

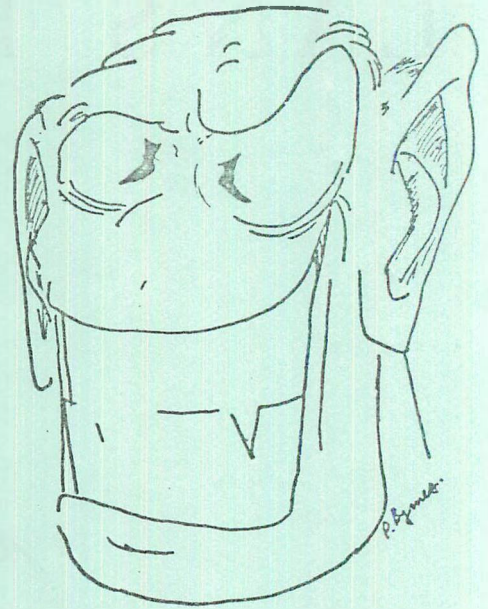
LAN'S LANTERN 14



BILL
BRYAN

Who knows what evil lurks... ?

Sam Dees!



One would think that, since this is a comics issue, I would know what evil lurks in the pages of the comic magazines, and what good as well. Actually, I've been a reader of comicbooks for almost 30 years, and a collector since about 1961. You would think that I really know about this phenomenon of American culture, but not as much as you might think. I read them, and since I have a fairly good memory, can remember the plots and story lines. But as to writers, artists, letterers, etc., I know very few. I can recognize Jack Kirby's art, as well as Carmen Infantino and Steve Ditko, but don't ask me about others.

So why an issue about comicbook superheroes?

Why not?

I like comicbooks, and I read them regularly. Ever since I came across the Archie and Little Lulu and Superman comics in the store, I've loved to read them. The daily comics in the newspaper, the Sunday color section, I awaited eagerly. Even now, when I pick up the paper, I turn to the comic section first.

Collecting was a bug thrust upon me by my friend Ken who had a lot of the DC issues of Superman, Superboy, Action, Adventure, and more. I would spend hours at his house devouring the stories. Eventually, when I started earning some money, I would buy them myself. Green Lantern #5 was the first purchase, and the rest followed in quick order. I sought out ways of getting more money so to keep up with the monthly and bimonthly releases. I would save lunch money. walk and hitchhike so to save bus money, all so that I could keep up with the comic habit. (When I also started buying SF books and Records, I went broke very quickly!) There were times I did have to cut back--going to college took more money than I thought, and had to forego comic magazines for a few years. But when I started up again, it was with a vengeance. It was a useful hobby. During Graduate school, I put together a slide lecture for the mythology class about the relationship between heros of ancient times and modern superheroes. Now, Maia and I make a weekly trip to Classic Comics to pick up the latest issues, and see how our friends are doing.

When Stan Lee started his Marvel Universe, and superheroes became more like real people, the plots became so intertwined and convoluted that they were more like soap operas. I remember telling a couple of friends about another friend who quit her job in New York where she was starring in a soap opera, and moved to Chicago so she could return to college. And another who was an industrial tycoon, but hit the bottle so much that he lost everything. Yes Supergirl and Iron Man do have their lives as real as one might find in real life.

This issue of LAN'S LANTERN is for all those comicbook readers who might have lost track of some of their heros, or who continue to read avidly (and can poke holes in any of the articles). So this issue is for me! It's pure self-indulgence. Thanks to all the contributors! Especially the artists.

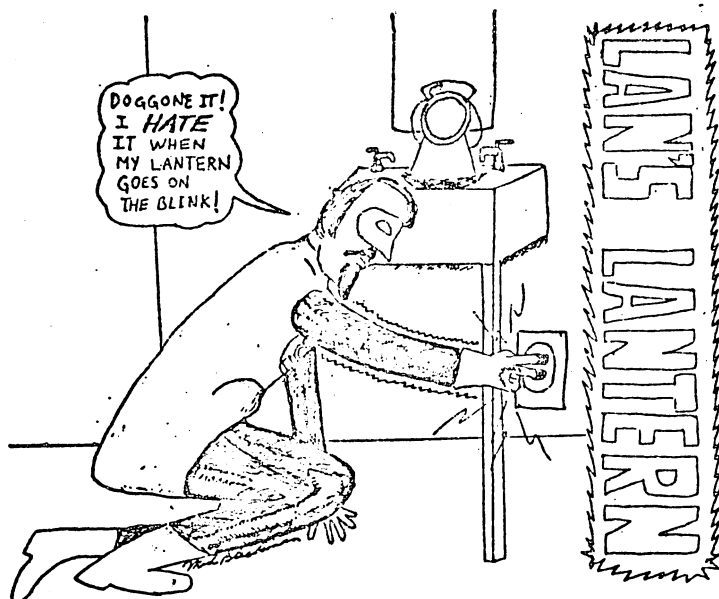


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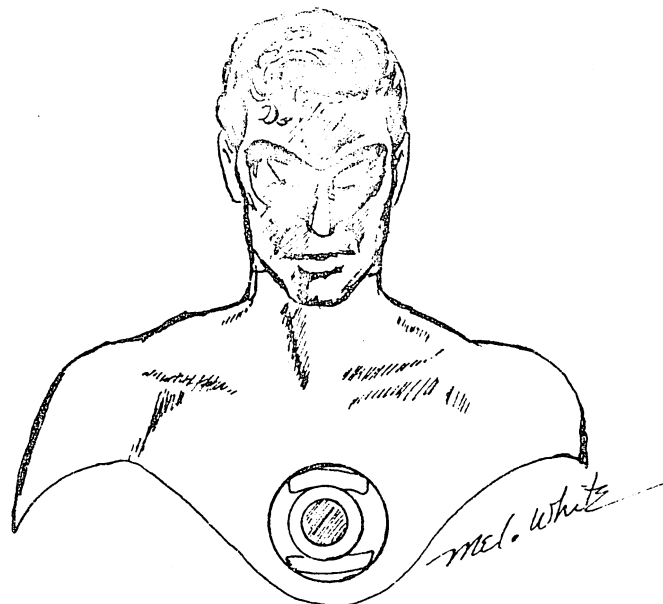
LAN'S LANTERN #14 is prepared and edited by George "Ian" Laskowski, who lives at 652 Cranbrook Rd #3 in Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013. LAN'S LANTERN is a fanzine available for the usual (art, article, letter of comment, a kind word, a Hugo nomination, etc.) or \$1.50 American. This is IanHI Publication # 169. IanHI Publications is a Division of IanShack Press Unlimited. This is copyright © May, 1984, by George J Laskowski, Jr. All rights revert to the contributors upon publication.

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GREEN LANTERN

MY FRIEND AND INSPIRATION



Although I have written before in LAN'S LANTERN that my fan name of Lan comes from Green Lantern, that essay appeared several years ago, and I suppose it bears repeating for the newer readers who have never read it. Green Lantern was my favorite comic character back before high school, and even through those secondary-school years. He did have competition with the Flash, Batman, Spiderman, and Daredevil, but he stayed on top for a long time. Considering that I had the same initials as Green Lantern, I thought it only fitting that he be my favorite character. Several years later, when looking for a name for a series of stories I was attempting to write set on Mars, I thought that "Lan" would be an appropriate name, and do obscure homage to my hero (certainly, I thought, no one would keep calling Green Lantern by that tri-syllable name, but shorten it to either GL or Lan...it only seem natural to me...). When I finally got into fandom, knowing how people in the past mutilated "Laskowski", I looked around for a nice short name for myself. "Lan" my Martian friend thrust his handle forward, and since I didn't get very far with those stories, I decided to use it. The rest, as they say, is history.

But what about Hal Jordan, the Green Lantern himself? Certainly anyone who has been reading this comic for several years knows that he is the member of an elite corps of sentient beings in the galaxy whose sole purpose is to help other sentient beings, and stop evil. Each Green Lantern is given a sector of space to patrol, and their powers are to be used to protect every race in their sector. All members of the Green Lantern Corps are to help anyone in their sector who requests their aid. This is the prime directive for the bearers of the power rings.

Green Lantern derives his power from a power battery which is shaped like a lantern (hence his name) whose emerald energy is transferred to, and contained in, a ring. This en-

ergy is shaped to do his bidding through the force of his will-power. Since his ring can only be charged for 24 hours at a time, several stories have used this as a plot device: how Hal Jordan the man uses his own wits and prowess to save himself, instead of relying on his power ring. And his emerald power-ring is useless against anything colored yellow. This comes from the impurity in the main power-battery itself, which gives the battery its power; if removed, the unique abilities of the batteries and the rings cease to exist. Again, many plot devices revolved around this weakness.

Hal Jordan and his fellow Green Lanterns are under the direct command of the Guardians of the Universe, a blue-skinned race of immortals, whose directives seem sometimes mystifying, but are almost always for the greater good of all sentient races. It is on their world of Oa at the center of the galaxy that the main power battery which feeds all the other smaller batteries is housed. Because each Green Lantern is responsible for certain sectors of space, the Guardians call on each to perform duties off their native planet. But this also gives a wider range for stories, and leaves open the imagination for more story possibilities. The running series of "Tales of the Green Lantern Corps" has for me become one of the most interesting features of the comic. It stretches the imagination, and the mind; the series shows different cultures, different beliefs, different perceptions of life, the world and the universe.

Yet it was this very expansive ranging of our own Earthman Emerald Gladiator throughout the galaxy and off-planet that got him into trouble with his fellow human beings, especially Green Arrow. How could he go off gallivanting around the galaxy when his people at home were in such sad shape? For Green Lantern, good and evil was as clear as black and white. But Green Arrow showed him otherwise. GA showed him the shades of gray between the two extremes, made him experience his world as he never had before. The Guardians were puzzled by this, and by Hal Jordan's now lack of cooperation with their plans. One of their own members was sent to observe Hal and Oliver Queen (Green Arrow), and came away with a new understanding of what it meant to be human. This whole series of stories, written by Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams and appearing in Green Lantern #76-89, were the most powerful stories written for comics, not only then, but probably ever since. It was here that O'Neil and Adams brought "relevance" to comics in a big way. Drugs, war, pollution, civil rights, and the shades between right and wrong were explored. (These stories have been collected and reprinted in a special limited series by DC.)

In the latest series of stories about the Emerald Warrior, he was exiled off planet by the Guardians for disregarding the prime directive of the Green Lantern Corps: he refused to aid the people of a world which was in danger of

being destroyed. Because of his previous record, the Guardians put him through a trial period, allowing him to range the starways, aid other races, and build up the Guardians' trust in his decisions once again. One of the more exciting adventures during this period was the series about the super power rings, those experimental ones which did not have a weakness against yellow. A small group of Green Lanterns discovered this, took the experimental rings, and proved true the maxim that absolute power does corrupt absolutely. Hal was instrumental in defeating those Green Lanterns and recovering the rings. It turns out that this whole "War of the Rings" episode was a psychodrama enacted for Hal's benefit, particularly to speed up his trial time. One major flaw in the episode was that the bearers of these new rings were defeated mostly by themselves, by their greatest fears coming up to haunt them. When Hal Jordan was chosen as the successor to Abin Sur as the bearer of power battery 2814, it was because he was entirely without fear. I assumed that other members of the Corps would be chosen for the same reason. But it was a good story anyway. Presently, Hal is back on Earth, proceeding with his usual fight against crime and evil, but ever ready to leap into space to aid other worlds, other races.

I have often speculated on where the idea of Green Lantern might have come from. Most other superheroes you can trace to some power of the gods and/or goddesses of ancient civilizations. Green Lantern is somewhat unique in that he has a weapon, rather than a particular power. I concluded that his origin was the legend of Aladdin and his magical lamp, whose genie within would obey his every wish. Indeed, some of the demi-gods or popular heroes of the Greek and Roman myths used divine weapons, but none with the scope and power of GL's power ring, or of Aladdin's magic genie.



A Few Points — by John Thiel

There are some points about super-heros that I would like to stress. First, the first of the superheros was Superman. Apparently plagiarism laws are considered silly in comic books, where writers and artists are often plagiaristic by nature, plagiarism being the changing and dissemination on a looser scale of published ideas, and comic art being the modification of solidier art forms for the sake of a more general public. I haven't heard of a successful plagiarism case in the comics industry (which doesn't mean there hasn't been one). However, most of these copy-heros wash out pretty fast, since there are on a lower level of idea and art, and less interesting to readers than the original heros. In other words, there is a lot of originality to comic art which attracts astute readers of the comics.

Unyil recently, only Captain Marvel has stood up to Superman---but the milieu created by Superman has included Wonder Woman, Batman, the Green Hornet, Plasticman, and others too numerous to name. Some of these had duration, others not; and some have been revived in the recent glut of the super-hero market. The tendency to endow super=powers even reached animals, producing Mighty Mouse (culminating in Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew) and others, and new villains srprung up patterned after those who sought to test Superman's powers.

The original cowboy and his sidekick were the Lone Ranger and Tonto (patterned after Cervantes' Don Quixote and his sidekick Sanco Panza), who was a super being in his own way, and not unknown to the SF-reading comic crowd. I believe the first airborne super-hero (not including Perseus and his horse Pegasus) was Sky King. And the first of the superhero/villain category seems to have been The Shadow. None of the remained loners long, joined by partners, or imperfectly copied by others.

Of course, if we discuss superheros, our main man has to be Superman, because it was there that the concept was evolved that "super" meant "better than others." With all due credit to Nietzsche and his not-very-entertaining *Man and Superman*, when it was published "super" meant something on the order of "supervisor" or simply "superior", rather than super-ordinary. Unless a dust-jacket was referred to as a "cape" by his contemporaries, there is no evidence of the standardized costume to be found in his work. Of course there was the SS, but note that they did not monogram themselves with very much style.

My opinion of the recent super-heros is that they arose shortly after the Superman craze had resulted in comicbooks about super-machines, and I think that people like Spiderman, the Hulk, Iron Man and all the others were reactions to this crazed comic mechanization of human life. As far as super-beings are concerned, I regard them as at least partially mutants. Some of those heros actually admit to the laboratory experiments and chemicals/radioactive materials that resulted in their being. They do good work, all right, but they also tend to imitate their forebears; foe example, Spiderman works for a newspaper, has a costume, and protects his identity.

I do not know if you would refer to these super-heros as "camp", the way some people do. However, I do know that they strive to be popular, and they resort to "camp" occasionally. They are not as aggressive about getting into exploits, and I frankly would prefer Superman from the days when he was less governmentalized. But one can't have everything.

I hope that this will help your Super-hero Issue, Lan; put out many more of these theme issues and you might become a super-hero yourself. Well, wait a minute---last issue's cover is Green and it's called Lantern...Ghaaaaaa.....



THE
MARVELOUS
TAROT

by Maia Cowan

Driving to Toledo can be a dangerous experience. It was during such a trip that my wandering mind settled on the idea of matching the Marvel Comics characters to the Major Arcana of the Tarot. To my great surprise, it worked. To my greater surprise, when I mentioned it to friends they were not horrified but enthusiastic.

The more I thought about it the more elaborate I got. Most of my concept of the Tarot comes from the Ryder-Waite deck, and my choices of the appropriate Marvel character were influenced not only by the meaning assigned to each card, but also by the physical representation most familiar to me --and, of course, by my perverse sense of humor. I can't resist a pun. On the other hand, I ended up deviating from the traditional representations by considering a "Reverse" for each card that was more than just the original card upside-down. There are too many characters who have "opposites" --either traditional enemies, or sometimes actually themselves-- to ignore the possibilities. (For the visually-oriented, I imagine the cards as having the same format as traditional playing deck face cards.)

If reason prevails in the universe, this idea will never be physically realized. But it's fun to play with, and if nothing else should get me lots of LoCs from people who disagree with my choice or want to ask why anyone would bother. So without further ado, here it is:

THE MARVELOUS TAROT

0. THE FOOL: The Beast. Not only does he frequently act like a court jester, but he fits the deeper meaning of a "seeker after wisdom."

Reversed: The Foolkiller. I don't know if this is symbolically appropriate, but I sure like the name.

1. THE MAGICIAN: How could I even think of using someone other than Doctor Strange?

Reversed: Therefore, Baron Mordo.

2. THE HIGH PRIESTESS: I can't figure out exactly why the Scarlet Witch seems just right for this, but she does.

Reversed: Ditto the White Queen (in this case, maybe because she's paired with the Bishop?).
because she's paired with a Bishop?).

3. THE EMPRESS: Since the simplistic meaning is that of an Earth Goddess or some such, Storm is appropriate here --before, of course, her drastic personality and appearance change.

Reversed: Just to keep things symmetrical, Callisto.
(Or maybe Storm after her changes.)

4. THE HIGH PRIEST: In the sense of one who provides spiritual guidance and authority, Professor Xavier.

Reversed: Sebastian Shaw, as Professor X's nemesis and a good match for the Reversed High Priestess.

5. THE EMPEROR: The Submariner.

Reversed: Who else but Doctor Doom? (So he and Namor aren't exactly counterparts. I didn't say this was going to be consistent.)

6. THE LOVERS: Lots of possibilities here, but I liked best Reed and Sue Richards.

Reversed: Also lots of possibilities for lovers who were tragic, or faithless, or just stupid. But for the sake of symmetry, I choose Johnny Storm and Frankie Raye --talk about "starcrossed"!

7. THE CHARIOT: Hercules is a natural. Besides, those of you who are familiar with the Ryder-Waite deck, imagine in place of the Sphinxes pulling that chariot, the Skrull on one side and the Recorder on the other. (Which is which I leave as an exercise to the reader.)

Reversed: I'm not certain this card calls for a Reverse, and besides I couldn't think of one. Unless, perhaps, yet another wrecked Quinjet, or Stan What's-his-name who keeps attacking the Avengers in armored contraptions, and getting humiliated.

8. STRENGTH: So what if in traditional depictions this card is feminine? I choose Captain America, as symbolic not only of physical strength but also the noble virtues embodied in this card.

Reversed: Somebody who misuses or is overwhelmed by his power, say The Blob.

9. THE HERMIT: The Watcher, of course.

Reversed: Another tricky one, but I finally settled for Elektra, since by all indications she's gone on retreat for a long time.

10. THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE: I had to get really obscure to find something that even came close, and finally decided on the In-Betweener. Look it up in the Marvel Universe directory.

11. JUSTICE: Our favorite blind attorney, Matthew Murdock. Is there a better?

Reversed: And our favorite defier of justice, The Kingpin. There seems a certain "justice" in juxtaposing the two.

12. THE HANGED MAN: Again I don't know if this is the most appropriate choice, but I couldn't resist the image of Spiderman hanging by one ankle from his own webbing. And

he has made his share of sacrifices....

Reversed: The Black Cat, and not just for artistic balance. It does appear that the lady expects to get what she wants without paying for it, and she's due to learn that the price is higher than she'd ever expect....

13. DEATH: Yeah, there's a real "Death" character in the Marvel Universe, but that would be too easy. Also too literal. I argued with a friend over this, and he finally convinced me that Ghost Rider belongs here. Besides, I like the artistic balance with

Reversed: Valkyrie, astride her horse. Both a messenger of death, and in her peculiar circumstances a symbol of rebirth.

14. TEMPERANCE: This was the hardest card to match, in the entire Major Arcana. There just aren't any temperate superheroes! But I never said we couldn't use supporting characters, so how about Jarvis? He certainly represents dignity, restraint, and common sense.

Reversed: Depicting Tony Stark would be a cheap shot, but then I never said we couldn't use cheap shots, either.

15. THE DEVIL: Lots of choices if we wanted to be literal-minded, but personally I prefer to go with the symbolism of being controlled by one's baser nature. Therefore, the Hulk. Besides (again), where the Ryder-Waite deck shows chained worshipper/victims before the Devil's throne, it amuses me to visualize Betty Ross Talbot and Rick Jones.

Reversed: On the other hand, even I wouldn't stoop so low as to suggest Warren Worthington III (The Angel) here. How about somebody who was a candidate for the "upside right", but could be better thought of as overcoming those baser instincts: Daimon Hellstrom.

16. THE TOWER: Also frequently called "The Lightning-Struck Tower", so it would naturally be the Baxter Building, after it's once again gotten its top floors blown away.

Reversed: Also the Baxter Building, at some stage of reconstruction.

17. THE STAR: Dazzler. Well, she does want to be one!

Reversed: The Enchantress, for no particular reason except maybe she's a glory-hound but usually doesn't get away with it.

18. THE MOON: Psyche; no pun on "Moonstar" intended (well, not only), but rather her ability to cast illusions.

Reversed: Mystique, whose entire life appears to be a deception.

19. THE SUN: Binary, admittedly more for the pun; but I

could make a good case for her having enjoyed a great victory (if just by her becoming Binary) after all her trials.

Reversed: Again there weren't any good choices, but we could think of Rogue as being not just the best "opposite" to Binary, but also someone who thought she had everything, and snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.

20. JUDGMENT: Another obscurity, The Living Tribunal. Although for a while I considered Lilandra Neramani, since she does seem to frequently fill the role of judge for crimes against the galaxy (i.e. Jean Grey, Reed Richards).

Reversed: Your guess is as good as mine. Could I claim this card doesn't need a reverse?

21. THE WORLD: A few choices, but minor compared with Gaea, who is the World (but what's a Greek deity doing in Thor?)

Reversed: Well, of course and without question, Galactus!

And that, fortunately, is that. It intrigued me, considering all the possible candidates, how much the characters --and their traditional opponents, or their own lives-- suited the symbolism. Is this actual influence or design, or merely an indication that the Tarot's meaning is universal, and similar archetypes are likely to appear anywhere?

Or does it mean that giving adequate levels of boredom and perversity, we (I) can warp any set of information to fit with any other?

Yes, that seems more likely.



Captain

Canuck

and the

Canadian

Comics

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Canadian comics have slowly been coming into their own. The comic industry in Canada has too long been overshadowed by the US companies. Even though Marvel comics has proffered national heroes for other countries (most of whom appeared in a mini-series called Contest of Champions), and now has a group of Canadian superheroes with their own comic, Alpha Flight, this was not quite the same as Canada producing her own. Richard Comely, along with his friend Ron Leishman, thought that his native land should have her own superhero, and together Richard and Ron came up with Captain Canuck. However, it wasn't until July 1, 1975, that the first issue of the comic hit the stands in Canada.

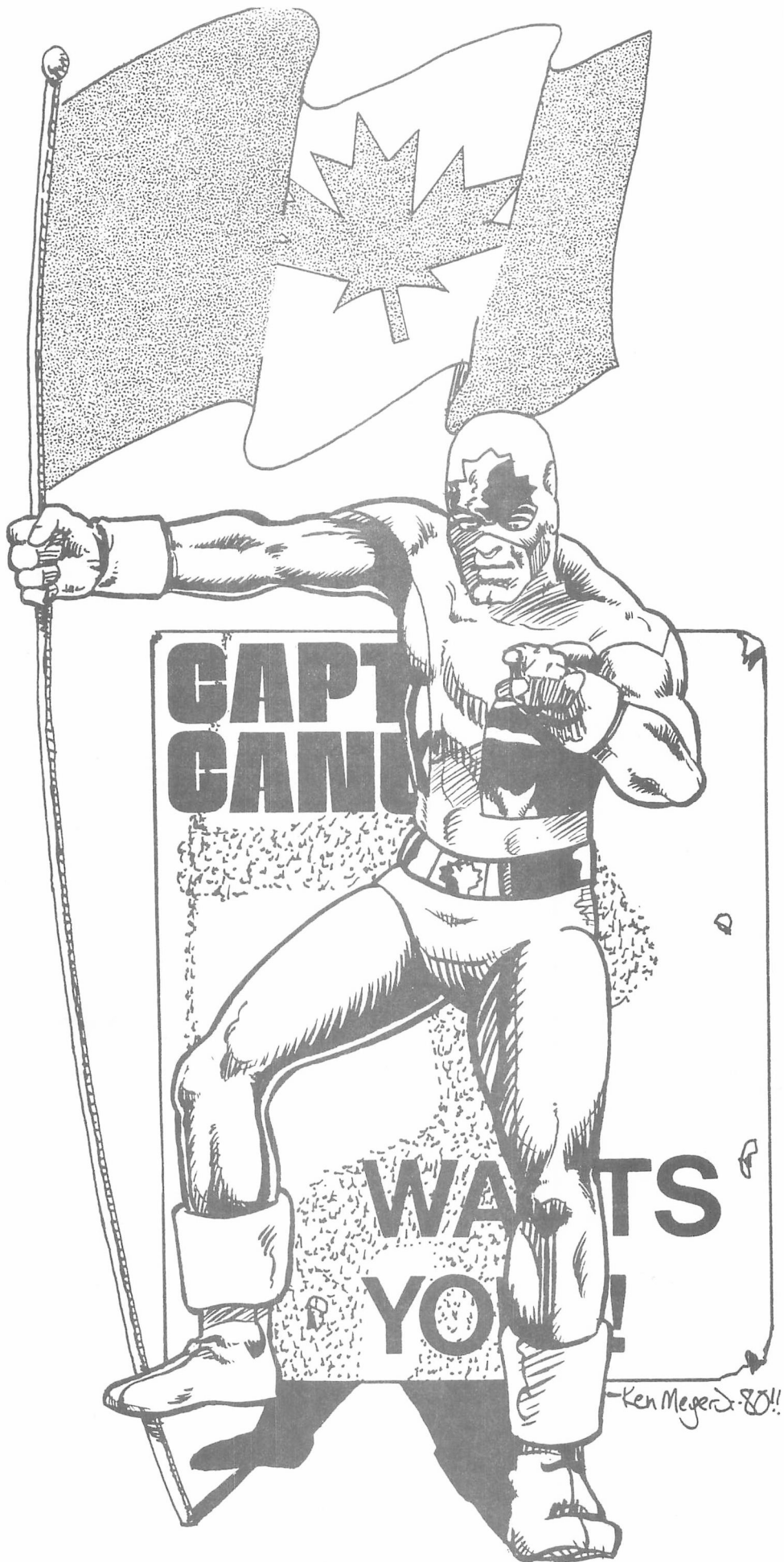
That first issue of Captain Canuck was a strikingly slick production. The first few pages of that initial issue were printed on slick cover-stock, and the rest of the issue on heavy newsprint, the kind that most of the American companies had dispensed with because of its high cost. The colors were bright, and the blending of actual photographs into the comic art was well done, even though some of the figures lacked the finesse of other comics at that time. The story, written and drawn by Comely himself, was a bold extrapolation of Canada at the forefront of political power in the world, and Captain Canuck was an agent for C-I-S-O, the Canadian International Security Organization.

CC had some superpowers, though not the kind a lot of his contemporaries had. He had super-strength and super-reflexes, about 2-3 times that of a normal human. His origin was saved until issue #5, wherein it was revealed that he obtained his powers from extra-terrestrials. This storyline was followed up in later issues, in the summer special of 1980, and in Captain Canuck #11-13, as a special extended story entitled "Chariots of Fire".

Richard Comely managed to maintain a close relationship with his readers. His letter column was very informal, and he included editorials about what was happening with the comic, Captain Canuck himself, and the other back-up stories, Jonn, The Catman, the series Beyond, and The Chaos Corps. One letter that Comely received talked about the original Canuck, Johnny Canuck, who appeared in Canada in 1941, as an answer to the States' Uncle Sam or Captain America. This was during World War II, at which time the Canadian government stopped importing such things as comics from the States; the money was needed more at home for the War effort. An addition to the war-exploits of Johnny Canuck were the adventures of The Canuck Kid, which unfortunately were never published. However, in Comely's Captain Canuck #3, several panels of The Canuck Kid were published.

With that third issue, Comely had to cut costs, and went to the lightweight newsprint paper that other comics companies were using. In spite of the money problems he was having, Comely still had high hopes of giving some of his back-up strips their own magazine. The readership was very supportive, but the monetary help Comely needed was not there, and had to delay publishing Captain Canuck #4 for more than three years. Comely was very straightforward with his readers when #4 did come out. Comely Comics was now part of CKR Productions, and a regular bimonthly publishing schedule was promised, with a special coming out in the summer.

More problems cropped up. Since I had taken a mail subscription, I didn't have to haunt the newsstands or comics stores to get my copies, or wonder expectantly whether or not an issue was delayed...again. But with the copy of Captain Canuck there came in the envelop some literature from the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, the Mormon Church. Although I could not find any reference to this in the issues of the comic, I recall seeing a letter from Richard Comely to everyone in which he didn't exactly apologize for the inclusions of the religious materials, but justified his actions of spreading "the word" as part of his religious beliefs. Indeed, there had been religious references in the comic itself, and occasionally an article by someone connected with the Mormon Church appeared in the comic. As of Captain Canuck #13, Comely was no longer associated with the comic. The company wrote that he had left to do freelance work, but I suspect that he was given a choice to leave or be fired, not



so much because of his religious beliefs projected into the plots of CC, but that he continued to use the comic mailing as a means of dispersing religious materials: (Mail fraud, maybe, but that's just my suspicion.)

Comely's leaving of the comic also brought an end to it. CC himself had just wound up his adventure in the extended story, "Chariots of Fire," during which he is thrust back in time to aid Canadian Indians repel a Viking invasion, and then returned to the "present" (1995) to aid in the defeat of the aliens who originally, and inadvertantly, had given him his powers. At the end, so to save his own life, Captain Canuck uses an energy portal (similar to the one that had sent him back and forth in time) and winds up in a forest with the portal being destroyed behind him. Is he on earth? Is he in the past, or in the future, or still in 1995? The questions are left standing, as the Captain is, in that forest glen, with an open future of adventures and storyline ahead (should CKR Productions choose to follow up on them).

One of the many artists who assisted Richard Comely with the drawing of Captain Canuck was Dave Sim. In 1976 Sim started his own comic called, Cerebus the Aardvark. Cerebus is, as the comic title indicates, an aardvark, or "earth-pig" as he calls himself. The original concept was that Cerebus was to be a parody of all the sword-and-sorcery books that were coming out at the time. It was spectacularly funny for a long time, until Cerebus went political, and, although humorous at times, it lacked the spontaneous recognition-humor of the sword-and-sorcery parodies. In spite of the irregularity in publishing, it continues to be popular.

The only other publisher of comics in Canada is Bill Marks, whose book, Vortex, is reputed to be the best selling one in Canada. Vortex is an anthology of SF and horror stories, with a mixture of mediocre to excellent art. Marks has, for the past year, been threatening the industry with another title, Mr. X, which has yet to see print.

Canadian comics are few, but they are becoming more and more known. Sim and Marks have the best chance now to make something of a ready-made audience in Canada. If they try a title with some national appeal they will probably have a hit on their hands. I wonder if either of them has thought about that approach. I'll have to mention it to Bill next time I see him.

DEMONRIDERS

by Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Many of the most famous and powerful superheroes have an enemy who is somehow linked to them, who is a part of their purpose in life. The majority of supervillains are simply hoods with an extra gimmick, a super-duper Saturday-Night-Special. They pop up all over the place. A few are overwhelmingly powerful and dangerous, but the most interesting are almost always those with some sort of character development. One of the most interesting techniques for giving a crook some personality is to make him (or her) part of the legend surrounding a hero, a really villainous backstabber who helps maintain a person on the rocky road to superherodom.

The most obvious pairing is Captain America and the Red Skull. Steve Rodgers was an ordinary American depression-era kid, perhaps a bit on the puny side. Disgusted, horrified by what he saw happening in Hitler's Germany, he tried to join the U.S. Army. Ruled unfit for any military service, he was offered a chance to risk almost certain death in an experiment. He was injected with the "super soldier" formula of Dr. Abraham Erskine which transformed Steve into a perfect human athlete. Not only did all his health problems vanish, but his sight and hearing improved, his reflexes speeded up, and his body grew muscle tissue of every sort.

Rodgers was the only person Dr. Erskine ever had a chance to treat, however, because he was almost immediately assassinated and his laboratory destroyed in a fight between the revitalized Rodgers and the Nazi assassin/spy. Unable to create an army of perfect specimens, the Army designed the identity of Captain America, and his costume, to be a unique symbol of America, and counter the Nozi's propaganda ploys. Adolph Hitler himself had chosen his own symbol, a masked terrorist and assassin named the Red Skull.

Hitler chose, partly to spite his other advisors and aides, a petty criminal and layabout to be his personal agent. This person was trained as a Storm Trooper, then given a mask and uniform by Hitler. He soon outgrew everyone around him. As Captain America became a living legend of courage, skill, and, well, basic decency, the Red Skull's trademarks became a disregard for human life, and a talent for carefully planned terror, with such special touches as playing the Funeral March over each atrocity. He was involved in the sabotage of allied munitions plants, the murder of prisoners of war, torturing of political prisoners, and I always thought the murder of the entire village of Lidice in Czechoslovakia fitted his M.O. He was rumored to be planning to replace Hitler.

All good things must come to an end, however, and at the close of World War II the Red Skull began planning his escape, sending money and men overseas. As one of his last acts he ordered the brilliant scientist Baron Zemo to England to destroy Captain America. Zemo tricked Cap and his teenage partner Bucky into trying to stop a remote controlled drone aircraft he had stolen. It was booby-trapped. Bucky was killed outright while the Captain was thrown into the ocean and frozen in a block of ice.

After Captain America was revived and resumed his crime-fighting career, it was revealed that while Zemo was preparing his trap in England the hero and his young aide had broken into the Red Skull's bunker in Berlin and had seen the war criminal buried by Allied bombing. It will surprise few readers of comics that the Red Skull also fell into a trance for several decades due to an experimental nerve gas stored in his headquarters.

Since his return to the "living", the Skull has constantly sought world power through advanced weaponry and careful criminal organization. Captain America became the leader of the Avengers and worked with different government agencies fighting not only criminals but communists, terrorists, demons, and even aliens.

At one point, however, the Star-Spangled hero decided to retire to being Steve Rogers permanently. He had become disillusioned--not with the ideals he had been fighting for, but with his belief that America represented them. He had just barely been able to defeat a plan by high elected officials to first destroy his public image, and in the resulting confusion of this and Watergate, overthrow the constitutional government.

Suddenly the Red Skull launched a wave of terror designed to disrupt the American economy. Captain America reappeared to defend members of the President's Economic Advisory Council, each of whom was slated for a carefully staged public murder. Since then, the two, Captain America and the Red Skull, have constantly clashed, each representing his particular "ideals".

The greatest superhero of them all, Superman, is held by a link of shared experiences to Lex Luthor, the most powerful of all mad scientists. They were both boys together in Smallville, and while not friends at least held each other with great respect. When Superboy saw just how valuable a genius like Luthor might be to humanity, he actually built the budding scientist/engineer his own lab. Luthor began working on a dual project, artificial life and a cure for kryptonite.

In a tragic accident during a lab fire, Superboy carelessly blew fumes over Lex Luthor and his greatest achievement, a living thing. Luthor's brain-child died, and Luthor lost all the hair on his head (except for the cilia in his nostrils). After this Luthor began to strike at Superboy and then the entire country. His long series of defeats, first by Superboy, then by Superman, maddened him since he was certain that his loss in these battles were solely due to his foe's "luck" in having superpowers. Ignoring the fact that he stole much of his advanced technology, he considered his scientific achievements proof of his superiority.

While callous, he has seldom directed his schemes directly at anyone but Superman. This was most clearly shown when he robbed Fort Knox on TV while holding Superman at a distance. He not only avoided killing the guards, but, when he discovered it was one of Superman's robots he had defeated, he returned the gold. Stealing from anyone but Superman was just too easy.

Superboy had long hoped to somehow reform Luthor, but became resigned to Luthor's chosen path after his many crimes, including, when convenient, cold-blooded murder. The older Luthor got, the more dangerous he became, and the desire to defeat his enemy Superman, whom he sees as the cause of all his suffering and a challenge to his genius, became an obsession. He has gone so far on occasion as to have saved Big Blue's life, since he wants to be the one to kill him, preferably with his bare fists.

Recently Superman chased the renegade scientist to the planet Luthor where Luthor is a respected hero, and has a wife and child. More accurately, he *was* a hero and married, since the planet was destroyed in the battle between him and Superman by one of Luthor's superweapons. In his own mind, he has forgotten that he had been planning to use his most recent weapons to conquer the Luthorians, but now remembers them as his friends and admirers. He idealizes his wife and child, and of course insists that Superman is somehow responsible for their deaths. This only added fuel to the fires of his twisted obsession to destroy Superman. Luthor is now preparing a series of attacks on the Man of Steel, which Superman can only pray will be directed at him alone, and not at his friends or his adopted planet.

Much of the action in the popular *Fantastic Four* comics is the relationship or bitter rivalry between Doctor Doom and Mr. Fantastic.

Reed Richards and Victor Von Doom were both science students at Empire State University, and were assigned to room together. Doom, a scholarship student from Central Europe, insisted on a private room in the rudest possible way. Reed Richards, the son of a wealthy physicist in California, was transferred to another room, and moved in with football player Ben Grimm. Later, Reed noted a mistake on a sheet of calculations Von Doom left laying open. Doom, involved in the construction of a device that would allow him to view other dimensions, refused to believe he could have made a mistake and proceeded with his work. The machine blew up. He was burned and scarred, his face particularly disfigured. Expelled from the college, and unable to accept his failure, Doom decided Richards had sabotaged his invention out of jealousy.

During World War II Richards joined the Army and served five years in G-2, intelligence. Doom took the chance to study Adolph Hitler by working as a technician on a superweapon project, then retired to the remotest part of Tibet. In a monastery there he mastered yet undisclosed secrets.

After the War, Reed Richards designed the United States' first manned spacecraft. He, his fiancee Sue Storm, her brother Johnny, and Reed's best friend Ben Grimm (now the world's foremost test-pilot) made an unauthorized first flight. They were exposed to cosmic rays which gave them superpowers.

Victor Von Doom assumed the title of Dr. Doom and leaving the monastery, both with his brilliant weaponry and great charisma, he became the absolute and yet popular dictator of his homeland of Latveria. He by himself has made Latveria a third power between the Free World and the Soviet Bloc, each seeking to neutralize him.

To date, Doom has launched several dangerous plans for world conquest, but he has in almost every case included in his plans the defeat and humiliation of Mr. Fantastic (Reed Richards) and the rest of the Fantastic Four. His inclusion of Richards and the others has been the direct reason for his defeat on several occasions, but beating anybody but Richards will not suffice.

Dr. Stephen Strange and Baron Karl Amadeus Mordo were also both students together, but they lived in the home of the Ancient One in Tibet. The Ancient One, the earth Sorcerer Supreme, accepted Baron Mordo as a student because he saw the Baron's lust for power, and wished to watch, guide and deter him from his goals. He chose to place the responsibility for the human race's future safety from Black Magic in the hands of Dr. Stephen Strange.

Strange, a former surgeon, came to the Ancient One hoping to have the serious nerve damage which had ended his medical career magically cured. Strange was a bitter alcoholic, but he not only reformed himself, but began his study of the mystic arts after he witnessed Mordo trying to magically slay the Ancient One.

Mordo has constantly sought the aid of dangerous extra-dimensional gods and demons in his quest for power. Strange has gained new powers, tools and knowledge out of each of his battles to protect humanity, and even the nature of reality, from Mordo. Mordo has become so embittered by his many defeats, especially after the Ancient One's death, that he no longer seeks to rule the world, but to destroy it. Why? At least partly to show up Dr. Strange. Strange has tried to treat Mordo's madness but has been unable to hold him prisoner for very long.

Legally, the closest relationship between hero and villain may be that between Lightning Lad of the Legion of Super Heroes and Lightning Lord of the Legion of Super Villains. They are brothers. Both gained the power to hurl lightning bolts when they were attacked by electricity-generating monsters on their home planet. Lightning Lord vanished shortly afterwards, joining the 30th century criminal underworld. His brother, Lightning Lad, traveled to earth to search for him and became one of the founding trio of the Legion of Superheroes. He and his brother have clashed several times since then, but I am not really sure how

much influence they have had on one another.

Arthur Curry (Aquaman) has a half-brother named Orm who has become a supervillain named Ocean Master, and Thor has an adopted brother named Loki, known as the God of Mischief. Both Ocean Master and Loki have become villains pestering their brothers, at least partly because they felt their fathers preferred their brothers. They are also envious of their brothers' great powers.

Professor Xaviar and Magneto, who appear in *X-Men* comics, are mutants of opposing ideological views. They met before starting their opposing careers as adventurers in a mental hospital in Israel, working with survivors of concentration camps. Magneto was a survivor of the holocaust who was working as an orderly. He decided that the mutants of the first two generations exposed to hard radiation will be persecuted by "normal" mankind, as he and so many others were for being different. How much of this is an excuse for the thefts and murders he has committed with his magnetic powers, and how much merely a desire for power and domination, is a good question.

Professor Xaviar on the other hand has used his telepathic powers to organize two almost completely different groups of young mutants. They are able to train themselves to control their powers so as not to harm others indiscriminately, and are pledged to protect humanity from "evil" mutants. Xaviar's most important motivation: to stop the incredibly powerful and brilliant Magneto.

There are several other examples. Baron Strucker and Sargent Nick Fury met in WW II when they were on opposite sides as commandoes. They continued to fight after the war as Strucker organized the international crime cartel named Hydra, and Colonel Nick Fury was appointed head of Shield by Lyndon Johnson.

In Charlton Comics, Thunderbolt and the Faceless One were raised in the same monastery in Central Asia and both trained in the martial arts. The Faceless One had his face destroyed when he carried a stray bomb out of the monastery. But it was Thunderbolt who was chosen over him to study the scrolls which helped teach mind over body and mind over matter techniques. The Faceless One's criminal activities were all designed to plague Thunderbolt.

Perhaps the oddest relationship is between the Flash and his Rogues Gallery. This is a club of costumed villains who compete with one another to see who can destroy the fastest man alive. They even give an annual award (stolen, of course) to the member who creates the most unique weapon. Most of the Flash's unique speed tricks were perfected to deal with members, or teams of members, from this group.

It is no surprise that the best villains are fully developed characters, but I was surprised when I stopped to consider how many writers have chosen the trick of personal competition between the hero and the villain to give them both a touch of color, and a depth of character they would not normally have.

IRON MAN

An accounting of the life of Anthony Stark, his near death and re-birth as Iron Man, and the changes that have occurred in nearly 20 years of his existence as a comic Super Hero.

by LAN

Whenever I see a new hero presented in the comics, I usually consider what thinking processes the writers might have gone through to create this character. Superman and most other heroes are easy to decipher--give them powers that were originally attributed to gods and goddesses. As science progressed, more and more heroes used scientific means to endow themselves with super-human abilities; indeed, there have been "scientific" explanations for the powers of Superman. When Iron Man appeared, I thought immediately of a "knight in shining armor," which could have been the creator's thinking as well. But the actual origin of Iron Man as a "Knight of Justice" was radically different from that of a real knight, yet so similar as that of a "Black Knight" of the movie thrillers. In fact, the thinking processes that Stan Lee went through were somewhat different than mine, as he reports in his book, SON OF ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS. His thought was to have an incredibly successful businessman as a superhero, but one whose successes mask a deep secret. Stan considered his hero to have a faulty heart, and thus would have to wear a chestplate designed to keep his heart beating. Thus was Iron Man born of Stan Lee. Let's examine Iron Man's comic origin, which was presented in Tales of Suspense #39.

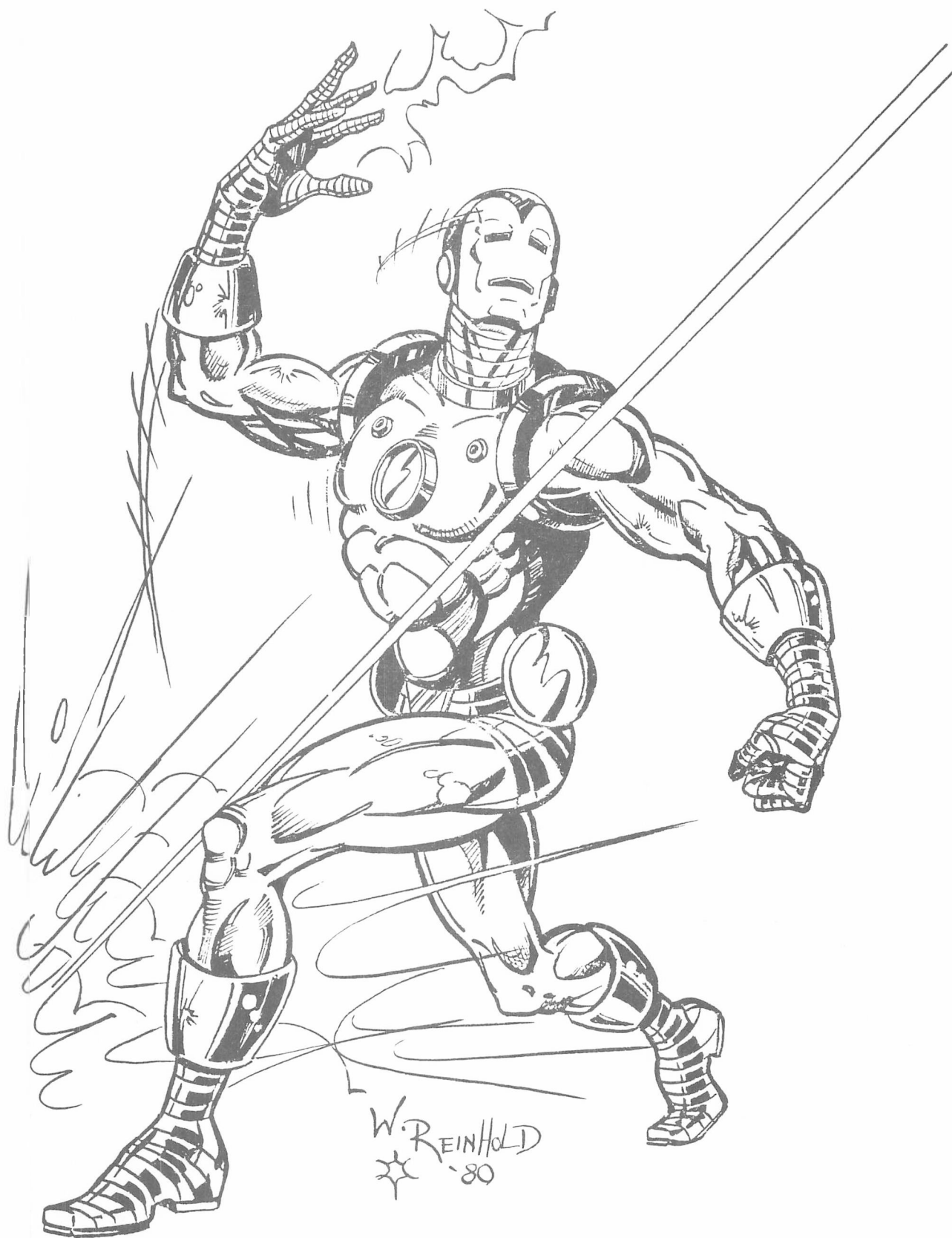
Tony Stark was an electronics genius, and his new weapons were being used by the military in Viet Nam. While on a tour of some military installations in that country and on a reconnaissance of his weapons in operation in the field, Tony Stark accidentally tripped a booby-trap. The resulting explosion killed his companions; Tony was spared immediate death. He had caught shell fragments in his chest, and they were beginning to disrupt his heart functions. Knocked unconscious by the blast, Tony awoke as a captive of the Viet Cong. Wong-Chu, the leader of the enemy,

recognized Stark as a weapons designer and manufacturer, and demanded that he use his last week of life, before the shrapnel pierced his heart and killed him, to design and make weapons for the Viet Cong. Stark agreed, but only to design his pacemaker, a transistorized chestplate to keep his heart beating. With the help of a Dr. Yinsen, an oriental physicist believed to be dead, Tony Stark does become Iron Man. The chest plate kept him alive, and the iron suit which encased his body had built-in weapons which he used to fight his way back to freedom. It was not until Iron Man #144 that we found out how Iron Man/Tony Stark got out of Viet Nam without arousing suspicion; this was when he met Jim Rhodes, who eventually became Tony Stark's private pilot, and Rhodey helped Iron Man get back to a military base where Tony Stark, because of his priority clearance, had no trouble returning to the US, chestplate and all.

The battle between Stark as Iron Man and Wong-Chu can be looked at as symbolic of the forces between good and evil (I think you can conclude which is which). But the similarities of some masked avenger of justice and freedom as applied to Iron Man are steeped in far more literary and social traditions than the idea of good guys versus the bad guys. One can compare Iron Man to the avenging knights of the medieval period, particularly those as expressed in the movie thrillers, foppish men of the court who take on a secret identity to right wrongs, or the Scarlet Pimpernel, or Zorro, or the super-spies of Ian Fleming, U.N.C.L.E., Mission Impossible, and others. Iron Man's every-day identity of Anthony Stark, international playboy and owner of Stark Industries, inventor and designer of weapons and munitions, and expert in transistors and electronic circuitry, is a far cry from Don Diego and other seemingly wimpy characters in novels and films. His deep secret, aside from being Iron Man, was his weak heart.

Stan Lee's policy for marvel characters was that they would grow and develop as "real" people. Iron man was no exception. In fact, there is a lot that Tony Stark and Iron Man have gone through in the 20 years or so that the comic has been out. In reading through all the issues of Tales of Suspense and Iron Man that I own, I have found Tony Stark/ Iron Man to be an extremely fascinating character, one whom a person could almost believe exists in real life. The remainder of this essay on Iron Man will be a summary of the highlights of his life, with some commentary on the character, the enemies he's made, his loves, victories and defeats.

Soon after returning to civilization from his short stay and "rebirth" in Viet Nam, Tony Stark became disenchanted with being Iron Man. He was being hounded by a Congressional Committee led by Senator Byrd to reveal who Stark's personal bodyguard, Iron Man, was, and turn over the sophisticated weaponry that Iron Man had to the military. In Tales of Suspense #84, Stark decides that he would reveal he was Iron Man, not just because he was tired of playing the dual role, but more importantly, some of his



closest friends had suffered because of it. Besides, it would get Senator Byrd off his back. While appearing before the Congressional Committee, Stark's chestplate runs low on power and he has a heart attack. The press have a field day--is Tony Stark really Iron Man? No one could remember ever seeing the two together. As Stark lay recovering in the hospital, Iron Man does appear; Happy Hogan, Tony's chauffeur, who knows that Stark and Iron Man are one and the same, subs for the real Iron Man and squelches the rumors.

The stories hinging on Stark's weak heart got to be a bit overdone, so Stark had a heart transplant (Avengers #59), but that turned out not to be as simple as it might appear. In Iron Man #37, Tony's heart starts giving him trouble again, and he takes Kevin O'Brien into his confidence. He also gives Kevin a suit of armor, and names him "The Guardian." Now stuck with the chestplate again, but not that he has to wear it all the time, the stories tended to have his heart go out frequently. But during this time, something else was happening with his company, Stark Industries.

Seeing that his company was involved in weapons productions, and because he saw what war did to others through his role as Iron Man, Stark decided to put Stark Industries on a different path, and began to reorder priorities. The ramifications were enormous. Simon Gilbert, one of the members of the Board of Stark Industries, called for a re-election and the deposing of Stark as chairman of the Board. At the same time there were protests against SI from students against the Viet Nam war, and soon trouble from his own employees over the "reordering of priorities." In Iron Man #48, Stark regains control of Stark Industries, and demands his "trusted" Board members to resign. Gilbert is extremely upset by this and contacts his son, who is Firebrand. Firebrand tries to destroy SI but is stopped by Iron Man; in the end Simon Gilbert is killed, and Firebrand blames Iron Man.

Meanwhile, as the troubles continue for Stark Industries, Tony begins to drink a little more heavily than he used to, but he does find out that his heart is healing--his body is accepting the transplanted organ (Iron Man #58). Eventually, Tony gets to the bottom of the industrial sabotage that has been going on, and defeats the brains behind it, the Mandarin. Finally, in Iron Man #73, Tony changes the name of Stark Industries to Stark International, to reflect the new direction that his company is taking--working more for the people, the space program, against pollution, and for the protection of the environment.

During this time, Tony Stark made many changes in Iron Man's armor. The bulky, lumbering, grey suit was first painted a golden yellow, but was soon replaced with a lighter-weight model which was just as strong. Advancements in electronics from transistors to printed circuits to microcircuits and micro-chips enabled Stark to pack more potent weaponry into a smaller space in

the armor. In Iron Man #95 he developed a suit of polarized armor that could be worn as part of his three-piece suit, since it was flexible in its de-polarized form. He eventually gave this up since too much protection and strength had to be sacrificed to allow the depolarized steel mesh to be stored in the cuffs, belt, collar and sleeves. Besides, he missed carrying his briefcase with the armor inside.

As Tony Stark, international playboy, he certainly found some lovely ladies with whom to spend his time. Pepper Potts was his secretary, back at the beginning of the series; she was very much in love with Tony, but eventually married Happy Hogan, and left the company. Madame Masque entered his life, but also left to take care of her father, Count Nefaria, whom Stark fought as Iron Man. Janis Cord, of the Cord Conglomerate, and Stark went together for several issues until she was killed in Iron Man #22 by the Crimson Dynamo. Marianne Rodgers became Stark's new love, but she hated Iron Man. Kevin O'Brien was in love with her, and with Stark/Iron Man as his best friend, it slowly drove him insane. In a battle with Iron Man, Kevin, as the Guardsman, is killed. Marianne, a woman with esper powers and precognition, goes insane herself, and winds up in a mental hospital (with the bill paid by Tony Stark). Tony soon takes up with Roxie Gilbert (yes, daughter of Simon Gilbert and sister to Gary, aka Firebrand), and Krissy Longfellow becomes his secretary.

Conspiracies abound for the next several issues, so much so that one is not really sure which people are working for whom. Detective Sargent Michael O'Brien, brother of Kevin, is convinced that Iron Man murdered his brother, and uses illegal means to get evidence to that effect. Harry Key, one of Stark's trusted employees keeps trying to get the information Michael requests. Meanwhile, someone is leaking patent information to other companies, and Stark is losing out on this. Senator Hawks and his aide Jon Rich are bringing security-risk charges against Stark. Jon, we find out, is in the pay of The Mandarin (once more trying to discredit Tony Stark and Iron Man). Michael O'Brien finally dons his brother's armor, goes after Iron Man as the Guardsman, and goes nearly insane. Stark/Iron Man tries to cure him. It is about this time that Stark discovers that Mandarin is behind some of this troubles and dons the Guardsman armor to fight him. Michael realizes his mistake, manages to break free of his restraints (you don't leave someone who is insane free to run around all the sophisticated and delicate machinery that Stark has on his premises), dons Iron Man's armor and tries to save Stark. Things wind up fairly well, with Michael recovering his sanity, and Stark almost in control of things again. Then Midas International takes over Stark International (Iron Man #103). Abe Klein, an old teacher and friend of Tony Stark, is the spy employed by Midas to effect his takeover of the company. With the help of Jasper Sitwell (of SHIELD), Michael O'Brien, Krissy Longfellow (who has been revealed to be Whitney Nefaria, also known as Madame Masque), Iron Man retakes control of SI for Tony Stark. This series of issues (Iron Man #103-107) shows Tony once

again contemplating giving up Iron Man, settling down with Madame Masque, and retiring from the rushed world of international business. A minor complication is that Jasper, who is helping Stark regain control of SI for security reasons, is also in love with Madame Masque. Eventually, the troubles are resolved. Then, Whitney betrays Tony Stark (she knows he is Iron Man), only to help her father (since he promised that no harm would come to Stark). Count Nefaria reneges, and tries to kill Stark. Tony survives by changing to Iron Man, and asking Whitney to stay with him anyway.. She chooses to remain with her father and see what she can do for him. (Iron Man #115-116).

Starting in Iron Man #117, a new chapter dawns in the life of Tony Stark and Iron Man. Actually, it started in Iron Man #112, with his armor beginning to act up. This happened twice more, in issues #113 and #124, the last with disastrous results. Justin Hammer, a rival of Tony Stark, had his scientists penetrate some of the control mechanisms of Iron Man's armor and in issue #124 caused Iron Man to kill the Carnelian Ambassador on the steps of the United Nations in front of news media and thousands of witnesses. The bodyguard of the ambassador was Bethany Cabe, a lovely redhead whom Tony Stark met in #117. At the same time, SHIELD, headed by Nick Fury, employs the Spymaster to get information about Stark International so that SHIELD can begin a legal takeover of SI in the name of national security. It is at this time that Tony Stark begins drinking--heavily.

Iron Man #120 introduces us to Jim Rhodes and Mrs. Arbogast. Rhodey becomes Stark's private pilot, and Mrs. Arbogast is Stark's secretary. She is an interesting person, a loyal worker who mothers Stark more than he really needs. Her comments on his taste in women were moments of humorous relief.

in the midst of some difficult problems for Tony Stark and Iron Man. Although concerned about the possible takeover of Stark International by SHIELD, Tony checks to see that he holds the majority of the stock, so long as one person does not



sell his two shares. In the midst of the killing of the Carnelian ambassador, his drinking problem, and taking care of Justin Hammer, Jarvis, Tony's butler and the butler to the Avengers, sells his two shares so that he can fund a trip home to visit his sick mother. SHIELD immediately buys up the two shares of stock, and await the next stock meeting to take control of SI. Tony Stark turns to the bottle in a big way, but with the help of Bethany Cabe, manages to kick the habit. In a landmark meeting of the stockholders of Stark International (Iron Man #129), Nick Fury representing SHIELD talks with Tony Stark, the other stockholder, about producing weapons for the government. Stark asks who will do the work, since the patents are his, not SI's, and the workers, refused to be controlled by the government, have tendered provisional resignations depending on the outcome of the meeting. Fury knows when he's been outmaneuvered and settles down to talk business, not make demands.

In the next 12 issues, Bethany is kidnapped and rescued twice. Though she really can take care of herself, Madame Masque and Justin Hammer (again) feel the wrath of Iron Man as he rescues Beth. Although Tony doesn't realize it, Beth had deduced he was Iron Man, a secret she would keep quiet until Tony himself tells her. Meanwhile, Roxxon, a rival of SI in the alternate energy field, manages to kill several hundred people in Allentown, Iowa, through a misplaced microwave beam projected from a secret satellite in space. As Iron Man takes care of this particular problem, Beth receives a letter from Ambassador Schmidt in E. Germany, informing her that her husband was still alive. She fakes her capture by the Soviet controlled Germans in order to rescue her husband, Alexander Van Tilberg, and Iron Man charges to her rescue, almost disrupting the carefully-laid plans of Bethany and SHIELD. Once again, the central woman in Tony Stark /Iron Man's life decides to stay with someone else (Iron Man #152). Beth, since she is still married, stays with her husband and tries to help him put his life back together.

The next several issues of Iron Man weren't exactly space fillers, but not all that exciting either. Some background on other regular characters is given, some human interest stories, but it is not until #162, the issue which starts the epic "The Destruction of Tony Stark," that Stark/Iron Man's life becomes extremely interesting once again. Once again someone is sabotaging the facilities of Stark International. In one raid a foreign visitor is nearly killed, rescued in the proverbial "nick of time" by Iron Man. Stark makes sure that Indries Moomji gets the best of care, as well as several dozen roses every day, and thus begins another romantic interest for him. Whoever is out to destroy Stark begins a masterful plan as if a chess match. Obadiah Stane actually uses assassins disguised as chess pieces to wreak havoc on Stark International and Iron Man. In turn, Iron Man battles the Knight, Bishop, and Rook, defeating each of them. However, there are some consequences that Stark/Iron Man has little control over. Rhodey is injured; Stark is kept so busy as Iron Man that he lets things at Stark International get almost too bad to salvage; pushing himself too hard to get to the bottom of the sabotage causes him to get little sleep, and thus his reactions slow nearly to the point of getting himself killed. In Iron Man #166, Stane admits to being behind the trouble at SI, but he knows that nothing can be proved. His reasons are purely business, but he is unscrupulous in attaining those ends. Stane's desire is to form an international business cartel which would control all international business to the point of bringing governments to their knees. His feeling is that there are too many governments and they are all run too poorly to be effective. Run as a business would mean prosperity for all, especially those at the head of the cartel. Stark refused to join, and thwarts Stane's plans (Iron Man #167). Stymied, but not defeated, Stane has one more piece to play. Returning to his office, Stark finds his True Love, Indries, to be the Queen of Stane's chess game. Checkmated, Stark falls apart, and once again finds solace in the bottle.

After this, Stark is not the same. He drinks heavily, and eventually has to discontinue his identity as Iron Man. Instead, he takes Rhodey into his confidence, hands over the suit of armor to him, and trusts that Rhodey can do at least as well as Stark did. As Stane takes over Stark International, he gets notices from almost all of Stark's former employees. Stane may have won a victory over Tony Stark, but it is a hollow victory. Stane was never one to inspire loyalty, only fear. He is left with empty research labs, and little else. SHIELD takes notice immediately, but there is no legal way for Fury and company to thwart Stane. Meanwhile, Rhodey and former employee of Stark's, Morley Erwin, join together to fathom the intricacies of Iron Man's armor, and help Rhodey learn its secrets. Eventually, Rhodey, Morley, and Morley's sister, Clytemnestra, decide to move to California to start their own business.

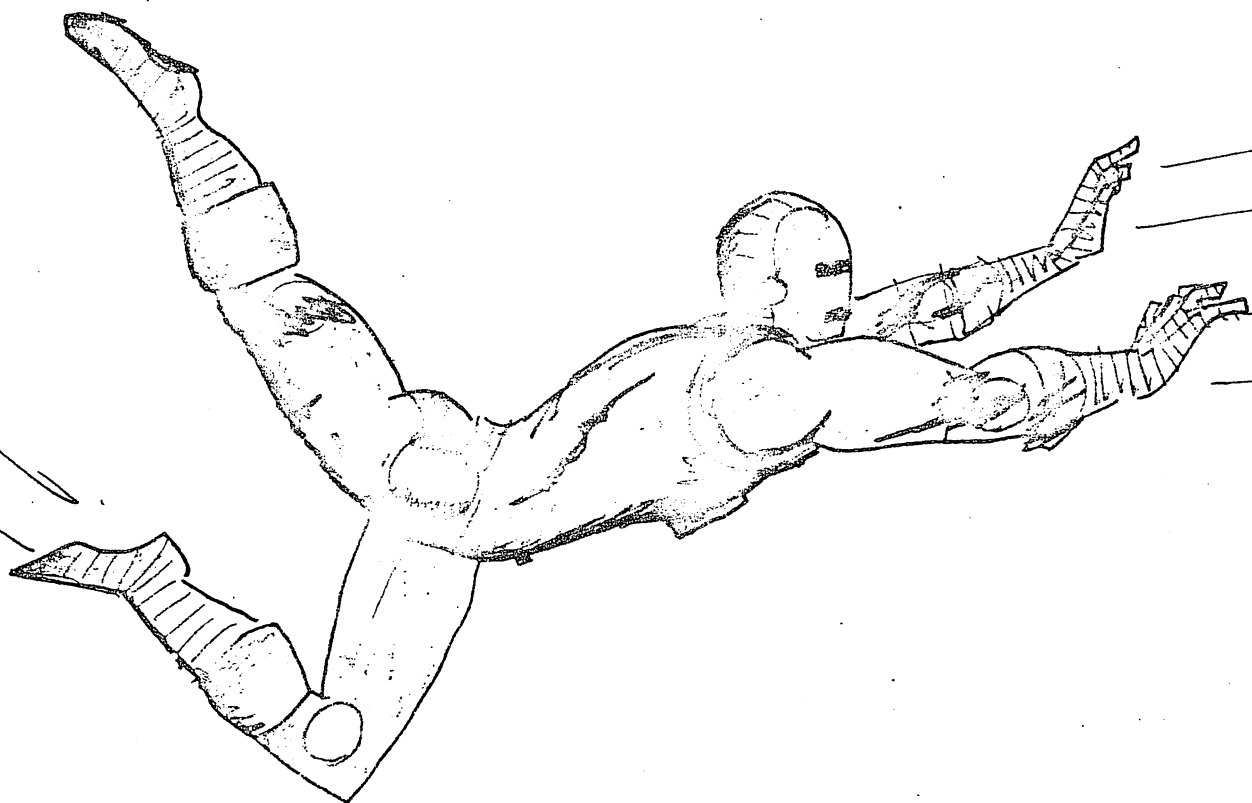
It seems strange that this one man was able to take over Stark International, whereas the resources of Midas and SHIELD were unable to do so. There were some differences, however, in the approaches of the attempted takeovers. Midas was unscrupulous, but slightly insane. His own ego was his downfall (although there was some help from the misguided esper powers of Marianne Rodgers--Iron Man #107). Fury and SHIELD tried legal means, but they were really "good guys" and Stark worked something legal out between his company and SHIELD. On the other hand, Stane was an expert businessman, unscrupulous in his means, but not at all mad. His moves were all calculated to effectively destroy Stark's confidence in himself, and leave his company open to Stane's takeover.

But what happened to Tony Stark? Several issues had scenes of him getting drunk, staying drunk, trying to take care of fellow-drunks, and so on. He finally does kick the habit--and this time on his own. And this time with more of a reason than he had before. One of his fellow-drinkers was Gretl, a pregnant woman, who gives birth during a snowstorm. Tony is there to save the child and himself, but not Gretl. They are all found the morning following the storm by police, and hospitalized. Rhodey goes to see Stark, and they patch up their friendship. Together they head out to California with Morley and Clytemnestra.

This is where the series has come to at this point. Rhodey and company are being pursued by the members of a crime fellowship called Zodiac. (In fact, Rhodey has been having some interesting adventures as old enemies of Iron Man attack him, villains he knows nothing about!) At the close of Iron Man #185, a conflict is set up between Stark and Rhodey--Stark momentarily dons the Iron Man helmet to call Fury at SHIELD (to inform him about Zodiac), and Rhodey feels a wave of jealousy roll over him. What comes next? I personally am waiting to see, although I do have some thoughts about what could lie ahead. I think that the conflict begun in Iron Man #185 will probably be resolved fairly painlessly, but not without some hard feelings and soul-searching

on the parts of both Rhodey and Tony Stark. Rhodey stays as Iron Man, joining the West Coast branch of the Avengers (Rhodey, knowing that he could not pull off a charade as the real Iron Man, quit the Avengers (Iron Man #160)). Stark designs a new set of armor and becomes another, different superhero, maybe eventually returning to the East Coast Avengers.

Whatever happens, I will continue to read Iron Man. Believe me, it's much better than the soap operas I've seen on TV!



Creature Comforts: The Fun

*A slender housewife calls on a neighbor and asks to borrow a cup of cyanide.

*A little boy, playing at archery, pauses in the bathroom to dip his arrows into an ominously labeled bottle of poison.

*A father lovingly helps his children build something in the workshop. It's a medieval torture rack.

Fun People?

Yes...that is, if you're the kind of person who prefers vintage wine, fresh baked bread, good cheese and an occasional chill running down your back and across your funny-bone.

Charles Addams is not for everyone. He is an acquired taste and must be savored to be appreciated.

What's this doing in a Science Fiction Fanzine? Why not? Addams peoples his cartoons with creatures both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial...and the distinctions are often blurred.

*Alien hordes landing at Halloween...and being told that the household is out of treats.

*UFOs stopping pedestrians and requesting directions..and matter-of-factly getting them.

*Small UFOs landing and disembarking their contents...two by two by two....

*An octopus pulls a man into the New York sewers and elicits very little crowd response.

*A fat woman skid downhill...leaving her tracks *around* a tree (incidentally, Addams originated this gag!).

*A baby in a foundling basket floats out of the exit of the "Tunnel of Love."

Most of these situations are taken from my collection of earlier Addams' work, but the latest volume maintains the flavor and humor. I own five volumes of his work, including Addams' latest collection, *Creature Comforts*, and enjoy looking at them again and again. (It's difficult to *read*...he rarely employs captions.)

My suggestion? Haunt (yes, that was intended) your local new and used book stores. Check the library old-book sales. Go to yard sales. Build up your own collection. Rediscover the man whose grasp of the macabre and weird totally overshadows the relative newcomers.

And while you're at it, stop and smell the carnivorous roses in the greenhouse...but don't get too close (heh, heh, heh!).

BY JEFFREY TOLLIVER

People of Charles Addams

Creature Comforts by Charles Addams is Published by Simon & Schuster, and is available in both the hardbound and softbound editions. (I'm sorry--I've lost my price listing, but the hardcover should be about \$25, and the softcover around \$10. Check at a bookstore.)

Incidentally, it has been stated that Addams' work has been used as a test for incipient insanity. Essentially, if you can understand and explain the cartoons, there is no doubt.

Me? I understand a lot of the cartoons, but I'll be damned if I'll try to explain them!

Now, if you'll excuse me, it's time to feed the pirahna.



Superman III =

Super-Bad

A Film Review by MARK R LEEPER

This is the season for third helpings. Three major film series -- *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, and *Superman* -- each have their third chapter coming out. *Superman III* is the third film in the *Superman* series, appropriately enough. The first film was an episodic rendering of the origins of the Man of Steel. Overall it was a reasonably enjoyable, if not very cohesive, film. Each of the segments had a different feel, as if it were a multi-director film. The second film was more cohesive, but the script was a miasma of logic flaws, absurd coincidences, and contradictions. It was strong on action but it insulted the audience's intelligence by assuming that it didn't have to play fair. For example, Superman gives up his superpowers in spite of being told that he can never regain them. When he wants them back, suddenly and without explanation they return. Well, now the third film is out. And is it another step down? In a word: Yes. Yes, in spades!

Superman III is not only the worst of the series, it probably will be the worst major film of the summer. The producers have tried to make a film that was as much a Richard Pryor comedy as it was a Superman adventure. They failed on both counts. Royally. The film lacks the social comment of a Pryor comedy, and as a fantasy adventure it is little better than a Godzilla film. The story deals with an out-of-work Pryor who answers a matchbook ad for a computer school. With a month or so of hard work he makes himself one of the world's greatest computer experts. He is good enough that he can break into and reprogram the city's traffic computers to foul up traffic so much that the images of the stranding man and the walking man on a "walk/don't walk" sign get up and start fighting each other. After he defrauds Robert Vaughn, his new-found employer, of \$85,000, Vaughn decides that Pryor is just the computer expert he needs. He convinces Pryor to use his genius for evil purposes. Pryor is to reprogram a weather monitoring satellite to cause a flood in Columbia. After that the plot gets a little silly. The real problem is apparently that there was nobody to tell the script-writers what was a stupid idea and what wasn't.

The special effects quality fell surprisingly far below that of the previous films. The film stock is particularly bad and the color of Superman's costume changes from scene to scene. For one sequence in the film, the change of color of the costume was intentional to underscore the changes in Superman under the influence of Kryptonite, but in a number of other flying scenes Superman seems to be wearing green rather than blue. Sloppy matte lines are particularly evident.

The producers are clearly mortgaging the future of the *Superman* series for a fast high-profit payoff. I am told that both Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder would like to leave the series. Now they have been given real incentive. Kidder, in fact, has little more than a cameo appearance in *Superman III*. The producers may well have decided to make this one more *Superman* film as quickly and cheaply as possible, then call it quits. Right now calling it quits sounds like a really fine idea.

It's Hard to be

GALACTUS

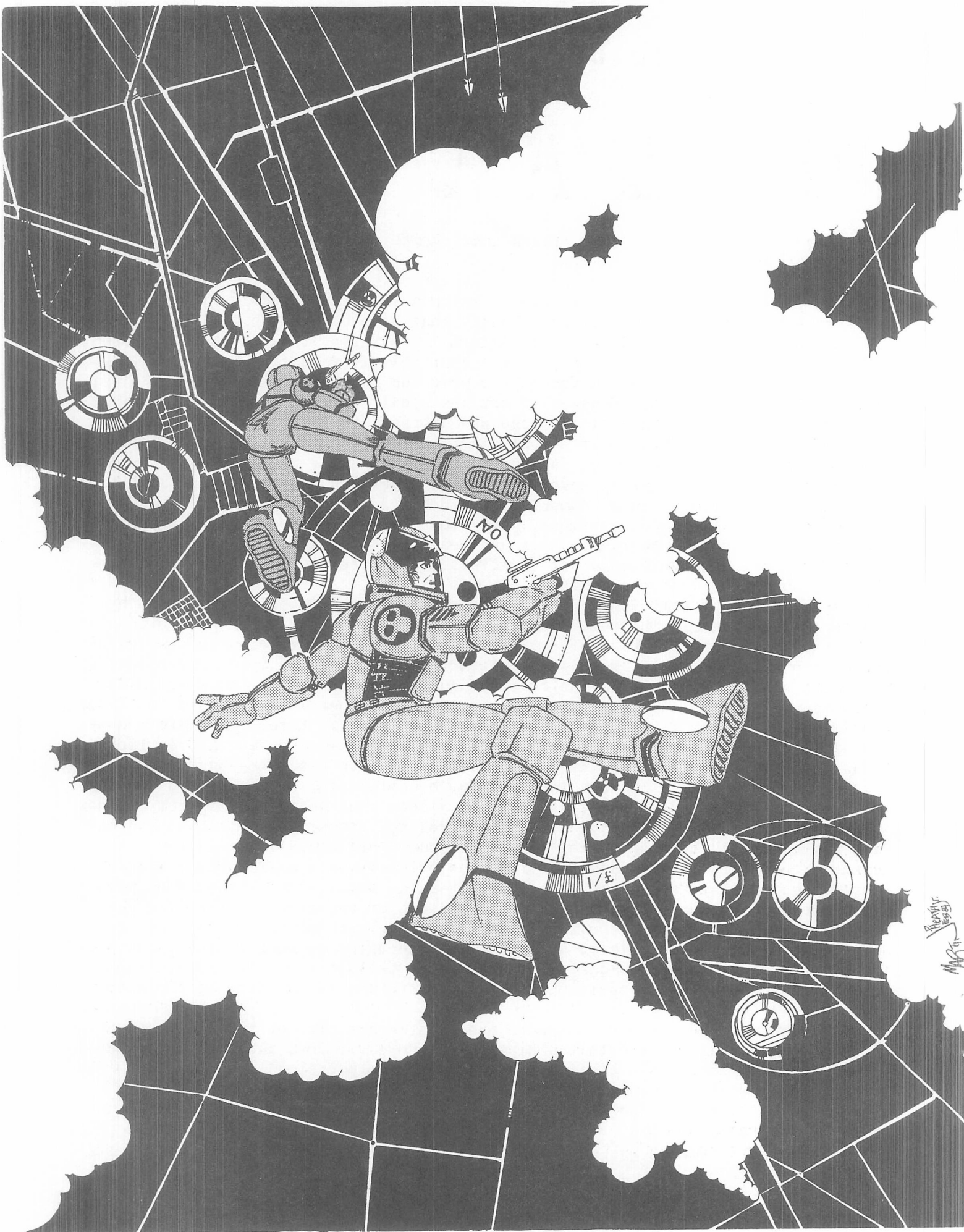
Brian Earl Brown

I've been reading comics for more years than I'd care to admit. So kill me. It's strange to reflect on all the changes that have occurred in comics publishing since I bought my first *Tales to Astonish* (featuring the Incredible Hulk) back in October 1966. Back then a comic cost only 12¢ and featured 20 pages of art. Soon, though, inflation forced the price up to 15¢, and ever upwards. At the same time the number of pages of art was slowly drifting downwards....19 pages, 18, 17.... And every time a page was dropped, or the price was up another nickel, I thought, "This is it -- only an idiot would pay that much for a comic. The industry will go under for lack of sales....!"

Well, the comics industry never quite went under, though there were some tight times--like the time Warner Communications decided to close down DC Comics because it wasn't making enough money, only to be talked instead into letting DC slash its publishing program in half and deal only with its most profitable titles. There must have been a lot of idiots (like myself) who kept buying the comics, no matter what the price.

As the price of comics went up I, like a lot of other people, responded by buying fewer titles. The total number of comics sold has dropped precipitously over the past decade. This, of course, has results in further price increases to keep profits up, which results in another drop in readership, a never-ending downward spiral. What saved the comics industry was the rather unexpected development of comics specialty shops. When I bought that long-ago issue of *Tales to Astonish*, it was from a local bus station/newsstand. Later I transferred my loyalties to a drugstore that received the comics weeks, even months, earlier than the bus station did. There was no other place to get them--back then. During the seventies as comics fandom grew, becoming big, vigorous, and wealthy, fans found that it was possible to open up a shop that dealt only in comics, new and especially used (and maybe a few other related items like SF books) and eke out a living. These shops, ever seeking an edge, began dealing with the publishers to get their comics direct from the printer, on a no-returns basis. At first the industry "tolerated" these direct-sales shops, but as the shops grew in number and volume of sales, people in and out of the industry realized that these shops, which bought their magazines outright without the costly and corruption-filled returns policy, were becoming the major support of the industry. Both Marvel and DC began planning special projects just for sale through the specialty shops. And competition entered the picture in the form of the alternative publishers.

The "undergrounds" of the 60s were the first generation of the alternative comics. They faded away with the hippies in the early 70s, although a few publishers, like Kitchen Sink, still remain, doing the occasional underground. The dream of self-publication, though, didn't die with them. Throughout the 70s there were a number of fans, like Mike Friedrich, who tried to publish alternative comics, usually black and white zines with no ads and relatively steep prices (say \$1.50, when Marvel was selling for 35¢). Most of these efforts ultimately



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failed because they came too soon. There weren't enough of the specialty shops. But by the late seventies the time was right, as evidenced by the commercial success of independents like *Elfquest* and *Cerebus*. It was only a matter of time before someone would take the plunge and do a color comic.

The first to take that plunge was Pacific Comics -- Bill and Steve Schanes. They had been publishing a series of *Prince Valiant* reprint volumes. In 1980 they announced plans to publish two 6-issue color comic titles. They were, I suspect, partially inspired by the "work for hire" contract flap at Marvel. When the copyright laws were revised a few years ago, Marvel brought out a new contract for its free-lance writers and artists (most comics professionals then worked on a free-lance basis) that, like the infamous Pocket Books contract of the same time, simply claimed all the rights to everything. No matter that you have come up with the hottest idea since Spiderman, if you did it for Marvel magazine and signed their contract, Marvel was the sole owner of that idea. This, as you can imagine, didn't sit too well with many people. What Pacific Comics did was to offer two established writer-artists contracts that gave them all rights to their characters and complete creative control. The idea, presumably, was to prove that a comics company could make money while still giving the creative people on the book their full share of fruit of their creativity. The two professionals they approached were Jack Kirby, who created *Captain Victory*, and Mike Grell, who created *Starslayer*.

I didn't follow the Grell title as I've never much liked his work. Kirby, who arguably created Marvel Comics single-handedly, gave us a space-opera thriller in which humanoid insects attempt to invade Earth only to be fought off by the military might of Captain Victory. By the fourth or fifth issue it dawned on me why Kirby was doing this for Pacific, and not Marvel or DC -- it was awful. Kirby has been drawing for almost as long as Robert Heinlein has been writing SF; he's begun to suffer from Heinlein's Disease: becoming a bad parody of his worst faults.

Despite that, the book must have sold because Pacific extended his contract for another 6 issues and contracted for a second title, *Silver Star*, a Kirbyesque treatment of Van Vogt's *Slan*. Grell, when his contract was up, sold his space-buccaneer strip *Starslayer* to another of the alternative publishers, First Comics, where it continues to be published.

Pacific had its problems, not surprising for a new venture. Regular publication was not achieved, or maybe its distribution was simply erratic in those early days. In either case, that doesn't look good for a company that's going one-on-one with established professional firms like Marvel or DC. And the dollar price-tag, while perhaps justified by the limited sales to the specialty shops, was stiff. Still it has prospered despite those handicaps, and has added an enormous range of titles. I stopped following them for about a year and when recently I again picked up a Pacific Comics issue, I was surprised to see a half-dozen titles offered for subscription. These included *Silver Star* and *Captain Victory*, plus newer titles like *Groo the Wanderer*, a humorous barbarian strip, a 6-year, 36-issue adaptation of Michael Moorcock's *Elric of Melniboné* saga, two anthologies *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds*, and a reprint collection titled *Berni Wrightson, Master of the Macabre*. Most of these titles switched from the mildly extravagant Mando paper to the very extravagant "Baxter" paper, laser-scan color separation, and retail prices of \$1.50. The result is a high-quality art book, which, with the exception of the Wrightson reprint series, unfortunately has never merited this fine treatment. Pacific started out as a publisher of limited edition art books (the *Prince Valiant* reprints) and currently seems to have reverted to that orientation as their current publishing plans include numerous irregular and short-run titles (*A Tim Conrad Trilogy*, etc) with, at times, an almost indiscriminate choice of writers and artists.

WY-PAR

THE FIRST MUTANT



Around a year and a half after Pacific got its feet wet in the comics publishing business the second of the alternative publishers brought out their first comic. They were First Comics, an unusually well-organized company based in Evanston, Illinois. First must have had a lot of money behind it as from the start they had an ambitious publishing program and carried it off on schedule. They are, in fact, about the only alternative publisher that has maintained any sort of regularity with their schedule. First started out with just two titles, both very calculatedly commercial properties. The first title was *Warp*, a comics adaptation of the legendary science-fictional play (co-written by Bury St. Edmund, part of the money behind First Comics) that brought a comics sensibility to the stage. Frank Brunner, a highly-respected, fan-favorite artist was picked to adapt the play, assuring strong interest in this book from both the fans of Frank Brunner art, and fans of the play. The second title was *E-Man*, a funny superhero who first appeared in the early 70s from the small comics firm of Charlton. Joe Stanton had received his start as a big-time artist on that book, and was hired away from DC Comics to handle the art chores on *E-Man* as well as art direction for the entire line. In staged intervals thereafter, First released a new book from Mike Grell, *Jon Sable, Freelance*, a continuation of Grell's book from Pacific, *Starslayer* (with a new writer-artist team), a new book from Howard Chaykin, *American Flagg*, and finally *Mars* by Wheatly and Hempel. As these are all monthly titles, First Comics has quickly leaped to the forefront of the alternative publishers. *Sable* is a mercenary sort of character set in the here-and-now. *Starslayer* is, as I've said before, a space-buccaneer strip. *American Flagg* is a complex thriller of a post-collapse America in the year 2033. Reuben Flagg is the closest thing to the law in Chicago Plex, and everybody seems to be out to use him or abuse him. Artistically this is some of Chaykin's finest work, while the writing is head and shoulders above just about the run of not merely other comics, but most science fiction novels dealing with Earth in the near future. There's no question but that *Flagg* is the best comic coming out now, and perhaps that has ever come out. Finally *Mars*. This was promised to be a very different comic, and it is, but it is also the only one of First's titles that simply isn't very good. The plot has the human race wiped out by war part-way through the terraforming of Mars with only a handful of astronauts surviving via suspended animation. 10,000 years later they revive to find a vastly altered Mars. Only the book was never quite that organized and the art, while a very stylish affair, was also very simple and..."childish" as compared to Frank Brunner or Howard Chaykins (or even John Byrne).

Close upon the heels of First Comics came Red Circle, and a greater contrast between publishers is hard to find. Red Circle is really an arm of Archie Comics, a firm that is, I believe, actually larger than Marvel, the publisher of the numerous *Archie* and *Betty & Veronica* titles. Thus they had as much or more money to throw into launching this line as First Comics did, yet Red Circle has been a dismal flop.

Archie, as an old firm, had a large number of old super-heros sitting in mothballs, characters left over from the days when Archie did super hero comics like everyone else. They had made an abortive effort in the 60s to make a "camp" revival, and were once again going to give it a try. The biggest mistake was in hiring Rich Buckler to ramrod the operation, though at the time I'm sure it seemed like a good idea. Buckler was an established professional artist, having worked for both DC and Marvel (although significantly he hadn't worked for either company in a while). He was also a fan with a love for the old Archie heroes. His plan was to have one flagship title, *The Mighty Crusaders* which would feature every single hero Archie ever had (including the two different characters called The Shield), and then a run of solo adventure titles for the more popular characters. Adding to this confusion was the decision to pub-



MAU



lish as a bimonthly, and to use a plot so involved and complicated that by the third issue it didn't so much get resolved as collapsed in on itself.

Legitimacy came to the Red Circle line from *The Fly* #1. This was a beautiful book illustrated in loving detail by Jim Sherman. It was a stunner to look at and the story was pretty good too, reviving an old villain and leading up to the ultimate cliffhanger--the Fly gets shot, seemingly dead, on the last panel! The only criticism of that issue would be in its handling of Fly Girl, the Fly's like-powered girlfriend. Suddenly she doesn't like being a super-hero. Besides the inconsistency of Fly Girl's new attitude, First Comics had just done the same plot line in *E-Man*. The second issue of *The Fly* was typical of a problem that quickly began to haunt Red Circle. Sherman dropped off the book and the carefully developed situations of the first book were written off in a quick five pages, and the rest of the book was made up of obvious filler and back-up features. Planning and organization were just shot to hell. The book continued to limp along, approaching a return to regular frequency with the placement of Steve Ditko, an old pro, as permanent artist. Other Red Circle titles include *The Black Hood*, a motorcycle riding vigilante made interesting by Gray Morrow artwork, and *The Shield*, which took an unusual turn with the fourth issue when the title hero disappeared down a hole to the center of the earth. The fifth issue appeared retitled *Steel Sterling*, the previous back-up feature. *Blue Ribbon* appears on an erratic basis, with occasionally two issues appearing in one month. This was at first a Baxter book for \$1.50, reprinting old Simon & Kirby Shield stories. Subsequent issues have featured various different characters, some already with their own regular feature, such as the Fly story in *Blue Ribbon* #5. Rich Buckler was demoted about six months into the operation when his inability to get these comics out on time became clearly evident. Bill DuBay was named editor, and promised to do well for Archie. He launched a six-book limited series, *The Comet*, exploring the mentality of some of Archie's oldest and bloodiest super-heroes, and in passing speculating on superheroics in general. Two issues came out before DuBay took a walk when told he had to cut the page-rates for the writers and artists in half. In the latest reorganization, Red Circle has been brought into the Archie operation as "Archie Red Circle" with newsstand distribution. Titles have been appearing irregularly and infrequently. It's probably only time before Archie just throws in the towel on this operation. Yet it would be sad if they did, as they do have a number of interesting characters and could do well with them.

Beyond these three firms are a number of much smaller companies, most of whom have only one or two titles appearing bimonthly or less often. Eclipse Comics is run by the brothers Jan and Dean Mullany, old comics fans. Eclipse publishes four titles: *Sabre*, a post-holocaust series by Don McGregor and Billy Graham; *Ms Tree*, a detective series by Max Collins; *Eclipse Monthly*, an anthology series; and *DNAgents*, by Mark Evanier and Will Meugnoit. The *DNAgents* concerns a number of artificial people created with super powers and used like tools by their corporate sponsors. Jack Kirby tossed off this idea some years before with creatures called "DNAliens." The intent of the series is to explore the feeling of being both very real people and "property" but the storyline has tended to flounder and the art, particularly the color, has been substandard. All of which is a shame. Eclipse's books are all printed on Baxter paper, and priced a very pricy \$1.75.*

*Baxter Paper refers to a variety of slick paper. These are used because they're more opaque than newsprint, whiter in color and better able to absorb printer's ink. "Mando" paper is a 37# newsprint formerly used by all comics until some time in the 60s when they switched to a lighter, cheaper 30# newsprint. The thicker, more opaque paper reprints the art better than the 30# paper.

JC Comics does just one title, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, a 60s series that JC bought from Tower Comics. It was a very fine series featuring lots of Wally Wood art and a number of original superheros who were portrayed as very, very human. It was a very good series. JC divides its time between reprints of the original series and new episodes. So far, only two new issues have come out at too great an interval, but they have been very good, accurately catching the feel of the original series. Most revivals have had little luck with capturing the feel of the original comic. JC's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* has been a rare exception.

Kitchen Sink has begun a color reprint series of the old *Spirit* series under Will Eisner's control. Two issues have come out; again subsequent issues seem to be much delayed.

Eagle Comics is a British firm reprinting features from their successful weekly British comic book *2000 AD* in 32-page American-style color comics. Their first title was *Judge Dredd*, a bizarre series about a tough cop in a tough future. Judge Dredd (cops are called Judges in this future world) could give Dirty Harry lessons in being tough. The art varies from the fine clean lines of Brian Bollard, and the shaky lines of Mike McMahon. The stories are clever, witty, and violent. *Judge Dredd* proves that fascism can be fun. Eagle's second title, another reprint from *2000 AD*, is *Robo-Hunter*, another wacko series about a Mike Hammer-ish robot "Blade-Runner" stuck at the end of the first episode on a planet run by robots. Humor, again, lifts this series above the banal.

It's hard to summarize the impact of these new comic book publishers. The product is uneven, with some gems like *E-Man*, and some dogs like *Captain Victory*. The \$1 to \$1.75 price tag is rough for people on a limited budget, and most comics *still* are bought by kids, who are on limited budgets. Too many of the comics have switched to Baxter paper, and higher price tags, which are going to really hurt sales. Still, having so many new publishers has opened up the field tremendously to original ideas and concepts. The old mainliners can no longer be confident that they have the pick of the writers and artists like they were used to when they were the only game in town. First Comics has attracted a particularly talented line of freelancers to do their comics by offering greater control and, in Howard Chaykin's case, a percentage of the book. In many cases these new titles are more interesting than older, more polished titles from the old mainstream companies simply because a 20 year old comic, as many of Marvel and DC's comics are, is pretty well used up in terms of new ideas, and is hamstrung by too much old history. Are the new publishers a threat to the oldtimers? Hardly, since none of them has yet to produce a character with either the market-recognition of a Superman or Spiderman. Marvel and DC are still vastly larger than Eclipse Comics, say. But comics are not going to be the same anymore. Marvel and DC once could be very complacent about what they do. They can be so no longer.

A final word. It should be noted that this is not by any means a complete or thorough discussion of all the alternative publishers currently active. There are more alternative comics than humanly possible to keep up with.

memories of comics

by Carolyn Doyle

I remember back when I was about ten, somehow one of my cousins got a wind-fall in the comics department---a huge box full of them. Most were Superman, with a few others thrown in. Whenever we'd visit them, I'd head down to the basement and read those comic books. It was the ads and the letter columns that interested me more than the stories---or at least I remember more about them than I do about the plots. (There was one story where Superman goes back to the family that raised him. Ma and Pa Kent are getting on in years now. Superman must remove something from earth into outer space quickly while he is visiting, and passes by his parents and some old residents of his home town so fast that they think a comet has passed by. Whatever was in the box Superman was carrying made all the old people young again. A fan wrote in asking why, in a comic he bought after this one, Superman's parents look old again. I forget how the editors explained it away---but I thought it was stupid to paint yourself into a corner like that.)

Some of the stories were pretty stupid---like the one where Jimmy Olsen accidentally eats some fruit from outer space, grows two extra pairs of arms, then finds that life as a biped octopus isn't all it's cracked up to be. And it turns out he's just had a dream! Talk about corn...

But there was something addictive about those comics. Like junk-food for the mind, I couldn't seem to stop with just one; they were meant to be consumed by the handful, like potato chips. Dave Rowe, my spouse, shares my weakness, I think. At least, he recently paid out a fair sum of money to get three hardcover volumes of complete Dan Dare comic book serials. We took turns reading them. I think I devoured all three, which probably kept little English boys on the edges of their seats for two years, in less than a week. Every other panel ends with an impossible cliffhanger---they're great.

Dan Dare is, of course, an English comic character, somewhat like a human, space-age superman. The strips are full of futuristic anachronisms--double-decker buses, with a man with a coinbox to take your fare---this in great 21st century Britain? Instead of buying the comics at the corner drug store, Dave's parents subscribed to Eagle Comic, which came weekly, delivered with the Monday paper. You could buy it at any newsstand if you happened to be on holiday. Dan Dare was only one of the strips in the Eagle Comic. And the book also had, in addition to other strips, articles about the comics, and a cut-away drawing of how the Woolich Ferry, an atomic reactor, or Dan Dare's spaceship worked. Dave liked these.

Again, I've arranged the letter column by topic, and hope to have room at the end for the addresses this time. We'll start with some back issues of LAN'S LANTERN.

LL #11, The Simak Special

Diane Fox: I was very interested in this. *Way Station* is one of the treasured group of first SF novels that made a strong impression on me. Until I was 17 I lived in a small country town with only one stationers' shop. Comics weren't too difficult to obtain, but magazines and paperbacks were. I made up for the lack when I was down in Sydney working.

It was the small-scale approach to something vast that was the most attractive thing about *Way Station*: an apparently ordinary person, or group of people, doing something very important that no one else happens to be in a position to do. *Lord of the Rings* uses the same idea. In Simak's book there is also the appeal of fascinating aliens.

I haven't read all of Simak's novels, and not all I read appealed to me, but some of them are among my favorites, like *City* and *Way Station*. After reading LAN'S LANTERN 11, I will make a special point to read more; it reminded me of how good they were.

Very much liked the two contrasting full-page illustrations (by Laurraine Tutihasi and Colin Cheer) to "All the Traps of Earth."

I'm doing a correspondence short-story writing course. As part of an assignment, I had to choose a short story that I'd read recently and liked, and write a one-paragraph summary of the plot, and a one-paragraph summary of the theme--at least what I supposed the theme to be. I had read "Grotto of the Dancing Deer" by Simak, and this was the story I chose. One of the ideas of the course is that I should read short stories to see how they "work." "Dancing Deer" had one of the traditional SF themes (immortality) and one of the traditional variants on that theme--the lonely immortal or "Wandering Jew" character--but treated this idea in a refreshing and beautiful way.

The interview with Clifford Simak was one of the best things in the zine. His views are so sane and sensible, and it is depressing to think that they might be considered old-fashioned and even out-of-date in this vile and corrupt age.

"*World of the Red Sun*" was a real delight! A typical old-fashioned pulp adventure (much better written than average) with those 1920-ish Frank R. Paul illustrations. I usually dislike "twist" u happy endings, but this one seemed tragically inevitable.

I liked Linda Leach's illustration to *Way Station* very much; also liked Joan Hanke-Woods' illustration for *Ring Around the Sun*, and Jim Gray's artwork for *All Flesh is Grass* on page 87, and the back cover piece for *The Goblin Reservation*.

MARK LONEY: I think LL #11 is a good fanzine and a fine effort--I just found it a bit daunting.

I have this idea that the perfect fanzine (WAR-HOON 28 excepted, of course) is around twenty pages in length, and your Cliff Simak Special went over that by quite a margin.

I have enjoyed the majority of his work that I have read, although I must admit that I have never set about trying to read all his published work the way I have with some other authors. *City*, as with so many other people, is one of my favourite works. It must be frustrating for an author (think of Asimov and "Nightfall") to have an early work that always seems to overshadow later efforts.

I think it was an excellent idea to reprint the original pulp version of "The World of the Red Sun." Apart from the short-lived English *Science Fiction Monthly* I don't recall ever seeing other than digest sized SF magazines. Although I had heard of "The World of the Red Sun" many times previously (it must be referred to hundreds of times in various anthologies, commentaries and histories) I had never seen a copy of it before. It is very obviously an early piece of work, but also very obviously written by a writer of promise.

EDUCATION

Maia Cowan: I was a little confused by Sally Syrjala's comments. At one point she criticizes the schools' overemphasis on students "doing their own thing", at another worries that there isn't enough opportunity for individual expression.

Perhaps the over-concern about passing quizzes and the like, mentioned by David Palter, is a symptom of the educational system's failings. The external indication that one has satisfied the system's expectations becomes more important than individual understanding and achievement. ((Already in college I find myself wanting to ask, "Will we need to know...?" and then being appalled at the presumption that I'll only consider certain information important if someone else expects me to know it. On the other hand this tendency indicates my realization that what I consider relevant and important isn't necessarily what the professor thinks is important. Had one teacher several years ago who tested us on the names of the people who conducted the experiments, but not on what the results of the experiments were!))

Incidentally, an article in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* reports that students who have 'pop quizzes' on material remember it better than students who have the opportunity to review it in the same time period, but aren't tested. So keep popping those quizzes!

Sally Syrjala: Your education editorial leads to thoughts of who education is meant to include, as well as to what it is meant to produce. Indeed the initial lunch program cutbacks hit hardest at those who have to struggle the hardest to remain in school. Its indirect message was that education was a restricted realm which was intended for those who fit into the "system."

This leads to further thoughts: is the system meant to keep things as they are, and not to encourage change and questioning, or the opposite, which real education would promote?



Too, it seems the curriculum has to meet the demands of all sorts of groups which reduces its content to banal pabulum. To please all, the substance is drained.

Texts must be perused to be sure the correct point of view is presented. But the "correct" point of view, it seems to me, depends on *your* point of view. Further, it would seem as if a more informed perspective could be gained if all points of view were taken into consideration. This might also give people more of an understanding of those with conflicting views, and more of an understanding could lead to more sympathy with those views and more unity between peoples. It would be nice if the "goal" of education could be a better understanding of various peoples rather than an aim at the highest tax bracket that can be attained.

Also, the way we look to education as being a "product" might need some change as well. Often its most rewarding aspects are those which can never be measured. How do you measure a mind which refuses to accept that which is forced-fed it? How do you measure the value of a conscience developed or the pure joy which can result from the solving of mind puzzles?

And is not education an on-going thing? School is something which starts the process, starts the thinking, the questioning, the quest. The knowledge you fill into the blank spaces after you leave the hallowed institutions is just as valid as that which is learned within an organization. A string of degrees does not necessarily make a person wise of knowledgeable. As you said, it could merely mean an ability to spit it back out again. Someone without the degrees may take the raw material and interpret it into a different format and be looked upon as lacking understanding merely because the information is processed differently. Yet which is the more knowledgeable in the truesense of the word? One is a good memorizer, but does he know that of which he speaks? The other takes the information and uses it as he needs it.

Neil Rest: If all you know about the Chicago Public Schools is what you read in the papers, you don't know the worst of it. My own personal favorite (I have a twisted sense of humor) is that the Chicago Public

Schools no longer teach reading. No, that's not a typo, and you really don't want to hear the double-talk, but Ruth Love is even a bigger fraud than you know. The last set of Iowa Standardized Scores cooked for something like six weeks before being released.

Less than half of the employees of the Chicago Board of Education are teachers, and their pay has gone down, against inflation, for something like three years now.

I don't know if you've gone into the analyses, but "merit pay" is a scam to lower average salaries. When someone suggests "merit pay" for the bureaucrats and administrators for whom the system is now run, I will stop counter-suggesting bloodbaths.

It might interest you to do a little historical work on the giant Carnegie Foundation study of American Higher Education, I believe from the twenties. The schizophrenic phenomenon of "institutions of higher learning" which are, in fact, vocational academies (a useful, necessary, and honorable establishment, if not deceitfully labeled) is the result of American big business designing American higher education.

You can strike a blow against my reputation for red-eyed hyperbole by doing a little looking into it on your own, if the subject interests you enough. *(I believe you are correct. I recall that a curriculum for High Schools was set up by asking businessmen what helped them most in preparing for life in the real world. This changed radically twice in my lifetime, and hopefully is in the throes of a third change: first Sputnik increased the study of science, math and technology; secondly, the radicals of the 60's & 70's revamped much of education to be more "relevant", which had the results of today--functional illiterates; the present change is the "back to basics" movement, which has its good points, but must be kept in perspective with what is actually happening in the real world. Computers is a fact, and computer literacy is going to be as important as reading is.)*

Barbara Tennison: After reading the comments on education and the horror stories thereof, perhaps I should stand up and be counted as someone whose passive attitude in public schools ("Oh, they want me to learn algebra. Fine. Algebra. Okay. Algebra. Well, it hardly matters, but here's your algebra.") left me with a pretty good education anyway. No doing of mine, honest, but it's more fun than television.

Harry Andruschak: I seem to be reading a lot about schools in fanzines and apazines lately. For certain, our present school system is not the one I went to starting in 1958. I was soon to be 14, and I was sent to a high school in downtown Detroit named Cass Technical. It was for gifted children. Math, chemistry, biology, physics, German---I got quite a lot of learning from it. I wonder what Cass Tech is like nowadays?

(As far as I know, it is still for gifted children who attend school in the Detroit School System. As the name indicates, and as you said it has an emphasis in the sciences and technology. The building is getting a bit run down, but the quality of education there is still high.)

Ben Indick: Reading your fine editorial (and considering LL as a reflection of your philosophy to life) I can believe that you must be a good, caring educator. "Caring" is surely the most urgent missing quality in Mr. Reagan's make-up. He has no sense of the meaning

of the word, and apparently has it confused with "expediency" in his frozen set of priorities.

Fred Jakobsic: Education is the one thing this country cannot afford to be short-changed on. Part of the problem is, of course, money, but another part is putting one's head to the grindstone. How many students are really working at getting an education, looking at their future, and expecting to have to earn a living? Life is either too easy, or too hard for those who do not have it easy. In other words, those who have it comparatively easy are not forced or have motivation to put out. Those who are on the other end, the poor, the disadvantaged, may have already given up the fight to get out of the "gutter."

Students must knuckle-down, and parents must allow teachers to make the students knuckle-down. There are teachers who just go through the motions of teaching, by dishing out pages to read from the text, giving True-and-False tests, and little else beyond that. I am not a teacher, but I did do some student teaching. In one of those classes it amounted to little more than lecturing from the textbook and not much else. There was no incentive, no drive on the part of the teacher, to motivate the students to learn or create thoughts and ideas, to be original, to question....

Ronald Reagan wants the local folks to support more of the educational burden through more local effort, more local participation, which takes away from other areas, and in a State like Michigan, that is all but impossible. The economy cannot hack it. (If this sounds like I am trying to 'wing it', I am.) I would question merit pay, but not the need for teacher evaluation--at all levels. At a junior college in Traverse City, I once had an instructor for a Political Science course who had no teaching experience at all. He came from a position directly out of the State of Wisconsin bureaucracy, and it showed. He literally, in his lecture and course outline, followed the text of the book. He had no teaching experience at all. I do not know what became of him since that class. From the same school I had another instructor who was brilliant, knew his stuff backwards and forwards, and was good at getting it across. Teaching is, at times, one of personality.

The Interviews: Joan D. Vinge/Katherine Kurtz

Diane Fox: Fascinated by the Joan D. Vinge interview; the best thing in the zine.

Maia Cowan: I've read the interview with Joan D. Vinge several times now, and each time wish I had an opportunity to sit and talk with her myself. Fascinating lady. I particularly enjoyed learning about "Joan the person" as well as "Joan the artist." And I'm going to steal the idea of a convention panel about the relationship between fine arts (including music) and science fiction.

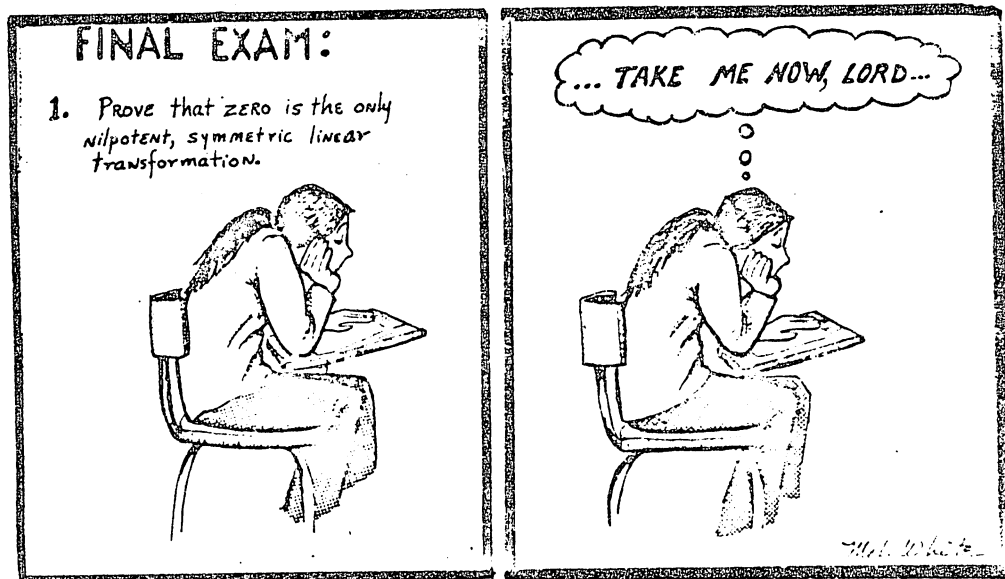
Katherine Kurtz's "WW II novel, *Lammas Option*", was retitled *Lammas Night*, and well worth reading. I was pleased to see her do something besides Deryni books. She's a good enough writer that I think she should branch out into other areas than the ideas she started with. With her scientific background, I'd like to see her do some "hard" SF, or at least semi-hard. She does use her history expertise to excellent effect.

Michele Armstrong: I was especially interested in the Kurtz interview as I enjoy her books very much. (Confession: No matter how much I prattle on about hard science in SF, give me a good fantasy any day.) Have the two books she mentioned writing besides the Camber/Kelson series been published?

((*Lammas Night* is out now; the other isn't out yet, as far as I know; it may be out by the time this zine sees print, though!))

David Bratman: Believe it or not, I heard Katherine Kurtz give the speech she mentions on p.30--the talk on Deryni magic she gave as a Goh speech at MYTHCON in 1978. I was intrigued by the patterns she discovered in her work. I say "discovered" deliberately, because she took the viewpoint of a reader who sees things and not that of an author who put those things there. This really sets one to thinking about patterns and parallels found in books--how many of them are deliberate and conscious, and how many of them are uses of archetype (which may be either conscious or unconscious), and how many are pure coincidence?

Nola Frame: Judging from the background I read of Ms. Kurtz in your zine, she sounds like the sort of woman I have suspected: that she is *very* well educated in terms of scholastic knowledge but she does not necessarily know about death. I got the feeling when I read her novels that after a major battle her characters would get up and walk away. I never got the feeling of sickness and lingering death which is the way slaughter can happen in real life. Once I talked with SF author Jerry Pournelle who basically said the same thing about her work. I figure he ought to know since Jerry was once in the military. For myself, I used to work in convalescent hospitals in which death, and not always the quick kind, was an everyday occurrence.



Kurtz's educational background helps explain why the heroines in her novels are always fortunate enough to have the benefit of a formal education, just as Ms. Kurtz was fortunate enough to benefit from a scholarship. Most of her male characters, if not all, were also lucky enough to have a "priestly education" or at least be taught by the Church.

Most of the fantasy novels I have read (by "fantasy" I also include borderline SF such as the *Dark-over* novels by Marion Zimmer Bradley) suffers from a malady--a variation if you will, of that reality which was known as the Middle Ages. In fantasy novels, unlike history in the Real World, (1) everyone practices good personal hygiene, and (2) everyone can read. Now, to be fair, not *all* of Kurtz's characters can read, just as not all the people of other author's creations can read. However, by having 99 percent of the characters able to read and having the point-of-view characters be literate, it still amounts to basically the same thing. Just once I would like to read a fantasy novel with a main character who is completely illiterate, or someone who is barely literate as the result of bad schooling. Who knows? That character could even be a nobleman who played hooky when he was younger, going fox hunting when he should have been in the classroom.

I've heard it said, please don't ask me where, that women are generally better-educated than men, though this does not necessarily lead to better jobs. Perhaps the high percentage of fantasy stories with very well-educated characters reflect the bias and background of these writers.

Perhaps I'm reading far too much in these types of stories, but by having characters who are well-educated as part of their birthright, that is, nobleborn, seems to foster the belief of education for the Chosen Few. Unless one grew up poorly educated herself, people cannot appreciate how much having a good education has to do with luck. And physical appearance. Least you think otherwise, Lan, how many college professors do you know who have been spastic since birth?

Another thing I found interesting about Ms. Kurtz's interview was her trouble in writing conversations. She had been trained in college thesis writing. Me, I came from the other side of the spectrum. I could write dialogue okay, but I couldn't write using good grammar to save my soul. For example, I had written a *Star Wars* short story, and when a friend, who would help me with my grammar, told me that I had broken sentences in my story, I pointed out, "But Darth Vader *talks* in broken sentences!" My friend is very well educated with a masters in opera history.

I didn't learn grammar until less than a year ago when I took a class of it at a junior college. When I tried to learn this subject when I was younger, I would fall flat on my face. Why? Because I couldn't see the board, even from the front row. There are still many English teachers who believe that the only proper way to teach grammar is to diagram sentences--in short, drawing little pictures on the blackboard. The teacher I had in junior College believed this too. Luckily she was recommended to me by my typing teacher who understood my visual problem. Hence, this English teacher used the blackboard little for her teaching, though sometimes when she used the board she would forget that I could not see it, which led to some interesting problems.

Not to sound like one of those fiends who disagree with *everything* Ms. Kurtz says, I must point out something I heartily agree with--her belief that a comma should be added before a conjunction such as "and", as in, "Mr. Spock got up, read his script, and threw up." Least you think this is a minor matter, I have spent many a fun hour attempting to read the works of a would-be fan writer, only to get bogged down because he did not use enough commas, or put them in the right places. Besides, I have never agreed

with my English book when it would tell me that sometimes one should use "x, y and z" and other time "x, y, and z."

Artwork

Barbara Tennison: The cover on #12 was WOW. I have this terrible weakness for op art and zipatone....

Ben Indick: Good picture-article on Lizards. So many artists, and all good!

Lee Pelton: The artwork was better, but I still wonder at the lack of really fine stuff within the pages of LANTERN. You know as many good artists as I do, so why not have plenty to display from them? Your layout concepts and graphics are as good as there are these days (reminds me of the zines Mike Bracken & Don D'Amassa did in them good ol' days) so why not take a little effort and really dress up your zine? Real curiosity here on this. Howcum?

(I really don't go out of my way to request specific pieces of artwork except for the special issues I do. I enjoy putting the issues together and use whatever art I have on hand. I'm not always that motivated to go out and push for art for LL. Maybe I should....)



Teaching SF

Mark Loney: I want to make a few comments about the C.J. Cherryh speech that you printed in LL 10 and that was mentioned in the letter column for LL 12. At the time I thought it was an admirable exposition on the critical confusion that SF has been treated to by both mainstream and some home-grown critics. One year into an English degree later I think it is even better. One of the areas we looked at this year was the development of the realistic novel. Science fiction and fantasy were dismissed in passing and having read C.J. Cherryh's speech helped me understand why, as well as helping me understand the course a little bit better. Actually I was so impressed with the speech that LL 10 was marked down as one of the few fanzines I have kept rather than passing it on to Grant Stone and his ever-burgeoning fanzine collection at the Murdoch University Library.

Neil Rest: More years ago than I care to remember, while I was goofing off at the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois, I had the unusual practice of reading the entire schedule of class offerings each quarter. That's how I discovered (among other things) a section of Freshie English II on the topic of Science Fiction (remember Relevance? or am I dating myself too much?). Since it was an inescapable course (you could place out of English I), I signed up.

That's how I met Beverly Friend, and came to teach her science fiction (at that time I had read several times as much of the stuff as she). A few years later, she ran a SFRA show up in Evanston. Which is how I came to be on my first panel--something about what to do with the inevitable fan who will turn up in your class (get him on your side fast!!). I have only one really vivid memory of the event. There were six panelists: the moderator, from Maine, whom I'd never heard of; me; the Eisensteins, to whom I'm a neo; and the Coulsons, to whom the Eisensteins are neos. But to all those English teachers, I was surely a hardened authority. A wierd feeling.

Somewhere near the end, amongst the questions (we were outnumbered well over two-to-one by the audience), someone asked about taking a class to a science fiction convention as a field trip. As you can well imagine, six minds boggled in perfect synchronization. Finally, Buck Coulson said, "Only if you have tenure!"

Cryonics, Longevity, etc...

Don D'Ammassa: I am personally indifferent to the cryonics people. It just doesn't seem a likely enough possibility to be worth any particular effort, but it's their business. But I think Stephen Bridge is way out of line saying that a person's personal aversion to cryogenic preservation is "trying to spot everything wrong" with the idea. Even if it were true, so what? Isn't the idea supposed to be to spot everything that is wrong with a project so that corrective steps can be taken?

He goes on to say that, like most other people, fans tend to talk rather than do. Joining the L5 Society doesn't strike me as any great improvement. All they really can do is talk, since they aren't about to finance a space colony out of their membership dues. What I find amusing is that many of the people who have been quite vociferous in their support of the L5 Society in my presence wouldn't be allowed within a parsec of a real space project. I recognize that there are many sincere, talented people involved as well, but I don't believe they are accomplishing anything significant except to make themselves feel as though they are doing something. The L5 Society is essentially a panacea.

Stephen also says that famine is the result of people thinking on short time scales. I suppose that means that if we had thought of it sooner, we could have averted the climatic shift in North Africa that is spreading the Sahara Desert southward? He also says that "afraid to die" and "terrified of death" are the same thing, and they strike me as totally different.

It almost seems that fandom at large is being charged with anti-intellectualism once more. We are anti-space program, anti-cryogenics, short-term thinking people who talk a lot but don't do anything. As a matter of fact, I am doing something. I'm enjoying myself and expending my effort where I think I can accomplish small but real tasks, rather than tilting at windmills. We'll never know which of us accomplishes more.

((And you have put out a copy of your fanzine MYTHOLOGIES, which I was delighted to see. A master fanzine editor has returned to publishing!!))

Maia Cowan: I'm not really convinced enough of my own opinion on cryonics (or my reaction to other people's) to continue the debate by replying to Steve Bridge's response. He raises good points and I'm not going to argue with his opinion. But his criticism that "stories are not reality" in my response to my mentioning the "cautionary tales" aspect of tales about immortality, does catch my attention. Certainly, the way humankind's dealing with immortality is portrayed in fiction isn't necessarily the way things really will be if we do achieve it. But it's an important insight into a common, deep feeling about the subject, which would have to be addressed in some detail if we are going to have to accept immortality. To me, psychological reality is as important as physical reality. What is the cryonics proponents' view of this aspect of the subject, or have they addressed it to any extent?

Neil Rest: The premise of Bob Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* is that people are able to be so stupid and destructive because we are so short-lived, and that the next evolutionary leap will be longevity. I don't remember how, but Shaw settled on the lifespan of 400 years. It makes a lot of sense; how much whole-county strip mining, acid rain, and development of space industry would there be if the Rockefeller's each expected to be alive in another three hundred years?

Mark Loney: As I doubt I'll ever be in a situation where I could afford to be cryonically treated after 'deanimation' (how's that for some Orwellian newspeak?) the question is hypothetical but an interesting one anyway. I don't think I would be worried about adjusting to a new age without any of the personal contacts I have now, which is not to say I think it would be easy or painless, but I don't know if I'd be bothered to make the effort.

I expect to have a fairly long life as the earliest any of my grandparents have died was in their middle seventies while two of them are still going strong in their eighties, and from empirical observation I get the feeling that I'll be quite happy to shuffle off this mortal coil when I get to my advanced years. Which is not to say that I expect to be unhappy with the quality of my life then and to be seeking to escape it--just that most of the old people I know have accepted their mortality and impending deaths (even though that could be up to twenty years away) with equanimity. To them it is natural.

Michael Darwin (appropriately named?) would probably argue that this is exactly what people in the cryonics movement don't accept. I wouldn't want to accept an early death, and if threatened with one, may feel differently about it--but I don't really know.

I was nearly killed about four years ago (luckily I got out without a scratch) in an accident, but more importantly I actually thought I was about to die. My instantaneous reaction was one of calmness and curiosity. I was not frightened or upset although then (as now) I had no wish to die. I was in a situation that I could do nothing about and that appeared to be about to kill me. So I wondered about what was going to happen after it was all over, and found out that I was curious about it.

I hold no religious beliefs about an afterlife; I have the feeling that once you're dead it's literally the end. (I will concede that a reasonable case can be made for reincarnation. The problem is that we don't appear to remember previous lives except under unusual circumstances, so even if you wish to posit the reality of reincarnation you have to concede that to the person you are now, it makes no difference whatsoever. You can claim the survival of the indefinable soul, but not of the personality.)

I still thought that it would be interesting to find out what really does go on after death.

An interesting effect of this has been that I find myself unworried about my death. I know that the actual manner of my dying may not be pleasant, the thought of dying itself doesn't frighten me.

Hugo Awards and Book Reviews

Sally Syrjala: I always find it fascinating reading how others view various pieces of writing. Whenever I see someone who shares a mutual like/dislike of a particular piece, it recaptures the feeling the story created when it was first read. It also makes you stop and re-evaluate where you disagree with the view expressed. This doesn't say you change your mind, but you look over the reasons why you disagree and begin to see what it is you look for in a story. ((When I taught some short SF courses at school, the question I always asked of my students was: "Why did you like/dislike this story?" My aim was to get them to set their own parameters for the types of SF they liked to read.))

David Brin's "The Postman" is one story that made an impression on me when I first read it and I can still recall the story in vivid detail--one sure sign the author managed to grab the attention span and hold it throughout.

((If you liked "The Postman", you love his novel Startide Rising; it's Hugo material!))

Connie Willis is an author whose works I try to search out. I have found her writing to be the type I like to read. An interesting sidelight: one of her stories about the mail system also involves a post-holocaust world. Truthfully, I think the mail system

is the thing I would miss most if our "civilization" went the way of all. It's interesting to note others also rank it high in the priority category as well.

David Bratman: The highlight of LL #13 was your look at the Hugo fiction nominees. Having read all 16 short fiction nominees virtually in one lump, and having strong opinions about most of them, I appreciated this thoughtful and detailed analysis by someone whose tastes are different from my own. I noticed that, aside from criticizing Russ' "Souls" for being too rambling and vague, you are more interested in the idea content of the stories than in their execution. This, I suppose, puts you on the "old-fashioned" content side of the great style/content barrier.

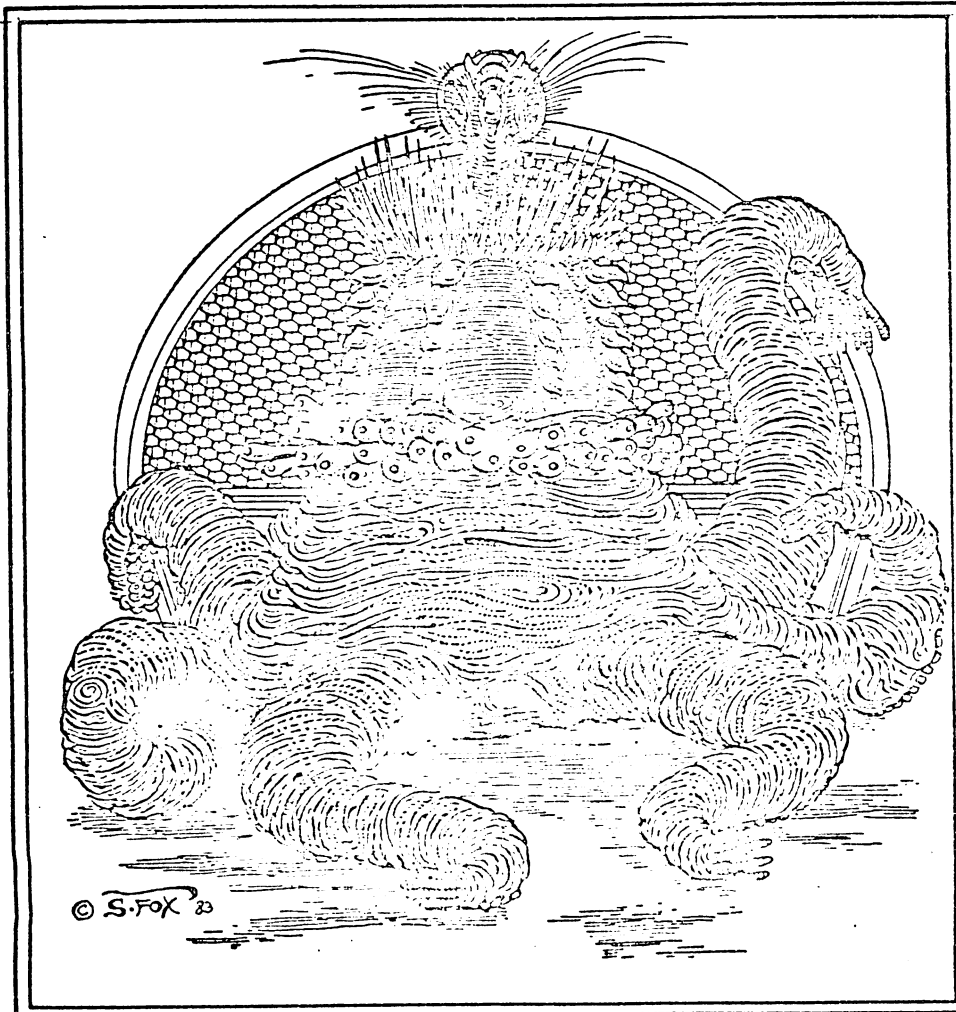
((I suppose so, but I do look at style more so than I might have stated. I usually ask myself if the style is appropriate to the story/idea/intention of the author, and if so, note it as part of the story as a whole on the plus side. If the style gets in the way of the story, then I make special note of that.))

I found Spider Robinson's "Melancholy Elephants" and Joseph Delaney's "Brainchild" to be particularly frustrating. You liked them for the quality of their ideas, and rightly so; Spider in particular was voicing a concept that has floated around a bit in the back of my head but that I lacked the ability to articulate. But for me these qualities were cancelled by some terrible offenses in style. Delaney's story is permeated with flat characters and palpable sexism, while Robinson's is not a story at all, but a lecture: one character sitting in a room talking to another, who keeps saying "Yes, but..." and is finally overwhelmed by the argument. (It's funny how some writers can pick up on Heinlein's worst mannerisms while neglecting the punch that makes Heinlein great.)

Considering this, it's nice to realize that there were at least some stories good enough in both departments to appeal to both of us, Eisenstein's "Nightlife" and Brin's "The Postman" in particular. And just to show that everyone can be wrong, look at the actual winners. I was not very pleased, and I'd guess you weren't either. ((No, not at all!))

Fred Jakobsic: I was glad to see *Foundation's Edge* get the Hugo Award. I thought it was a much better and entertaining novel than the others, but then I'm an Asimov fan.

Barbara Tennison: Your survey of the 1983 Hugo Award contenders was exactly the sort of thing a lazy reader like myself welcomes. I think I agree with you on Robinson's "Melancholy Elephants", though I've just heard that it did win the award, presumably out of the fans' gratitude for a Robinson story that wasn't based on a pun or gimmick. Or maybe because it was worked out through a gimmick... (I imagine someone besides me has noticed that the Senator is a



dead ringer for Johann Sebastian Bach Smith in *I will Fear No Evil*, undoubtedly by intent.) I agree with the premise and the writing is good in the sense that it's always clear what the writer wants you to "see" at any time. However, I resist the overt sentimentality which motivates all the characters and the basic idea is science fiction only in the sense of social extrapolation. I'd rather see the Hugo go to a story based on a more daring idea, conceived completely in the author's own idiom, if any such story is comparable to Robinson's in writing quality.

One is, of course, wary of the three big names (I suppose it's better to get all the nonsense over with in one year than have one name dominate the nominations for each of three years...). I haven't gotten the impression that any of Gene Wolfe's books were likely to stand up against Cherryh's, or even the Big Three in their prime, so seeing your re-evaluation of the novels' ranking at the end gave me a pleasant nasty feeling of smugness. One doesn't really mean to crow over an honest author's discomfiture, even if it means someone with a fanzine agrees with me.

[[If you've seen the Hugo list for this year, Asimov made it again, for Robots of Dawn. I hope more fans vote this year so that there is a better evaluation of the nominated novels.]]

Tony Renner: I'd like to suggest that you might want to lean a little less heavily on plot summary in your reviews. To me the most important thing I want to know about a book is whether it is entertaining. Looking back over the article, it seems that your comments on *Friday* are just what I'm looking for. On the other hand, you try to give so much detail about *Courtship Rite* that it just doesn't interest me in the novel. Actually, the first paragraph and the last two paragraphs do make me want to read *Courtship Rite*. Basically, I guess I believe that unless you have lots and lots of room to delve deeply into background you're better off keeping vague about characters and plot actions.

[[I see what you mean, just having re-read my review of the novel. My working hypothesis for presenting my choices was that it would be too late for anyone to vote by the time they saw print, so I felt comfortable revealing what I did in the stories. However, although I did sum up the plot, there is so much more to that novel you should read it to see what I did leave out.]]

Neil Rest: Yes, *Courtship Rite* blew me away too. The last time I had to go back an immediately re-read something was Herbert's *Dosadi Experiment*, which also left me gasping that so many loose ends could be so thoroughly and authentically tied up so fast. Contemporary SF may be anemic, but it sure ain't dead yet!

Ben Indick: Hugos...Nebulas...WCF Winners...sigh!* I never read any of them until later when one may catch my interest. I'll take your word as to the shorts, but aside from LeGuin, I'd be unlikely to read any of these. For whatever reason, contemporary SF does not grab me. Recently I succumbed, as I do every few years, to the blandishments of the SFBC, to catch up. The Nebula Awards for primarily the 60s proved to be as unreadable in general today as they were then. Pretentious in their sixtyish existentialism (synonym in this case for non-story) and helplessness before fate, they were choices of SFWA members, and thus were inevitable choices.

Hugos--fan choices--would be quite different. There is something to be said for awards given by other than potential awardees (a similar case could well be the Oscars).

In novels, I did read the Asimov and Clarke; Wolfe is highly regarded but I failed to catch the earlier books in the series. Your comments on Heinlein are encouraging; his previous was pure self-indulgent sludge (how many women refer to their nipples so frequently, let alone at all, as "teats"? His four characters were nearly undifferentiated.) I'll skip *Friday* and all future Hienlein as well, thank you.

Dennis Jarog: Part of the problem with the Hugos (as with any major award--SF is not alone in this problem) is that name-recognition is more than half the battle. Thus when one of the old masters comes through with a creditable story, he is more likely to win than a newcomer with an outstanding novel. This is aggravated by the number of people who vote on things they aren't familiar with. For this reason I rarely nominate in the shorter fiction categories because there is such a wealth of material to choose from; if at all possible I do read what has been nominated. It's not a perfect system; I doubt it ever will be. Still, even flawed recognition is better than none at all. I don't think the nominated novels last year were all that bad. Of the big three, the good Doctor's was the best, but likely Cherryh's *Pride of Chanur* was better than all three. Beyond that, I regretted that Gene Wolfe got no acknowledgment of his masterwork, *The Book of the New Sun* through its final volume.

Maia Cowan: You didn't do so well predicting the best works of fiction for 1982. At least, not enough people agreed with you. I did only one better myself, having chosen "Melancholy Elephants" for best short story. I share your disappointment with the selection of Best Novel. Asimov may be one of the best writers around, but *Foundation's Edge* isn't one of his best novels!

ConReports and Ramblings

Lee Pelton: The real gem of the issue was, as always, your own Conreports and Ramblings. I suspect I enjoy this so much because it does tell me about you and your experiences. I also know some of the people you mention and can enjoy a vicarious kind of fun in reading about things they and you were a part of. Noe if you could only do an X-rated zine sometime telling all! Prurient? Me? Well, sure, why not?

David Bratman: "Conreports and Ramblings" is a good read, especially the way the two parts intersect to form an overall diary of your life. I think I'd get walleyed going to so many cons myself, but you seem to be having fun.

Mike Sestak's "Thinking of Solutions"

Diane Fox: Unfortunately, while solutions already exist, obviously many people may well find it to their advantage not to have them implemented--until some apparently unrelated disaster overtakes them or a member of their families.

Maia Cowan: Michael Sestak's article reminds me of Stan Schmidt's speech in #13; both are as apropos to today's circumstances as to the time when they were first presented. I don't think we've made any progress on taking the larger view of our problems, or trying to find original solutions. If we did come up with good solutions, they would probably require such far-reaching changes that we'd never get the mass of people to go along with them, particularly

if the answers required short-term sacrifices or even inconvenience. But that's no reason to stop trying.

Stan Schmidt's GoH Speech

Sally Syrjala: It rather reminded me of our freedom to pick attitudes. We can be part of the group that sees things as they are and asks why, or part of the group that sees things that have not yet been and asks why not.

[[Or one can choose to be part of the group that looks to others to decide for them what they should or can believe in, and never ask why.]]

Also, the idea of seeing the problem as a whole is something of what A. E. Van Vogt was speaking of in *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*. Too much specialization can bring about a limited way of doing things, which will produce more problems in the long run. It is only when we can distinguish the forest as a whole from the various trees that comprise it that a more complete understanding can be at hand.

Jean Airey's "Words of Significance"

Dennis Jarog: I heard Jean deliver "Words of Significance" on a couple of occasions, and without question the lines are loaded with terrible puns. I can remember the groans; at one con, one of the several Darth Vaders escorted her off the stage.

Tony Renner: O.K., O.K., Lan, How many Asimov titles did Jean Airey get in?
[[I counted 18, but there were probably more. How many did you count?]]

I Also Heard From

Robert Bloch, Mike Rogers, Jon Pryor, Frank Olyn'k, Chris Meiting, Don Wandrei, David Heath, Don Franson, Joseph Green, Roland Green, Vince Tuzzo, Mary Long, David Gerrold, Sally Fink, Don Ayres, Suzy Steele, Ines Cabrera, Bob Greene, Timothy Zahn, Chris Swart-out, Richard Lamb, Bill Surrent, David Singer, and probably others whom I've forgotten.

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12806 Matteson Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Ben Indick
428 Sagamore Ave
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Fred Jakobcic
113 W. Ohio, Apt. 4
Marquette, MI 49855

Dennis Jarog
PO Box 48461
Niles, IL 60648

Mark Loney
39 Norfolk St.
South Perth, WA
6151 AUSTRALIA

Lee Pelton/Private Heat
PO Box 3145 Traffic Sta.
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Tony Renner
3842 DeTonty Ave #3W
St. Louis, MO 63110

Neil Rest
5309 N. Clark
Chicago, IL 60640

Sally Syrjala
PO Box 149
Centerville, MA 02632

Barbara Tennison
1834½ Selby Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90025

NOTE: CHANGE OF ADDRESS-----

As of July 1, our new address will be:

Lan/Maia
55 Valley Way
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013

Yes, I'm moving back to Valley Way.

