

NEOLITHIC 20

Here is NeOL, once again (probably) in its pristine, coverless form, and this is its Second Annish. It comes from the basement of Ruth Berman, 5620 Edgewater Boulevard, Minneapolis 17, Minnesota. December, 1961, bimonthly. One gets it by trading (all for all), writing (once every two issues, more or less), subscribing (2/25¢), or by being stuck on the mailing-list.

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with the pictorial aid of Gary Deindorfer and William Rotsler.

EDITROOLINGS

This has been a curious year for me. The biggest change was a major change: from mathematics to theater. It took place last spring (you may have seen it coming in the editorial I wrote on The Visit), and it has left me feeling unsure of myself. I have visions of myself switching from theater to English, to French, to philosophy, graduating twenty years hence with 1,000 credits and a major in basket-weaving. Visions aside, I am ~~smoking less~~ studying more and enjoying it more.

I have done a lot of publishing this year. Despite the fact that nearly every issue was supposed to be the last, NeOL has come out regularly on its inexorable schedule; in fact, it has come out a little too regularly, and I don't see any chance of stopping it now. I have also put out a few issues of a Shadow Fapa zine, one issue of a Sapszine (though it won't appear till January of next year), and several issues of Cue, the newspaper of the University of Minnesota Radio and Television Guild.

When I joined the Guild, two years ago, it was a dormant organization. A year ago, Walter Mills, then the head of the Guild, decided it was time for the Guild to wake up. He got the Guild to organize and produce a weekly dramatic show, Theater of the Air (some of you Californians may know Wilt; he is now in LA). I only listened to the shows until spring, partly from laziness,

partly because I was trying to avoid all theatrical work at that time. In the spring, I tried out for the Theater of the Air production of The Importance of Being Earnest, and soon after found myself offering to print and edit Cue.

The Guild has given me my most satisfying work this year. I've had to do steady work for them, and have done the work with people I like very much. For example: David Jones, the head of the Guild this year. He is a Welshman with a voice like quicksilver. He has been in the U. S. for about three years, and his speech is becoming an interesting mixture of British and American idioms. David is shaped like a Hoka in mind and body, and his enthusiasms are catching.

Outside the writing required for school and magazines, I have written very little this year. I have started any number of things, some of which I am still trying to finish.

Good year, bad year, changeable year: it has been all three for me.



The borogove in orbit,



the Walking Corpse,

Ruth Berman
and I

hope

you enjoyed yours, and wish you the best of

1962

I have been re-reading Heidi, fine old children's classic, and I am surprised to find that it is an intensely moral book, obviously devoted to inculcating moral virtues in the young. Before re-reading it, my memory of the book was its description of the Swiss mountains and the character of the Alm-Uncle. If pressed, I might have been able to describe Heidi, Peter, Fräulein Rottenmeier, and the plot.

I do not remember what I thought of the moral passages when I first read the book. I am surprised to see that I did not remember the moral passages at all. If they inculcated any moral virtues in me, it was in my sub-conscious. I rather doubt that any virtues were planted thus. However, it is likely that Heidi did beat some morality into me through the Alm-Uncle. He is a wonderful old man who loves the great out-of-doors, hates his fellow man, and does everything he can to help his fellow man when called on to do so. Fity that it is so much harder to create vivid characters like the Alm-Uncle than to preach, isn't it?

I am amused by some inconsistencies in the translation (by Helen B. Dole). At one point in the story, Heidi remarks to the butler, "Thou lookst just like Peter." Fräulein Rottenmeier gasps and groans, "Is it possible! She is saying Thou to the servants!" This is the only time in the book that Heidi says "thou" to anyone. I know, now, what is going on. Heidi has been saying "du" to everyone. In the only place where the difference between the familiar and the impersonal you matters, the translator has suddenly translated "du" as "thou." I don't remember what I made of that passage when I first read Heidi. If I made anything of it, it was certainly the wrong thing. Seeing "thou" used almost exclusively by lofty people in historical novels and in prayers, I had always assumed that it was a mark of respect to address someone as "thou." It wasn't until I'd taken French for a year that I figured out what "thou" really means. Taking one consideration with another, a translator's lot is not a happy one.

Felice Rolfe writes that the current British stf magazines have not yet come in, so her column will not appear this issue.

This quarter I took English 21, Part I of a survey of English literature. We read parts of Paradise Lost, and the teacher kept referring—approvingly—to "Milton's science fiction element." I'm still not quite sure what he meant by that; I think he meant Milton's detailed descriptions of worlds. Still, it's nice to hear "science fiction" used as a compliment.

GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS

A Short History of Fandom In Minnesota (Continued) by Redd Boggs

The Minneapolis SFL

Anyone who reads back-issue Wonders of middling age—the last few years of the Gernsback magazine and the first few years of Thrilling Wonder Stories—will find several pages in each issue given over to an organization called the Science Fiction League. In The Immortal Storm Sam Moskowitz gives an excellent account of the SFL, which he calls "more beneficial and important to fandom than any organization which preceded or followed it." (p 32, hardcover edition) In introducing the club, Gernsback described the SFL as "a non-commercial membership organization for the furtherance and betterment of the art of science fiction," and among its functions to that end was the chartering of local chapters to be affiliated with the parent organization. Many such chapters were formed, since only three members were required to start a local chapter, and the SFL column in Wonder was soon filled with news about groups that were being formed or proposed. Various chapters, such as those in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Leeds (England), were soon established on a firm footing, but many others were either proposed and forgotten or else organized, only to fall into inactivity almost immediately.

The Science Fiction League was announced in the May, 1934 Wonder (with a preliminary announcement the previous issue), but it was not until more than a year later that the organization of a Minnesota group was reported. The June, 1935 Wonder listed a proposed Minneapolis SFL chapter headed by Alden E. Stafford, whose address was 200-288 Civic Arts Building, 305 South 5th Street. By some coincidence, this building now houses part of Farnham's school and office supply store, which contributes to local fan activity these days by functioning as the Minneapolis Gestetner agency and seller of mimeo supplies to Gafia Press and other fan publishers in this area. Though this SFL chapter was mentioned for the next seven issues—for as long as the Gernsback Wonder survived—this early and abortive attempt to organize a Minneapolis fan club constitutes a "forgotten chapter" in the history of Minnesota fandom. Later fans seem never to have heard of this proposed SFL chapter and never, to my knowledge, even referred to it when describing fan activity in this area.

Even more curiously, a Mr. Alden E. Stafford still resides in Minneapolis, but when confronted in March, 1961 with the evidence of his part in the incident, he could not remember having attempted to form a fan club. He confessed to having read science fiction at one time, and finally recalled having been acquainted with a Mr. M. R. Keith, who once had an office in the Civic Arts

Building sometimes during the 1930s. He suggested that Mr. Keith may have had something to do with the matter. Mr. Keith, an attorney, did indeed remember this long-ago incident, though he had forgotten the details. He believed that he and Mr. Stafford had discussed the formation of a SFL chapter and that Mr. Stafford had written the letter to Wonder, using his (Keith's) business address. However, the chapter "never got off the ground," Mr. Keith recalled, and no meetings were held.

This proposed SFL chapter was premature, but only by the narrow space of a few months or a year at the most. Oliver Saari moved to Minneapolis late in 1935 or early in 1936, as did John Chapman, and Doug Blakely announced his existence to the fan world about the same time. The presence of these young fans would have given the SFL chapter a nucleus from which to build, and the history of Twin Cities fandom might have been quite different. As it was, two years passed before another attempt to organize a Minneapolis group was made. On page 124 of Thrilling Wonder Stories, June, 1937, this report appeared:

MINNEAPOLIS CHAPTER

At the preliminary meetings of the Minneapolis Chapter of the Science Fiction League held recently, members present were: Oliver E. Saari, who was elected temporary director; Douglas Blakely, assistant director; John Chapman, secretary; Vern Winkelman; and Jack Burgess.

Honorary guests present at this meeting were Mr. Donald Wandrei and Mr. Carl Jacobi, well known science fiction authors, who gave interesting talks on various sidelights of fantasy fiction.

SFL members in the Twin Cities who are interested in joining this chapter please get in touch with Oliver Saari, 1427 Logan Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The "preliminary meeting" reported here was also the only SFL meeting ever held by the Minneapolis chapter, but local fan activity nevertheless received a stimulus which had many long-term effects. Messrs. McKinnon, Winkelman, and Burgess are obscure fans whose fate is unknown to your historian; presumably they were never seen again in active fan circles. But the others—Saari, Blakely, Chapman, Madsen, and Benson—became fast friends and during the next three years and more, except for some brief lapses, met frequently and "carried on almost all the activities of a club except the two that distinguish a club from a casual gathering—viz., organization and publicity." (So reported Samuel D. Russell in "The Minneapolis Fantasy Society," an article appearing in The Fantastite #2, February, 1941) Bob Madsen is perhaps the least familiar name of the five because he played little part in later fannish developments in Minneapolis. About the time a

formal fan group was organized at last, he was appointed to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He was listed as an honorary member of the fan club for several years, however.

Although Oliver Saari was elected temporary director of the SFL chapter, Doug Blakely provided much of the impetus behind the venture.

Blakely, it seems, deserves credit for stirring up fan interest in Minneapolis, having lured Saari away from his recluse with the aid of several disintegrators, flame throwers, bombs, and a brief, somewhat inaccurate letter which touched Saari deeply. From all this sprang the Minneapolis SFL, and so to Doug goes a bouquet for his well meaning. —Squanchfoot, "MFS Members," Fantastite #4, July, 1941.

During the interregnum period of 1937-1940, "the chief literary activities of the Unholy Five," as Sam Russell wrote in the article already mentioned, "were the composition of innumerable Silly Stories—brief nonsensical satires on current asinimities in science fiction." Thus was founded a great tradition in Minnesota fandom: henceforth, as long as two fans met in the Twin Cities, the MFS Silly Story formed an important element in their transactions. Jack Speer described the Silly Story in Fancy-clopedia I:

They are said to have been composed back in the days of the First Transition, when the MFS had virtually no contact with fandom, but when read at meetings, they set the morons rolling on the floor with laughter. They are the source of such exciting words as fout, nank, and Twonk's disease.

In 1939 Clifford D. Simak arrived in the Twin Cities. Born in Millville, Wisconsin, Simak had followed a newspaper career from Iron River, Michigan, to Brainerd, Minnesota, before landing in Minneapolis, where he still resides, employed as news editor of the Minneapolis Star. His first science fiction story, "The World of the Red Sun," had appeared in Wonder, December, 1931, and after a hiatus of several years, he returned to the field in 1938, selling such stories as "Rule 18," "Reunion on Ganymede," and "Hunger Death." He was already a famous science fiction writer when he arrived here, and when the local fans "became acquainted with him and began visiting him regularly, their interest in science fiction was intensified," as Sam Russell reports. "It was inevitable that the thought of starting another organization should seductively rise and tantalize."

The "Old" MFS

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Science fiction enthusiasts in the Twin Cities would like to announce the formation of an informal independent organization to be known as the Minneapolis Fantasy Society.

Monthly meetings are being held at the home of its director, Clifford D. Simak. Other prominent members include Carl Jacobi, Oliver E. Saari, Charles Jarvis, and Phil Bronson.

Fans in the immediate area who are interested are urged to contact the secretary at the following address—John L. Chapman, Sec., 1512 Como Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.

—Astounding, April, 1941

It was on 8 October, 1940 that John Chapman sent out the first invitations to fans in the Twin Cities area to attend the initial meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society. This act signalized the end of the three-year period of informal fellowship among the "Unholy Five" that had continued since the failure of the Minneapolis SFL and the beginning of the most active and productive era in the history of Minnesota fandom.

The first meetings of the club took place on Friday, 29 November, 1940 at the home of Clifford D. Simak. The total attendance was nine ("Ten if you want to count the Simak pooch, Squanch-foot"), with several other interested fans being unable to attend that evening. Simak was elected temporary director, and Chapman temporary secretary-treasurer. They were elected to full terms with the third meeting; Saari became assistant director. Carl Jacobi, Samuel D. Russell, and Chapman were given the task of drawing up a constitution for the club, and this constitution—largely written by Jacobi—was adopted at the second meeting, 20 December, 1940. Although the MFS was intended primarily as a social organization, "simply to let us enjoy one another's company," the MFS constitution also set down two definite aims: to stimulate interest in fantasy in the Twin Cities; and to make the name of Society notable throughout fandom. The first aim was probably never realized, but, as Sam Russell foretold in an early article (The Fantasite #2, February, 1941), the MFS did make its mark during the next few years.

The names of some of the attendees at the historic first meetings are unknown to your historian, but Phil Bronson was probably present, and Arden Benson surely was, for he is said to have inaugurated, with this very first meetings, the famous MFS custom of winding up the evening with a visit to the New Elgin Cafe in downtown Minneapolis for a bullfest over coffee and sandwiches. "Regardless of the time," reports John Chapman in "MFS Notes," The Fantasite #4, "it's accepted that the better half of

the crowd will drift for the New Elgin after each meeting. Unless the management brings a complaint. You see, we're still wondering how Bronson accidentally (?) didn't pay his check a couple of months ago." (Thereupon Bronson promised to pay the management "their nickel the very next time I'm in town.") The New Elgin Cafe disappeared years ago, but it probably occupied the same space occupied today by the Cafe DiNapoli, across the street from the State Theatre at 816 Hennepin Avenue.

A group photograph was taken of those present at the third meeting, 10 January, 1941, and was published on the front cover of the February, 1941 issue of The Fantasite. In the picture are Arden Benson (holding Squanchfoot, Simak's Scottie, adopted as the club mascot), Charles Albertson, Oliver Saari, Ken Peterson, Sam Russell, John Chapman, Clifford Simak, Carl Jacobi, Cyril Eggum, Douglas Blakely, and Phil Bronson. Not present, and not in the picture, were Fred Wagner, Sherman Schultz, and Bill Campbell.

Cyril Eggum went south with the National Guard soon afterward and was stationed at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. To my knowledge, he played no further part in fan affairs. Bill Campbell, one-time Astounding letterhack mentioned in a previous chapter, soon dropped out of the MFS, but all the others continued to play active roles in the club for years to come. Carl Jacobi was the well known fantasy and weird tales writer who had also been present at the 1937 SFL meeting reported in the last chapter. One of the few Minneapolis-born members of the MFS, Jacobi had been a successful author of weird, fantasy, adventure, and detective fiction since his student days at the University of Minnesota, where he had known Don Wandrei, another well known fantasy writer. One of Jacobi's earliest stories was "Mive," written for a contest but eventually printed in Weird Tales. He later became a WT regular, contributing such stories as "The Phantom Pistol," "The Satanic Piano," and "Revelations in Black," the latter being the title story of his Arkham House collection. Besides freelance writing, Jacobi edited various publications, including Midwest Media, a local trade journal. He still lives in Minneapolis.

On 23 May, 1941, an MFS meetings was held at Carl Jacobi's cabin on Red Cedar Point, Lake Minnetonka, which he had built as "a place to work in quiet and solitary retreat, a place where great masterpieces would be written." (He admitted that, though he went there to write, he preferred to fish or putter around, and "not one yarn has come from the cabin on Red Cedar Point.") A photo of the attendees at that meeting was taken by Morris Dollens by the light of kerosene lamps. In the photo are Simak, Russell, Dale Rostomily, Dollens himself, Jacobi, Albertson, Saari, Chapman, and Peterson.

Though one of the earliest MFS members, and one who remained a member for many years, Dale Rostomily is one of those fans whose is severely local. He wrote little or nothing for any of the club publications, and his reputation as a "character" was thus limited to those who met him face to face. Morris Dollens had reappeared in fandom at one of the early meetings of the MFS, and, as Chapman remarked, he seemed to have spent the four years since turning the Science Fiction Collector over to John V. Baltadonis in making "a thorough study of cinema arts, photo arts, and just plain art." He worked in a St Paul photo studio, was an excellent cameraman and cinematographer, and an accomplished engineer and sound man as well.

Dollens showed up at MFS meetings lugging many suitcases full of photographic and sound equipment, and fascinated MFS members soon found themselves scripting and acting in brief science fiction movies and recording science fiction plays. While many hundreds of feet of documentary material concerning MFS activities were shot over the next three years, few of the more ambitious film projects that were planned seem to have gotten under way. One of these, a movie to be titled "A Day in the Life of an SF Fan," snagged on the difficulty of persuading Ollie Saari to play the lead. Some of the record plays put on shellac by Dollens' disc recorder were more successful, and several of these plays were sent around fandom during the 1941-1943 era. The first attempt at recording a play took place at the 14 June, 1941 meeting at which a short script by Sam Russell, "The Coak-sack," was recorded, the principal roles being played by Russell himself and Doug Blakely. Later sessions produced "Stroke," a science fiction play by John Chapman (printed as a story in the Science Fiction Quarterly, Summer, 1942) and "The After-Life," a fantasy by Oliver E. Saari. Numerous impromptu ad lib recordings, "too numerous and undignified to mention," were cut as well, though Dollens' disc recorder was far less useful for this purpose than the tape recorder, developed years later.

Not all recordings were dramatic or casual in nature. Many recordings were made of MFS activities, including a speech given at the 21 September, 1941 meeting by Donald Wandrei. The author of numerous fantasy and science fiction tales such as "Colussus," "Blinding Shadows," and "The Red Brain," and co-founder, with August Derleth, of Arkham House, Wandrei had been a member of the Lovecraft circle, and his talk was a fascinating account of various fantasy notables he had met. These included H.L. himself, Clark Ashton Smith, Farnsworth Wright, Harry Bates, August Derleth, and many others. One of the highlights of this speech was Wandrei's description of "an ice cream orgy" indulged in by H.L. and Wandrei at a Rhode Island establishment that stocked 28 flavors of ice cream. Lovecraft insisted on sampling all 28 varieties before he quit. (This incident and others relating to H.L. are told in Wandrei's "The Dweller in Darkness: Lovecraft, 1927"

in Marginalia, Arkham House, 1944.)

Another recording, made almost improptu at the 3 July, 1941 meeting, on the eve of the Denvention, consisted of greetings from the MFS to the fans gathered at Denver. The idea was brought forth, probably by Director Simak, halfway through the meetings, and the record was promptly cut, hurriedly wrapped and sent air-mail, arriving at the con hotel about 16 hours after the idea was conceived.

Shortly after its founding, the MFS began to meet biweekly rather than monthly, and this custom continued with only a few interruptions for as long as the "old" MFS survived. Meetings continued to be well-attended through the summer of 1941 despite the absence of some members on vacation. Phil Bronson spent the summer on the west coast, and attended the Denvention over the Independence Day weekend, becoming—so far as your historian knows—the first Minnesota fan to attend a science fiction convention. Bronson stayed at the home of Lew Martin in Denver, and later spent a week in Oakland as the guest of the well known Bay Area fan Tom Wright. During this excursion, Bronson made many fan contacts that helped bring the MFS and his fanzine, The Fantasite, to national prominence.

Bronson had arrived in fandom late in 1939, appearing as a letterhack with letters in the January and February, 1940 issues of Thrilling Wonder Stories. (The latter letter showed his address to be New York City, but this was presumably a printer's error.) Bronson was an artist of considerable talent, and his first attempt at publishing a fanzine was Scientific Comics, an imitation comic-book first issued in May, 1940. This fanzine folded after two issues, and Bronson's second attempt, The Fantasite, was launched about the same time that the MFS, with Bronson as a charter member, was organized. Bronson never wrote fiction for the prozines, but in later years he became a newspaperman, partly as a result of his experience in writing and editing The Fantasite.

Bronson lived in Hastings, Minnesota, during this early period, commuting to meetings and between-meetings events. He was largely instrumental in introducing several new members from Hastings, most notably Rod Allen, who planned a fanzine to be called Fanotes which seems never to have appeared, and Frances Blomstrand, a 17 year old girl who became associate editor of The Fantasite for several issues and, incidentally, one of the few female members in the entire history of the MFS.

Your historian attended his first MFS meeting sometime in the late summer or early autumn of 1941, and, while memories have grown vague after 20 years, a few facts remain in mind. John Chapman drove me to the meeting, which was held in North

Minneapolis, probably at the home of either Arden Benson or Sam Russell. I remember confronting Simak, Bronson, Saari, Russell, Benson, Dollens, Peterson, and probably others at this meeting. Peterson, I remember, was lugging an original painting he had just finished, which depicted a scene from "At the Mountains of Madness"; perhaps he intended to auction it off. I cannot recall the details of the program for that evening, but I do remember listening to a Shangri-La Record (The only fanzine with round edges), a disc produced by Walter J. Daughtery, Forrest J. Ackerman, and the LASFS. I also heard some of the recent MFS recordings, including Chapman's "Stroke." This play contained the famous bit of dialog that fascinated MFSers for months and years to come: "What is that?" "It's a machine."

After the meeting, many of the members descended on the New Elgin Cafe where a bull session continued for an hour or two, and later, as an impromptu piece of skylarking, we organized a touch-football game which was carried on with great zest and hilarity in the wan moonlight of the athletic field of some public park. This game and further highjinks continued far into the small hours of the morning.

Great Days of the MFS

Although Cyril Eggum of the National Guard was lost to the MFS early in 1941 and Bob Madsen had become a midshipman at Annapolis shortly before, the only leading MFS member who was drafted into service before Pearl Harbor was Doug Blakely, who became Private Blakely of Camp Callan, California, in September or October, 1941. (Later he was stationed at Fort Baker, California, and visited various Bay Area fans while on pass.) Before leaving for California, Blakely was treated to a final night on the town by Saari and Benson and was poured aboard a Fort Snelling streetcar after the last bar closed up. His departure from the Fort was delayed and he turned up at Saari's next day firmly insisting that he had wakened in a taxicab the previous night, with the driver loudly demanding his fare. The mystery of how he had ended up in a cab after being hoisted aboard a trolley was never cleared up.

Blakely was widely regarded as the sparkplug of the MFS; nevertheless, his departure did not noticeably reduce the rampant enthusiasm exhibited by the club as it passed its first anniversary. Samuel D. Russell took over as MFS director for 1942, and interest continued so high that in the intervening week between regular meetings an informal gathering usually took place. The Hastings contingent often traveled up to North St Paul on Sunday afternoon to make use of Dollens' endlessly fascinating cameras and recorder or merely to listen to his "millions of records and albums." Other weekends, Dollens transported his photographic and

sound equipment down to Hastings for a session at Bronson's. Other groups in the MFS often met informally as well, but despite such tendencies the club never subdivided into warring cliques as so often happens with such organizations.

Sam Russell, the new director, was known as the scholar of the MFS and became famous among members as an author, playwright, critic, and actor. He had graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1940, and afterward attended business school, meantime working also as a script writer for the University radio station, WLB (now KUOM). He had begun to read science fiction in 1934 and since then had amassed an impressive, almost encyclopedic knowledge of the literature by reading every book and magazine he could buy or borrow. It was proverbial among MFS members that the bookcard for every fantasy book at the U or the city library was inscribed with Sam's name. "He's our briefcase boy," reported "Squanchfoot in a profile of SDR, "always ready with the facts or perhaps a brief history of fantasy or an anthology of H. G. Wells or a new recording script or almost anything of unusual interest....And his vocabulary is as inexhaustible as his dignity, the latter being one of his better contributions to the society." One time he wrote a letter of comment on The Fantasite which in the magazine ran two full singlespaced elite-typed pages on a single postal card, writing in a "microscopic hand" that could not be read without the use of a powerful magnifying glass. Russell, sometimes known to MFSers as E. Throttletwitch Gankbottom, became famous to fandom at large as a literary critic, partly because of his painstaking book reviews in The Fantasite and partly from his contributions a few years later to Lacey's The Acolyte, which he served as associate editor during most of its California period. His long and penetrating article on M. R. James in The Acolyte was particularly important.

John Chapman gave posterity an excellent picture of the "old" MFS at its zenith in the instalment of "MFS Notes" he wrote for the Fantasite annish. At the meeting he reported, that of 23 January, 1942, no fewer than 19 fans showed up at Sam Russell's house, arriving from St Paul, North St Paul, and Hastings, as well as Minneapolis. Members began to arrive about 7 p.m., and lounged around, watching Dollens assemble his "maze" of recording equipment, or inspected Russell's fantasy collection (adjudged second only to Saari's in the Minneapolis area; Russell's was superior on Weird Tales, which Saari disdained), or discussed the latest Astounding. Director Russell called the meeting to order about 8:45 p.m. There followed a discussion on the question of whether the 1942 Pacificon should be held, and the club put itself on record as favoring the cancellation of all "world" cons for the duration of the war.

Uncertainty about the future, due to America's recent involvement in World War II, was perhaps the keynote of the meeting. Bronson was struck by a brainstorm, suggesting that everybody present record a message to the next MFS--"the organization that exists after the duration." This was done, although it is unlikely that this disc has survived or at least was ever played for the benefit of the postwar MFS. A science fiction quiz followed, and Donald Wandrei, who was present, was stumped frequently on questions that concerned his own stories. "Did I write that?" he asked more than once. Bronson proved to be the quiz kid of the group.

The meeting broke up about 12:30, and everybody who could cram into Saari's '35 Nash headed downtown for the New Elgin Cafe. Some time afterward, concludes Chapman, "we managed to thwart Rostomily's urge to lead us into a shooting gallery, boarded the Saari auto once more, and limped home."

During the meeting, four new members had been voted into the Society, although for some of them it was their first meeting and the MFS constitution decreed that a new fan had to attend two consecutive meetings before becoming eligible for membership. This difficulty was removed when Director Russell adjourned the meeting and immediately called another meeting to order. The four new members were Don Wandrei, Paul Koppes, Manson Brackney, and Gordon Dickson. Wandrei was drafted into the service shortly afterward, and Koppes, a Hastings friend of Bronson's, soon disappeared from the fan scene, but Brackney and Dickson became important MFS members. Both were University students whom Saari had recruited on campus.

Manson Brackney is another MFS member whose local fame overshadowed that of several other members better known to fandom at large. Although he wrote for MFS publications, was on the staff of The Fantasite, and even published two issues of his own fanzine, Bar-r-r-ack!, "Manse" or "Brack" as he was called was even more fabulous in person. "Squanchfoot" characterized him as "a friendly chap, with an overabundance of energy" and was of the opinion that he would make a good traveling salesman, mentioning his "unequaled fondness for blondes, brunettes, redheads, blondes, redheads, brunettes, and women." One of his main interests in life was "'corn' of any size, shape, color, or variety," particularly honky-tonk piano. Sometimes forgotten in later years, when his interest had declined, is the fact that Brackney began reading the prozines as early as 1935 and had a wide knowledge of early science fiction. Incidentally, he had intended to reply to the old Minneapolis SFL announcement in the June, 1937 Thrilling Wonder Stories, but neglected ever to mail the letter he wrote.

One of the old MFS members who made good in later years as a professional ~~writer~~er, Gordon Rupert Dickson was a friendly, cheerful eighteen-year-old in 1942. He had begun to read science fiction in 1938, and the first fan he ever met was Manson Brackney, a fellow student at the U. During those years it was said that the easiest way to contact him, or Brackney, was to go up to the balcony of the Union, where he spent most of his time. Dickson soon became a prolific contributor to The Fantasite and other MFS publications, his "Fan Scratchings" column becoming particularly popular. His first appearance in fanzines outside those published locally was in the September, 1942 Spaceways, which ran the MFS chapter of the round-robin serial, "If I Werewolf," largely the product of Gordy's pen. Dickson contributed one of the most famous of Famous Sayings by Club Members on Halloween night, 1942 when the MFS threw a combination meeting and surprise party in honor of his birthday. Everybody presented him with a pack of his favorite cigarettes, Philip Morris—except one person who somehow brought an alien brand. Ignoring the imposing heap of Philip Morris packs, Gordy's first comment was, "Who brought the Old Golds?"

The meeting of 8 February, 1942, at John Gergen's, saw a less astonishing turnout than the one for 23 January, and the program was far more informal. The only item of importance was the beginning of a comprehensive review of Weinbaum's science fiction given by Sam Russell—although possibly this talk was not begun till the meeting of 22 February. The records in this case are ambiguous. At any rate, Russell's "Weinbaum talk" became part of the MFS legend, not alone for its excellence and general interest, but largely for the reason that Russell so frequently managed to postpone continuing it at later meetings. After some success, luck ran against him at the 17 April meeting, and he was, he reported later, "forced to discourse interminably on SGW's hackier work, while members wandered idly in and out of the room." This still did not complete the talk, and on 9 July he managed to evade the necessity of continuing it only by delivering another talk he had prepared, this one on the science fiction of Frank K. Kelly. He finally concluded the Weinbaum talk at the meeting of 13 November, 1942—nine months after beginning it.

One of the main events in the history of science fiction during this era—at least for MFS members—was the publication of the short short story "The Door" in the November, 1941 Astounding. John Chapman admitted, "There's nothing unusual about it—it's just like any other short short story you'll come across. You may not like it at all." But the story had an unusual history: it was, essentially, an MFS silly story, and it had been born in the feverish minds of two Minneapolis fans in the winter of 1938. Other fans were introduced to the joke, or the story, and the yarn was gradually developed by being tossed around at every fan

gathering for the next two years, till nearly every fan in the area had a hand in it. The very first meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society in November, 1940 saw the discussion revived yet again after having been dropped for a time. At the second meeting Oliver Saari decided in desperation to write the story and thus dispose of it once and for all. He not only wrote it, but submitted it to Campbell. He nearly keeled over when a check arrived by return mail. "The Door" was published under Saari's byline, but since the MFS as a whole had helped write it, Saari turned part of the check over to the MFS treasury.

By the autumn of 1942 the great days of the "old" MFS were drawing to a close. Now that America had entered the war, members were being drafted at an accelerating pace, and other MFSers were talking about migrating to the west coast. There was time, however, for one more happy event, this being the trek of a quartet of MFS members to the Michiconference, held at the Otsego Hotel of Jackson, Michigan, on 26 September, 1942. Phil Bronson, Sam Russell, Manson Brackney, and Ollie Saari drove down in Saari's '35 Nash that had once belonged to Doug Blakely, stopping en route on both the outward and the return trip to visit Illinois fans (Walt Liebscher, Frank Robinson, Niel DeJack, Bob Tucker, and others).

This epic journey, described at length by Brackney in MFS Bulletin Vol. I, No. 6, and at even greater length by Bronson in an article titled "Via Stfnash" in The Fantasite # 10, took four days and was, according to Bronson, even more enjoyable than the Denvention. During the trip Bronson won the nickname of "The Shamrock Kid" due to his sudden predilection for a green beverage of that name. Possibly under the pleasant influence of this concoction the Shamrock Kid almost hurtled to his doom at the Otsego Hotel by dashing blindly through a door that turned out to lead to the fire escape. When the MFS cavalcade passed through Jackson en route to the Torcon in 1948, Brackney pointed out to your historian where the X marking the grease spot would have been drawn had not Brackney grabbed Bronson just in time to prevent him from soaring off into space.

TO BE CONTINUED





DEINDORFER REVIEWS MANKIND
by Gary Deindorfer

First Principles, You Know—This is the first installment of a proposed regular column for NeoLithic. It will review people, that strange, accidental race of creatures of which even fans are members, though they sometimes seem reluctant to admit the fact.

Really, though, there is nothing so very shameful about being a member of the race of Man. In spite of Jack Paar, bargain-basement sales, and Captain Kangaroo, people have made isolated, notable contributions. Did a cow write Crime and Punishment? Did a parakeet decorate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? You're jolly-damned right they didn't—and remember that they didn't. It may be a solace to you in your declining years, as it is to me in mine.

Riders Incognito—There are different kinds of people, you know. There are Rotarians, Lutherans, and affluents (and affluent Rotarian Lutherans). There are Finns and Poles. There are poets, rapists, housewives, ditch-diggers, extortionists, and musicians. There are geniuses and idiots; hips and squares.

It's a funny thing about people, though: there is a strange characteristic about them which causes them react in much the same way when subjected to the same stimuli, no matter how diverse they may be in background or personal make-up. The reason for this is that Man, for all his pretensions otherwise, is still basically a herd animal.

This effect (which I call the Effect of Reactive Homogeniety, for want of a gutsier name) is nowhere better illustrated than by the people who ride subways. Everybody acts the same when he gets on the subway. He withdraws into himself. He wants to be with himself, and wants not even the possibility of having to communicate with anybody around him.

The reason for this foetal regression is obvious; the subway rider is ashamed of his situation, thoroughly and completely ashamed of it. He seems to feel himself a failure for having to ride the subway when other people—the successful people—are up above ripping round in cabs and holls-Royces and golden chariots. The subway rider is a passenger in shame.

For some reason, I'm one of the few people who aren't victims of this subway syndrome. I am a wretched clod, and I know it, but I don't care that I am a wretched clod. I know very well that I can't afford anything cushier than a subway to get around

on when I go into Philadelphia. Thus, when I sit in a subway car surrounded by all of these foetally regressed, catatonic, ashamed people, I hold my sensitive fhannish fhace high. "Okay, people," I think, "Believe that you all are anything more than wretched clods like me. Hide in yourselves; hope that nobody is going to recognize you riding the subway. You aren't fooling me."

Once, as we all clacked down the Stygian tube bound for Broad Street and points south, I suddenly realized, "Mighod, this is a Unique Power which I possess. Here I am sitting as a sentient being amongst all of these fearful, quivering globs. Wow. With such power, I should be able to do something wonderful. I must utilize it." I thought of a writer's manual I had laying around the house. You know, a book written for people who think that they might like to write some day; they never do, though; they just amass themendous collections of writer's manuals. It said, among other things, "The aspiring writer must keep a notebook of observations. Such a notebook is indispensable. The writer must carry it with himself at all times. It will enable him to develop a keenly observing eye, and will ensure that he will have a place to refer to for story ideas, descriptions, bits of dialogue, mumble mumble, pontificate, etcetera."

So, okay. Thank you for the keen suggestion, fellas.

A week later I got onto the subway with a large 24" by 18" ringed rawing pad. On its cover was printed "Observations of a Writer" in large, fat, greasy, block India Ink letters. I made a very big deal about getting a seat, stomping up and down the length of the car with much grunting and wildly sweeping the drawing pad under the glassine eyes of the passengers. I finally sat down next to the saddest case I could find in the car, an elderly, dired-up, tiny lady in a faded, blue, flower print dress. She had the look of someone who has just been bitten in an embarrassing spot by something large and repulsive.

I sat quietly for a while, the drawing pad closed on my lap. I peered around the car, looking for some faint hint of a sign of awareness of my noisy entrance and strange pad on the faces of the passengers. None visible. I looked over at the elderly woman by my side. I stared hard at her old, cracked hands folded neatly in her lap. She blushed deeply and turned her face away from me. Her hands were quivering like cold little mice.

"Oh well," said I in a loud voice, "Oh well, well, well."

I opened up the drawing pad. Then I took out of a shirt pocket one of those giant foot-and-a-half long pencils which you win a shore resort concessions for hitting furry elephant dolls in the rear-end with wooden balls. The pencil had no point on it;

it was as yet unsharpened. When I had done was to stick a pin into the writing end of the instrument so that its head protruded.

I shot a glance over at the elderly lady. I caught her looking down at my pad which was turned to a first page that said in huge red and green crayoned letters, "Hello there."

She shuddered as if she had gotten a load of ice cubes dumped down the back of her dress when she saw that I was looking at her again. Her hands shook wildly in her lap, and she tried to slide away from me along the seat. She couldn't. A fat, hairy man in a charcoal undershirt bounded her on the other side, and she had no sliding room. And she was too frightened to get up and stumble to another seat. She just closed her eyes tightly and hunched in a tense, constricted little pose, shivering and shuddering.

Then I said very loudly, "Hmmmm." After leaning forward on my seat and staring for a long time directly into the eyes of a large, fat lady sitting across the aisle surrounded by piles of packages, I chuckled slyly, went "hmmmm!" again, and began to scribble madly across the first page of my pad with my out-sized pencil.

Of course the blunt pin stuck into the pencil's end tore the first page to shreds, scattering bits of paper in massed bits around me, but it created a great effect of someone writing with a mad dedication, as if he must furiously write out his immortal thoughts before they wisp away in their elusiveness. While I ripped up the page, I emitted a constant staccato stream of "hmmm," "well," "hah!" and such. A fierce expression came over my face, and I held my tongue tightly between my teeth so that it stuck out of my mouth like a loose, flapping piece of red cloth.

I flipped the tattered remnants of the first page over. I looked up from the pad, stopped scribbling, and sought out another person. I seized upon a young, balding man of slight build with worry lines carved all over his face. I gave him the long-stare treatment, and then I went "hooah!" in a loud, ragged eruption of sound. I then proceeded to shred the second page of the drawing pad.

I continued this at a constantly accelerating pace: stare a passenger down, chuckle and exclaim loudly, rip up a sheet, flip it over, and repeat the process. I was a small glob of feverish, turbulent activity in the long, yellow-lit subway car.

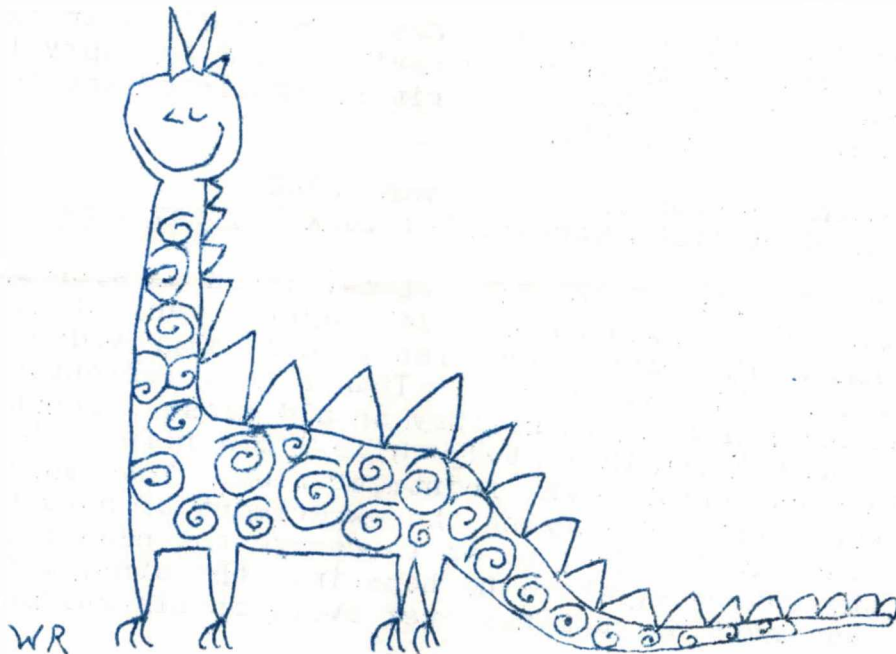
Finally the passengers reacted. It was a slow-starting, gradual reaction, like some giant slothful creature heaving to wakefulness by degrees after a five month nap, but it was a reaction.

People began to burst into cold sweats all through the car. After I had given a passenger my stare, he or she would shudder convulsively, teeth would chatter, feet would shuffle, a low moan would come from his or her lips.

Soon I had given the penetrating stare treatment to everybody in the subway car. You never saw such a crowd of craven beings in your life. Raw fear filled the car like a giant, palpable thing. Women were on the brink of fainting, men were gulping for air, their mouths working like the gills of fish, their hot intake and expulsion of air creating a symphony of rasping cacophony. And all of this was in reaction to me.

I finished shredding the pages and sat back. The eyes of everyone in the subway car were on my, glazed eyes, with a pleading look behind them. The elderly, shrivelled lady beside me began to sing "Rock of Ages" in a high, thin, quavery voice. As she sang, first one, then another, and finally everybody in the car joined in, until the air was full of "Rock of Ages."

When a fat woman pitched forward in a faint and rested on her forehead in the aisle like an overturned Buddha, I realized that I had gone far enough in my ploy and that I had better withdraw the tension before some exhibitionist went ahead and died of convulsions. I slammed my pad shut, and at the next stop I arose and strode out of the subway car, leaving behind my a carload of spent, shot people.



Clay Tablets

from ELEANOR ARNASON, October 7, 1961
Apt 12 A, 6 West 77, New York 26, New York

Mr. Eney: his comment, while a bit painful (painfully derivative?) was just and perhaps too gentle. I hadn't thought of Fren as Holmes-ish. When he commits crimes instead of solving them—which is his usual position—he is closer to the Saint than S.H.

I suppose because I was at the Seacon your conreport seems thin. People see things differently, of course, especially fans (you) and mundanians (me), so I try to not to regret those small moments of insanity that I noticed and appreciated. Of course, to a fan they may be normal and not worth remarking.

from REDD BOGGS, 23 October 1961
2209 Highland Place N. E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota

Neolithic may have become the first bimonthly fanzine in history to publish monthly issues. After all, it reverses the old tradition that a monthly fanzine appears only bimonthly.

Eleanor Arnason's cover has an otherworldly effect, even though I'm not altogether sure what it depicts. A king of Bark-over about to descend into his royal barge? I wish eaa would provide a full explanation for each of her drawings; I'm sure the explanations would be as fascinating as the pictures themselves, or more so.

Felice Rolfe's "Glances Over the Pond" is an extremely well written and well thought out review. I'd be happy to see almost any review column about the British prozines, and to have a good one is doubly pleasant.

from AVRAM DAVIDSON, 15 Cheshvan, 5722
410 West 110th Street, New York 25, New York

Thanks for sending me NeOL 19, which as soon as I finish acknowledging it and DISCORD 14, maybe I can get down to doing some work. My chances are also greatly improved because I've just solved The Cat Problem. Thanks to a carpenter who put in a few hours fixing my doors they should close I can now keep Boz (for Boswell) out from study while I'm working. Next is to get the door replaced on the frontmost room. The bedroom is now also Bozproof. I'm trying the experiment of putting the Bozbox in a niche in the hall so as to remove the need for letting him into the bathroom, where he hops into the sink, wets his paws, and goes padding tiny pugmarks over every single surface except the ceiling.

Because Ruth Berman might be coy in saying Thank Goodness, it doesn't follow that everyone else who says Thank Goodness

instead of Thank G'd is coy; now does it? We must not Project, we must not Project. I once got in touch with one of my long-lost California cousins, what time I was in Frisco (I guess I'm far enough away to call it that now). She invited me to supper. "I had better tell you," I said, "that I eat only kosher food, and so perhaps won't be able to accept." "My land!" she said. "My land...." She wasn't being coy, although whoever first said that instead of My Lord may have been; but it was an expression she'd picked up and used without intending any euphemism.

On p. 8, Redd Boggs's history of Minn. fandom: "The same Amazing (December 1936) in which Blakely was chided by Dr. Sloan...." He was not "~~chided~~," dammit, he was CHIDDEN. Dr. Sloan chided or chid him, but blakely was ~~chided~~ chidden.

Glad to see Felice Rolfe's review of Brish SFzines, but as I don't read same, I skipped it. I mean, fanzines should review pro publications, but I don't happen to follow this particular set. In fact, the only magazines I read regularly are F&SF. I'm attempting to resume GALAXY. We'll see. Occasionally I look at ANALCG, but about all I read consistently is Sky Miller's reviews. Perhaps I'm missing much by skipping the UKzines, but my last experience with them, a few years ago, was that they just didn't have it.

from TED JOHNSTONE, 26 October 1961
5337 Remington Road, #231-2, San Diego 15, California

All the sericon natter about that crazy Buck Campbell stuff is very well, but it doesn't suit NeOL. What ever happened to the good old starry-eyed essays on fantasy? And the poetry? And the fiction?

LA Fandom has acquired a copy of The Enchanted Forest. It sounds perfectly lovely. Shame! Saying "The Old Tobacco Shop" was the only "just a dream" story you'd read that was really like a dream—Alice is very dream-like, especially the latter, where Alice goes through vague and illusory scene-changes, like the bit with the sheep in the shop and the egg, where it all changes to a stream and boat.

[No it's not; I had Alice in mind when I made the statement. At least, my dreams never change in a melt-swirl-swish. If I change scenes, it's like a camera moving, not like a switch from one camera to another. Also, Alice is too logical underneath the surface. A dream may be logical underneath as a Freudian case, but not as art. The Old Tobacco Shop comes close enough to the dream's special under-the-surface logic to be more dreamlike than other such stories; it goes too far from the logic of art to be entirely pleasing to me.—RB]

from RICH ELSBERRY, October 27, 1961
1723 Coralee Drive, San Jose, California

Thanks for NeoLitch #19—sent, no doubt, at the suggestion of D. Redd Boggs. The Boggs item naturally commands my attention. The initial installment seems a bit heavy on detail, light on characterization. Let's see Boggs deny that! But I expect it to pick up about chapter 42 when RBE appears on the scene, breathing fires and starting them.

Now answer me this: why does Boggs spend his time pawing through old fanzines and prozines for names and addresses when he could as easily be polishing little jewels for F&SF? Silverberg, Harmon, even Ellison, are collecting checks—why not Boggs? My own personal feeling is that over the past 10 years or so he has been working on a master novel designed to dwarf even "The Once and Future King," and that he'll be springing it on us one of these days.

I recently read 40-odd issues of ASF from 1952-1955, and can't recall a single story. "A Stillness at Appomatox" sticks in my mind, though, along with the TH White epic and Mark Harris' "Wake Up, Stupid." Obvious conclusion: if I never read another issue of Analog, I wouldn't miss a thing. And if I never hear Prokofiev's 5th Symphony again, I won't be disappointed either.

Why must a fanzine discuss only the narrow and relatively boring field of sf and fantasy? Why not branch out into vitaculture, music, bookbinding, chess, history, humor, nuclear technology, politics. Yes, even politics. Most fans appear to be vegetables—they have one track minds. When an occasional one does get an idea, his exposition of it brands him a crackpot. As a guess, I'd say the normal, healthy element of fandom either stops reading it...or begins writing it.

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