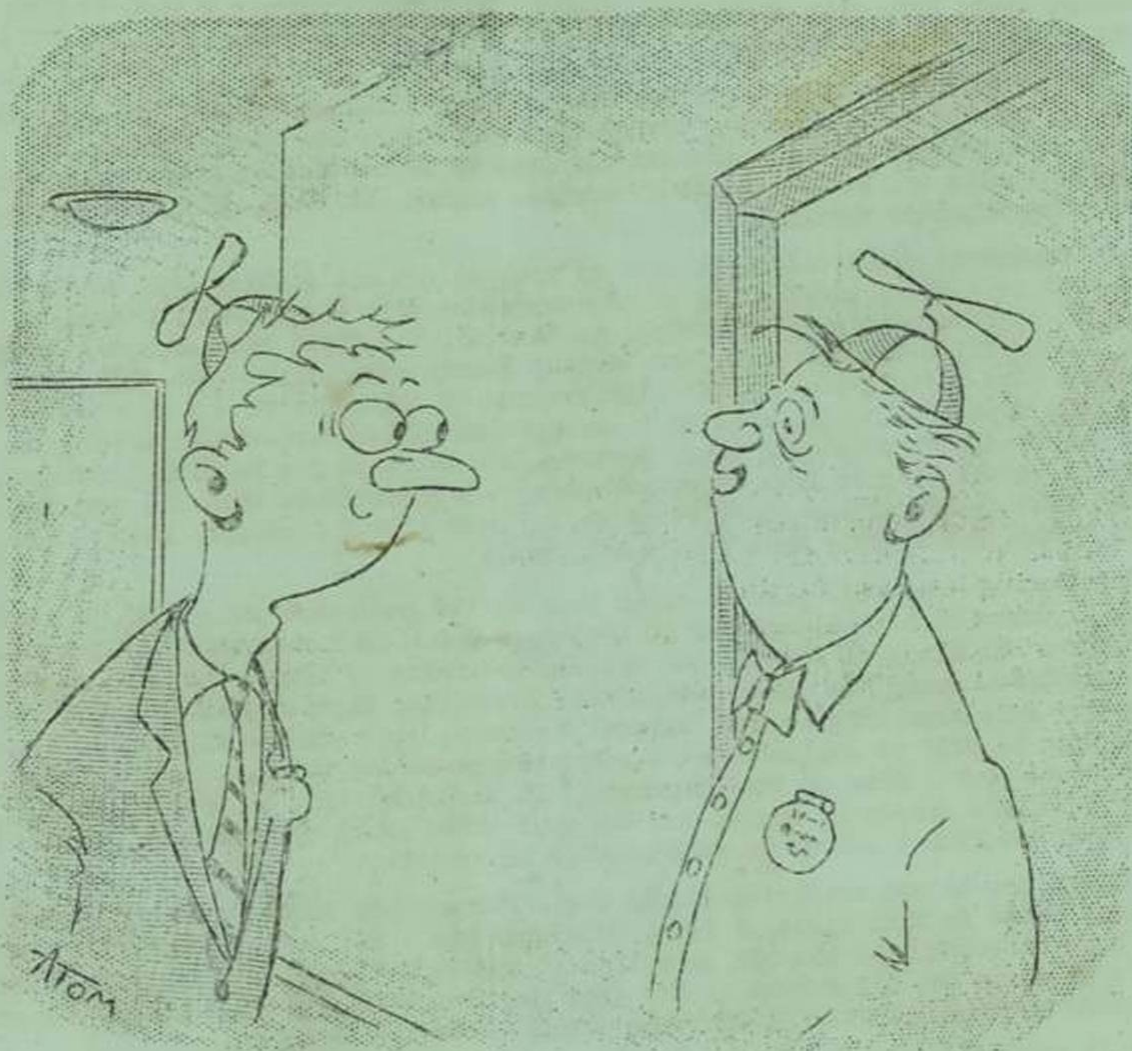


HYPHEN

NO.27

MARCH

1961



"My wife will be out in a minute: she say's she's got
a pretty startling idea for the Costume Ball."

INSIDE COVERAGE

Walt Willis

If you've ever lived with a mad Scientist who wants to put out a monthly fanzine you'll understand why last issue I wrote some addresses on gummed labels, to have them ready for Ian's deadline.

Now, I know about gummed labels. They have left little rectangular scars all over my soul. But I'd stuck one of those onto a sheet of duplicating paper a week ago and it was still there, so I got the roll out again and wrote a couple of dozen addresses.

That was all, because the strain of fighting both ends of the roll got too much for me, and I just jumped clear and let it whir back into its cylindrical life-phase. I'd been feeling as Leocoon would have felt during his struggle with the serpents if people had kept asking him for his autograph.

That was two months ago, and now one of those labelled Hyphens has been washed back to the shores of Ireland, having lost its label, its stamp and its way. It lies here pathetically, bleached prematurely grey by the action of water, with verdigris on its staples and piranha-nibbled margins. Anyone out there claim this poor little wandering homeless fanzine?

Of course it might belong to some of you who are not getting this issue. Tough, but that is a local problem and we are concerned with the overall situation. The overall situation, big picture-wise, is that for the first time Hyphen's circulation has fallen below the 200 mark, and another twenty subs expire with this issue. Now I don't have to tell you men the significance of this. You've got to get out there and sell Hyphen....oops, what am I saying? Two hundred or even less is quite OK by us, especially at collating time. Curious, but the less you publish a fanzine, the more it grows. It just lies there gathering new subscribers from old reviews, like dust. Conversely, if you start it up in top gear all of a sudden, lots of people get left behind before they know what's happening.

However, if you would like to climb back on the sandwagon and you'll be at the British Convention at Gloucester in Easter, you can give your money to Ian McAulay who likes all kinds of lettuce and will be attending as IFen's fully accredited representative. Among his other duties will be helping English fandom to protect Kingsley Amis from wansborough, Burgess & Reaney, lest science fiction be set back 30 years. (A pity we couldn't get a robot bodyguard for this....Amis and Android would have looked nice on the programme.) In his spare time he will be cutting off Brian Aldis's source of income for the next three years by explaining to him how his Bothouse Planet set-up is astronomically impossible.

Though how he can criticise Aldis for a few cobwebs to the Moon after what he himself wrote in this issue... True, Madeline and I did go down with flu, and he did have to break down his own door, but it was from the outside, and... Oh well. Bob's piece on the other hand is the true and hitherto unrevealed behind the scenes exposure of an International Sporting event, exclusive to Hyphen.

Next issue James White writes again, and Ian & I report on the Convention.

Published by Walt Willis & Ian McAulay, 170 Upper M'Ards Rd., Belfast 4, Northern Ireland. Art Editor Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London SW2. Co-founders Chuck Harris & Bob Shaw. Refreshments by Madeline Willis. The rest of IFandom... James & Patsy White, George Charters, Sadie Shaw & John Berry... gave every assistance within their power short of actual help. 1/- or 15¢ per copy, 7 for \$1.00 an X after your name denotes the demise of your sub.

The Glass Bushel..... Bob Show

BOWMEN IN THE

GLOAMING



EVERYBODY AGREED that the 1960 Ulster International Archery Team should fly over to Scotland for the big contest. National prestige demands that we fly, said Stewarty Lemon; there's no comparison between the standards of comfort in boat and plane, said Hector Simpson; we'll shoot better if we fly because there's less fatigue, said Willy Deane; flying is the only civilised gentlemanly way to go, said Nelson Park. Being a newcomer to the team, I merely nodded as each one in turn spoke his piece. Anyway, everyone agreed we were flying.

The following week we received a letter from the Archery Association informing us that, because of several financial near-disasters, the members of the International Team would have to pay their own travelling expenses....

It was grim down in the hold of that boat.

At first I thought the daylight crossing would be good fun. I had never done it before and I imagined we would have a roistering time down in the third class hold—swigging beer, smoking, playing cards all day. As it happened, things went all right for the first part of the journey, that is the bit where we all walked up the gangway. At the top of it a sailor with a red, weatherbeaten face and little crinkles at the corners of his eyes (which showed that his face was beginning to crack up at the corners of his eyes) insisted on taking our cases of equipment and putting them in a huge rack along with all the other luggage.

For some reason this enraged Nelson Park and he refused to leave the vicinity of the rack. Questioning revealed that he was afraid of his stuff being stolen, and no amount of argument would convince him that a number of a notorious international gang of bow and arrow thieves was not waiting to pounce the moment his back was turned. He finally announced his intention of standing guard until the ship docked at 12.15—roughly six hours later. Nelson is a very tall lean man with a face that would ideally suit him for playing Strider in a Lord of the Rings film, and the idea of him going to waste by standing all day staring suspiciously at the elderly plumbers and sweet-sucking children who surrounded us had a strangely depressing effect on me.

The others seemed to feel it too but we went below, set up a few folding seats and a suitcase, bought beer, lit pipes and cigarettes and dealt the cards. I found myself sitting beside Stewarty Leron. This suited me quite well; he is a small happy looking man who works in an engineering toolroom and I felt I knew where I was with him. But half an hour later, after two bottles of pale ale, he began, to my horror, to exhibit unmistakable signs of drunkenness.

His face got red, he kept spilling his drink and showering the floor with cards when it was his turn to deal. "This is great," he would say at intervals. "Good job the wife can't see me now—drinkin', gamblin', usin' bad language—it's great!" In between times he would sing snatches from The Desert Song, and each time an unattached woman went by he whispered, "She isn't half askin' for trouble paradin' about like that. Flauntin' herself in front of wild, drinkin' men!"

I got more and more worried about him until he reached a crescendo when he thought he detected Harry Higham, the oldest member of the team, dealing himself extra cards. He leapt to his feet and shouted, "Naw you don't, naw you don't. Those tricks don't fool me—Maverick!"

Old Harry, an ex-professional soldier with a bald head and a malarial complexion, had been growing tired of Stewarty's babbling. "Shut your mouth, you stupid-looking . . .," he searched his mind for another TV character and blurted the first one that came, "...William Tell".

This was an unfortunate choice. Stewarty took it as a subtle but deadly insult to his prowess with the long bow and the card game dissolved in an explosion of acrimony and near-violence. We spent the rest of the time wandering round the ship, singly or in pairs. Everywhere I went I was able to see Nelson Park's face sticking up above the crowd as he guarded his bow and arrows. The only bright spot was when Hector Simpson forgave me for being in the same club as Stewarty and tried to teach me some Latin. After I had given a few wrong answers he decided I was worse than his lowest class at school and went away to the toilet where he spent the rest of the trip marking homeworks.

* * * * *

The morning of the match dawned, as the saying goes, bright and fair. I hadn't slept too well. All the previous evening Stewarty had persisted with his conviction that every woman who passed by was flaunting herself at him and "askin' for trouble." I found myself sharing the same bed with him and as I was completely accustomed to being in bed with my wife I was terrified in case I should perhaps put my arm around Stewarty while sleeping. In the mood he was in there was no telling how he would have taken it so I spent the night balanced on the opposite edge of the bed.

But it was a fine sunny morning with very little wind and I recovered my good spirits as we drove to the archery ground at Troon. Having reached the ground we unpacked our little boxes and began stringing the bows and looking along arrows to make sure they were straight. Old Harry, a veteran of many matches, kept telling us to relax and be confident. Confidence, it seemed, was the main thing.

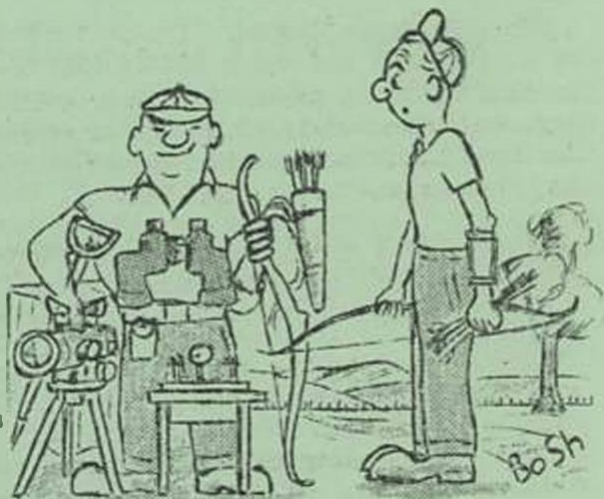
Suddenly I noticed something rather queer. The Scottish team had come out of the pavilion carrying their boxes at the same time as us, but we had our bows strung and bracers strapped on and yet the other team was still marching back and forward to the pavilion carrying out more and more boxes. When they had finally dropped the native bearer routine I began keeping a furtive eye in the Scotsman who was sharing my target.

First of all he wrestled the lid off a massive packing case and removed an ex-army artillery gunsight, bristling with lenses and knurled knobs, which he set up on a special tripod. He spent several minutes peering down into it and clicking in coloured filters of various strengths. After a while he sensed my interest in the contraption and explained that the filters were invaluable in changing light conditions. Faced with this display of scientific exactitude I felt my confidence begin to crumble slightly. I glanced down the shooting line for a reassuring glance at Old Harry but I could hardly see the rest of the Irish team for the piles of boxes that the Scots had produced. The place had begun to look like Southampton Docks in the middle of a strike.

My man, whose name was Angus, next opened another box and took out a gleaming gadget which he set up on a little bench. This, it turned out, was his arrow straightener—accurate to .001". I looked down the line and saw that the other Scots were setting up their arrow straighteners too. By this time I had begun to feel sick.

Next came his high powered binoculars which were for quick checks on arrow positions when he didn't want to move over to the gunsight. Then came a shooting stick for resting between ends, then two special silver studs for marking the position of his toes so that he could always resume exactly the same stance after retrieving arrows.

Old Harry came up to me and I noticed that his face seemed pale under its usual weatherbeaten brown. "Confidence is all that counts," he whispered. "When it comes to the bit each man is alone on the award with his bow."



"Are you kidding?" I moaned in panic. "This client beside me has been opening boxes for half an hour and he hasn't even reached his bow yet!"

Just then Angus took out his bow. Needless to say it was one of the latest high speed, low draw weight, plastic laminate efforts which cost as much as all the Irish team's steel bows put together. When he had it braced and strung he gave the string an experimental pluck which produced a sharp clear musical note like a harp. Old Harry squeezed my arm and went away back to his place to the accompaniment of more musical plinks from Scottish plastic bows all down the line.

The whistle blew for the six sighting-in shots with which all matches load off.

Each archer carries six arrows. He shoots three and then steps back until his opponent shoots three, then he shoots his second three. When his opponent has shot his second three they go up to the target and count the score for that end. Angus was first on my target but he was slow at starting because he had several sets of arrows in a box and he wanted to select a set whose flights were most suitable for the wind conditions, so I watched Stewarty on my left and Hector on my right. They both led off in their usual form. Stewarty, shooting too quickly and nervously, blazed off three arrows which seemed to be still rising as they passed over the target at a height of about twenty feet. Hector very calmly and deliberately placed an arrow in each leg of the stand which supported his target and then failed to nock the third one properly. It gave a horrible twang and fell on the ground

about six yards in front of him.

Somehow I was reassured. Stewarty and Hector had been archers for years and I could beat them—perhaps Angus for all his equipment would be no better. By this time he had chosen a set of arrows which he felt would be suitable. He stood up to the line and in an unruffled, almost abstracted manner feathered three arrows near the centre of the target a hundred yards away.

"Very good," I said numbly.

"I'm not too happy about number two," he commented. "I'd better check the straightness—I think it's about half a thou out."

I went up to the line and sent off my first shot. At a hundred yards the arrows fade out of sight before they strike and you listen for the sound. I was overjoyed to hear a comforting thud from the target area and prepared to send another one in the same general direction.

Suddenly Angus barked, "You're in the black at eight o'clock. Screw your sight out a sixteenth and aim a little higher." I glanced round and saw that he was crouched over his gunsight like a U-boat commander aiming torpedoes. I did as he suggested but my next shot missed. Angus gaped into his intercom for a moment then came marching over to me, snatched my arrows and put them through his arrow straightener one after the other. "I thought so," he muttered over each one as he tested it. "as many sides as a thrupenny bit." He straightened all my arrows and for the rest of the match took an intense personal interest in the fate of every shot. Due to his enthusiastic coaching I managed to put up one of my highest ever scores, although Angus won by a comfortable margin and the Ulster team as a whole was beaten.

Five of us sailed back to Belfast that night. We got a good seat in the first class lounge after changing our tickets from third to first class so that we would be able to get sleeping accommodation. Things went all right for a while—we discussed the match over our beer, then Willy discovered that with the added expense of first class return and berths and meals it would have been just as cheap to fly. This led to a number of bitter wrangles then Stewarty began to notice women flaunting themselves at him again and Nelson began to worry about his stuff being stolen....

Finally we all went below. On the way down Old Harry discovered that because of the way our berth tickets were arranged only four could go into one cabin and the fifth would have to share another cabin with a stranger. "It's unfortunate," he said. "It's not very nice being away from all the boys on your own—but there's nothing else for it."

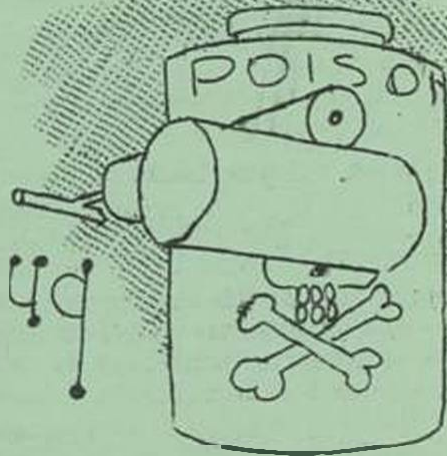
We all agreed sadly, looked at each other for a few seconds and then there was a wild charge towards our cabins. I was lucky enough to get in front so I dashed into the room with the surprised stranger and bolted the door, and I never did find out which room the others had been running for.

I slept late the following morning and when I woke up the boat had been in for ages and all the others had gone home. Somehow, I didn't mind.

LIMITED: April '43 ASF (US Edition)! Also most issues between 1940 and 1945. As a last resort, MONEY will even be paid.

Ion McEulley

I Was a
Teenage
Bugthug
Jeff
Wahshel



FATHER LOOKED, found his keys, and walked out the kitchen door to the car. Mother waited until he was a good distance away, checked the path, found it clear. She turned to me. I looked over her impassive features. Even through the lenses, I could see the cool glint of hard steel reflected in her eyes. What was to come? She buttoned the top fastening of her trenchcoat, and nodded towards the East corner of the room. To the worktable. "There's one over there," she whispered. "Dispose of it." I saluted. She turned away. Her jack-boots clicked together sharply as she descended the steps. There was a faint trace of a smile, of an inward joke, on her innocent face. It disappeared as she approached her husband. The ignition snapped, the car rolled down the driveway, sped away into the shadows of the night.

I stood until the sound of the huzzing engine was too faint to discern. With a swift, well co-ordinated motion I closed the kitchen door and executed a letter-perfect about-face. The fly rested there on the work table, its unhooding, bulbous eyes searching elsewhere. My hand sneaked out to the stack, groped, found what it was looking for. With the paper in my steady and unshaking grip, I slowly slid forward over the floor. The fly remained, not knowing it had been spotted, unwary of the circumstances about to end its brief moment of existence. It suspected nothing. I walked a few feet away from the work table, turned, and sauntered past the fly with the paper held loosely in my right hand. With a hideous grin on my mug, I ceased movement a foot from the insect. Out of the corner of my eye, I behold the last aware movement of the bug. In a lightning swift action, every synapse perfectly integrated, the blur of motion that was the paper in my hand sped up, then down. It hit the worktable with a sudden WHACK. The grin widened into a lunatic smile. I removed the newspaper. There, in a pool of fluid, lay the fly, messily dismembered. The smile eased into a look of solemn pity, and with a sidewise motion, the paper flicked away and back - the coup-de-grace. The faint drone ceased, the legs stopped twitching. With a faintly distasteful glance, I picked up - rather pulled away - the earthly remains of the fly. My head held high, I quietly hummed "taps", and as the final words "and dust to dust" issued forth from

my primary facial orifice, I flushed the dead blotch down the toilet.
They don't call me the fastest newspaper in the East for nothing.

MY EYES GLAZED WITH EXCITEMENT, I beheld the unfortunate horse-thief as the noose was placed around his neck. Marshall Dillon was going to have one hell of a time before this show was over. - I could see that. Yet that was not all I could see. For at that exact moment, out of the extreme corner of my eyeball, I observed a relatively small brown object, in the process of doing something - I knew not what. All outside awareness passed from my realm of existence. In a split second, the brown object had vanished under the protection of the sleeve of my father's best blue suit. My sense of loyalty to my father made a few vague murmurings, but it was mainly my inborn hate of insects that compelled me to do as I did. All humaneness vanished from my composure. I became once more a machine - a killer whose sole purpose in the macrocosm was the hunting down and destruction of all insect life. I felt a surge of strength and hatred pour through my veins. Eyes gleaming evilly, I stepped over to the suit-rack on tiptoe. Had it seen me? Cautiously and gently, so as not to disturb unduly the being inside, I lifted the sleeve until my view included the intruder.

What I observed was the biggest brown spider I have ever seen.

Vigilantly shaken, I backed off. My cunning mind envisioned a thousand and one horrible deaths for the thing to encounter. Yet Marshall Dillon would not wait, and I was feeling generous. No, the end would be quick.

I tapped the sleeve with just enough force to dislodge the spider, but not damage it. The spider shook loose, dropped partway down on his shimmering assassin line, took one look at me, uttered an inaudible scream, and plummeted the rest of the way.

Once touching a solid surface, the spider dashed madly across the rug. It might have beaten lesser mortals, but to one with my experience the movement was slow and awkward. With my upper lip curling into a leering snoot, my foot shot forward, and before the spider realized what the majestic shadow above meant, it was imprisoned under my shoe. I held it there for a short while, giving it just enough time to utter a final prayer to Roscoe, and then exerted a crushing pressure - grinding the spider into oblivion. Wiping away the multi-colored blood was the work of a second. With a reverent attitude, I solemnly recited "How he belongs to the ages".

Satisfied, I returned to the rest of my evening's entertainment. Less than two minutes had passed from the discovery to the kill. Not bad.

My abhorrence and subsequent malice towards insects is a quirk in my psychology that I have retained since shortly after birth. At that time, a wasp stung me, stunting my growth for a good number of months. I don't think mother ever did find out why the milk bottle was shattered all over the crib.

However, I am not totally ruthless. Once, when I was in Haiti, I returned to my room to find two cockroaches chasing each other around and around a beautiful bouquet of flowers. I let this go on for fifteen minutes - after all, who am I to foil a cockroach seduction - but when the participants showed no sign of letting up, I called someone else because my golden heart could not bear the thought of breaking up the twosome. He was a good man - the awareness of ensnaring ^{death} never became fully apparent to the gay creatures.

I LAY THERE, soaking up the delightful rays of the hot sun. As the golden warmth enveloped me, I felt myself drowsily sinking off into a peaceful doze.

Little did I know what the strange events of the next hour would hold for me. I must have been snoring gently, because the noise was not noticeable to me at once. When it got louder, my instinct rang an alarm bell, and I arose from the depth of slumber, my person already undergoing the change that turns me into an iron-hard

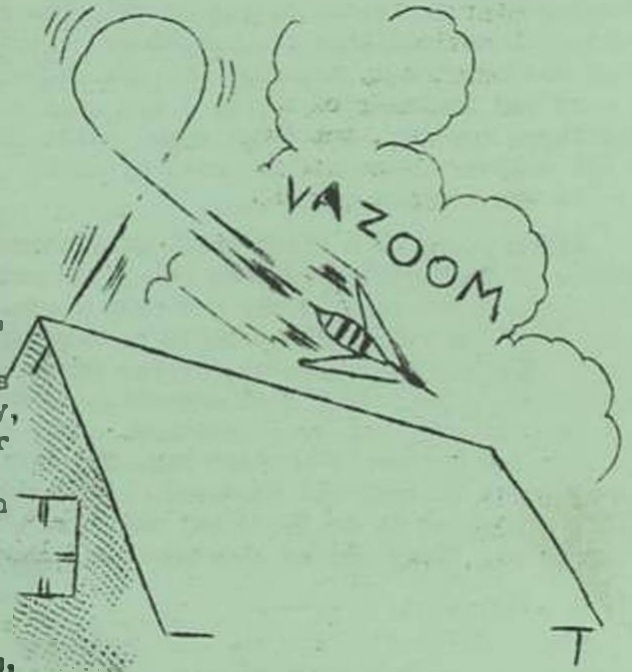
machine, a killer, from the lovable, fanatical being that is my usual outward appearance.

I opened my eyes to find the sun blotted out by an odd-shaped eclipse. *Wichod!* What had happened? Shoving my obviously malfunctioning radar set off my chest (for the detection of UFI - Unidentified Flying Insects), I lunged upright. At this point in the cosmic scheme of things, the odd-shaped eclipse, with a loud buzz, departed from the immediate area of my nose. I muttered an obscenity, and swearing an oath to rid the area of all insects when fully awake, settled down to return to sleep. The buzzing noise returned gradually, and the yellowjacket once more settled lightly on my nose. Before I could do anything about it, it flew off and alighted on a flower. Like a slithering tentacle from an ivy creeper, an evil idea was conceived and formed in the depths of my fog-enshrouded brain. I leaped lightly into the house (a bare-faced lie if you've ever seen me leap) and emerged with the most efficient can of bug-spray that we had. Once more, I settled back on the outside couch. True to form, the yellowjacket returned, performed a one and a half full gainer dive, and glided in for a five star landing on my proboscis. I shoed it off - but this time, followed it. I observed, patiently, while it swooped nonchalantly from flower to flower. Only the sweet thought of total revenge kept me from annihilating it with one mighty blow. Finally, it quit, and sped towards the house. With a shock, I realized that it intended to go over the roof. This I had not bargained for. It ignored all my frantic cries and gestures, so reluctantly I heaved the can up on the roof, gathered up my overlarge paunch, and executing a Tarzan-like leap, fell flat on my pums. Groggily, I spotted a foothold and scrambled up the wall. Reaching the roof, I accidentally stepped on the spray-can nozzle, and my reward was a three-second blast of repellent full in the face.

I managed to stop the flow, and merrily yelled some choice adjectives that the F.O. would frown on. As soon as I heard sirens in the distance, I shut up. Meanwhile, the coward wasp was passing over the peak of the roof and descending on the other side. I lurched drunkenly up further, and as I reached the top and hurtled after the wasp, I missed a shingle and swooped out quite ungracefully into space.

Choking a scream, I landed in the front bushes - in a damned holly, yet - and missing barely a broken neck; my heel did not miss the picture window, which promptly shattered. Screaming incoherently, I whooped a Comanche war-cry and galumphed after the yellowjacket, which was just barely visible in the distance. As I neared it, it dropped low to the ground.

In my concentration on it, I failed to notice the giant oak which suddenly swerved directly into my path and crashed into me head-on. Accursed tree - why didn't it watch where it was going? Picking myself up, I dropped a comment or two which demonstrated my disdain for the questionable ancestors of the tree, and then clambered into the woods like one obsessed. Ignoring the open windows and



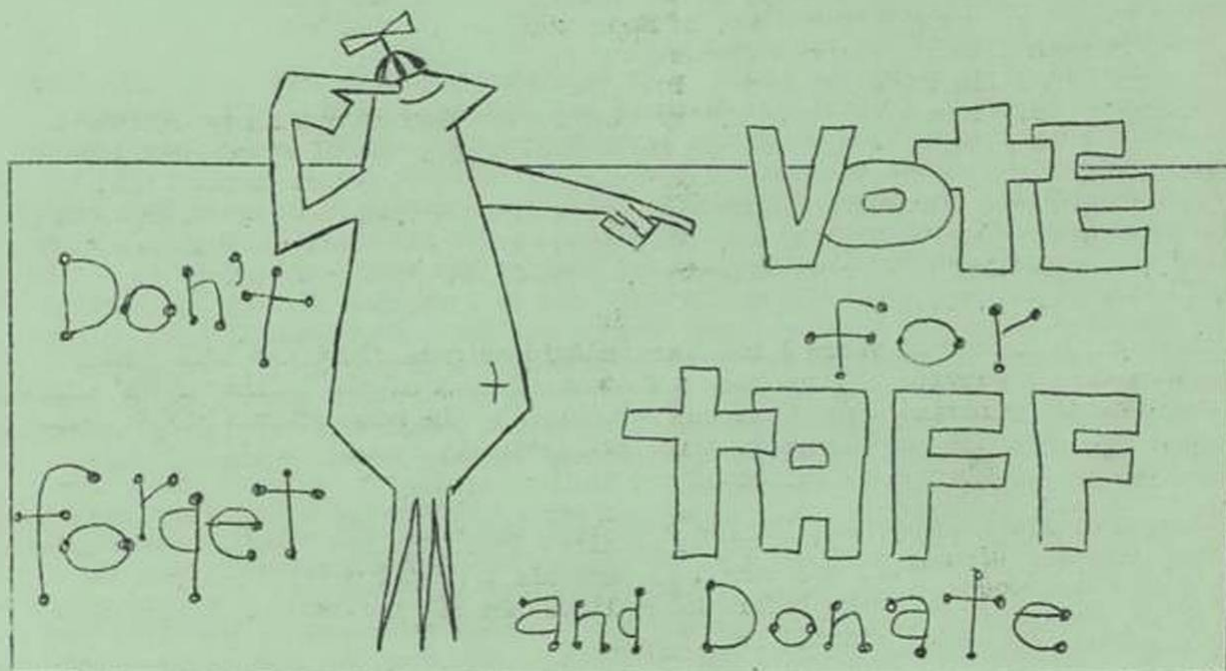
wido-eyed faces, I tramped on. what was so unusual about a tattered, blood-soaked figure running into the woods, shouting Commancheo war-cries, swearing in Esperanto, and spraying insect repellent all over existence? Ignorant, noxy clods. Finally, the yellowjacket led me to the heart of the forest, and I saw my goal - the nest!

Yodelling in delight, I fell upon them, wreaking havoc and destruction. I completely emptied the contents of the spray-can on them, effectively slaughtering the nest and every yellowjacket coming near it for ten minutes. I turned around, battered head held upright. I marched right into a waiting squadron of wasps. I hurled at them, among other things, the empty can and a dozen scathing oaths. I tromped like a drunken gazelle down to the house, and once inside, groped under the kitchen sink and produced a few more cans. Cavorting back into the street, I covered it with reeking mist until the bodies of the dead and dying (not only insects) blocked all exits. I noticed that the neighbours deemed to have lost interest. Oh well. I sat down and counted my wounds. For the satisfaction of completely ravaging and ruining a nest and hundreds of wasps, I had only suffered 37 stings, a sprained ankle, a shattered kneecap, two black eyes, quite probably Twonks' disease, and the cost of a 120 dollar window hanging over my head.

It was a grand moment.


After years in a black hole, meditating upon the eternal and everlasting significance of the hate of various other fen and I for insects, I believe that at last I can present the real, true, and only reason. These past few years, have you once seen a trufan raise his eyeballs to Heaven and solemnly invoke the name of Mighty Ghu? No, not one shows the proper reverence any more. Have the insects spread across the cosmos ever once acknowledged Ghu as their great leader? No, they do not recognize him as even existing. Therefore, seeing his glorious empire in ruin and his fen in revolt against him, Ghu hath implanted within certain of us a fanatical desire to smud out bug-kind, and within others the dreaded germ known as gaffa.

If you look at it in the right way, the knowledge will flood into your soul that this is so. Does anyone else have as reasonable a suggestion? If so, let me know.



The History of Irish Fandom

Part V

John 
berry

WHEN WALT WILLIS asked me to write this chapter, he little expected to see me stagger up the hallowed steps of 170 Upper Newtownards Road with four inches of closely typed manuscript. You see, I have so far only typed 3 lines, but I know my record of Irish Fandom since 1954 will just go on and on. I mean, you have only to cast your mind back to the 1955/7 era to recall that my Irish Fandom stories appeared in most of the fanzines going. And although I freely admit there was a wealth of fable, the facts were only a fragment of the fascinating things which took place. The easy way for me to write of my experiences in Irish Fandom would be to place all those stories in chronological order and reprint snippets of them, in the form of an omnibus edition. But I know for a fact that, of necessity, my stories are read in much less conspicuous places than public transport, so that project falls by the wayside. But I know exactly what I am going to do. I am going to allow my fingers to wander over this typewriter as they will. I am going to think back to that fabulous day when I first read the name 'Walt Willis'... I am going to force myself into an abstract trance (that'll baffle Ron Hubbard) and write exactly what comes into my head. I have discovered after writing some hundreds of thousands of words in fandom that the more spontaneous phrases are always the most effective and realistic and truthful. You'll see.....

For a goodly number of years I had been an avid science fiction reader, and in those days fanzine review columns were a feature of most of the prozines. Of course, it soon came to my notice that a person in Belfast by the name of Walt Willis published a fanzine which was always getting rave notices.....and, what's more, it seemed that he was a prolific writer of the highest grade. I knew nothing of fanzines, save that they were synonymous with science fiction, and as this exalted personality actually lived only a couple of miles from me I was prompted to enquire further. Willis, of course, was canny. I sent him a postal order as a sub. to HYPHEN, and it was three weeks before he replied. On his invitation, I went up to Oblique House, and it all started from there.

Walt lent me a batch of prozines and fanzines, and I spent a fortnight reading them....a fortnight in which I pondered deeply if this way of life was for me.

One Sunday in late August in 1954 I made the fateful decision. I pumped up the tyres of my pedal cycle and pushed my way over to Oblique House, and during the next four hours I saw exactly all that Irish Pandemon stood for.

Bob Shaw, a young man with a whimsical expression permanently transfixing his Grecian features, had a fantastic appetite. James White, of the studious expression and sartorial elegance, on the other hand, only nibbled thin plain biscuits.

Madeleine Willis seemed to spend most of her time staggering up and down three flights of stairs with a fifteen gallon teapot. Walt Willis seemed, by common consent, to be the nucleus round which they all circled, and he had a crafty grin on his face, and seemed to keep his mind at a permanent razor's edge in order to be able to twist a perfectly innocent verbal expression into a potent pun. George Charters, a nice old man, sat in a chair and purveyed bags of sweets, seeming to make a ritual of keeping 'the purple one' for Sadie. Sadie, in those days, was Bob's girl-friend, and endeared herself to me by sportingly playing ghocminton and being quite prepared to divest herself of superficial attire should the tempo of the game require it!

Ah, ghocminton.....

This was the outlet for our sporting instincts, and I became an addict. I fear I was so keen to play that it may have appeared that I pushed myself forward out of turn. I could not resist some dormant primitive urge to batter the shuttlecock. For this game brought out the best and the worst in us all. The rules were non-existent: as long as the shuttlecock could be made to hit the floor on the opponent's side, it didn't matter at all how it got there! This was a perfect set-up for aggression and brute force, but the way we played it said a great deal for the delicacy of our upbringing and appreciation of the rules of sportsmanship. Admittedly, the game was the direct cause of considerable damage to the house and its furnishings, but broken windows and powdered plaster and matchwood chairs were proof positive that we played the game for all it was worth. No personal animosity asserted itself, strange as it may seem, because we were such a convivial group that none existed. The fact that my blood was strewn all over the fan attic after every game wasn't because I had wrunged any of them, just fermish exuberance. You see, I went out of my way to win. I brought all the subtlety of my mental and physical make-up into a vicious vendetta against the shuttlecock and whoever was precipitating it. We all had our ploys. Bob Shaw, who I've asserted before should have been a ballet dancer, preferred to prance around like a sylph, so that for a second we would take our eyes off the missile, while he battered it at hypersonic speed past our ears and into the floorboards. James White, normally placid, hacked and fought with gritted teeth. Madeleine Willis, an amazingly athletic specimen of wonderful womanhood, let it be known immediately that just because she was a female she didn't expect preferential treatment. Even when her wrist was sprained and her left thumb knocked out of orbit, she didn't complain. George Charters, elder by far than the rest of us, insisted upon playing too, and denied our permission that he could remain seated during the tourney. His nickname (dubbed by James White) of 'The Dribbling Terror' conveys better than any words of mine what a potent force he was. He had the Appointment to supply the bats, and whilst other workers at his factory were hard at work, George was surreptitiously shaping squares of cardboard, which he smuggled out of the factory inside his flat cap. The Managing Director of the factory, making his annual speech to the shareholders in 1955, was quoted as saying, "...and, gentlemen, beside manufacturing 87 Canberra twin-jet attack bombers and building the prototype of the Short Seagew, on full Government subsidy, I am sorry to announce a most discouraging drop in the shares. If only we could cut down on our use of cardboard packing boxes....."

After goodnights, Madeleine always came up to the fan attic with the large teapot, as I've already mentioned. She also supplied home-made delicacies, foremost amongst them the celebrated 'Coffee-Kisses'. During and after this repast the conversation became magnificently fresh and uninhibited. No particular subject was chosen; we just followed our flights of fancies and created allusion upon allusion, to the merriment of all. In my early days, I didn't partake in the conversation too much, because my mind hadn't been geared to the ultimate revs per min; but a veritable battle of wits usually ensued between Bob, James, Madeleine and I. conversation dripping with puns and word-play. I noticed one day, after I had become somewhat attuned, that when one of them made a particular remark, probably something quite innocent, they all laughed....and it gradually dawned on me that their minds were so pliable, so used to each other, so brilliant, that they all, without a word being spoken, recognized the same unspoken play on words! If you like, I'll go so far as to say that their reactions displayed some degree of perception which cannot be put down to mere intellectual cohabitation. There was something else, an understanding I've never come across before or since. I know whereof I speak, because within a year or two, I was firmly entrenched in this phenomenon. When a visitor came, and said something quite natural, but which, to our over-seeing minds, indicated word-play, we looked at each other for a second, or in some cases without even a look or glance, we each knew the others had noted what we had noted.



Perhaps a visitor would make a pun: possibly, on rare occasions, a good pun - good, that was, to our standard. We all only laughed, and the visitor assumed that our hilarity had been directed at the original pun. This was untrue! Our minds, in unison, had accepted the pun in a split second, had torn it to pieces, and had worked out many other complicated puns. Each one a play on the previous one. On occasions, if one of us thought we had hit a particularly original play on words regarding a remark, we would utter a word connected with our discovery, and from the nods and laughs it was obvious that the rest had thought of it also, sampled it, and approved it.

The amazing thing, to me, was that these thoughts raced through our minds in split seconds. It was like someone looking out of the window of an aeroplane and seeing everywhere and everything, from horizon to horizon, at the same time. I wish it were possible to give an example, just one. Unfortunately, although many thousands of brilliant puns, quips and merry jests passed between us during the last five years, I cannot recall any classic examples.

It was wonderful the way we used to dissect ideas. One of us would come up with something unconventional, and, after tea, we would all sit round and produce all sorts of fantastically wonderful plays on the original theme.

For instance, there was my wardrobe affair !

The wardrobe biz was fully detailed in BLISSKRIEG (title by Walt Willis) in Hyphen. It concerned my theories that the prelude to marital bliss in the privacy of the boudoir should be a death-defying leap by the male from the top of the wardrobe on to the bed.

I took the article up for the rest of Irish fandom to read, and they all thoroughly enjoyed the idea; it was, to use a common mundane expression, right up their street. And we started to embroider the basic theme.

I think it was Bob Shaw who suggested that if my idea really caught on, we should form a limited company and corner the wardrobe monopoly.

Suggestions flew thick and fast...some rejected...some animatedly developed. Someone said that in years to come they could envisage young couples heading towards a secluded part of a park, towing a wardrobe behind them.

Walt coined the classic phrase concerning the celebrated sex-fiend Chuck Harris... 'Have wardrobe - will travel.'

James White thought that the wardrobe idea would be a big hit in the Middle East. He reasoned that a potentate would not gain prestige from the number of his concubines, as of yore, but from the number, design and strength of his wardrobes. A series of tall wardrobes, showing that a terrific leap was necessary, would prove to his minions that the potentate was gifted with fantastic virility. "Of course," I remember James saying, "one couldn't expect a potentate to actually cause possible injury to himself by personally participating in the preliminary jump. A new category of male would be recruited into the harem, to join the eunuchs. These would be superb physical specimens, whose sole activity was to accompany the potentate and his current choice to the bedchamber. The individual would sit on top of the wardrobe, and at a signal from the potentate that all was ready, would leap on to the bed; perchance, if the occasion demanded it, turning a couple of somersaults. He would then sneak furtively away, leaving the scene, but keeping within shouting distance should his services be required again !"

For older married couples we invented the jet-assisted take-off equipment for installation on the top of the wardrobe. We thought of having the wardrobe on railway lines, with a little engine on it, so that the male could shunt around the bed, keeping the female in suspenseful agony. We had a miniature glider so that the male could actually fly over the bed, and thus bail out at the psychological moment.

And so on...you know, I've only just sketched some of our allusions. Luckily, this was one of the rare occasions during which I kept notes !

A word or two about the lady members of Irish Fandom.

Modelaine is the acknowledged First Lady of Irish Fandom, and has played a big part in the functions of the group, both from a furnish point of view, and from a social aspect. The amount of cakes and biscuits and gallons of tea she has supplied must be astronomical and, you'll pardon the expression...gastronomical !

I've mentioned before her prowess at ghosdminton, but she shines in all directions, mentally and physically, and I've never met a shrewder Canasta player. I only hope she never suggests playing for money !

Peggy White was a very frequent visitor to Irish Fandom meetings for some time, before she married James and afterwards, but since the advent of a couple of White

Minors, she obviously has less time for ghoddminton and suchlike.

Samie Shaw, I've told you before, is a sportswoman...well, she was, anyway. In my early days in Irish Fandom she was most enthusiastic about ghoddminton, and once she even wrote a brilliant article. We were without the Shaws for over two years...they went to Canada...although it is gratifying to be able to relate that they kept in touch with us, so much so that when they returned, we speedily forgot that they'd ever been away.

I've tried to show, as briefly as possible, all the varying aspects of fan activity that Irish Fandom has participated in during my sojourn. The combined list of fanzines, apazines, stories, articles, letters of comment, pro. studies, columns, one shots, etc, which all of us of Irish Fandom have produced in the last five years must be staggering. Members of Irish Fandom have appeared at or near the top of most of the polls conducted during the period, and I recall that in 1956, in one poll, members of IF (including ANQM, an Honorary Member) topped eight out of twelve categories. Now I shouldn't boast about our triumphs like this, but you all know that I am famed for giving factual data, and it is up to me to carry on this fine and noble tradition in this chapter of our history.

It is interesting to conjecture what will happen to Irish Fandom in the next decade. I have brought the history up to date... up to the end of 1959... and I wonder what fate holds for us... and who will be writing the history of Irish Fandom so as to bring the record up to date in 1969?

Walt and Co. were blossoming forth in 1949, and in the past ten years Irish Fandom has grown into a group of devoted fans, with the furtherance of fandom as its principle objective. Where will it go from here?

One thing you may all be assured of. Even though Walt and Madeleine may leave 170, Upper Newwards Road, a new Oblique House will carry on the fine tradition...and I am confident you all feel that fandom will continue to be the better for it.



LIFE
WITH
Berkeley
FANDOM
Ron Ellik

SOME TIME AGO, when the Gibsons were still living in Berkeley and I was still co-editor of *FALLAC*, I went over to their home to deliver the latest issue (they have boasted for months of home-delivery service, and don't know what to do now they live out in the country). While I was there, Roger Graham dropped in, and we sat talking about fans and science-fiction as we sometimes do on hot spring afternoons. Roberta complained about not seeing the Gibson name often enough in *FALLAC*, especially since we had announced in the 35th issue that our policy was to mention Rotsler every issue.

I countered by asking what the Gibsons had done recently to warrant publicity, and she told me she was taking judo lessons.

"All I could write about that would be: Roberta Gibson taking judo lessons— fans beware," I said, visualising the headline before my eyes.

This didn't seem to be satisfactory, so she thought about it while we listened to

their new radio. At a commercial, she came back with, "I was a hero the other day, too."

"Heroine," Roger corrected her.

"Well, anyway, there was a letter delivered to the Administration Building, saying that three dynamite bombs had been planted in it. The campus police department asked some of us who work in the Ad Building to help look for the bombs, and I volunteered to search the ladies' rest-room single-handed. I looked everywhere but in the water-tanks and the tissue-dispensers."

Joe looked up. "You didn't tell me you did a shoddy, half-way job of it," he frowned.

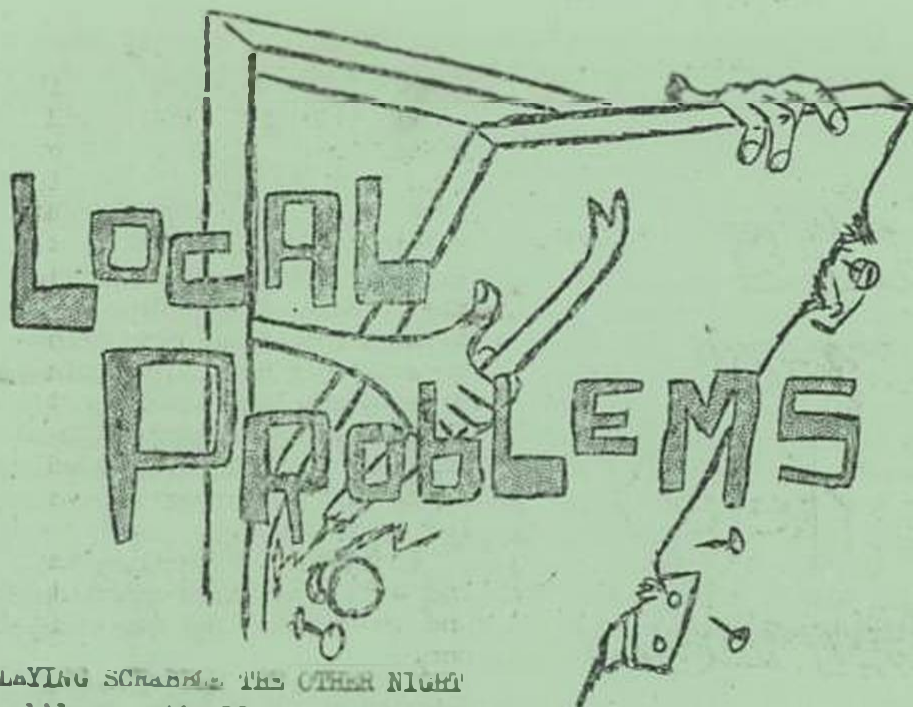
"Well," she reasoned, "if the bomb was in the water-tanks it would explode harmlessly, and besides, they're too high up to search. And it couldn't be in the tissue-dispensers because they're locked. And I didn't have a key." Joe went back to his reading, pacified.

"But the bomb didn't go off?" I asked, hesitantly, reaching for my pencil.

"Of course not," said Rog. "That's why they didn't print your name, Robby. Now, if the bomb had gone off, there would be a full-page headline article about you, because they don't have much headline news for *FALLAC*; your name would be shot through it, with vital statistics like your age at time of death, and so on; and at the top of the page would be a Bjo cartoon of you, with wings and a crooked star saying Hero."

"Heroine," I corrected him.

When Robby quieted down and stopped threatening to throw both of us out of the house, Joe promised to start doing writable things once in a while, and Robby promised to keep me posted.



WE WERE PLAYING SCRABBLE THE OTHER NIGHT

- we play Scrabble practically every night at Oblique House - when the first signs of the impending disaster appeared. Not that we recognised them as signs of impending disaster, one never does at the time; but looking back now it's easy to say that that's when they first became big enough to notice.

IAN

MCMAULAY

Madeline has been playing very well lately and Walt and I were expecting her to at least equal our scores, but as the game went on she appeared more and more distracted. At his eighth turn, Walt nonchalantly slapped down a seven letter word and said modestly, "I believe that makes 149 for me". Madeline said nothing and we thought she was about to score at least twice that, but twenty minutes went by and she didn't make a move. Walt looked at me and I looked at Walt. Five minutes later he shifted restively and said to Madeline, "Your turn, isn't it, Dear?". There was no reply. Then we noticed that Madeline's eyes were glassy and that she was obviously so unwell that she couldn't carry on with the game.

Well, naturally we were very upset at this and weren't quite sure what was the best thing to do. Eventually we decided that the only course open to us was to count it as a missed turn for Madeline and carry on with the game. Threequarters of an hour later Walt just managed to beat me by two points - I'd been left with the Q in my hand and no U - and Madeline still hadn't recovered. Walt carried her upstairs and put her to bed and then we set up the board again. When we decided to go to bed Walt was looking a bit worried and remarked that he hoped Madeline would be better the next day as it wasn't much fun playing two-handed Scrabble. I suggested he should try Eynon salts, but he only looked more pensive.

As usual the next morning I awoke bright and early at the crack of half past eight, shaved rapidly, and sprang out of bed with my customary alacrity. When I tried to leave my room I discovered that the door was still locked and then I realised that the house was unnaturally still. Something had prevented Walt from

getting up and unlocking my door as he usually did. I know it seems a bit strange that Walt should lock me in my room every night and I thought so too when I first went to live at Oblique House. As a matter of fact, I asked him about it then but he only muttered something about having a growing daughter to think about and knowing what the Southern Irish were like. I didn't see what he was getting at and finally put this mania for locked doors down to some strange Belfast foible, (the inhabitants of Belfast are well known as a foible-minded lot).

Well, rattling the door didn't make any difference so I tried to pick the lock with a plastic shirt stiffener. These may be absolutely indispensable for stiffening plastic shirts but they weren't any good for picking the lock on my door. Next I tried to ease back the tongue of the lock using a knife blade. The knife blade snapped. Then I tried hurling myself at the door shoulder first, the way they do in the television serials. After ten minutes I had developed a very sore shoulder and a deep scepticism as to the actual door knocking down experience of television serial script writers. Finally I realised there was nothing for it but to force the lock, so I picked up the crowbar I keep lying on my bedside table and approached the job in a scientific way. The sun had risen higher and the shadow of the steel window grille (when Willis locks you up there are no half measures) made a chequerboard pattern on the splintered wood and twisted steel when I stepped out into the hall about twenty minutes later.

There had been a certain amount of unavoidable noise about all this but in spite of it nobody had appeared to see what was going on, so I concluded that Walt had decided to take a day off and have a bit of a lie-in. I made myself some breakfast and set off for work a little late, but otherwise without a care in the world.

* * * * *

When I drove back to Oblique House that evening, I sensed that something was wrong as soon as I stepped out of my car. There was an eerie, macabre atmosphere that somehow conveyed the impression that all was not well. We scientists get used to subconsciously picking up all the subtle, intangible, little factors that make up the big picture, and often manage to reach a conclusion before the man in the street has even realised that a problem exists. Perhaps the vultures circling over the house and uttering malevolent cries made a difference, too.

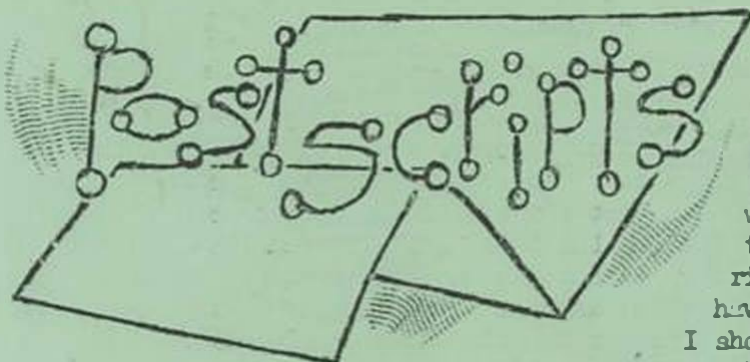
Cautiously I went into the sombre gloom of the kitchen and realised from the congealed bits of egg and bacon rind still on my plate that nobody had been in there since I left in the morning. After foraging out the scraps to keep the vultures busy for a while, I tried to open the kitchen door and go into the hall. The door opened slowly against a heavy resistance. My suspicions were confirmed when I saw Walt sprawled in the hall behind the door, his hands extended towards the small pile of letters and packages that had arrived in the afternoon mail. I prised open his eyelids and discovered that he was breathing stertorously. (The Willis family always breathe stertorously through their eyelids).

After I had restored myself with a cup of coffee, I felt that perhaps I should do something to help him. I went up to the medicine cabinet in the bathroom and took a random selection of bottles down to where Walt was still lying in the hall. Levering apart his jaws, I poured a teaspoonful of the first bottle into his mouth. It was Glauber's salts and there was no apparent reaction. Proceeding in the approved scientific manner, I tried him with small doses of Milk of Magnesia, Pond's face-cream, Dettol, Bonamine and Vaseline hair tonic, in that order. The fundamental correctness of the scientific method was once again triumphantly vindicated when he coughed weakly after the dose of Vaseline hair tonic. After an-

other dose he sat up and began to return to normal, though I thought he didn't appear very grateful when I told him of the various treatments I had tried before I could arouse him. He even went so far as to say that he thought six sticks of Bonemint was more than enough for a trial dose. I pointed out that he should always try to preserve an objective spirit of scientific detachment on matters like this. It pains me to record that he appeared unconvinced by my logical approach, even though Madeleine needed nearly two full cups of hot, sweet tea before she recovered.

It didn't take too long to formulate an hypothesis which accounted for my immunity and explained the symptoms of the others. As soon as we began to list the differences in our diets, it immediately became obvious that they were suffering from that dreaded disease, lettuce deficiency. Walt is now looking forward to eating three or four big salads every week.

Later that evening they appeared none the worse for their experience, as we sat around the fire playing Scrabble, though Walt seemed curiously restless and kept dashing out of the room with every appearance of urgency. I think the way he glared at me on his way out each time was probably due to his envy at my continued immunity from the odd malady that had been rampant at Oblique House.



Mal Ashworth, 14 Westgate,
Eccleshill, Bradford 2 —=
I dare say you know that Old
Saying (I believe it was Irish
in origin anyway) which goes
"Always put off till yesterday
what you can never leave until
tomorrow" and I want to say
right here and now that is what I
have been doing with Rhyphen. And
I should probably have gone right on
doing it if today hadn't got in the way. Snacks.

Seriously though...(I just love that paragraph opening; 'Seriously though...' I always feel like taking my head off and polishing it lightly as I write it. It means, as far as I can understand it, "No quit larkin' abaht cos I'n gonna make a pronouncement which I fink is in-port-ant!") By now, of course, I don't feel at all like making an important pronouncement. What I was going to say was that H seems to have regained most of its old flavour this issue....

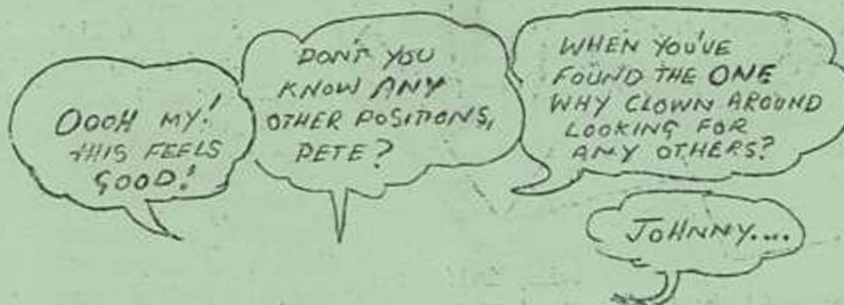
While I remember, I am having a rather bad time with Sheila ever since Ian was here. Every time the fire looks rather dull, she says "It's the sun in the window that's putting the fire out" and when I snigger my 'Old Jewish Superstition' snigger she bristles and insists it is too the sun coming in the window that is putting the fire out because Ian McAlay said so and he's a SCIENTIST. However I have managed to get my own back in what I consider a rather subtle way. I told her about Alexander Cross, the fellow who was playing about with electricity about the same time as Faraday and came up with those little living insects which he called 'Acari' apparently out of nothing. Now—said he slyly rubbing his hands—since Ian is a SCIENTIST, Sheila thinks it would be nice if he duplicated Cross's experiment, and made some little insects. Go to it, Ian. But no spiders. She doesn't like spiders. (Ten four. It looks as if Ian may have made one insect already, cos Madeleine found a butterfly in his bed the other day.)

Len Moffatt, 10202 Balcher, Downey, California
 Mike McInerney, 81 Ivy Drive, Meriden, Conn.
 Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Ave., Surbiton,
 Surrey += Both Ian's & James's tales were enjoyable, but
 my, changed days isn't it? There is James with wife and
 kids, and none of this business of getting his glasses
 all stirred up. Ah well, tarpus fungi.

Archie Mercer, 434/4 Newark Rd., N. Rockham, Lincoln
 Ken Cheslin, 18 Hew Farm Road, Bourbridge, Worcs.
 Los Garber, Box 223, Franklin & Marshall College,
 Lancaster, Pa.
 Bog Ebert, 410 E. Washington, Urbana, Illinois
 Mike Dockinger, 85 Locust Ave., Millburn, NJ
 Pat Everett, Bishop Beveridge Hc., Barrow on Soar, Leics.
 Walter Breen, 1205 Peralta Ave., Berkeley 6, California



Sid Coleman, Norman Bridge Lab. of Physics, Caltech, Pasadena, Cal. += The thought
 of you standing by your window, waiting bravely for material, gradually coming to
 the realisation that all former has ostracised you for your foolhardy defiance of
 John Campbell, Robert Heinlein and Buck Coulson, while Ian, hunched over his micro-
 scope, methodically continues his dust count (he must be well into his second million
 now) has been too much for my sensitive emotions, over which I have almost as
 little control as I do over this sentence. Therefore I send you the following:



Insights Into The Folk Art Of The North American Continent (One of a Series)

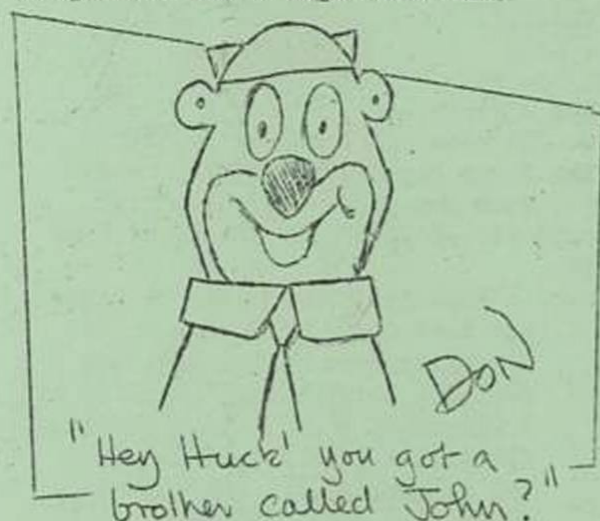
The above sequence of balloons appeared in the nationally syndicated cartoon
 strip "On Stage", Dec. 17, 1960, substantially as it appears here, except for a
 slight waviness of the lettering induced by a trembling that afflicts my
 tracing fingers whenever I am in the grip of a powerful emotion.

As a small contest to build reader
 interest in the magazine, I suggest
 that readers of H attempt to guess in
 what common everyday activity the
 characters are engaged. As a clue,
 their gender, from left to right, is
 female, male, male, female.

I will be happy to supply the correct
 answer to any enquirer upon receipt
 of a stamped self-addressed envelope.



Don Allen, 12 Briar Edge, Forest Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne 12-1-1-1
On the same day I was writing a letter of comment on H25, H26 arrived in the last post. I knew it was the last post because the postman had a bugle with him.



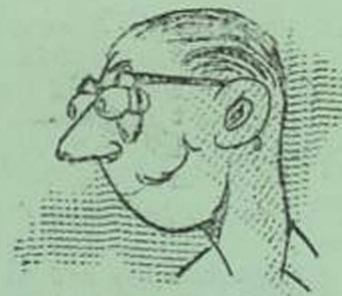
Ah yes, that notorious backer quip. After reading about it in H25 I almost did my nut trying to locate it. There is nothing more infuriating than trying to remember something you obviously know but it stubbornly refuses to come out. I can just imagine the turmoil in the Memory Dept. of the brain when this happens. Hundreds of little brain-men running along dark corridors. Some even ride bicycles along special lanes called psycho-paths. Panic and pandemonium as they frantically search dusty shelves for the missing memory card.

Bob's right in what he says about the old-time flicks. I go quite a lot, but they're not the same as the old ones. Perhaps it's all due to the vast improvements like sound and colour. Very shortly our local fleapit is to be installed with cinemascope. They say it will be from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. I can't see that it will make a great deal of difference as our local cinema is a caravan.

I was greatly surprised to see that remarkable letter from Seamus O'Bosh of the I.R. I thought he was dead! Must've been just a flesh wound then. Reading about the I.R. brings back memories of the time I was fighting against them. One in particular was one night I was doing a Border Patrol (a sort of Irish Jig). On this occasion we were expecting to be invaded any minute by a horde of screaming IRA troops. Quite unexpectedly, like, I noticed a figure carrying something through the gloom. Without hesitation, having the whole of the R.F. Regiment to back me up, I called out, "Halt, and what have you got under your arm?" The figure stopped and shouted back, "Hairs! What you got, feathers?" Needless to say he got away.



Jack Harris, "Carolyn", Lake Ave., Frinton, Essex
 I read Champion's letter with much interest and, although I feel that somebody should investigate the merits of the American automobile rear seat as opposed to that of the British models, I am afraid I can no longer deal with such fascinating subjects personally. I am Spoken For. My fiancée, Miss Susan Bourne, (the bourne from which no fan returns) prefers me to ignore such serious projects. She says she will break our engagement and my neck if I even think of such things. She does not care for brother Champion's suggestion. She is most indignant. She terms him "bloody Yankee home-wrecker" and classes him with that "nasty Berry person who jumps off wardrobes". (We are not going to have a wardrobe when we start off on this Holy Matrimony lark—but I can try jumping off a suitcase if I like.



However I would like to point out that Champion does seem to have misunderstood me. Any damn fool can perform in a Chrysler or a Plymouth. When I was expounding the merits of the Ford Anglia I was talking to the connoisseurs among rear seat lethargics. It is the cramped confinement itself which gives the old sense of achievement. Anyone who cannot at least project their lofty title into hyperspace at all has no right to take part in such an argument, let alone suggest the superiority of the American passion wagon. As Banteliff himself once said to me when casting envious eyes on a Volkswagen, "Anyone can cope in a pentecosticon. But who'd want to?" So there.



That's nice ground bait in the editorial and I do hope that everyone falls with exultant glee upon hapless Campbell and hopeless Carnell. I am almost tempted to have a go myself, but I've been out of touch for so long it wouldn't be fair. It does seem though that sf has been handicapped by the weird people in the editorial chairs of the prozines. Carnell, for instance, may suit the board of Novapubs, but he certainly doesn't suit me. When I am elected Commissar for SF and Pornography he will promptly be given the old heave ho. Ted is a nice guy but he is a bank clerk manque and has no more place on an sf magazine than Ken Slater. Vin Clarko could do an infinitely better job: he has the only fundamental talent an sf editor needs—fundamental good taste and an instinctive liking for good science fiction.

And Stateside sf! Lord, just look at what we've had to put up with. Campbell with diometrics and Palmer with deroses: Cold with his yearning for the wonb...hell, the whole boiling lot could be classified between 'slightly gaga' and 'completely stankers'.

We do of course have only one minor problem left before dragging them off to the gallows. Just who the hell will we choose to replace them. We have all those scrawled ranks of true and dedicated science fiction lovers, each with a Fine Mind nosing snugly beneath his beanie. Are these the replacements? The hell they are. Look at them. Every single one of them nutty as a fruitcake in his own inimitable way. Almost all of them have already found out that they can't write or plot well enough

(Ct'l. at foot of next page.)

George Spencer, 8302 Lombybrook Lane, Chevy Chase 15, Md., USA. -- Jud in case this letter is full of misspellings and typos and generally incoherent, it's because I was at a party last night. Lest you jump to conclusions, let me assure you it's not what you're thinking. You see, I met a fellow there who professes to be a witch doctor and when I scoffed he tried to put a spell on me. As a result I have to type this letter by leaping from key to key. I'm still wondering how to stick the envelope.



Seriously though, I've been inactive for so long I decided to rouse myself a bit and renew the contacts I've let dangle. How are you going to carry on Hyphen without Harris, anyhow? What's happening, another Ice Age coming that I don't know about? If this goes on I may not even send you a copy of FREEBLE. Come to think of it, I couldn't send you a copy anyhow, since I don't publish that fanzine. Nobody does. Things are getting worse, aren't they?

I'm getting set to visit with my parents to New England, and will be passing through New York just about the time of the Detention. That's the way I do things. I blanch at the thought of following road maps again, though. Those things make no bust a spleen. (I have a handy spleen-patch kit.) You ever notice how they conveniently change roads a wee bit so they can fit in the names of towns, and put little side roads in deceptive bold relief so you think they're ten-lane super-highways? Taxaco have been kind enough to print their maps on no-glare paper. You can't tell what State you're in, but you don't get eyestrain. I was reading an article the other day that said that map-makers used to have a trick to fool rival map-makers who copied their maps. They'd stick in a couple of towns that didn't exist, and if they showed up on a rival's map, they sued. One of these fake towns was, I believe, Weyauwega, Wisconsin. Don't tell Bloch that, or he'll feel bad. (I'd heard ^{the story} of directory compilers, and if they've put in imaginary streets and houses in "Weyauwega" I suppose that would explain how Bloch came into "existence". But how to account for all those articles and stories by him? It seems a desperate way to protect a magazine's copyright.)

(Chuck Harris, et al.) to make the grade as pro-authors, but in their secret hearts every goddam one of them is completely and utterly convinced that he'd be a crazy success if only he could get his little paws on a pro-editorship and Show The Bestards. But would Wansborough or Bennett really be an improvement on Camell?

Walt, you follow me? You do understand that there are only two possible choices remaining and trust completely in my fine impartial judgement. We have been friends for so long and you must know that I am completely unbiassed and moderate in all my views but, well honestly Walt....you do have that odd taste for that dreary Van Vogt stuff and you know it wouldn't be policy to run 20-page editorials every issue.

Much has happened since I wrote the previous page. The Building Society finally decided to grant me a mortgage and all hell broke loose. I've been juggling with solicitors, agents, wallpaperers, insurance men and Christ knows who else. I have signed a solemn promise not to open a beershop or run a disorderly house and to grant free access to the Earl of Pendrine (does he still exercise jus primae noctis?) & his heirs and assigns if they wish to excavate in my backyard. Also I will not erect billboards or unsightly outbuildings keep pigs or cattle. I don't know if I shall still be allowed to vote Socialist or even stand at the first floor window and pee on the people passing in the street but I'm even willing to bet that'll be banned too. (Just as long as you haven't undertaken not to re-enter frndon.....)

The wedding will be on Sept. 9th. Complimentary tickets will be issued later, if you would care to witness the spectacle of me grovelling in front of the altar. (I'm tearing up my bound file of The Freethinker for confetti.)

Redd Boggs 2209 Highland Place NE, Minneapolis 21 --
 as for your game of naming or describing a single character in well-remembered sf yarns such as 'Nightfall', yes, it's hard to do...and one is forced to fall back on cartooned characters such as Giles Habibula and Blackie Duquesne. But in Nightfall I can make a stab at describing a couple of characters, at least to the extent of naming their profession. (Yeah, astronomer and journalist: but the point remains, it wasn't characterisation that made the story memorable.)... It is hard to believe that EPR was ever in America. He must not have looked at a phone directory. All his Americans have Saxon names and what was that fine American girl in 'Call Him Dead' named—Penelope Whittington? Something like that. My god. As I recall there wasn't a single name in the novel that would be out of place in Cheshire except that of one person referred to though not presented.



Thomas Perry, 1130 Garfield St., Lincoln 2, Nebraska
 Ellis Mills, Carswell AFB, Texas

Martin Holzman, 11 Lawrence Ave., Melville, NY--
 Although I voted for Nixon, I have come to the conclusion that it might not be too bad with Kennedy as president. At least he should help our missile program.

(Sorry people, and Peter, but this next letter is real old. The first paragraph refers to a remark in the 24 editorial about checking for blanks by analysing the aerodynamic characteristics of an unprinted sheet flying out of the duplicator, as opposed to a printed one.)

Peter Mabey, 10 Wallington Square, Cheltenham, Glos.-- I've been looking out for technical data on square aeroplanes for you, but as you remark it is scanty. A series of test reports by Convair may be of value: "Aerodynamic Experimental Investigation of Low Aspect-Ratio Untapered Organic Semi-rigid Surfaces, with Various Types of Coating". The summary in 'Index Aer nauticus' (abstract 765/5413) says that the basic constructional material was a preparation of wheat flour and various alloying substances, suitably heat-treated, and a surface coating of a fatty material on one side covered with a tapecoat which for most of the series of tests consisted of a sugary fruit extract. (The reason for testing these particular classes of material is not explained clearly, and is presumably related to some highly classified project.) It was found that, almost independent of launching conditions, these bodies would land with the coated surface down in 90% of cases; and that there was a ground effect making the percentage rise to about 99% if the ground was covered by a loose layer of sand or dirt. This could be your solution—by using similar materials for printing if you would be able to virtually guarantee that the printed side would fall face down, so exposing any blank sheets to view at once. It is true that legibility would suffer, but you would at least know which side your bread was buttered.

In McLaughlin & Hantz an interesting application of the Schrodinger wave equation was mentioned, but the application to pornography is almost unexplored. It has been suggested that the function 'psi' should in this application be referred to as 'phi' but...a preliminary examination of the salient features shows that the function omega double-dot ((ω)) should be prominent. If you could provide a supply of data I would consider the preparation of a paper on the subject. The advance of the frontier of science is a cause to which one's leisure should be willingly given.

The Big Time + The Mind Spider & Other Stories, by Fritz Leiber. Ace Double. 35¢

Fritz Leiber's thought processes have always seemed to me to have the alien character of the man in the Sturgeon story who threw the girl at the fan, and Bob Shaw once remarked that they frightened him. But offhand the only example I could call to mind was the story about the great computer with nothing inside it but a fat man in his undervest drinking beer, so I welcomed this collection as an opportunity to isolate and define this disturbing quality of the Leiber mind.

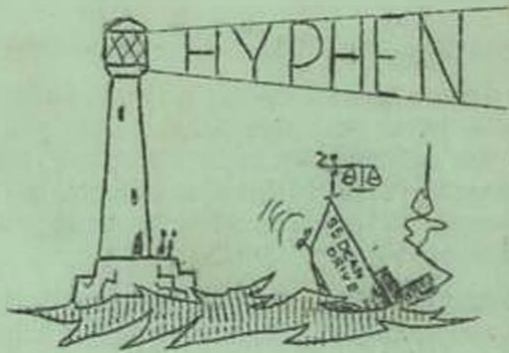
Unfortunately the most frightening thing about The Big Time is the fact that it was awarded a Hugo. It reads just as it was dolloped out in Galaxy, a pretentious farraige festooned with flyblown fragments of Culture. In fact in a way it reads worse, because in this Ace-about-face format you have no warning that the story is coming to an end. The narrative hook on which you have been dragged through the previous 128 pages—the raison d'être of the Great Change War—suddenly catches on a half-submerged allegory and straightens out into a mere loose end, leaving you floundering up & down on a projecting shoal of The Mind Spider. This is the only disadvantage of the "69" format of Ace books, apart of course from your not being able to carry them around in public: could we not have a special Intellectual Snob edition with two back covers?

To be fair, though, I must admit that for me The Big Time suffers from incurable Calcutitis. It had a wonderful title but it never lived up to it any more than to Gold's build-up (what could?) and much of my annoyance with it is sheer disappointment. If you didn't read it in Galaxy you might like it. Three of the stories in The Mind Spider, for instance, deal with the same Change War set-up and I found them quite enjoyable. Apart from a gimmicky short that leaves The Haunted Future, a sort of extrapolated Sweden where everyone is going nutty as a result of too much fruit-cake, metaphorically speaking, and the title story about a giant alien telepathic spider imprisoned in Antarctica. I just love stories about giant alien telepathic spiders imprisoned in Antarctica and I think it alone is worth your money. What magazine can you buy with one good story in it? It's the only one of this lot though that contains what I thought of as the characteristic Leiber quality, so it looks as if either I or Wollheim were mistaken in regarding this as a representative selection of Leiber's work.

Adventures on Other Planets, edited by Don Wollheim. Ace pb. 35¢

Most theme anthologies trample their victims into the ground until the reader wanders away distastefully, but the theme of this one is large enough to stand it. If these five widely different stories have anything also in common but excellence it is a plea for co-operation among intelligent beings, a welcome corrective to the psychopathic xenophobia fostering elsewhere in the field. If an alien spaceship lands in your backyard, hide your Heinleins and bring this out.

I thought the best was Dec's The Obligation, in which the delicate theme of a quasi-sexual relationship with an e.t. is handled with all the taste and assurance of Brown's classic Correspondence Course—you remember, the one where the lonely widower voluntarily enters into a symbiotic relationship with a semiparasitic life form. In Williams's Sound of Bugles psionic L. signs rescue a kidnapped Earth child...nicely written. Simak's Ogre is poor Simak, but that's still pretty good and I suspect parts of it were designed to appeal to Campbell's sense of humour, which lets most of the rest of us out. There is a typically competent Leinster and then the original magazine version of Van Vogt's Bull. I still like it. Van may not be able to write for toffee, but goshaw that ol' sense of wonder is running out of his ears. The stories are from Startling 49, 52 & 54 and ASF 41 & 48. Good buy.



HYPHEN 27
March 1961

From W. Willis & I. Mcanlay
170 Upper Warda Rd.,
Belfast 4, N. Ireland

PRINTED MATTER
(Reduced Rate)

Eavesdroppings

SO I ONLY SENT A POSTCARD MENTIONING THE FACT THAT I SOMETIMES SENT HIM A POSTCARDIT WAS LIKE BEING HIT BY A PALE BLUE THUNDERBOLT.....THE ROLL OF ROBE WAS PRECEDED BY A SUMMER.....MY PSYCHIATRIST IS A GOOD ID-SHRINKER.....SHE WENT OUT WITH A TV ACTOR BUT DIDN'T LIKE HIS VERTICAL HOLD..... WHENEVER I HEAR A KNOCK AT MY DOOR I ALWAYS THINK I'M THE LAST MAN ON EARTH.....OF COURSE I'M NOT GOING BALD, I'M JUST GETTING TALLER THAT'S ALL..... JULES VERNE AND HGWELLS AND R L RAMPORPE WERE STILL WRITING THEIR CLASSIC MASTERPIECES BACK IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIESHE'S A VERY SERIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE TYPE BUT I SUPPOSE THAT'S ALL RIGHT FOR A BRIDGE BUILDER.....ADDING AN ISLAND OF SURVIVING HUMANITY WOULD BE LIKE SEXING UP ROBINSON CRUSOE.....I DON'T EAT TOO MUCH —JUST ENOUGH TO KEEP MYSELF ALIVE.... SOME OF US FEEL THAT THAT'S TOO MUCH..... HE SAID WAIT BY THE ELEVATOR AND I'LL BRING THE ETCHINGS DOWN.....SHE WANTED US TO LIVE IN SIN EVEN AFTER WE WERE MARRIED .BY DID WE HAVE TO BUY LOUISIANA WHEN WE GOT THE REST OF THE STATES FOR NOTHING?... ..THAT'S THE WAY IT CRUMBLES, COOKIE-WISEWHEN I TOLD HIM HE SHOULD STRIKE OUT IN FANDOM ON HIS OWN HE CAME OVER AND ATE ALL THE CRABAPPLES OFF OUR TREE.....HAVE A CUP AND SAUCER OF TEA, JAMES.....IT'S THE ONLY INTRIGUE WITHOUT A MOTIF.....I DON'T SEE WHAT A FAN CAN DO THESE DAYS TO HELP SCIENCE FICTION EXCEPT GO ROUND THE NEWSSTANDS PUTTING ALL THE SF MAGS AT THE BACK.....YOU MAY CALL IT SLEEP-WALKING BUT I CALL IT PROMISCUITY.....ON OUR WEDDING NIGHT MY HUSBAND PROPOSED SOMETHING THAT EVEN MY OWN BROTHER WOULDN'T HAVE DONE.....THE RAIN WAS COMING DOWN LIKE MOLTEN HAIL.....HE IS REALLY A TRUE FAN BUT IS HANDICAPPED BY MONGOLISM.....IF OIFIG AN PEUIST REALLY DOESN'T MEAN GENTLEMEN I DID A VERY SILLY THING IN THE POST OFFICE THIS MORNING....archie mercer, waw 2, miko deckinger 2, don allen 3, leo brett, james white 3, larry shaw, bob shaw, james thurber 5, jack lemon, greg banford, madalaine willis, andy young, chuck harris 2

2162 Hillside Ave.
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Calif.

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BELFAST
15 MARCH
1961

