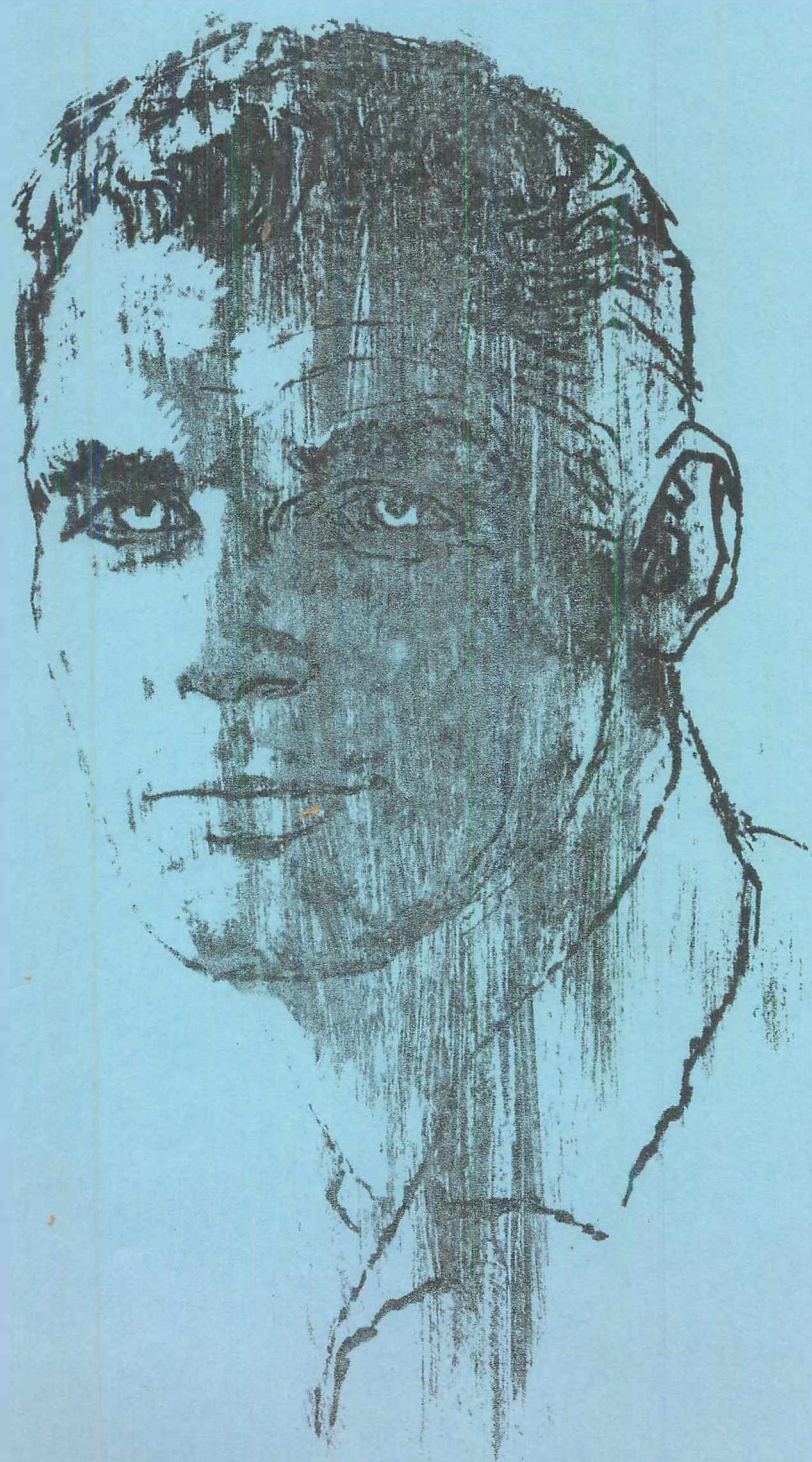


THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE 15



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This is a non-profit amateur journal devoted to the works--and to the readers--of John D. MacDonald. Price: 50¢ per copy, or a publishable letter of comment will bring you the issue in which your loc appears. If there is an "X" on your mailing label, you must do something to receive the next issue.

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OUR THANKS TO THE FAWCETT WORLD LIBRARY FOR PERMISSION TO USE JOHN McDERMOTT'S DRAWING OF TRAVIS McGEE ON THIS ISSUE'S COVER.

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Recommended Reading

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE (\$1 a copy)

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

DAST MAGAZINE (Detective - Agents - Science-fiction - Thriller) (in Swedish)

Iwan Hedman, Flodins vag 5, S 152 00, Strangnas, SWEDEN

THE FAUST COLLECTOR (50¢ a copy, 5 for \$2)

William J. Clark, 11744½ Gateway Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90064

THE FRANK GRUBER INDEX

William J. Clark (see above)

THE MYSTERY READER'S NEWSLETTER (6 for \$3, U.S. & Canada, \$3.50 overseas, surface mail)

Lianne Carlin, PO Box 113, Melrose, Massachusetts, 02176

THE QUEEN CANON BIBLIOPHILE (4 for \$2)

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

THE ROHMER REVIEW (\$2 for issues 5-7; back issues #3-4 @ 50¢ each)

Robert E. Briney, 245 Lafayette Street, Apt. 3F, Salem, Massachusetts 01970

NEWS & PREVIEWS

John D. MacDonald has been ill, and is spending most of February in the British West Indies for R&R.

He has finished the 13th McGee novel, as yet untitled. We expect it will be out before we get around to publishing the next issue of JDMB. We understand that Travis travels to New Brunswick, Canada, in this one.

Fawcett will also be publishing a collection of John's short stories, entitled S*E*V*E*N.

As announced in our last issue, Lippincott has published DRESS HER IN INDIGO in hardcovers. That makes a total of five McGee novels that have been reprinted in hardcovers from paperbacks. (INDIGO and AMBER by Lippincott, BLUE, PINK and PURPLE published in one volume as THREE FOR MCGEE by Doubleday.) June and I were especially delighted to see the hardcover version of INDIGO as it is (blush) dedicated to us...

The next McGee movie will be THE DEEP BLUE GOOD-BY, scripted by Sandy Stern, 34, a former Toronto physician who dropped medicine for a literary career. He has sold many dramas to CBC and CTV television.

The March, 1971 issue of ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE has a new short story by JDM: "He Was Always A Nice Boy" and Jon L. Breen's parody of McGee, "Green Gravy For The Blush". The latter was sold to EQMM some time ago, and John was asked to write a McGee short to go with it. He refused on the grounds that a series character cannot be presented well in a short, but hoped that his refusal would not prevent EQMM from using Jon Breen's parody. We guess that EQMM finally decided to settle for a non-McGee short to go with the McGee parody. Both stories are Recommended Reading.

The September 19, 1970 Toronto TELEGRAM features a full-page article on JDM by Clyde Gilmour, illustrated with a photo of John, and two stills from the movie DARKER THAN AMBER (Rod Taylor as McGee, Suzy Kendall as Vangie). It is an excellent article, but then Clyde is a JDM fan as well as a good newspaperman.

Clyde interviewed John by long-distance phone, and some of the news reported in this column came from Clyde's article. The article mentioned JDMB and quoted from Elijah Stern's article in JDMP #10, June 1968.

What do famous writers do with crank mail? Most, I assume, toss it in the round file, ignore it in the hopes that it will go away--that is, that the crank will not continue to write. JDM has his own way of handling crank mail. He has a rubber stamp in Old English lettering, stamps the offending epistle and returns it to the crank. To date, he has never had more than one letter from any one crank. The stamp says:

BULLSHIT

-ljm

A STERN LOOK AT MCGEE

by
Elijah
Stern

I get the idea that some of us are restless at the prospect of all McGee and no more flashes of green. Maybe this is understandable, and maybe it has something to do with problems that are inherent in any series character.

Remember how great McGee was at first? How original and incisive and more than just a man of his time he seemed like in DEEP BLUE and PINK and PURPLE PLACE and QUICK RED? And then, like a good beer left too long on the table, he started to lose that certain edge. He flattened and fattened and we found ourselves gulping him instead of sipping him. To get to the bottom. To get to the story. To dig for the meat and potatoes, because that was all that seemed to nourish us, now. Because McGee had become predictable. Whenever he saw a certain kind of gal or a certain kind of guy or a certain kind of trouble, we could almost write the rest ourselves. And sometimes we did in our minds, just for the fun of trying to out-guess the Master. Only that is not why we read novels by JDM. Not to out-guess. Not to gulp down. But to nourish, really nourish, whatever inside us is left hungry by what they show on television or mail out as the Book of the Month.

McGee became predictable, just like every other series character becomes predictable. And predictable means stuffy. Ever so slightly. Just around the edges. Not really that apparent unless you look carefully. But the paunch is there. And it wasn't there in DEEP BLUE or those other early ones.

What's the big problem with series characters that always bogs them down? Well, especially with a guy like McGee, you always know ahead of time that they won't get killed and they won't get married. In fact, they can't even be realistically threatened with either possibility. And if you think that's no great loss, remember some of your favorite (non-McGee) JDM novels and then check and you'll find out that the main characters were at least threatened with one or the other (if not both) as the story unwound.

For good reason. Death and Marriage are about the two most important things that can happen to anybody once he's got himself born. Remove the possibility of both from the life of a novel character and you find yourself left with a very constricted universe for him to move around in. So what do you do? Well, two things. You work out the best possible milieu for him and try to move it from setting to setting in novel after novel. And you keep trying to top yourself in the creation of events and plots.

In the end, if you're good (like Ian Fleming), you can seem to keep all the plates in the air and bow your way off stage to wild applause before the audience gets wise to the mirrors or wires or whatever you relied on to trick them. If you're better than good (like JDM), you don't have to worry about keeping all the plates in the air because the audience is with you all the way. They'll pay attention to the plates that stay in the air and overlook those that you drop.

But isn't there anything better? Isn't there some way to give the rest of the novels built around a series character the basic fascination of the first couple? The fascination that is there because the character is new and original and not predictable? Maybe yes. Maybe there are two ways.

One would be to let him grow and change--in ways that still avoid getting killed or married.

In real life, people change. The simple passage of years changes them. A few big things change them in big ways. A lot of little things change them in little ways. They change much more than our society will let them admit very often. Which is why a lot of marriages start off very solid but become like empty eggshells, why brilliant careers turn sour, why the little guy from nowhere can sometimes wind up with all the marbles, why the famous become obscure and the obscure become famous. People change. They can't help changing.

But series characters don't change. Never mind that the traumatic experiences they constantly undergo leave no mark on them. Even the years leave no mark on them. They don't get fat. They don't slow down. They don't lose their wind or their hair. Their legs don't give out. They don't learn to think more and act less, to use more finesse and less force, to deal rather than demand. They don't learn any of the things the rest of us seem to learn, have to learn, are even glad to learn. And why? I'll never understand it. On television, in books, at the movies--it's always the same. The series character turns into an actor playing his first-impression self over and over until we know all his lines and moves by heart. And couldn't care less.

McGee would be a great character to watch change during a series of novels. To watch grow older, wiser, sharper, fatter, slower, more this, less that, something new becoming important here, something old becoming unimportant there. McGee coming to life again. Like for the first time. Like in DEEP BLUE.

And change for McGee is so much easier than for most people. Because most people make long-range commitments in their 20's that keep them from behaving like what they've become in their 40's. Commitments that involve a lot of other people and can't very honorably be broken.

But McGee has no such commitments. He is free to be himself. And if that is different now from what it was five years ago--okay. He doesn't have a boss who would fall over dead if he suddenly expressed a lack of faith in the sacredness of therapeutic sex. He doesn't have a wife who would rush out to have him committed if he should suddenly announce that he's selling the Flush and buying a split-level in the suburbs to live in for a few years. McGee can be whatever he has become. Even an insurance salesman or a lifeguard. Whatever he wants. Truly wants.

So come, McGee. Grow a little. Never mind sucking in your gut every time you think we're looking. Throw away that little bottle of hair color you hide in the Flush's medicine cabinet. You don't have to make us believe that it's still 1964. Let's get older gracefully together. That can be a land of adventure too, you know.

Okay. That's one way to keep a series character alive. But there's another way. Maybe even more interesting.

We automatically think of the first-person-singular as a tell-all narrative device. Maybe because it's always used in confessions (criminal and otherwise) that claim to be telling the truth, whole and nothing but. So when the main character tells his own story like McGee does, we know everything about him--right?

Wrong. At least, not necessarily right. Because first-person-singular turns out to be the best way to hide the truth about a character. The obvious example is Madam Christie's man Ackroyd. But that's really no better than a cop-out used to stick an O. Henry ending on an otherwise conventional puzzle tale. There's a lot more that can be done.

Think of it this way. You meet a fascinating, unusual guy who has obviously led a very full life. You become his drinking buddy, spend much time with him, listen to the great stories he has to tell. Now he never sits down and gives you his life history from A to Z in one neat session. Instead, he tells you bits and pieces that are worked into the conversation ("I once knew a woman in Lima, Peru, who was so beautiful that she should have been on display in an art museum..." or, "I was staying in an old house on a street in London's East End, where tourists never go..." or even, "I was traveling through the Carpathians one dark and stormy night, and the wolves were howling through the thunder all around me, when suddenly...").

And you have to put these pieces together yourself in order to get something like a complete picture of the guy's life. Except that you can't be sure how complete it really is, because there are a lot of gaps that you've filled with guesses. So you look forward to more stories, and you keep on revising the picture as you get to know him better. Which is part of the fun of knowing him.

Then comes the day when the two of you are with a third person, and he tells this third person one of the stories you've heard before. Except that the details are a little different from the way you remembered. Maybe even the whole implication is different. And you sit there, wondering. Did the woman really die in his arms--as he said when he told you the story months ago? Or did she go back to her husband--as he just now said in telling the story to this third person? Or is he actually talking about two different women you only thought were the same? Or did he make up the whole thing--with different versions to impress different kinds of people, and forget which version he had told you?

So, all of a sudden, the picture that you thought was so clear isn't clear at all. In fact, now you have several different pictures and you're trying to decide which one is closest to the truth. He tells you more stories, and you hear him tell other people stories that you may or may not have heard before. And the pictures keep changing. And you're always changing your mind about which one is the truth. And you can't decide if he's a complete fraud or a true king of men or something in between or what.

But at least he is never dull, never predictable, never boring. Because he is constantly challenging (by accident or design, and who knows which) all the assumptions that you've made about him--even those you made as recently as the last story.

In the end, it may turn out that he really never left Flatbush except to go to the library where he found out about all those amazing places he told you that he'd been. But by then you'll forgive him anything. Because he's enriched your life--with fact or fiction, it doesn't matter which--and that has made him worth knowing and worth buying countless beers for.

So maybe there is more to McGee than meets our collective eye. Maybe it is time for the nice, reliable picture we have of him to be shaken up a little. And never allowed to settle into any more predictable shapes. Maybe it is time for him to challenge our assumptions. Maybe.

Even if he really never has left Flatbush.

- Elijah Stern

SOUNDS

OF

by
Lawrence

Fleming

GUNSHOTS

There must be more shooting in fiction than there is in real life, wars excepted, yet technical errors do occur in print. Private detectives pack Police Positives and spies carry Lugers; neither would be likely in real life, since both weapons are long obsolete, and known for mechanical weaknesses. If it is desirable to name the hardware, it might be better to call for a Chief's Special or a K-38 Combat Masterpiece.

A few writers, notably JDM, are accurate about the lethal firearms that they issue to their characters, and careful about the ensuing acoustic clues. (Who heard the shots?) Other writers now and then strain the credibility of the reader, particularly if he has ever been on a firing range.

This note is about the sounds, not the ironwork. Gunshots generally are extremely loud. They are much louder than anything we ordinarily hear. Big aircraft very nearby, or a close thunderclap, yes, but not anything in the usual routine. If the shot is indoors and the witness outside, and heavy trucks are going by, he might miss hearing it. But if he is in the apartment next door, he could never mistake the fatal shot for something on the TV, unless he deceived himself. The real thing is a hundred times louder than any racket the little speaker on a television set could possibly emit. In real life, alas, people often fool themselves, and so real witnesses might hear real shots and say, "No, it couldn't be" and then believe it. If so, it's psychology, a different department.

The first fictional use of electronic audio to cover the sounds of shooting was in one of the early gangster movies of the 1930's. In those days they had big console radios that were Radios. Nowadays, the appropriate thing is a 50-watt stereo rig. TV audio is puny.

The only common kind of gun that is relatively quiet is a .22 rimfire rifle. A fictional assassin might, say, buy a clip-fed .22 automatic rifle, take off the stock, conceal the (fully operable) barrelled action under his overcoat or something, and then proceed to the victim's apartment. During a drum solo on a Dixieland disc, he commits the crime.

Two different phenomena make the noise, the muzzle blast and the sonic boom of the bullet. The latter can be powerful if the bullet is moving fast. The muzzle blast is made by the slug of incandescent gas from the burned powder, coming out at supersonic speed. It expands and imparts a violent push to the surrounding air. If all the powder is burned before the bullet emerges, the blast is milder. This is the case with a .22 rimfire rifle. In any pistol, however, the powder is still burning. A .22 pistol is noisy, almost as loud as a .38. The shorter the barrel, the louder.

The sonic boom phenomenon is more important in high-power rifles. Pistol bullets are slower. In 1913, the U. S. Army made tests of silencers fitted to Springfield .30-06 rifles. They worked on the muzzle blast, the principle being the same as an auto muffler, but had, naturally, no effect on the bullet, which was traveling at around Mach 3. Going by, it made a deafening "crack". A 5-inch Navy shell moves, comparably, at around Mach 2.6 and goes "BOOM" as it passes.

Hunting rifles and military rifles are much of a kind, speedwise, at from around Mach 2.6 to Mach 4.1. The exception is the rimfire .22 Short bullet, at subsonic speed, and the .22 Long rifle, which starts out at around Mach 1.1 to 1.3, but soon drops to subsonic and makes no sonic boom. Among hunting firearms, the highest velocity is the .220 Swift at Mach 4.1, used by destruction-bent sportsmen against woodchucks. In spite of its small caliber, it is noted for being horribly noisy; the powder charge is huge. The modern military M16 is rather similar.

Gentlemen who like to kill deer often use a .30-06, which wreaks gruesome damage with a commercial expanding bullet. The muzzle blast from any high-power rifle is very loud indeed, somewhat stronger than a .45 pistol. Close by, however, it is hard to tell the difference.

Antique muzzle-loading guns, which burn old-fashioned black powder (still available from DuPont), make a distinctive hollow-sounding "boom", accompanied by a dense cloud of white smoke. Hobbyists use these, and modern replicas, in target matches.

The .45 automatic pistol bullet moves at around Mach 0.8, and the .22 Long Rifle, as well as the .38 Special (generally used by police departments) a little under Mach 1. Silencers would work on these; they have been illegal under the Federal Firearms Act since 1934.

Highway patrols often use the .357 Magnum, essentially a souped-up .38 because the bullet will go through a car body; it goes at about Mach 1.4, supersonic. Noisiest of all pistols is the recently-developed (around 1957) .44 Magnum. This oversized, wrist-breaking revolver is too powerful for any apparent practical purpose, since most of the grizzly bears are already dead. It might fit the character of some fictional villain.

- Lawrence Fleming

EARTHQUAKE NOTE

The quake that shook the Los Angeles area awake at 6 a.m. on Tuesday, February 9, did no damage to either Moffatt House nor the inhabitants thereof. Unless you count losing about a half hour of sleep time... Total "damage" was a postcard that fell off the mantel and a lipstick that rolled off a dresser.

- ljm & jmm

FEETNOTE

TO

by

Dean A. Grennell

FLEMING

The good Mr. Moffatt passed along a xerox of what I presume will be the preceding discussion and requested my thoughts and comments. Though Len addressed me slightly saponaceously as their "resident gun expert", I must in all modesty make faint demurring noises. Occasionally, I've made statements later proved false on unimpeachable authority: e.g., when Ruger first announced their .357 magnum Blackhawk with a fitted auxiliary cylinder for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge (often called the 9mm Luger), I fecklessly proclaimed that this was the first 9mm revolver ever in the world. And any number of astute readers of the firearms publication which charitably retains me as its (barely) managing editor wrote letters to advise me that once Smith & Wesson had turned out some given quantity of revolvers for Israel, chambered for this cartridge. Other examples could be cited, in sober, sheepish rue, but that should suffice. Anymore, I tend to make my pontifical pronouncements with an unvoiced "I t'eenk" after each. Please add this qualification to the comments which follow.

The Police Positive is, indeed, long defunct, though its name had a compelling ring which brought it nearly to the status of a household word, such as kodak, coke or frigid-
aire. Introduced in 1905, the model was produced--with minor modifications--until suspended in 1943. As with many fine Colt arms, the patterns and gages, etc., were mislaid or thrown out during WW-II and the cost to replace them was deemed prohibitive and impractical. I once owned one of the target models, with six-inch barrel, in .32-20 caliber, and it was a most pleasant little plinker; often wish I'd kept it.

In BROWN, there's some faintly deplorable business about a Police Positive being taken from the lawyer type by McGee, turned over to the cop, later borrowed back and, at this point, a bit of tomfoolery about working the knurled safety back and forth to make certain it wouldn't fire. I suspect all this was cranked into the copy by the author on a purely puckish whimpulse in hopes of evoking squalls of outrage among ballistophiles among his readers. Fact: The knurled widgie visible on the left side of a Police Positive--or nearly any other make/model of double-action revolver--is the cylinder latch. You work it back, forward or inward (depending) in order to release the cylinder so it can be pivoted outward for ejection of the fired cases and/or for loading. Contemporary revolvers do not have, or need, safeties.

Which brings us to a sore point: A well-made revolver is an expensive hunk of precision hardware, vulnerable to damage through abuse. Undoubtedly, you've seen the TV heroes and baddies "check" their gats by snapping the cylinders open and banging them shut with a flick of the wrist. This is a great, roaring no-no if you plan to keep the gun and perhaps fire it one day, because it warps, bends and burrs the cylinder crane and throws the chambers out of line with the barrel. Practiced with but token diligence,

it degrades accuracy and can cause a blown cylinder; messy, distracting, expensive and downright fatal if it happens at a crucial moment. No prudent soul mistreats a mechanism upon which his future existence may depend.

As for the ubiquitous Luger, it is spelled that way: upper-case L, no umlauts (cf. "Anatomy of a Murder", among a host of others). Stoecker Arms has been making a little .22 autoloading pistol in recent times, called a Luger and vaguely resembling the Pistole '08 (as the so-called Luger properly might be termed); it looks cheesy, but test samples shot fairly well. The old Mauser works has been laboring to bring forth a reasonable duplicate of the Pistole '08, but little has come of it. There are still a jillion of the originals around (one figured in the film of AMBER) and they seem to have the public fancy by the throat: Every time we run one of the ugly brutes on the cover, we can count on healthy sales for that issue. I detest Lugers.

The sounds of firearms reports are modified considerably by ambient conditions. It's worst in small, enclosed spaces, particularly with hard, sound-reflective walls, and/or ceilings, etc. Position of the listener's ear counts, too--as I can attest, having had a few let off with muzzles next to my ear. Peak levels reached by firearms reports extend, roughly, from about 90 to 160 decibels; 90 dB is considered to be about the threshold of hazard, beyond which sound is apt to cause permanent hearing damage. I use a pair of vented plugs, custom-moulded to my ears, with good results to control ear discomfort; they're okay for rifles up to .300 Winchester magnum when fired indoors, but they're a bit insufficient with some loads in my snub-nosed .357 mag revolver, so I add the special sponge-lined earmuffs when working with it in the lab. And still it stings.

Research addicts may wish to consult a discussion of gunfire and ear damage by Donald Hamilton (Matt Helm's creator) appearing in the current (1971) GUN DIGEST. Hamilton also has a pb of collected accounts of guns and hunting, currently on sale. He is, of all the mystery writers with whose work I'm familiar, the one most solidly knowledgeable on this particular topic.

As to confusing the sounds of gunshots with something else, I'd hate to have to stake my neck on being able to distinguish between the backfire of an automobile and any typical firearm. Occasional sound-effects around the neighborhood cause me to prick up my blast-enfeebled ears and play the noise back on my mental tapes, but usually it's just some indigenous urchins setting off verboten firecrackers.

It is a federal no-no to construct a handgun by modification of a rifle or shotgun, or to attach a shoulder stock to a handgun capable of firing fixed ammunition (i.e., cartridges, as opposed to black powder muzzleloaders). .22 rimfire rifles must have a minimum barrel length of 16", 18 for shotguns and centerfire rifles, and either must be at least 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " in length overall. Of course, a person bent on murder is not apt to let this sway him unduly.

Any number of handguns can exceed the velocity of sound and thus generate a sonic boom. Fleming's conversion of velocities into Mach numbers is a bit confusing, as this can be defined as the ratio of flight speed through a medium compared to the velocity of sound-wave propagation through that medium under identical conditions. Its name derives from Ernst Mach (1838-1916), an Austrian physicist, psychologist and philosopher whose work contributed toward the concept. In atmosphere--at sea-level pressure of 14.7 psi, plus 32° F temperature and 0% relative humidity--the speed of sound is 741 mph; apply the common conversion factor of mph x 1.467=fps and you get an equivalent of 1087.047 feet per second, the common medium of exchange in discussions of ballistic velocities. At 30,000 feet altitude (Angels 30 in flyboy patois), the speed of sound drops to 675 mph* and that's about 990.225 fps. Thus, a bullet moving at 1087.047 fps at sea level

*According to the Dictionary of Electronics and Nucleonics, via the Research Dept. of the Pasadena Public Library, whose phone number is (213) 577-4066.

would be making Mach 1.000--at that altitude and under those conditions. Fire the same bullet, at the same speed, at 30,000 and it comes out about Mach 1.1--though it's still going exactly as fast. Which is why one prefers fps as the specification of bullet velocity; or meters per second (M/sec.) if you work with the metric system.

Most velocity is given at the muzzle, in fps, as noted. Shotguns rarely exceed about 1400 fps, though slug loads may top that by a bit. Handguns start around 550 fps and peak out a wee bit over 3000 fps; the latter being for a resolutely handled bullet in the caliber .221 Fire Ball Remington XP-100 single-shot pistol, with ten-inch barrel, for which factory-load specs are 2650 fps with a 50-grain bullet. Rifles go from about 800 fps to...well, the highest velocity in my personal experience is 5280 fps, which we hit with one shot during an intrepid chronographing session with 18-grain bullets in a wildcatted (i.e., not a standard factory) cartridge, which had been created by necking a .222 Remington magnum down to take a bullet of .172-inch diameter, thus a .17/222 Rem mag. In aerospace research, they've topped 10,000 under controlled laboratory conditions: releasing a compressed blast of hydrogen/oxygen and igniting it behind tiny wafers of plastic fired into evacuated chambers.

The grains used as a weight unit for bullets, powder charges, etc. are avoirdupois grains, of which 437.5 make one ounce and 7000 make one pound. A common, gummed cigarette paper (Bugler brand) weighs close around one grain. Kinetic energy of any moving object, including bullets, is computed by a simple formula:

$$\frac{V^2W}{64.32} = E$$

Velocity, in

fps, squared, times weight (W) in pounds, divided by 64.32 (gravitational constant for Sol III) equals energy (E) in foot-pounds. Grains divided by 7000 gives you the figure for W in pounds. You'll note that, if you double the velocity, the energy is not doubled, but quadrupled. But mere energy is only one factor in a highly complex equation controlled by several variables, only a few of which are predictable, when consideration turns toward what we might term "serious social shooting".

Viewed as a game animal, the adult male Homo sapiens is well up the scale of formidability, not far below Ursus horribilis and the rest...so, too, for members of the delightfully opposite sex, comes to that. Given whole-souled hostile intent and a system supercharged with adrenalin, H. sap can take one goshawful lot of stopping. Recall a long-ago Bogart film (Have And Have Not) in which Bogey blipped a baddie in the tum-tum with what appeared to be a .32 or .380 Colt pocket auto? He fired once and stood there looking politely regretful and the black-hat type drew his own gun and blapped the hero right back, whereupon the latter lay him down and shuffled his coil, as well. Not at all far-fetched, as there are any quantity of cases on record in which some bod absorbed the entire content of a revolver or autoloader and hardly was slowed a whit in his/her regrettable intentions.

A single solid torso hit from even the humble .22 can be mortal, and very often is. In fact, the .22 rimfires have a mortality rate out of all proportion. But the victim tends to die three days to a week later in considerable discomfort. But usually, the hit does not stop the, uhh, hittee at the time, with the desired degree of instant putting out of action. This is equally true of the .38 Special cartridge, particularly when fired from the snub-nosed (two-inch barrel) revolvers, with round-nosed factory loads--which is grossly overrated as to potency by most mystery writers, including JDM. For some reason, most people think that the loads with the heaviest bullet are the most effective, leading to the popularity of the 200-grain factory load in .38 Special; not so at all. A few years ago, some local cops and I hauled some impounded cars to a secluded area and conducted exhaustive penetration tests. The 200-grain .38 Special, from a snub-nose, barely dented--did not penetrate--the metal in the fender of a Ford, nor could it get through any of its windows with a single hit. So far as that gun and cartridge are concerned, any car is a Sherman tank.

Foot-pounds of energy have to be transmitted--abruptly--to the target to be effective. A knitting needle, fired through muscle tissue at hellish velocities, would create very little shock if it didn't hit a bone. To perform its logical function, a projectile should have good sectional density (ratio of weight to cross-sectional area) plus a streamlined shape so as to penetrate the intervening air with minimal loss of velocity. Upon impact, ideally, all of its energy should be transmitted to the target right now--that is, without going through and carrying unused energy onward. Ergo, the expanding bullet, designed to carry energy to the target and expend it efficiently upon arrival.

Recently, there was a fearsome yawp set up when someone made the shocking discovery that the nasty old police were (some of them) carrying "dum-dum" bullets. No one seemed shook that they also carry 12-gauge shotguns, although the shotgun, within 20 yards or so, is infinitely more devastating than any handgun or damn near any rifle. Dum-dum is a semantically loaded term, well-bedded in the public's smattering of ignorance, it's from Dum Dum arsenal, in India, where (supposedly) expanding bullets were developed for use against (excuse cliché) savage tribesmen.

Foosh, chum: put it like so. Firing a projectile into the corporeal real estate of a fellow creature cannot be classed as an act of benevolence. No way. One could kill or seriously chew up an adversary by working him over with a sandblaster's hose, given time and opportunity. From the police viewpoint, the service handgun is used--or at least should be used solely as a last-ditch emergency expedient for preventing death or grievous bodily harm from being inflicted upon themselves or upon other innocent victims. Given such a circumstance, it doesn't help in the slightest if the would-be killer dies a week later of peritonitis; meanwhile without having been deterred from carrying out his anti-social intentions. To fulfil its logical mission, any social-purposes gun has to be capable of immobilizing the target instantly, or as nearly so as possible.

There are specialized factory loads available which enhance the capability of the .38 Special considerably--and reloads which can do quite a bit better. Anything much smaller than that is better than a thrown pebble, but not a helluva lot better.

Mindful that a profusion of figures and numerals make copy look unpalatable to the average reader, I refrain from cranking a vaguely relevant table into this discussion. Hatcher's formulas arrive at a factor for relative stopping power which can be worked into an index, by taking a typical .38 Special as 100. On that basis, the .44 magnum's index is 467; .41 magnum, 332; .45 Long Colt, 258; .44 Special, 197; and .357 magnum, 198. Typical recoil of the .38 Special is 3.3 foot-pounds; 6.3 for the .357; 5.7 for the .45 LC; 12.5 for the .41 mag and 16.3 for the .44 magnum. That's a condensation from half a page of fine type.

Faced with a formidable antagonist such as King Sturnevan (LAVENDER), McGee quite logically chooses the .44 mag, from the Ruger carbine, whose longer barrel milks about 400 extra fps of velocity out of this cartridge; and then, it was hardly enough. But this was not a logical caliber, at all--at all, as the sniper's weapon in PURPLE from 500 yards away. Mais non. When sighted for point of aim at 100 yards, the fat, stubby 240-grain bullet drops about 53 inches below the line of sight at a mere 250 yards, at which point the ballistic tables in the Hornady Handbook give up and stop listing. One BNF gunwriter, some years ago, told of killing a deer with a .44 mag revolver at a distance of 600 yards, thereby bringing upon his unbending head torrents of contumely which hardly have abated yet. I concede he may have done it, but he'd've had to hold perhaps fifty-sixty feet high to loft it in from that far away and the trajectory gets so convex that the difference between say, 550 and 650 yards could mean a vertical spread of a few feet. If the bullet starts at 1700 fps, it's down to 970 fps at 250 yards and quite a bit less than that at 500--where nearly enough steam left to leave the fist-sized exit wound mentioned in PURPLE. Sorry about that, Mr. MacDonald.

I've vague memories of having said so before in these hallowed pages, but you cannot silence a revolver for the simple reason that you get a goshawful blast of high-pressure gases leaking out through the crevice between the front of the cylinder and the rear of the barrel. I photographed the phenomena once, at night, opening the shutter and using powder flare as the sole illumination. Cartridge was a .22 Jet--a .357 mag case given a long body taper and necked down to take a .22 bullet--and the gun was held on its side, with top of barrel toward the camera. The side leaks, on the photo, show up as gorgeous plumes of searing flame, extending about 12-14 inches each way and something like four inches in diameter toward the ends. Given a 100% effective silencer on the muzzle, the side leaks would still amount to one frightful tumult. Silence a revolver? Bah and also humbug!

Essentially silent handguns are possible, being virtually noiseless without the use of any illegal, external silencing devices. The projectile doesn't have much punch, but can get through a ply or two of orange-crate wood, and I should not care to be hit with one in a strategic area or, for that matter, elsewhere. I'd prefer to withhold explicit details on this, in the public interest.

As for logical gun choices, any shotgun--preferably a multi-shot repeater--would be my choice for short-range duty, availability permitting, even if I could have a Thompson or an M3, etc. Any competent, handy carbine as a second choice (the .44 Ruger to 100 yards, a Model 660 Remington to about 200).

Handguns would be a reluctant third selection but, of those available, I'd prefer a nice little Browning Model of 1935 auto in caliber 9mm; it holds thirteen in the magazine plus one in the pipe and, with my pet handload, groups about 1.5-inches at 25 yards with 90-grain hollow point bullets at a touch over 1400 fps. The French MAB, also 9mm, holds 16 shots, but I don't consider it as accurate nor as reliable.

The Model 39 S&W, still in 9mm, permits carrying hammer-down, with the first round getting off by a double action pull of the trigger, but the magazine capacity is only 8 plus 1, and the extra five shots in the Browning could come handy. After that, a good .45 auto Colt, the same gun in their caliber .38 Super, shifting to revolvers: .44 mag, .41 mag, .44 Special, .357 mag in that order and, if it had to be concealed in swim trunks, just possibly a .38 Special with home-brewed loads.

Beyond that, I would tend to rely upon a really notable talent for cross-country running. Thank you, Jas. Bond, but you can keep your silly little PPK Walther in .32 ACP--I'd rate it marginal on wounded grasshoppers. Especially if my one and only neck were in the pot.

I've owned several .44 mags and Specials over the years, and still have some. The recoil isn't all that hard on an experienced shooter and I've seen ladies and young folk do well with them. But I'd not recommend one as a first gun for a beginner. Trouble with any revolver is that you're so sickeningly vulnerable when the cylinder goes dry and you try to restuff it while slugs are popping about your ears.

I'm sure that this is more than most of you cared to know on the topic. Apologies.

- Dean A. Grennell, aka Art Wesley

HARD TOUCH

by
Bill Wilson

As with the administration of justice, one can hope that police departments and administration are in a state of evolution.

Police departments as we know them are, historically speaking, a fairly recent development in civilization. Most police departments in the United States, like cities, were not planned but just grew, with the result being, in some cases, a governmental disaster. Most of the ills in police departments are correctable, and most corruption therein could be greatly reduced if the police were removed from certain spheres of activity. Crime, graft and corruption will always exist as long as human beings remain human--however, like illness, they can be treated and held to a minimum.

In poor police departments, one of the basic faults is in selection standards (or in some cases, lack of any) for personnel. A policeman should have a minimum IQ of 100, with 110 being the desired figure. He should have a clean back-ground, and be given a battery of psychological tests (to include a Rorschach) to weed out sadists and psychopaths. Detectives should be recruited directly from applicants who would not necessarily meet the physical standards for patrolmen (height and weight). Practically every police department obtains its detectives from the ranks of the patrolmen. Why? Because they have always done it that way. Yet the Federal agencies, e.g. FBI, Secret Service, etc. get their men by direct recruitment. In one metropolitan police force, it is common practice to reward acts of heroism with a promotion to detective!

Each applicant should then pass both a written and an oral examination for the appropriate position of patrolman or detective with patrolmen given the option of transferring to the detective division by taking and passing the detective examination. This would go a long way towards eliminating the bullies and fanatics that are on some departments. Also, it would produce a smarter breed of detective.

Each state should establish a training school for police officers and detectives, with the requirement that every man in each department attend the school before being eligible to perform the duties of an officer of the law. By having the schools operated by the state, it would enable the small towns to obtain the best training possible, it would standardize the training throughout the state, and it would minimize local influence upon the school, e.g. "Push Bodkins through the school, he's Alderman Snide's nephew" sort of thing. Then each large department should have refresher training to include range firing and new techniques.

Pay scales should be established which would enable a patrolman to live on a decent middle-class standard without having to moonlight. How can the citizens of a community expect to have officers of character and intelligence when they offer them the wages of an unskilled laborer? One of the causes of corruption of police officers is the low pay scale, which makes the man subject to frequent economic pressures.

This is a radical step, but police departments should be removed from enforcing laws which are based upon social mores. Society must learn that it cannot legislate so-called "moral behavior". Gambling should be legalized, or if not, the gambling laws should then be enforced by a special department. The laws concerning prostitution should be enforced by health departments, with both the merchant and customer being arrested. (This would lead to a quick death of the law. Call girls would be left alone--although they are technically prostitutes, they are a different breed of cat (I was tempted to use another word, which would have made it the worst pun of the year). Homosexuals would be ignored as long as they didn't annoy "straight" people with their advances, and left children alone.

Most corruption of police officers and departments begins in the area of "morals". Poorly paid officers are easily tempted by bribes from gamblers, the rationale being that no real crime is being committed. True, a law is being broken, but there is a difference--and so it goes. Officers get involved with prostitutes by taking payoffs from the pimps or freebies from the girls, or both, and the same rationale exists. Incidentally, if prostitution were legal, the need for pimps would be practically non-existent.

With homosexuals, the picture gets a little more grim--often these people are shaken down by officers when the person involved is one of financial means or substance in the community. What the dishonest police officer doesn't stop to realize is that once he takes a payoff of any kind, the word spreads around that he can be had, and then he is placed in the position of having to cover up felonies. Also, in cases of record, once on the take, an ethical breakdown starts, and the rot spreads.

If these policies and reforms were instituted, it would go a long way to eliminate the Lew Arnstead and King Sturtevant types, plus others that JDM has written about so incisively. However, how many communities really want an efficient, honest and impartial police department?

As a final thought, before anyone obtains a Master's degree in sociology, they should be required to work on a police department or in a correctional institution. Much of the unwarranted criticism of police departments comes from theorists who have never dealt with the criminal element on a face-to-face basis. Usually they deal in abstractions and statistics concerning the behavior and reactions of reasonable people.

The majority of people the police officer has to deal with are either irrational or are ordinarily reasonable people who are acting in an unreasonable manner due to a stress situation. For those who live in a metro area, listen to a police call radio some Saturday night. Then you will be able to understand why so many police officers ask "Aren't there any nice, reasonable people around?"

- Bill Wilson

The JDM Master Checklist

\$1 per copy

A bibliography of the works of John D. MacDonald, covering stories and articles in magazines, paperbacks and hardcovers. Cross-indexed.

It also features a photo and a brief biography of Mr. MacDonald.

Len & June Moffatt

P.O. Box 4456

Downey, CA 90241

An Interesting Book, This Lavender Look

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The story starts slowly, all quiet, deceptive
As Travis and Meyer speed home from the fete,
When all of a sudden from out of the darkness
Runs beauty in bedclothes with galloping gait.

Then quickly a screech and a pop and a tumble,
Our heroes are ass over Agnes entrenched;
Soon follow attacks by an angry old pick-up...
My doubts, for the moment, I see, have been benched.

The plot is peculiar, the action is catchin'
McGee #12 doesn't signal a pause.
And something that most of the series can't muster:
Six opening chapters without any flaws.

Arrested, the brutalization of Meyer,
Then into the picture, successful and sleek,
A fast-talking lawyer who's new to the stable
Of characters seen in MacDonald each week.

The heroes amassed; the potential's all there for
One last shiny saga, then back to the "Flush".
All points to this book as a suitable capper,
A chance for the series to close with a rush.

Alas--and a lack, I'm afraid, of the courage
To deal with a character brand-new and bold--
The author removes him, and trots out the horses
We've all seen before, too familiar, too old:

The sheriff, his deputies, chippies, mechanics,
Quick-witted old ladies and newsmen resigned.
A round-heeled young psycho and hate-crazy kinfolk--
If this is raw meat, it's inferior grind.

And what have we else? Why, McGee and a waitress
Their gristly attraction are off to explore,
Described with unwholesomely clinical gusto,
And that in itself is a bit of a bore.

Yes, always we find a susceptible woman
Who's burned and alone and too frightened to fly,
Set up for McGee to assist and awaken...
But why must susceptible women all die?

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An Interesting Book, This Lavender Look - by Dave Stewart (2)

A question I do not expect to have answered.
The waitress is gone; let us quickly forget.
Along with the nympho, the guy out of prison
And nasty old him who got stuffed down the pit.

The bodies ascend, like the steps toward a climax,
By gun and by knife, through the day and at night.
We hope for an ending transcending the middle,
But when it arrives, it's unspeakably trite.

It's flat-footed Travis who finds himself facing
A giant much stronger and quicker than he
And cleverly fails to suspect just how evil
This gentlest of deputies turns out to be.

Alone and unarmed, like the heroes of countless
Bad novels, past memories all lost in the void,
See Trav doing battle and struggling and winning
And cleverly getting his body destroyed.

Now watch as he's carried back home to his lady,
Oh, stay there, dear hero! Let's please end the show.
And spare us the torture of more such adventures.
It hurts when you're sent out with no place to go.

- Dave Stewart

-oOo-

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

We do not agree, though your poem may be epic
As it re-tells the story, it loses much
And your misinterpretation of Betsy Kapp
With some of our readers may get you in Dutch!

We do not agree that the "show" should be ended
Til John D. himself tires of Travis McGee.
If you don't like the "horses" in McGee's "stable"
Try reading some "dogs" for real shock therapy...

- ljm

EARLY JDM:

THREE PULPS FROM '49

A trio of JDM's pulp stories, all from the same year, demonstrate neatly that before he had published a single novel he was already a supreme professional storyteller, with the professional's deft skill at action-writing and plot and sketching character and setting, and with the professional's curse of putting out an occasional mediocrity in between the first-rate tales.

THREE'S A SHROUD (New Detective, January 1949)

The narrator is a high-class Syndicate torpedo named Wally Gerrit, who is sent to the upstate New York city of Bruerton to get rid of the new and unfixable police chief. Gerrit poses as a journalist to set up the chief for the kill, goes soft for the chief's secretary, who is herself in love with her boss, shakes up some of the local gambling entrepreneurs, runs afoul of his ambitious supervisor in the Syndicate, and winds up in prison, a self-made loser. JDM handles the ambience of postwar urban racketeering and the slippery theme of the partial reformation of a louse with equal mastery.

BEDSIDE MURDER (Mystery Book Magazine, Summer 1949)

This story is also narrated in the first person, but this time the narrator is a woman. Or, at least, she says she is, but fails to convince us even for a moment. Her name is Laura Lynn, she sings in nightclubs, she has been the victim of several near-miss "accidents", and instead of going to the police like any normal person, she asks a young attorney named Kim Hale to be her bodyguard. (I don't know why my clients never ask me to perform such chores.)

A slew of suspects are introduced, and the chain of mishaps continues until in due time the killer exposes himself. The story has no intellectual perplexity, is grossly unfair to the reader, boasts a least-likely suspect who sticks out like a two-foot thumb, is flatly written, and proves only that even the best writers put out a few clinkers now and then.

HERITAGE OF HATE (Black Mask, July 1949)

With this one, JDM is back in the groove with another Syndicate story, protagonist this time being a bright boy named Larry Hask who rises in the ranks by playing his boss and the next higher-up against each other until the latent violence explodes into a bloody, dispassionately told gun battle, leaving few survivors.

The multiple double-crosses are so neatly handled that you always know exactly what is happening, but never know until the end just whose side Hask is really on. The attempted murder in the heated pool should be noted as an early foreshadowing of The Drowner, and the final scene in Acapulco may (I hope) be explained away as the result of some moralistic editor's pressure on JDM. That, of course, is another curse professionals have learned to live with.

- Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

HA/KA

- by John D. MacDonald

Cormorants fishing,
Rest on the barren branches
Of idle draglines.

Pelicans gorging,
Marvel at the kindly man
Who nets their supper.

Egrets ditch-watching,
Enduring the traffic roar...
White hunger on stilts.

Gulls, terns and pigeons,
Prosperous mendicants all...
Scrap-dealers by choice.

Ibis are nesting,
Eyes cool as the lenses of
The picture takers.

Migrant water birds
Return to old fishing sites
To find them seawalled.

A caged flamingo
Frowns past the tourists as it
Composes haiku.

(Originally published in St. Petersburg Times Sunday Magazine, Dec. 1964)

Please Write For Details

The Readers Write...

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

ALBERT ASHFORTH, Brooklyn, NY - I see from JDMB #14 that JDM enjoys great popularity in Sweden. On the basis of a five-week stay in Germany this summer, I can report that JDM's popularity is great there as well.

I was very pleasantly surprised one morning last August when, on entering a small stationery shop on one of the remote Frisian Islands, I encountered a very full display of JDM novels in translation on the paperback rack. Having an extensive command of German going back to my Army days there in the mid-1950s, I immediately bought them all. They comprised the bulk of my reading for the balance of my stay in Europe.

Later on, in Hamburg and Berlin, I checked the bookstores, and found most of them stocking some JDMs. I assume they're to be had all over in Germany.

All in all, the translations are not bad. They do, however, vary in quality. This is due partly to the fact that different translators do different books. This probably wouldn't be so bad, but it has resulted in making the narrator in some of the McGee books seem like a somewhat different person from adventure to adventure. I read four of the McGee books (translations of Pale Gray, Bright Orange, Purple Place and Deadly Gold) and each was translated by a different person.

Certain facts also are handled inconsistently. The name "The Busted Flush" for example, would not have significance if translated literally into German (Die Kapute Flote?), so it has been rendered in one book as "Stich As", which is a kind of pun since "stich" could be a card trick or a nautical slipknot. "As" is ace. In the other books, though, the flush becomes "Pik As" which is simply "Ace of Spades".

McGee's wisecracks and pointed observations frequently lose their sting in German, but not always. Sometimes, to avoid obscurity, entire conversations and even a scene or two are omitted.

Insofar as the titles go, except for Tod in der Sonne (Death in the Sun), which is a translation of the first McGee, Purple Place for Dying, all the German titles retain colors in their names. However, the same colors do not always go with the same books. Thus, Bright Orange for the Shroud becomes Giftgrun for Vivian (Poison-Green for Vivian).

A particularly well-rendered translation is that of The Last One Left, by Willy Thaler. He includes the account of the game "the last one left" from which the book takes its title (calling it "Eine bleibt zuletzt"), but, strangely, does not use this for the book's title. To my mind, Das Champagner Madchen (The Champagne Girl) is rather routine.

MERVYN BARPETT, London, ENGLAND - The JDMBs have been arriving regularly--thanks. If the lettercols are any indication, you've got a zine that's coming more and more alive with every issue. I've an idea that when mystery fandom really starts to roll in the way of having a few dozen good fanzines around and not just a few it'll be the letter columns that will be the main feature and provide the most kicks. SF fanzine lettercols are going to look tame by comparison, and it'll be because the roots of mystery stories, cop stories, etc. are in much more "real" things. Things that fascinate, often while repelling, such things as murder, perversion, drugs, brutality; things that are all around us, experienced by us all to some degree even if at third hand; things that people have strong views about and will want to get into print about and argue about. Sure, in lots of SF fanzines the lettercols are fairly wide open and you get cycles of discussion on "real-life" topics, but the orientation is still very much science-fiction/literature.

The talk about marijuana and the smell of it I found interesting because I once had this Great Idea for putting out cans of marijuana-smelling aerosol. I talked it over with a chemist friend who thought that maybe it could be done but said that isolating whatever it is that causes a characteristic smell and then synthesising it is tough to do. The idea was that the aerosol would not contain any marijuana nor have any of the effects of it. Its use would have been principally in the field of social one-upmanship.

((Oh? Well, whatever turns you on, Merv. - jmm))

You'd spray it around the pad before guests arrive, and say to the ones you want to impress something like, "Jesus, man, what a pity you didn't get here sooner. Somebody brought this terrific grass, and we've all been turning on." While I think that the penalties that can be dished out for possession of pot are irrational to the point of being barbaric, and I hate the amount of entrapment and the way pot is used by the police, or whoever gives them their orders, as a way of getting at someone disliked, I can't go along with the arguments that are often trotted out in support of legalizing it. (That it should never have been declared illegal in the way it was is another story.) You know, the "well, alcohol is legal and look what that can do so why shouldn't pot be legal?" argument, with the inference that even if it is dangerous why shouldn't we put another poison on the market? Well, there is the matter of strength which John D. pointed out in his letter, and the matter of frequency.

With most of the stuff that gets on the market changing hands several times and being cut each time it changes hands and people still mostly, because of the need for a certain amount of caution, turning on only at weekends or at home on "special" occasions there is no yardstick by which the effects of a marijuana industry--and there would be an industry just as surely as there is a tobacco industry and a booze industry--operating in a society where pot is legalized could be estimated.

A thing about pot that makes me a little uneasy is the desire among regular smokers to turn on those who don't. It seems to go a bit beyond what could be called a social gesture. It's a lot closer to the way addicts of heroin and other things try to get other people addicted than the action of a drinker forcing drinks on somebody. An alcoholic doesn't try to create alcoholics the way an addict on some hard drugs will really work at turning somebody on. I don't think one has more conscience than the other--it's just an effect of what they're hooked on, but it does make one more dangerous than the other. ((Maybe it's another manifestation of the "misery loves company" syndrome? -jmm))

FRED BLOSSER, Boomer, W. VA. - Re-read Dave Stewart's review carefully after seeing DARKER THAN AMBER last week and generally agree with his conclusions. I do disagree on one point, however, The way the McGee-Vangie relationship is set up in the film, there is nothing hypocritical about Trav's bedding the lady (term used advisedly). The Vangie of the movie is not the Vangie of the novel. I do regret that the scriptwriter chose to sentimentalize the character, but since he did do this, it only follows that Vangie's relationship with Trav would have to be sentimentalized also. If only for the sake of consistency.

I fully agree with Mr. Stewart about Griff and Terry. Magnificent casting! Did anyone else notice that Terry's name was changed from Ans Terry to Terry Bartell, as in Cliff Bartell(s) of THE BRASS CUPCAKE? An interesting bit of MacDonald trivia, I thot.

MacDonald's parody on Spillane was very funny. How about a McGee parody called THE LONG DEEP BLUE LAVENDER GOOD-BY LOOK, with cameos by Lew Archer and Philip Marlowe? I'm working on this one myself--with little to show for it so far, I'm afraid--but I'm throwing it out to fellow JDM fans for consideration, if they are so desperate as to have nothing better to do with their time.

THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK was vaguely disappointing. Great beginning--some nice flashes of detail and insight--but, on the whole, lacking the energy of the earlier books. The series seems to have reached the point where McGee's soul-searching is adversely affecting the pace of the story; so much time is devoted to introspection that suspense lapses, or is totally lost.

Don't get me wrong. Trav's frequent self-appraisals are one of the main reasons I read MacDonald. (Have you ever tried to really get interested in a novel in which the hero does not possess at least a measure of introspection? You can't do it.) But I don't like to see the rest of the story suffer thereby. Maybe MacDonald can retire McGee for a year or so, to give Trav plenty of time to think things out and maybe attain a greater degree of self-understanding than he currently possesses.

As I have stated previously in this letter, I would definitely not want to see McGee retired permanently, unless JDM feels he can no longer work effectively with the character. But a McGee who is not constantly brooding--and one who enjoys a happy ending once in a while--might be a refreshing change.

((But all of the novels to date have had happy endings for McGee--considering the nature of his work. He endures; he survives; he continues to enjoy the life he has chosen to lead. -ljm))

DICK BOYD, Summit, NJ - I hope this makes the next JDMB to register some of my thoughts about the movie DARKER THAN AMBER and JDM's latest McGee: THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK.

By dint of some persistence, my wife and I finally got to see AMBER here in the New York City area. I enjoyed it, for many of the reasons given in the reviews in the recent JDMB. The script was close enough to the book to give me joyful jolts of recognition, but it departed enough as it climaxed to keep me on the edge of my seat. My only complaint is that Suzy Parker's "Vangie" wasn't tough enough.

AMBER's fate at the hands of the metropolitan NYC movie houses may be of interest to Bib. readers. It was a second feature at half-a-dozen houses for two weeks or so in the early fall here in NYC and suburban Jersey. It lasted up to about 6 weeks in NYC. Then it disappeared from sight, like Vangie, until the favorable review in Time Magazine brought it up again. Advertising AMBER with a reprint of the Time review, two theaters in NYC booked it as a single feature. One theater held it for a week, and we caught it at the other theater in its third and last week, with an audience of 14 others--a sorry fate for a great JDM-type movie! ((I don't think it was all that great. - jmm))

I have enjoyed the JDMB, particularly JDM's letters, stories, etc. and your editorial comments throughout. I hope JDM keeps "contributing". The news of LAVENDER in the last Bib. was very timely. The next day I walked into my local bookstore to bug the owner about getting LAVENDER in stock. He grinned and showed me the shelf where he had just stacked his first copies! I think LAVENDER is one of the bigger and better McGees, plot twists and all. I was particularly happy to have McGee end up with Heidi and Raoul. I hope Raoul is a permanent addition to the Busted Flush, knowing JDM's skill at reporting cats. I really resonated with Heidi's diagnosis of McGee's "troubles" as second adolescence (the period has also been referred to as "middlescence"), probably because that's where I'm at.

A final thought. I hope some McGee fan will concoct a McGee chronology from the bits and hints of McGee's past that are in the books---family, brother (?), school, pro football, Korea, and colorful adventures.

((Dean Grennell! Please note that final thought from Dick Boyd. Aren't you working on something like that? You compile it and we'll publish it. -ljm & jmm))

ROBERT E. BRINEY, Salem, Mass. - Saw the movie DARKER THAN AMBER. Mildly entertaining, but it seemed to me that most of what made the book worth reading got left out of the film. The film could have been by anybody--it had no distinctive JDM aura (in fact, no distinctive aura, period.). ((Good! Somebody else who appreciates what was missing! -jmm))

Read Travis McGee No. 12 (LAVENDER)...sort of amusing to see Trav on the receiving end of his favorite form of therapy.

Glad to hear that you are planning to be at the SF convention in Boston on the Labor Day weekend, 1971. There is going to be at least one program item (probably at a special morning session) on connections between sf/fantasy and mysteries. A talk on Harry Stephen Keeler by Mike Nevins and one on Sax Rohmer by myself are already planned, and other items will undoubtedly surface during the coming months. A number of mystery fans are planning to attend--the Nevinses, Washers, Carlins, Pat Erhardt, etc.

((Too bad it's to be a morning session. Late morning, I hope, as I hardly come awake or get my heart started before 11 a.m. at most conventions. But it is nice that the World Science Fiction Convention is giving some time to the mystery buffs. We do hope to be there, and for those who might be interested, write for info to:

NOREASCON

P. O. Box 547

Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Attending membership fee is \$6 until AUGUST 10, 1971. Membership at the door will be \$10, so if you plan to attend, now is the time to join. -ljm))

JACK CUTHBERT, Greensburg, PA - Same day I got JDMB #14, I journeyed to the local Mall and happily, to my surprise, picked up THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK which I immediately read in spite of the fact that there are at least 109 other unread books resting thither and yon about the ranch. I shall not attempt a review of same, leaving that to those qualified, but will state it was JDM in his usual form, which is high-class entertainment, suspense and general good reading. McGee makes somewhat like a better class private eye.

I was interested in the remark in F. Blosser's letter in #14 regarding Gold Medal losing Richard Stark's (WESTLAKE?) Parker series. How come--also where did he go? G.M. got this series from Pocket Books which had the original Parker books, of which I have six or seven.

Maybe you could get an expert to write you an article on the WEIRD WORLD OF PAPERBACKS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION, which certainly is. I don't know how many times I have picked up paperbacks at obscure stores which don't specialize in such, and these books never seem to appear in the larger stores at any time. How many times have you missed books which didn't land at your usual source of pbs? Well, anyhow, I have.

((See Don Wollheim's explanation on pb distribution in Rand's Bouchercon report, JDMB #14. Distribution is a major headache for the publishing industry. It's the weird world of distribution companies we have to blame. -ljm))

DAN GOODMAN, Los Angeles, CA - On Len's comparison between mystery fandom and sf fandom-- there are several fairly obvious differences. One large one--mystery fandom is being influenced by the example of sf fandom. When and if mystery fandom takes to amateur press associations, for example, they'll be modeled after the sf fandom apas rather than the mundane apas that sf fandom took the idea from.

Other differences: the average age of members seems to be rather higher than in the early years of sf fandom, over 30 rather than under 21. And relations with the pros seem to be far better. And there seems to be far less in the way of political fireworks. Admittedly, the great early dissensions of sf fandom may have been blown up out of proportion in the telling; and similar rifts in mystery fandom may have been kept quiet. Still--

The difference may be that science fiction is for people who like to think of themselves as being eminently rational. And there is no one less rational, much of the time, than the man who knows he is always logical and reasonable.

On the other hand, the man who reads mysteries is likely to be able to admit that he has anti-social impulses. That he occasionally, with little provocation, wishes that someone else would die in agony. (Or peacefully in his sleep.)

There are several definitions of "head" current; and Ted White and JDM are using rather different ones. Ted's is closer to the one I generally use and assume others are using: fairly frequent, definitely more than occasional user. JDM is talking about people who use a drug to the point at which their lives are built around it, so that it saps whatever energies they might otherwise use elsewhere. I'd say that Ted knows several people who fit that definition--including a couple he doesn't think of in that way.

Stan Woolston's suggestion of catapulting McGee into the future, and June's comment pointing out that McGee belongs in our own time brings up a question: just what sort of society is needed to provide a plausible background for someone like McGee?

What's essential seems to be a society loose enough so that a man can be independent to that degree, tight enough so he has to work at being independent, and with enough crookedness so someone can make a living operating the way McGee does. (A society in which vendettas are the common way of settling disputes, or one in which nearly everyone was a member of one or another secret society, would be something else. No room for McGee there.)

Canada, maybe; but a Canadian McGee would likely operate also in the US. England, since World War II, seems to have a fair number of people whose money has been acquired in unorthodox ways--the Beatles are one example. Western Europe as a whole might be a good place for a McGee type; more documentation is required for travel, but that would present no real problem. ((Such a McGee would be almost compelled to be multi-lingual, in order to move in society with the same ease that he does in this one. -jmm))

Now to Ted White's letter (traveling back to #13): There are grapevines, and they are highly useful at times. Any fandom serves as a grapevine to some degree. So does any political organization, and any that's small enough and considers itself isolated from the political mainstream has a grapevine of astounding accuracy. (Concerning what that group and related ones are doing, that is. Information gained on the far left about the activities of the far right and the FBI is likely to be inaccurate; similarly for information gained on the far right.)

The New York Jewish community is so splintered and so vague at the edges that it's probably not particularly useful as a source of information unless you know exactly where to look. No use asking a wealthy Reform Jew to help track down information available in the Hasidic community, for example.

However--I could probably do better than Ted in finding such information because I'm Jewish, and hence more trustworthy. I'm far from being unmistakably Jewish; my relatives are almost all atheists and agnostics; I speak only a very few scraps of Yiddish--but still, I'd probably be trusted more than any Gentile.

Agreed that McGee (and possibly JDM also, in his own personality--not quite enough evidence there to judge) doesn't see hippies and semi-hippies three-dimensionally. But then, how could he, without being far more than he's shown himself to be? McGee believes in the virtues of hard work to the extent of practicing it; he has a lifestyle which requires fairly large amounts of money. He's not going to be empathetic towards kids who have (by his standards) had it easy and who are doing almost nothing that could be called work. Productive artists are one thing; most of the hippies he encounters are another.

There are hippies who work harder at ordinary jobs than do most conventional people. And a minority who have taken up farming in poor-soil areas, and have voluntarily taken on workloads from which people escape to "easy" jobs like mining. McGee hasn't met any in either group. And since those who are consistently in one of these groups are pretty good at staying out of trouble, he's not likely to encounter them.

I'd like to see Ted try his hand at a mystery set among hippies. (Except that the term was obsolete the day it was conceived--and the next label will probably be invented within the year, certainly within the next five.) Someone who has a certain amount of empathy with the people, who knows the customs and can write from the inside in a non-sensationalistic manner could write at least one damned good mystery.

Of course, readers might reject a mystery inhabited by bohemians who were essentially like Jane Marple's neighbors; Agatha Christie has used one or two such, but only as frosting on the cake.

IWAN HEDMAN, Sweden - Many thanks for your very interesting JDM Bibliophile #14, which came to me this morning. It contains such a lot of interesting information for a Mystery Fan, as I am.

I am writing this letter because I read, with great interest, the article called WHAT IS MYSTERY FANDOM? I found it interesting because I too published my own DAST MAGAZINE without knowing anything at all about the other three mystery magazines--TAD, TRMN and JDMB.

I got the idea over just a night and went to our capital city, Stockholm, to discuss the idea with some friends in the publishing market. The director I spoke to was very helpful and told me he would like to help me at the beginning. He did so for about the first six months, when I had collected enough money to buy me a machine of my own. I have one now and I also do all the work by myself together with my helpful wife.

My DAST MAGAZINE started in September 1968 and I did not know of any other fanzine like mine before I suddenly got the information from one of my members in DAST that there were at least two other fanzines in USA which dealt with Mystery Books (TAD and TRMN). Early this year I also got the information that there was a third one and that was JDMB.

In your JDMB I got the address to THE QUEEN CANON BIBLIOPHILE, but as I have written twice I haven't got any answer.

If you are interested in my DAST MAGAZINE I can tell you that I now have about 300 members spread all over the world. In Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, England, USA and also Australia are my members. I am also sending my DAST to a lot of Swedish libraries, which seem to be very interested in such publications.

I am sending you a copy, and even if you can't read Swedish I am sure you will read the article by Geoffrey Boothroyd--The Armourer of James Bond--who visited me and my wife last summer for one week. I think his article is worth reading.

I am also glad to see my own list of JDM books published in Sweden. Hope some of your readers would like to exchange my Swedish books by JDM. I have only one copy of his books in English (CRY HARD, CRY FAST).

The Swedish title of the movie with Travis McGee DARKER THAN AMBER is: VITNET AR KALLT. In a translation back to English, it would be: The Witness Is Cold. Some papers gave it very good critics.

((As you can see, we have added DAST to our Recommended Reading list. We didn't list subscription rates, as we could find none in the copy you sent. // Hope you have heard from Bob Washer about TCQB by now. The mails do get fouled up once in a while. // I wonder how many other mystery or detective fanzines or amateur journals are being published outside of the mystery fandom we all "belong" to? -ljm))

MIKE NEVINS, East Brunswick, NJ - I must confess that I didn't think the DARKER THAN AMBER movie anywhere near as good as Dave Stewart thought it. The screenwriter and director squeezed all the plausibility from JDM's plot, stripped his characters of all flesh-and-blood detail, removed almost all of the novel's outrage at the treatment of other humans as objects, then encouraged us to like all those phony-ritzy settings which JDM has always expressed contempt for. Despite the fact that it retained the bare bones of the original story, the film reminded me primarily not of anything written by JDM but of Frank Sinatra's Tony Rome movies--a slick, painless way to kill two hours, but not worthy of a thought thereafter. ((On the contrary--I found it acutely painful, to sit there and watch what could have been a good movie go down the drain. Especially with the occasional small touches straight from the book--such as Travis deliberately upending the pop-top beer can, and the subtle suggestion of high tragedy implicit in the scene where Dee and Terry, where she is absorbed in putting on makeup and lying to him. - jmm))

ALEXEI PANSKIN, Perkashie, PA - The thing I liked best about issue 14 was the news that I can expect to see two MacDonald books before the end of the year. Maybe October. Maybe when I check out the new paperbacks this week. I wish it were the shorts coming first. Since it's the McGee, I'll just be hoping for good things.

The hobnails used on Ted White sent me back to look at his letter in the previous issue. I know Ted through the science fiction community you mention in your editorial. He is infuriating and arrogant and has one or two other defects, too, but I'll dedicate a book to him with affection one of these years if he will only stop doing things to make me change my mind at the last minute. His letter was infuriating and arrogant and had one or two other defects, but it also made some points I agreed with. Your final comment was an expectation of comment pro and con and since the comment in 14 was unfavorable enough to send me back to Ted's letter in the first place, let me stick up for Ted. A little bit. In the first place, Ted does respect the hell out of JDM. I used to listen to him talk about Chapter 12 of A DEADLY SHADE OF GOLD, the one where McGee breaks into the estate in Mexico and kills the guard dog. And Ted lent me all those old pulp MacDonald stories he dug out of his collection to read. But I think Ted does have a couple of critical points worth taking seriously even by us friends and admirers of JDM.

The last few McGees have been tired and seemed written by reflex. The patented MacDonald way-with-words has rung a bit mechanically on my ear. I put it down to McGee--rote situations evoke rote responses. For me, JDM has lost an edge that he had for me for half my life, which is to say, for fifteen years. After the first two McGees, I wrote to JDM and wondered if they wouldn't become confining. He wrote back that he was writing THE HOUSE GUESTS and THE BLOOD GAME, but that the real saver was that while the first six McGees would be written to formula, "in the second six I'll bust McGee out of the formula and it will be the damndest series that anyone ever wrote." Since then we've had THE HOUSE GUESTS, though not THE BLOOD GAME, the Coppolino book, ten McGees, and THE LAST ONE LEFT, which might even be the McGee-book-run-wild of popular speculation.

For these years which should have been as much of an advance on the fifties as the MacDonald fifties were an advance on the forties, this isn't nearly enough. I understand why MacDonald wrote 12 McGees, as I understand why Donald Hamilton writes Matt Helm. It's the same reason that I'm writing a science fiction series and hoping it will have cumulative popularity. It's clear that both MacDonald and Hamilton have been hurt as writers by the confinements of their series. They no longer surprise, perhaps because the appeal of the formula series is familiarity. MacDonald could once do a great deal more than McGee-formula. In the last few books, he hasn't even done McGee ritualisms well. I waited for him to break McGee out of the formula, but he decided not to. Or was convinced not to. I hope he keeps his second intention and ends the McGees at 12 books. If he continues with the series, I think it will be at the cost of his creativity.

MacDonald has his marijuana wrong both in his book and in his letter in #14. That's a genuine cause for concern. If twenty years from now it is MacDonald who is checked out to see how things felt in our times, then MacDonald had better have the feel of things right. In the case of marijuana, he is wrong enough in idiom and understanding that INDIGO is compromised for a reader like me, let alone a future reader who is likely to be familiar with pot. In his letter, JDM seems to be saying that he was not talking of the common user, but of the dependent personality, the extraordinary case, which he calls the "head". In the first place, this is an example of MacDonald's lack of understanding of the idiom. To be a ---head is to have an affinity for ---. The "opium heads" in that Burmese village were not the two or three wrecks, but those steady users who complained about the sticks, straws and impurities. In INDIGO, the early marijuana talk was off-key and the representation of the special case--who did not seem within the context of the story to be all that special a case--was ludicrous. Nobody whines, whimpers and begs for marijuana. Certainly not a head. And if a dependent personality had gotten into marijuana and then couldn't come by it, the most likely thing she or he would do is go into booze. As for JDM's claim in his letter that the difference between the social user of pot and the social user of alcohol is degeneration in the pot user, that is not borne out by my observation of several hundred of both. I've known potheads with up to 20 years of regular use and the degeneration has been negligible. And I've seen more people than I care to think about wrecked by alcohol. And what could JDM mean by "a lowering of the sights insofar as the goals and life-style are concerned"? Beads, beards and bellbottoms? Grass isn't a subject that MacDonald or McGee know very well, and for the sake of their reliability as reporters, shouldn't fantasize about. Grass sweet? Never. It's all those banana-flavored cigarette papers you're smelling. Mumble, mumble, mumble. Excuse me. I must go find a pot pusher and buy a miggie. Or two. I need a fix desperately.

Cory and I caught JDM on the tv program Book Beat. Very likable and sharp. I think he would be splendid company. I also liked and sympathized with his obvious second thoughts. Near the end he said something to the effect that he didn't think he would do one of these programs again.

I'm glad you Moffatts are coming to the science-fiction convention in Boston next year. I'm looking forward to meeting you. ((Likewise, we're sure. -jmm)) It may be that the voluntary popular common-interest groups like science fiction fandom and the mystery fandom you are describing now will turn out to be a new form of social institution. National or even international in scope. It's only possible now, and what will come of it might make a science fiction story.

Excuse me. I must go find a book pusher and buy a MacDonald. Or two. I need a fix desperately.

((I have come to the conclusion that the smell of maryjane, pot, or wotever y'wanna call it varies from nose to nose. However, I recently asked several persons who, for one reason or another, have smelled the stuff how they would describe said smell, and the answers ranged from "sweet" to "sickeningly sweet". // I would guess that the readers who want John to drop McGee and write non-series books are in the minority considering the popularity of McGee around the world. We could poll the readership of JDMB on the subject, but I doubt that the results of the poll--even if each and every one of you voted--would influence John one way or the other. He has written 13 of them and whether or not he writes any more depends on how he feels about it. Personally, I hope he never tires of Trav, and I hope this just as strongly as I am sure that if and when he tires of Trav he won't write any more McGees.

E. S. SEELEY, Jr., Brooklyn, NY - About the movie version of DARKER THAN AMBER. As you have probably heard, it played here in New York only on a double bill, got generally good reviews, but stirred no particular excitement. The consensus among film people that I know is that the movie is about two years too late. That is, two years ago it would have been received very well by both critics and audiences because films of this type were still quite fashionable. But these days the emphasis is all on youth-oriented films that deliberately avoid the kind of tightly organized plot structures that JDM is so famous for. The ironic thing is that almost any McGee novel could be made into a film that would have great appeal to the same audience that loves EASY RIDER and similar films (which now represent the mainstream of American cinema--both artistically and commercially).

It is only necessary to concentrate on McGee himself--on his anti-Establishment, do-your-own-thing, drop-out-of-the-rat-race life style. And on his willingness to accept violence as a practical necessity in the contemporary world even though he personally dislikes it. This mirrors the feelings and attitudes of so many young people in colleges, and they are the ones who make up the largest and most important segment of movie audiences today.

But the producers of AMBER chose to follow the tradition of the James Bond films, for understandable reasons. Unfortunately, there is no longer an adequate commercial market for such films in American movie theaters. They are as dead as blockbuster musicals like PAINT YOUR WAGON. Though there is still a market for them on network television (the world premiere movies) and in European theaters.

Personally, I think it would be very interesting to see some of the McGee novels done as contemporary, youth-oriented films. The character is there, the social commentary is there, and all the young people I know who have read JDM (including some college building liberators, etc.) think that he is great.

JEFF SMITH, Baltimore, MD - Since last issue I've read five MacDonald novels, which brings my total to eight. Someday in the far future I may actually be justified in calling myself a JDM fan--maybe after I read my first Travis McGee book? ALL THESE CONDEMNED is a fascinating book; if I ever get caught up on MacDonald and start rereading, this will be one of the first ones I go through again, purely on the basis of its technique. APRIL EVIL never really came to life for me, but it made pleasant reading. On the other hand, BALLROOM IN THE SKIES bored me to absolute tears, and was a struggle to finish. CANCEL ALL OUR VOWS is far and away the best MacDonald I've read yet; the intense probing of the characters was handled perfectly, and easily offset a few plot deficiencies. And I was just stunned by the concept of CRY HARD, CRY FAST; who but MacDonald would write a novel about an automobile accident? And carry it off?

Flipping through JDMB to write this letter, I found it easy to imagine I was reading a science-fiction fanzine. After all, there was a letter from Harry Warner Jr., a con report, a comment on Harlan Ellison, a let's-jump-on-Ted-White section...everything, including a review of a science fiction novel. (But no Rotsler drawings.) ((You must have missed the issue with the drawing Rotsler did for us. -jmm))

You wonder how I can still have as much fun producing my fanzine if I'm losing some of my early enthusiasm. What it is, I suppose, is that I'm replacing my early enthusiasm to Publish with a newer enthusiasm for Publishing Well. That's why my next issue will be a month or so late; if I publish now I'll be publishing without all my Tim Kirk drawings. At the beginning, I probably would have substituted other material (as I considered--briefly--doing this time) and saved the Kirk material for the next issue. Now it takes me longer to be happy with having an issue published, but I'm happier with it when I'm done. Is my position any clearer? ((Yes. -jmm))

The last paragraph of Clay Kimball's letter hit home pretty hard--the last time I tried to prove I wasn't a slavish admirer of a writer I criticized him so harshly he told me he never wanted to speak to me again and really put me down before 150 fans. The artistic ego is notoriously thin--large, but thin. (Happy ending: we straightened out our difficulties and are friends once again, but it was rough for a while.)

Is it better just to admit to being a slavish admirer than to risk something like that? I think not. If you really are a slavish admirer, you are of little use to anyone. When I have written my dozen best-sellers and have won the Pulitzer, the NBA

and am being considered for the Nobel, I would less prefer having a bunch of people around me crying "Oh, you're so great!" than a group who will criticize me when I'm lazy and accept me even though they are aware of my deficiencies. (If I continue to write sentences as poor as that one I'll never have to worry.)

Dave Locke asks for more JDM sf. Well now, I like JDM and I like sf, and I liked WINE OF THE DREAMERS and THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH & EVERYTHING, so it stands to reason that I should back Dave up on this, as the two of you did. But JDM has some strange ideas about sf that I don't think would lend themselves to a really good sf novel. "The pretentious and overly grammatic speeches made by the actors are touchingly typical of the genre." "Science fiction is either space-adventure, (or) mad-scientist (or) doom-machine epics." "I may well be responsible, also, for turning off the hard-core aficionado of science fiction who, because these are more about people than things, might also term them 'silly'." (JDM, 1968)

If MacDonald is going to write any more sf, I should hope he reads up a little on the genre as it is today--the five Nebula Award anthologies published by Doubleday and the Nebula-winning novels, if nothing else--so he can see what is "touchingly typical" of the genre today. (Would it be too much to suggest that a JDM sf novel should be serialized in AMAZING STORIES, edited by Ted White?)

Gail Van Achtoven's letter worried me a bit. She is saying (I know I'm putting words in your mouth here, Gail, but I do so under the impression that you believe them, and in the knowledge that if I misrepresent you, you will leap at me fang and claw with no hesitation) "Who cares if a couple of the facts are wrong, so long as it's an interesting story?" This is an example of Slavish Admiration; anyone who cares about JDM--as opposed to "cares for"---will say: John, that was a good book but I want to point out this mistake to you so you won't make it again. ((You do my good friend Gail an injustice. She is the gentlest and most reasonable of ~~fantastic~~ people. -jmm))

Ted White writes and edits science fiction, which has a stranger relationship with facts than anything else in the world. Sf people have to invent a lot of their own "facts", but where a real Fact does exist, it has to be used--or suitably explained away. Poor use of facts will ruin an sf story, moreso than a mystery-suspense story, but someone used to sf will understandably be dissatisfied with any story that misuses facts. You may say that's one of the hazards of being an sf person, but I think anyone who can gloss over mistakes in a piece of fiction is a pure escapist, and there are more reasons than just escapism to read anything.

MRS. Harriet N. STEVENSON, West Linn, OR - I like your idea about dressing up for the next Bouchercon. If I can't attend as the BRASS CUPCAKES, I won't be there. Of course, almost any of JDM's titles would be naturals. The GIRL IN THE PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER would be easy: burlap and chicken-wire. But what would you do for A PURPLE PLACE FOR DYING?

Paragraph 2 on page 9 repeats what Ellery Queen has said many times: The writers of mystery and suspense stories write it as it is; novelists write it as they think it is or ought to be. I think I understand what Ellery Queen says: Writers of mystery, suspense or detective stories use fictional people to write about the truth. Novelists use real people to tell about fictional occurrences. The fictional episodes are dated too soon. Who reads ARROWSMITH? or SAND PEBBLES? ((Tain't necessarily so. Just re-read DODSWORTH and found it even better than I'd remembered. Of course, it IS the finest story Lewis ever wrote... -jmm)) School children are required to read A TALE OF TWO CITIES. The dullest book I've ever read. I'd suggest they read Winston Churchill's books. Old Charles Dickens wrote for magazines that paid 1¢ a word; he used a lot of words. So did old John Galsworthy. I've read Forsyte Saga at least 3 times; but like Perry Mason it didn't come to life until it was done live on TV.

There is no comparison, of course, between the artistry of FORSYTE SAGA and PERRY MASON. But Raymond Burr made something out of nothing. What has Earl Stanley Gardner sold in books now? 30 million? Just under Agatha Christie.

Personally, I prefer authors that take a little more time. Does JDM dictate? Or pound the words out on a typewriter? I'm curious.

((JDM is a typer-pounder. -ljm))

I liked THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK; in my opinion he got back to Florida and the places he knows better. I hope JDM won't stop with 12 McGees. He's getting very good reviews on the movie DARKER THAN AMBER. Of course there has been the same travesty, probably, on JDM's book as on Raymond Chandler's and Hammett's. There was the same messing up of James Bond. The only true movie of a book was GONE WITH THE WIND. Why do screenwriters have to use the titles and none of the book?

JDM is beginning to write in the same genre (what does that word mean?) as Raymond Chandler. He likes to write; he loves the words he uses; he has the feeling for people, ordinary people, underdogs.

I suggest JDM let Edgar Hoover do the trick with the drug problem, if Hoover can, which I doubt. No one who is 75 years old can cope.

TOM VanACHTOVEN, 270 E. Alegria Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024 - Needs the following titles by Sax Rohmer:

Nude in Mink
Sumuru
Fire Goddess
Return of Sumuru
The Quest of the Sacred Slipper
The Dream Detector

HARRY WARNER, JR., Hagerstown, MD - Someone could write a long, long speculative article on the future of mystery fandom, using your leadoff article in this latest JDMB as the springboard. The comparison with science fiction fandom of today and of the distant past is tempting as a basis for reasoning about the future. But I suspect that some people who are new to both science fiction and mystery fandoms might not realize the enormous differences between mystery fandom today and science fiction fandom at a comparable stage in the early 1930's. You know the differences, of course, but I wonder if the mystery fan today can imagine how it was for the science fiction fan four decades ago? Science fiction stories were something that many fans wouldn't admit to reading, unless they were certain they were talking to a very understanding person, while mystery fiction is totally acceptable.

In the early 1930's, it was no feat at all for a science fiction fan to read everything generally available, unless he lived in a big metropolis where the public library had all sorts of rare books, because it took only a couple of months to read all theazines ever published, and not much longer to go through the hundred or so science fiction books in print or in most libraries; the mystery fan today has a stupendously large choice of instantly available reading matter and it must take years for the person who has just discovered the delights of mystery fiction to read the basic works that will enable him to carry on a conversation sensibly.

Contact between science fiction fans in the early years of that fandom was almost solely by correspondence, because of financial and transportation problems; today even a mystery fan still in high school probably owns an auto and lives near an interstate highway that enables him to visit on a weekend trip anyone who lives within 600 miles or so of his home.

Science-fiction fanzines had to struggle through experiments and soul-searching over publication methods and types of material; mystery fanzines today can imitate instead of wasting years in experimenting.

Mystery fiction has mutated repeatedly, from the Poe prototypes of pure deduction through the classic era of the plain, unadorned whodunits, into more recent types of novels in which the events are more important than the puzzle's disclosure and the environment is the tough, unidealized real world.

Science fiction has always been just a shade more advanced in language and thought than boys' fiction, until the first real advances came as paperbacks grew more important than magazines and now we may be entering a new era typified by the New Wave fusses: the point is that mystery fans may not be as antagonistic to new developments in their field as science fiction fans have been, because of the constant evolution it has already undergone.

For these and a lot of other reasons, I doubt that mystery fandom will evolve as slowly as science fiction fandom did, or in similar directions. I wouldn't be at all surprised to find mystery fans impelling universities to alter course offerings to include this type of fiction within five years; it took a third of a century for this process in science fiction fandom. ((A third of a century--AND a successful space program! -jmm))

I'd also suspect that mystery fandom will be much more successful than science fiction fandom in the creation of prozines. Science fiction prozines have almost always come from mundane sources. Mystery fans include many people with maturity and contacts who might promote new magazines for newsstand distribution and I think there would be a market for them. ((You mean like FDR? -jmm))

But I can't create a precedent by devoting a loc to a single topic, so let's see what else I want to mention from this issue which I should have written about a long time ago. The Bouchercon report is the first of any length that I've encountered. I'm gratified to know that the event will retain its name and its fannish population.

Dave Stewart impresses me as someone the science fiction fanzines should contact immediately, to determine if he ever goes to fantasy movies. He writes a superb review, judging by this example, and good reviews of fantasy movies, other than those for 2001, have been very scarce in fanzines for years. Now the next problem will be to determine if I wait months or years to see DARKER THAN AMBER. Hagerstown has three theaters, and two of them rarely run a film for less than a week or two, so the total number of movies shown here in the course of a year isn't great. My public passion, Kim Darby, has been featured in three films distributed since TRUE GRIT, and only one of them has reached Hagerstown, to give you some idea. Maybe I'll have to wait until DARKER THAN AMBER comes to television two or three years from now, praying all the while that television networks won't in the meantime convert to some kind of three-dimensional projection which will prevent them from showing any movies made before 1972. ((Maybe when you're in Boston next September, Harry? -jmm))

Bill Wilson's column is again fascinating. The only real problem with legalizing marijuana is: what will kids do to get the thrill of law-breaking after it becomes legal? Because the urge to rebel against the authority that is tied in with the law of the land is going to be a part of human nature for a long time to come. The young people who are spending their money on marijuana today would have been carrying hip flasks if they'd been born during prohibition--but today many of them are campaigning against alcohol. I keep worrying about the danger that legalizing marijuana will cause them to turn to something much worse than either rotgut or pot.

Stan Woolston's theory about telepathy to the future, as an accomplishment of science fiction writers, doesn't sound too fantastic, after what Shirley Maclaine, of all people, said the other day. She did a solo appearance on the David Frost program, and told about an apparently foolproof example of telepathy in darkest Africa during her recent adventures there. Stan seems to imply that the death penalty for rape was something typical of long-ago Maryland, but it remains in existence today.

I appreciate the kind things you said at the end of my letter, and I hope that I don't louse up this epic encounter in Boston. My health has been an increasing problem for the past year, and I'm currently on a monthly schedule of visits to the doctor who wants to avoid an operation but warns that one might be necessary at almost any time. I'll probably have to travel by airplain for the first time in my life to get to Boston, unless I have some kind of dramatic healing episode between now and August, because I don't think I can risk eight or nine hours each way on the train or bus.

The Swedish additions to the JDM Master Checklist fascinate me. Apparently some translators just threw up their hands and didn't even try to provide titles of some books similar to the originals. I know almost no Swedish, but common sense indicates that there has been a copout on the McGee books in particular.

BILL WILSON, Atlanta, GA - I liked THE LONG LAVENDER LOOK fine, but I don't think it is quite as good as INDIGO. I was especially interested in JDM's portrayals of Dori and Jeannie and his comments regarding their types in Chapter 15. He has got the types down to the last dot. Also his character Lew Arnstead is one that, unfortunately, is encounted on various law enforcement agencies.

Random thought--I wonder if JDM had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote the last paragraph of Chapter One...

Here are some clippings that you may find of interest. Note that Mr. F. Lee Bailey has had his knuckles rapped by the Massachusetts Bar Association. I fail to share the admiration of some people for Mr. Bailey's flamboyant tactics for exactly the reasons cited by the Bar Association.

To Gail VanAchtoven: Perhaps you speed-read, or you skipped by a word, but I did not express a yen for a real McGee--I qualified it with the word "almost". Anytime I start wishing for fantasy to become fact my wife of these many years will take me to a friend of ours who has one of those quiet, panelled offices complete with a leather contour chair, and we will probably start off with a word association test. As to the other comments, perhaps I am guilty of some sort of pejoration, but I rather think that you have me typecast as a long-fanged character who enjoys having people barbecued in the electric chair and who gets his jollies seeing miscreants hanging in chains. ((You mean you don't? - jmm)) Far from it--I don't approve of capital punishment and I think our present penal system (as with our judicial system) has a long way to go to produce anything at all resembling true justice for all.

As to the "poor slob" who got killed by the robbers--what about his civil rights? He was exercising his rights as a citizen which are to be secure in his person and walk the streets in safety, and the fact that the robbers did not set out to kill that particular man has no bearing on the case at all. A point of law is, that if you kill anyone in the course of committing a felony, it is murder.

My theoretical quarrel with the judge and lawyer involved is that they were only concerned with a point of law and one can therefore postulate that they didn't give a damn about justice for the victim--after all, that wasn't the point at issue. I personally feel that society should be concerned for the victims of crimes and by this I don't mean welfare charity. At one time the Chinese had a system whereby if you killed a man you became responsible for his family and his debts.

In other words, I am thinking in terms of some sort of recompense for the victim, with the offender being primarily liable for the payment. The present theory of correction and rehabilitation fails because it does not take into account the psychopaths who by their very nature are not amenable to either course of action.

If you are in the mood, the following books are of real interest: "Crime and the Mind" by Walter Bromberg, "The Mask of Sanity" by Hervey Cleckley, "The Prosecutor" by James Mills, "Cops on Campus and Crime in the Streets" by Erle Stanley Gardner, and, finally, in case you haven't read it, "The Executioners" by JDM--one of the best (if not the best) fictional depictions of a criminal psychopath. If you are interested in pursuing the matter further you can write to me through Len and June. For personal reasons, I don't want to correspond with anyone directly unless I know exactly who they are.

((Gail is a dear personal friend of Len's and mine. Is that good enough, or do you want further affidavits? -jmm))

I highly recommend to all "The Assassination of John F. Kennedy--The Reasons Why" by Albert H. Newman. In my opinion, it is by far the best book on the subject. Incidentally, some of the books on this topic are so absurd that one wonders how they were ever accepted for publication.

Quote from Daniel Webster: "Every unpunished murder takes away something from the security of every man's life." Think about it.

I hope JDM will write more about Raoul. My wife and I are cat lovers--we live with four of them--and my son and his wife have three. In addition, we have a band of vagabonds who come mooching about the back door. This band varies from two to ten, and has me buying cat food by the case. I won't bore you with all the details, but if you dig cats, drop me a note and I'll fill you in on the full story. A record I think both of you and JDM would like--"World's Greatest Jazz Band" - Project 3: S-5033.

AL HUBIN, White Bear Lake, MN - You may be interested that the NYTimes, in the form of the new editor of the Book Review (John Leonard), has decided to dispense with my services. I mailed my last column February 9 (for publication Feb. 28), and according to rumor Harold Schonberg, Times music critic, will be covering crime

fiction beginning in March. In a letter to me, Mr. Leonard indicated that he wished to begin experimenting with new formats--and using New York writers. While I admit to some disappointment (one always prefers to make these decisions oneself!), my predominating reaction is a sense of anticipation--anticipation of what I'll now have time to do that was previously impossible. My library has burgeoned to nearly 12,000 volumes--now I'll have time to do some reading among all the older volumes that have accumulated. I'll now have time to go on with the anthology series for Dutton--and it appears that I will be doing 2 of them this year (one for publication in July of 1972, the other for Christmas this year). I'll now be able to pay a little more attention to TAD, not to mention my family and my home! But this is all not to say that I did not enjoy my 33 months with the Times: it was a fabulous experience, immensely satisfying, and I'm enormously grateful for the opportunity that I had.

I have one apprehension about the change at the Times: I fear a serious de-emphasis on crime fiction is in the wind at the Book Review. I hope not; we shall see. Mr. Schonberg is said to be a long-time fancier of the genre, so hopefully greater things are in store, not lesser.

All that I've read about the Bouchercon stimulated no little interest, and I've been thinking that it would be worth no little rearranging of schedules to attend the next one (in October, I presume). In fact, I had thought to pass up this year's MWA bash, but I'm so curious about what effect my fall from grace at the Times will have on my reception at MWA I may try to attend both criminous extravaganzas this year--if the money holds out.

The slowness of mystery and detective fandom to develop a voice is indeed curious. I suppose that the greater letter-publishing efforts of sf magazines helped stimulate fandom, but some mystery magazines in the 30's also had letter columns. I might be tempted to say that the detective story and sf appeal to different types, but I know how much the fandom (at least now) overlaps (once, before I began to specialize on detective fiction, I read sf omnivorously).

You were discussing the origins of mystery fandom in the last JDMB. If memory serves, I began talking and thinking about the idea that developed into TAD before I came in touch with you and JDMB, but there's no doubt that I owe a considerable debt to you in carrying the early idea into fruition. In fact, before any of us got started, Tony Boucher wrote an article in the MWA Annual in which he pled the case for mystery fanzines. What is still unexplained is why, in such a short span of time, so many people individually were bitten by the publishing bug in this area. Tony Boucher had been doing the Times column since 1951, after all; what changed in 1966-67? For myself, I think it was simply a matter of timing. I suspect strongly that in earlier years I wasn't sufficiently knowledgable, sufficiently mature, sufficiently interested, to begin a publication like TAD; but by 1967 I had had enough exposure to mystery fiction, had been tantalized by a little exposure to the pleasures of contacts with fellow aficionados, had become sufficiently serious about my interest, and TAD was born.

Where mystery fandom is headed is a fascinating question. I personally hope it will not head in some of the undisciplined directions of sf fandom. But the first Bouchercon realized one of my early hopes: that mystery fans could have an organization and national meetings in a sort of parallel to those of the professionals. The national meeting has come; I don't know that a formal organization is necessary. But I am enormously pleased with the developemtn to date of mystery fandom: aficionados all around the country, including a large number within the academic community, are taking voice, and what they have to say (in letters, articles, reviews or what have you) is generally well-reasoned, well-informed and well-written. Every week I make a new contact or two through TAD, and I'm sure the same is true of Lianne and you; the circle widens, and we are all the winners for it.

MORE RECOMMENDED READING: The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, April 1971,

SPECIAL Poul Anderson issue.

[illegible]

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