

INSPIRATION

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

This is the issue of INSP that was to be the best yet to disgrace a FAPA mailing. Just this once there was going to be plenty of time and no lack of subjects about which to write. Even edges and other trimmings were planned. Yes, this was supposed to be quite an issue of INSP.

But such was not to be. I'm moving at just about the time I'd intended to do most of the work. It seems that the army wants to send me to college. This is being written at home on a short furlough. I only have 4 days in Michigan, and two of them are gone already. Frankly, I have quite a few other things to do besides cutting stencils, so not a great deal of time is going to be spent on this stuff. 'Tis only the 17th of July now, so I may get a chance to add to whatever I can write now. Or I may get someone else to cut stencils for me. That remains to be seen. The space for the address is being left vacant until such time as I find out what my future location will be.

As you have probably already guessed, this is being composed directly on the stencil, with speed taking preference over accuracy. So there are undoubtedly quite a few typographical and grammatical errors, for which there are no apologies. Also, I left Alabama in such a hurry that I forgot to bring along any correction fluid. So any errors I do make will not be corrected.

SERVICE FAN ACTIVITY

POGORUS is wrong. There is definitely nothing to the statement that -- "men in the armed services are lost not only to fandom but to the whole science-fiction-fantasy field." So far as I'm concerned that's practically an insult. Counting this one, I've had INSPIRATION in 5 of the 6 mailings since I've been in uniform. And I had everything written for the issue I did miss, but didn't get the chance to cut the stencils. The contents may generally be skimpy and of poor quality, but they were that way before my army career so the army can't be blamed.

If interestd, it isn't too difficult for a fan to continue activity after enlistment. He has to depend on help from other fans, but that help is forthcoming in every case. Ackerman, Rothman, and many others keep active. True, we keep pretty busy -- but fan activity is perfect as a hobby in this case, as it's quite different from the routine business of learning how to kill Germans and Japs. If inducted, Rus, try to continue activity. It will be easier than you imagine.

THOSE "DRESSED-UP WESTERNS"

(Note: This was written and dummied some time ago, so I'm going ahead with even margins even tho it doesn't match the rest of this stuff.)

So Speer wants a definition of a "dressed-up western" science-fiction story? Definitions are tricky, as they can be interpreted in different ways, but I'll make a stab at it. How about this one -- substituting the word "modern" for "western" so that other types of popular fiction, such as detective and adventure, may be included as well.

"A 'dressed-up modern' science-fiction story is one in which incidentals to the story could be changed to present day equivalents, without substantially changing the plot."

Incidentals include such things as characters, weapons, conveyances, and anything else that differs only in type from that used today. To be substantially changed a story plot would have to be changed almost completely.

For an example of a story which is not changed greatly by transference to modern horse-opera terms we have the standard space-opera, plot A, variation 2b. The spaceship Stardust, en route from Venus to Mars with a valuable cargo of xvythenyl dust, is set upon by pirates armed with theta ray projectors. After a fierce battle, the pirates escape with the loot to their base on Asteroid CCXVI, where they are trailed by an officer of the Space Patrol who singlehandedly captures the stronghold.

Familiar enough, isn't it? In "western" the story would go this way --. The afternoon stage, enroute from Snake Head City to Dry Gulch with a shipment of gold, is robbed by outlaws carrying six-shooters. After a battle, the outlaws get the gold and run to their hideout in Dead Man's canyon, where they are trailed by "Red" Silvers, the local sheriff, who captures the entire band after a gun fight. The same plot, of course, has its equivalent in detective and adventure forms.

AMAZING is, naturally, the worst offender when it comes to printing stories which are but "moderns" disguised by a futuristic setting. But AMAZING isn't the only offender, ASTOUNDING itself occasionally lapsing enough to use one of them. Indeed, the worst offender I can think of for dressing up an adventure as science-fiction is C. L. Moore and some stories she has had in ASTOUNDING. While excellently written, they could as easily have taken place in Africa, South America, the Kentucky hills, or similar uncivilized sections of this world of ours.

The "pure" science-fiction story is distinguished from the "dressed-up" version in that the plot depends entirely upon science. That does not necessarily mean that the "pure" story is superior to the other in every case, altho all real "classics" are the "pure" type. Indeed, many of the most hackneyed types are of the "pure" variety.

An example is the new invention type of story. That is almost invariably true science-fiction, as nothing can very well be substituted for a new invention. There is one important exception to this rule, and that is the "mad scientist with new invention tries to rule the world" story. Substitute politician for mad scientist and propaganda methods for new inventions, and the story changes from imaginative fiction to current history.

I doubt very much, Harry, if the political status of Andorra has changed because of the war. After all, it's in the Pyrennes between France and Spain, and so wouldn't be in as much dangar as countries next to the more agresive members of the axis. Nor is Luxemburg so small. It's much bigger than a lot of the European vest-pocket nations. Wonder if anyone can tell me what's happened to these 3 -- Liechtenstein in the Alps, San Marino in the middle of Italy, and Monaco, home of Monte Carlo?

A TALE OF TWO STORIES

The two best stories in the Wollheim Pocketbook of Science-fiction have an interesting and similar parallel. First published at about the same time, both were largely responsible for popularizing a certain type of story. The two stories are "Twilight" and "A Martian Odyssey."

The "Odyssey" was Weinbaum's first story and one of his greatest. More important, it is the example referred to when the "Weinbaum" style is mentioned. "A Martian Odyssey" was almost solely responsible for the deluge of Extra-terrestrial life stories which followed, doing away at one stroke with the older custom of peopling other worlds with essentially human characters. The Martians described by Weinbaum were all the more interesting and likeable for their complete unhumaness. Previously, the only serious attempt at depicting alien creatures had been in the "horror" type of s-f adventure story -- none too popular at any time and very much overdone. All that was changed by Weinbaum until today no author with the exception of Burroughs even dares to suggest that inhabitants of other worlds are even remotely manlike.

"Twilight" too was responsible for an entire new type of s-f writing, but along different lines. Like the "Odyssey", it was a first story by a new writer -- the Stuart style being so different from the Campbell that for all purposes Stuart could be considered a new author. But whereas Weinbaum popularized alien characterization, Stuart popularized a new writing style. Previously, "atmosphere" writing, so far as imaginative fiction is concerned, was considered the sole right of fantasy and weird. But "Twilight" is science-fiction, and there can be little doubt that it was both popular and imitated.

There is one more point of similarity between the two stories. Both were practically plotless, proving once and for all that "plot" is largely an over-rated quality demanded usually by the cheaper pulps. The "Odyssey" was mostly just a description of varied alien cultures; with just a thread of action to hold them together; "Twilight" was a description of the future, depending upon a successfully held atmosphere of despair. Both were important enough to be rated as "classics."

ROCKETS

Names usually associated with science-fiction are to be found just about everywhere these days. Recently Wollheim had an article in FLYING ACES on the future of rocket planes, and Willey Ley had an article in AIR PROGRESS on the stratosphere, where rockets were also mentioned. The Ley article, so far as rockets were concerned, dealt only with them as a means for research. But the Wollheim article considers rockets from all angles, and comes to some rather surprising conclusions.

According to Wollheim, rockets will be used mostly for cargo, as humans could never stand the acceleration. Just why they couldn't, the author neglects to say. Seems to me that all that is needed is a valve of some kind to control the flow of the combustible fuel into the ignition chamber. Thus, the more fuel used per second, the greater the thrust. The same principle is used on the ordinary internal combustion engine, and keeps your automobile from running at top speed at all times.

Nor does Wollheim seem to think much of the use of wings for added lift and control while the rocket is still in thick atmosphere. Wings, at least small ones, would seem to be the answer to control of rockets, and they wouldn't interfere while the ship was in the upper atmosphere or in space. It seems like a waste of fuel to depend on auxiliary rocket jets for lift and control.

Incidentally, it has been fairly reliably reported that a German military jet propulsion plane has been captured. Jet propulsion is the first step toward a true rocket ship.

ON SLANS AND SUCH

Credit Al Ashley with the most humorous piece of writing in the last mailing. It was one of those subtle bits of writing, designed to make the unwary reader believe that it was in earnest. Being one of those discerning souls who are able to see such things in their true light, I found it most delightful, and laughed for quite some time over it. The bit of writing I mean is, of course, the one about "Slan Center."

It was written so subtly that it even had me wondering for a while whether or not it was supposed to be taken seriously. To tell the truth I'm still a little in doubt. Al might be serious, but if he is there is still quite a bit of unconscious humor in the article.

Why fans, of all hobbyists, should consider themselves intellectually superior to everyone else is something of a mystery. I've met a few other fans, including the Ashleys, but I have yet to see anything remarkable about their group intelligence. Sure, I enjoy talking to other fans. I enjoy talking to anyone with similar common interests to my own -- and that includes a lot of people who have never even heard of fandom and to whom "slan" would sound like double-talk.

This may be treason, but to me fandom is just a hobby, not a career.

RACIAL AGGRESSIVENESS

Methinks SUSPRO is wrong in saying that such peaceful minded peoples as the Chinese and Jews have managed to survive wonderfully. The Chinese, for the first time in centuries have been forced to become a warring nation, and have a stronger nationalism now than at any time since the Khans. Prior to the Japanese incidents, China was but a loosely knit organization of slumbering separate states. The only reason there was still a China was because none of her neighbors was much, if any, more aggressive than herself. If any nation was stagnant and practically dead, it was pre-war China. Chinese progress has apparently ceased centuries before. That is what a peaceful culture will do. But the new, fighting, China is going to be one of the world powers after this war is finished.

As for the Jews, there is probably no stronger fighting race anywhere in the world. Where is there another people who could have survived centuries of suppression and lack of a homeland, who could have clung to religious and racial customs and characteristics as well as the Jews have done?

All of which gets pretty close to the argument which has been going on in and about YHOS, and to which I have nothing in particular to add. Besides, the remark in INSP a couple of issues ago which started this was supposed to be concerned with individuals rather than races.

PARODIES

In HORIZONS, HWJr wonders why he can enjoy a great piece of literature, and still enjoy a burlesk of that same piece of literature. It's really simple. To be successful, a parody must be of a great or at least a well known work. Otherwise it wouldn't be recognized as a parody. Only true greatness, really, can be ridiculed successfully by means of parody.

It works the same whether it is a poem, story, painting, or piece of music. One of the funniest scenes I've ever seen in a movie was the Marx brothers version of Pagliacci in a picture a few years ago.

So, fans, next time you set out to write a parody or burlesk of something better be sure that the original possesses the required quality of familiarity or greatness.

THINGS AND STUFF

Still at home, but it is now July 19, two days since I started this. A short time remains before train time, so one more stencil is going to get filled up, mostly with stuff of no importance whatever. With INSP that is nothing new.

A couple of times recently, JWC's editorials in ASTOUNDING have mentioned the industrial progress which is certain to follow immediately after the war. It does seem likely that the few years immediately following final victory are to see the greatest period of industrial progress in history. Always provided that inflation doesn't cause such an economic mess that it will take those years to recover. For inflation is not only coming, it's already here.

Why is it that war is such a stimulant to progress? For one thing, during time of war there is more incentive than during time of peace. Until man realizes that there is just as much reason to strive for better things in time of peace, such will be the case. At any rate it seems certain that many new inventions and improvements on old ones are fully developed and just await the time for release to the public.

These days, almost every factory in the country is busy producing goods quite different than the usual products of peace. This change in type of product is certain to have an effect on future manufacturing methods. The automotive industry is bringing mass production to the aircraft industry -- and is itself learning new methods of precision. The result is certain to have a great effect on future automobiles and airplanes alike. And so it is with almost everything we use.

Somebody ought to tell Norman Stanley that words are supposed to be hyphenated between syllables, not at whatever point the word happens to be split when the end of the line is reached. Eyes which are used to standard methods of word-splitting are inclined to rebel at observing Stanley's original methods.

Still on FAN-TODS -- unlike Stanley, I'd welcome that moon rocket trip. Afraid I just don't have enough love of life to turn it down. Anyone can live a life, but how many can ride the first rocket to the moon? Nor is that the result of a year-and-a-half in the army. I'd have welcomed the chance even before that.

Hope some kind soul supplies quotations from the missing issues of ASTOUNDING for "Yesterday's 10,000 Years." The AST of '34 and early '35 was the best ever seen so far as readers columns go.

I'm using some of those cellophane coated stencils which Speer dislikes so much, and they seem to be turning out rather well. I used a couple of them last time and had a few left over. Far be it from me to buy new stencils before the old ones are used completely. So far I haven't tried anything but a typewriter on them. My stylus work (on other stencils) last issue was pretty bad, something that surprised me. I've used a stylus several times on army work, with generally good results. Anyhow, no stylus this time, unless I use it to inscribe my address on the as yet vacant space on page one.

If you still have some of those cellophane stencils, Juffus, try the method they suggest for a heavy copy. That seems to work best with a portable at least.

Which brings me perilously close to the bottom of the page. Whether any more will be added to these 5 pages I don't, as yet, know. I'm going to try, but doubt if I'll be able to cut any more stencils myself. But I've set one record this time. This is undoubtedly the messiest typing job ever seen in the history of FAPA.

LAST MINUTE SECTION

August 9, quite a while since the last stencil was cut. In the intervening time I've been kept busy moving around, finally ending up at the same place and doing the same job as before! I was sent down to Auburn, Alabama, for classification for college training, but was rejected on the grounds that my education wasn't sufficient for an advanced course and I was too old for a basic course. I'm not particularly unhappy over the results, as I feel that my present work is more important towards the winning of the war than college training would be. So it looks as the fandom in army colleges will have to be left to Bilty and some of the others.

While at Auburn I met my first New York Futurian, quite an experience for a mid-westerner. Futurian was Cyril Kornbluth, at Auburn for the same reason as I. Only difference was that he made the grade, and a couple of hours after I met him he was on his way to CCNY, just a few blocks from his home! Just one of the unbelievable things that can happen. I, who am left in the hot and not-too-sunny south can only envy him.

Don't know exactly what I'd expected of Kornbluth, whom I and many others consider one of the best of the fantasy writers, but I found him to be a thoroly pleasant and likable person. He'd never heard of me, but pretended that he had anyhow, and we spent a couple of hours discussing everything under the sun, including fantasy and fandom.

Had to disappoint Kornbluth in one thing tho. He wanted to see some fanzines, but I'd left all mine home, and the only thing I had along were the first 5 IIRP stencils. That was as bad as nothing at all. Incidentally, Kornbluth is about the first fan I know of besides myself who thinks the stories in ASTOUNDING are improving!

A card from Speer asks if I'd be interested in opposing a proposal to exempt all members of FAPA in the service from payment of dues for the duration. That I would. There's no reason why fans stationed in the U.S. shouldn't be required to meet all membership requirements, both activity and financial. Army pay is easily sufficient for payment of dues and financing of a publication. In the matter of time, the service fan is at no disadvantage, considering the number of hours put in by your conscientious war-worker. The only thing service fans need help on is in the mimeographing, and possibly the stenciling, of a publication. If those who are still still civilians will help, those of us in the service should have no difficulty in meeting requirements.

The most puzzling thing, to me, about this dues exemption proposal is that it was originated by two members in the army! And neither of them is a private. Next, I suppose those guys will want a pension!

Don't know yet how the balloting came out, but I hope that the proposal suspending activity requirements for service fans for the duration didn't pass. There's no reason for it, and there's even less reason for the dues proposal.

STILL LAST MINUTE SECTION

August 10 now. I was interrupted before getting very much done last night, just one of the troubles of writing a fapazine in an army orderly room. I intend to finish tonight and get this in the mails.

Seems to have been a let-down in fan activity and correspondence lately. I only hope that it is due to the summer weather and not to any such thing as a long heralded decline of fandom. There is usually some slowing up of activity during the summer, but scarcely as much as this year.

Were it not for FAPA, I doubt if fandom could long continue. Such slight activity as takes place independently is not enough to keep things going. A hobby needs something to sustain interest, and the quarterly FAPA mailing does just that.

This is the 3rd typewriter to be used on this issue, something of a record considering its size. I hated to switch from elite to pica type, but the only elite typer available here is one which doesn't strike hard enough for stencil cutting. So the typer I'm finally using is a Royal exactly like my own except for type size. Page 6 was done on an even better model Royal portable, while the name and address on the first page was done with the company's only elite typer. It was then I found that it wouldn't cut stencils.

Army language is often a fascinating subject, bearing about the same relationship to English as the "jive" talk of the younger generation. But the best phrases are unfortunately unprintable. Such abbreviated forms as "TS" and "SNAFU" reach print occasionally, but never with the correct translation. Those 4 lettered Anglo-Saxon words are just never written except by small boys on back alley fences or in mens lavatories -- but they are spoken by almost everyone. And the army doesn't seem to be able to get along without them.

I've gone up a couple of grades since last issue, now rating as Technical Sergeant. Wonder if there's anyone else in fandom, outside of those holding commissions, who can top 5 stripes? I know of at least one other T/Sgt, overseas, among the ranks of fandom.

Nearing the end of a page and of another issue of IMSP. I don't know how long the fortunes of war will allow this publication to appear, but it will be continued as long as possible. It looks now as tho I'll be able to make the next mailing, tho the one following that seems doubtful. The future will tell more about that.

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 APOLOGIES
 TO LYNN FOR
 THE PAPER.
 INCIDENTALLY,
 WHY CAN'T
 I CUT PRETTY
 STENCILS USING
 THE FIRST
 FEW PAGES
 HERE? JFS

Lynn