

The JDM Bibliophile No. 14, August 1970

Edited and published twice a year by Len and June Moffatt, Box 4456, Downey, CA 90241. Associate Editors: Bill Clark and Ed Cox. This is a non-profit amateur journal devoted to the works - and to the readers - of John D. MacDonald. Price for this issue is 25¢, but starting next issue, the price will have to be 50¢ a copy. PLEASE READ EDITORIAL BELOW FOR DETAILS ON OUR PUBLISHING POLICY. Deadline for next issue: January 2, 1971.

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EDITORIAL

Yes, friends, we have decided to settle on a twice-a-year publishing schedule for THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE. It seems to be working out that way anyway. This is not due to lack of interest on our part, and considering the stack of mail we receive after each issue, there is certainly no lessening of interest on the part of the readership. The problem--if it is a problem--is that June and I, like most of you, I'm sure, are interested in so many things, most of them related to each other, but each of them requiring time. And, there are just so many spare-time hours in anyone's life to devote to hobbies.

We also feel that it is necessary to raise the price of JDMB to 50¢ a copy, starting with the next issue. However, a publishable letter of comment is still sufficient to keep you on the mailing list for the issue in which it appears. Read PWFD, the letter column, to find out what we mean by "a publishable letter". If that doesn't clue you in, forget it, and send the 50¢.

We are still using the "X" symbol on the address label. An "X" on your label means that you have to do something to receive the next issue: write that letter, send news or clippings, additions or corrections to the Checklist, or send 50¢. If there is not an "X" on your label, DO NOT send more money. (However, letters, clippings, etc. are always welcome. And, needless to say, we want more reviews and articles on the works of John D. MacDonald.)

Barring unforeseen difficulties, JDMB No. 15 will be published some time in the first half of 1971. The January 2 deadline should give all of you time to make whatever response is necessary, and, theoretically, should give June and me time to edit the material, lay out the zine, stencil, print, collate, staple and mail the issue before the end of May. (If you knew our spare-time "schedule", you'd understand why we feel this much "cushion", this much "planning ahead" is necessary!)

One more comment or reminder regarding your letters: If you do not specify otherwise, we will assume that it is okay to publish your letter--but we will not publish your complete address unless you specifically ask us to do so.

Copies of JDMB returned by the Post Office will not be re-sent unless we have your forwarding address, and ONLY if you have enough "credit" with us to cover the time, trouble and additional expense of re-mailing your copy.

SEEK & SWAP

ARNOLD J. CELICK, 9153 Thilow Drive, Sacramento, CA 95826 would like to buy WEEP FOR ME and I COULD GO ON SINGING to complete his collection. He has 1958 Popular Library CRY HARD, CRY FAST and May 1953 Pocket Books Inc. PLANET OF THE DREAMERS for anyone in a swapping mood.

BILL CRIDER, 1304 Mariposa (#144), Austin, Texas 78704, will buy WEEP FOR ME, or swap for it. Write Bill your offer.

DON ELLWOOD, 332-1 Pennell Circle, Tallahassee, Fla. 32304, also needs WEEP FOR ME. Write Don your offer.

ADRIAN H. GOLDSTONE, 35 Lee Street, Mill Valley, CA 94941, wants back issues of JDM BIBLIOPHILE (#1 thru #10), or photocopies of same.

CHARLES E. STEVER, 1220 N. Yosemite, Stockton, CA 95203, has a long wantlist of titles by Faust (under various pseudonyms: Max Brand, Baxter, Manning, etc., etc.). As this column is primarily for the seeking and swapping of JDM titles, we can't take space to list all of Chuck's wants here, but we make this mention in case some of you are Faust collectors and can help Chuck.

IWAN HEDMAN, Flodins vag 5, 152 00 Strangnas, SWEDEN, will swap JDM titles in Swedish for same in English. He also collects CAPTAIN FUTURE MAGAZINE, and needs issues from 1940-1943 period.

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Recommended Reading

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

Allen J. Hubin, 3656 Midland, White Bear Lake, Minnesota 55110

THE FAUST COLLECTOR

William J. Clark, 11744½ Gateway Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064
(Bill has also published THE FRANK GRUBER INDEX, \$1 per copy)

THE MYSTERY READER'S NEWSLETTER

Lianne Carlin, PO Box 113, Melrose, Massachusetts 02176

THE QUEEN CANON BIBLIOPHILE

Rev. Robert E. Washer, 82 E. 8th Street, Oneida Castle, NY 13421

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AND, copies of THE JDM MASTER CHECKLIST are still available from the Moffatts at \$1 per copy. See Page One for our address. For the benefit of new readers, the MASTER CHECKLIST is a complete-as-possible bibliography of John D. MacDonald's stories and articles in magazines, paperbacks and hardcovers. The MASTER CHECKLIST also features a brief biography and a photo of Mr. MacDonald.

WHAT IS MYSTERY STORY FANDOM?

by Len Moffatt

What is Mystery Story Fandom? I can best answer that question by comparing it to another fandom, one that has been active for perhaps nearly half a century: science-fiction fandom. (For s-f, read also fantasy and weird fiction, but the s-f element has been and still is the strongest part of this worldwide hobby group.)

Of course, any group of fans or followers of a particular author, movie star, baseball team, literary field (such as mystery, s-f, western, sports, etc.) can be called a "fandom". They need not be organized. They don't even have to know each other or know about each other. They simply read the author or fiction field devotedly, or go to all the games, or see all the movies featuring their favorite star, and thus are fans. Or, as some prefer to say, "buffs", (because the term "fan" is presumably derived from "fanatic"). In any case, a group of persons interested in the same thing, whether they are in communication with each other or not, is a potential "fandom", and could, in time, become what is known in the s-f field as an "active fandom".

Perhaps the biggest mystery of Mystery Story Fandom is why the fans or readers have been so slow in emerging as an active fandom, compared to the many, many years of fan activity in s-f fandom. The latter started through letters to the professional magazines, and letter-exchanges between the readers. There was some in-person contact, especially in the larger cities where clubs were formed so that they could get together and talk about their favorite form of reading entertainment. And then there were the fanzines or fanmags--amateur journals, which in the early days more or less copied the style and format of the professional magazines. Some of them even contained fiction and articles by the professional authors as well as by the fans, as many of the pros writing for the old pulps were also fans of the s-f field.

Communication between the fans, and between fans and pros, was, of course, the reason for the growing development of active s-f fandom. Letter-writing, fanzine publishing, club meetings and then national and regional conventions--all of these combined to build s-f fandom into the large and active hobby group it is today. (Some old-timers think it has grown Too Big, but that's another subject, on which I'll try to touch later...)

Meanwhile, in the mystery/detective/suspense story field, which covered the same communicative areas that were covered by s-f--i.e., the pulps, hardcovers, paperbacks, etc., there were no lines of communication developed by the fans and pros of that field. True, the pros communicated with each other, and there probably were some scattered fan contacts, but as Stanley Carlin points out in the May issue of AMERICAN BOOK COLLECTOR (see News & Previews this issue), the only "zine" that met with any success until the recent emergence of mystery fandom zines was THE BAKER STREET JOURNAL, a highly specialized journal that perhaps cannot be classified as a "fanzine"--depending on your definition of fanzine...

How, then, did Mystery Story Fandom get started? It has started, I believe, whether the participants realize it or not. Two or three years ago, Bob Bloch and I were discussing the phenomenon. At that time, I said something to the effect that mystery story fandom was in its early stages, similar to the stage s-f fandom was in back in the 30's. We had a few fanzines (or amateur journals). Pretty much the same persons were writing for most of them. Lines of communication were established and growing...

Bloch impishly predicted that in a few years there would be the first mystery story convention, no doubt headed up by the Moffatts. I told Bob that if it did happen, he would certainly have to be toastmaster, if not the guest of honor.

It seems we were only half-joking...

What Is Mystery Story Fandom? (continued)

But let's get back to beginnings: Three different persons in three different parts of the country (and at that time unknown to each other) were contemplating the idea of a journal or fanzine devoted to the mystery story field. Each of them had a different approach, and we feel that each magazine, when it was produced, and as it is being produced today, complements the others, rather than being in competition.

At various times June and I have been credited (or accused?) with creating mystery story fandom, or at least discovering it. First of all, we did not create it. It was already there, waiting for somebody to do something to bring it together, so to speak. If we had not published even one issue of JDMB, I'm positive that THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE and THE MYSTERY READER'S NEWSLETTER would have appeared anyway. As a matter of fact, the latter was being published before Lianne Carlin heard of JDMB, nor had we heard of her efforts.

I think the line of communication that put us in touch with each other was Tony Boucher's TIMES column, and I believe that is the way Allen Hubin heard of us. Allen wrote to us before he published the first issue of TAD for advice and info, but the fact is that if JDMB had not existed, Allen would still have come up with the idea of such a journal, and it would have been published without our encouragement. (When the publishing bug hits you, there is little or no hope for a cure, and fortunately the bug has bitten some excellent editors and publishers in mystery story fandom. In time, if and when there are more and more of the zines, what we call "crudzines" in s-f fandom may appear, but at the moment we can happily recommend all of the current mystery zines or journals being published. All of the ones we know about, anyway.)

So, June and I didn't create this fandom, nor did we discover it. It discovered us, just as it discovered TMRNL and TAD. Boucher's plugs in the NY TIMES had the most to do with this, as well as subsequent mentions in other papers and magazines.

So now we know HOW this fandom "started", though we don't know why it was so late in becoming "active", nor do we know why the three different editors started when they did, within the same period of time. Had one started and the others followed suit, it would be more explainable. But neither Lianne nor Allen were followers--nor were we--each of us began to publish a zine in the field simply because we wanted to, and the coincidence of timing remains unexplained. Why all of us didn't start sooner is still the original mystery, though.

Bruce Pelz, co-chairman of Bouchercon I, has said that there is not a one-to-one ratio between mystery fandom and s-f fandom--at least, from the standpoint of putting on a convention. I agree, to a degree, that mystery story fandom, which is still in its early stages of development, cannot be compared to current s-f fandom, which has had many years to grow and develop, and perhaps at this time is over-developed. I'll stick with my original comparison that mystery story fandom is more comparable to the early stages of s-f fandom, when there were fewer zines, clubs and conventions. And, I think that mystery story fandom will grow and develop if the lines of communication now in use are added to, extended, or developed in the areas available. More fanzines or journals. More in-person get-togethers. More letter exchanges among the fans and pros. And so on.

Regardless of what happens next, or what doesn't, June and I are enjoying it. We still attend (and even help put on) s-f conventions, but even the regional ones are getting larger than we like. We still publish in s-f fandom, but it has grown so large that we limit our publishing within the field and make no attempt to publish a zine for the entire population of s-f fandom.

On the other hand, mystery story fandom, small but growing, has a ways to go before it becomes too big for any one fan or zine to cover. We've had our first convention, and it went very well indeed. All of us can look forward to many happy years of communication and sharing. That's what fandoms are for, as far as we are concerned.

Keep Smiling - ljm

NEWS &

PREVIEWS

GÖTEBORGS-POSTEN Söndagen den 5 april 1970

John D MacDonalds romanfigur Travis McGee blir ny filmhjälte

EN NY FILMFIGUR dyker upp i kriminalgenren i höst, Travis McGee. Ett slags modern Robin Hood-figur lanserad via en romanserie av den amerikanske författaren John D. MacDonald.

Hittills har 10 böcker om Travis McGee getts ut i USA och ytterligare två kommer. MacDonald har nämligen i ett kontrakt lovat bokförlaget Fawcett exakt ett dussin McGee-äventyr. Men det kan naturligtvis bli fler eftersom serien varit framgångsrik och sål bra.

Samtliga böcker i McGee-serien har en färg i titeln, t. ex. »Darker than Ambers», »Nightmare in Pink», »The deep blue good-byes», »One fearful yellow eyes» etc. Sex McGee-böcker har översatts till svenska och släppts ut i serien Komediekarna. På svenska har emellertid »Börjerna» förvandlats till mera publikfrämjande titlar som »Färlig grannlåt», »Färlig vidvåt» och »Färligt byte».

□ McGees debut

Den första McGee-romanen »Darker than Ambers» från 1964, häftar in på att filmas. Titelrollen var ursprungligen värd för Robert Culp men gick senare till Rod Taylor, en mörkhårig aktör som inte har mycket gemensamt med MacDonalds store blonde romanhjälte.

MacDonald har sedan romandebuten 1950 med »The brass cupcake» (svensk översättning 1955 — »Någon måste domas») skrivit drygt ett 60-tal böcker, 21 av dessa har översatts till svenska.

□ Började i lumpen

MacDonald började skriva 1945 när han som överstelöjtnant låg stationerad på Ceylon. På lediga stunder knäckade han ner sina berättelser på en reseskrivmaskin och efter att ha sålt sin första novell

till Story Magazine för det förstliga gaget av 125 kronor beslutade sig MacDonald för att senare som sköförfattare fortsätta författarbana. Efter en tveksam start började så MacDonalds rader dyka upp i publikationer som McCall's, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal och i dag, oräkneliga noveller och 40 romaner senare. För MacDonalds romaner klistrar över praktiskt taget hela världen. Euhard i pocketupplagor har hans romaner sålt i 30 miljoner ex.

MacDonald har kallats den första klassens yrkesman och en av de bästa historieberättarna just nu. The New York Times gick ännu längre och döpte MacDonald till »kriminalromanens John O'Hara».

□ Science-fiction

John D. MacDonald har inte bara skrivit vanliga romaner och kriminalhistorier utan även science-fiction. »Planes of the dreamers» är snett klassisk och »The girl, the godwatch and everything» — en humanistisk skroman om en man som kan stoppa tiden — skall snart bli film med Jack Lemmon.

1963 skrev MacDonald också en biografi om Judy Garland kallad »I could go on singing».

□ Filmade romaner

Några MacDonald-romaner har redan filmats. »Mantrap» kom 1961. Den byggde på »Soft touch» (sv. tit. »Gå för häkten») och »Cape fear» (1962) var filmversionen av »The Executioners» (sv. tit. »Alltid planöras»). 1968 filmades också »Kona Coast» byggd på en kort MacDonald-novell.

Ytterligare aktuell i filmsammanhang är John D. MacDonald också eftersom hans fina roman »The last one left» också lockats av ett filmbolag.

John D. MacDonald som inte är släkt med kollegan-namnen Ross MacDonald är i 50-årsåldern och bor numera i Sarasota i Florida i en författarkoloni. Hans fru Dorothy Prentiss MacDonald är en känd konstnärinna.

John D. MacDonald skriver koncentrerat, dramatiskt och realistiskt övertygande. De människor han berättar om verkar alltid äkta, ibland nästan lite bekanta. Hans intriger är invecklade men alltid intelligent turnerade och förkärleken till att låta flera parallella handlingar löpa separerat sida vid sida för att sedan samman i ett överraskande klimax. Är ett av hans favoritgrepp.

MacDonald är inte en författare som arbetar efter bestämda mallar och inte heller en berättare som alltid låter sina historier få ett lyckligt slut. Men vet aldrig riktigt hur en MacDonald-roman skall sluta. Det enda man vet är att det är mycket svårt att inte strackläsa hans alster.

□ Egen fan-tidning

I USA utkommer då och då en liten stencellerad tidskrift kallad The JDM Bibliophile, publicerad av Len och June Moffatt. Det hela började 1965 när paret Moffatt hjälpte MacDonald-beundrare, skrev ut och stencellerade en lista över MacDonald-romaner och skickade runt den till vänner och bekanta. John D. MacDonald själv blev både förvånad och smickrad över uppmärksamheten och inledde så småningom ett samarbete med JDM Bibliophile vilket 1969 resulterade i en, gäntiskt, stencellerad volym »The JDM Master Checklist» där spänliga av MacDonalds verk raknades upp. Både noveller och romaner och inte bara sådana som publicerats i USA utan även i Frankrike, Tyskland och Sverige — ja t o m i Japan!

När det gäller novellerna finns uppgifter både om i vilken tidskrift de återfanns i, vilket år och om MacDonald använde sig av en pseudonym.

Den som är intresserad av John D



John D. MacDonald blir aktuell i filmsammanhang i höst. Om en av hans tidigaste romaner »The Dominos» uttalade sej en gång Mickey Spillone så här: — Jag önskar att jag hade skrivit den boken!»

MacDonalds produktion bör snarast skriva till Len och June Moffatt, Box 4456, Downey, California 90241 och skicka med en check på en dollar. Mer kostar nämligen inte den intressanta och utförliga JDM-bibliografin!

Hans Stén.

NEWS & PREVIEWS (cont)

Robert Hoskins of Lancer Books, Inc. informs us that he has selected TROJAN HORSE LAUGH for his NAL science-fiction anthology, TOMORROW: ONE. It will probably be published in Spring 1971.

The final version (88,000 words) of the 12th McGee novel was mailed to the publisher in April. Although John referred to it as THE LAVENDER GAME, more recent information from Max Wilkinson indicates that the title will be THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK. (In any case, look for LAVENDER on your newsstand by October...)

Lippincott's hardcover edition of DARKER THAN AMBER has sold so well, especially to libraries, that they plan to follow up with more hardcover reprints of the McGee novels.

Fawcett will be bringing out another collection of JDM's stories--probably some time this year. (Assuming you are reading this in 1970 and we aren't Later Than We Think with this issue of JDMB...)

A sneak preview of DARKER THAN AMBER in Phoenix, Arizona was "sensational" according to a CBS executive. See Dave Stewart's review in this issue for one fan's opinion of the film. No word at this writing as to when the movie will be released generally.

Look in your local bookstore for SO YOU WANT TO BE IN MUSIC! by Jesse Burt and Bob Ferguson (Abingdon Press, Nashville & New York, \$1.95). Pages 54 and 55 will be of particular interest to JDM buffs and JDMB readers. However, the entire book should be of interest and great value to anyone interested in getting into the music business--a "how-to" manual that pulls no punches in advising the reader of the difficulties as well as of the do's and don'ts. Publication date was April 13. You can order it by mail thru Mills Bookstore, 21st Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee, 37203.

Speaking of "how-to" books, watch for SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE WRITERS BUT I WOULDN'T WANT MY DAUGHTER TO MARRY ONE, a combination textbook and memoirs of over 30 years experience in the free-lance writing jungles, by Robert Turner. Sherbourne Press, Los Angeles, will be publishing it this fall, and we are inclined to recommend it sight unseen, not only because of that title (which alone has to be worth the price of the book, whatever it is), but also because Bob Turner, like Jesse Burt and Bob Ferguson mentioned above, knows whereof he writes. Then, too, there are those chapter titles, such as: THE BLANK WHITE PAPER CAPER--AGENTS, THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL-- THE OUTLINE BUGABOO...

An article by Stanley A. Carlin, "The Emergence of the Mystery Zines", in the May 1970 issue of American Book Collector, covers briefly--but in some historic detail--the amateur publishing facet of mystery fandom, with comments on the zines currently being published. (THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE, THE BAKER STREET JOURNAL, THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE, THE MYSTERY READER'S NEWSLETTER, THE PONTINE DOSSIER, THE QUEEN CANON BIBLIOPHILE and THE ROHMER REVIEW.) It's recommended reading for anyone interested in the recent emergence of mystery story fans as an active fan/hobby group, a group that is similar in many ways to science-fiction fandom in that they want to do more than merely read and collect their favorite literature. For more on mystery story fandom, see our article and the Bouchercon report in this issue of JDMB.

When the 23rd Annual West Coast Science Fiction Conference (Westercon 23) was held in Goleta, California (Santa Barbara area) over the 4th of July weekend, sites for the next two Westercons were chosen by the members present. Westercon 24 will be held next year in the San Francisco area. Westercon 25 will be held in 1972 in Long Beach, California. We mention this because it seems that (blush, gulp) Len Moffatt has been chosen to be the Fan Guest of Honor at Westercon 25. There is no truth to the rumor that Len plans to get John D. MacDonald to ghostwrite his speech...

A Report On

BOUCHERCON I

The First Annual Anthony Boucher Memorial Mystery Convention (Bouchercon I) was held at the Royal Inn, Santa Monica, California, over the 1970 Memorial Day weekend.

Bruce Pelz and Chuck Crayne were the co-chairmen. Robert Bloch was the Guest of Honor. A little more than 100 persons attended.

Now you have the basic facts. But what really happened at Bouchercon I? What really happened was the engendering of a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. Both pros and fans were asking "Why haven't we done this before? And how soon can we do it again?"

Why all the enthusiasm? Because this was the first convention or meeting of its kind in the mystery field. When planning the Bouchercon, Bruce and Chuck attempted to model it after the science-fiction conventions, both having had experience in that area. They learned that, even though there can be and are similarities in the two fields, they are not the same. The Bouchercon was an experiment for them, as well as for the attendees--an experiment that turned into a happy experience.

Friday evening, May 29, was devoted to a general Reception. There was a cash bar, and there were many early-comers. It was a quite successful let's-get-acquainted party.

After the reception, there were at least one or two room parties. Room parties are typical of s-f conventions (and no doubt happen at all kinds of conventions), but the nice thing about this first small confab of mystery fans, writers and editors was that practically everybody who attended the convention proper could also go to the room parties without overcrowding.

The official opening was at 1 p.m., Saturday, May 30. Chuck Crayne called the convention to order, welcomed everybody, and then introduced Poul and Karen Anderson. The Andersons talked for close to an hour, I believe, about Tony Boucher. They knew him well, and in the short time they had, managed to cover most if not all of Tony's many and varied interests...from mysteries to s-f to opera to sports to cooking, and so on.

Next up, there was a panel discussion of "Mysteries in the Old Pulp". On the panel were Howard Browne, Bill Clark, William P. McGivern, Larry Shaw and Robert Turner. It was moderated by Len Moffatt. The panel went over very well indeed, with much audience participation, and finally Len had to bring it to a halt so that there would be time for the rest of the day's program. Perhaps it will be "continued next year".

Bruce held an auction next. Auctions are held at conventions to raise money to help pay the costs of the convention, and hopefully to have some left over to help finance the following year's convention. This first auction did not go very well, but remember that this is from the viewpoint of one who has been to many auctions at many s-f cons. A number of items (mostly books) were sold, however, and I think that in time, the mystery buffs will get into the spirit of the thing.

After the auction, the second panel "The State of the Art", was introduced. Moderated by Bruce, the panelists were Bill S. Ballinger, Clayton Matthews, Larry Niven, Dr. Jerry Pournelle and Don Wollheim. This panel also held the interest of the audience (as well as of the panelists), and managed--as panels have a way of doing--to get off on a couple of sidetracks.

One was the Problem of Distribution. Don Wollheim explained the facts of life regarding this problem. Most publishers do not control distribution--or not as much as they would like. The people who are controlling it are interested in books only as a product. Many of them are probably illiterate.

The other "sidetrack" was brought up by Jerry Pournelle, who wanted to know What The Readers Wanted in spy stories, for instance. Did they want the Real Thing (which can be rather dull and unamusing) or did they want fantasy, as in James Bond stories, etc.

This question resulted in an one-the-spot creation of another program item--a "spinoff" panel held that evening to discuss readers' likes and dislikes. This panel consisted of Bruce Pelz, Bjo Trimble, Florence Russell and Jerry Pournelle. Again there was much audience participation and although Jerry's question (and the questions it engendered...) was (were) not thoroughly answered, everybody had a lot of fun expressing their own personal likes and dislikes in mystery story reading.

However--before that evening panel--there was a Masquerade demonstration. Again, this is something that was borrowed from s-f conventions--the idea of a Costume or Masquerade ball or competition. Only a few persons appeared in costume, and these were used to show what could be done--and also what shouldn't be done if one is seriously interested in winning a prize.

Bruce came as Doctor Gideon Fell, with several deliberate mistakes in his costume. He asked the audience to pick his costume apart--not literally, you understand, but to criticize it. The hat was wrong, for instance--not a true "shovel hat", etc.

Karen Anderson came as a famous victim--Mary, Queen of Scots. Her daughter Astrid came as Mrs. Crater, looking for her husband, the Judge...

Larry and Marilyn Niven came as Flavius Maximus, Roman Private Eye, and Caesar's widow, respectively. He, of course, questioned her regarding her husband Julie's untimely demise.

Dr. Frank Cunningham put on his tie, tails and cape and umpteen medals, and came as Jules de Grandin, the famous Seabury Quinn occult detective.

Gary Helland, a teenager, came as a very young vampire.

The costumes were enjoyed by all present, and, one hopes, will serve to inspire more to participate in the Masquerade next year.

The banquet luncheon on Sunday, May 31, was very well attended. I noticed several persons there who had not been in attendance at the previous program items, plus most, if not all, of the earlier attendees.

After a mediocre meal (but then one never expects convention banquets to excel in gourmet or even gourmand delights), Chuck Crayne introduced the Guest of Honor, Robert Bloch.

Bloch was superb--as usual. He talked quite a bit about Tony Boucher, of course, as was fitting at the first convention named after that wonderful gentleman. Bob told

of how he and Tony met at a convention and immediately became good friends. "We met, we fell in love, got married and lived happily ever after", was about the way Bob put it. He also talked about the mystery/detective/suspense field in general, and the fact that it is more important than most would-be literary critics give it credit for.

Readers of JDMB will be interested to know that Bloch spoke quite highly of John D. MacDonald. He said that 20 years from now, historians will have to read the works of JDM to find out what it was really like here and now, rather than Mailer, Updike, etc.

Those of you who did not attend the first Bouchercon may be interested in knowing that most, if not all, of it was taped. Randy Millen of the Bay Area conscientiously kept his machine running throughout the convention. I won't give his address here, lest he be bombarded with requests, but if you are seriously interested in buying copies of his tapes, you might mention it in your next letter to the Moffatts. I'm sure that they will see that Randy learns of your interest. ((So the Moffatts get bombarded with requests? -ljm & jmm))

Then Bruce conducted the "business meeting"--i.e., Where Do We Go From Here? As indicated in the beginning of this report, everyone was interested in the convention becoming an annual event. However, the second one will probably be held some time in October, 1971, rather than over the Memorial Day weekend. Reason: so as not to conflict with the spring dinner of the MWA, and so as not to be too close in time to other conventions, such as s-f conventions. (It seems that many s-f fans and writers are also mystery fans and writers, and they want to be able to go to conventions in both fields.)

Someone present (who hadn't understood what conventions such as these are all about and who apparently thought of it as a seminar for professionals) suggested that only the writers (and presumably would-be writers) be permitted to attend...keep the fans out...

This suggestion brought an immediate roar of disapproval from all of the pros and fans present. As Clayton Matthews put it, the writers want to meet their readers, especially in such congenial surroundings, and find out how they are doing, what the readers like, etc. And, of course, the readers want to visit with the writers and editors, not just to collect autographs, but to communicate their likes and dislikes.

There is also what I call the "people factor". Mystery writers and readers are people, and as they happen to have a common interest, they can find lots to talk about, other than the subjects mentioned above. Bring a bunch of people together to discuss or exchange ideas on a subject of interest to all of them, and sure as Bloch has the heart of a small boy (he keeps it in a jar on his desk) they will not only discuss the given or common subject, but also find many other areas of interest in common.

If you want to be on the mailing list for information regarding Bouchercon II, send your name and address to:

Bruce E. Pelz
Box 1
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Now, do not expect an immediate reply. Bruce, like most of us, is running conventions and doing other kinds of related hobby work, in his spare time. And it does take time to plan for a convention.

Perhaps Bouchercon I did not have as much advance publicity and as widespread publicity as it should have had. On the other hand, the meeting room would have had SRO if many more had attended.

The local MWA chapter was well-represented (and of course Bloch is currently the national president of MWA), as were the local fans of the mystery field. I'm not sure

who traveled the farthest to attend. Don Wollheim came from New York City, and Pat Erhardt and her father, Frederick Schneider, came all the way from Utica, NY.

Jon L. Breen was there with his pretty new bride--she came all the way from England, but I'm sure it wasn't just for the Bouchercon...

And Phyllis White was there, and I think that she found that the convention named after Tony did do honor to his name. As she said in a letter quoted in the Program Booklet, "The only misgiving I have is that calling a convention a memorial--to anyone--sounds rather anti-festive. Tony would never want to turn up as a wet blanket at a convention. If the committee thinks that there is no danger of anyone being downhearted, I am very much in favor of the idea."

Well, there's no doubt that all of us miss Tony Boucher for many and varied reasons. And I did hear it said more than once during the convention, "It's too bad Tony can't be here to enjoy this."

So, perhaps there was some downheartedness, but I think that everyone present had a hell of a good time, just as Tony would have wanted, just as he would have had--as he always did.

And I like to think that he was there--as a part of those who knew him, whether they knew him intimately or slightly.

During the business meeting, there was a suggestion that perhaps the name of the convention could be changed each year to honor others in the field. This was rejected immediately by the chairmen. This is the Bouchercon, and will remain so. It is fitting and proper that the name of the annual mystery convention should bear the name of the man who gave so much of himself to the field, in so many ways, and whose love for get-togethers of this sort could not be surpassed by anyone.

Your reporter is looking forward to reading other reports on Bouchercon in the other journals and fanzines, and hopefully there will be some professional coverage, too. And I'm looking forward even more to next year's Bouchercon...so get cracking, Bruce and Chuck...your experiment was eminently successful, and next year's can be even better...

Of course, Bruce and Chuck will need help, and I'm hoping that all of you who read this will volunteer immediately.

Wherever and whenever it is--Bouchercon II will be a lovely place to be.

Leo Rand

IN MEMORIAM:

A note dated August 6, 1970 from his brother, Jack, advises us of the recent death of Wendell V. Howard. As most of you know - through our Seek & Swap Department and our letter column - Wendell was a good friend and of great help to many of us. We never had the pleasure of meeting him in person but his help and encouragement will be missed by all of us.

-ljm & jmm

MOVIE REVIEW:

DARKER

THAN

by

Dave Stewart

AMBER

The date is May 9, and today I have seen McGee on film--perhaps the first contributor to JDMB to have done so...

Because of its non-metropolitan atmosphere and its proximity to Hollywood, Phoenix has become the mecca for Hollywood Sneak Previews. Movie brass can jet over in an hour and jet back with a significant audience reaction. Local radio stations are quick to the fore, offering the subject theater much publicity in return for the increased listenership that handing out free admission passes promises. Well, your reporter won a pair of freebies in a call-in contest; DARKER THAN AMBER was in fact the preview; and "serendipity" eloquently describes my evening. And, the opportunity to explore virgin territory, to apply the first brushstrokes of commentary to an empty canvas, to have first turn at bat in what will surely be a big inning in JDMB--brings me from there to here. So, kindly Moffatts, I trust you will allow me a tiny corner of JDMB #14, despite the lateness of this entry. Fellow McGee fans, here we go.

Save for possibly PURPLE, AMBER has probably the best grabber-opening of the series, and this feature is translated beautifully onto the screen. Starting with the credits themselves, which feature (ala Bond) a driving big-band jazz theme as two eerie white orbs dominate a dark background. These focus leisurely into the headlights of the car approaching the bridge, as

TRAVIS MCGEE

is

ROD TAYLOR

hits the screen with the appropriate crescendo. The rest of the credits follow quickly, imposed over our first glimpse of the victim and the villains. Much of the "grabbing" impact of the opening here is effected by the magnificent casting of Griff and Terry. Never, in all the movies I've seen, can I recall a tandem as evil, as hulking, as monstrous and as menacing as these two. Huge, incredibly muscled and with a perceptible aura of overt faggotry, they march through the movie reeking of corruptness. I was reminded of the villain Red Grant in FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE. The same majestic meanness. And, from a sheer production standpoint, AMBER compares very well to the Bond epics. The photography, art direction, acting, and especially directing are all excellent.

The script, on the other hand, is quite weak in spots, the cinematography generally poor (too many gimmicky fade-ins and "arty" angle shots), the music good but often loud.

to the point of intrusion. The Busted Flush is opulent beyond expectation and certainly beyond brief description. We even get a glimpse of Miss Agnes. (Not to give these items equal importance.)

Suzy Kendall is good as Vangie/Merrimay, though the script doesn't give her character the coarseness and core of self-contempt which Vangie had that an actress could sink her method into. Rod Taylor is exceptional as Trav. At various times, he is suitably amiable, tender, tough, righteously angry and amusing--a wide range of skills exhibited by a good-looking and very good actor.

Meyer (played by Theodore Bikel) is useless. He comes on strong in the first few minutes but is soon relegated to bartender and resident buffoon. Witness the sequence where he becomes the mad shutterbug. He slips off quietly in Nassau about halfway on, and isn't seen again. But even this is generous compared to the part given Jane Russell--don't blink or you'll miss her! One silly, stupid and totally meaningless scene that a good editor would hew out. Along with the fatuous four-or-five-second gratuity in Nina's Boutique involving the naked lady. ("Look, fellows, do we want an "R" rating or don't we?") And have I mentioned that the bad guys are great?

"This film could be the blockbuster of the year," predicted the one-sheets outside. If it is, look to Griff and Terry for a large part of the reason, for they, in fact, are the only fully consistent part of the movie. They provide the backbone that raises it above the commonplace. Up against them, even an anti-hero becomes a romantic fighter for the Right. The trouble arises with the protagonist's inconsistency--when on occasion he acts in a manner contrary to the romantic stature he has acquired more or less by default.

For instance, if McGee were a true moral hero, but his adversaries were weak and ineffectual little men, then his efforts to bring them down--his courage, integrity, honesty, rationality--would be ludicrous, out of kilter, and wasted. Conversely, give him great menacing adversaries (true "moral" villains) and make McGee himself less than a full hero, then his lapses, his lack of integrity and rationality become the factors out of kilter, out of step. Also conversely (and due to the moral polarity that's involved) the effect is not at all ludicrous. It's shameful.

It is to Hollywood's credit that they understood McGee enough to provide him two excellent "hero" scenes in which, out of context, he achieves a true moral stature. It is to Mr. MacDonald's discredit that he did not delineate McGee clearly enough so that Hollywood would not have had to add their own ideas of what a moral hero is like--so McGee would not have to be a sexual hypocrite: after telling Vangie in reel one that "You seem to have the idea that you have to bed the captain to get along on this barge. Well, it doesn't work that way. I've found that it isn't any good without an emotional involvement." Great? Well, in reel two, sans involvement (or at least any valid reason for one) Trav commits the fornication.

Yes, with Vangie, of whom the book Trav comments: "It is difficult to put much value on something the lady has distributed all too generously... once X pairs of hungry hands have been clamped tightly upon her rounded undersides...her mouth (becomes) a windy cave from whence, with each moisturous gasping, comes a tiny stink of death. I could not want her on any terms." (pp 50-51)

So he would not have to be a sloppy drunk: he seemed never to be without a handy drink. Beer, brandy and endless jiggers of scotch (surprisingly, no gin), once aboard the cruise ship, Trav is shown to be rather embarrassingly pimentoed. So, he would not have to, worst of all, end up as a pining lover forlorn of the loss of his Vangie! I kid you not. He does.

The two "hero" scenes, which transcend everything I've seen in a long time, are those with the wise-mouth morgue attendant where Trav lets fly his righteous anger and in the diner, getting information from the maid Noreen. I won't tell you what Trav

(12)

shows here--the scene is so magnificent that I want you to see it for yourself. Incidentally, both the attendant and the maid are in the novel, but metaphysically, the novel has nothing remotely close to these two encounters.

If anybody points out, referring to my appraisal above of JDM's delineation of McGee, that McGee has become very lifelike as a result, he would be right. But what has been sacrificed to make Trav a "regular guy" is, quite simply, Drama. There is one short line at the very end of the diner scene which prompted the biggest emotional outburst of the evening. It brought the house down. It consisted of surprise, pleasure, satisfaction and, bonded to each of these, a glorious affirmation, the emotional equivalent of "Yes, that's the way a man should deal with life!"

When you see the film and witness this particular response (and I guarantee you will) consider what it is saying implicitly about Trav himself, the man whose course of action in the diner brought it about. It is a type of outburst that one finds only in a movie or show theater, and that only a romantic hero can educe.

Whether in the course of an entire picture or only a moment of one, if you combine a peak of dramatic tension and the morally flawless behavior of a hero, the audience will respond favorably and enthusiastically (and in a way quite different from, say, their response to an especially brilliant soliloquy, which may have everything save that sense of affirmation). Add a funny line to break the tension and they will roar, as a relief and a release; it indicates nothing more than how totally they were wrapped up in the story.

No dramatist--playwright, novelist or screenwriter--could ask for a more exalted type of reaction. And no audience could "relate to" a character more solidly than such a reaction indicates. It is, in short, the essence of Great Drama. Needless to say, the movie industry--and JDM--may have this valuable analysis gratis.

This, then, I see as the gut flaw in the movie. McGee is so fantastic, so heroic, so noble in several parts of this film that he is able to set up the kind of genuine emotional rapport that I've described; yet his character throughout most of the rest of AMBER undercuts and diminishes him.

The producers have picked up this saga of McGee by the scruff of its neck, shaken out the trivia and the sour platitudes and given us a slick and stylized version of what was left: a damn good crime-adventure tale. The only thing is--McGee doesn't stack up. He's the best screen hero since the early Bond, but he's one or two notches below the type of man one would expect to be able to handle the story-world he inhabits.

For future McGee movies, may I counsel JDM to advise the screenwriters to scramble the plot a bit, or to make the villains a bit silly also, so the contrast won't offend so. Or else advise them how they might pump a little more moral courage and integrity into one T. McGee.

In the first case, "Real Life" would be the great beneficiary, and a resultant chorus of "Yeah-I-kinda-liked-it" as the audience exits. In the latter case, McGee could well achieve the inspiring romantic status that DARKER THAN AMBER delivers, but delivers stillborn. In such a case, who can tell? The extent of the affirmation might surprise us all.

- Dave Stewart

EARLY JDM:

PULP THOUGHT & PULP ACTION

Two recently read pulp stories of JDM provide some revealing glimpses of the author's salad days. One is a story of almost pure thought (or at least as close to pure thought as one got in the pulps), the other, a tale of almost pure action.

The setting of "Death Is The Answer" (Thrilling Detective, 12/48) is a radio quiz show, Professor Quotient, sponsored by the one and only Amoeba Mouthwash. At the time of the story, the show is on tour, being broadcast live from the theater in the small city of Hoagersburg. Ex-carnival barker Tom Schurtz (a character based on W. C. Fields if ever one was) is Professor Quotient, the quizmaster. His assistants Nick Weller and Stan Haverly circulate among the audience with the questions. All three men are in love with Mary Adams, who stands onstage in a bikini, holding the question bowl. On the night of their first show in Hoagersburg, Nick is slugged to death in an alley, leaving a dying message behind him. What his last words mean is revealed by intuition rather than reasoning, but the plot is intriguing and well worked out, and avoids the overelaborateness to which JDM, like Woolrich, is sometimes prone when dealing with cerebral material.

The protagonist of "A Corpse-Maker Goes Courting" (Dime Detective, 7/49) is named Max Raffidy, but we can dimly see in him some of the outline of Travis McGee. Max is a reporter whose paper has just gone bankrupt, and as the story opens he is sitting in a bar, drinking himself into detachment from the reality of being jobless in a jobless city--not trying to drown his misery and disgust "but just to make it swim a little". Then a beautiful bruised girl blunders into the tavern, calls Max "Jerry", sits down with him, and two large, solid men in dark suits come in right behind her. As Max comments, Mc-Gee-like to himself, "Sir Lancelot Raffidy roars in on his white horse." The girl has amnesia, her fiance has vanished, and after the requisite shadowing and slugging episodes the gangland-doublecross plot that motivated the whole affair is revealed, and the back of the Organization in this city is broken. It's almost impossible to recall anything about the plot a few days after you've read the story, but it's competent, still supremely readable twenty-one years after publication, and significant as a possible precursor of the McGee novels.

A third tale of slightly earlier vintage shows how JDM at his early best would fuse the whodunit and fast-action strands into a single fine story. In "The Tin Suitcase", (Doc Savage, 5-6/48) by Peter Reed, we meet Judson Broack, an ex-alcoholic and ex-cop who now works as a laborer in a scrap-metal yard. It was the murder of his wife (by a lover she had taken while he was at war) that had first driven him to the bottle; now the near-fatal shooting of an office girl with whom he was beginning to fall in love comes close to destroying the fragile foundations of his new life. In an uneasy alliance with former friends on the force who now despise him for a lush, he tries to find out who in the plant shot the woman, and why, intending to take his own vengeance when he learns the truth. The story is expertly handled, combining intellectual, emotional and fast-action elements into a plot organically related to its post-war industrial setting. The possibility of a collection of JDM's early work has been discussed in these pages; if such a book ever does appear, this tale seems to me a prime contender for inclusion.

- Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

Time Capsule Book Review:

THE BRASS CUPCAKE

(...written as though this were 1950 and I was reviewing it as a new book...ML)

THE BRASS CUPCAKE, by John D. MacDonald, Fawcett Publications, 1950.

As a reviewer, I am always happy to read a well-written readable first novel. I feel it is an extra bonus when that first novel also carries on a tradition I had felt might be in danger of dying out. The tradition is "the hard-boiled detective story". Its practitioners have been strangely subdued lately. Dashiell Hammett has not written a novel since 1934. Raymond Chandler seems to have lost some of his vitality. Raoul Whitfield and Frederick Nebel are almost never heard from. Some good writers continue to contribute to the "pulp", but these magazines are in serious economic trouble.

Then along comes John D. MacDonald, himself a prolific contributor to the pulp magazines, with an original mystery novel which is published in paperback. Is this a trend in publishing? We hope so.

MacDonald writes well, though his prose is not perhaps as lean and hard as that of Hammett. He is an acute observer of the Florida scene, though perhaps not quite as keen as Chandler when he looks at L. A. MacDonald is clearly aware of his predecessors, and this awareness shows when his hero, ex-cop Cliff Bartells says "I often find myself talking like something out of Hammett..." Further recognizing the man who has made Hammett's Sam Spade and Chandler's Philip Marlowe live on the screen, we read of people "with the Bogart gestures". Bartells suffers a brutal beating at the hands of two crooked policemen. He then comments, "The beating...wasn't something that would go away in a day."

I thought of the fictional heroes of the hard-guy school, of the way they can bounce back from a pasting that should have put them in a hospital bed. Yet, Cliff Bartells himself does bounce back from this beating to fight and make love with virtually no time to rest. Bartells' home grounds, "Florence City", Florida, contains some of the elements of the "Personville" Hammett wrote about in RED HARVEST, as well as Chandler's "Bay City" of THE LADY IN THE LAKE. So, too, are their heroes resembled by Cliff Bartells in his innate honesty and toughness.

However, MacDonald is no mere imitator. He is a worthy successor to a great tradition but a distinctive storyteller in his own right. Most importantly, he has captured the spirit of the worried, money-hungry, postwar era as it is found on the southeastern part of the United States, just as another MacDonald (John Ross) caught this mood on the west coast in his private eye novel last year, THE MOVING TARGET.

It is a pleasure to report that the Hard-Boiled Mystery is now in excellent hands.

- Marvin Lachman

9. THE SPILLANE

or
MY SPILLANE IS QUICK

or
VENGEANCE IS SPILLANE

by
John
D.
MacDonald

or
ONE LONELY SPILLANE

or
THE BIG SPILLANE

EDITOR'S NOTE: This parody was written and mailed to Dick Carroll, then editor of Gold Medal Books, as a gag, on December 23, 1951. Our thanks to John for his permission to publish it here. -ljm

It was one of those afternoons when the greasy sunshine flooded Third Avenue like a men's room with a broken john. She came out of the alley lapping at her juicy red lips with her pointed spicey tongue.

I shouldered her out of the way and blew the smoke off the end of the rod. He lay there in the alley and he was dead. I don't know why I did it, but I aimed at him and blew off the other half of his greasy skull. It was a dirty world full of dirty people and I was sick of it. I felt the crazy anger welling up in me. He lay there in the alley and he was dead. She rubbed her thorax against me. I blasted his teeth out through the back of his neck.

Pat shouldered her out of the way. He was picking his greasy teeth with a broken match. A smart cop, that Pat.

"I knew you was going to go kill-crazy again, Mike. This has got to stop."

I knew it couldn't stop. Not while there were people left in the world. Dirty people in a dirty world. I had to kill all I could. Even if they lifted my license. He lay there in the greasy alley in the greasy Third Avenue sunshine and he was dead, and I was glad I'd shot his greasy skull apart.

"Mike, Mike," she gasped, stabbing her tongue into my ear. It tickled.

I fingered her haunch, then shoved her away, hard. She looked at me with those wide spicey hot eyes.

"You haven't fooled me a bit," I rasped. Then I laughed. My laugh sounded like two Buicks rubbing together.

She knew what I meant. She said "Look what I can give you, Mike." She unlatched her Maidenform.

I looked at it. I felt the sadness, the regret. But the anger was there. Pat sucked on the greasy match. He turned his head. He was a good cop.

The first shot nailed her against the alley wall. While she was slipping, her eyes still pleading with me, I wrote my initials across her gut with hot lead. It was tricky shooting.

Pat sighed. He said, "Mike, the D.A. 'll have something to say about this."

"Screw the D.A.," I said. My voice sounded like a lead nickel in a stone juke box.

We walked out of the alley, down through the soggy sunshine. Somehow, I felt very tired.

-JDM

HARD TOUCH - a column

- by Bill Wilson

EDITORS' NOTE: A half-dozen readers suggested seven different titles for this column. However, Bill and the editors agree that although some of the suggestions had merit, none of them quite covered what Bill's column is all about. The problem is that Bill's columns are likely to be about a lot of things! The titles suggested were: Brass Tacks (or Tactics), I Wish I Knew The Answers, A Hard Touch of Reason, A Man of Affairs, Hard Facts, ...& Everything (from The Girl, The Gold Watch, &c) and Area of Suspicion. So, we'll continue to call it HARD TOUCH (that's right, opposite of "Soft Touch") until a better title comes along. -ljm

Much has been written and said concerning marijuana--some of it fact and a great deal of fancy. I do not claim to be an authority on the subject, but I do believe that I have had considerably more objective experience concerning the subject than the average person; and from what I have read on occasion, more than some of the self-styled experts.

To begin--marijuana (*Cannabis Sativa*), commonly called Indian hemp, will grow in just about any climate or soil. At one time it was believed that there were different species of the plant, but after many horticultural tests it was established that the differences were due to the particular soil, climate and cultivation concerned and from cross planting and transplanting, that the seeds were all the same. Therefore, if the pot grown in Mexico was more potent than the backyard crop in New York, it was due to conditions and not variations in the plant. Actually, the most potent stuff seems to come from North Africa and India. Also, the female plant is more potent than the male.

In describing smell, taste and effect, one has to remember that, as with all description, one has to have a frame of reference (e.g., try describing the taste of an apple to someone who has never eaten an apple). In general, most unadulterated marijuana smells to me like punk or joss sticks. However, much of the stuff is mixed or adulterated with other weedlike material for various reasons. Also, in some cases, resins or syrups are added for various effects.

One kick is to take marijuana seeds and leaves and grind them up to a fine state, then use a wet resin binder. When this mixture dries and hardens it can be shaved into thin splinters. These splinters are then inserted into regular cigarettes. Incidentally, this mixture does have a rather sweet odor. However, the often-used cliché of "sickly sweet odor" isn't too accurate.

This triteness apparently stems from the old pulp detective story writers of the 20's and 30's who used to borrow freely from each other and often got confused in their subject matter, e.g. "heroin-crazed killer", when the drug they meant was cocaine. Opium, which is smoked, does have a pervasive sickly-sweet odor, and I think as with the above cited example the boys got their pipe brands mixed up and the fumble perpetuated itself.

Personally, I have never smelled any marijuana that, when smoked, smelled like rubber, but I wouldn't say that it couldn't smell that way. There might have been an adulterant added to that batch which could well have produced that odor. Or perhaps some puckish character slipped some ground-up rubber bands into the batch! Incidentally, this last bit of mischief is done on occasion to rag an inveterate pipe smoker.

As to taste, I don't know. Personally, I have never smoked marijuana, so I can't say. Most of the people who have described the taste to me say that it is bitter, that it takes getting used to. As with the smell, it probably differs from person to person, and also depends on whether or not the stuff has been mixed with anything. The effects of marijuana differ from person to person and are unpredictable.

In general, one can say that in this respect it can be compared to alcohol. Some get high and happy, others sleepy, others mean and aggressive, and still others withdrawn. The common physical reactions are described as a distortion of the passage of time, distortion of height and distance, and an intensifying of light, color and sound. This accounts for the fact that many users will wear dark glasses even in a darkened room, as even the dim light bothers their eyes. There are no common outward symptoms. Some users will walk a little stiffly to compensate for the distortion of height and distance, others will talk very slowly and thoughtfully, and still others will talk so rapidly that the words seem to run all together. Some will have reddened eyes, and yes, some do get glassy-eyed. It all depends on the individual and how, under the influence of marijuana, he deviates from his norm.

Contrary to some common ideas, marijuana is not addictive, and there is no concrete proof that the use of it leads to harder drugs. In fact, all of the common "bad" reactions of marijuana are equally true of alcohol. One sees the people who are hung up on pot and who have dropped out of the race, and the comment is made "That's what pot will do to you". Yet what about the wino bums on skid row?

Lest anyone get the idea that I am taking up the fight for marijuana--"Tain't so". I am merely pointing out that there are many misconceptions about it, and that we don't really know if it is more harmful to the average individual than alcohol is, or not. I can remember when there was no law against the use of marijuana in this country. There were a few users of it in the neighborhood of Detroit, where I grew up. These users were looked upon as oddballs, but they never bothered anyone, and no one bothered them.

Then, in the mid-30's, the Commissioner of the Federal Narcotics Bureau became convinced that the use of marijuana was a dangerous thing, and he started a campaign to prohibit it by having it declared a narcotic. In this campaign, he was aided by a Sunday supplement to the Hearst papers, called "The American Weekly". Based upon the Commissioner's campaign and the continuing articles, the general public became aroused and legislation was passed and legal proclamations made outlawing the use of marijuana as a narcotic drug.

It is my personal opinion that a comprehensive study should be made to determine the exact facts concerning marijuana. Does the use of it really lead to harder drugs--does the continued use of it inevitably lead to mental deterioration--does its continued use lessen the will and drive the user to a debilitated state?

These facts should then be made known to the public, and if it is scientifically established that pot is dangerous, then a Constitutional Amendment should be submitted for a public referendum to outlaw the drug. If it should be established that it is no more (or not as) harmful as alcohol or tobacco, then I believe that the Federal law should be repealed, and the separate states left to decide how they wish to regulate it.

* * * * *

It is my personal conviction that homosexuals are emotionally crippled people who, for one reason or another, are incapable of enjoying sex in the way that nature obviously intended people to do. In fact, the homosexual act has been most aptly described as "The Caricature of Love", which is the title of a book by Dr. Hervey M. Cleckley.

I firmly believe that if homosexuals want to do their thing in private, let them. Also, if they have certain bars or clubs where they want to hang out and make pickups among their own clique, by all means let them. Too many police departments waste a great deal of time bothering these characters, when the time could be better spent on some of the more important transgressions of the law. However, in some instances, the homosexual element brings trouble on its own head, by becoming too blatant and annoying.

Because of the predominant religious ethic of this country, homosexuality is considered taboo. In both the Old Testament and the New, the blast is put on this type of conduct. I personally am not annoyed by knowing that a certain person is a homosexual, and I have never felt I had to prove my own masculinity by punching one in the nose. I say this in a somewhat sardonic sense, as on occasion a "real he-man" will see a somewhat flamboyant male and will make the classic remark that "Every time I see one of those queers, I want to punch him in the nose".

The interesting part is that the average man thinks he can spot a homosexual any time he sees one, when in fact he can't tell the difference between a homosexual and an epicene person. Furthermore, they are usually completely fooled by the pederastic type, who are the most dangerous from the standpoint of morals and law enforcement. As to homosexual stereotypes, I have found that in most cases they stereotype themselves.

Some homosexuals are brilliant persons in their particular field of endeavor. However, they attempt to pass off the fable that all homosexuals are more brilliant and/or talented than the average heterosexual, when the truth is that they are talented as individuals, just as some physically handicapped persons are exceptionally talented. The fact is that the talented, stereotyped homosexual is noticeable because of his dress and/or actions and this lends credence to the fable.

And, while we are on the subject of stereotypes, I know of at least three male homosexuals who are successful interior decorators, not to mention designers of women's dresses and shoes. On the other hand, I have had occasion to encounter homosexuals who were intellectually stupid. Furthermore, there are always homosexuals in the French Foreign Legion, which is hardly a sissy outfit. Much has been made of homosexuality in prisons. However, a great deal of this is not truly homosexual activity but is rather surrogated behavior. A true homosexual may be defined as a person who, from immediate preference, has sexual relations with a person of the same sex.

To reiterate, I believe that if homosexuals keep it private and hang out with their own kind, they ought to be left alone. When they persist in annoying "straight" people with their advances, they should be arrested as disorderly persons, and when they solicit among or impair the morals of minors, they should be prosecuted under morals offenses. In other words, homosexuality per se should not be a crime. It is also interesting to note that, in the historic sense, whenever homosexuality became an open, publicly accepted form of behavior, it was one of the early signs of the decline of that phase of civilization.

* * * * *

Anyone who engages in investigative work or news reporting soon finds out that there are certain sources of information that are not readily available to the average person, and also that there are what is commonly called "grapevines" in certain strata of society. The key to this information is in having a contact within the group concerned. The best connection is one that is based upon mutual trust or respect, stemming either from past favors or a vouching from a person of standing or repute within the particular stratum.

In other instances, the source is someone who is in fear of or forcibly beholden to the seekers of information. In large metropolitan areas, groups are further segmented by areas, so that, for example, if in New York the black element in Brooklyn has something going on, the people in Harlem might have no idea about it at all.

However, let us assume that there was a piece of information concerning a white man that you believed a black cab driver in Harlem might know. If you had a good friend in the black community in Brooklyn, and since the information would do no harm to a black, he could, probably, within a few days give you a lead or connection in the direction you wanted.

In small communities, the relationship is really tight, and among domestic types it is something else. They literally do know all of the goings-on in the town. I have lived in the South for many years now, and know that in the average medium-to-small town in this area that the black domestics are a tight-knit group (self-preservation) and if approached formally will go into an "Uncle Tom" act that is something to see. However, if you are known or vouched for, and the information won't hurt one of them, they will tell you what you need--often the information is conveyed by indirection, but it is there. Further, if the information does concern a black, but the black in question has done something harmful to the black community, the information often will come through one of the community leaders, again, usually by indirection.

In Germany, at the end of World War II, there were thousands of Displaced Persons, commonly known as DPs, and these DPs were separated in camps by nationality or ethnic origin. The international money black market was largely controlled by Jews. Out of the same element of self-protection, they had a grapevine that was fantastic. In the early days of the occupation, I had done a favor for one of the Jewish camp leaders, and he and I became good friends.

Some time later, something of a classified nature was stolen from one of the military bases in Germany. We had reason to believe that it might be offered to the Jewish underground for use in what was then Palestine. If this item was used, diplomatic hell would break loose and might seriously affect the attitude of the U.S. toward the Free Israel movement. I went to my friend, explained the situation to him, and asked for his help in a "no questions asked" recovery of the item. Within 24 hours, I had the item back, and a little bird told me who the U.S. personnel were who stole it.

Later on, this same friend tipped me off to a counterfeit scheme that was being concocted by some of his compatriots. This scheme, he felt, would be traced back to the camp and reflect discredit upon the Jewish community. When we made the raid, we seized the plates, but the operators had apparently fled only moments before we arrived. I am satisfied in my own mind that my friend tipped them off so that they could avoid arrest, but at the same time, we were able to break up the operation before it really got started, so my friend was able to satisfy both his conscience and his personal ethics.

Incidentally, for the benefit of anyone who doesn't know what an "Uncle Tom" act is, there is a fine example by Sammy Davis Jr. in the picture "Ocean's Eleven". It is the bit at the police checkpoint when Sammy is driving the garbage truck. Also, McGee has a couple of these experiences, in some of his adventures.

- Bill Wilson

BOOK REVIEW:

THE BLESSING WAY, by Tony Hillerman (Harper & Row, 1970. \$4.95)

Dr. Bergen McKee, the protagonist of this entertaining and informative Harper Novel of Suspense may not be your cup of tea as a fictional hero--if you are one of those narrow-minded readers who insist that heroes of suspense must be as hardboiled and as brainy as Travis McGee. In short, McKee is no McGee

Nor is he meant to be...

Not that McKee is a pantywaist. He finds that he's tougher than he thinks he is as he becomes involved in the mystery of the Navajo wolf man and the seemingly reasonless murder that occurs during his field trip in the Southwest. And he is not lacking in the brain department. Neither is his friend, Joe Leaphorn of the Law & Order Division, who adds a unique touch to the police procedural side of the story. Between the two of them they solve the seemingly unsolvable, and at the same time clue us in on modern and ancient Indian lore. A fascinating book for mystery readers with an interest in ethnology--or even without. If THE BLESSING WAY isn't the first of a series, it should be.

-ljm

Please Write For Details

The Readers Write...

((...the editors reply - ljm & jmm))

POUL ANDERSON, Orinda, CA:

LOC

~~At Left Gibson~~ Poul Anderson

"When a lady feels low," says McGee
"Make your help both effective and free.
Steer her clear of analysis
And suggest, instead, phalluses;
"I have found that she'll always agree."

FRED BLOSSER, Boomer, W. VA: Sorry I can't agree with Stewart, Shiffrin and others in the lettercol of JDMB #13 that McGee is starting to creak. One, McGee is complex enough to continue to interest me, even after 11 novels (unlike, say, Tiger Mann, for whom one book was plenty). Two, MacDonald's plots and prose haven't begun to deteriorate appreciably, so why kill a profitable line? Three, Gold Medal has already lost "Richard Stark"'s Parker: losing McGee as well wouldn't do the last publishing stronghold of American hardboiled writers a hell of a lot of good. And so on and so on...

(I could throw a monkey wrench in the works by griping about Trav being too cute at times, like a Bill Cosby routine that doesn't quite come off, but the last time that that really rubbed me was way back in Hightmare in Pink, and it wasn't Trav himself but Nina, probably the most insipid heroine in modern fiction--the final page-and-a-half of chapter 7 if you want to see what I mean--who irritated me so I won't bring it up and congratulations for wading through what must be the most involuted sentence since Henry James.)

Oh yeah--I probably shouldn't have taken that swipe at Spillane in paragraph one. Did anyone else catch the Spillane interview on the "Today" TV program in July, 1967? When asked who his favorite writers were, Spillane answered: "Carroll John Daly and John D. MacDonald." A JDM fan can't be all bad.

My hopes are rising for the "Darker Than Amber" flick. After seeing the abortions Hollywood made of the Matt Helm books I was kind of leery about MacDonald being filmed. (Though the adaptation of Cry Hard, Cry Fast on "Run For Your Life" a couple of years ago wasn't bad.) But it sounds like "Amber" is being handled well. And may I suggest The Deep Blue Good-By as a follow-up if the first film makes a profit? The climatic fist-fight scene between Trav and Junior Allen on board the crippled yacht would be a hair-raiser on the screen.

JEAN BONNER, Lawrence, Kansas: (January 23, 1970) Have a goody to pass along. I attended the University of Colorado Writers' Conference last June and ran headlong into Harlan Ellison--a kooky but GREAT guy, and a terrific workshop leader. During one of his harangues on what makes a good writer-person, he asked the group (30-40 quivering victims) how many were familiar with John D. MacDonald. About 7 of us raised our hands, whereupon Mr. Ellison slapped his papers on the table and shook his head violently.

"What do you people read?" he said. "If you really want to know what writing is all about, pick up one of MacDonald's books. You can learn more about good writing from one page of his stuff than anything I can tell you here."

Yup, I have to agree--he is that good.

JON L. BREEN, Gardena, CA: Number 13 is another excellent issue. I was interested to see the results of Mr. Peterson's poll. I didn't vote in it, not feeling I'd read enough JDM to qualify, but I induced my father to cast a vote.

It amuses me that Mr. Peterson considers 36 ballots a disappointing total. I'm working on a similar best-5 poll on Ellery Queen (for Bob Washer's TQCB) and I haven't quite received 36 votes. More like 6.

Mr. Peterson's tabulating method doesn't give any weight to the order of preference given by the participants. I'd prefer a scoring system based on five points for a first-place vote, four for a second, three for a third, two for a fourth, and one for a fifth.

If this method had been employed, the winner would remain the same but The Girl, The Gold Watch & Everything would move into second.

Many interesting comments on Dress Her In Indigo. One of your correspondents calls it dull! That is one quality JDM is incapable of projecting, at least in any of the works of his I've read.

I suspect that Ted White's letter was the one you expected your readers to see red at. (Isn't my syntax stunning tonight?) Actually, his remarks have a good deal of validity. In fairness to JDM, however, he certainly does much better than most middle-aged writers who try to depict the youth-drug-hip scene. One very well-known writer of detective short stories (who shall remain nameless) recently revealed in print that he believes LSD-users sometimes move on to something stronger: marijuana!

BILL CRIDER, Austin, Texas: Speaking of rare editions of JDM's books, I have recently found a copy of the 1954 Dell pb (that is, before revision) of AREA OF SUSPICION. Is this rare enough to call for my holding on to any additional copies I happen to run across (if I do), or am I just the last one to find this?

For Christmas I got a copy of WHO DONE IT? by Ordean Hagen; for your readers who don't know, this is a bibliography (or is supposed to be) listing all mysteries published in English between 1841 and 1967. Because it cost over \$18, I couldn't afford it myself, but my inlaws could. Anyway, before any of your readers drop \$18, they should know that while the book is fascinating, even I, a non-expert in these matters, spotted a number of errors. For example: JDM's THE BLOOD GAME is listed as having been published by Doubleday in 1965; at least one Tony Rome book, MY KIND OF GAME, is not listed at all; several Jim Thompson books are omitted; numerous pb dates are not given or are not the date of the first edition. All in all, I guess one can overlook such trifles, because the book is certainly remarkable for what it does succeed in doing.

I would also like to comment on what I think may be a new trend, one which I don't like very much. I have just read BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE, by Lou Cameron, a new GM original. It contains one pornographic sexual episode and numerous incidents which, in less-enlightened times, were referred to as "sensationalism". I don't think of myself as Mrs. Grundy, and Grove Press has their share of my coins, but, nevertheless, I just don't think that a mystery or a suspense novel is the place for graphic sex which does absolutely nothing to advance the story or develop a character--the one in the Cameron book does neither. In fact, the girl is killed off soon after. Her funeral advances the story, but it could have been another funeral just as well; the sex just does not contribute to the story.

The point is, however, that this is not just an isolated example. I have read two "Garrity" novels by Allan Nixon which have the same kind of vivid-but-pointless description (and let me say that two strikes and Nixon is out--these are the poorest stories combined with the worst writing that I have run across in a good while). The same is true of something called GANNON'S VENDETTA by John Whitlatch (which is not written much better).

Is this what it takes to sell books these days? And don't tell me that I shouldn't object to good healthy sex and not to the blood and violence in these books; I do object to it, especially in the Whitlatch, where it is simply violence for the sake of violence.

Well, now that I have that off my chest, I can get back to my other problems. Thanks again.

((The '54 edition of AREA OF SUSPICION is probably rare enough, especially to completist collectors. ::The listing of THE BLOOD GAME in WHO DONE IT? is probably our fault. We first listed it among titles to be published, and somehow managed to list it among the published books when we reprinted the JDM novel list. Later, we learned that BLOOD GAME was one of those novels that John started and then set aside to work on later. He could be working on it now. ::The use of sex and violence in any kind of fiction is hardly a new trend, any more than it is a new trend in making movies. Relaxing of strict censorship--or the defying of censorship--whichever way you want to look at it--is a current trend in publishing and movie making. But, historically speaking, not a new trend. These things seem to go in cycles. Personally, I would rather see less censorship and put up with the stuff in poor taste in order to let the good writers and movie-makers be free of bluenose legal restrictions. I don't have to read the books that misuse the freedom, and, at the same

time I don't have to worry that JDM is going to be hauled into court because McGee beds down with one of his cliente. -ljm))

JOSEPH CSIDA, Pacific Palisades, CA: The only letter I actively disliked in all the JDMBs I've read was the long and silly one from Ted White.

I know MacDonald won't be too upset over it. He'll realize, as anyone sensible reading it would, that no writer could possibly please such a thoro expert on drugs, sex, perversion and story-telling as Mr. White.

I've liked everything MacDonald has ever done, and have since before BRASS CUPCAKE. All I want from him is to keep it up, and I don't care if he continues McGee, writes fiction or non-fiction. Whatever he decides, I know he'll do as well as he can, and that's plenty good.

L. FLEMING, Pasadena, CA: This is a plug for JDM's book about his pet cats (and also some about JDM), THE HOUSE GUESTS (1965). I had occasion to read everything handy about cats, some 20 books so far. There are four main types: "What and How" books, vet books, anthologies, and personal books. The well-known personal books include, besides JDM's, the Carl Van Vechten TIGER IN THE HOUSE, Beverly Nichols' CATS' ABC and Doris Lessing's PARTICULARLY CATS.

Van Vechten is dated and stuffy, Nichols pulls social rank on the reader until you can't stand it (amusing eccentricities of one's servants, lunch at the Club, and tea with the Duke); Lessing puts gooey emotion ahead of the animals themselves.

THE HOUSE GUESTS is far ahead of these efforts. JDM's observations are not only thoughtful and sympathetic, but bright and clear. The cats' characters come out as sharply as JDM's humans. You know them personally. No other writer has done them as well, except possibly the naturalist Konrad Lorenz.

Maybe the only official ticket for being ranked as a trained animal observer is a Ph.D in ethology. But in real life, a good writer of fiction has to be a trained observer of everything. And it takes a brighter person to write good thrillers than it does to write mainstream novels. So JDM has not only written an elegant book, he has top credentials, if anyone should ever ask.

JIM GAUDET, Cambridge, Mass.: JDM's reactions on visiting the production of DARKER THAN AMBER both surprised and pleased me. Surprised, because I expected him to be less than eager to observe others playing around with his characters; pleased, because he reacted openly to what was apparently a first for him, he comes across a lot younger than his physical age would lead you to believe. It was a lot of fun to read, and it gave us all a few more insights into JDM.

Bill Wilson's column was the big surprise of the issue. Your introduction left me a bit skeptical as to its objectivity. Once I got into it, however, I felt much reassured. His is an easy style, bred of long familiarity with his material and with the need to present it coherently. I also like his attitude. I am looking forward to more. As for a title, if you would like to keep a tradition going, why not MAN OF AFFAIRS? I feel it is more appropriate than HARD TOUCH.

By the way, in general I feel that what JDM's ten best friends think about him (or what my ten best friends think of me) is far different from the image a man creates of himself in his writings. For one, there is the purpose in the communications experienced. With his friends, JDM is probably a personality first and a source of ideas second. In his writings, the various characters JDM creates are obviously not true reflections of their creator (in general); yet, they all possess the obvious unifying element: JDM created them. How he treats them, how often certain characters (and situations) appear reflect elements of JDM's character.

Thus, through the JDMB, we all have an opportunity to trade our thoughts on these books, characters, situations and ideas. Intentionally or not, we are all creating a forum by which a collective, public image of JDM is emerging. Witness Ted White's letter, Bill Wilson's column, and our collective furor over who gets what role in the movie.

Unlike other fan-organizations devoted to a certain author, we have the added pleasure of author-feedback. (In return, I assume we provide audience feedback for author and publisher. True?) Thus, JDM can express amusement at someone's letter in one issue, and we can all wonder just why he was amused, what he meant by those remarks. So, he gives away a bit of himself, and we give away a bit of ourselves. This isn't just a lot of vacuous (in ultimate effect) comment; it's communication. That's why I dig JDMB, and JDM. So there.

((I think that's why we all dig JDM and JDMB. We aren't an organized fan-club, but JDMB--plus the other fanzines or journals in the field--aids in communication, and that's what most fandoms of this sort are all about. -ljm))

CLAY KIMBALL, Eden, N.C.: The JDM Popularity Poll was a delight. I didn't vote, myself, and have little interest in the results. It really doesn't matter that much what others consider his best works. It only matters to the individual reading the book. Still, the write-up was very humorous, and I hope you can induce Petersen to do more writing for you.

Wilson's column is also good. I don't really agree completely with his viewpoint, (he omits all the evidence for the other side) but he makes me stop and analyze my own position, which can't be all bad.

Why aren't the pieces by JDM printed in the JDMB listed in the Master Checklist?

Can anyone recommend a good mystery reviewer? I always depended on Boucher to steer me to anything worth reading, and now that he's gone, I don't know whose opinion I can rely on. (And I certainly can't read everything that comes out so I can decide for myself.) Boucher's reviews revealed enough of the essence of the book to enable a person to judge for himself whether he would like to read a book, no matter if Boucher didn't happen to like it, (or even if he did). Is there anyone else around who reviews like this?

Wonder if anyone happened to tape JDM's radio/TV appearances? Be nice to get a copy if anyone happens to have one. There are some people who sell tapes of old radio programs--including Vic and Sade. If you like, I'll send you some addresses.

Put another "X" on Ted White's mailing label.

Many of the letterwriters seem intent on proving that they're not slavish admirers of JDM, and that they can recognize his defects, which, I guess, is better than refusing to admit that he has any.

((I think that we have listed the JDM pieces that have appeared in JDMB in the MC or in the supplement sheets--except for the letters. It wasn't our intention to list all of the letters John has had published, though we did make a couple of exceptions, such as listing a letter he had in PLAYBOY a while back. However, most everyone who buys the MC also subscribes--or does something--to be on the JDMB mailing list, so they see the letters, whereas the books, stories, etc., are items they may or may not know about without the aid of the MC and its supplements. ::We think that Allen Hubin has done a good job of replacing Boucher as the NY TIMES mystery reviewer. Of course--and I'm sure that Allen agrees--no one can really replace Tony Boucher. -ljm))

DAVID LOCKE, Duarte, CA: If this is the trend of Bill Wilson's column, maybe you should title it AREA OF SUSPICION. I rather agree with him that simple justice is no longer simple, and most of the time not even justice. It's a problem of compensation, and it's two-fold. First, you have new restraints on the police to balance the human failing of misuse of power. Without it, the citizen has the problem of defending himself against those police who would use no common decency in the performance of their work. With it, you've got a police force that is so bound up in these safeguards that it cannot adequately perform its function. Which is worse? If there's a happy medium, define it.

One problem is that police procedures are not being updated anywhere near as rapidly as are the rights of the individual. Look how well protected the individual is now when it comes to search and seizure. However, the police still have to spend as much time in getting a warrant as they ever did, and by the time they get it they can usually blow their nose on it.

Then you've got the matter of the courts, which is what Bill was talking about. Again, it's over-compensation, supporting the old saw that "we'd rather let ten guilty men go free than convict one innocent man". So now we're at the point where we convict hardly anybody. ((You think that's not still valid? You want to convict everybody, on the assumption that if they weren't guilty, they wouldn't be there? -jmm)) And look at the length of some of these trials, which consequently lengthens the waiting period before you can get a trial. ((Of course, we could always go back to the Good Old-Fashioned System, where most prisoners never got a trial at all. Think of the savings! -jmm))

Another problem is the delineation of black and white when you've got any set of rules, including law and court procedures. If you can find such a thing, a human judge with a liberal understanding of right and wrong, or justice and injustice, doesn't need fifty billion detailed clauses in order to guide himself or the jury in making verdicts. I have the feeling we're trying to get it all down so pat that we can just let a computer crank out the judicial decisions, and with that much wordage you can bet you're going to get technicalities. With no safeguards you're often at the mercy of whim, and when you try to cover every conceivable circumstance with them, then the ridiculous starts happening. Again, define the happy medium. ((The quality of computering is not strained...it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven...? -jmm))

I'm terribly sorry that Ted White was "annoyed" at my review of BROWN, because he doesn't agree with my reasons why it was weak. But then, I don't agree with many of his. I go along with the feeling that McGee was too exterior to the crucial events of the book, but beyond that I don't buy White's reasoning.

Perhaps Ted White finds John's notion of perversion tiring, but that may mean it's either a case of what you're used to or what you're used to reading. If the case in point is the big sex orgy that John described, then I take it that when Ted refers to this sort of thing as being obsolete, he means it's no longer an example of perversion. When he says it's puritan he must mean it's puritan, from Ted White's point of view, to consider it perversion. I question that Ted White's point of view is either the norm or the ideal, just as I doubt that the big sex orgy is either the norm or the ideal. It exists, and is currently more blatant. But then, the same can be said of Ted White. I find this no reason for wholehearted endorsement of either one.

For the benefit of most of your readers, this is not the first time I've run across Ted White's opinions. *Lacrimae rerum*. But hopefully, not *ab ovo usque ad mala*. Translations: tragedy of life, but hopefully not from beginning to end.)

The point is that MacDonald is showing us a view of life through the eyes of a fictional character named McGee, who has his prejudices and viewpoints. If I want to read about a hero who digs perversions, then there are lots of those books on the market, too. That Travis McGee is not a homosexual or pervert is not, to my mind, a horrible tragedy. Nor does it reflect poorly on the author. That McGee does not horribly sympathize with these types is also not too damaging, even though it is disappointing to Ted.

It is, however, interesting to note that these "weaknesses" which Ted says cut him so deep are more a matter of McGee's viewpoint than of MacDonald's writing ability. You'll notice I don't lump MacDonald's and McGee's viewpoints together, as it isn't necessarily true that you can tie the two together straight across the board. I don't feel, as Ted obviously does, that they're always the same. But in the instances he cites, they likely are.

I think Dave Stewart's letter wins the prize for best in this issue. A Busted Flush Bronzed Barnacle? That JDM will turn journalist is rather a dismal picture for us fiction lovers, but there's more than a grain of truth in his logic. However, if he continues to write fiction I certainly hope he doesn't write on Stewart's choice about the black man in America. I doubt that he would anyway, but I'm tired of hearing about "society's emotional castration of the black male". Rather colorful term, though, isn't it? Might make a good McGee title, BLACKMAIL FOR CASTRATION. I wonder if his publishers would have the balls to print it?

None of your readers have brought it up, naturally, but I'm opting for some JDM science fiction. How about it, JDM, you've had the interest to write in this field before; what's the status on seeing another science fiction novel in the future? Or even another light fantasy? Please answer - I have this great burning desire to see something more from you in this line. Hello? Hello?

((We'll drink to that--more s-f by JDM, that is, so we hope that John doesn't hang up on your plaintive hellos... -ljm))

JOHN D. MacDONALD, Florida: A few comments on the comments in Numero 13: To Ted White, who sees a pernicious cliché in reporting the reality of members of the black community in southern cities knowing a considerable amount about the private affairs of the members of the power structure, I think Mr. White might be thinking a little bit cloudily due to the kind of obligatory liberal stance that everybody is like everybody else. Maybe they are, or would be, in a vacuum. But forces and pressures create survival-abilities. In the chicken yard they keep an eye on the hawk at all times. In infantry patrol action, any flaw in intelligence can be fatal. Were I black (and even the most empathetic white novelist could only approximate a portion of the inner values and reactions of that condition of birth) I would damned well keep track of what was going on in every level of the white community, because I would want to know when to duck and what to duck--when to insist and upon what to insist.

Re the drug scene, I would be almighty surprised if Mr. White's contact with it were any more than the usual social bit. It is obvious he has never encountered a head, or had to deal with one in any direct way. They are emotional inadequates, stunted in some internal way so gravely that they will over-use any escape hatch, be it grass, booze, candy, milk or sex. My own marijuana experience was back in the dark dark ages, long before it was fashionable, when sticks were called "miggles" for God's sake, and cost a dime in most of the Harlem jazz clubs. All they did for me in the mid-thirties was isolate the components of the music so I had the feeling I could hear everything. And it took forever to walk across a street. And at any time some innocent object--a hamburger, a lamp post, a city bus--could become the funniest damned thing ever seen by anyone.

During two and a half years in India I had some close contact with the charas scene, and charas is merely cannabis so refined and intensified that it has about ten times the clout of the grass available here. The Indian government studies of the charas head (six cigarettes or six candy-cakes a day) show a forty per cent incidence of irreversible psychosis. I think that a lot of contemporary sophisticated tolerance of cannabis is due to the fact that it is so damned weak here by comparison. At one point, I toted British opium into North Burma because that was the standard wage paid to the Kachin hill tribes for their dirt-moving work on the Stilwell Road (Pick's Pike). It came in hard, tan, one-tilo bricks, shaped like small square pillows, tied about with twine. The Kachins were a little surly about the opium we provided because the opium they could get from the Japanese had less sticks and straw and impurities in it.

I tried it, around the evening fire in the Kachin village, learned that it was a relaxant, giving a sense of ease, remoteness, quiet thoughts and added a vividness to one's daydreams. I saw that men, women and children all shared the pipes with no apparent ill effects. However, in each village, (75 to 150 people) there were always two or three who were heads. They were thin, weak, pallid and totally withdrawn. They were not required to work. They got all the opium they needed. They were treated with a kind of sad respect one has for the dying, because in those harsh and soggy hills, once resistance is lowered, death from other causes soon results.

Re the smell of grass, it seems to me to be a sweetish pungency, pervasive and memorable. There is no point comparing subjective reactions to the smell of grass or the taste of pickles.

I happen to believe, based upon personal encounter and observation and pain, that this current bit of comparing grass and booze is dangerous nonsense. We can agree, I think (if Mr. White will find himself a couple of heads to observe) that a certain percentage of people are going to absent themselves from reality with whatever is available. As there is more booze available than there is strong grass, there are more drunks than heads. Drunks cause more damage to the people and things around them. But in either instance it is the destruction of personality. Okay, then what about the casual user of alcohol as opposed to the casual user of marijuana? The difference can be read in permanent change in the pattern of the electroencephalogram in the grass user, in a measurable shortening of the attention span, and in, too often, a lowering of the sights insofar as the goals and life-style are concerned.

Mr. White seems so anxious to lambaste me on every possible front, that somehow, for me, the sting is lost. If he had kept to valid objection to what I actually am writing (rather than what he thinks I am writing) then it might have some constructive impact. But, like so many people otherwise perceptive, he seems to want the writer to speak with his own mouth through every single character in the book. I cannot imagine a more deadly novel than one where every character voiced my own opinions. Not even McGee does that. I do not want to overreact to Mr. White's remarks, but, just as he says about his young friends, I do not like to be patronized. Nor do I feel any agonizing compulsion to get with the scene on the present level of myth and fashionability which seems to have him hooked. I have to get with things on my own basis, not on the basis of what anyone thinks it would be dutiful of me to write. This might provide a little more historical continuity and relevancy than were I, like a garment store, changing my product to fit every trend. I would be interested to know what he thought of the drug scene in *THE END OF THE NIGHT*. That was published in 1960 when Mr. White was 21. It was pre-hippy, pre-drug-concern, and I would like to know if he thinks I was trying so terribly hard to Understand, and basing it on text books.

I do not think that there is any such thing as a generation gap. There is an awareness gap. There is an intelligence gap. There is an education gap. But the age of the person is not a qualification as to which side of the gap he belongs on.

I suspect that the root cause of Mr. White's trauma in the area of critique is merely the fact of being 31. That may be the year when the centerfold girls look less bovine. The current issue of *Playboy* with my short in it, *DEAR OLD FRIEND*, shocked me for a very special reason. The lovely 17 year old on the cover is the granddaughter of a Sarasota friend--Frances Archdeacon. How can any man be foolhardy enough to try to stay with it when they begin throwing granddaughters at him?

To Jesse Burt: I'll buy that critique of *INDIGO*. It is just about the way I feel about the book. "Travis should never have left home." Amen.

To Dave Stewart, who predicts I will take the easy way out: I haven't done so up until now. Don't plan to start. And forget *THE PRIMITIVE EXPERIENCE*. I have killed it dead, and with suitable ceremony buried 500 pages in the trash basket. No more journalism, ever, or any novel based on factual incident, ever. I do so solemnly swear...

To William F. Smith, who talked of a Nobel (!) prize: Bless you, sir, for a loyal and touching misconception. I have chosen to work in those areas which a Yale professor has termed sub-literary. I should not use the word "chosen" because it is not all that voluntary. I write what I want to write, and keep hoping it will get better as the years shuffle by. I cannot make myself into something I am not, either in talent, skill, novelistic materials or insight, so I am caught, as is everyone, in their own little set of limitations, and part of being grown up is, I guess, knowing what you can probably do, and what you can't ever do. I can't ever be given that award, and I would not want it because I would have to spend all of eternity wandering around the Writer's Building, apologizing to Faulkner and all the others who won it for great and ample reason.

Enough for now. Keep well. Stand firm.

((We're sorry to hear that there won't be a second Coppolino book by JDM. We found the first one fascinating and informative--even educational--and only regret that it wasn't indexed. With an index it would be an outstanding textbook, instead of just an excellent one. On the other hand, it does seem that more McGee and more other fiction is what most of us want, (if we can't have both fiction and non-fiction from JDM) judging by the letters--published and unpublished--sent to JDMB. -ljm))

MIKE NEVINS, East Brunswick, NJ: I'm doing a mammoth collection of uncollected stories by the late and great Cornell Woolrich, to be published by Harper & Row early next year.

I fell into a windfall last month, picking up two copies of the first edition of *BORDER TOWN GIRL* for exactly 8 1/3 cents per copy. Do you know anybody who'd like my spare copy?

SAMUEL R. PHILLIPS, Dunellen, NJ: I hope that JDM isn't losing interest in Travis, as might be indicated by several weak points sparsely deposited throughout *BROWN* and *INDIGO* (where Trav was pushed too often into the back-

ground and too much attention was given to other obscure characters.

However, I must admit that both (and every) books mentioned gave me MUCH MORE than my money's worth. JDM's books give me the most pleasure per dollar than any other form of entertainment that I have discovered.

JEFF SMITH, Baltimore, MD: JDMB is a fascinating little fanzine. I can't think of any other that still sounds neofannish in its 13th issue.

That, incidentally, is not a complaint. I'm hardly an old pro at fannishness, being a veteran of My Fandom (sf) of little over a year. I like the enthusiasm of neofannishism, and in sf it doesn't last very long. (Unfortunately, only a few people turn into Ted Whites--able to write very well on everything. When we start out, we can write enthusiastically about everything...)

Myself, I've just run through two very neofannish issues of PHANTASMICON, an sf fmz, and the third issue is going to be quite different, it appears. I must admit to losing some of my enthusiasm. Which is not to say I'm having less fun! ((Isn't it? -jmm))

Anyway, to catch up on some sleep I went to bed around 8 p.m. last night, as is not my wont, and was up around 8 this morning. The only thing to do 8 o'clock Sunday morning is read, so I put on some music and read WINE OF THE DREAMERS. I approached it apprehensively, because as a general rule I dislike 1951 science fiction novels (1953 and 4 were pretty good years, though), but my fears were unfounded. The book was very well told (of course) and I really truly did not know how it was going to end. I didn't know if the ending was going to be happy or tragic. MacDonald really cut it close, and I thank him for a fun morning.

I'm sorry he didn't get into the problem of what would happen if three minds inhabited the same body, because that strikes me as a real problem of the society he set up; but I don't think that it would happen in his story as it is set up, because most minds were on world one while the action took place on world two. The problem would probably arise on world one.

If any of your non-sf readers read this and were intrigued by the concept of more than one mind in just one body, allow me to recommend some further readings: a novel and a short story. The novel is Dave van Arnam's STARMIND, a Ballantine paperback of a year ago, which is not about alien takeover, but is for two-thirds of its length a fine psychological novel concerning Tylerbody--a composite human consisting of Benjy Tyler's body and cerebellum, Joe Winslow's right brain lobe and Jailyn Post's left brain lobe. The best parts of the novel concern the various personalities' adjustments to this very strange way of life.

The short story is Robert Silverberg's "Passengers", an original story in Damon Knight's anthology ORBIT FOUR (hardback Putnam, paperback Berkeley) which tackles MacDonald's theme of alien takeover from the standpoint of the human victims. JDM showed us the fun the aliens had, but for the most part he ignored the very personal effects this had on the people it happened to. Silverberg's story is a very chilling, depressing and emotional one, and it's worth hunting up.

There are, of course, many others (Silverberg's novel TO LIVE AGAIN concerns multiple inhabitation of minds, and is one of his best books) but I had only planned on a one-page note.

HARRIET STEVENSON, West Linn, Oregon: I am abject with chagrin. Imagine my surprise to see my name in PWFD. Not in any way, shape, form, writing, plot, innuendo, words, deeds or ultimate outcome would I compare or contrast JDM with Perry Mason. I think Earl Stanley Gardner is a great man but I don't like books that are run out by computers. It's amazing, though, the Perry Mason shows come on early, 7:30, local television. I'd rather watch them, or it, than some of the SIT-COMS.

I still hold to my original thought that Cissy was framed to confess. Now, if she had been stripped naked and beaten with rubber hoses, she wouldn't have confessed. If she had been stripped and turned out in the prison yard to be raped by all the prisoners, she wouldn't have confessed. ((Under the heading of Extra Privileges for the prisoners?

My, my. -jmm))

Sure, a smart lawyer and her defense lawyer, an alcoholic, devised a plan to get her to confess. A smart lawyer like F. Lee Bailey, Percy Foreman or Melvin Belli could get her a hearing. Sure, she was guilty, but she doesn't have to be a witness against herself. So: I'll leave it lay.

But thanks to you two for answering my question about the Apollo 11. Now if you think nobody else held a breath. I didn't fully realize until I read about it later that there could have been trouble about the landing. But when I heard: "Tranquillity Base here, the Eagle has landed," the tears were running down my cheeks. The moon-walk wasn't half as exciting.

Of course you kids are too young to remember Lindy. There weren't many radios around the Reed College Campus. But we all ganged up to listen. Would he make it? And he did. That was 1927.

I meant to do this critique page by page in an orderly manner; the way you very efficiently put out JDMB. But then I find Epaminondas. Now, what yo'll tokn 'bt. Jus got sen doun t' th' crk fur a pn'd uf butr. Now sus wrop 't 'n g'wape lvs an' bwun 'm hom. Ownl'st t'ng I seen in the P'nd wuz th's lut'l d'g. So I wrupp'd h'm 'n gr'p lvs 'n brung h'm home. 'n Mama s'd to Epaminondas: "Now you ain't got the sense you was borned with, you never did have the sense you was borned with and you never will have the sense you was borned with." ((A sweeping indictment, indeed! -jmm)) I have always liked the juvenile delinquents like Peter Rabbit and Epaminondas. ((The version I read was in English rather than dialect. I put off reading the Uncle Remus stories for years because I wouldn't wade through the dialect--or couldn't. I wonder how many different versions of that story there are. Is it a real folk-tale? -jmm)) ((Epaminondas a folk-hero? Well, it's a thought. -jmm))

I have now read FLASH OF GREEN and it's very good. But there isn't anyone that noble; at least not to my knowledge. (I'd love to have a McGee shirt. Are they 44 inches across the chest?)

Now I'm not about to put down HARD TOUCH and Bill Wilson's obvious qualifications. But what does he know about the early days of mankind? People, and animals, have always lived in groups. Anthropologists call them "troops". Now, what civilization is Bill Wilson talking about? Greek? Homosexuality was their usual way of life. It kept the population down. Chinese? In the 7th Century their culture was greater and their commitment to justice surpassed anything in the so-called Western World. About that time the Romans were overrunning England. I suggest that Bill Wilson call his column I WISH I KNEW THE ANSWERS. Nobody does, least of all Bill Wilson.

GAIL Van ACHTOVEN, Sierra Madre, CA: Regarding the MOVIE NOTES: I worked at CBS-TV at the same time as Robert Clouse, director of DARKER THAN AMBER. At that time he wasn't a director (this was about ten years ago, I guess) and wasn't employed in any creative capacity. But he was an aspiring writer, in a writing class given for employees of CBS by Story Editor Helen Madden. He was outstandingly talented, and wrote a piece called "The Black Cadillac", which he finally produced, directed, photographed, edited, etc. mostly by himself and certainly with his own funds. It won awards and was on TV a few years back. Later he did "Jimmy Blue Eyes", another award winner, and which, again, he wrote, directed and produced by himself. (The man has a hearing handicap, by the way). He's really come up the hard way, on the strength of his own gifts and guts, and I'm sure he'll do justice to anything he tackles.

I don't have a title to suggest for Bill Wilson's column, but I do have an argument or two for his statements. (I suppose your title, "Hard Touch" is a good one if it means the opposite of "soft touch".) ((What else? -jmm)) Mr. Wilson asks "...what has happened to the question of guilt or innocence, and where is justice?"

This is an ancient question, and only those who believe there is such a thing as justice for all would ask it. By me, it's like saying black is black and white is white with no shades of grey in between. The villains are the bad guys and the good guys always win in the end. Can a person who believes in justice look even as far as his own neighborhood, where perhaps a family with retarded children lives next door, and across the street a man who was blinded in an accident; maybe nearby there are teenagers addicted to drugs; maybe a mother who died of cancer and left small children, and still believe? ((But that's Cosmic Justice--or Injustice! -jmm))

You could go on and on, and you know that's not an unusual neighborhood. All right, then, are we talking about the justice men mete to other men, only, leaving God, or Fate, or whatever out of it? Let's take the two case histories cited by Mr. Wilson.

In the first, he stated that the two robbers shot an innocent bystander, and the bystander's wife became mentally deranged as a result of his death. What would justice be in a case like that? Would the wife regain her sanity if the robbers had frizzled on the electric chair? Would their deaths have helped the orphaned children? Perhaps the children could look back with satisfaction and say "Okay, the guys that killed our father got theirs in the end," but is that really justice? Vengeance, yes, but justice? ((As a matter of fact, vengeance may very well have a therapeutic effect for a victim--but I doubt that's what Bill Wilson had in mind. -jmm))

Where was justice when the poor slob got in the way of the robbers' bullets in the first place? ((Tut-tut, that's Cosmic again. -jmm)) Since the robbers apparently didn't set out to kill that particular man, could we call his boss a murderer, since presumably his orders sent the salesman to the spot where he met his end? Could we call his client a murderer because he might have kept the salesman a few minutes overtime, so that he was on time for his date with death? ((Appointment in Samarkand? -jmm)) Maybe the salesman could be termed a suicide, since he stood looking on as two armed men committed their crime. Silly speculation, perhaps, but no sillier, to my mind, than blaming a judge who tried to do his job and interpret the law as he best sees it, or condemning a lawyer who admittedly made a deposit in the bank (he works for money, like the rest of us) but was trying to do his job to the best of his ability. Maybe his ability does not include taking on the responsibilities of judge and jury, or performing his work with selfless benevolence and infinite wisdom. Or maybe he was only out for a buck after all, but surely nobody, not even someone who believes in black and white, the good guys and justice, could mean to imply that the judge and lawyer were happy that the robbers went free and the wife to an institution? If people are really that bad, why hope only for justice? Why not hope for the genocide that seems to be approaching anyhow?

In the second case cited, I agree with Bill Wilson that the man should have been put away, but I do not agree that this would bring justice for the victims. It would be a safeguard to potential victims, but no guilty verdict could help the poor souls he harmed. And, in looking at these two cases further, one might ask what about the criminals...what is justice in their cases? Does a man become a sexual psychopath because he wants to? Does he rob and kill because he enjoys it? If so, genocide, where is thy sting? Anyway, to wish for a real McGee is a charming thought.

In contrast to Mr. Wilson's yen for a real McGee and therefore, to my mind, expressing his wish for fantasy to become fact, we have Ted White's letter in which he decries facts presented fantastically. I certainly couldn't argue with his savvy, and I wouldn't argue with anything he said anyway, because I am in open-mouthed awe of his writing abilities, but I would like to say this much. Why does he feel real-world things have to be presented accurately in fiction? Maybe it's the fault of my unanalytical mind, but I can enjoy a good story like INDIGO and never worry about the fact that marijuana might not have a sweet smell, and the smokers might not look glassy-eyed. McGee's perfect sexual raptures don't make me want to leave my husband, and his ideas of perversion don't bore me if they're not right up to date. I can figure that's the way he is, and so what? If the story's interesting and enjoyable, who cares? (How about James Bond? How anyone could believe anything in those stories is beyond me, yet their popularity was phenomenal. Or do you classify them with fantasy, Ted?) ((Now, now, Gail, leave us not confuse mere Phenomenal Popularity with the type of fiction required by the Superior Intellect. -jmm))

I know that Mr. White stated "It destroys identification with a book, and it puts McGee/MacDonald on the Other Side of The Fence: with those people who Don't Know, but presume to Advise". I don't think people look for advice, consciously or unconsciously, in fiction, and I don't think most writers believe themselves to be oracles, nor should their readers take them as such. ((But there IS a certain tendency for people to think that if they saw it in print, it must be true. -jmm))

If McGee/MacDonald obviously doesn't know about or approve of the drug scene, why should marijuana smokers or LSD trippers worry about it to the extent that they can't enjoy his stories? In my opinion, a believable character is necessary to a good story, but flaws in research can be forgiven, and even overlooked.

I guess the thing that worries me most about Ted White's comments, and what I have not expressed very well, is that they indicate the general trend toward FACTS to the disparagement of FICTION. As he probably knows, the market for factual articles these days far outstrips the markets for fiction in magazines. Who needs FACTS instead of FICTION? Facts are needed, certainly, but so is fiction. Peaceful Coexistence, Mr. White! ((Precisely. -jmm))

HARRY WARNER, Jr., Hagerstown, MD: Jack Speer says that a small response from a moderately small whole can provide some guidance to general preferences. So maybe the popularity poll has a bit more validity than Pete Petersen implies. But it would be nice to know if the great unknown bulk of the MacDonald public favors THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH & EVERYTHING as much as those who responded to this poll. JDMB's mailing list must have a fair quantity of science-fiction fans among the hardcore mystery and crime fiction fans. Then there's the matter of the failure of the McGee books to reach the top placings. Maybe the series isn't quite the best MacDonald, or maybe there is a certain amount of nostalgia working for the non-McGee books, which tend to be older and to have been read longer ago.

Bill Wilson's column is splendid, and I look forward to future installments in the most fidgeting manner. For quite a while, I've been wondering if the scale-weighting for the suspect might cause the decline and fall of the whole genre of crime and mystery fiction. If there's no way for the bad guy to get his comeuppance in the near future, because prosecutors can't beat the new roadblocks to convictions, how can authors wind up their stories? Allow the good guys to take the law into their own hands and gun down the bad guys before anyone has time to go through the formality of an arrest?

Some aspects of the law today simply do not make sense to me, even when I keep in mind the need to make certain that the law is superior to the old rough justice of the frontier West. Take, as an example, the Supreme Court rulings involving an individual's right to have a lawyer on hand and the importance of his being aware of his right to remain silent under police questioning. I sit through trial after trial in which the technicalities of the defendant's rights become the subject of defense counsel motions, almost always lost by defense counsel but undoubtedly utilized as a basis for later appeal when the man is convicted.

In almost every case, the defendant is someone who has been arrested repeatedly, because first offenders will normally get a suspended sentence if they plead guilty and try to beat the rap only when they know that their past record will make a prison term likely. Why should police be required to go through this ritual of describing to a man with a known criminal record his rights upon his latest arrest? ((Only if they always know that he has a criminal record at the time of his arrest would that attitude be valid. Or would you have them assume that he does in any case? -jmm)) He knows his rights by this time as certainly as he knows that he won't be able to walk between the bars of his cell. But the legal complexities and the acquittal that will come if there's the tiniest slipup involving the explanation of rights are just as valid for the person who has been picked up for the tenth or the fiftieth time.

And the plea of not guilty by reason of insanity. I feel more than the usual amount of sympathy for the insane because two cousins have been in and out of mental institutions. Fortunately, neither has had the mental problems that lead to violence or law-breaking. But I can't conceive the justice or logic of allowing the man who created a crime while insane to go scot free as soon as the mental institution has pronounced him cured. Surely there could be some kind of humane, useful life established for these people after they've been pronounced sane again, free from the tensions of city life and the rat race, where they could work in wildlife conservation or on farms or at other occupations for a year or two after their cure was pronounced, under observation all the while, then if still in good mental condition, could be released on condition that they stay away from their former city of residence, occupation and circle of friends, in order to prevent returning to the rut that may have produced the madness, originally. ((Do you really realized just exactly WHAT you are proposing, Harry? -jmm))

Nope, no Vic and Sade from the Nostalgia Book Club yet. I can't find that wonderful program included in the NFFF's current tape catalog, but in case you don't have a copy, it contains a fair amount of old radio broadcasts with crime or mystery content. I can't

find any MacDonald, and he gained full prominence too late for the golden age of radio anyway. But you might check with Joanne Bürger, 55 Blue Bonnet Court, Lake Jackson, Texas, 77566, to see if she has anything to interest you. She copies anything in the tape library for 50¢ per hour of running time plus a sufficient quantity of blank tape.

I don't follow Ted White's chain of logic when he speaks of the generation gap and then proceeds to scold JDM for the way he describes drug users. Certainly Ted can't mean that drugs are used only by young people or that the use of drugs by people of any age is something new in this particular time in man's history. I suppose that someone could come up with statistics proving that more people are using marijuana than a quarter-century or a half-century ago, but it might also be possible to argue that the stuff is just getting more publicity and people aren't as careful about using it only in strictest privacy.

I remember clearly a time long ago when I hadn't even gone to work for the newspaper yet. Every so often, the local paper published an item about how federal agents had burned an acre or two of land in the southern part of this county to destroy a forthcoming crop of marijuana. It usually received three or four paragraphs, and I can't remember ever hearing about prosecution of the owner or renter of the land. Newspapers were playing up highway accidents and Hollywood scandals in that era. Now it takes three murders on the same night to get Hollywood people into the news and the newspaper has been running some fatal accidents as straight unheadlined obituaries, and two or three kids getting nabbed for possession of marijuana is splashed all over the front page. The people who were smoking marijuana thirty years ago are old enough by now to have gained quite important posts in control of the city and surrounding area, and they're doing a lousy job of running the community, so I don't believe today's marijuana users are going to turn out any better.

Is it a traditional aspect of a mystery convention not to reveal where it's going to be? Aside from that, I'm glad to see the mystery fans adopting another good science fiction fandom tradition.

((Hardly a "traditional" aspect, Harry, as this was the first mystery convention--as far as we know. At the time the ad was published, the hotel originally scheduled for Bouchercon I had refused to honor the deal the committee had made with the previous management. Bruce and Chuck could, perhaps, have legally forced the hotel in question to host the convention, but who wants to attempt to run an experimental convention--let alone an established one--at a hotel that has made itself unfriendly? We knew that the co-chairmen would find another hotel in time, and they did, but all we could do in the ad was give Bruce's address, feeling that those sufficiently interested would write to him for details.

Speaking of conventions, this is as good a spot as any to mention that the 1971 World Science Fiction Convention will be in Boston, Mass., and that Harry will be the Fan Guest of Honor. This year's s-f Worldcon is in Heidelberg, Germany. June and I plan to make it to Boston in '71, where--for the first time in all of our years in s-f fandom--Harry's and ours--we will get to meet Harry Warner, whose contributions to our fields of interest for more than three decades are considerable, and are envied and admired by all who have the pleasure of knowing him through the highly communicative hobby of s-f fandom, and now mystery-story fandom. Stop blushing, Harry--we're just getting you in practice for what Bob Silverberg is likely to say about you when he introduces you at the convention banquet. He should do a pretty fair job, as he is also a JDM fan, and, as someone said earlier in this lettercolumn, anyone who likes JDM can't be all bad... -ljm))

STAN WOOLSTON, Garden Grove, CA: JDM's insight into film folk and those on this particular movie (Darker Than Amber) shows the advantage of investigating something in person as closely as is possible before starting to write anything that can be identified by anyone. My advice, in fact, to SF people might be to timetravel into the future to sop up background and atmosphere before finishing a historical of the future. Well, I prefer mine to be idea-oriented in a world of what might be rather than necessary historical accuracy, so I'd not INSIST on this treatment by writing. Anyway, time travel is still expensive, I hear. Maybe studying Rhine's books and others on perception through time, and widening the telepathic abilities in

that area, might help develop a writer's insight--and not just an SF writer's.

This promotes the theory (Woolston Theory #3/1/70-A, I will call it) that good writers are telepathic in this sense and can dip into other minds, if not through time, to get the "feeling of reality" into their stuff. (Of course this is only for romantic and realistic fiction; for SF and fantasy there may be dipping into the mind of the genius or the crackpot, as well as the world of the warped.) As people train their minds--lead them around in something like set paths--they "warp" themselves. A writer and a reader like myself has wide interests and so I'm warped in a wide variety of ways. (Being cognizant of the world, I partake of its madness on occasion, such as now. The eternal now is my madman's stage; I am actor, writer, director--but alas, all too often there is no plot and no film in the camera.)

This theory explains why a story has to "jell" in the subconscious of a writer--and why some stories are written without the feeling of reality because they are pressed down flat on paper before they are given life by stewing in the "mind-tank" where thoughts ripen. The subconscious is maybe a poor name for it; it spills over, like a barrel of brew with the bung out; as with wine, the opening may be partly blocked by the curds or skins of the grape and other solids working to the top--and some authors write about this outpouring rather than the finished brew that takes a little more time to become ready. Some pulp writers seemed to be "raw likker" writers, while others ran their stuff not only through the bung hole but through a still to strengthen it, too... JDM, to me, is a stronger and headier stuff than the clogged-bung hole workings. (And if you can't work your mind thru the warped figures of speech and analogies to the seed of meaning, don't worry--maybe there is nothing to find.)

I hope JOHN D. MacDONALD (well, I am tired writing JDM) will not go into the "real world" reporter route too often in the coming decade; I like his fiction. Maybe he could lose Travis for a year or so--put him in limbo without being fatal about it--and if he gets renewed interest or develops a good story line, dig him up again. I know I would never advise an author to keep alive a creature that grows over stale with him, but I hate not to think the author would again bring him to the printed page on occasion.

He might even put Travis in an SF story--future fiction, I mean; drag him into the future and let his abilities be used for the sake of someone in the future (maybe a grown baby he bounced on his knee, or the grandchild of that baby who told his or her descendant a few juicy things about ol' Trav). Now that is inspiration for an inventor to go ahead and invent a timeprobe or temporal scoop--even if he can get him into the future only and can't really place him in any particular time at the first try. Time Tunnel on TV was an adventure show--too seldom had SF aspects--but a lively character like Trav misplaced in time might be fun. ((Cute idea, Stan, but impractical. Trav's greatest advantage is the ease and familiarity with which he moves through our present-day society. Dislocate him in time, and he might well be worse than useless until he learned the parameters of that future society the way he knows ours. -jmm))

INDIGO seemed real enough for me, but at times McGee is a bit undecided or seems to be of two minds--and then he goes ahead and gets involved like the skull-rappings of a TV hero. It's a good thing his skull is thick. Gristle, plus a certain degree of brains and readiness (maybe that is a subset of the word "stubborn") can help a story move. My contact with drug-soaked people is indirect, so I've no objections to the Mexican environment or the way the drugs were treated. It seems regardless of how a majority of anyone will act, a certain percentage are rocked into mad violence by drugs.

The Bill Wilson column should be a high-light of future issues. We still cling to the idea of "an eye for an eye", and then some lawyers and others want to bypass all prison life for those convicted on the theory that it does no good. Ideally, we should have an importation of truly able workers from somewhere (maybe the future) to change the habits of those who are subject to stealing and violence. I imagine if there is a psychological truth behind this, it is that those who are violent are apt to have been victims of violence in their past, just as a one-time neighbor acts much as she was acted on by a sex-mad man when she was very young. In the same way, a child beaten by a parent seems more apt to treat her child with violence--maybe subconsciously to punish her mother. It is not a sane reaction, but there seem to be many lines of social unsanity in this world.

My attitude on reading mysteries and violence is usually that it is fiction, and yet the real-life violences have their own grim proof of reality. Gang murders and other violence maybe in the name of "the family" are a travesty of civilization, reducing it to the stage of the headhunters who think whenever anyone dies someone must have cursed him, so the witch doctor determines who in surrounding tribes did it, and their hunters go and get the head or die in the attempt. Violence there breeds violence for the outsider. We kill neighbors still, individually and in groups, and give "good excuses". Maybe the theory that there is a mad world god that leads us to this, but I can imagine it's the striving of people to find their place in the world, with humans still undeveloped. Wait a million years and maybe we will be, say I. As you can see, I'm an optimist. Maybe in just a hundred years or so, by slow degrees, we'll feel less afraid and frustrated and so let out the feeling of neighborliness and humanity we are supposed to feel always for relatives close at hand or at least friends.

Death for stealing, rape and arson (I guess classification was usually "burglary and robbery") was common in early colonies that evolved into states of the union. In 1786 rape, arson, burglary and robbery were death offenses in Connecticut, but in 1796 only rape was--the others were prison offenses. Arson and burglary were death offenses in some early locales and sometimes rape was and not the others. Rape and arson were death offenses in Maryland in 1809 and in Massachusetts it was death for burglary but not robbery. And New York had death for all 4 categories when first legislation was initiated in 1785, as in Rhode Island in 1798. I have a report in the VIRGINIA LAW REVIEW for Nov. 1969 before me in an article on bail reform. As laws were enforced with prisons and later medical treatment, most states moved toward less stringent treatment for these and similar offenses. (Pennsylvania started all these as prison offenses, though--in 1790.) Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York had death for "bestiality" at one time or another; in this list no other states or colonies are listed as having the offense at all. Maybe Mr. Wilson knows what it was...

Laws, at best, only approximate justice, and no trial by jury can guarantee against injustice at times. Nowadays this is apt to make the death penalty less likely, thus allowing time to work its changes so the "life" prisoner may be released before he or she becomes over-old, at times. It is really a shame that prisons could not be a barrier to society for people needing treatment, with an almost-sure treatment for the imprisoned--but medication seems at best only partly successful as a treatment for the erratic (I guess the proper term may range from lower area of psychotic to that area of frustration that may cause temporary emotional imbalance, or maybe activate immaturity). Where definitions of mental condition and "punishment" overlap there is always a chance to get a change in verdict, governor's pardon or medical clearance for something approaching "incompetence" overcome. (Curing a nut would be nice; at least I've a feeling at times "society" is made up of nuts, including me.) (My nuttiness is not the violent type, though, I hope.)

I've visited sheriff's offices where they have had a gadget to find poisons in very minute amount by electronic methods--or maybe spectroscopic; I didn't see the device in working order. The chemicals of human cells, though, can break down and hide many poisons, or maybe duplicate some (such as those of rotted meat). So, though self-incrimination or even confession is frowned on by some courts or decisions nowadays, I wonder if some suicides are the result of individual decisions that punishment is needed and being one's own judge and jury. If some people commit some violences of the sort they really deplore most, the result could be self-conviction as attitude and as such, not so much suicide as a displacement of identity to that of the judge. Ah, minds warp many ways.

I look forward to more JDMB and more columns by BW.

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LATE NIGHT FINAL:

Lippincott is publishing DRESS HER IN INDIGO in hard covers.