

The JDM Bibliophile No 20

John D. MacDonald makes a sock in the jaw a literary event.

John D. MacDonald, creator of the Travis McGee series, is one of the unrivalled masters of the tough guy adventure story. If you're looking for action McGee will give it to you with both hands.

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roundup of adventure series called the McGee books "probably the best written of them all."

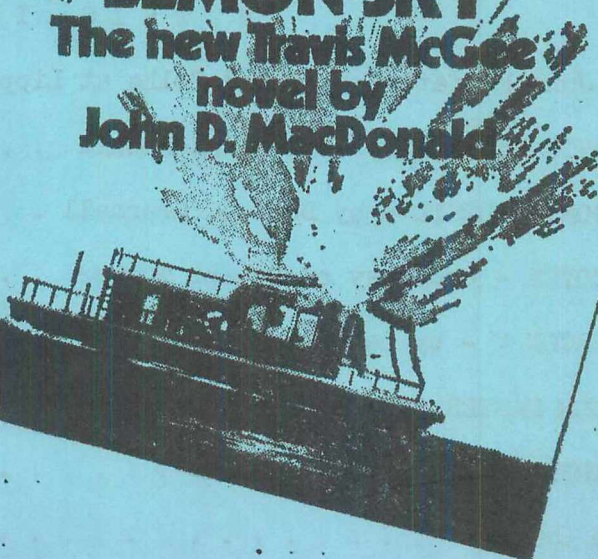
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10th Anniversary Issue

Edited and published by Len & June Moffatt, Box 4456, Downey, CA 90241 U. S. A.

This is a non-profit amateur journal devoted to the works--and to the readers--of John D. MacDonald. Price: 50¢ a copy--or a publishable letter of comment will bring you the issue in which your letter appears. If there is an "X" on your mailing label, you must do something to receive the next issue. Please DO NOT send more than 50¢ at a time. We do not want long-range subscriptions.

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: September 1, 1975. (This does not mean that the next issue will be published in September. It may not appear until some time in 1976. But we would like to know no later than September 1 just how many of you are interested in the continuation of this magazine.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR PUBLISHING SCHEDULE, READ "...& EVERYTHING" IN THIS ISSUE. THERE MAY BE SOME CHANGES.

NOTE: This issue is dated March, 1975, although we know that it will probably not be mailed until some time in April or May. We had hoped to have it ready to mail in March, because March, 1965 was the date of the very first issue of JDMB. But time ran out on us. Nevertheless we are calling this our 10th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE.

It has been a fast, and--for the most part--happy ten years. The deaths of two good men, Tony Boucher and Ron Ellick, (without whom the JDMB might never have been started--or thrived as well as it has--) marred that happiness, but we are grateful for the friendships we have made and enjoyed through the pages of this publication.

We raise our glasses to John and Dorothy and to all of you who have helped to make THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE one of the most enjoyable parts of our lives.

- Len & June, March 28, 1975

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THE "AGING" OF TRAVIS MCGEE

EDITOR'S NOTE: John gave us permission to reprint the following letter, which was in reply to a letter from Marion Poynter, columnist for the St. Petersburg Times, in which she asked him to comment on the changes in Travis over the years.

-oOo-

I have the feeling I am going to tell you more than you care to know about your query, and I think it is going to be imprecise. I have thought about it for several days.

I do not know if this is any kind of an insight, but perhaps one can define aging as a process of isolation. Assume a stable community. Roots. Identity. There are cross-linked lines of communication. In his thirties, John Smith knows well a veritable alphabet of people, from Amy to Zelda. His sense of identity is based not only upon his direct contact with the 26 good friends, but also upon their contacts with each other in which they talk about him, directly or indirectly. "Saw John over at Al's last Saturday, looking beat."

To analogize, think of it as a big web with 27 places where a spider would appropriately sit, with each web-middle connected both directly and indirectly with every other web-middle. So along comes the drunk driver, or pneumonia, or Big C, and snipsnip, when John Smith is in his forties, eight of the interconnected web-centers have been cut out, and his intimate identity, direct and indirect, is cut down to 18 other centers. Contacts suffer a geometric reduction. Whereas before, the contacts in one specific length of time could be expressed by $27 \times 26 \times 25 \times 24 \dots$ etc., it has now become $19 \times 18 \times 17 \dots$ etc., a vastly smaller number.

Can John Smith, in a stable community, replace these holes in the web? Not in kind. Knowing a person means knowing them through a chunk of their history, seeing the growth and change. We can not explain ourselves to one another. We are what we are at that point in time when we make a new friend. So the sense of identity is missing. There are fewer voices in our background noise. They are supportive voices which are missing, because they were telling us who we are, and we were living up to those superimposed conceptions.

What has all this got to do with McGee? I have established him in a fairly static environment, peopled with friends and transients. In the beginning, I knew

that I wanted to have him grow older, without defining his precise age. In 16 books, he moves around. So it would be grotesque not to have some passage of time. But out of enlightened self-interest, I did not want him to age as fast as all the rest of us. Maybe one year every three or four? He began in 1964. I mentioned, in an early book, Korean war service. So would that make him about 35? I wouldn't know. Eleven years later, is he 38? Who knows? Maybe he was 33 and is now 36. I don't really want to know.

Chronological age is no great problem. The problem is, as I have tried to state, an emotional and psychological one. I have had to involve him deeply with people and then I have killed those people off. If I repeople his world with new intimates, and make him the same jolly-boy of yore, then I am saying, indirectly, that this is a shallow and trivial man. If I make him a shallow fellow, I shall tire quickly of him, and there will be no more books, because when they stop being fun I stop doing them. Guaranteed.

So, realistically, I must induce a malaise (without getting it mixed up with mine own) and understand why he has it. Meyer--and I have implied he is older--will have his own version of it.

Life does become smaller and more cautious because identity becomes more difficult to ascertain and maintain. The dwindled circle of intimates becomes aware of being survivors. Loss is more sharply felt because more acutely understood, but at the same time the pang is dulled by the pre-awareness of its inevitability.

So what do I do to keep McGee and Meyer from becoming too withdrawn and morose? I can move them about more. Or I can go back and pick up on the casual contacts and bring those people back into a more intimate and valued focus within their home turf. I favor the latter. Perhaps a birthday party for Meyer in the beginning of McGee #17. And if there are not enough folks, I can invent a few--shared memories and all.

A couple of weeks before Alden Hatch died, he told me at lunch that he and Squeakie consciously cultivated "new friends" to fill the gap when old friends died. Acquaintances to replace friends, I think.

Who are the people least vulnerable to the malaise of the narrowing years? Those most certain of their own identity, those who have proof through accomplishment regarding who they are and what they have done.

The most vulnerable? The very old, who have done little with their lives, and who have absolutely no one left. This means there is no identity at all. Typically, in nursing homes, they will sit with chin on chest and not lift the head or eyes even to look at the television set in the lounge, to demonstrate their terrible and--to a great extent self-imposed--isolation.

What I guess I am saying in this very muddy letter is that a fictional hero has to be real to whatever possible extent I can make him real. And in order to make him real, I have to apply to him those same jolts and shocks of reality I have felt myself. Humor fades from slapstick to irony, and who can say which is better? There is more tolerance of error, and of the more gross of the human vices. There is more skepticism of the concept of justice. There is more value in gentleness.

- John D. MacDonald

Not V/BG FOR:

BPPRGOAYGBILSTL

"For the sake of sanity, date!" Thus, Alfred Korzybski was wont to admonish his disciples and no, I don't think he meant the verb in the sense of going about with members of the pleasantly opposite sex; more likely he was referring to pinpointing events and/or artifacts in terms of their origin in the timestream. So, not to seem all that anti-semantic, leave us pick up a quart of radiocarbon at the corner 7-11 Store and engage in a spot of entirely Platonic dating.

I'll not soon forget wandering into the Fond du Lac News Company, in the small Wisconsin city of the same name, to discover the initial trio of McGee books, all burst into bloom together. They were THE DEEP BLUE GOOD-BY, NIGHTMARE IN PINK and A PURPLE PLACE FOR DYING. I glommed onto all three and right happily. Long before that, I'd made it a habit to buy any new book by John D. MacDonald on sight, having learned the hard way to beware of and shun anything bylined John R. Macdonald, for that was in the days when Kenneth Millar, for reasons never entirely clear to me, used the John R. Macdonald pseudonym, later changing it to Ross MacDonald.

I'm acquainted with people who claim to be solidly hooked on the works of Ross Macdonald. I've also known people who were fond of iced coffee and Coca-Cola, mixed half and half, and once knew a lady who added a lavish ration of cinnamon to the pot when making chili; actually, it wasn't quite as dreadful as it sounds. For one thing, it was not addictive.

Speaking of dating, I know the year was 1964 but I wish I felt more certain whether it was in the spring or in the fall. I lean toward the latter, but would not bet heavily.

I recall hearing--but not where, when nor from whom--that the primal work carried the name of the central character as Dallas McGee, but that it seemed expedient, in light of the unsavory aftertaste of November 22, 1963, to change it to Travis. There has been at least one reference to Travis D. McGee, suggesting that the original name hangs in the author's mind; could be.

From BLUE through INDIGO, the Gold Medal pbs carry only the year of copyright. BLUE, PINK, PURPLE and RED--surely a combination to trigger nausea in anyone not color-blind--all were copyrighted in 1964, though RED did not appear until somewhat later. Let's list the full titles to the present, for convenience and easy reference:

1. The Deep Blue Good-By; 1964
2. Nightmare in Pink; 1964
3. A Purple Place For Dying; 1964
4. The Quick Red Fox; 1964
5. A Deadly Shade of Gold; 1965
6. Bright Orange For The Shroud; 1965
7. Darker Than Amber; 1966
8. One Fearful Yellow Eye; 1966
9. Pale Gray For Guilt; 1968
10. The Girl In The Plain Brown Wrapper; 1968
11. Dress Her In Indigo; 1969
12. The Long Lavender Look; October, 1970
13. A Tan And Sandy Silence; January, 1972

14. The Scarlet Ruse; July, 1973
15. The Turquoise Lament; hc ed. abt November, 1973; pb June '74
16. The Dreadful Lemon Sky; hc ed. February, 1975; pb ?

Having set down the titles in full, we'll use the usual shortcut of referring to the individual books by the color alone. The inclusion of a color in the title is by no means original. Cornell Woolrich, aka William Irish, was fond of inserting Black in most of his titles, the obvious exceptions being Deadline At Dawn and Phantom Lady. A lady mystery writer of several years back--whose work I never followed closely, whose name I've been striving in vain to recollect--followed the practice of hanging a different color in each new title regularly. These are but two ready examples that loom in gropy memory. There may be others, but it's not important; more nitty than gritty.

Running through the colors of the conventional spectrum, for which "VIBGYOR" is the handy acronym for recalling in proper sequence, we note that only violet and green remain unused to date, with indigo, blue, yellow, orange and red having been ticked off. A FLASH OF GREEN was the title of a non-McGee JDM book.

LEMON came close to being called The Azure Dismay and the reference for it remains in the hc edition, to be found on page 202. "...the dreadful lemon sky," occurs on page 225 as an intact phrase. This may have been due to pressure on the part of the publisher(s); a force by no means foreign to gentry of that ilk. Azure is not all that solidly familiar a word in the popular vocabulary, though most people know the color of lemons.

It would appear that a considerable amount of frantic, last-minute stirring goes on with a McGee book, right up to the moment when the plates are locked up and the button is punched on the switch to start the presses in motion. As an example, the first version of TAN to reach the west coast--so far as we know--was a set of galley proofs. These are pulled from the plates for correction by the author, proofreaders, et al. They were in the form of a sheaf of strips, about one page wide by four or five pages high, on rough, yellowish paper.

Were this a McGee book, we could title it The Deceitful Ecru Galley, with some justification. Len and June read the galley, after which I negotiated the privilege of getting further eye-tracks across it by agreeing to write the review that appeared in JDMB 17. In much the same manner, they let me precognite their rush hc copy of LEMON in return for the pot of message at hand. Having just reviewed the review I committed for #17, I confess to feeling appalled at the fatuous, flatulent flavor of it all and I'm trying to exercise more judicious restraint this time. I hope it shows.

The point of all this is that, in the galley proofs, in the final pages, McGee sailed off into the sunset or wherever with Miss Kathy Marcus, the chirky little bank tellerperson appearing on p. 213. In the final (locked-plate) version, she exits with modest boasts about her great Greek salad (TAN/217).

So I maundered the lit'rary critique off the typer and shipped it to Moffatt House and sat back licking my whiskers and looking smug. Until, that is, the actual pb version of TAN hit the stands. I bought a copy for the files--galley proofs are sloppy on bookshelves and besides, I'd returned the sheaf to Len and June--and read through it again in the more conventional manner.

I got as far as TAN/252 and knew undiluted horror. The lady taking her ease aboard the Flush was identified as Jeannie Dolan, the condominium huckstress, not Ms. Marcus. I referred to my carbon (Rookies: Always keep a carbon! -- Chesnut Ghoul'd) and verified that my memory was not at fault; this time. Well, I called the Moffatts and explained the shemozzle and they did some deft editing to keep me from looking more the utter ass than is my usual custom. I had expressed astonishment that the Flush's supercargo had wound up being Marcus instead of Dolan. In fact, only by heroic effort

had I refrained from dragging in something to the effect that it Marcus Welby spring. Well, so it goes and whom can one trust, really?

Let us turn to other trivia. How big is McGee? TAN/224 makes him approximately 6'4" and fifteen stone. Since a stone is 14 pounds, that's 210, subject to the random fluctuation of such things. RED/111 puts his shirt size at 17½ - 36, with size 33 shorts; a passably wedge-shaped torso. TURQUOISE/13hc mentions "six four and a bit, with a 44-inch inseam".

That confused me. I'm roughly six feet high and take 32-inch inseams; never mind the weight and waistal girth. Even so, I have abnormally long legs and thumbs for my other proportions. Could I accept that McGee, with about four inches more total altitude, had legs that were a full twelve inches longer? No way. I went to the top and asked Mr. MacD. about the matter, pointing out that I'd read a great many of his books and eaten a goodly quantity of his hamburgers (yes, I know: tha's McDonald!).

The reply was that TURQUOISE/13 represents an honest and authentic typo. In checking his original manuscript, the copy reads 34-inch, not 44 inch. JDM, himself, is reported to be around the 6'4" mark, which must simplify reporting of such vital statistics. It was a considerable relief, since it had projected an image of a McGee who bore no small resemblance to a pair of draftsman's dividers. I do not have TURQUOISE in pb, though I plan to get it, eventually. Thus, I don't know if the booboo was cleaned up for the later printing. I would hope that they did something about the mess at the bottom of TURQ/90hc, which makes me want to mutter "Gesundheit!" every time I come to it. Pied type is one thing; ala mode is another.

What about Meyer? Is, for example, that his first name, last name, nickname, what? Is a fine-type question; am so glad you ask. GRAY/114 mentions G. Ludweg Meyer, Ph.D., Executive Vice-President of Barker, Epstein and Wilks, Inc., Management Engineering Services. I've spotted no further clues, but would be interested to hear if you have.

So far as I've been able to observe, PURPLE/28 has a brief reference by McGee to "my friend Meyer, the economist". On RED/39, we hear "Meyer's craft was dark".

Meyer's boat is transom-identified as The John Maynard Keynes, which was the name of a real-world economist type, who--as I understand it--worked with FDR during the early days of the Roosevelt administration. Most encyclopedias carry an entry on him, though few mention that he served as the focal point for christening Meyer's boat.

So far as I can research it, Meyer first came fully on-camera in GOLD/5, the initial page of that book. He had; as I've noted been mentioned or quoted in RED and in PURPLE, before that.

In his comment on the story that introduces Hoppy Uniartz in The First Saint Omnibus, Leslie Charteris comments upon the general phenomenon of stooges and stoogery, pointing out that, while Watson and Bunny tend to be cited as prime examples, Sancho Panza was stooging for Don Quixote a few centuries earlier.

"I am hard to convince, for instance," Charteris says, "that Mr A J Raffles, with a nice jail sentence waiting for him at the first mistake, would have persistently entrusted his fate to a man like Bunny for no better reason than that it made it easier for Mr E W Hornung to write stories about him."

Well, some of us old dyed-in-the-glass, blown-in-the-wool Simon Templar fans have been known to wonder at the Saint's perspicacity in entrusting his fate to so rough-cut a gem as Hoppy Uniartz. Be that as it may, Meyer is a far cry from your typical, uniartzian stooge. He is a worthy cohort by any standard, and, in several instances, his connections and expertise have proven invaluable in bringing a knotty plot to resolution. GRAY is an excellent example, though far from the only one.

While some might suggest that there have been times--INDIGO, for instance--when a dauntlessly thick-skulled companion the likes of Uniatz might've been handy, Meyer tends to make up in resourceful coqlth whatever he may lack in the line of aptitude for street brawling. During that epoch--LAVENDER/TAN/SCARLET--when McGee tended to reach the end of each book in a severely traumatized condition, Meyer was the one who kept things together with spit and baling-wire until the Flush's master regained his tottery feet.

Yes, Meyer is a good man; perhaps better than McGee deserves, or the rest of us, for that matter. There is a bit in LEMON that, to my ear, rings hardly more true than a plausible lead quarter. It starts on LEMON/35hc. I just plain find it hard to reconcile my previous image of Meyer with that of a 12-year-old adventuring forth with his first .22 rifle. The fact that it was "chambered for shorts" lends little by way of credibility, either. Unless Meyer is of truly undreamt-of antiquity, this is unlikely. I won't take oath that the old Hamilton single-shots that used to be given as premiums for selling tins of Cloverine Salve weren't chambered for the .22 short, but precious few other .22 rimfire rifles have been chambered for the short, exclusively. The only ones of which I have knowledge in fairly contemporary times have been the flossy hand-guns intended for Olympic rapid-fire competition.

Well, at any rate, the reader is exposed to a fairly extensive session of contrite confession on Meyer's guilt-pangs after having slain a grackle and learned thereby the true meaning of death and the value of life itself. The effect is somewhat diminished when you get to page 80, however: (McGee is narrating.)

"I whapped a mosquito which tasted the side of my neck and rolled him into a tiny moist gobbet of meat and dropped him out of his life onto the deck. In many ways the Hindu is right. All life in all forms is so terribly transient there is an innocence about all acts and functions of life. Death, icy and irrevocable, is the genuine definition of reality. ..."

This seemed to twang a faint chord. I dug up "House Guests" which hopefully can be taken as the authentic voice of JDM and, after a bit of leafing, found:

(p. 37, pb) "I have talked of the hurting of animals, and because this book is about the relationship between cats and people, I should at least make mention of our ambivalent attitude in these matters, though I have no hope of explaining it. I do not hunt. We do not kill snakes. Dorothy carries housebound bugs into the great outdoors for release but is pure hell on a clothes moth. We trap whitefoot mice in our Adirondack camp and hate doing it. We both enjoy sports fishing. And we are both aficionados of the bull ring. Were the horses unpadded, we wouldn't be. I am not interested in arguing these inconsistencies with anyone."

In its turn, that put me in mind of another quote, remembered but vaguely. After some interlude of cogitation, I tracked it down on page 59 of Donald Hamilton's "The Removers". With the good Mr. Hamilton's indulgence, I'd like to read about half a page into the discussion:

"She sighed. 'No. Of course not. But I think I'm right. That would explain why Duke Logan left him. The Duke always said he'd run guns to anybody who'd pay--he'd done it, too--but he drew the line at trafficking in dope and women.'

"'Good for old Duke,' I said.

"'Don't sound so cynical.'

"I said, 'These guys who keep drawing lines never impress me very much. I know a dozen fishermen who'll let a trout fight its heart out against a nylon leader, but who are real proud of themselves because they've never shot anything in their lives.' And

then there's a man I know who'll shoot any bird that flies--ducks, geese, quail, doves, you name it--but he feels quite moral because he's never killed a big animal like a deer or an elk. And I even know a deer hunter who gets his buck every fall but who'd never dream of going to Africa and murdering a great big elephant just for sport, he thinks that's terrible. They've all got something they won't do, and it makes them feel swell.'

"She studied my face for a moment. 'And you?' she murmured. 'What won't you do, Matt?'

"'Nothing,' I said. 'I draw no lines, kid.'"

Well, the human creature is much prone to the making of value judgments and the literary human is by no means an exception to this. Who is to say that the v.j. of one is superior to that of another? There are Hindus who will watch a mosquito let down its flaps, sink in its probe and drink deeply of their lifely gore, with an expression of ineffable beatitude on their faces, bidding it bon appetit as it flounders off on churning wings. Very noble, surely, but within the charitable veins of even such ultra-humanitarian gentry, all involuntarily, beyond their control, their personal white corpuscles are wreaking grievous harm upon inimical microorganisms, actually, to be brutally blunt, killing the poor, inoffensive little things which, after all, are only doing their thing. (LAVENDER/238.)

I have never gone through the series to any given date, conducting a head-count as to the number of human souls that McGee has sent to their eternal reward, either by direct personal action or perhaps through contributory negligence. It would make an interesting research project. True, most if not all such affairs can be condoned as having been done in self-defense. In some instances, there has been much painful contrition after the fact. As an example, check AMBER/108.

Perhaps it's all quite irrelevant, or at least inconsequential to brood over such things. I think I could've kept my gorge down if McGee, after tsk-tsking soulfully over Meyer's long-ago grackle victim, had simply refrained from rolling that hapless mosquito into a tiny gobbet with such sadistic relish. The least he could've done, it seems to me, would have been to accord it decent Christian burial, with full military honors.

After all, perhaps some mama mosquito once had watched the wee nipper pull himself up by the crib bars and stand cooing and drooling, and thought him a damned fine baby. You could push the reductio to a state of considerable absurdum, if you really worked at it.

Since many of JDMB's readers will be attacking the hardbound version of LEMON about the time this sees publication, while the more patient and parsimonious souls await its paperback reincarnation, I do not propose to delve deeply into LEMON's plotwork, lest I sour someone's enjoyment of its stately unreeling. Some of the episodes continge upon startling failure to observe routine and sensible coppish procedure, but we won't go into that until some future issue of JDMB, if ever.

It may be noted that, page LEMON/31, McGee and Meyer are quaffing Tuborg with perfect contentment and no hint of dismay. A scant two pages later, page LEMON/32, actually, McGee launches into a screaming bitter phillippic about the ersatz state of his heretofore beloved Plymouth Gin. He refers to the sailor on the label and he causes me some amount of honest befuddlement. I have bought some few bottles of Plymouth Gin in California, Texas and perhaps a few other locales, mainly for the sake of tradition, since if I'm going to disburse a price on that level, I'd really prefer Tanqueray. All of the Plymouth Gin I've seen to date has carried a picture of a

Blackfriar on the label. After reading the bit on LEMON/32-33, I went trembling into a local package store to find that they still have P G on the shelves labeled as having been bottled in England. Still with the slightly stoned-looking friar colophon. Perhaps they sell a different sort of P G in Florida than in most other places, who knows?

Within the recent past, a McGee contemporary name of Joe Gall has made a similar soapbox denunciation of Jack Daniels Black Label and has switched pettishly to Jim Beam. Personally, I've long agreed with my eldest daughter's observation that "bourbon smells like drunk people", and have never been a hot fan of the stuff, preferring Daviess County on those rare interludes when so inclined.

The thing that puzzles the sheeing hell out of me is McGee's aplombous acceptance of Tuborg, cheek by jowl with his fit of the kicking horrors over the baffling metamorphosis of Plymouth gin. If ever there was a subversion of an honored name, the domestic swill foisted off under the Tuborg label has got to be the glaring example of all time. Why McGee and Meyer have clasped Tuborg to their hairy bosoms is the great unresolved mystery of DREADFUL LEMON, since they have known and reveled in such brews as Dos Equis in prior works. In an earlier book--RED, I think--McGee castigated San Francisco for micturating its assets and promise away, but made no reservation that it continues to produce Anchor Steam Beer, which is a worthy compeer of Dos Equis, not to mention the Tres Equis that apparently has yet to purl its golden sparkle across the McGee palate.

Nor has McGee waxed passing wroth over the fact that Tullamore Dew in the stone crocks, at the fancy price, is no longer labeled as being 12 years old. To me, that is both shocking, sickening and just cause for the peasants to march against the castle with scythes over their staunch shoulders, muttering ominously. Presumably, within the recent past, they've begun filling the crocks from the same vat as the 8-year-old offering in clear glass bottles, but without lowering the price a jot nor a tittle. Does McGee care? Does MacDonald?

Well, truly, I don't think it's very germane to rate the McGee books by the brand names of the tippling he does. At the risk of coming on like some manner of male chauvinist porker, I tend to evaluate them in terms of the ladies he meets and mingles with. On that shaky basis, every McGee book since GRAY has been a downhill. There were notable landmarks before, but they were no more than path markers leading up to Puss Killian. Ask me to cite the most emotionally evocative item of poetry or prose I've encountered in upward of half a century of tracking my eyes left-to-right across printed lines and, without hesitation, I'd say it was the last of the italics on page GRAY/222. I've read the damned book a dozen times and, in between, have faunched for it to fade enough in my memory to justify reading it still another time. I have never come to the end of Puss's farewell letter without unseemly moisture spurting from the corners of my bock-beer-hued orbs and if I ever reach the point at which it doesn't, I'm going to be seriously concerned about it.

It would be futile and unrealistic to hope that McGee would go on from book to book, ever scaling heights measurably above the ones before. After all, what d'ya do for an encore? But I seem to note a diminution, since GRAY, in the innate worth of the feminine protagonist or call her what you will, from book to book, and it continues to alarm me and dismay me. Perhaps the worst of the instances of all this can be found in SCARLET. Mary Alice McDermitt showed early promise of being another of the memorable very-specials. Suddenly, along the way, she disintegrated into a tummock of tawdry trash and finishing the book could have been compared to finding, as you get toward the lower half of a double-thick chocolate malted, that, somehow a significant quantity of kerosene has gotten into the mixture.

Starting with BROWN and progressively down to the present LEMON (surely, an unfortunate title in terms of semantic loading), the ladies McGee has encountered have had little if anything by way of justification for the reader to remember them. They tend to have limited value and, as a result, even less interest.

Personally, I incline to look askance at literary critics/commentators who seem to regard their own foibles and prejudices as being omnipotent and irrefutably right to sixteen decimals. In fairness, I must apply this yardstick to all the foregoing. But please check me out on a few points, if you would--? Scan down the sequential listing of the books and see if your personal memory can recall the names of the female leads of each with effortless ease.

Start from the top. BLUE: We have Chookie McCall and, later, in ORANGE, we learn that her real name was Barbara Jean (ORANGE/121) and she introduced McGee to Catherine "Cathy" Berry Kerr, who was memorable and valuable in her own quiet, low-key way.

In PINK, does it require effort to recall Nina Gibson? There is no correct and official answer. In my book, Nina is notably memorable, but it's for you to judge if you agree or not.

In PURPLE, we have a special case. I still tend to think of it as a non-McGee book that the author re-wrote to fit it into the series. Frankly, I can't dredge up the names of any of the ladies without cribbing back to check. To me, PURPLE shall forever be the piece that doesn't quite fit, though it is a splendidly memorable book in many other respects. It just doesn't seem like a McGee book.

RED is replete with the enigmatic Skeeter as well as Dana and for that one, I needn't take a cautious skiffing of the pages. Their names fall off the memory without effort.

GOLD, and I'll say Nora before I look, as well as La Venezueliana. I have to check to make sure it's Nora Gardino, not Taggart. I have to riffle to arrive at the name of Connie Melgar. In essence, GOLD is two books under one cover, but it continues to stand as a landmark, to that point in the saga.

ORANGE, finally, is Chookie's book and McGee doesn't make out terribly well in this one. Off the top of my head, I can't bring up the name of the preatress with the mint-green eyes. She didn't impress McGee much, either.

AMBER, to me, is a total blur, despite it's having been the sole title to date treated in the cine medium. I could refresh my memory with a look through the pages, but that'd be cheating, no?

YELLOW; ah yes indeed, YELLOW. Here we encounter Mrs. Mildred Shottlehauster, the bucolic swingstress, not to mention the ultra-memorable Heidi. And it carries one more noteworthy character, at least: the nameless lady encountered by McGee on the Chicago streets to whom he feels instant, instinctive empathy. He senses that she feels a comparable reaction, but the ships pass without loss of semen; a singular, memorable encounter. The nameless lady of YELLOW is one of my personal favorite characters. I have the feeling that I've met her, myself, somewhere along the way.

It was long ago, several wars ago and geographically far removed from the here. I'd tend to spot it somewhere in the flatlands of Nebraska, but I could be wrong at this late date. I was on a train; so was she. Both the trains had stopped on sidings, and both of us were staring through our respective windows with that fixity of

the cross-country train passenger. It took a surprisingly long while to realize, mutually, that we were staring into each other's eyes. It took even a trifle longer to mutually realize that it was a sensation of a fairly pleasurable sort.

As if by common accord, both of us lurched to our feet, with a final poignant gaze into the eyes of the other and headed for the vestibules, from which perhaps we hoped to shout addresses at each the other. And, just then, one or perhaps both trains commenced to move. So we sagged back to our respective seats and muttered "Kismet" at the whole situation.

A small sigh, if you please, for the souls that never quite establish contact. But you can believe that the nameless lady in YELLOW remains one of my favorite McGeeish characters. Yes, sometimes one sees Laura / On a train that is passing through, but this's getting awfully subjective, so let us cut back to the topic and forgive the tangents, please?

To save you riffling, the passage is on YELLOW/46; reads like so: "There is something about seeing one like that which tries to break your heart. You will never know her, but you want it all to be great for her, all the parts of it, the wine, the weather, the food, the people, the beds, the kids, the love and being old."

Mais oui, Messrs McGee and MacDonald.

And so, after the usual months of impatient hiatus between books, came along GRAY which, in my humble opinion, constitutes a high-water mark that has not been sloshed close-to within the most recent seven works; which I find faintly discouraging. We are still speaking in terms of the introduced ladies and Puss Killian is uniquely wonderful, in cards, spades and big casino. So wonderful, alas, that the man at the typer had to take permanent steps to keep her from cluttering up the plot framework henceforth. We cannot guess the creative agony it cost him, but the really great pussycats are slaughtered off as irrevocably as McGee might meal the mosquito that is so ill-bred as to bite him on the side of the neck.

Mr. & Mrs. North have never ranked terribly high on my personal list of fictional sleuths, but I think I could endure it with admirable stoicism, should Puss Whomever--for she said it was not Killian--be miraculously reinstated to the land of the living; transplanted, as it were, back onto the precarious gravelbank of the born-but-not-yet-defunct (GRAY/87). After all, Simon Templar had his Patricia Holm, who never suffered permanent harm, without deterring his literary career too severely. I do not anticipate this happening but, should it do so, I plan to be very brave about it.

For, I respectfully submit, in all of the canon from BLUE to LEMON, there has yet to appear a member of the delightfully opposite sex so pluperfectly fitted to be the complement to McGee for so long as they both shall exist.

Perhaps McGee feels somewhat the same. In the shag end of GRAY, he found himself astonishingly disinclined to respond to Mary Smith because "it was too soon after Puss". Seven books later, it still seems a bit soon after. Disagree, if you wish, but as I run my eye down the list, from BROWN through LEMON, I find it hard to conure up the name of any of the other ladies from memory's depths.

BROWN? He was fond of the mother of the two hapless daughters whose embroilment made up most of the plot, but this--presumably--may have antedated the text of GRAY.

INDIGO? What was the name of the erring daughter whose uncertain fate led the Dynamic Duo back to Old Mejico? What were the names of the two muchachas who

kept them cheerful company during their sojourn below the border? Who was the horsy British nympho who succubated our spit-eyed hero rather demoralizingly? True, I could look it up in a trice, but memory provides it not.

LAVENDER? Well, if we refer to the lady who wound up getting strangled, so that her cyanosed pallor lent the hue to the title, the best that can be said for the poor departed is that she was harmless, well-meaning but not terribly noteworthy. In its way, LAVENDER is the most depressing downer of the series to date, particularly in terms of the female lead and her sordid fate. To date, I said, because we're still coming to SCARLET.

TAN? Well, there was a good gal, but she died ere getting on camera, I think. There was a bad gal--hey, her name comes back: Lisa Dissat--as irretrievably unworthy as AMBER's Vangie, and there was either the condominium salesperson or the bank teller-ess; the former, I think, though I've gotten a trifle confused through the unusual circumstances described previously.

SCARLET? Ah yes, remember it well. I had fired up the venerable Honda of a Sunday morn, sputtled up to Laguna Beach and found it on the racks at The Browse-About Bookshop and, in gleeful anticipation, had hefted the meaty thickness of pages between fingertips and made a further stop at Franklin Liquor in Laguna Niguel to lay aboard a six-pack of Dos Equis, and had wended my way home to stash all but one darkly beaded bottle in the refrigerator and had set up the reclining chair in the back yard and settled down for an all-out orgy of grokking McGee. The anticipation, as it turned out, was much the best part of it all.

Mary Alice McDermit is the lady's name and, I'll confess, I cheated and looked it up. Memory said "Mary Ellen Whoozit". She came on great in the early chapters and, about the time I delicately disengaged the cap from the third bottle of Dos Equis, she still was shaping up in a promising manner and then, suddenly, something came unglued and it became apparent she was one of the bad-hats. Which left nothing particularly memorable by way of a candidate to take the place of the lamented Puss. In this one, as noted, it became necessary to zotz clear back to BLUE to retrieve a lady to shore up an intrepid hero constructed of cornflakes, stale rubber bands and old gnawed bones, at the end of the book.

Seldom has it been so obvious that McGee's destiny is supported by his creator, who is constrained to succor and sustain him for the sake of future episodes in the series. They tell the tale of an ancient pulpster, working on a continued story, who had left his put-upon hero, at the end of the last published episode, in the bottom of a fourteen-foot pit, filled with--are you ready for this--pit vipers and the deadline for putting the next issue to bed came down apace and the publisher sent minions scurrying through the lowest dives in quest of the elusive scrivener. At last, they tracked him down, in a sodden stupor, head on the table in a reeking gin-mill, passed out in front of a typewriter, in which was one sheet of paper, carrying one line:

"With a mighty bound, Lucky MacReadie leaped out of the pit to freedom. ..."

I have that morsel of apocryphia on the sworn testimony of one Robert Silverberg. I do but quote.

TURQUOISE? MacDonald put one across the plate on Constant Readers everywhere. Despite the bleakest of fears, Linda "Pidge" Lewellen did not come to an untimely quietus. She survived the darksome plots against her continuing existence and came down to the end of the book with heart still palpitant and honeyed membranes undamaged... a real surprise ending. With fifteen books under the belt, what does one do for an

encore? Well, this's one possibility. And it's a plausible one, if not outstandingly palatable. Someone had suggested to MacDonald that McGee could come down to the end of the book and discover that his ostensible lady-love was a transvestite. On hearing this, I pointed out that Mickey Spillane had used up that gambit for a Mike Hammer, aeons aback, and for goodness sake, let us not take sloppy seconds on Mickey Spillane, huh? Sheeg, to the seventh power!

LEMON. Ah yesss, LEMON. Well, it offers nice touches, though certainly it still falls far short of a lady to rival the ill-fated Puss Whomever. The tall marina proprietress might have been noteworthy, had she happened along around BLUE or PINK. It is not always easy to put these things in the proper perspective until they've aged for a few years, with a few re-readings after suitable interludes of letting recollection lie fallow for a bit. However, subject to reservations for an option on repositioning, I think I would rate Cindy Birdsong, of LEMON, about one medium slice above Miss Penny Woertz, of BROWN.

Admitted: I had to go back to BROWN to find Penny's name and, on BROWN/79, marveled at what well could just possibly be the penultimate spasm of Zane Greyism in modern literature.

The censor's burden--or, as some have termed it, the Comstock Load--has come to be so ephemeral in these enlightened later years that hardly a rude word nor an epithet cannot be spelled out upon the printed page without risk of disturbing anyone strategic. There is a place in GOLD where one of the female characters calls one of the male ones "a ten-letter word". I'll let you look for it; be my guest, Edgar!

However, the extravagantly dashed portion on BROWN/79 puts me in mind of a long-ago pastiche on Zane Grey, authored by Corey Ford and Alister McBain, circa 1940 or so, starting out with the line: "Guerd Larey was handsome as a d---l." In the days of my early youth, books were interlarded heavily with the term d---n, leaving one to speculate if the elided letters were "am" or "ar"; it provides a nostalgic twinge or two.

Various fictionsmiths have gained status by pegging their plotframe securely to the Real World that you and I inch through, sometimes a bit tediously, at the uniform rate of 3,600 seconds per hour. Some years ago, a friend of mine named Bill Rotsler used to live at a lofty spot in the Hollywood Hills that you reached by means of traveling several blocks up Beachwood Drive. I never drove to see Rotsler, in those days, without marvelling over the fact, while traversing the winding uphill turns, "By golly, Philip Marlowe once drove up this very same street".

You can scan the city maps of Los Angeles in vain for Noon Street, as in Pickup On --, and the decadent and depraved Bay City, they tell me, is called Long Beach in the Real World, but for all that, the works of Raymond Thornton Chandler continue to stand out as nominal fiction, played against a recognizable backdrop that can be revisited, subject to the eroding effect of time.

Can you humor me just one more irrelevant tangent? When they filmed "The Lady in the Lake", starring Robert Montgomery, the name on his office window was spelled "Phillip" with two ells. Had the dour student of Capablanca seen the film, I suspect he'd've waxed passing wroth over that, being inclined to forgive major humain frailties, meanwhile picking hell out of the minor nits.

Well, little of the backdrop in GOLD is recognizable as the Southern California known to its inhabitants, though perhaps the Floridan milieu is more familiar and authentic. However, to give credit where it's due, JDM has been rather careful about integrating calendar dates with days of the week in recent works. I'll cite a few examples, leaving JDMB readers the option of bringing up further ones in their comments.

There are but fourteen basic year-patterns. The first of January can fall upon one of seven days of the week and, by the presence or absence of a February 29, you can end the year on one out of fourteen possibles. If you've ever chanced to subscribe to a magazine called Popular Science, when your sub runs out and they send an invitation to renew it, they'll send along a handy little wallet-sized card that enables you to have an instant calendar for any year from 1750 to 2059. (If you ever chanced to wonder, the 4th of July, 1776, fell on a Thursday.)

Hence, for example, on GRAY/84, we find a reference to Wednesday, December and, checking the references, it seems likely that the year in question was 1967, in which the day and date lined up that way. It could have been 1769 or 1882, for example, though this seems less likely.

In TURQUOISE/80, we find a reference to Friday morning, December 7, which fits the framework for 1973 (as well as 1917 or 2012, to name but two) and, as a matter of fact, I recall having glommed onto my copy of TURQUOISE so promptly that I was reading that particular page on or very close to Friday the 7th of December, which gave a memorable sensation of tiny, icy-footed salamanders slithering up and down the spine; a most unusual feeling that all this actually was going on, right then.

You'll find further time-binding--dating, if you please--on LEMON/15: May 16, a Thursday. That configures with 1974, which is credible.

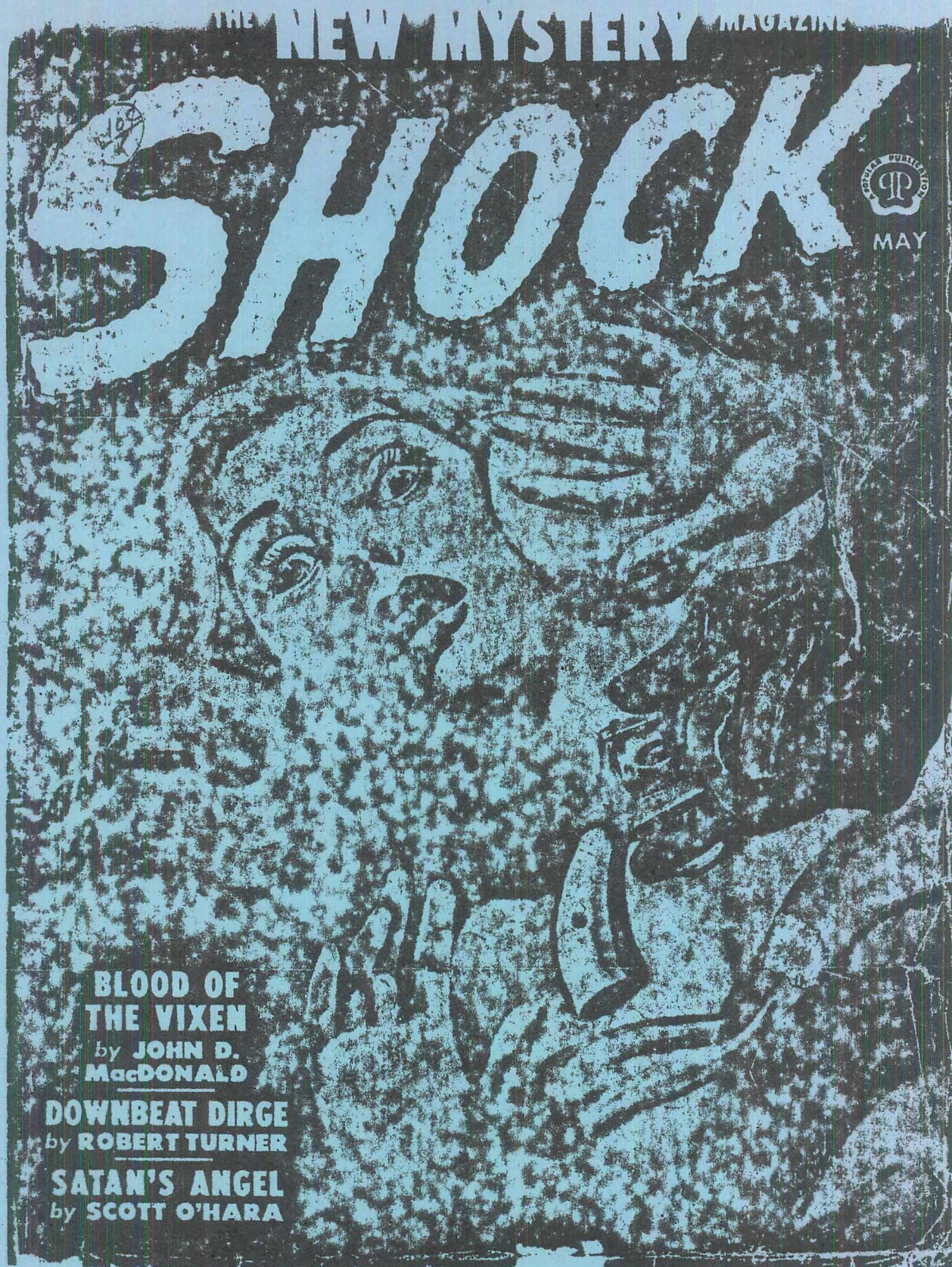
I cite but a few such examples. It well could be that the dedicated researcher can find clues in all sixteen books, betraying the year in which they took place. I wish such intrepid souls much triumph in the quest.

At any rate, we seem to've come full-circle, back to the date-obsessed Alfred K., and, since this is where we came in, it seems an appropriate time to stash our empty popcorn carton beneath the seat and take our leave. It is about that time.

Allow me to sum up in hopes of preventing misunderstanding, for, as Robert Gunning has so sagely observed, one must not only write so one can be understood, but one must write so that one cannot possibly be misunderstood. I'm aware of this; just that it skids off my mind at times. I still think JDM is a great writer, though I've missed a few words by some writers--pre-Mesopotamian cuneiform is a weak spot of mine, admittedly--but I continue to regard our boy as one of the more noteworthy performers in my recollectable acquaintance. It's just that I find it somewhat disturbing that the more recent vintages have not been all that amusing in their presumption.

But that doesn't keep me from looking forward to The Puissant Puce Poltergeist, or whatever it may be entitled. Hoping you are the same...

- Dean A. Grennell



SHOCK, MAY 1948 Featuring two JDM stories. ("Scott O'Hara" is a house name.)

If you want a xerox copy of this cover, send a dime and a stamped self-addressed envelope to:

Robert Turner, 6637 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, CA 90028

(What you see here is an electrostenciled copy of a xerox copy.)

A REPORT ON BOUCHERCON V

The Fifth Annual Anthony Boucher Memorial Mystery Convention was held at the Royal Inn, Oakland, California, on October 4th, 5th and 6th, 1974. Chaired by Adrienne Martine-Barnes, with Clint Bigglestone as Vice-Chairman, Ardis Waters as Art Director, and Dean Dickensheet, Phyllis White and Quinn Yarbrow as advisors, it was an all-too-short two-and-a-half days of fun and interest to the mystery readers, writers and editors who attended.

The Guest of Honor was Reginald Bretnor, who delighted us with his scheduled speech as well as in general, informal, conversation. Besides being a writer in the mystery and science-fiction & fantasy fields, Mr. Bretnor is a Sherlockian, a collector of antique Japanese swords and weapons, an ailurophile, and--we are told--a fine cook and a mean poker player.

The only criticism we can make of Bouchercon V is the lack of advance publicity. We understand that this was due to unexpected illness and other problems (such as moving into a new house), but although the attendance was less than it might have been, we noted that almost everyone who did attend showed up for all the program items and seemed to enjoy them immensely.

The speakers included professionals from the mystery/suspense/detective field such as Joe Gores, Frank McAuliffe, Marvin Lachman, Ray Nelson, Michael Kurland, Bill Pronzini, Dean & Shirley Dickensheet, Poul & Karen Anderson, Lenore Glen Offord (mystery reviewer on the San Francisco Chronicle), Willo Davis Roberts and Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow. The subjects of the various talks and panels covered a wide range of interest: The Gothic Novel; Anthony Boucher, Sherlockian; Reviewing the Mystery; Violence in Literature; The American Regional Mystery Novel; Writing the Period Mystery; Creating a Detective. And, of course, one of the highlights was Phyllis White's talk on The Private Anthony Boucher.

The film program included Hitchcock's "39 Steps"; a German-made Sherlock Holmes film with Christopher Lee (the title of which your reviewer has mercifully forgotten); and a British short film (possibly from British TV) featuring Peter Sellers as a bumbling detective in Goon Show style.

There was no luncheon or banquet, though there was a wine-and-cheese get-acquainted party in the convention suite the first night of the con, which all of us did enjoy.

It was announced that Bouchercon VI would be in Chicago in 1976, thanks to John Nieminski, who was there to place the Windy City's bid, and to Bob Hahn, who wasn't there but who had written to inquire about the possibility of having a Bouchercon in the midwest. There was no opposition to the bid, as the founders of the Bouchercon and the membership in general have no objection to the convention traveling around the country, thus giving mystery readers and professionals a chance to meet in their own geographical areas, as well as giving some of us an excuse to travel to those areas to be entertained and informed in one of our favorite literary fields.

It might be well to recap or list the Bouchercons for the benefit of new readers:

BOUCHERCON I - May 29-32, 1970 Santa Monica, California
Guest of Honor: Robert Bloch

BOUCHERCON II - October 8-11, 1971 Los Angeles, California
Guest of Honor: Bill S. Ballinger

BOUCHERCON III - October 20-22, 1972 Los Angeles
Guest of Honor: Ellery Queen
Featured Speaker: Rev. Robert E. Washer

BOUCHERCON IV - October 5-7, 1973 Boston, Massachusetts
Featured Speaker: Prof. Donald A. Yates

BOUCHERCON V - October 4-6, 1974 Oakland, California
Guest of Honor: Reginald Bretnor

If you have never attended a Bouchercon, we can only urge that you attend one as soon as possible, such as Bouchercon VI in Chicago this coming July. You will find yourself in good company, and your only regret will be that they happen only once a year, and that the weekend on which they occur is always too, too short.

- Leo Rand

ADDITIONS TO THE JDM MASTER CHECKLIST

96. "The Creative Person & Some Dangerous Streets". Writer's Digest June 1969.
97. "Wish I Had Written That" (letter excerpt) Bill Rotsler's Masque (1954? Bill?)
98. THE DREADFUL LEMON SKY (tm) Lippincott 1975 (Hardcover first publication)
99. TROJAN HORSE LAUGH (see p. 2 and A&C No. 68) reprinted in DIMENSIONS 4, edited by Groff Conklin; Pyramid 1964.

S E E K & S W A P D E P T .

Michael J. Cook, 3318 Wimberg Ave., Evansville, Indiana - Will buy back issues of JDMB (Nos. 1-16, 18) Write him your offer.

Josephine O. Cortes, Box 236, Englewood, FL 33533 - Wants to complete her collection of JDM books. Has 40, and will donate complete set to her local library when she has them. Has extras for swapping.

William K. Hagan, 12418 Leavenworth, Omaha, NE 68154 - Wants out-of-print JDM books.

Margaret Mallory, 418 N. Comanche, San Marcos, TX 78666 - Wants to borrow back issues of JDMB (Nos. 1 through 18) for reference for her thesis.

L I M E R I C K

Our hero's name is McGee
Who'll help a girl for a fee
He keeps half of the loot
And gets loving to boot
And sometimes he works for free.

- Fred Cropper

Please Write For Details

The Readers Write ((The editors reply - ljm & jmm))

Mrs. BARBARA A. BUHRER, Livingston, NJ: I was introduced to Travis McGee by my young teacher-son who swears MacDonald (John D.) is the best ever. Since I had been for years a devoted fan of John Creasey and Dell Shannon, we had a few lively discussions which convinced me that the least I could do was read to see. So now I am a fan of JDM also. All of which proves that there are a few things we can learn from the young.

FRED CROPPER, Altadena, CA: I first read John D.'s WINE OF THE DREAMERS in the early 1950's and also THE DAMNED about that time. Although I was crazy about WINE..., THE DAMNED didn't impress me then.

Cut to 1962 when I read an absolute delight of a book called THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH & EVERYTHING. Although I have read a great deal of SF before and since, no one has ever made me believe in any SF device like JDM did with that wonderful time-slowng watch. Consequently, I became a John D. Maniac.

When I read a short time later that JDM was going to start a series, I began to haunt the local bookstores. At last--McGee. Cut to 1974 when I read an article in the L. A. Times about a recent visit of JDM to Los Angeles and a publication called THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE, and my story comes to date.

I have again been haunting a certain bookstore, THE ALHAMBRA NEWS, where I used to work part-time, asking everyone (ad nauseam) who works there if they've heard about a new McGee coming out. At last, the Moffatts came up with the answer, THE AZURE DISMAY, and I will post a careful watch for JDM's latest McGee opus. ((Sorry to possibly dismay you, in whatever color, but we have heard a rumor that the latest McGee has undergone a title/color change. - jmm))

I might add that when I am having a hard time going to sleep at night I think up new titles for coming McGee novels. Since JDM hasn't used the primary color GREEN in any of the series books, perhaps because of his A FLASH OF GREEN, I keep coming up with things like THE GIRL WITH THE LONG GREEN EYES, A TASTE OF GREEN, THE LAST OF THE GREEN, THE SEA-GREEN DEATH and other such titles. However, I am sure JDM will come up with a much better one when he decides to use that color. ((Chartreuse? - jmm))

Many thanks for the JDM BIBLIOPHILE. It is a delight. JDM is one of the finest writer-storytellers around, and rarely are writing and storytelling blended and welded together as in the superb craft of John D. MacDonald.

LAWRENCE FLEMING, Pasadena, CA: The pb reprinting of JDM's THE HOUSE GUESTS (I got one at the local cut-rate drug store) should imply permission to some fan to make some words about cats, if only because JDM is one of those natural phenomena (talent) like G. F. Handel, and happens to like the creatures.

The top current authority about such beasts is Professor Konrad Lorenz, of Austria, who won a 1973 Nobel Prize for his studies of the behavior of animals. The best pertinent work in print is the two chapters in Lorenz's book, MAN MEETS DOG. It is even better on dogs. The most cogent remark was written by the noted naturalist Ivan Sander-son, and runs something like this: Among animals as among men, there are idiots and geniuses, heroes and criminals...every individual is different.

We have hosted vagrant cats who mooch meals but won't come in, whose lives are secret. One came in enough to sire a kitten under the dining room table. The mother was a sickly cat, who later died mysteriously, but the kitten has grown into a singularly beautiful animal with enormous blue eyes, polite but distant. He likes the porch light on so that he can chase flying moths at night.

JDM's cats sound real. In some analogy to his cat who used to rough up the frog in the Florida pool, a local cat captures grasshoppers in flight, whop, and eats them; one night he hauled a bluejay into the bedroom and aroused us. The big bird was uninjured, except for its pride. I know because I picked it up, showed it to my wife for proof, carried it to the front door and hove it out, and it flew. There were just a few feathers about.

bc

Both of our cats herd the dog. The dog is an ancient 30-pound poodle, stone-blind, hard of hearing, an advanced cardiac case, been to six vets. Our medicine-chest consists of dog medicine. Old Dog goes bumbling out, and one or two cats trot ahead. They walk ahead and lean on Old Dog to keep him from bumping into things. When I take Old Dog for a walk out in front, a cat goes along--not to "heel", but to keep around in the indirect fashion of the feline.

There is so much in the world to see, and I can see only little scraps here and there. An artist sees a lot more; if such an artist as JDM sees goings-on in the animal world that look strange to you or me, I bet he saw things whose implications you or I would fail to recognize right in front of our noses.

RON HEAD, Church Hill, TN: I have been an admirer of Mr. MacDonald since reading AMBER after seeing the movie back in 1970. Unlike many people who wrote to you, and you yourself, I considered the movie to be very good, but I did not go to see this or that portrayed in a certain way because I had never read a Travis McGee novel before. I was sorry to see that the movie was not a success.

I have long been a fan of Florida since my childhood, which led me to go and see the movie, which then gave me the idea of reading the books since they take place in Florida. I now consider Mr. MacDonald to be one of the best, if not the best, authors on the market today. I particularly like his philosophical touches, which seem to make Travis McGee more human.

Like a true fan, I have been to Bahia Mar, and I was very impressed with the place. Everything was first-class, especially the personnel who work there. The lady who worked in the control tower told me that they received many tourists and local people looking for the famous Slip F-18. The lowest number they had was F-24, I believe. She said that she felt like writing Mr. MacDonald and asking him to buy a houseboat to dock there so his fans would have a houseboat to take a picture of. ((Why buy one? Maybe the movie studio who made AMBER would loan/give him the houseboat from that picture. Although JDM's having sufficient trouble with people who think or act as if McGee is a real person. Putting a Busted Flush on display at Bahia Mar might be Too Much for some people. - jmm))

Since I have many relatives and friends in Florida, I was lucky enough to get a summer job at Sarasota in the summer of '74. On one of my afternoons off, I drove out to Mr. MacDonald's house just to look around. Next to his house is a fishing wall that is very popular with the local fishermen. While sitting on this wall, I was lucky enough to see Mr. MacDonald when he came out to attend to Knees or Duck who was raising a fuss over a large bird sitting on their back wall. I would have gone up and said something to Mr. MacDonald, but I remembered reading that he likes his privacy, as we all do.

CLAY KIMBALL, Eden, NC: A year and a half? Has it really been that long? Hardly seems it. I hate to think of having to wait a full year for the next issue, though still at least there will be a next issue. I hope you can manage to keep it going, but with the constantly increasing costs it seems doubtful that you or any other fanmag may be able to stay in business. It turns out that the Post Office is not the only enemy. Life would be a lot duller without fanmags.

I'm really surprised at Fred Blosser's statement that the last two Matt Helms were "crashing bores". THE INTIMIDATORS, while not the best Hamilton, is very readable. On the other hand, I think THE INTRIGUERS is possibly the best book in the series. I haven't seen so many crosses, double-crosses and involved motivation since Hammett.

But then, I think the last couple of Earl Drakes have been pretty dull. I guess all authors have occasional lapses; even Dick Francis fell down with SMOKECREEN. ((That's a Dick Francis I haven't seen yet. I think the last one we got was BONECRACK. A friend in England sent us the British hardback, and later we acquired the American edition. THAT one was a chiller! - jmm))

((Despite the rising costs of postage, paper, ink, stencils, etc. we plan to keep publishing--at least once a year. See "...& Everything" for details. - ljm))

JEAN LINARD, 24 Rue Petit, 70000 VESOUL, FRANCE: For a long time now, you must be knowing that the new (provisional?) title for THE AZURE DISMAY is THE DREADFUL LEMON SKY. I've known this for years. You ought to have asked me. I wouldn't have told you (if asked).

Glad to see that JDM is "dead against any more McGee movies". Why, even as a JDM fan, I wouldn't go 300 meters away to see AMBER if they showed it in Vesoul, because only from seeing one picture printed on the front cover of the English edition pb I'd like to be kept away from it. It shows a McGee bleeding abundantly... I don't mind that too much, except for the fact that such a scene isn't happening in the book hardly at all. And as a rule (I'll welcome any exceptions I see) besides ebing that much unfaithful, movies feature almost at everytime a dumb cast, and when cast isn't entirely dumb, it's thanks to (rarely) maybe ONE exception, such or such actor... and the chance of ever seeing a McGee (of all things) potable picture seems very thin to me, unless they'd do hundreds of films, the risk then could increase to perhaps "one" of them, to be at best passably mediocre. Of course there's always the off-chance. But rarely rewarding. ((Potable? In English/American that means "suitable for drinking". I doubt that any movie could achieve that status! - jmm))

Would you care to tell us all next time what your distribution (by then) is? Roughly. You say it increased, but I have no idea of how many are receiving the JDMB.

((It varies from issue to issue--we have been printing 250 copies, and they are all distributed eventually. -ljm))

That Moffatt House Newsletter-style bit is totally interesting. I always wondered about the Moffatt Household as well, and by seeing never an allusion to it, I'd just assumed that you had already accounted for a lot of it in earlier issues. If more readers are for more of it at any time, please count me in. ((You already have the general outlines. For us to put in any more would mean a sort of diary-article thing, which we don't consider appropriate to this zine at all. - jmm))

Why should Sherlock Holmes be referred to as the Master, I wonder. If he is the very first hero (if that) that doesn't make him The Master. Note that if there is a sensible answer to this I don't want to be told about it.

((If you are a member of The Baker Street Irregulars, you refer to Holmes as The Master. - ljm)) ((Whether or not you consider this a sensible answer is up to you. - jmm))

About the "maitress d'" I only said I supposed it came from the French (I do use fractured English myself) because I ain't so sure even so. You see, what I meant is that, in that form it does not exist in French, to my (limited) knowledge, that's all. Maitre de could be said. As a mild gag, Maitresse d' couldn't even be said because unpronounceable without serious equivocal distortion, because of the total similarity between the pron. of "d(') and "des". It can be written, of course, but still doesn't make sense over here, because we have no maitresses in restaurant, although there are maitres d'notes somewhere. Maitresses in these parts are only for schoolteachers (fem) and mistresses. But DNQ me on this as I am probably all mistaken. I know WE use lotsa English terms that have still less meaning in English. I was just mediumly curious. I'll try to forget it.

Thanks for plug in your Seek and Swap column. As of today, I'm now bound to have all the 15 titles, Dean Grennell having mailed to me BROWN and TURQUOISE, and James Sandoe (of the NYHT) having sent me SCARLET earlier. (I wonder if, in English, turquoise rhymes with purpose; or if you pronounce it "ewaz" like the French, for example?) ((Turquoise rhymes with "fur toys". The "qu" is pronounced like "k". - jmm))

The current book John's working on these present days, which is not a McGee, is to be called CONDOMINIUM. Least, he says.

Well, here are the titles I want. I'll tell you if in the meantime I get them from Fawcett, so that you keep this away from your next Seek & Swap, in case.

THE END OF THE NIGHT A KEY TO THE SUITE SLAM THE BIG DOOR
THE LAST ONE LEFT ONE MONDAY WE KILLED THEM ALL

The Charles Williams stories John says "he believes I would like" are: SCORPION REEF, MAN ON A LEASH, AGROUND and DEAD CALM.

Mrs. J. L. POTTER, Pipe Creek, TX: I am glad to see information about other authors also--we'd never read Charles Williams until I ran across mention of him in the last two issues, and now we've read what we have managed to find, and enjoyed them all very much. It's interesting, to me, to note how frequently these fans of JDM enjoy other authors and how frequently the other authors are the same ones. ((Have you tried Josephine Tey or Dick Francis? - jmm))

Think I must be in the minority--I didn't personally like TURQUOISE LAMENT as much as some of the other earlier McGees--seemed too contrived at the end and hastily put together as if to get it off the shelf. Would dearly love to read some other mysteries (new) of MacDonald's similar, or in a similar vein, to MURDER IN THE WIND--or PLEASE WRITE... What happened to the book that was going to be about the Tamiami Trail?

Hope JDM's health has improved and am sure he has to relax and take it easier--but I miss those new books.

((We don't want to increase the price of JDMB, and we would still rather receive articles and reviews instead of money. - ljm))

Mrs. HARRIET N. STEVENSON, West Linn, OR: As usual, it was fun to get JDMB 19. You missed my 67th birthday by 10 days. Glad that jmm provided such a happy party for the 50th of ljm. I got vicarious pleasure from your birthday party.

Enclosed is \$2 for THE MOFFATT HOUSE ABROAD. Science-fiction is not my plate of spiced crawdads, but I can't resist the prospect of reading about your trip to England as TAFF representatives. I like the salt & spice you put into JDMB. I agree that a "Busted Flush Irregulars" fanzine might sugar the spice. I prefer mine straight and I'm sure (or it is my opinion) JDM agrees.

Maybe you won't stop JDMB at #20 if you have so many new fans. JDM didn't quit McGee as he threatened. McGee is immortal--like Meyer. Maybe I'll live long enough to read AZURE DISMAY. I don't plan to abandon this world for a while. I have two neutered male cats that enjoy fighting. They should keep me interested for a long time.

((A number of people who aren't s-f fans seem to have enjoyed our trip report. We have sold enough copies to get back our publishing costs, so that monies received from sales of THE MOFFATT HOUSE ABROAD now goes into the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund to be used by the next winner.

Getting new readers for JDMB is fine, but we also need more writers of reviews, articles, verse and so on. - ljm))

RICHARD STOOKER, Alton, IL: I enjoyed JDMB, and wish I had gotten on your mailing list much earlier. But somewhere I'd gotten the impression that you were no longer publishing it. (That year-and-a-half gap between issues might have had something to do with that.) Then I saw you listed in LOCUS and couldn't resist.

I had seen a few scattered earlier issues however, and was disappointed to find no topic of hard discussion in the lettercol. Maybe some of your readers would like to chew on this idea:

The antagonists in many of JDM's stories are sociopaths, people totally lacking in empathy towards other people. They have no compulsions against hurting other people, because they simply don't understand that other human beings also suffer. They know how to fake such things as concern and friendliness convincingly, but it is all fake. They recognize no moral system except their own needs and wants. The only crime is getting caught.

JDM has described this person many times, and much better than I just did. I don't know JDM's personal politics, but I wonder if he, and the readers of JDMB, see the same parallels I do between the political career of Nixon and the sociopath JDM has portrayed so many times in his fiction. ((Hoo, boy! - jmm))

I found THE SCARLET RUSE disappointing, but am at a loss to explain why. THE TURQUOISE LAMENT is excellent. The new city ordinance threatening Travis's docking space, and his worries of growing old and slow eliminate the assumed security of their

world in the earlier books, and adds a disquieting emotional undertone to the story. ((Hmmm--it must have been Travis's worrying about getting old that caused him to go off in all directions instead of calming down and finding out in the beginning that the ordinance was harmless to them. - jmm))

Anyone who thinks Richard Stark has lost some of his steam should read his latest, BUTCHER'S MOON. The best way I can think to describe it is to say it's Westlake's answer to RED HARVEST. ((Red Harvest was a question? - jmm))

Is anyone else a fan of mystery writer Wade Miller, a pseudonym for the team of Bob Wade and Bill Miller? In THE GIRL FROM MIDNIGHT they have the villain's getaway in a car foiled by a cheetah, who of course can reach a speed of 70 mph faster than any automobile. That strikes me as one of those ideas which should have been obvious to any writer who's ever visited a zoo, but which to my knowledge has never been used before. ((There IS the small point of opportunity--how many cheetahs are there roaming loose in YOUR neighborhood? - jmm)) GUILTY BYSTANDER is about a down-and-out detective whose ex-wife (since remarried) comes to him for help in finding their kidnapped son, whom he hasn't seen for four years.

If JDM would agree, I would like to see a large volume of the best of his early work. Francis Nevins would be the logical choice for editor, for his work on NIGHTWEBS. It could include about 300-500,000 words of fiction (why not, if Asimov can publish such a large volume of thirties sf?); a long personal, critical introduction slanted towards the angle that no one is pretending these stories are great JDM, that they are the work of an apprentice and journeyman learning his trade, not the master craftsman of Travis McGee and THE LAST ONE LEFT, but still damned good stories; and reprint the JDM MASTER CHECKLIST updated. I, for one, would gladly shell out 12 or 13 bucks for such a book. If you're reading this, Mr. MacDonald, how about it?

((Such a collection has been suggested, more than once, and your suggestion as to HOW to present the stories would probably meet with John's approval. Now all you have to do is convince his publishers... - ljm))

HARRY WARNER, Jr., Hagerstown, MD: I don't remember seeing you and June at the Discon.

If I encountered you and the meeting vanished from memory, I apologize; if you were there and we didn't see one another, I'm sorry; and if you didn't get there, I express my regrets. The weekend left mostly pleasant impressions, although I have this nagging belief that it's the last time I'll go to a worldcon. Regional events might suit me better for their smaller size. Just in case, I created a souvenir for myself in the form of my first real conreport, all 18 pages of which will be in the next Horizons.

Anyway, the arrival of the new JDM Bibliophile is one of the few pleasant things which have occurred since the return to Hagerstown. The only good aspect of the infrequency of your publishing schedule is the way I can write a 140,000 word fan history first-draft between issues. So it doesn't get relegated to the huge stacks of fanzines which arrived when I wasn't writing locs.

You're probably wise to stay out of the club syndrome. What could a club accomplish that you haven't been doing? I can't think of anything important, since JDM wouldn't welcome a five-busload pilgrimage to his home, for instance, which a club might organize. ((Yarst! What a horribobble idea! - jmm))

Condolences on your continued inability to tame the tabby. I have been fretting about my ability to make friends with this neighborhood's cats. There must be ten cats or so living within easy walking distance of 423 and none of them has shown real approval of me, although a couple of them are willing to sit a couple of feet away and stare at me as long as I stare at them. I was afraid that this was my fault, then I found myself making a lot of new cat friends almost instantaneously in other parts of town while on various missions. So I'm attributing the situation to the declining quality of the neighborhood: the cats probably aren't happy with the humans around here and aren't making an exception for me. ((I have succeeded in petting one of the tabby kittens when she's eating, and have managed to touch the other one twice. Mama Tabby, however, isn't taking any chances. She won't come within arm's reach. Period. - jmm))

Bill Wilson sums up the situation well in very few words. My major problem with the national mania for safety involves child-proof containers. I keep wondering how many adults are suffering ulcer perforations, hernias and heart attacks from struggles with them. Just the other night I escaped by a downright miracle a real spot of trouble when a can of drain opener slipped just as I finally managed to get the cap off: I was alone in the house, and could have been injured if it had spilled a few degrees further southwest and landed on me. ((Child-proof caps on drain opener? That sounds sensible. - jmm)) Meanwhile, the big cause of childhood tragedies remains unaffected by safety work: matches, which kids can get access to with much less trouble than even a conventional type of aspirin bottle can be opened. ((What ever happened to the old-fashioned safety matches? - jmm)) Why doesn't some inventor come up with a child-proof lock for medicine and kitchen cabinets, which would obviate the need for all those intricate container alterations? ((Something along that line is needed--some children are real pill freaks. A friend of ours had four children--the first three weren't interested in pills as such at all, but the fourth was an aspirin-eater from the time he was able to crawl. They had him in the hospital once for this problem. Apparently there's no telling when you're going to get a kid who loves eating strangeweird things. - jmm))

I'm now reading a collection of novels by Josephine Tey whom Jean Linard asked about. I'm quite impressed. They are unconventional in construction and intensely feminine in some ways (emphasis on furniture, flowers, physical aspects of men which most men don't notice and so on; I'm not trying to get myself pulverized by the libbers) and much more introspective than most mystery novels. Bill Wilson would love the bishop who fawns on underdogs in THE FRANCHISE AFFAIR as an enfant terrible. ((What you are referring to is the "artist's eye" for observation, which is certainly not exclusively feminine. - jmm))

Harriet Stevenson might have pointed out that during the twelve years which have produced more than a tripling of the cost of paperbacks, the cost of television sets has remained substantially unchanged (you can buy a color set with all the UHF channels for about what you paid for a 12-channel black-and-white set in 1962) and they cost less to run because of transistorized circuitry which doesn't draw as much power and the spread of public television stations has increased viewing choice for most parts of the country. If anyone wonders why reading is going out of fashion, just keep that in mind while watching the cost of books and magazines continue to soar out of sight. If the publishing industry doesn't cooperate to find some kind of alternative for paper and ink pretty soon, it may become as much a nostalgia topic as vaudeville. Microfiche, some form of facsimile transmission via telephone lines, maybe something else that would require a substantial one-time cost to the consumer but would then permit enormous reductions in production costs and consumption of natural resources.

I hadn't realized where The Moffatt House came from. Matter of fact, I didn't read until recently another Tucker novel, which indicates that I must be in Times Square on New Year's Eve awaiting the arrival of 2000. I hope the city is somewhat safer by then, because I doubt if I'll be able to protect myself against aggressors to any great extent by then.

((We didn't make it to Discon (the 1974 World Science Fiction Convention in Washington, D. C.). We do hope to attend the Bouchercon and Westercon this year, and the NASFiC; and Bouchercon, Westercon, Midwestcon AND Worldcon next year. Hope to see you at more than one of them, Harry. Like, Chicago isn't that far from Maryland. - ljm))

... &

EVERYTHING

A Column of News, Views and Previews - by Len Moffatt

THE DREADFUL LEMON SKY

the 16th Travis McGee novel by John D. MacDonald, is the second McGee novel to be first published in hardcover. We assume that Fawcett will eventually reprint it in paperback. Meanwhile, it has been hitting the best-seller lists, and is or will be available from the Detective Book Club and the Book-of-the-Month Club.

As a result of all this, John says he has been asked for many interviews and was able to accomodate one from a Canadian magazine (didn't specify title), one from People Magazine (should appear some time in April), and "an upcoming one from Esquire which should be painless as it is being done by a friend I like and trust, Rust Hills".

Readers of JDMB 19 will recall that the working title for the sixteenth McGee novel was THE AZURE DISMAY. John says that he changed it from Azure to LEMON because he couldn't put Azure together in a way that had the right tone and cadence.

THE GREAT PLYMOUTH GIN MYSTERY

Dean Grennell comments on this in his article in this issue of JDMB, and we have a note from Roy Squires of Glendale, California, expressing further mystification. Roy, who is a member of the Society of Plymouth Men (Overseas Chapter), Plymouth Gin drinker and Black Watch Smoker for over 15 years, says:

"In appendix to our chat Saturday night during which you told me that either J. MacDonald or T. McGee was on record as having said that Plymouth Gin is now produced from a different distillery than before, I submit these quotations:

From the S.P. M. News, November 1964, Issue No. 3: Issued on behalf of the Society of Plymouth Men by Coates & Co. (Plymouth) Ltd.

In the December 1965 issue is a letter to the membership signed by the Vice-President of the Society of Plymouth Men, Black Friars Distillery, Plymouth.

From the labels of all bottles (3) of Plymouth Gin in my liquor cabinet and the one in my freezer (when I ask my slave girl for a martini, I mean now!):

Extra Dry Plymouth Distilled English Gin, Coates & Co. (Plymouth) Ltd.,
Black Friars Distillery, Plymouth, England.

The above bottles were delivered to me within the past four months by Phil Mays, noted fantasy collector and Wine Steward at Pearson's Brentwood (an area inhabited only by affluent persons of good taste, wherefor one may assume that their stock of Plymouth Gin is always a fairly recent acquisition.) Or, these bottles almost certainly were shipped after your JDM quotation was written. And, so what has changed?

Is it possible that there are two different labels involved here? And if you don't know what we're talking about, go read LEMON and then come back to this.

We haven't had time to consult John directly on this, but I was able to sample the McGee recipe for Plymouth Gin some time ago. (June doesn't care for gin at all except in a gimlet with lots of Rose's in proportion to the gin.) I found it quite a palatable drink, though the fact that I had imbibed a couple of gin-and-tonics before discovering that the bar had Plymouth Gin available might have had its effect in preparing me for the McGee recipe...

I told John that I had finally been able to try PG, and in his letter dated April 5, he comments:

"Glad you had a chance to try Plymouth. I understand that the Plymouth people are quite miffed about my comments, and insist it is bottled in England. But I happen to know better. It is made in England, but shipped over in bulk and bottled here. Why pay freight on a lot of glass, and risk all that breakage and pilferage?"

IS CONDOMINIUM OPPS?

We don't know, but perhaps we'll find out when John gets back from his boat ride. In the letter mentioned above, John reports:

"I am ceasing work on Condominium--with final draft on 200 pages, a semi-final on 200 more, and very rough stuff on the last 400 pages (a long book!)--so that we can get off on a boat ride--about 2½ months of it. I am, of course, taking a typewriter, and may get well into McGee #17, tentative title using color ginger."

PLAGIARISMS

We feel that Rona Barrett should turn PALE GRAY FOR GUILT. Reason: pages 453 and 454 of the Bantam edition of THE LOVE MANIACS contain various combinations of words and phrases lifted from Puss Killian's farewell letter to Travis in the ninth McGee novel, GRAY. Imitation is supposed to be the sincerest form of flattery, but there are limits.

On the same subject, Jan Trenholm was kind enough to inform us that one of John's short stories was totally plagiarized "except for name changes in the story and the title, of course". We passed this along to John, who expressed his thanks, and says he will follow it up. On the outside chance that it might give advance warning to the story-stealer and his publisher, we won't mention the titles here. Not that they are on our mailing list, but copies of JDMB do get around. Hopefully, we can report on this in more detail next time.

THE JDM MASTER CHECKLIST IS OUT OF PRINT We will continue to publish additions and corrections. If any of you want to part with your copy, let us know. We'll list it in the Seek & Swap Department.

Speaking of the CHECKLIST, John reports that it is proving invaluable in the dreary problem of renewal of copyrights. He says, "I really feel pretty ancient when it comes to renewing stuff written 28 years ago. At least when I get a lot of the older ones renewed in my name--the ones on which the original publisher had owned all rights--I can think of putting together an anthology of period pulp."

ALL BACK ISSUES OF THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE ARE ALSO OUT OF PRINT. Well, we do have a few copies of No. 19 left at this writing, but we also keep getting new readers.

Which brings us to the problem of what we are going to give our readers (old and new) in the future. This could be the final issue of JDMB. It started out as a very slim issue, and would have come out that way had not Dean come through with his long article and John with his news and the letter on the "aging" of McGee.

Whether or not there will be future issues of JDMB will depend on:

- (1) Our supply of time, energy and money (in that order).
- (2) How much publishable material (news, reviews, articles, letters, verse, etc.) we receive before the deadline.

We don't want to raise the price of JDMB, and anyway, at the moment that isn't the major problem, despite the increase in cost for ink, paper, stencils, postage, etc. But we aren't getting any younger and though we have managed to cut down on some of our activities we still have more commitments than any two people (of any age) should possibly have. We both need more time for reading and resting.

And we don't want to stop communicating with all of our JDMB readers, John and Dorothy included. So here is what might happen:

Instead of publishing JDMB 21, we might instead publish THE JDM BIBLIOPHILE BULLETIN #2. (The first issue of JDMBB was published back in 1972 to let our readers know that June and I had not died between JDMBs 17 and 18.) It would be one or two pages of news and information, and would also feature the Seek & Swap Department and any Additions or Corrections to the CHECKLIST. No letters, articles or reviews. It would be mailed first class domestically and be priced @ 25¢ a copy. (So if you sent in 50¢ for JDMB 21, you'd get JDMBB Nos. 2 & 3 for your half buck.)

Right now we have no way of predicting which route we will take. It's a matter of crossing bridges when we come to them without burning any behind us. It's possible that after one or two issues of JDMBB we'll have enough time, energy, material and money to publish another issue of JDMB, and go on from there, using either the magazine or the bulletin/newsletter format each time we publish, depending on which one is the most practical at the time.

Comment?

- ljm

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