

# Inspiration

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Address at time of writing -- T/Sgt Lynn Bridges, 833rd Chemical Co. AO, Camp Sibert, Alabama. As usual, that's subject to change without notice, and a later address, if any, will be found in the Fantasy Amateur.

I'm getting a break again in being able to do this at home rather than to depend on the limited facilities of an army typewriter and orderly room. I have about a week in Michigan this time, which should be sufficient time to turn out a few pages, despite the fact that there are many other things to be done in these few days. Hope to make a trip across the state to visit the Battle Creek settlement before I have to move south again. These furloughs seem to come at opportune times, as this is the third INSP of the last five to be done either wholly or in part at home. This is being written later than usual, (November 4, and I'm just starting) but I have hopes of making the mailing regardless.

Just for the record, this concludes the second year of INSP, during which time only one issue has been missed. All but the first issue were written while I was in the service of the Army of the United States, proving once and for all that such service doesn't necessarily stop activity -- for fans stationed on this side of the oceans. With this issue comes a complete conversion to the rambling type of publication, with nothing written beforehand, no subject titles, and no advance planning. I'm just putting stencils in the typer and pecking away, and have no idea as to the sort of subject matter to appear here, the number of pages to be done, etc. Any frills having to do with neatness and legibility are being sacrificed in the interests of speed. And so to work:

Trudy presents quite a mess of controversial subjects in NUCLEUS, so one or two of them will be taken up while I'm in a controversial mood. First and foremost is the negro problem, which has a place in s-f because of its relation to future sociological problems. I'm a northerner, used to the theoretical treatment of negroes as equals, but for almost two years have been in the south where such is not the case. As a result, I've been able to observe and compare the two opposing systems of dealing with negroes.

Ask a southerner about the caste treatment of negroes as an inferior race and he will likely shrug his shoulders, admit that equality is nice in theory, and then give the following reasons why equality will not work out in actual practice.

1. Whites in this country have been conditioned to treat the dark races as inferiors, and such conditioning is hard to break.
2. By continuing the caste system, everything is made more convenient for all concerned.
3. That the southern negro isn't as well educated as the northern, and couldn't accept or be trusted with equality.

Seems to me that this question of racial equality comes pretty close to being one of the things we're fighting a war over, and that the only way to prove to other nations that we are sincere in our war aims of liberation of subjugated peoples is to do something about our own racial mess. That can only be done by mass education, of both southern whites and negroes. Nor would this be confined to the south, for whether we admit it or not, the same problem ex-

ists in the north to a more limited extent, as proved by the recent riots in Detroit and Harlem.

It can't be denied that the southern system makes things more convenient, for the whites. But I doubt if even the most stubborn rebel can reconcile that system with justice. None that I have talked to could do it, and I've had quite a few arguments on the subject with southern soldiers and with civilians. One main defense of the system seems to be that southerners actually believe the negro to be inferiors. I doubt if this is the case, based on the number of intelligent negroes I've met in both north and south. Altho given equality by national law, equal rights for negroes are ignored in southern states. If we are to have true racial equality in this country -- and we should have if only as an example to other nations -- then that equality should extend everywhere, not only in voting.

Separate schools for negroes is not the answer, nor such things as separate cars on trains, seating negroes at the rear of busses and street cars, denying negroes admittance to theaters, or any other of the million and one other restrictions the south imposes for the crime of being born some color other than white. When we in this country base racial superiority on color, how can we honestly deny the right of some other nation to base it on some other standard, even such ridiculous standards as those set up by Schickelgruber & Co.?

As for intermarriage (crossbreeding is a better word) between whites and negroes, the south is far ahead of the north in that respect! Louisiana is especially noted for the number of mullattoes it has, and other southern states have their share. Apparently their part-white ancestry is ignored or quietly overlooked, and they are under the same restrictions as negroes, despite the fact that some of the "finest" blood of the south is in their veins. That, if the average rebel is to be believed, should make them at least the superior of the northerner, or danyankee!

Now, switching to something lighter, a few words on the subject of football vs baseball. My experience with both is confined to sandlot "pick-up" games, except for a few weeks when I was short center on a softball team, so I'm about equally familiar with both. Track is the only sport in which I was ever represented on a school team.

The fundamental difference between football and baseball is in the degree of participation. Football is the ultimate in team games, and every player is a participant on every play. Baseball is more individualized, and the interest always centers on one or two of the players. In the field, the only ones who have something to do on every play are the pitcher and catcher -- which is bound to make things a bit boring for the rest unless they have an interest and liking of the game. It's hard to keep alert when most of the time there is little to do. At bat, only the batter and baserunners are actively playing, which again is conducive to disinterest for the casual player.

So far as audience is concerned, football is undoubtedly the more spectacular of the two, and most likely to appeal to those who know little of the game. The fundamental principle, moving the ball across the line at the end of the field over the opposition of the other team, is easily understood by anyone. But for those with a knowledge of the game, baseball offers as much if not more than football. In baseball it is more the struggle of the individual, and interest centers mainly on the batter and pitcher. For the true sports fan, this probably offers more and better drama than football, where a single play often takes a team the full length of the field, changing the entire complexion of the game in a few seconds.

I have no preference myself. I'd as soon see a home run as a touchdown pass, a several run rally as a sustained march down the gridiron, or an infield double play as a blocked punt.

Still on subjects suggested by NUCLEUS. Trudy seems to be furnishing a lot of the inspiration for INSP this time. Subject for now is that of religion, which I've left alone before this.

Ye writer hasn't been to church for at least 10 years, and is willing to freely admit it. Churchgoing, as I see it, is no guarantee against sin, and a non-churchgoer is not necessarily a sinner. I'm not an atheist, but none of the pictures of God presented by the churches quite fit my own impression. The church demands too much of a concrete symbol of God, and of Christianity. Christ, in my opinion, is much more believable when considered as a man than as the actual son of God. For that matter, I doubt if any evidence can be found that Christ, himself, ever intended to have himself represented as more than man, and believed himself to be the son of God only as all men are sons of God. Thru the centuries, the church has built up its legends, until today many of his teachings have been almost completely reversed.

I'm not an atheist, as that brings up the unanswerable question of why. Why is the universe, and why is man? The easiest answer is that of an almighty God, and that answer I will accept in lieu of a better one. But my picture of God, like Trudy's, is hardly that of a haloed patriarch. It is more that of a mental power, so superior to man as to be beyond his understanding. As for his physical representation, I have none. Nor have I any need for one.

I can't accept man as the accredited inheritors of the universe, as does the church. Man, it seems far more likely, is but an insignificant crawling insect who cannot even conquer one speck of atomic dust in a remote corner of one galaxy. I even accept the theory that man is an accident whose existence in no way influences the universe as a whole.

But there is one supreme God, of that I'm certain. And it is to Him that we owe the qualities of conscience and intelligence, the two qualities in which man is superior to all other animals on this planet.

Like Trudy, I now consider FAPA to be fandom, and have little interest in fandom outside of FAPA.

UNKNOWN is gone, and its passing is cause for sorrow. During its all too brief span of existence it left an unforgettable mark on the fantasy field and upon fandom. It was the first fantasy magazine I ever read regularly. Up to the time UNK first appeared I'd considered fantasy and weird in a class with horror tales. But UNK showed me stories of an imaginative type I'd never thought possible thru any medium other than that of science-fiction. The lighter, "fairy tale for grownups" type of tale which UNK so specialized in, have never been duplicated by any other mag. The closing issue of UNKNOWN had one such unforgettable bits -- the neatly done "The Refugee." That was one of the best werewolf tales I've ever read.

All that is left that is worth while now is ASTOUNDING. For more years than can be remembered, AST has been the best magazine in the s-f field. Now, it is the only s-f magazine I read regularly, altho I occasionally read one of the others. Second to AST, I'd place PLANET, which quite frequently has something worth-while, altho it has too much of a tendency toward the action type of psuedo-adventure story.

Going to the ridiculous from the sublime, I recently made the mistake of buying a copy of AMAZING. My only excuse for such a breach of the code of fan ethics is that I was out of reading material, and that AMAZING was the only thing handy. First story I read concerned a dog given a human soul, and the second was about a Ford that could flap its fenders and fly. I read no further. Hast thou come to this, my beloved science-fiction, that such atrocities should be committed in thy name?

A bit of research showed that AMAZING burns brilliantly and is excellent for starting fires.

Comes now the topic of Claude Degler and his Cosmic Circle, more familiarly and aptly known as the "Comic Circle." From the correspondence I've gotten since the last mailing, this bids fair to be the main controversial subject of mailing. The whole situation would be entirely humorous were it not that Degler has been claiming the "Circle" to be the representatives of all fandom, and the bad impression that is almost certain to leave on any outsiders and prospective fans with whom he comes in contact.

In plain words, the Cosmic Circle is an organization formed, apparently, by a group of Newcastle, Indiana, kids with little knowledge of fandom or of the aims of fans. In no other way can be explained Degler's refusal to submit the names of his "200" members, or the utter childishness of many of the claims made for the organization. Several of the few prominent fans who are named as supporting the CC have declared that they have never authorized the use of their names in connection with it, and want nothing to do with it.

The Yerke "expose", despite Degler's calling it "unwarrantedly malicious," is a sane, rational view of the whole matter, and fandom owes him a vote of thanks for the work done on it.

Just why fandom needs to be changed around into a race of supermen in the first place is something of a mystery. Not being the "Slan" type who places fandom above all else, I'm satisfied with fandom pretty much the way it is. At present fandom is but a loosely knit correspondence club made up of those whose intellectual interests are much the same, except for such improvements as FAPA which enables correspondence to be more widely circulated, and is quite all right in its present form. But then, I suppose that I'm one of those poor individuals who do not have the "Cosmic viewpoint" and am under the impression that fandom is but a hobby.

One of the aims of the CC is to make it easier for the newer and younger fans to become active, and get fandom away from the dictatorial influence of the older fans who are at present monopolizing fandom. Right now, of course, it's almost impossible to break into fandom, as the older fans do not want to give the newer and younger fans a chance. At least, that's Degler's story. Just how much trouble is it to break into fandom? As far as I've been able to discover there's nothing to it. Write a couple of letters, subscribe to a fanzine or two, and you're in. Whether you stay in or not is entirely up to the individual. Seems to me as tho membership in some organization such as the CC would make it more, not less, difficult to become a fan.

As far as I'm concerned, Degler can do all the work he wants towards his Cosmic Circle, provided that he refrains from claiming that his organization represents fandom. I'll still take fandom in its present form.

Speer doesn't think sociology is a science. But it is, and so is psychology. Note, Jack, I did not say that it was an exact science -- not yet anyhow. It may be some day, but certainly not within our lifetimes. There are too many variables involved for sociology to be exact. But to a certain extent we can control cause and effect, and we are learning more about them each day.

To the ancients, physics was far from being an exact science, and many phases of physics are still far from being exact. But that doesn't keep physics from being classed as a science, and an exact one. Even the fields of mathematics and chemistry, which are perhaps better known than any other, are not yet completely exact.

Geometry, for example, is based on a few apparently self-evident and unchangeable rules, such as that of a straight line being the shortest distance between two points. Suppose, by some form of "x" logic, it could be proved that the shortest distance between two points was a hyperbola. Then the whole science of geometry would have to be revised, and an entire new set of theorems written according to the rules of "x" logic. And who are we to say that the

"x" system of geometry would be any less accurate than our present one?

But it is sociology that we were discussing, and particularly its prominence in s-f stories. I like the Campbell sociological type stories, and consider them every bit a scientificfictional as stories based on any other science. One mistake which is quite frequently made, especially in the non-Campbellian mags, is the use of sociological problems of today in futuristic setting. Such stories come under the heading of "dressed-up moderns" which were discussed here last time.

Stories based on sociological problems of the future tho, have just as much a part in s-f as do those based on space and time travel or any other of the usual themes. Such futuristic sociological problems would presumably be caused by changes in technology, frontiers opened up by space travel (at times it would doubtless be difficult to determine whether this was truly "new" or similar to present new frontier stories), or even evolution, such as "Slan!"

Psychology, too, is a field which s-f could well afford to investigate. Altho it is doubtful whether or not either psychology or sociology will ever reach the status of "exact" sciences, it still seems likely that in the future they will be much more easily controlled than they are today. Anyhow, I'd like to see more such stories -- and I'm far from being tired of the "Campbell" type as yet.

Liked SusPro's discussion of the romantic vs the classical types of story, but can't quite agree on all the conclusions. Particularly, I don't care for those definitions of the two terms. Classical material, says Speer, is "setting and characters which are part of the experience of the reader." Thus, per se, all s-f and fantasy become romantic, because none of us has experienced the settings involved in those stories. All fantasy, I believe, can be classed as romantic no matter what the definition of "romantic" be. Not so with science-fiction, a large part of which comes under the classical heading.

Whether a story is written realistically or idealistically has, I believe, little to do with its classification. Most good literature, except for childrens stories, is written realistically so far as characters and actions are concerned. No longer do we have the simon-pure heroes and thoroly bad villians of old. Yet many a story with realistic writing is still romantic fiction.

Best system, as Speer indicates, is that of appeal. Does it appeal to the intellect or to the emotions? Even with this decided on as a means of classification, the problem is often difficult. The common type story of the marooned spaceship which must be repaired would, to many, seem to be concerned with the intellectual problem of how the repairs are to be made. To others, the story would be the emotional one of whether or not the escape from being marooned was successful.

The best system of judging a story is still that of whether or not it is a good story, and how well you liked it.

Will have to hurry and finish this stencil, as I leave for Battle Creek in a few minutes, and don't like to leave a stencil in the typewriter. I'm looking forward to seeing the BC fans, as it's been quite some time since I've had any contact with other fans save thru correspondence. Report on the trip will probably follow on the next page.

Seems as tho a lot of fans don't consider my army address simple enough, as it's constantly being abbreviated. That isn't advisable, as I've cut it down almost to the limit myself. But for those who just have to shorten the word "chemical", the correct War Department abbreviation is cml, not chem. FANTASY AMATEUR please note, as I'd just as soon get my mail as have it wandering thru various parts of the country.

A night at Slan Shack! Tis truly an experience that no fan should miss. As usual, I was a bit too late for things, as the Michicon had been held a week before I made my way to Battle Creek. From all accounts it must have been the ultimate in fan affairs.

But I did renew acquaintances with the more permanent members of Slan Shack, and kept the joint awake until the small hours of the morning. Still, it was probably a very quiet night, compared to the usual run of things.

It was dark when I reached Battle Creek, too dark to see the house numbers, so I asked a native where No. 25 was. He raised his head in alarm. "Why, that's Al Ashley's place!" he exclaimed in horror. I smilingly nodded agreement, and started towards the house he pointed out with trembling finger. He watched as I entered the house, as tho never expecting to see me alive again. Little did he know that I, too, was a fan.

The problem of Degler and the Cosmic Circle was discussed at some length, and I received further news on the matter which makes the lines I wrote a couple of pages ago seem out-of-date. Doubtless, the story of Degler and the Michicon will be told elsewhere in the mailing. But it appears definite now that the CC will no longer be of any trouble to fandom.

Degler was not the only subject of conversation. As is usual when fans get together, just about everything was mentioned at one time or another. Science-fiction and fantasy even found their way into the conversation at one time! To those who know fans, that is almost unbelievable.

Al almost has me sold on the Slan Center idea now, but there are still some objections to it. I, for one, would not be interested enough to move a long distance from the area where all my non-fan friendships and occupational interests were located. I'm also not so sure that continued close association with other fans would be advisable. Such contacts occasionally are stimulating, but I'm afraid that as a steady diet it wouldn't be so good. It seems to be working out well enough in Battle Creek, tho, with Al, Abby Lu, Walt, and Jack, apparently still on speaking terms. Maybe it would work as well on a larger scale.

Los Angeles was recommended as a good site for Slan Center, because of the supposedly favorable climate and the large number of fans already there. I, who have never been in California, would prefer the more even climate of Florida, if Slan Center is to be located in the tropics. But there is no reason why it couldn't be located in the north just as well, especially since that is where the majority of fans already live, and that is the climate to which they are accustomed.

But any proposals to set up a fund for the Center at this time, I wouldn't consider advisable. As Al pointed out, with generally high wages, the war period would be a good time to save for the center. But it should be up to each person interested to save for himself, not to put his money into a mutual fund, especially into a fund for some vague project to go into effect after the war.

I've used the word "Slan" in connection with Slan Center, as that is the name given to the project. But I still object to the use of the word Slan as a synonym for fan. After all, nobody except Degler believes that fans are supermen. We are quite ordinary humans distinguished from other mortals by our somewhat screwy imaginations. I don't use the term "superior" imaginations, because it actually isn't superior. It takes at least as much imagination, tho of a different sort, to visualize the working and principle of a complicated machine, or to do about any other of the myriad occupations of today.

"Slan" as a word, should be reserved as a term for a future super-race. Fans, some of them, are unusual people, but they ain't Slans!

I had planned on 8 pages this time, which would have been a new record for me, but am running low on time and will have to stop at the usual 7 -- probably to the relief of all readers. Probably only the hardest of fans has been able to get this far.

This issue is being mimeographed by Nova Press, the 4th mimeograph to be used on INSP. Many thanks to those who have helped out in the past, to Kuhn, Chauvenet, and Speer. And many thanks, too, to Ashley for agreeing to waste his time and paper on this issue. Some day, I suppose, the war will be over and then I'll have to go to work and do the work myself. Ah, unhappy day. Meanwhile, INSP will have to sponge upon agreeable fans.

I seem to have absorbed the army system of discipline much easier than Cpl Rothman. At least, I have no such troubles as feeling that I'm in a jail or have the Gestapo at my heels. At times, of course, there is the feeling that many of the rules under which the army lives are senseless -- but almost always there is a good reason for it.

As for humor as a defense mechanism, I'm not so sure. KP at Sibert is a fairly easy job, and a lot of the men prefer it to being in regular training, but that doesn't seem to stop the jokes about it. When something is disliked, instead of cracking jokes about it the usual policy is to gripe about it. The army uses a much more apt word than gripe, but it can't very well be set down for publication.

Strangely enough, griping in the army often takes the place of bragging. A soldier may complain about having had to go on a long hike with a sore foot, but he's 9 times out of 10 actually boasting about how he did it. At times tho, griping acts just as the defense mechanism or safety valve which Milty mentions. Humor is humor, and the army version is often unintelligible to the civilian, but army humor is not usually making fun of unpleasant things.

I doubt if many soldiers actually feel the lack of freedom which Milty so deploras, and I doubt that there is any basis for his belief that highly educated and intelligent men would refuse to serve in the army during other than war time. I've met several old army men who have made the army a career, and who would be a credit to whatever other occupation they would have chosen.

I don't care about making the army a career, and intend to leave the service as soon as possible after the end of the war, but meanwhile I find it not such a bad life. Instead of feeling imprisoned by a uniform, I take pride in having the right to wear that uniform.

Like the new size of ASTOUNDING, but it's still the stories that are important, not the format. But this new size is almost small enough to fit in a pocket, and for me at least, is easier to handle. But most important, now photographs can be used to advantage. I'm interested in seeing what can be done in the way of illustrated articles, especially. But if Campbell just continues the same quality stories which he has been using, I don't care what size or format is used. Anything but stone tablets will be acceptable!

Pleasant thought; Suppose ASTOUNDING was as large as the Palmer mags? Speaking of wastage of paper, Ziff-Davis must be using up a couple of forests of pulp wood for each issue of those stinkers. Can't something be done about such desecration of the terra science-fiction? I'd just as soon read a comic mag, and I've previously explained what I think of that junk.

End of the page, and of another issue of INSP. Turned out this time even more hurriedly than usual, as can be told by its appearance. (Honest, I can spell better and have a better knowledge of grammar than would be indicated by this thing.) I'll try to make the next mailing, but as always the future is indefinite.