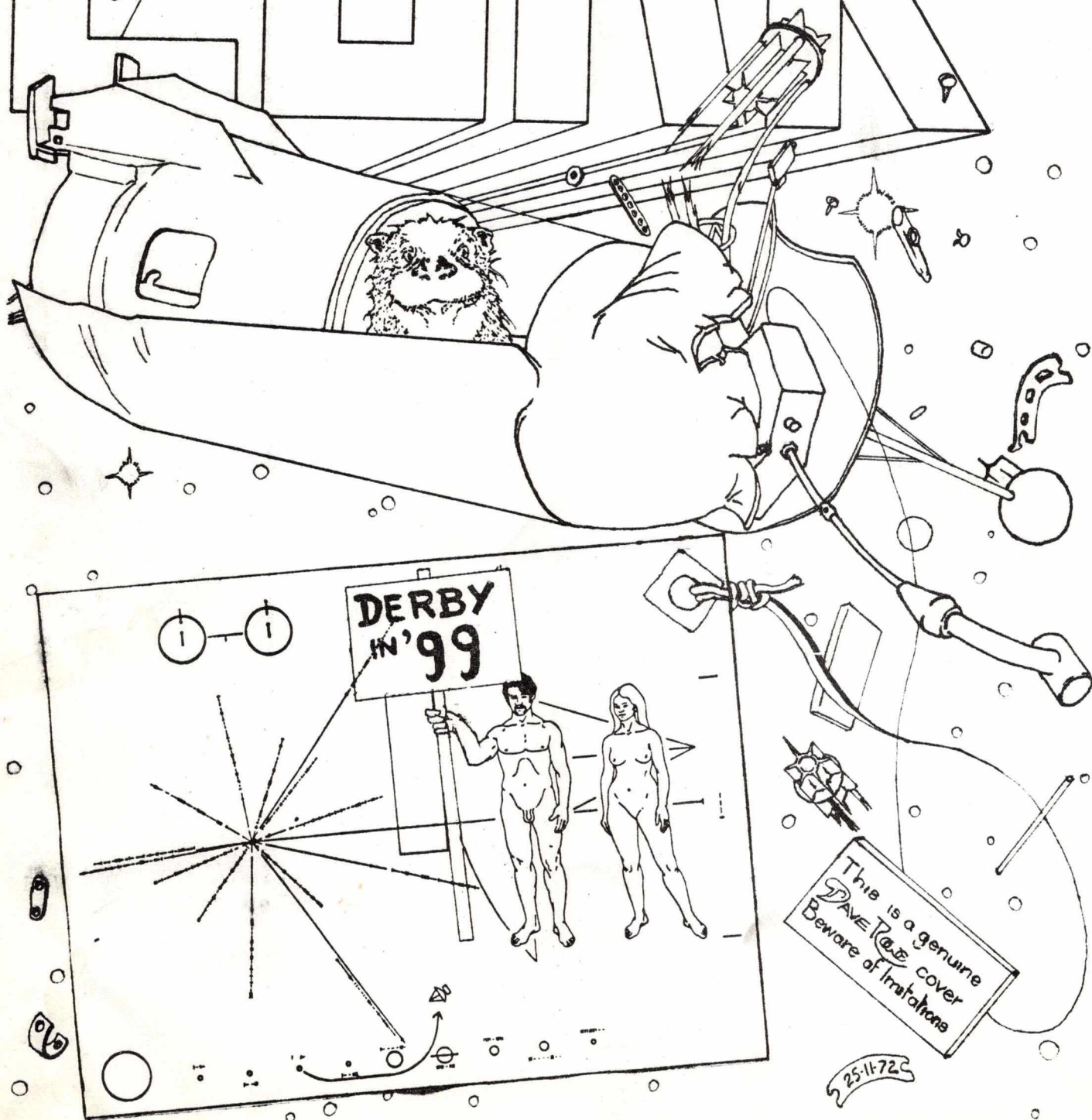
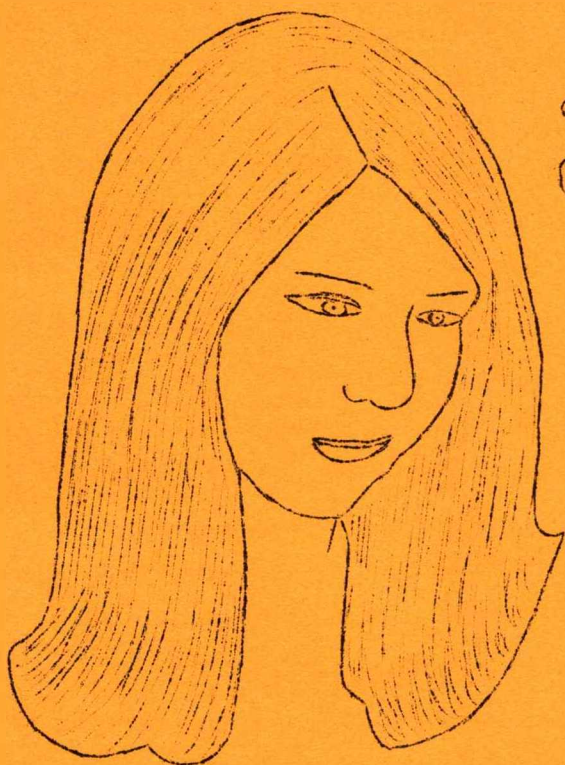


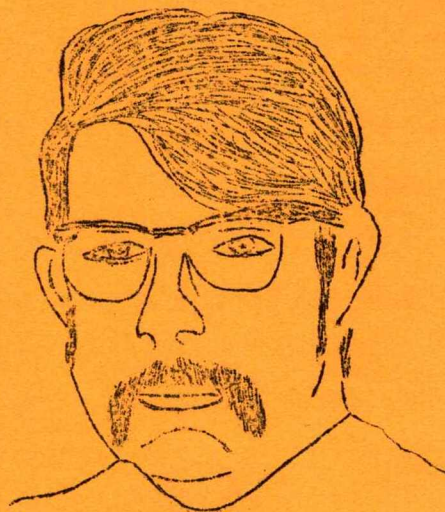
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WELL, HERE IT IS....

....another fairly stark issue, but not quite as bare as last time. We've tried to put illustrated headings on as many items as possible, and hopefully we may get back to interior art next issue. It's not that we're short of artwork - far from it - it's just a question of finding the time to get the stuff electrostencilled and patched in.

Still on the subject of artwork, we've noticed how many faneds are now making use of litho for their covers and even some interiors. It's not really surprising when you consider the benefits in quality and time-saving which can be obtained in comparison with the electrostencil, and for quite a modest cost increase. A couple of places offering this service have recently opened in Derby - last issue's back cover was the work of one of them - so in future, LURK will be riding on this particular bandwagon.

As we expected, most of last issue's predictions just didn't work out. Still, it's fun trying. You never know, one of these days we might hit the jackpot and get everything right. Anyway, apologies to those people who were led to believe they'd be making an appearance this time; don't worry folks, it'll be Real Soon Now.

Apart from all the usual reasons for lack of time, there's the fact that Mike's job, after months of relative inactivity, has suddenly roared into

high-speed action, with the result that he gets home most nights feeling considerably knackered and by no means in the mood for hacking away at a few stencils or whatever. Not to mention the fact that, despite having got rid of the car, his weight has increased quite a lot, which doesn't help. He got on the scales recently and was shocked to discover that he'd put on nearly three stones since his university days of semi-starvation. So it's dietsville for him, which is rather a shame with Christmas just a couple of weeks away as he writes this - ohwhatagiveaway. Anyway, I have got willpower and I can resist the temptation of all those mince pies and Christmas pudds and luvverly cakes with icing on and....and....(groan!)

THERE'S BEEN QUITE A LOT....

....of fanac going on around this fannish backwater in the past few months. First there was the visit of Rubberboots Rowe and Viewpoint Hemmings, on their way to Phil Rogers' and Doreen Parker's wedding. They dropped in one Friday, ate and drank everything in sight in true fannish style, and departed again Jeeves-wards. I can't remember much about the visit, except that Fred had brought about 800 copies of an OMPAcon progress report with him, in the vain hope that we'd help him collate it. What a fiendish trick! But justice won out in the end - after a few dozen copies he ran out of staples. I also remember trying to turn them onto Django and Venuti/Lang, without very much success. I played them some Stefan Grossman (the good early stuff, before he began writing his own material) and was shocked to the core to hear Fred say something to the effect that it was OK to hear once, but he didn't think it would bear repeated listening. What can one do with such a person?*

Then a couple of weeks or so after that, we took a short and much-delayed holiday, in London (where else can you go in October?), where we did a fair proportion of fannish things; we bought a duplicator, for instance, which is quite fannish, though of course the trufannish way is to borrow one. Anyway, it's a Roneo 750, with stand and colour-change drum, and it performs pretty well, as I hope you can see. We indulged in a positive orgy of (no, not that!) science-fiction-film-viewing, which I suppose is fairly averagely fannish; at a late show in Lewisham we saw QUATERMASS II - that's the one about the Cornish pasties from outer space - and DUEL OF THE SPACE MONSTERS, which must be the worst film in the history of the universe. Apparently made on a budget of £10 plus unlimited access to a scrap metal yard, it includes stock shots of missiles, NASA launches etc., whole scenes repeated, presumably to save money, and believe it or not, the hero and heroine ride around on a motor-scooter! (It wouldn't have been so bad if they'd had one each). Undeterred by that, and the six-mile walk back to our friends' flat afterwards, later in the week we saw SILENT RUNNING, which is not to be recommended I'm afraid. Dave Rowe sums up the film's faults pretty well in his letter herein. Still suckers for punishment, we ended up by going to an all-night show at the Classic, Piccadilly; this is a particularly insidious form of torture which has since broken out - and been a huge success, so I hear - in Derby. Here, for the sum of £1.25 each, including refreshments and as much so-called coffee as you could force down, we saw a couple of second-rate horror films plus THE PROJECTED MAN, RODAN and THE FLESH EATERS; the first is

* Answers on a postcard please, to FRED HEMMINGS DISPOSAL COMPETITION, c/o this address. The winner will receive a personal visit from Mr. Hemmings.

just a poor rehash of THE FLY, RODAN is an ordinary monster film with a fair selection of beasties, some very realistic, some not. The best of the three was the one we hadn't heard of; in this one the plot and acting are above the average for sf films. The auditorium was surprisingly full, mostly of middle-aged men who didn't look in the least like sf or horror fanatics. For them it was merely a warm, if not very comfortable, place to spend the night. As the house lights came up after each film, it was quite amusing to survey the steadily increasing numbers of sleepers, and the unlikely postures they contrived in an effort to get comfortable. The whole thing was an interesting experience, more like an endurance test really, and not one we'd wish to repeat too often.

On the Thursday of that week The Last Goon Show Of All was scheduled to be broadcast, and we'd intended to spend a quiet evening with radio and tape-recorder, when Pat suddenly remembered that it was Globe night. As it happened, we could have killed two birds with one stone if we'd arrived early enough, but in fact we arrived about 9pm, to be greeted with amazement by Fred Hemmings. Relieved at finding somebody I knew, I made the mistake of offering to buy Fred a drink....double vodka and cider? Yecch!! Pat was rapidly surrounded by Brian Burgess, who proceeded to show her his holiday snaps....taken at a South of France nudist camp. Hey, that reminds me, I never did get to see 'em. We met several people for the first time - Mike Sandow, Gray Boak, Rob Holdstock, and Greg Pickersgill to whom I talked at some length. I'd been dreading meeting this character, and so was pleasantly surprised to find him more human than I'd expected. Unfortunately, I've subsequently had to revise this opinion again. We discovered from Gray that we'd missed his monthly gathering the previous weekend, but decided to make up for it by calling in at the Bridges' on our way back to Derby - as it turned out, we felt so shattered we decided not to bother. We left about 11pm after a most enjoyable evening, but not before we'd finished the last of the Globe's excellent sausages.

About a month after that came NOVACON 2, about which I can't say very much, because it was for us rather a non-event. Like Chessmancon, it gave us the feeling that it was just happening rather than being organised by a committee. Even the programme was rather thin, but despite that we didn't seem to have the time to talk to anybody. It's almost true to say that the part we enjoyed most was the OMPAcon committee meeting on the Friday night. Next year's committee claim to have some new ideas - I certainly hope so.

About a month after that again, we and Gerbish visited the home of the Hemmings, ostensibly to catalogue Gray Boak's fanzine collection for the OMPAcon auction, though several other things happened also. We played our first game of "Diplomacy" on the Friday evening, carrying on until about 5am the following morning, when the struggle between Fred and Gerb, who had played before, was resolved in Fred's favour. We were also the guinea-pigs for Fred and Gerb's OMPAcon programme item idea, about which I must leave you wondering, for 'tis Top Secret. Should you ever visit Fred, I suggest you bring your own sleeping accommodation; Fred has the noisiest put-up in the known universe. It was a good job Pat and I weren't feeling randy, or we'd have woken the whole street.

FUGGHEAD OF THE YEAR AWARD....

....must, I'm afraid, go to Peter Weston as a result of his letter in the

latest MAYA. I was really amazed to see the editor of SPECULATION give out with such an unreasoned argument. Pete, how can you be so anti-pot, and yet indulge in alcohol at the same time? If you look at the Chessmancon photo-pages, you'll see a photo including yourself, captioned: "...Peter Weston, at a drunken sing-song at about 5am on the Sunday morning." Now if that's not "mixing your mind up with drugs," then I'd like to know what is. Can't you see that if alcohol, and even nicotine, were only discovered tomorrow, they'd be made illegal just as marijuana is? The only reason they're accepted is because they've been with us so long. I'm not denying that it may be a bad thing to take drugs of this nature, but please let's be rational in defining what a drug is. It would be irrelevant at this stage to go into all the relative merits and demerits of pot and alcohol, though it might be interesting to do so, once the basic premise I've outlined above has been discussed a little. Since you asked for people's feelings, here are mine, and I hope you get a lot of response since you've had the guts to set your feelings down on paper. With the view of helping the thing along, we're hoping to be able to publish nextish an excellent article on marijuana which we've had on hand for some time.

And now for a word or several from the female half of the partnership; since you've all been demanding that she expose herself in print, I'll depart from the typer (before she has a chance to belt me for that last crack) and allow her to regale you with a piece entitled....

THE REASON I'M NOT BURNING MY BRA

Now don't get me wrong; apart from the fact that the above action would result in a certain amount of discomfort to someone of my...er...proportions, I'm not against Women's Lib. Indeed, I'm a whole-hearted supporter of equal opportunity. There is no more ultimate frustration than to be denied an opportunity, not because of any concrete physical or mental deficiency, but through an act of sheer prejudice. I'm just realistic. You can legislate against unequal pay and maybe unequal opportunity, but you can't change attitudes so easily, and it is these attitudes which cause the real misery of being a second-class citizen. It's the little things, repeated, that annoy; visitors to our department ask me for directions, assuming that I'm a secretary; the run-controller will check with my boss to find out if the run I've put in is really O.K. But as I said, you can't legislate to make a 55-year-old man believe that a 25-year-old girl can know what she's doing. Attitudes take a long while to change. What you can do of course is to put on the aforementioned bra (well padded), a short skirt and some perfume and ask the run-controller nicely to submit your programme. He doesn't seem to ring your boss up then. In other words, a man will only accept a woman in a role he can recognise. It's easier to play the game than to fight the system.

AND THE POOR SHALL INHERIT....?

Where is the next generation coming from? This question was prompted by something one of our friends said whilst we were staying with them in London recently. Martin and Nicky both have degrees and good jobs and have been married about eighteen months. They have no children because they like their two-bedroomed flat, which they couldn't afford to buy on Martin's salary alone.

Martin said how worried he was about this, and that he thought the same thing must apply to other couples too, since no-one in their twelve-storey block, and very few people in the neighbouring blocks, had children either.

I was not entirely surprised to find this situation reflected in my department at work. There are 24 of us, all in the 24-35 age-group, all graduates; six are unmarried, but the others all have spouses with some sort of professional qualification and have been married two years or longer. Only four have children, and these are all over thirty.

If we were to have children now, it would mean a 50% drop in our income. We would be able (just taking into account tax-concessions) to keep our house, but that's about all. Our other expenses such as fan-pubbing, attending conventions, buying books and records, would have to go. This sort of financial problem, especially where the wife's salary approximates to the husband's, could be a major reason for the lack of children amongst professionally qualified and therefore presumably intelligent people. Also, the wife could be finding more satisfaction in her job than she would by stopping at home looking after a child. But whatever the reason, a large proportion of professionally qualified couples. Is the race breeding for minimum intelligence?

Alternatively one could theorise on the evidence of my boss and his wife, both in their mid-thirties, who have just had their first baby. Perhaps professional couples are just leaving it later, until the husband has a couple of promotions behind him and the differential in their salaries has increased, as it must do, and the couple has most of the material things it needs. But this still means that couples in this situation will have fewer children, since the older the woman is, the less likely she is to conceive - and the more likely it is that her child will be mentally or physically abnormal. So it comes to the same thing in the end; the race is breeding for lesser intelligence. ((P))

"THIS PRODUCT CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH"

In a recent survey the motor car was found to be one of the biggest single causes of death. In fact in the under-45 age group it beat all the others hands down, including such things as smoking, drugs, drink and heart-attacks. Can you see the motor manufacturers allowing this to be printed on the dashboard of every car:

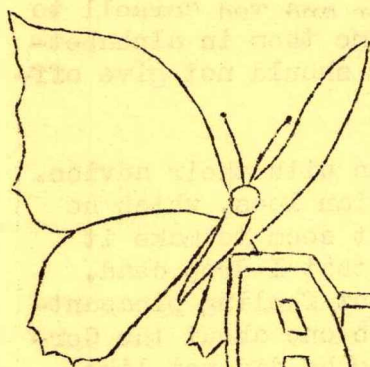
"This product can damage your health - fatally."

Somehow I don't think so - but why not?

((P))

TAKE ONE FAN, SOZZIE IT LIGHTLY....

Whilst visiting Fred Hemmings recently, the subject turned, naturally enough, to food, and an enjoyable half-hour or so was spent swapping recipes. Fred tried out one of his "creations" on us, which was pronounced superb by all those present. If any of you have any recipes which you consider to be your own inventions, I'd like to hear from you. We may even publish a few. Bear in mind, though, that a truly fannish recipe is one which can be prepared with a minimum of effort by a male bachelor who may not be in full control of his faculties, or by someone like Mike. ((P))



ALIENS AND ME

by

JAMES WHITE

What follows is a transcript of the Guest of Honour speech given by James at the 1971 Novacon. The title has been added by the editors. Our thanks to Peter Weston for donating a copy of the original script.

Ladies and gentlemen, I must begin by explaining why I am reading this speech instead of talking off the top of my head. One reason is that I have not got a mouth there. Another is that I have great difficulty in memorising things - if you don't believe that, later this evening, try asking me my name. As well, the sight of hundreds of eyes staring at me is unnerving. Even worse, as my speech progresses, will be the hideous aspect of hundreds of gaping mouths, yawning in my face.

The job of Guest of Honour at a convention like this is one which, by rights, should demand a long and rigorous apprenticeship, perhaps even a programme of genetic engineering, aimed at producing a being capable of going for long periods without sleep, with at least two hollow legs, in which to store the gallons of beer or tomato juice which tradition requires that he consume, and with the ability to produce scintillating conversation every time he opens his mouth - unless he is opening it for more beer or tomato juice.

I should make it clear at this point that I do not like beer. I do, however, like looking at and through the bottoms of large, cut-glass beer mugs, and I have, after many years of practice, trained my features to register an expression of enjoyment whilst drinking the stuff. But the sober truth - well, the truth, anyway - is that until they are able to serve transparent tomato juice, neat, in cut-glass pint mugs, I shall have to make do with beer.

But to get back to the subject of Guest-of-Honouring: in the absence of a course of studies which might have been able to fit me for the job, the only alternative seemed to be to seek the advice of past, and successful,

Guests of Honour - people like Brian Aldiss, John Brunner and Ted Carnell to name but a few. You notice how careful I have been to name them in alphabetical order, so as not to give offence. A Guest of Honour should not give offence, this early in the programme.

I must say that the earlier incumbents were very generous with their advice. Brian gave me some very interesting material on Jugoslavian loos, which he suggested that I incorporate in my speech, but I couldn't seem to make it fit. Ted - my agent and friend, alternately - suggested that I drop dead, for openers. In fairness I should tell you that he was not feeling pleasantly disposed towards me just then. I had just told him the one about the German soldier who, on being given a sandwich with a filling he did not like, opened it and exclaimed "Ach, tongue!"

John Brunner was extremely helpful. Whilst finishing a half of bitter he gave me a detailed outline for a talk, on one of the current aspects of science-fiction, which was both learned and controversial. Unfortunately, I was admiring cut-glass at the time and could not, I'm afraid, remember anything of what he told me. If I give the impression that I am jealous of John's ability to generate and communicate ideas, it is because I am.

Annie McCaffrey offered to lend me her Italian cavalry officer's riding cloak, but I am afraid that by wearing it I would risk excommunication from the Order of St. Fanthony. James Blish was very helpful, too, but somehow I felt that it would be terribly wrong, even sacriligious, to pass on his ideas without first having them chiselled into tablets of stone. Ken Bulmer told me - incidentally, isn't it odd that so many Guests of Honour, Blish, Brunner and Bulmer, are B's? - Ken told me to be myself, only louder. So if my shouting and screaming at you like this unnerves you, blame Ken.

There have been some Guests of Honour who not only spoke well, they also showed a fine example. I can remember Ted Tubb leading a procession of fans through a con hotel corridor at three in the morning, stopping at each bedroom door in turn, and all of them clinking their bottles together in unison and chanting "Go back to your wives". And there was the fan at the roof party during the Supermancon. He kept dropping bottles down the chimney and into my room, among others. He wasn't the Guest of Honour, now that I come to think of it, but he was most apologetic and inoffensive.

However, as well as being myself, only louder, I should say something about science-fiction - something interesting, intelligent and perhaps controversial. The trouble is that I don't know very much about science-fiction. I am a slow reader and an even slower writer, so I don't have the time to keep abreast of what everyone else is writing. That leaves me with only one subject on which I can speak with authority, and that is the intriguing, lovable, many-faced personality - I think maybe that should be many-faceted personality - that is myself.

But a two-day convention, like this one, does not give me enough time to fully develop this subject, so I must concentrate on one particular facet, and that is the empathy, understanding, perhaps even liking which I have grown

to feel for hairy things, and tailly things, and wee long-nebbed things and things which go slurp in the night. In short, I should like to tell you the real story of how the Sector General series was born.

It began in the early fifties, on a sunny afternoon on Ghod's front lawn, although at that time a few ignorant fans still insisted on calling him Walt Willis. We had finished our fan activity for the day, and were spread out on the grass, discussing broad matters of policy - Walt Willis, George Charters, John Berry, Bob Shaw, all names to be conjured with. Maybe that is why some of them have disappeared. As I said, we were relaxing, exchanging tremendous, mind-wrenching concepts in desultory fashion, and shooting at passing butterflies with our water-pistols.

I should explain that water-pistols had been introduced to Irish Fandom, and to British s-f conventions, by myself, chiefly because I am a stickler for verisimilitude. In 1952 I was feuding with a big name fan called Chuck Harris. I had also, just before the convention of that year, gone on a Cook's tour to Paris, during which I had filled my water-pistol at the steps under the Pont Neuf. I had done this so that, when I confronted Harris at the convention a few days later, I could squirt him and say, quite truthfully, that I left him wringing in the Seine.....

Anyway, we were shooting butterflies and getting to be very good at it. But somehow the thrill of the hunt was being diluted by feelings of guilt. The quarry was slow, and terribly stupid. When they crash-landed and we took pity on them, and dried them out until they qualified for their certificate of airworthiness again, they didn't even have enough sense to fly into the garden next door, which belonged to a dentist who did not have a water-pistol. So we declared butterflies to be a non-hostile species, and instead hunted wasp. But even this soon lost its appeal - some of them tried to sting us - and we returned to our fanactivity and/or pro writing. But the memory of those groups of miserable, bedraggled butterflies and half-drowned wasps drying out on Walt Willis's fence haunted me for a long time.

That shameful episode in my past has resulted, I now believe, in my taking the worms-eye view as often as possible where extra-terrestrial characters are concerned. Certainly it enabled me, at the Worcester convention this year, to meet my first millipede socially. We were introduced informally by Jack Cohen, who offered to let me take it home. It met quite a lot of people at Worcester as I remember, so some of you might also remember it. Nine inches long, about an inch in diameter, furry, mostly black with a silvery grey underside, feelers at the front and with an awful lot of legs - tentatively classified as DBRT. If you met it you must remember the thing, you couldn't mistake it even among the other hairy people present.

From the very first it showed itself to be friendly, quiet, housebroken and with many other endearing characteristics. Its legs, for instance, when they were repositioning themselves for a step forward, lifted and moved forward in waves from tail to head, which gave the impression that they were moving the wrong way, just like stagecoach wheels in old western movies. When I had established the parameters of its life-support requirements, and Jack had told

me that it would not be inconvenienced by the flight back to Belfast, I rang Peggy to tell her that I was bringing it home.

It's funny the way wives react to a situation like this. Another woman, an au pair girl, a purely platonic relationship with a millipede - the reaction is invariably the same. Even when I detailed its many good points, its friendliness, the fact that it was probably tax-deductible as a dependent relative, how the children would love it, the answer was still "No". I told her that it was dry and warm, not a bit like the snakes she had a thing about, and her "No" changed to "Yes, but....". But everyone knows that this is just a different, harder-to-answer "No".

She said "Yes, but the cat might eat it.....". So I'm afraid the millipede didn't have a leg to stand on. I don't really believe that it would have been in any danger from the cat, which is tolerant and moderate like the rest of the family. But with the situation being as it is at home, its continued survival could have depended on whether it was a Protestant or a Catholic millipede, and Jack didn't have this information. But Jack understood, and sympathised with me over my having to refuse his millipede. And later, when he very kindly ran me to the airport, he stopped by his house to introduce me to his python. This was another strong, silent character. He even let it handle me.

Knowing all this, and maybe even believing some of it, you can now appreciate the reasons why my extra-terrestrial characters are often more sympathetic than the human ones. In the past my human characters have tended to be a bit, well, clean-cut. With a character weighing half a ton, whose tegument looks like greasy seaweed, and with far too many legs and eyes and things, readers don't worry too much if it is also clean-cut. But when a human character is highly moral and sympathetic and, if you like, clean-cut, many readers seem to find difficulty in identifying with him. Maybe he is alien to their everyday experience, more alien, perhaps, than the extra-terrestrial characters. This worries me sometimes. It makes me wonder if I shouldn't introduce a little more nastiness, a touch of perversion perhaps, or if I should even try to write a story with, if you'll pardon the word, gender in it. Maybe one of these years I, too, shall write a frank, honest, daring, filthy book. But again, maybe not.

We are in the middle of a tidal wave of such forthright books. As well as being explicit about their gender, many of them display a high degree of sensitivity and compassion, so that they illuminate as well as shock. But an awful lot of them simply shock us into insensibility and boredom. As a result the whole business of love and sex - oh, sorry about that - is in danger of being down-graded and diluted, until it becomes a persistent, but mild craving, which can easily be satisfied anywhere, at any time, like popping in for a beer. This also worries me, in case I have been using the wrong brand of beer.

But this tidal wave will pass. Its best elements, like those of earlier waves, will be absorbed and the rest discarded, and a new wave will come rolling up. What exactly it will be like is impossible to say. But I think there

are indications, based on such things as the increasing popularity of historical romances - romantic romances, not grunt and groan mixed wrestling - and the public reaction to films like "Love Story", and the interesting implications of the recent billing of God the Son as a superstar. It is possible that the next wave will take the form of a very interesting and surprising - and maybe even violent - reaction to certain aspects of our swinging society, a wave of neo-Puritanism, if you like. Personally, I wouldn't like.

I do not approve of fanatically bad people, or of religious zealots - people are much more interesting, and likeable, if they are moderately good. But the point I am trying to make is that, if such a wave is going to engulf us, I may be able to continue doing my own thing until it becomes fashionable again.

I should like to conclude, or maybe even end, by thanking all of you for listening to me, and by thanking the con committee for inviting me to be the Guest of Honour and, in so doing, giving you no choice but to listen to me. This has not been an informative or controversial or even a very serious speech. The reason for this is probably that, where I come from, things are very serious - often dead serious - at times, and you have given me the chance to escape for a few days into quiet and civilised surroundings - well, civilised anyway. And now that this awful, interminable nightmare of a speech is over - that's how I feel about it, and I'm not on the receiving end - I shall be able to relax and start enjoying the con.

Thank you.

((Editors' note: readers should remember that James' remarks concerning Ted Carnell were made before the latter's unfortunate death, and should therefore be taken in the spirit in which they were given.))

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LURKING AHEAD Those of you who enjoy that sort of thing are probably having a merry gloat over the fact that, for the third successive issue, the contents of this magazine bear little relation to what we said they'd be. The reason this time is that OMPACon committee work is beginning to eat into the time we set aside for zine production, hence the smaller-than-promised size of this. How Fred Hemmings finds the time to produce VIEWPOINT we'll never know. However, to please the merry gloaters among you, we'll continue to play the game, albeit with a little more caution. Now let's see, how can we phrase it this time? Ah yes. Among the items which we probably have in store for future issues, the following may or may not appear next time; the conclusion of the Chessmancon interview; "How to Publish a Golden-Age Fanzine" by Eric Bentcliffe; fan-fiction by persons unspecified; more book reviews, plus the usual features. There - nothing much can go wrong with that, can it?.....can it???

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Professor Fugghhead says that the Principle of Conversation of Matter states that fat people talk less than thin ones.....



UNEASY RIDER

PHIL PAYNE continues the story of his American tour.

All too soon it was Sunday, September 3rd. and our stay at the camp was over. Most of our friends had left the week before, but it was still a little sad saying goodbye to the place that had been home for the last couple of months. So, after a brief visit to the bar to bid farewell, we picked up our bags and started hitching. We had bought one of the three-week Greyhound bus passes, but the nearest boarding point was in Scranton, fifty miles away. It was not too easy hitching, as there were two of us, with associated luggage, but there was no hurry as we had twelve hours before our bus left, at 3.30 the following morning. We aimed to do most of our travelling at night, thus eliminating accommodation costs, and reducing the monotony of the long journeys.

All went well and, after a few hours' sleep, we pulled into Buffalo at about 11am. Rapidly switching buses we crossed the border into Canada and made the short journey to Niagara falls. The waterfalls themselves are beautiful, but the tourist trade has converted the surrounding town into a sort of super-Blackpool. You can see the falls from every conceivable angle. The method I chose was to go on a boat, the "Maid of the Mists", which takes you right up into the horseshoe of the falls, and for a short while you are surrounded on three sides by this fantastic, roaring sheet of water.

That evening we caught a bus out and headed for Boston, a very interesting city, despite the fact that most of its attractions celebrate the War of Independence. There is a route - the Freedom Trail - marked out along the pavements which we, like all the other tourists, followed. It shows the major points of interest, though after a while one tends to get fed up with our defeat being constantly rubbed in. After that we crossed the river to Cambridge, home of Harvard and the M.I.T. The latter, in particular, is a fascinating university, very modern with superb facilities - quite a change from the dreaming spires of Oxford.

Mid-afternoon we joined another bus for the short ride down to New York, where we had friends. We stayed with them overnight and then the next day (Wednesday) went to see a friend from camp who lived in Long Island. We also spent a short while in Manhattan. New York is a terrifying place - the huge buildings and wide streets make you feel so tiny. And it is very dirty and unfriendly. Even the people, on the outside, are unfriendly, but that is a result of their environment - once you get to know them, they are as friendly as any Americans. It's just that the majority of them walk round in fear, because of the frighteningly high incidence of violence there.

We spent that night with our friends, but had no desire to stay in the vicinity, so next morning we moved on to Washington D.C. We saw all the usual and proper sights - the White House, the Washington Monument, the Pentagon, the Capitol and the Smithsonian Institute - but everything was so widely spread apart that we were soon worn out with just walking around. So we moved on. Our next target was New Orleans, but it was too far to go in one night, so we broke our journey at Atlanta and spent the day there, but sadly there was little to do. There was one unforgettable sight, though - the Regency Hyatt House Hotel. This 22-storey hotel has a lobby-cum-lounge open right up to a glass roof. The elevators - decorated glass cylinders - run up the outside of a huge column, and the cocktail bar has a parasol-shaped cover suspended from the roof. The whole effect is unbelievable, like something out of "Things to Come".

And so to New Orleans, a stop we soon regretted. There are only two attractions in New Orleans: the famous Mardi Gras festival, held at Easter, and the Vieux Carre, the centre of the jazz- and night-clubs. But this was September, we didn't like jazz - sorry, Mike! - and it was morning anyway, so the Vieux Carre was dirty and desolate. And the climate! New Orleans is on a level with part of the Sahara, so it's hot, and it's near the sea, so it's humid. The combination is deadly. We spent a lot of time hopping in and out of air-conditioned shops, and ended up in a cinema, as the only way to stay cool.

By now we were getting tired of travelling and wandering around American cities. Originally we had intended to visit the NASA centre at Houston, but opening times meant we would either have had to stay overnight in New Orleans or spend all day in Houston. So we scrubbed that and went straight through Houston to Dallas, and then on to Oklahoma City, Albuquerque and Flagstaff, taking two nights and a day. Flagstaff is the nearest Greyhound terminal to the Grand Canyon - our next destination - so we hastily changed buses and went to see the famous Big Ditch.

And what a sight! The most incredible thing I have ever seen. You could just stand there and look at it and not really believe it was real. For the factually-minded it's ten miles wide, twenty-six miles long and one mile deep. That's a hell of a hole! There are many ways to see the place; you can take a mule-trip down to the bottom and back - if you book months in advance. You can walk to the bottom and back - if you're energetic and have eight hours to spare. You can even see it from a helicopter - if you're stinking rich. Or you can go on a guided coach tour of the South Rim - if you're poor

and lazy like us. Whatever you do, you will never get over the immense grandeur of the place. It has the great advantage over Niagara Falls of being a National Park, and thus relatively unspoilt. All too soon we were out of time (we couldn't afford to spend a night there) and we left as the rocks were turning unbelievable colours in the light of the setting sun.

And so to Los Angeles, where we had friends, and where we settled down for a rest. We had eleven days until our flight home on the 23rd and at first only intended staying a few days before moving on. But the thought of spending any length of time on a Greyhound bus again sufficiently deterred us, so we stayed put - a pity really, as Los Angeles is a bad city to stay in. It's so big that you can't really get from one point to another without a car. And of course, there's the ever-present smog.

We did travel out once, to Mexico. We just crossed the border and spent the day in Tijuana, which isn't much of a place, and what there is is geared exclusively to the American tourist. There was a lot of poverty as well. Just outside the town proper was a large shanty town, with houses made from cardboard boxes. Still, it was quite fun haggling over the price of things with the shopkeepers.

The one other event of note before we left Los Angeles happened on our last day. We had met an American couple in a bar the night before, and they invited us down to their house by the beach for the day. We spent most of our time on the glorious golden sand, under the bright hot sun, occasionally popping into the Pacific. It was marvellous, and so peaceful, being midweek in September.

Then it was time to move on once more, and we caught an overnight bus to San Francisco, where we spent the next day riding the cable-cars and looking at the Golden Gate. It's quite a pretty city, better than most, but it had its ugly side as well. That night we slept at the airport - Oakland, just outside San Francisco, ready for our flight at 11am the next morning. We came back via the polar route, and so the flight took only ten hours. Sadly I stayed awake all the time, and as it was 6am local time when we landed, it took me a while to adjust to the time difference.

So I was back in England, after probably the best summer I have ever spent. I shouldn't like to live in America, but it's a great place to visit, and I intend to go back next year. I would urge anyone else with the chance to do the same - it could be the experience of your lifetime. My only advice is - get a car when you're over there. It would make life a lot easier.

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SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD Across: 1 Alphaville. 8 Star. 9 Leinster
10 Cinema. 11 Engine. 12 Nor. 13 Angel.
15 Esper. 17 Hal. 19 Paulie. 21 Enigma. 23 Stop Amis. 24 Tenn. 25 Enterprise
Down: 2 Lithian. 3 Horse. 4 Vulcan. 5 Leiber. 6 Ensigns. 7 Queen. 14 Eclipse
16 Edmonds. 17 Helmet. 18 Lesser. 20 Altar. 22 Inter.

Sender of the first correct entry was once again PHILIP PAYNE.

SEEN ON THE ZINE SCENE

Fanzines received since the last issue went to press, briefly reviewed by Mike.

CYPHER 8 (84pp/A4/Mimeo) from James Goddard and Mike Sandow, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants., U.K. 20p or 5 for £1 (obviously).

About half of this issue is devoted to E. C. Tubb, which made it required reading for me. There's a short reminiscent piece by Tubb himself, and Phil Harbottle does his usual thing on Tubb and early British sf, plus a bibliographical review of his early novels. Excellent stuff. The rest of the issue is rather poor; the cartoon strip, though quite funny, is as difficult to decypher (whoops) as ever. Walter Gillings says nothing new quite well about Wyndham, preceded by a strange and boring interview with some Doomwatch chappie. I did like the weird humour of Paul Walker's pseudo-factual piece on the American Horned Eagle, though. In the lettercolumn, Harry Warner stands out like an oasis in a desert of mostly awful sf criticism. There always seems to be at least something good in CYPHER, but on the other hand there's too much that I find simply not worth reading. ***

IDIOCY COUCHANT 2 (14pp/4to/Mimeo) from Arthur Cruttenden, 31 Heath Lodge Site, Welwyn, Herts., U.K. Free for the usual (I think).

This looks much better than the first issue did; at least all the pages are the same size! ¹/₂ writes pretty well, and the zine would really be better if he didn't print LoCs like these, which don't say anything worth printing, and instead filled the space with his own writing. Keith Bridges' fanzine reviews add a bit of variety. The overall impression I got was one of friendly faanishness, and it goes to show - dare I say it again? - that good layout is not essential, merely a pleasant bonus. ***

M31 2 (52pp/US4to/Mimeo) from Ron L. Clarke, 78 Redgrave Road, Normanhurst, NSW 2076, Australia. (No spare copies).

Neatly produced but uninspired, that's how I found this one. Despite the presence of two sex-slanted articles, plus a fair amount of discussion of the same subject in the lettercol, there was just nothing in here that I could get interested in. In addition to the above there are a couple of pieces of fiction and Aussiefam Bob Smith talking about his fanish career. This latter I found the most interesting thing in the issue. To be fair, some of the letters seem quite interesting, but they refer to an issue of THE MENTOR, which I haven't seen. ***₁

MAIFUNCTION 2 (17pp/4to/Mimeo) from Pete Presford, 10 Dalkeith Road, South Reddish, Stockport SK5 7EY, Cheshire, U.K. Free for the usual?

If you really want to know how I feel about this one, Ian Williams says it, more or less, in the latest MAYA. As it is, I can't raise the enthusiasm to comment on it, except to say that it's pretty awful. *sigh* ***₁

MAULE'S WELL 1 (4pp/4to/Mimeo) and MAYA 5 (32pp/4to/Mimeo) both from Ian Maule, 13 Weardale Avenue, Forest Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, NE 12 OHX, U.K. The latter available for the usual or 20p (sample free).

If there's one thing preventing MAYA from becoming a first-rank zine in the wider sense (it's already one of the best in Britain) it must be that the editor doesn't come across very well in his own writing. Ian obviously realises this, because the stated purpose of MAULE'S WELL is to improve his writing style. I can't see much improvement so far; just over half of it is devoted to NOVACON 2, only mildly interesting, the events described and the description itself being about equally to blame. More interesting are the sections about Chuck and Dave's bookshop, and pornography (no connection, of course).

MAYA itself, on the other hand, is absolutely superb this time around. I can't imagine any fannish fan not enthusing over it. Just run over in your mind the things you'd consider essential to a good fannish fanzine, and I'm willing to bet you'd find a good selection of them here; close on Dave Rowe's heels (see TTW 3) Andrew Stephenson bemoans the artist's lot, and bemoans it very convincingly (not surprisingly, since AMES is a lot of artist). Ian Williams, at the top of his rather variable form, reviews his early fan life, plus a few fanzines; Darrell Schweitzer rambles entertainingly on a variety of subjects, and there's fiction from Lisa Conesa (I didn't get this one). Oh, and a fine lettercol, but that goes without saying. A pity Ian's not as good a writer as he is an editor.

**** $\frac{1}{2}$

RICHARD E. GEIS 2 (46pp/US4to/Mimeo) from Himself, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211, U.S.A. Available for trades or \$1.

The mixture exactly as before, except that Alter-Ego is a little more dominant. The art of fan-writing cozes from every page. This is an education, in more ways than one.

SFINX 6 (26pp/A4/Litho) from Allan Scott, New College, Oxford. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ p (I think).

Now that MACROCOSM is in its death-throes, this must be the only amateur all-fiction magazine in Britain. They've opened their doors to outsiders now, so contributions from outside the university are welcomed (AMES has a piece of art herein, for example). There are five stories, not all successful to the same degree, but at least they're all literate. I haven't the space to go into each one, but my favourite was Kev Smith's very funny untitled piece. I can recommend this even to haters of amateur fiction, I think.

*** $\frac{1}{2}$

THE TURNING WORM 3 (44pp/A4/Mimeo) from John Piggott, Jesus College, Cambridge, CB5 8BL, U.K. For the usual or 40p.

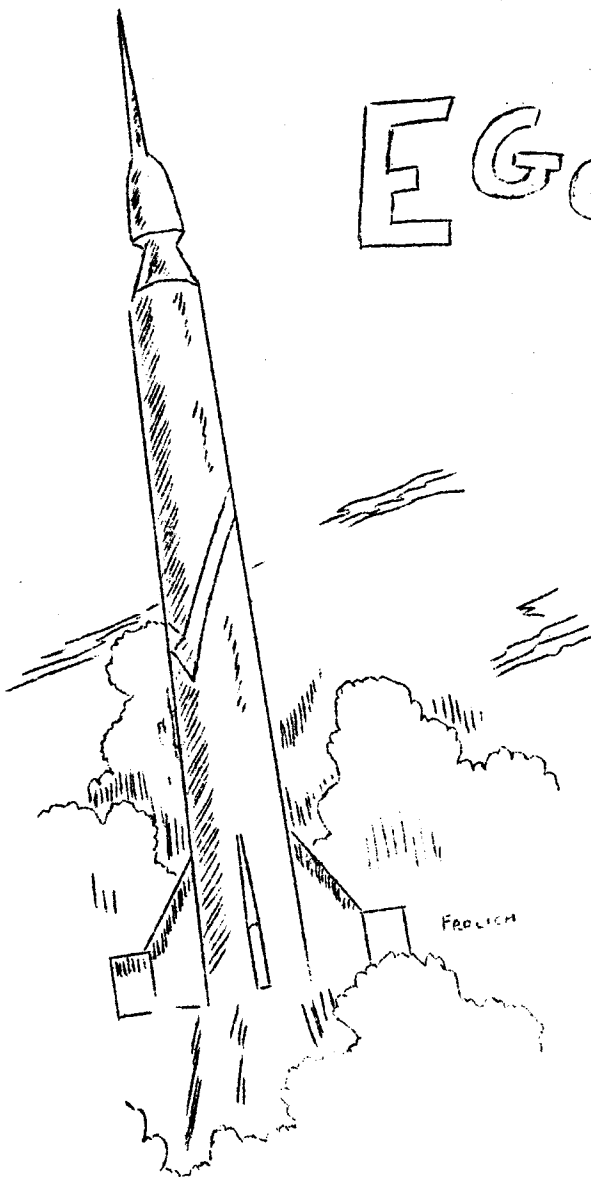
The fact that this zine consists of page after page of fairly solid print and yet has been so well received says a lot for the quality of the contents. TTW is rather like an art-less MAYA, except that John is a better writer than Ian. Contributors are Brian Temple, Ian Maule, Williams & Penman and Dave Rowe.

WOMBAT 3a (16pp/4to/Mimeo) from Ron. L. Clarke (address above). Free?

An all-poetry issue, hence not my cup of beverage, I'm afraid.

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EGO BOOSTER



Pat takes a critical look at the 67th.
OMPA mailing.

This mailing produced a few outstanding items: in my opinion they were:

ERG 40's cover.
Jeeves' "Down Memory-Bank Lane" (ERG 40)
Skel's editorial (HELL 6)
"In Search of the Tropical Nude" by
Robert Saute (SHELTAR 11)
Cy Chauvin's column in ARCANUM 1.
Bobbie Gray's "A Small Wilderness"
(VAGARY 25).

A couple of these items were written by non-OMPans and are thus ineligible for the egoboo poll. This seems a shame, as a good article should result in some egoboo, if only for the editor who went to the trouble of getting the material and putting it through OMPA.

OFF-TRAILS 67 (The Noble AE)

I'm sure we voted in the egoboo poll soon after receiving the October mailing, but if you've no record of our votes, let us know and we'll repeat

them for you.

ARCANUM 1 (Jim Goddard)

I really enjoyed Cy's column, however I must disagree with Leon Taylor; in my opinion fans are not intellectuals, especially in Britain where "intellectual" is a much sought-after epithet. However, fans may well be frustrated by their jobs, say, both in intellectual terms and in terms of personal fulfillment. I believe that a person becomes a fan because of some dissatisfaction with their society; they get no personal satisfaction from their job or in their relationships with workmates, family and friends. They seek a society in which they can express themselves better; if their dissatisfaction is intellectually based, they write; if it is socially based, they become faanish

fen, who often gaffiate when fully occupied by their job (e.g. Walt Willis). Most fen seem to have a collecting mania - books, fanzines and records seem the most popular, but there are also instances of cameras, musical instruments and even games. Cy should have known it's not necessary to be balanced to be in OMPA - Only Mad Persons Admitted? (Who said that?). The issue was spoiled a bit by poor hand-cutting and headings; a faned of your experience hasn't got much excuse for this.

BUNDALOHN QUARTERLY 1 & LOEBROG 6 (John Bangsund)

Is Australia funny? The answer is no, nothing is funny unless it possesses in the telling something which strikes a chord in someone's sense of humour. Nothing is funny until you laugh at it. Bundalohn Quarterly certainly isn't funny - to me.

ERG 40 (Terry Jeeves)

Marvellous cover - well worth the cost of having it electro'd. "Down Memory-Bank Lane" was the best in this issue - excruciatingly funny. I must disagree with Alan Burns' conclusions though; the style of the "Lens" books is so old-fashioned it makes me embarrassed to think that these are being read today as examples of science fiction. I was glad to see the bigger lettercol - a great improvement. Thanks for the egoboo.

FANJAN 1 (Jan Jansen)

Nice to meet you at Novacon. Did you get the tape O.K., and how was the recording? I liked "Where have all the flowers gone?" immensely - a nice fresh outlook on mailing comments, to me anyway. I found the comments on Belgian fandom interesting, and I hope you'll continue to do this and strengthen the ties of international fandom.

EULOGY 1 (Phil Spencer)

Welcome back, faint fan, and congratulations on your predicament. Thanks for the egoboo, but since you seem to like LURK, why not try reviewing it so we can find out why? I'm afraid my art-mistress concentrated on the artistic souls, leaving those who couldn't already draw to their own devices. Blame her for the artwork, or lack of it, in this issue of LURK. I thought your Cuthberts were a good examples of how a good caption can make a success of an indifferent drawing.

F.H.T.V. 8 (John & Jane Coombe)

You deserve some special praise again for the coloured covers, but the decimal price did spoil the effect a bit. I think many of your non-farming readers won't realise how close to the truth "August on t'farm" is; I'm thinking especially of the tale of the combine harvester. A friend who runs a farm recently told me a tale of woe very similar to this.

FHTV is one of the most improving zines in OMPA. With a little more care on straightness and creases in stencils, this would be even better. There's certainly nothing wrong with the contents.

HELL 6 & 1220 (Brian, Paul et al.)

Here's another in the series of diabolical covers, if you'll pardon the expression. Why can't you go back to the fine cartoon-style cover a la HELL 2? Skell is developing a fine witty editorial style. I don't think Mike would have had as much patience in that situation, which is sad as we've got a glass front door. HELL is a good zine, but after six issues it doesn't seem to have developed an overall direction. I don't know whether this is intentional, but it does give the impression that you'd print almost anything.

1220 reads well in retrospect, which is surprising, since none of the authors was completely sober or completely awake.

LES SPINGE 24, 25 & 26 & PABLO 16 (The Pardoes)

Four items in a mailing must be some kind of record. Nice to see SPINGE back amongst us again. Many thanks for the kind words about DUNK. I think many people over-estimate the difficulties of commuting to and from London every day. We only live about four miles from where I work, but on a bad night it can take me 1½ hours to get home by car. To us the only deterrent to moving to the London area is the price of housing.

'OT ON THE TRAILS 11 (Gerbish)

Your piece on Cornwall failed to allow for the language barrier. What the hell's an oggie, I thought - some deficient kind of moggie? Oggie is the rather unflattering name we call my section leader (when he's not there) but that really couldn't have been it either. Fortunately all was revealed by yourself at Novacon 2 - one of the few things that did happen that weekend - and on re-reading the piece I found it very amusing indeed.

SHEIWA THARI 10 & 11 (le fault du Eney)

Number 11 was very good; both articles were well worth reading, and Robert Saute's travelogue was probably the best piece of descriptive writing I've read in a zine this year. By comparison number 10 was very dull, since it was largely devoted to one topic for which I couldn't raise much enthusiasm. I find this kind of specialisation a common fault in your zines.

SPECULUM 5 (Tom Collins)

You should have known that publishing something radically different, like IS, always causes a lot of adverse comment from the people who can't easily adapt to new ideas. However, you should be happy with the nice things people are saying now.

VAGARY 25 (Bobbie Gray)

I must express how much we were pleased to see
The long-awaited return of Roberta Gray and her magazine VAGARY.
When her well-known green cover and tatty stencil-cutting we did espy
We said "Ho! This is a sight which will surely delight any OMPAN's eye."
Her piece of prose entitled "A Small Wilderness" was grand;
May her fame as an accomplished writer spread throughout the land.

As I hope you can see from these few lines, we are also McGonagall fan,
 Which must surely put us among a very select body of women and men.
 In writing this I have found that it is quite easy to imitate the McGonagall
 style,
 Though to capture the true essence of his work is more difficult by a mile.

Those of you who are blessed with a fine memory
 Will be much surprised to see this poetry,
 For when our publishing career we did commence
 We said that poetry would be notable in our zine by its absence.

Some might say we haven't broken our word.

VIEWPOINT 9 & PAPER TIGER 1 (Fred Hemmings)

I found your editorial in V8, with its bland statement of policy, a little boring and very difficult to comment on. The ed. should add meat and flavour to his zine via his opinions. I hope you can keep Jhim Lhinwood as your fanzine reviewer - at least he'll be seen a bit more often if you do - but if he really feels that way about tradezines, surely the answer is selective trading.

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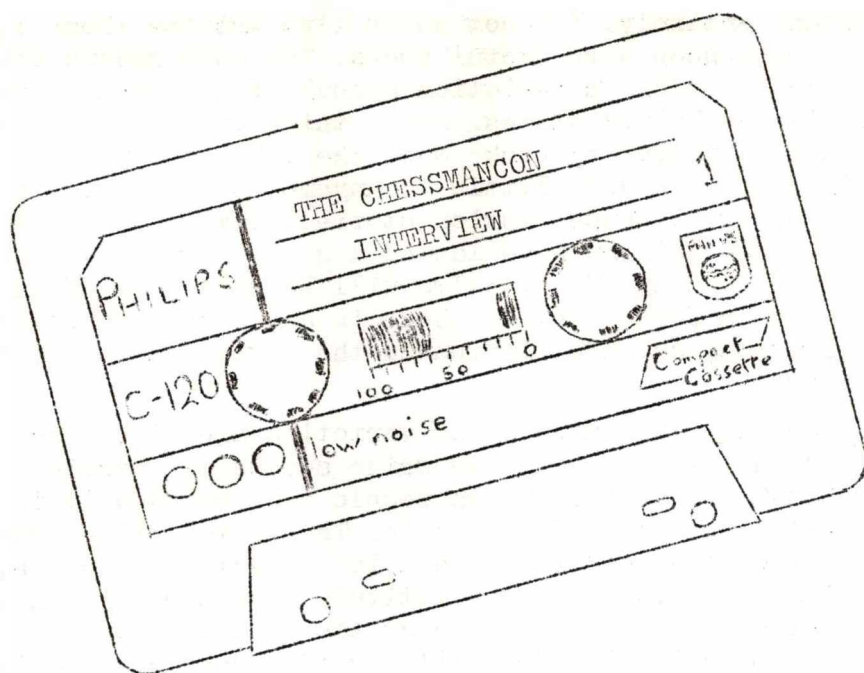
And now a brief summary of some facts and figures relating to the past year of OMPA. This information was compiled in rather a hurry for the purpose of filling this space, so our apologies for any mistakes.

<u>Mailing</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Page count:	302	447	204	354	1307
Items:	20	25	14	22	81
Contributing members:	16	17	12	14	

<u>Member</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Average</u> ¹	<u>Member</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Average</u> ¹
Hemmings*	8	184	46	Hickman	1	30	8
Robinson & Skel**4		173	43	Jansen	1	14	7
Mearas**	3	96	32	Bangsund	4	25	6
Collins	4	108	27	Spencer	2	24	6
Jeeves	4	81	20	Gray	1	22	6
Coombes	5	68	17	OMPA (Offtrails)	4	22	6
Conesa*	2	64	16	Carrigan	3	21	5
Eney	5	64	16	Long	2	21	5
Boak & Patrizio	2	62	16	Bishop	3	19	5
Cheslin*	2	42	11	Handfield	2	8	4
Goddard	2	20	10	Piper	2	8	4
Pardoes	4	38	10	Feron	1	6	3
Walker*	4	35	9	Grigg	2	7	2
Shears	1	32	8	Metcalfe	2	3	1

¹Page count averaged over number of mailings for which member was eligible.

*Combozine contribution included in activity. Combozine not included in item count. **As above, but activity also includes one-shot (50:50).



This is the transcript of a taped interview with a number of leading sf writers and editors, which took place at the 1972 Easter Convention. Questionmaster Ken Bulmer asked the panel four questions, the answers to two of which appear here; the remainder will be published in the next issue. Our thanks to Dave Rowe for the loan of the tape.

Q: Why do you write science fiction when there are so many more interesting types of fiction?

Larry Niven: The reason I write science fiction most of the time is because that is where I got all of my ideas. However there's more to say on the subject; you think of science fiction as a sub-class of fiction, and maybe it is, but most of the other sub-classes fall within the vast group of fantasy. Fantasy is a great realm, enormous. Within fantasy you find little clusters like mainstream fiction, and Gothics, and nurse novels, and detective stories and so forth, and within a much larger borderline you find science fiction. Science fiction is anything that doesn't fit into the other classification, provided it has some element of possibility to it. Eliminate the idea of possibility and you're in fantasy. Naturally most of my ideas are going to fall in science fiction. The same is true of any writer with a sufficiently big imagination.

Fred Pohl: In the first place I deny that there are more interesting things to write than science fiction. I've written all sorts of things at one time or another; I've published sixty or seventy books - I've lost the exact number but it's in there somewhere - and at least twenty of them were out of science fiction entirely and out of what is generally considered to be

the area of fantasy entirely. I'm not sorry I've written them; I greatly enjoyed them; I thought some were useful books. The most recent one is called "Practical Politics"; it's a non-fiction manual of how to make your way in the party machinery in the United States, and I think it's a valuable book and a good book, but it's a temporary book; once the 1972 elections are over in the United States it will mean very little to anyone, because the phenomenon it describes is temporary. Science fiction stories, I think, last for ever - the good ones do. Jonathan Swift's have lasted a good long time. I think Doc Smith and Edgar Rice Burroughs and H. G. Wells will be read long after the current best-sellers have been forgotten. If there is any reason to write other than immediate satisfaction, science fiction is the best way, to me, to find these other satisfactions.

Harry Harrison: No, all the interesting varieties are within science fiction. When the time comes to write something outside of science fiction, like STONEHENGE, I do it, though people tell me even it is a science fiction novel - I'll buy that if I have to. The writer writes what he feels a need to write; I feel the need to write a lot of science fiction. I feel that in science fiction there is much more latitude than there is in any other form of fiction. I have no particular desire at the moment to write a mainstream novel; when I do I'll write it. Up until now I've been very satisfied by science fiction, and all my needs are satisfied therein.

James White: You rat! Well, I started writing science fiction because I read so much of it. I couldn't believe in Westerns: the technical bits in Westerns didn't come across - gunslinging and all that - so I thought it was better to have Delameters and Lensmen than Westerns, because then they could ride on spaceships. That's a silly question!

Bob Shaw: I think it's a silly question. You said there are far more interesting things to write about than science fiction, and of course you don't believe it yourself. You threw that in to start us off. The reason I write science fiction is I don't think it's worth while writing anything else. Science fiction people tend to be the most interesting people in the world to talk to, and science fiction is the only viable form of literature today which is worth reading.

Don Wollheim: Why not science fiction? Personally I started writing science fiction because naturally I liked reading it, and I started editing science fiction for much the same reason. I think science fiction is the stuff of the present, I think it's ingrained in the whole society today, it's what's doing, it's where the game is, and it's where we're going. It predicts all this and you feel you're with the modern times. I think that's why more and more people are reading science fiction, why youth is taking it up. For better or for worse, that's what the situation is. Your Westerns, your mysteries, your historicals all really belong to a past concern, something that isn't really in the modern stream of life. Science fiction is, that's it.

Q: What are your future plans?

Fred Pohl: I have no secrets about my plans, because I mostly have hopes. What I would like to do would be to publish the best science fiction I can find, in all categories. When I was editing GALAXY and IF I was a sort

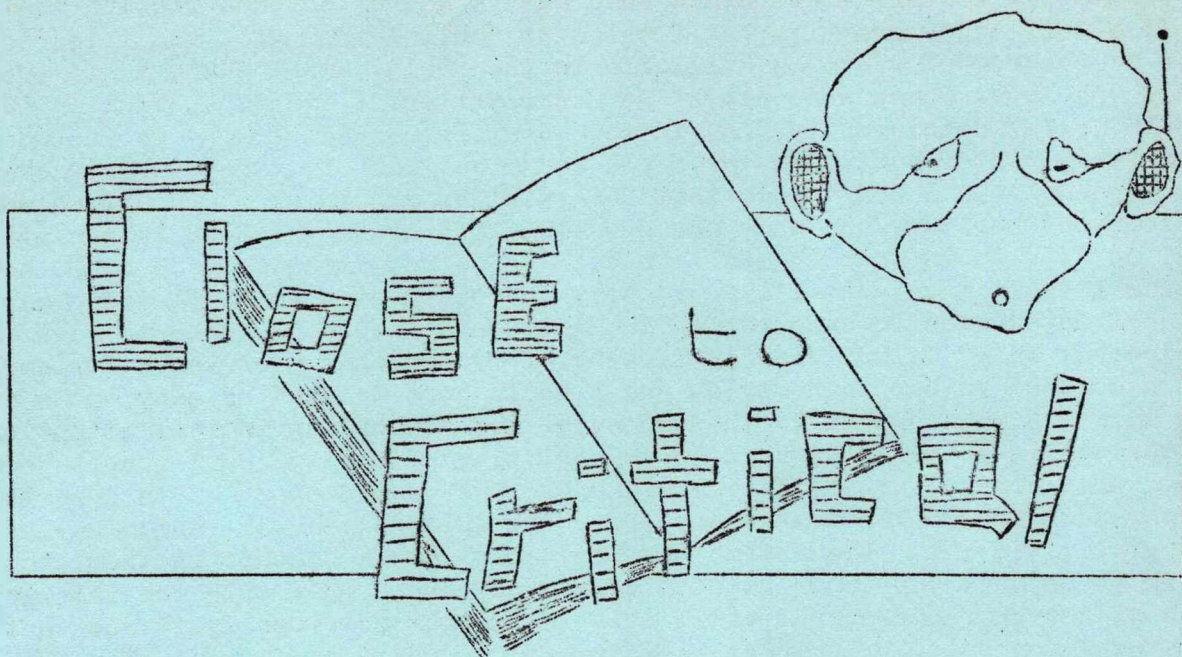
of permissive editor; there are a good many kinds of science fiction that I don't myself enjoy greatly, but I tried to publish them all, and tried to give a spectrum of what was available in the field, and I think I did pretty well, you know. There were almost no major writers I didn't publish in GALAXY and IF fairly consistently, and in the book list at ACE I hope to include almost every writer active in the field today who has any innovative or creative pretensions. I don't know that this will be possible; there are so many writers now working, and they are speaking with so many voices that whether I will be able to include them all in one list which amounts to 75 or 80 books a year I don't know, but I'll sure try. The sorts of science fiction that I am most interested in encouraging are the sorts that seem to me to have been neglected; in my talk yesterday I spoke of my personal preference for emphasis on content rather than style, and I would hope to find as many books as I can in which the content is the object of the author's principal attention, so that he is thinking of what he is saying, what sort of worlds he is describing, what sort of scientific gimmicks or laws or phenomena he is describing, rather than the feelings of the people. I'm quite clear that human beings are important, I'm quite clear that they have a place in science fiction, but it seems to me that many current stories are concerned only with the internal life of the characters, and while this is alright for itself, it does not exhaust the potential of science fiction.

Brian Aldiss: I am currently working on three books. To take them in the order in which I suppose they will appear; first of all there's my history of science fiction, THE BILLION YEAR SPREE. I believe that it will be the first history of science fiction to be written. Certainly it will be the first one by a working writer, to overlook the whole field and survey it in a critical form that is intended for a general reader. On the whole, my idea of my particular public is a general readership.

My second book will be EIGHTY MINUTE HOUR, which is subtitled A SPACE OPERA. It's literally an opera; it takes very much the traditional form of the space opera in that it is about a lot of things being juggled at once, like a juggler's multicoloured balls. There's the Cap-Comm treaty, the moving of the international dateline, the introduction of universal contraception, the discovery of something unpleasant on Mars, and various other items that at the moment I forget. And every now and then the characters, who seem at the moment to number about two hundred, have to be cut down rather severely, drop whatever they're doing, and sing a little song about science. For instance, "Evolution Bothers Me", that's one title that occurs to me. It really is an attempt at a space opera. Quite straightforward, anyone could read it.

And the third book is A RUDE AWAKENING, which is the third in my sextet of books about Horatio Stubbs that started with THE HAND-REARED BOY and A SOLDIER ERECT. And perhaps that order of priorities alone will tell you something about where my loyalties lie, because my publishers are dunning me to produce A RUDE AWAKENING, which is already a year behindhand, and God damn it, I'm writing my bloody history of science fiction for ten hours a day, when I could be making a hell of a lot more cash writing the other thing, but there you are; cash is never a prime motivation.

Larry Niven: I am in the middle of one collaboration novel, one novel of my own, and a series. I've written a series that now amounts to



THE SENSUOUS DIRTY OLD MAN by "Dr. A" (Isaac Asimov): Signet 1972: \$1.25

You thrilled over "The Sensuous Woman"!

You raved about "The Sensuous Man"!

And now, the greatest of all, we have "The Sensuous Dirty Old Man"! In this unabashed handbook, the well-known senile sexologist Dr. A explains in graphic detail the techniques by which any aspiring dirty old man can become truly sensuous!

Yes folks, Asimov's at it again. Having announced a while back that he was writing a book on sex for teenagers, the subject appears to have gone to his head. In this book he urges everyone to be a dirty old man - you needn't even be old - and, furthermore, to glory in their "dirtyhood". He gleefully cites examples of dirty old men who did just this, and who lived long and prospered well, like Benjamin Franklin, as opposed to those who tried to hide it and died young, like Alexander Hamilton.

But it is not as a propaganda leaflet on behalf of Dirty Old Men that this book will enter the annals of publishing history, but rather as an unprecedented sex manual. In explicit detail Dr. A explains what every Dirty Old Man should know about how to leer and what to leer at. Listen to him recount one of the problems of Dirty Old Men today:

"Without the constriction of the bra, the average young lady, moving forward in a healthy, free-swinging stride, presents what can only be described as a moving target. It is therefore difficult for the dirty old man to get to the

point; for the point shifts. It moves wildly at the slightest bodily motion. It jiggles, wobbles and dangles; heaves, yaws and rolls; vibrates, oscillates and undulates. The dirty old man may find himself trying to follow every movement by use of the eye muscles, head muscles, or both. This is not advisable. Aside from the fact that in the attempt to concentrate too entirely on the target, he may walk into a wall, the constant movement of eyes or head, or both, will induce dizziness, headache, nausea and even that dread affliction of the inveterate leerer, watering eyes. The whole complex of symptoms makes up the syndrome of mammamobilism."

And so on. Overall it's a good-natured, humorous book, with some beautiful turns of phrase, such as mentioning that the Andromeda galaxy is 200,000,000,000,000,000,000 city blocks away. However, for \$1.25 you only get a 150-page paperback, including 27 full-page illustrations and some very large print. In fact, the book only runs to a little over 15,000 words, but if you're rich, or an inveterate Asimov fan, then do buy it. If you're neither of these, find someone who is, and borrow their copy.

Philip Payne.

GREY LENSMAN by E. E. "Doc" Smith: Panther 03845 (1972): 35p.

This is the fourth of seven volumes comprising the saga of the Lens, but since it's rather pointless to deal with just one book out of seven, this review is more a general comment on the series as a whole.

At the beginning of each volume, the reader is given a fairly lengthy summary of the story so far. This has the effect of making each book more complete in itself, and is also useful as a refresher-course, since the complete story must be two or three times as long as Asimov's "Foundation" trilogy, and there's a great deal of detail to remember. From these summaries it is possible to get a good idea of the plot fairly rapidly, and, as space-operas go, this has a better plot than most. Arisia (Good) and Eddore (Evil) are two races already old when the First and Second Galaxies pass through each other, thus creating myriads of new planets, soon to be inhabited by intelligent life, arising from the Arisian life spores. The continuum-hopping Eddoreans discover the new planets and decide that this is a good place to stop and exercise their power-mania. Thus the stage is set for a titanic struggle, in which Earth, being one of the "seeded" planets on which intelligent life develops, plays an important part. Along the way we are introduced to a number of ingenious devices, chief of which is the Lens, a pseudo-living jewel with a number of interesting characteristics.

As I said, there's nothing wrong with the plot. What spoilt the book for me, making it practically unreadable (and presumably this applies to the other volumes as well) was the way it is written. The characters are the usual cardboard cutouts which one associates with space-opera, but even worse are the words they have to say; if these are supermen, God help us! Then there are the endless descriptions of battles, each one drawn out to the point of nausea with atrocious adjectives and ridiculous similes, which rapidly "clogged my jets", to quote a phrase. The only way I could get through the book was by skipping over the action and just picking out the threads of the plot, which seems a rather negative way of approaching the problem.

Here is a good argument against the reprinting of yesterday's "classics", for by today's standards they often show up very poorly indeed. Although they, and this series in particular, were the means by which many of today's older fans first discovered the delights of science fiction, reprinting them at this late can do the genre nothing but harm.

Pat

THE WITCHCRAFT READER ed. Peter Haining: Pan 23335 (1972): 30p

Pan have issued this book under their sf imprint. How can witchcraft be classed as sf, you ask? Ah, they're "enthraling twin fields", says the blurb, besides which, some of the stories are set "far into the future". In fact, though all the authors here are recognised writers of sf, only two of the eight stories have any sf content at all.

Stories which deal with the paranormal (except the sword-and-sorcery type, which are usually more concerned with the former weapon than with the latter) seem to me to have to walk the narrow path between Hammer-style horror on the one hand and a Walt-Disneyan tweeness on the other. The stories in this volume manage to avoid these pitfalls most of the time, but unfortunately that isn't enough to make good stories of them all.

The collection starts off poorly and gets better, which, I suppose, is better than the other way round; TIMOTHY is about a scarecrow brought to life by a bored young witch for her amusement. I can find no merit in such plots, and it is a tribute to the skill of Keith Roberts that in the end he manages to make the story worth reading. THE WITCH by A. E. Van Vogt is easily the worst story in the book. Whatever else Van Vogt may be good at, this sample made me glad that his ventures outside sf have been few. The plot is fair, but the characters are strictly ex stock; the well-meaning but thick hero, his threatened but stubbornly unbelieving wife, and to crown it all, a chemistry assistant who happens to know all about witchcraft and explains the plot halfway through the story. Fritz Leiber's THE WARLOCK is nearly as bad. The plot is very insubstantial and unconvincing - about modern-day witches and warlocks being carriers of insanity - and the story suffers from a rather predictable trick ending.

John Brunner's ALL THE DEVILS IN HELL is one of the two novelettes in this collection, and deals with a girl's attempted destruction of her rival in love by black magic. It is possibly a little over-written, but John handles the difficult first-person style quite well. Richard Matheson's FROM SHADOWED PLACES is for me the best story in the book. The basic idea is very simple, concerning the cure of a young explorer afflicted with a voodoo curse, but the way in which Matheson builds in several difficult overtones and fits them convincingly into 22 pages is sheer mastery in construction.

Sturgeon's classic ONE FOOT AND THE GRAVE is the other longer piece, and probably the best-known story in the book. Like ALL THE DEVILS IN HELL, this is written in the first person, but apart from the first few pages, which are an object-lesson in how to grab a reader's interest, the style isn't very convincing. Worth reading for the good characterisation and plot, though. Bob Bloch's BROOMSTICK RIDE has an interesting if not very believable plot angle (well, can you believe in witches flying off into space on their broomsticks and colonising another planet?) but is otherwise forgettable. The final story is Bradbury's THE MAD WIZARDS OF MARS, a little-known story which could have

been included in THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES but for a slight similarity with USHER II. If, like me, you think Bradbury superb, then this one is up to standard.

Worth reading for Matheson, Sturgeon and Bradbury, then, but if you're a hardcore sf fanatic, don't be tempted by the blurb; this one's not for you!

Mike

WHO NEEDS MEN? by Edmund Cooper: Hodder & Stoughton (1972): £1.60.

I will confess from the start that I am a convicted Cooper fan, and so it was with eager anticipation that I reached for a copy of this, his latest novel. This anticipation was slightly dulled by the cover blurb, which sounded dangerously like David Stout's W.H.A.M. (Sphere:1972) which I had the misfortune to read a while ago. I needn't have worried; the master hadn't lost his touch.

The book is set on Earth in the 25th. century. Man is no longer needed for reproduction and, after losing a wholesale War of the Sexes, is headed for extinction at the hands of women, indoctrinated from 'birth' with an exaggerated Women's Liberation philosophy. The action is set in Britain - though we are assured that the rest of the world is in the same state - where a few million women live in the totally liberated 'Republic of Anglia' and are trying to exterminate the last few men, and renegade women, living in the Scottish highlands.

Rura Alexander has just graduated as an exterminator. She is as much of a feminist as everyone else, happy loving and being loved by other women, but she finds she has no heart for killing. She cannot even kill the renegade leader Diarmid MacDiarmid when she has the chance, even though he has killed her lover. More and more she worries about the state of things and wonders whether the war is really right. So much so that when her group is ambushed in the Highlands, she finds she is unable to fight back. She is captured - and raped - by a group of men, and taken to the stronghold of Diarmid, where, after a fashion, the two fall in love. Then the story really starts.

This will never be remembered as a classic - it is nowhere near the brilliance of KRONK or TRANSIT - but it is well worth reading. One of its strongest points is the traps it avoids, rather than actual positive attributes. W.H.A.M. used the idea for a bad bit of lesbian erotica, but to Cooper's women it is just as much a way of life as anything else, and they are happy in it, having known no other. Nor does Cooper ever assert - as many authors would - that Men are better than Women, just that they are complementary halves of the same race and were made to live together.

Probably the biggest trap Cooper avoids is in his choice of ending. I don't think the game will be given away if I reveal that the Cavalry don't arrive at the last moment to rescue the hero and heroine - a possibility I was dreading all through the last few chapters. The book just comes to a quiet and believable ending. Perhaps I'm biased, but whenever I think of believable endings four authors come to mind: Christopher, Cooper, Moorcock and Wyndham -

all English. The Americans seem a lot fonder of the super-weapon or hero that saves the world on the last page.

Cooper buffs are bound to think of FIVE TO TWELVE when they consider this book - if only because the jacket blurb mentions it - but the two worlds are very different. The only earlier book it resembles is ALL FOOL'S DAY, and that because of the style of certain passages. One thing some people are bound to do after reading the book is to blame Cooper for being alarmist. It could never happen, after all. I mean, minority groups never get fanatical and lose sight of their original aims, do they? If you think that, try reading a history book. So treat your lady-friends well, gentlemen, you wouldn't want them to get hasty.

Philip Payne

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN by John Boyd: Pan 23244 (1972): 30p.

This book tells the story of Dr. Freda Caron's progression from a sexually-repressed departmental head at the Bureau of Exotic Plants to a nymphomaniac omniphiliac on the planet Flora, where her inhibitions are released and her fantasies realised in lesbianism with orchids.

Now that's an interesting and original idea, but unfortunately it's largely wasted, since the lack of artistry in construction makes for difficult reading. The book's main fault lies in the pacing of the plot; the background of the changing attitudes and increasing sexual instability of the heroine occupies over two-thirds of the book's length, whereas the action - Freda's transportation to Flora, the orchids, her capture and internment in a mental hospital (where she seduces her psychiatrists) and her final return to Flora - is packed into the last 35 pages. I couldn't help but get the impression from this that the author had suddenly realised that he had gone on for too long without getting to the point, and had panicked into rushing the ending instead of going back and re-writing.

From the very beginning the plot lacks elementary logic; alien plants, which are shown to have some very strange properties - voice mimicry for example - are brought to Earth with no quarantine precautions whatsoever. This sort of carelessness, which is so easy to avoid with a little effort, is irritating and strains the credulity of the reader.

This could have been a valid and different combination of sex and sf (and could be read as a warning against the increasing preoccupation with sexual pleasure in our society) but the book's faults almost reduce it - though not quite - to the level of mere titillation.

Pat

((The editors have review copies of Philip K. Dick's THE PRESERVING MACHINE and GALACTIC POT HEALER and are looking for volunteer(s) to review them. The book of your choice is yours to keep, and the deadline for copy is March 1st.))

THE CHESSMANCON INTERVIEW (continued): about 450,000 words, the Known Space series, a Future History, to use Heinlein's term. I want to start another based on the idea that you cannot go faster than light, which seems at least equally likely. The collaboration novel is going to be huge; it may wind up about the size of DUNE, and it involves the most elaborate alien species I've ever worked on.



THE WIND FROM NOWHERE

ERIC BENTCLIFFE,
17 Riverside Crescent,
Holmes Chapel,
Cheshire CW4 7NR.

Anne McCaffrey's article was excellent and easily the best thing in the zine. I wasn't present to hear her speech so, to me, it came fresh and very entertaining. I've enjoyed all Anne's stories, the 'Dragonriders' being my favourite, and I think the article

contained a very honest assessment of her own writings and the factors inherent in them. It would be very interesting to hear her opinions on other feminine 'heroes' in science fiction; personally, the only other ones who have seemed to me to come over successfully have all been the brainchildren of James H. Schmitz, i.e. Telzey and 'The Witches of Karres'. Zenna Henderson's first stories in the 'People' series also seemed to have a fairly good feminine angle, but my interest began to flag after realising that she seemed to have only one story to tell, and that rather twee at times! There have been other excellent distaff authors around, but, as Anne stresses, they do tend to write from the masculine viewpoint in the main. Andre Norton, to mention just a few, seems to have succeeded far better when not writing of females. Kate Wilhelm, likewise. But let's have a woman's opinion, eh?

((Surely.....We've been thinking of passing your suggestion on to Anne, in the hope of eliciting a follow-up article, but we have the impression that she's moved recently. Anyone know her new address?))

Pete Weston on "-" was interesting reading, too....but perhaps not enough mention was made of the other people around who stimulated Walt and the Wheels of If into producing the excellent fanzine that they did. For instance, in U.K. fandom at that time Vin^o Clarke and Ken Bulmer probably did most to set Walt on the fannish path....hands up all those in the audience who remember STEAM (pat. pending), the many fannish applications of which helped to create a whole new series of fan-legends. And, of course, there were the Stateside fans and fanzines; people like Dean Grennell and GRUE, Bob (Wilson) Tucker's SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY, Bob Bloch et al. who all were around at that time creating all sorts of weird and wonderful slants on fandom. And, perhaps, the person who had the most influence on Walt's early fannish career; Lee Hoffman (who was at first thought to be male, femmefans being almost unheard of in those days - fannish femmefans, anyway!) with QANDRY, and the Walt Kelly 'Pogo' books which were to influence a great deal of the fan-writing of the period. You'll find quite a lot of allusions to 'swamp-critturs' in "-". Later, people like Mal Ashworth with BEM and RCT, and Ken and Irene Potter,

and a whole host of people helped create (~~through their writings and through~~ their fanzines) the atmosphere in which HYPHEN flourished. It couldn't have done so without this outside stimulation, this 'feedback' if you like. The climate was right then....the exercise of Ghoddminton created sufficient Steam to power Bulmer's Calliope into rhapsodies of fannish lyricism!

If I should make one criticism of current fandom as is, it lacks wit and humour. There are plenty of yclept fannish schticks being written but almost without exception the writers seem to lack wit. They aren't attempting to write fannish things about faan-critturs, just boring accounts of getting drunk at one place or another. Certainly, the fans of what is now being termed the 'Golden Age' got drunk too, but the reports of their orgies focused on unusual conversations stemming from the relaxed atmosphere of a party. Give you an instance....I spent a week with John Berry in Belfast some years ago and naturally the greater part of the time was spent at Oblique House, drinking and playing Ghoddminton with Walt, BoSh and James White. Several accounts of that week got published eventually but I don't recall any mentioning the mechanics of getting slightly drunk or the calls on one's bladder. Instead we put out a one-shot called TRUE-BILL; Chuck Harris had been over the week prior to my visit and in an offhand remark John mentioned that his budgie hadn't been the same since....so we put out a one-shot devoted to the pro's and con's of Chuck having raped the bird! That, put baldly, sounds ridiculous, but it still reads better, to me, than most of what I've read of late and also, perhaps, will give you a pointer to what my crit is.

The current crop of fan-writers are not attempting to use their imagination to develop a 'mystique' of their particular group or gathering. They are reporting baldly, much too baldly, the events that took place. This may give a truer picture of what took place, but it isn't half as fannish or as much fun....agreed?

((Agreed. And thanks for a fine interesting letter, or pair of letters actually - hope you approve of the 'surgery'. Archie Mercer, a few pages hence, also has some interesting words to say about HYPHEN, from a different viewpoint - sorry Fred!))

MARY LEGG,
20 Woodstock Close,
Oxford OX2 8DB.

Phil's camping experience sounds awful, and not a bit like mine. Would he call it atypical of American summer camps? When I was still living in Newcastle (hail, all hail) we used to go camping at weekend with the school.

It owned an old school-house in the wilds of the Northumbrian moor, and we used to go in parties of sixteen or so, shepherded by two teachers. For city children, used only to parks and bomb-sites for green spaces, it was an enormous adventure, and their first glimpse of nature outside the city. (I am reminded of my niece's comment recently, when she came to visit us in Oxford, and was thrilled to see all the birds and squirrels etc. around the place.... "Aunty, what a lot of nature there is here!") We saw cows being milked, and played in the river (funny how attractive running water is to children when it's on the ground), and went rambling on and on. The moors were pretty bleak, vegetation being mainly ferns and heather and bracken, with very few trees, and the few there were all stunted and bent by the constant wind, and the whole thing watered by freezing cold springs, clear as crystal, trickling over beds of brown pebbles. We enjoyed every minute of it, from the communal soup - we

all brought a tin, and all the flavours were brewed up together - to staggering home with hands full of ferns, and knapsacks, loaned by the school, full of muddy washing!

(M(The way you describe it makes it sound very enjoyable, though I doubt if I would have thought much of the idea at that sort of age - twelve, perhaps? Maybe I can persuade Pat to relate her rock-hunting experiences from her geology course at Liverpool. Thanks for writing, Mary - there were several other interesting bits I would like to have quoted, but for limitations on time and space.)M)

DAVE PIPER, Gulp. Please thank Dave Rowe for his kind comment, and
7 Cranley Drive, thank you for your kind agreement. Gulp.
Ruislip, I've pulled down me old garden fence and put up a new one.
Middlesex HA4 6BZ. I've decorated the bathroom.

I've decorated the bog.

I've decorated the dining room.

I've painted the WHOLE of the outside of the house - wooden parts that is.

I'm now decorating the living room.

Apart from that I ain't not dun nuffink.

WHEN I finish the living room Cath might, just might, allow me some spare time and I might get me pen and ink out again. Until then, and on the strength of No. 3, I'd say LURK doesn't need any art. Damnfine issue. Very entertaining and enjoyable. Thankee.

((Thankee. Incidentally, if you do ever get any spare pen-and-ink time, how about doing us a column? On the basis of your old MOTHS, and a hilarious letter in a recent American zine about an incident on a train, you'd make a fine columnist - quite a rare breed this side of the pond these days.))

CY CHAUVIN, I was intrigued by your remark (in the fanzine reviews) about
17829 Peters, the fine editorial the latest SPEC had. I agree; and I think
Roseville, it's a shame that more faneditors don't realise the impor-
Michigan 48066. tance of their own writings in a fanzine. They leave the edi-
----- torial go to last, and do it on stencil, and yet it's the ed-
itor's personality that largely gives his fanzine its personality (and, as
anyone will tell you, the difference between a merely competent fanzine and a
great one is in its personality). Both John Piggott and Ian Maule, who are
attempting to publish good fannish fanzines, tend to fail in this regard. So
does HELL. I've pestered Jim Goddard about same. Etc. I guess that it's not
as easy as it looks, though; I recall one editor telling me that his mind went
completely blank every time it came round to writing his editorial. Then, too,
you have to have a rather balanced mixture of both personal and fannish anec-
dotes, and if you degenerate into either type completely, the thing probably
just won't come off. (Or at least the ones I've read haven't). Still, almost
anything would be better than the apologies for poor reproduction/suggestions
for the Hugos/requests for contributions and the like which masquerade as ed-
itorials in most U.S. fanzines.

((Goshwow, senseofblunder, a criticism of the Great American Fanzine! You should watch out Cy, or the C.I.A. will be after you. In fact we haven't really come across any examples of this failing in U.S. zines, but that's probably because we don't get many of them. We've seen recent issues of EN-ERGUMEN and GRANFALLOON, and although they're very slick, we'd rather read a British zine any day of the week, because we're much more likely to know, or at least to have met, the people concerned. It's very nice to get to know someone through the medium of his or her zine, but we think a piece of writing means much more after one has met its author. Gray Boak is a case in point.))

ARCHIE MERCER,
21 Trenethick Parc,
Helston,
Cornwall.

A somewhat unbalanced issue, I may say at once: not one, but two transcribed speeches as the main fare. (Never mind: some might, as a certain genius from Nottingham declared once, want three.)

Anne McCaffrey's speech reads like one that was composed because a speech was necessary, rather than because she had something to say. My reaction to convention speeches is usually that I'd sooner see them written down than hear them spoken. It occurs to me that this specimen may well have been an instance of the opposite, i.e. that it sounded a lot better than it reads. All she seems to be saying is that her various stories were actually about "love". On the other hand, it seems to me that they can equally well have been about its converse, hate. Further, it shouldn't (I should think) be difficult to demonstrate that they were really about childhood, or religion, or politics, or sex, or idealism, or any other basic ingredient.

((O.K., fair enough, go on then, demonstrate!))

Pete speculates as to why I disposed of my HYPHEN collection. Basically, because it seemed to me that I'd never be likely to wish to re-read them - and at the time Beryl would have been happy to see virtually the entire Mercatorial fanzine collection disappear. We were trimming ship preparatory to putting our effects into store, you see, and there was so much fanzine bulk. So I sorted out a lot that I felt I didn't really want, and away they went. This raises the supplementary question of why I wouldn't be likely to want to re-read HYPHEN. I've had to think hard about this. They were brilliant - but, somehow, there was a sort of coldness about them. Various other fanzines published around the same period I have kept because, although they may have lacked HYPHEN's extreme genius, they were warmer, friendlier.

One of the things about HYPHEN which does not seem to be generally realised or remembered is that Walt Willis was its editor, not its author. In fact, apart from a brief editorial and those brilliantly laconic interjections into the lettercol, his own writings were almost completely absent from a typical issue. I can see the point of this - though I consider it also a thing for regret. I consider that as a writer he stands head and shoulders above any of his contributors that I can recall, such names as (you name 'em;) notwithstanding. In other words, I prefer him as a writer to as an editor.

This matter is particularly appropriate to LURK, of course, because there seems to be extremely little Meara in it, none at all of Pat that I can detect. And you lack Walt's excuse. He was producing a genzine for circulation to all comers. You, on the other hand, are producing an apazine, and one of the characteristics of the best apazines is that the reader can get to know

the perpetrator through its pages. Let HYPHEN's fate be your awful warning! ((To be compared with HYPHEN is an honour, sir, even though you didn't mean it that way. However, we are not, strictly speaking, producing an apazine, since over half our circulation goes outside OMPA. We do agree with you, though, about 'editorial presence', and hopefully we'll devote part of the editorial to this problem. It's not done yet since, as Cy suggests, we leave it to the last and compose it straight onto stencil.))

The word, Mr. Payne or Messrs. Meara, is BEYNON. BEY as in beyond, NON as in nonsense. Though you are consistent - it's not simply slipshod proofreading here and there.

(M(My fault I'm afraid - Phil typed it correctly and I copied it wrongly throughout. I'd always thought it was BENYON - ghu knows why - until you pointed it out. And I can't even blame Pat for not checking it properly - she can't spell anyway.)M)

PHILIP PAYNE,
University College,
Oxford OX1 4BH.

Agree greatly with Brian Robinson on giving students a year off for mind broadening but, after this summer, I can foresee a few problems. Firstly, a year or more off working tends to make you a bit rusty and you would have to do a refresher course on what you had learnt before you could go on learning new stuff. Secondly, can you imagine the problem of settling down to University after travelling? Having spent time broadening your mind you've then got to settle down to having it narrowed again. And what happens when you get the wandrin' bug in your system and can't settle down to work? No, I reckon that overall it's best to get as far as you can in the academic world as soon as possible - after all there are vacations to get away in - and then spend a while travelling before you finally settle down. (That's what's known as changing your mind in a couple of seconds, in case you didn't notice).

ROGER WADDINGTON,
4 Commercial Street,
Norton,
Malton,
Yorkshire.

I think the main thing holding British fanzines and zine-eds back from producing anything finer(?) than the Standard British Fanzine (sounds like a means of measurement) is lack of funds. The Americans have the money to spend on turning their zines into visions that delight the eye, or maybe they've just put their fannish priorities first. Our own comixfen have their all-litho efforts proliferating, and we do seem to be far behind in the design field, but then I like to think that we're as far ahead in the field of good writing, which is fighting the battle where it counts. To take Pete Weston's example, however badly printed, however corflu-spotted its pages were, however many stick figures were plastered on its pages in a pale imitation of artwork, you'd read it cover to cover if you knew that Walt Willis was within. And this is what keeps British fanzines holding their heads above the waterline, where bad design might popularly be supposed to sink them. I know we could design them better, with at least the basic use of blank space, but we've got to give equal consideration to both the words and the music, and while we're not likely to write any symphonies, we've got the means to come up with some excellent librettos! I'd say we've got our priorities right; the only thing now is to prove it to the rest of the known fannish world.

((Our attitude entirely. All this has been hotly debated in recent months, and it seems to us that there are three factions or viewpoints (curse you, Hemmings!) developing with regard to current fandom and fanzines; there are those who think there is nothing at all wrong with British fanzines, those who (like us) think that there's nothing basically wrong with them, and those who seem to feel that British fanzines are so bad in comparison with the American product that we might as well all give up, sell our dupers and take up conchology. We doubt that there is much to be gained by further discussion, interesting though this may be. The position is of course further complicated by the various attitudes to the 'golden age' syndrome.))

DAVE ROWE, I was going to write that review for you of SILENT RUNNING,
8 Park Drive, with that flare-haired, flare-eyed, flare-nostrilled schizoid
Wickford, latent-hippy-type hero (you know, the one who's favourite pin-
Essex. up was Smoky the Bear), wandering around in his bath-robe like
Francis of Assisi, asking rhetorical questions of the most inadequate robots it's possible to design, as they toddle about helping(?) run that gigantic airfix spacecraft and forest, which to all intents and purposes would have been more easily contained and cared for on Earth itself. Gad! The "man-eating cucumber from East Acton"-type film had less inaccuracies, improbabilities and impossibilities than that, which unfortunately seems to have been made to jump on the environmental bandwagon. Thank ghod the publicity boys weren't also plugging it as a new 2001.

However, as I was going to say, I won't have time, so instead I'll write this LoC.

((Whew! Since you put it like that, Dave, we agree with you, honest we do! Seriously though, after reading all the raves in LOCUS, we were both bitterly disappointed in it. Although, as you say, it wasn't being pushed as a successor to 2001, audiences will undoubtedly link the two films in their minds, and come to the conclusion that sf is a load of rubbish after all, just as they'd always thought it was before 2001 came along to give them doubts.))

JAN JANSEN, Dug out LURK 3 from the OMPA envelope, and although
L.v. Hullebusckstr. 197, I do agree with you (somewhere in the issue) that
B2120 Schoten, the writing is more important, I myself prefer to
Belgium. see some illustrations in fanzines. I'd like to see
every article presented with an illustrated title
with the heading in drawn letters, big or small depending on how the artist feels they go best with his illo. I don't feel the artwork should go in because it is nice to look at, or because it illustrates an article, but just to fill up a space which otherwise would be taken up by more words, that is, to break up the mass of type on any given page. I find, for example, six closely typed pages of Anne McGaffrey's speech only bearable because it was interesting, and, at this second reading, because I have heard her. So make it seven pages and lighten the darkened pages with an illustration.

((We agree in principle, but patching in electros is tricky, tedious and time-consuming, just like the alternative, hand-cutting. Hope you find this an improvement over the last one in this respect, though.))

W.A.H.F: Roy and Joan Sharpe, Ian Butterworth, Dave Seale and Richard Cotton.

MY GHOD!

LURK was the last zine
I'd expect to find with
full frontal cover nudes!

