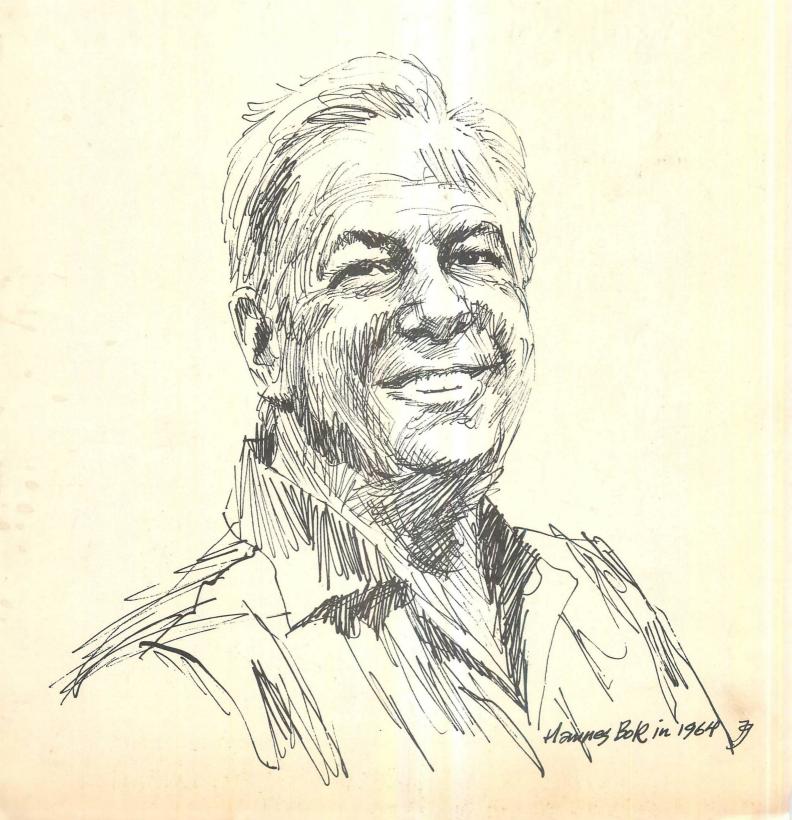
LUNA

Special Issue



LUNA

NUMBER 4 1965

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by Franklin M. Dietz Jr.

THE HERMIT

I've often thought it rather remarkable that people remain active in our field the science fiction field - as long as they do. The publishers, editors, artists,
even the fans - perhaps especially the fans - have a way of starting young and
staying active, so as to create a sense of permanence which is, of course, only an
illusion.

So we see and meet titans. Hugo Gernsback wrote RALPH 124C41+ before the First World War; in 1926 he founded the "first" science fiction magazine. One would think him an historic figure. a sort of Jules Verne, long gone in person but with his influence still felt; only Hugo Gernsback is still alive, and active.

Similarly other figures from the early days of our field are still alive, and still producing: Doc Smith has been hitting the magazines again lately, and a new hardcover novel of his has appeared this year; Murray Leinster is still writing and appearing in Analog and in books; John Campbell is still raising an editorial ruckus even though he long ago stopped producing stories of his own.

Among the fans many of the early names are still to be seen; the unfortunate occurences emerging from this year's world convention direct our recollections to the original Exclusion Act, and we are astonished to see so many of the principals still operating in fandom, or in the professional science fiction field, or in both; Blish, Moskowitz, Shaw, Sykora, Wollheim.

The durability of so many science fiction people makes it all the more shocking when death reminds us that this seeming permanence is illusory. When Henry Kuttner and Cyril Kornbluth died a few years ago, I think their loss, shocking and tragic as it was, was nonetheless overshadowed by simple surprise. These men had "always" been part of the field, or at least it so seemed to us who were younger, and we no more could believe that they had been removed from the scene by death than we could believe that the Rocky Mountains had been levelled by erosion. Oh, we all know that the Rockies will eventually be worn away, we are taught this in elementary school. But that is such a remote prospect. So, with the "immortals" of science fiction.

The first identifiable science fiction I ever read was in a Big Little Book that came into my possession when I was about six years of age, and barely able to read even those simple words. I've been reading "real" stf for some twenty years now, and have been active in fandom for almost fifteen years, and have had a small professional involvement for the past couple. For all these years that I've had a serious interest in the science fiction field, there have been, to my mind, three great science fiction artists: Frank R. Paul, Hannes Bok, and Virgil Finlay. All three had been around "forever," i.e., they had been established in the field before I became interested in it, and were still active in it. They were not historic figures, like Wesso, Howard V. Brown, Hibert Rogers, Dold, Morey, or Cartier. Nor were they "newcomers" like Emshwiller or Freas, or the more recent Krenkel or Frazette.

Richard A. Lupoff

These three: Paul, Bok, Finlay, were above time. It seemed that they had always been and would always be. I felt highly favored to make the acquaintance of Frank R. Paul shortly before his death. Even though our meeting was only a brief one in the midst of a noisy crowd, I felt that I had met, had spoken with and shaken the hand of a giant. Still, it was obvious that Paul was an old man, and not strong, and so it was less a shock to hear of his death some months later than it would have been if we had never met.

I met Hannes Bok some time after meeting Paul. I had heard that Hannes was a hermit of sorts, that he lived in a little apartment where he seldom entertained visitors, and from which he almost never emerged. He had largely abandoned professional art in favor of astrology. To me this seemed a tragic waste of talent, but to Hannes it was sensible.

Still, his apartment evidenced a continuing interest in art. The walls were covered with drawings and paintings, many of Hannes' own, others of his ideal and friend Maxfield Parrish. Aside from the drawings and paintings there were other evidences of Hannes' interests: masks, fantastic but charming elven-faces that Hannes had made and painted, and an astonishingly realistic life mask of the late Art Castillo. And music: Hannes loved music, his favorites seemed to be soundtracks from such films as "She." Max Steiner was a friend of Hannes, and had obtained for him many records which were unavailable through normal channels.

And Hannes himself, in the midst of incredible clutter, seemed like nothing but a giant elf himself. One would never think that this vigorous, enthusiastic man had a serious heart condition, or that he knew he might die at any time, without warning.

For a "hermit" he was one of the most engaging individuals I've ever met. He had a fund of knowledge and range of interests to marvel at. As a self-directed student of everything he maintained a card file on his desk, and as he conversed on art, literature, astrology, history, or anything else, he seemed forever to be sliding drawers in and out, checking references, citing facts, making notes. He possessed a sort of universal curiosity, or at least it seemed so to me, so that in any conversation, if he was not teaching, he was learning.

And he was always busy. He was always at work or at study about something, always ready to include a friend in what he was doing. One might wonder if the things Hannes did were worth doing, but he thought they were, and if we sometimes think that our friends are wasting their talents and energies, why, perhaps they think the same of us.

One time when I visited Hannes he was working on mendalas. A mendala is any little design or symbol, such as yang-and-yin, used as a focus. A mystic might maintain that it serves to concentrate cosmic forces. A person of less ethereal bent might still find a mandala useful for concentrating his own mentality, and for excluding extraneous attractions.

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He permitted me to join him in divising various combinations of simple geometric figures to form mandalas, and to "count" these mandalas, selecting those whose elements might best be enumerated and related by the mind....part of that concentration I mentioned. When we finished working with mandalas, I asked if Hannes had any drawings or paintings for sale, that I might put on the walls of my home. He had many; he would not sell any that had not been published, although I pleaded very hard for an Egyptian tomb scene originally done for Weird Tales but never published.

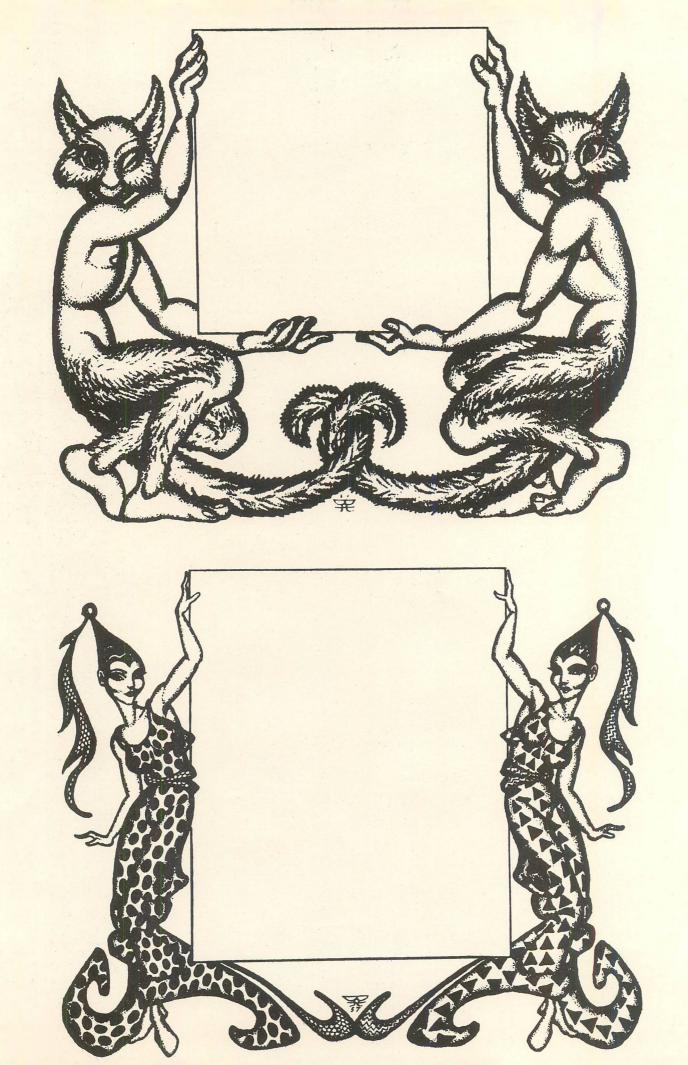
Hannes absolutely refused to part with it, but finally brought out a box of "junk." The "junk" consisted of many drawings, most of which had appeared in various magazines over the years, plus a few paintings. One of these, which had appeared on Fantastic Universe some years before, Hannes agreed to sell me. The price was substantial, but not unreasonable, and I did not try to bargain. Hannes was an independent man; the story is told that on one occasion a representative of the museum of modern Art approached Hannes and requested the loan of a painting for exhibit. Hannes explained that he was a professional, that he would be delighted to sell the museum a painting, but that he did not lend his work. If the story is true, I regret the opportunity to advance his career that Hannes turned down, and yet I cannot help admire the spirit of an individual who can dictate his terms to a wealthy and influential institution, and say "No deal" when they are not met, rather than



When Hannes sold me his painting he gave very explicit instructions: it was to be matted with white, it was to be glassed over, it was to be framed in a simple frame of natural-colored wood. It was to be hung in such-and-such a light. Wondering if I was pushing my luck with the "hermit,", I agreed to have the picture framed exactly as Hannes specified, and to hang it just as he directed; would he, then, leave his apartment and come visit Pat and me, and see the picture as it was hung?

To my delighted surprise, Hannes agreed. Pat and I had the picture framed, and we hung it as Hannes had specified, and we fully intended to invite him to visit, but it was one of those undated invitations that may take effect any time, in a week, a month, or a year or more.

One day last April I was reading a copy of Show magazine and came across a lengthy article about Maxfield Parrish, spry at 94. I thought immediately of Hannes Bok, and his long admiration for Parrish, and determined that I must show him the (Cont. on Page 16)







WITH SNARPPS AND STRAZZENDILFERS

by Gerry de la Ree

Hannes Bok had a passion for many things: Max Steiner music. A. Merritt's fantasies, cats, masks by W. T. Benda, foods of all types and varieties, plastic dinosaurs, weird sculpture, science fiction movies, astrology, and so on....the complete list would fill a page.

He would talk or write ecstatically on almost any subject which might be his current interest. The smallest thing, which most of us would only consider briefly and then mentally discard, could have an all-engressing fascination for Hannes.

That he had a unique talent as an artist, few would deny. But he never made a fortune from painting....or anything else. In fact, he always seemed to be only a few jumps ahead of his creditors. The demand for fantasy artwork was rather limited, and his few attempts to break away from this field were never met with great success.

His refusal to grind out artwork with machine-like precision limited his output and his financial income. He was a perfectionist and stubbornly refused to turn commercial. As long as he had enough money to pay for the rent and groceries, he was content.

He also had a talent for writing. His work in completing A. Merritt's "The Fox Woman" and "The Black Wheel" was exceptional, I always felt. Both were published in 1946 and included some of Bok's finest illustrations. They were not financial successes.

Hannes had three novels published in magazines: "Starstone World" in Science Fiction Quarterly for Summer, 1942; "The Sorcerer's Ship" in Unknown for December, 1942; and "The Blue Flamingo" in Startling Stories for January, 1948. He also had a handful of short stories published in the 1942-43 period.

But his writing proved even less profitable than his illustrating. He wasn't a prolific writer any more than he was a prolific painter. His writing does, however, deserve hard-cover publication.

As I've said, Hannes was a bug on max Steiner's movie music. This is probably my earliest memory of Bok. When I first made the 3-block trek from the 8th Avenue Subway up 109th Street to his apartment some 20 years ago, his main passion other than painting was music.

His proudest possessions were private pressings of the background music from "King Kong" and "She." There were no wire or tape recorders available in 1943, so these records were unique and once the surfaces were overly worn from replaying. Hannes realized this music would be forever lost to him. But still he delighted in playing them for visitors and describing in fascinating detail the actions of the film that went with the particular selections.

I don't know if Bok would be described as a Bohemian....for the simple reason I don't personally know any Bohemians with whom I could compare him. I know he lived in the same New York brownstone -- he moved from a small apartment to a slightly larger one several years back -- during the period I knew him. I spent quite a few pleasant hours with Hannes in the 1940's, listening to records, viewing his latest artistic efforts, and hearing him discuss future projects, some of which materialized and many of which didn't.

Getting Bok out of New York City wasn't an easy task. I actually got him over to River Edge, N.J., on two occasions for dinner with Helen and I in November, 1953 and October, 1954. His third and last visit was a brief one about two years ago when he dropped in out of the blue to show a friend the Bok artwork I have adorning the walls. Except for a Christmas card the last two Decembers, I didn't hear from him again.

Speaking of Christmas cards, his 1954 one for Helen and I was a gizzlestine (big-eared critter) painting he had promised my wife for some time. This is one of five color works by Bok I have. I also have six black and whites.

narfittes.

During the 1949-50's period I received some 25 cards and letters from Hannes; there were some earlier ones but they were discarded before I started my present file. His letters were unique also, for Hannes had his own simplified spelling and a passion for using words of his own creation with which to close each letter.

A few examples: With borfenskroggils for you and braddentiggils for Helen" - "with findoolippies" - "with ornks" - "with frindenboffers" - "with froddygnozzles" -"with vrakstenz krallibapping" - "with flamping frabbers-kanz" - "with vronks" - "with romblitched anxters" - "with gernfnertches" - "with snarpps and strazzendilfers" -"with grindified grunditzers" - "with frandifers conneebling" - "with frabsters" - "with ipfins" - etc., etc.

Something I hadn't realized before; he never, over a period of 11 years, used the same closing words twice!

Following are a few quotes from some of Bok's letters and postcards:

Dec. 8. 1949: "Was stuck with the "Blind Spot" pix & to make deadline had to forego movies, dates, visitors, & letters - so that I had over 60 letters to write when I got pix done - yi, the wordage of a novel. "

Aug. 29, 1950: "Can't really inform you as to rates of fantasy mags since they vary with the artist. Rumor has it that Finlay gets \$65 per picture -- I dunno. Ray Palmer and Ziff-Davis pay (as far as I know) \$25 per pic; I hear "Weird" pays \$20 - some places still pay \$10. Only thing I know your friend can do is see the various editors and haggle with them. If he's doing O.K. with medical work, price shouldn't mean anything to him - he should do it for love, since that's what it will amount to in the long run, and if he starts out with that in mind he Won't be disappointed!"

Aug. 31. 1951: "Hope to go into the hand-color field again soon, something I've disregarded for quite a while now; prices will be rather stiff, but pics will be limited to editions of 25 or less and of course will be rather 'loose' rather than fotografik in effect, something like van Gogh or Toulouse-Lautrec technic."

July 2, 1952: "I've forsaken the stf-fantasy field. It simply didn't pay, there wasn't emif work, I got tired of being 'tooken' (as with O'Connor, Prime Press, Molacon, Gnome Press deals), and I decided if I cudn't paint following my own ideas (which of course illustrating doesn't allow) there just wasn't much point in painting, period. Early this year I got an 'honest job! -- whaddayuh know, I like it! -- and hope I can keep it, at least long emif to pay off my debts, buy some necessary clothes, etc. It's a bit rough on me with my white hairs, and of course I have very little time left for any relaxation."

Oct. 13, 1953: "Hope the paintings look nice at your house. Already they've been missed. Funny how people come over & look around & don't say anything until a thing is missing. 'Oh, where'd the picture over the record cabinet go? And that lovely Green Girl? SOLD them! Oh, no! But such is life... Hoped to get going on a new big Madonna today, but got held up due to Isabel. Ah, well, such too is life."

Oct. 16, 1953: "Will await yr invite to New Jersey; hope I don't get lost, but it'll be an adventure if I do — I get out of manhattan so seldom, the idea of the trip is really a thrill to me! Gnorgels for Helen. Am at last getting started on new Madonna, the one I hope will satisfy me a million % so I can then branch out into other matters, such as Adam & Eve conceptions I want to try."

Nov. 23, 1953: "My preference as to food? Tak. tak, what a question. As long as it's food (with the exception of oysters, clams, and roast pork) I LOVE IT. (You've never seen me eat, apparently). I have an awful yen for bacon & eggs (haven't had any in years), and dote on meat loaf, hamburgers, cassarole dishes, mashed spuds, liver & all other things edible (all of which I can't prepare here on my balky hot plate). Ah, those cassarole dishes I'm going to gorge on, if and when I get an apt. with a kitchen - scalloped spuds, macaroni & cheese, weet-spuds candied with ham chips. I shall subsist on stewed onions, on meat loaves, on gigantic pots of bean soup. (though of course for the 1st few weeks I'll live entirely on pie - any & all varieties, with banana cream coming first & grahamcracker crust ones next). Forgot to list potato salad and chili con carne among my passions."

Sept. 24, 1954: "Still slogging away on sample paintings. Either they're going to be terrific or superhorrible."

Sept. 29. 1954: "Hoo Boy, the \$10 arrove in the nick of time. P.O. box rent was due (a mere \$6) and if I cudn't pay it. I'd lose the box and have to go on a waiting list before I'd be able to get a new box... Starting to lay out design for the book jacket for MALOBRA (complete with a gizzelstine among the cast). What with lettering & execution of jacket, plus samples requiring many layers of varnish & color, I'll have enuf to keep me bizzy till lines. I shud live so long."

Oct. 8, 1954: "Wish we could have looked more at Moon thru telly-skope. Maybe next summer, when it's warm, we can????? One can look in telescope while the others wave firebrands at the voracious Jersey mosquitoes I've heard so much about. (There was a story in an old "Argosy" or "Cavalier." circa 1915 or so, about Jersey mosquitoes that kept growing bigger & bigger & finally flew off with their human victims),"

Dec. 13. 1954: "I is flat busted, & downna borrow any \$\$\$ (becuz then will hafta worry about getting it repaid) so no fare to go gallivanting. Have a small art job promised for end of Dec., & expect it to cover this month's & Jan. rent, etc. The "Blue Mamingo" sequel book-deal is about to be called off; not enuf orders."

Dec. 18. 1954: Gotta live on nothing till Eshback okays the next jacket job (he wants to see first if the new process I used will really save as much printing costs as it should).

Mar. 16, 1957: "Just punch typer day in & day out, enswering mail anent astrology; business is lousy, but that's to be expected at this time of year, so I don't mind. About the only exciting item is that I got to see a real movie in a real theater — boy, isn't that living it up???"

Apr. 25. 1957: Would indeed be grateful for copy of Frank R. Paul article to put on file!! (after all, if it weren't for him, I'd never have begun drawing!) Haven't done any pics; no incentive; I get as far as thinking up a pic, but once that's done (it's really the work of painting) I feel it's accomplished & can't face the monotony of executing it."

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har. ?, 1957: "Fellow who knows my mother is in town & showing MS the sights. Last night I got tooken to Luchow's for a colossal dinner (about 3 meals in volume and about 2 weeks' food expenses for me) so I'm really whooping it up."

Jan. 12. 1959: "Me, I been sick (colds, rheumatiz, etc.) since Nov. 14; expected it, tho not so severe, but all shud be well by March 15, so I grins and tries to bear it."

May 22, 1959: "Finally quit the very frustrating job (as astrologer & part-time mgr at nearly ND salary) at Chinese restaurant. So I had to go and get sick again. Am just recovering. Fooey. But once in a while it's GOOD to get sick — makes you realize how wonderful it is to be well at other times...Trying to get going on a painting started last Fall, but tedious & slow. No prospects in sight, but then that's been my life-history. Something has to give, and it ain't a-goin' to be me...Lots of astrology work, but most clients too broke to pay (so often I receive a bag of apples or a sack of eats, as reward but still it's fun to do research. In short, I'm purty happy, and what more could one ask?

"I yearn for a pet, but must be content fondling the laundryman's cats (he has one which has rickets & walks sideways. is called 'Sickat,' very affectionate & wonderful soulful face & eyes, which I COULD have. but don't want to adopt; cudn't feed it decently & wudn't want it to be lonely for its relatives). So instead I cultivate my windowsill "garden," which is fun — rows & rows of pots, with scads of hideous-red geraniums, 2 pineapples, (look like young palm trees; fun to watch bright-green new needles forming, look just like pinfeathers), a pepper plant, orange-tree, Baby Tears, & numerous seedlings of ageratum, portylacas, several whatsits & scallions (they sprout up with their tips still in the ground, forming little green loops) & the chives are about to bloom, which is by me a Big Deal, never having seen it before."

Dec. 16, 1959: "Gawrsh, where does tempus fugit? Had purty wild year of NOTHING. Business was punk & during the hot-humid spell, it was all I cud do to keep breathing; spent most of time in shorts at electric fan, making dark sweat-puddles on floor & gasping for air. In Fall had food-allergy poisoning a while. But managed to have fun off & on with color experiments (mostly just purty-gal heads under weird lighting effects) and did three great arabesques (just pure design, using very limited palette)."

Feb. 19. 1960: "Thought I was a goner for a few hours on 1/15 when virus hit like a piledriver; then came colitis (still got) and bad cold (gone). The few arabesques I made last summer seem to please everybody (one gal threatens to bring an art-agent to see 'em) so I'm eager to finish the series — three done, but two more to go.

"Got paperback AKU AKU & loved it. (I've reread KON TIKI till it's almost worn out) — my kind of books. Took day off & saw JOURNEY TO CENTER OF Earth — ridiculous 'science' but process shots utterly utter, so got a big bang out of it (expecially the daffy climax).

"Helen is such a wow of an image maker that it busts my heart that she isn't doing any ceramix. Beat her up till she returns to it. But don't spank the katz — give 'em all nape-pinches from me. Hope things are going swell for youse-all: With gernfnertches, mannes."



MAXPIKED PARHING WINDSOR VERMONT

May 8 1964

Dear Mr. Dietz:

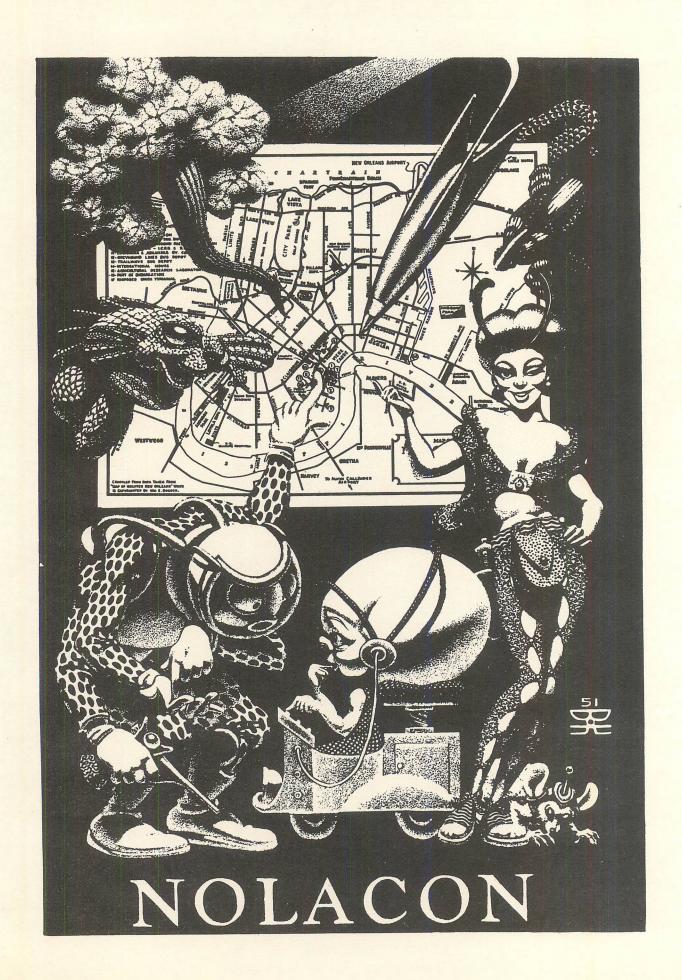
It was most considerate of you to tell me of Hannes Rok's passing on. Our mutuel centacts happen to be very few: about all I knew of him was through a long list of letters, so that he almost seemed to be a character from fiction, albeit a very real one.

It seemed to me such a pity for him to have to live ina tiny room up among the chimneys, whereas for less money there is the vast open country from which to choose. To be sure I began under a tin roof myself with the song of trollies below, but I knew it was only for a short time and I also know there are many who much prefer the "crowd" with life going on within touch, It takes all kinds, does nt it?

Sincerely:

Maxfield Parcish:

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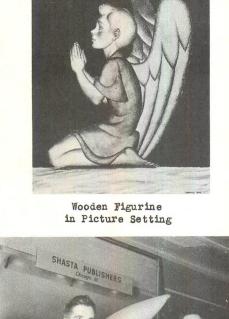




The First "Higo"

Best Artist presented to Hannes Bok
at the Philcon II in 1953







Hannes - serly 1950's

Evening Star



er Hannes Bok Theodore Sturgeon at the Cinvention in 1949 Ed Cartier



Hannes - early 1950's

The Well

H'ster

by Franklin M. Dietz Jr. *

The world of science fiction suffered the loss of another great man, with the tragic death of Hannes Bok. Creative artist, author and astrologer, his untimely death came as a result of a heart attack on the night of April 11, 1964.

A large portion of his life was spent working in the science fiction field, a natural association, as his imaginative mind always tended toward the fantastic. It was unfortunate in a sense, as the rewards the field offered were wholly inadequate compensation for the time and effort he put into his creations.

as an artist, Hannes is best known for his covers and dust jackets on numerous magazines and books. He continued his painting even after he stopped working regularly for the field in the mid 1950's, and occasionally was prevailed upon to produce a cover from time to time since then. But most of his painting during the latter years were ideas he personally wanted to portray, designed for his own satisfaction rather than for sale.

Born in Minnesota on July 2, 1914, Hannes was a self-taught artist, having no formal training to provide even the basics of the trade. He attributed his inspiration to fantastic art to the late Frank R. Paul, dean of science fiction artists, and much of the mastery of his early work to maxfield Parrish, a popular artist during those years. He continually experimented with new colors and techniques, always learning by experience, and never long satisfied that any new method he discovered could not be even better. He completely rejected the field of commercial art for its uniformity and lack of imagination, preferring the limited income he received to the narrow artistic horizons required for commercial art.

Astrology played a major role in his life, and it was to this he turned when he became dissatisfied with the science fiction market. Here too Hannes rejected the commercial mass market, devoting himself instead to a serious study and research into what he felt was a valid science. He built a modest circle of clients, through his articles in Ray Palmer's magazines and personal contacts. But the fees he received for these astrological forecasts fell far short of adequate compensation for the extended time he spent writing them.

About two years ago Hannes began working in a new medium, the creation of fantastic and grotesque masks. He had long admired this artform, and was especially proud of the results he achieved. Success did not come quickly however - he was attempting to learn this skill entirely by experimentation and experience - but the very few he did complete stand as evidence of his amazing talents.

The career of Hannes Bok spans a period of 25 years. His first artwork to be published was a linoleum block cover on the now-legendary Cosmos, a 17-part science fiction story written by as many authors, which appeared in 1935. His work was subsequently seen in other fanzines, including Ray Bradbury's "Futura Fantasia."

*Reprinted from Science Fiction Times #415 - May 1964

Weird Tales in 1939 presented his first professional cover. His paintings have since appeared on Cosmic Stories, Fantastic Universe, Fantasy Fiction, Future combined with Science Fiction, Imagination, Marvel Stories, Other Worlds, Planet Stories, Science Fiction Quarterly, Science Stories, and most recently his only cover for Fantasy and Science Fiction on the November 1963 issue. In addition his drawings also appeared in Unknown.

The science fiction book publishers made good use of his abilities, and his paintings graced the dust jackets of many books from Shasta, Fantasy Press and Gnome Press. He did many of the drawings for the Fantasy Calendars in 1949 and 1950, also published by Gnome Press, and designed 3 of the dozen book plates which Fantasy Press offered. Very recently he did a couple of paintings for Llewellyn Press, an occult publisher.

Hannes was also an author, and sold a modest 9 stories to the magazines, including 3 novels and one novelette. His first published work was called "Alien Vibration" which appeared in Future in the February, 1942 issue. He is probably best known in this sense for his work in completing two unfinished stories by Abe Merritt, "The Fox Woman" and "The Black Wheel," both of which he also illustrated, and which were published by the New Collectors Group.

Fandom paid its greatest tribute to his artistry in 1953, when the Philadelphia Convention presented the first of the "Hugos" to him as Best Artist. He attended only one World Convention, the 1949 Cinvention in Cincinatti. And he was prevailed upon to contribute a painting for the cover of the Program Booklet for the 1951 Nolacon. But Hannes took no part in the activities of fandom after the early 1950's, although he retained many close friendships with fans since then.

FIN

Editors Note: This special issue is a departure from the usual material we present - transcriptions of convention and conference speeches and discussions - however the close friendship I had with Hannes Bok for some 15 years could not permit me to do less to express my gratitude for the friendship, comfort, advice, generosity, and assistance he offered during this time.

Due to lack of response, promised and unpromised, from a large number of Hannes' friends and business contacts, the material contributed and presented herewith was insufficient to permit the publication of an Hannes Bok memorial Volume, as originally planned. Should we receive any further contributions (and I do hope so), they will be presented in a future issue as a suplement to this issue.

THE HERMIT by Richard A. Lupoff (conclusion)

article if he had not seen it. Also, this would be a good time to do something about that long-standing invitation.

I did not know it then, but of course Hannes was already dead.

(16)

Dick Lupoff

