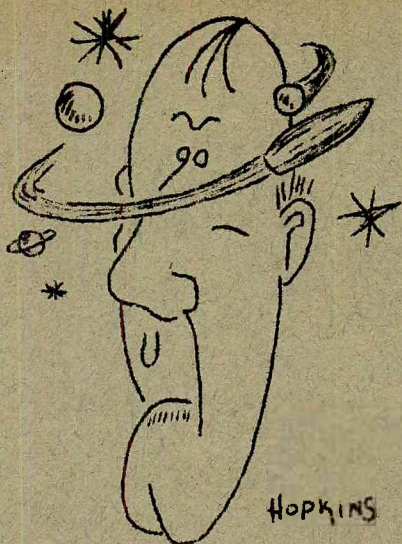


OOPSLA! # 12

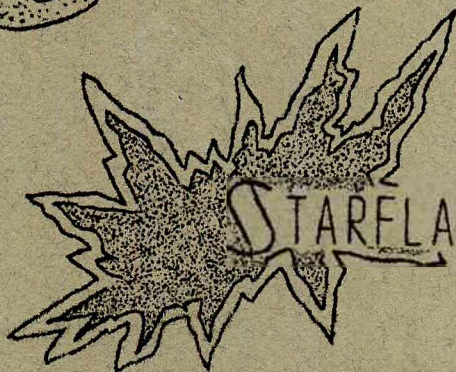


"for adults only...."

Capella



# OOPSLA!



## PUBLICATIONS

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"Fandom's  
Finest  
Fanzine"

March / April , 1954

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The Harp That Once Or Twice	Walt Willis
A Candle to Light Our Way	Robert Bloch
Dear Alice (absent this issue)	Shelby Vick
Dribblings	An editorial tour de force

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## "DANS UN VERRE D'EAU

...sort of an editorial lapsus calami

Those of you who read RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST are aware that at one time said magazine was displayed for sale on California newsstands. Those of you living in or around Glendale, California are apt to find copies of SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER similarly displayed. And it's rumored that one or two or even three other fanzines around the country are displaying their wares in competition with our more commercial brethren in the genre.

Being of an inquisitive nature by birth, which is a perfectly acceptable way to become inquisitive, I decided to make a survey of the amount of success one might find by displaying a fanzine on a commercial newsstand. Luckily, I found myself at that time to be in possession of a slightly used but otherwise readable ownership of a fanzine, leaving only the question of a similar newsstand to be found.

Now newsstands in California are about as rare as a Ray Bradbury story about Mars, but obviously one doesn't just walk up to the nearest stand, smile toothily at the dealer and plunk down 306 copies of his latest issue and slink casually away. Neither does one slither in unnoticed and hastily hide copies behind the stacks of Astounding, hoping the readers will find them before the dealer does.

For the few of you who are wondering, here is the story. When I first started coming into Santa Monica regularly from Camp Pendleton, the first thing I looked for was a suitable source of science fiction. This I found in a small newsstand located along the seashore in Venice. After I had been there several times, buying only science-fiction, I think the dealer began to suspect, because whenever he would see me coming, from then on, he would hurriedly rush into the back room and bring out all the copies of pocket-books, comics and French post-cards that he had dealing with science-fiction. Naturally we struck up an acquaintance, and in the natural course of events my hobby was disclosed.

Not too many days later we came to a mutual agreement that COPS LA! should be displayed on California newsstands, or at least one of them, which conveniently turned out to be his. Being finally in possession of both fanzine and newsstand, on the 9th day of January, 1954, I triumphantly arranged six copies of COPS LA! #11 where all might gaze upon their glory. I had equalled RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST. I had equalled SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER.

Every success story has its sequel, and mine is only very slightly different from most of them. Far be it from me to help set a trend.

On the 6th of February, 1954, I picked the six copies back up and brought them home with me, unsold. Don't call me Mr. Alger -- just plain Eoratio will do...

# THE MARK OF MCCAIN



- VERNON L. MCCAIN

I think it was Shelby Vick who first mentioned it in the fan press, early in 1953. Several passing comments were made and I must confess I was a trifle confused over this sudden enthusiasm for a fanzine which had died almost a year before after a quite brief career.

But finally Shelby devoted a whole article to the subject and I discovered this MAD was a comic book. Since then, admiration for this publication has been silently oozing out from under the staples of every other fanzine. This comic book, we were given to understand, was 'zorch'!

Time passed, and I must confess I began to wonder if I actually was missing something. It didn't seem likely. I'd been about 14 when I began noticing comic books tended to be more boring than otherwise. I've always operated on the theory these magazines are intended for children and no matter how many adults regularly peruse them with delight, I remain unshakable in that belief, just as the fact that a LIFE reader may be able to painfully form his own name or even read traffic signs does not alter my conclusion that it is published solely for illiterates.

In recent years I have not spent so much as a dime on comic books except for a very occasional "Li'l Abner" or "Pogo."

But with so many fanatics beating the drums for it, I decided perhaps MAD was worth the investment of one hard-earned dime. The only trouble was that I never saw a copy. Of course I must confess I have never studied the stands very hard. I am struck with sudden blindness if I take more than a passing glance at the 4000 massed comic books available at any good (?) newsstand.

But one night I wanted something to peruse in the restaurant while waiting for my order. There were no magazines available which looked acceptable and which I hadn't yet read. Dispiritedly I let my gaze flicker down to the very modest display of only thirty or so comic books carried by this unostentatious drugstore. And there was MAD.

So I had made the acquaintance of the legendary.

The cover carried a cartoon as corny as on most comic books, but the first panel did indeed indicate something out of the ordinary. The gags weren't so awfully good, but they did take on a certain flavor by sheer weight of numbers, just as a bad pun, when stuck in the middle of a string of other bad puns cleverly arranged into one tightly-knit whole, can be hilarious.

## The Mark of McCain, II

And this was indeed punning...an optical form of punnery somewhat akin to that found in the movie cartoon which has its humor based almost solely on similarity of shapes as contrasted to the similarity of sound found in verbal puns. The MAD puns were a trifle ahead of the movie version. The first panel could stand at least three or four minutes scrutiny. Undoubtedly the cleverest portion of this stormy midnight scene in front of a gloomy castle was that it was quite literally raining cats and dogs and pitchforks. I recall there was also a 'mix-it-yourself' soft-drinks vending machine in front of the ancient castle. The rest of the jokes are now forgotten and probably justifiably so.

"Ah, perhaps MAD is special" said I to myself (I frequently talk to myself... the conversation is so much more stimulating that way), so I proceeded farther.

Unfortunately it proved the gagwriters had expended all of what talent they possessed on that first large title panel. The rest of the magazine was taken up with unbelievably infantile and crude humor, about on the same level as a radio comedian's wit or an Orig Prem story.

In fact, I began to understand why MAD was so beloved of Seventh Fandom. (With the exception of Shelby Vick, for whom I can find no explanation except that he once publicly admitted to liking Donald Duck, I know of no MAD admirer who isn't also an enthusiastic Seventh Fandomer.) The jokes come a bit more frequently in MAD, they are perhaps a trifle cleverer, and they are definitely better illustrated, which isn't saying much; but basically MAD is a typical Seventh Fandom fanzine. The jokes in any Seventh Fandomer's column and in MAD could be swapped without anyone even noticing the difference. In fact, I'm a trifle puzzled how MAD has survived commercial competition from such relatively intellectual items as "Superman" and "Orphan Annie."

In case I have failed to make it sufficiently clear, I did not become a MAD fan.

Actually the number of comics acceptable to the stfan has always been small. And in about three years when the average Seventh Fandomer is approaching the age of the average Six Fandomer during their heyday, I suspect the list of acceptable ones will have shrunk by one...leaving MAD as an embarrassing memory along with the Cosmic Circle and Michelism.

For some reason the daily comics in the newspaper always seem to be about the most acceptable...perhaps because we see them more frequently and easily.

No one needs to be told of the devotion in which Sixth Fandom (plus practically all of that group known politically as 'Liberals' which whom I must say I'm not too happy to be bracketed) hold the one and only "Pogo."

Fifth Fandomers were the first to herald him, as far as I know (my first encounter with Pogo was through purchase of another comic book on the published recommendation of one of the LA insurgents) but Fifth Fandom was dying at the time.

Being new to fandom at that time, I can't say positively who preceeded Pogo as fandom's pet comic strip, but I have no doubt it was "Li'l Abner," who held almost complete dominion over the loyalties of the more sophisticated comic readers.

In the '30s, "Krazy Kat" was the favorite before its originator's demise.

I've occasionally considered the comic pages I would like to publish if I owned a newspaper. I'm sure the results would not help sales much, though.

### The Mark of McCain, III

Right at the top of the page would be "Pogo" and right under him, "Li'l Abner." Then would come "Gasoline Alley" (not a fannish favorite, I don't suppose, but one of mine for the same reason "One Man's Family" is one of the only two radio programs I bother tuning in. (The other is "Twenty Questions.") It is the only strip which has a believable group of people who live normal lives, aging and changing with time. I find them believable and likable and follow the adventures of the Wallens and the Barbours with the same interest I'd give to the adventures of the next door neighbor except that the first two have an extra advantage; they don't drop in to borrow a cup of sugar.) Certainly "Dennis the Menace" is an absolute necessity to any good comic page...and here I just about run out of comic strips I consider to be worth the trouble reading. There are a couple of other doubtful ones I might include. I started reading "Snuffy Smith" a few years ago when Cricket, the delightful buck-toothed bare-foot femme fatale of the hills was dominating the strip, trying to decide who she would marry. Since she became a mother (don't worry, she did get married first) and gradually faded out of the strip, my interest has faded also. Then there is "Abbie 'n Slat's." At one time this would have been an absolute necessity. But at that time Al Capp was writing the continuity and inserting much of the same brilliant bite he imparts to his own strip. However, now one of his brothers has taken over the job and while the mood remains the same, the genius is gone, quite literally.

Actually, despite my delight in the "Pogo" strip, and the fact that I always read it first, I have never had any serious doubts about who was the outstanding member of the cartooning profession. Capp wins going away. He's been doing it a lot longer than Kelly and right now his strip seems less fresh and more repetitious than "Pogo" (although actually a lack of new plot ideas...though never new gags and puns...is Kelly's greatest weakness. How many times has some variety of wild or not-so-wild life taken up residence in Albert's insides, for instance? I know of at least four.) But "Pogo" is tied to directly to today's events that I daresay in another fifteen years today's strips will have lost their kick and in another century be completely meaningless.

"Li'l Abner" is something else again. Like "Pogo" it satirizes current events. Unlike the gentle titter of "Pogo," "Li'l Abner" is frequently angry and occasionally approaches viciousness in its dissection of (usually well-chosen) targets. It lacks "Pogo's" good humor.

However, any attempt to appraise Al Capp inevitably results in a comparison with Jonathan Swift. No matter what facet of Capp you are discussing, the comparison with Swift naturally springs to mind.

I don't know if Hemingway will still be read and admired as one of our great men of letters in another century and a half. Nor am I willing to commit myself in predicting



The Mark of McCain, IV

posterity's judgment of any other current literary figure. The one exception is Al Capp. I am utterly positive that future generations will treat cartooning as a new form of literature just as we do the comparatively new form of the novel. And I am sure Al Capp will be regarded as the first important name in the genre. Perhaps one or two others will live on as quaint examples of our time... "Dick Tracy" would be the obvious choice except that this is Capp's most brilliant takeoff and if 'Fearless Fosdick' survives, why should 'Dick Tracy'? My guess would be that "Orphan Annie" is most likely to survive as the typical comic strip of our day.

Meanwhile, as with Swift, the events satirized by Capp will have faded into uninteresting history. But the stories themselves do not need knowledge of these conditions to be enjoyed (unlike Pogo.) Like "Gulliver's Travels" a few choice bits of Capp will survive and be included in every literature text book, while the vast mass of his work will be remembered only by specialists in this period.

It would be hard to say which Capp episodes will be the ones to withstand the test of time. 'Fearless Fosdick,' most certainly. Quite possibly 'Sadie Hawkins Day' and 'Lena the Hyena' both of which enjoyed immense popularity, although I consider them overrated. 'Adam Lazonga' was another popular one...was once repeated by popular vote, in fact. My own personal favorite, the 'Orson Waggon' takeoff on 'Orson Welles,' is forgotten already by most people although I think it had a balance and perfection missing in most of the others.

Some, like this 'Freddie McGurgle' bit, aimed at the then swoon-king Frank Sinatra, obviously will not survive...enjoyable at the time, but little staying power.

At any rate, I think eventually fandom will swing back to "Li'l Abner," basically most fannish of the strips. I think it will be a favorite after "Pogo" fades, which I don't expect to be for a good many years yet, and long, long after MAD is forgotten, which I expect to be very soon.

-- Vernon L. McCain...

-----00000000-----

A

tender poem of the Old Spaceways titled...

"Dad Was All Burned Up Over That One"

I weep.

A cinder, brought upon a gentle breeze, is in my eye.  
It makes a tear flow.

I live here.

Home is near the Spaceport because my father works there.  
He cleans out rocket tubes.

That's strange...

The rocket that just left that cinder in my eye--the 8:15--  
Was twenty minutes early, leaving.

I think I know where that cinder came from.

-- anon

# THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE

WILLIS

by

WALT

WILLIS —



I guess I'll never make a columnist...as the guy said when Louella Parson's slapped his face. For instance, I was going to start off this one with a few brief words about how the Harp started and before I knew where I was I had already introduced the subjects of Bob Tucker, Charles Lindbergh, Messrs. Woolworth, Vince Clarke, Chuck Harris and my recollections of the First Staple War. (Believe me, there is a connection, though it may not be apparent to anyone in his right mind.) You can see now why I'm still hanging around fandom—I'm afraid to start my memoirs. I should probably spend more time leaving fandom than I ever did in it, like Francis Towner Laney.

(This is just like old times, isn't it? Already I've revived all the popular and lovable characters that used to throng the old Q Harps, except Max Keasler. I'll bet some of you actually thought these were all real people? Well, well. As a matter of fact, no sooner did I mention Max's name than he popped into existence in California, all set to re-enter fandom. Good old Max, one of my favourite characters.)

## The Harp That Once Or Twice. II

But what I was going to say was that I used to have the same trouble with SLANT, and that's how you come to be reading this today. (If you're actually reading something else, just ignore this remark. You've lost your place.) I'd get the thing all printed up and then go along filling in all the holes with stuff specially commissioned from myself. But the trouble was that no matter what subject I picked, I'd always find myself with several thousand words left over. It's hard to get me started writing about anything, but it's almost impossible to stop me. (Fortunately the incentive is so much greater in the latter case.) It used to annoy me to throw the stuff away. Why not send it to some other faned and let it annoy him? I sat around for a while waiting hopefully to be asked. Nobody did. There was a path to my door, all right, but everybody beat it in the other direction. Timidly I wrote three articles and sent them out. Two of the faneds immediately ceased publication and the third cunningly lost the article. But was I discouraged?

Yes.

Then one day in November, 1950, a new fan called Lee Hoffman commented on an exchange copy of SLANT I'd sent her. Somewhere among the praise of SLANT, Joe Kennedy, amateur theatricals and the antiquities of Savannah, condemnations of racial prejudice, Redd Boggs and Flash Gordon, and expressions of disinterest in the sex life of hamsters, there occurred the sentence: "If you ever feel so inclined, don't hesitate to send material to QUANDRY."

Naturally I read this letter as a desperate plea for material. I replied by return airmail volunteering to do a one-page column. Lee accepted. (At this time her only regular contributors were R. J. Banks.) I took a lot of trouble over that first installment. I must have re-written it at least six times and it suffered from it. The first paragraph alone contained 13 jokes of one sort or another, some of which I'll bet no one has noticed yet. I was suffering then from an ailment that attacks all conscientious fan writers, the inability to realize that other people don't read as carefully as you write. However, Lee liked it and said so. By this time we were corresponding frequently. In fact we were carrying on two entirely different correspondences, one by air and one by surface mail. And at this point I have a confession to make. I have for years been concealing a ghastly skeleton in my closet. I know this disclosure will make me an object of derision before all fandom, but I feel I must start off here with a clean breast. I shall tell All. My dreadful secret is this.

In February, 1951, Lee Hoffman sent me a Valentine. And I didn't realize.

Of course, it wasn't a romantic type one...it was actually, if you must know my intimate secrets, a picture of a squirrel with the legend "You're nutty but nice" ...but I should at least have suspected. How can I have been so stupid? But I had such a clear picture of Lee as a tubby brown-eyed young fellow that I just put the Valentine down to fannish eccentricity. I'd been in fandom for two years by then and had ceased to be surprised by anything. I had to have a house fall on me. This happened--at least it felt like it--when she sent me her photograph. I still remember calling Bob Shaw the minute I got to work that morning...

"22674."

"Drawing Office, please."

"Is Mr. Shaw there?"

"Bob?"

"LEE HOFFMAN IS A GIRL!!!!!!"

"Of course I'm sure."

"She sent me her photograph. In the first place, she looks like a girl. She looks like one in the second place, too."

### The Harp That Once Or Twice. III

But back to the Harp. That first one was in the Quandry dated March 1951. In the April issue Joe Kennedy and others were very nice about it and I walked on air for days. I noticed one thing, though. No one seemed impressed by the first installment of my brilliant and scholarly analysis of sciencefictional trends, and in the second one Lee had inserted a pointed editorial comment up my most serious passage. I took the hint and never wrote a serious article again. (Except one in the Rhodomagnetic Digest which I still think was the best thing I ever wrote, even if not a single person in fandom has ever mentioned the thing. Curse you all, anyway; one day I shall play Hamlet.)

But meanwhile, on with the motley. The Harp turned out to be a pretty successful column. It may not have been the best body of writing in fandom, but it certainly was the most moving. At any rate it moved me, from Belfast to Chicago. But that's another story. It also made Q the first international fanzine when I started reporting British Conventions in it, and I could write a few thousand words about that, too. But leave us not get nostalgic.. QUANDRY is dead, long live OOPSLA! There will never be another fanzine just like Q, nor will there ever be another Harp just like the Q Harps. But there will be fanzines just as good as Q in their own way, and maybe other Harps no worse than the old ones.

But before we put Q reverently away, there's a couple of odds and ends we might lay beside it. For one thing, there is one sentence of the Harp that never got printed. Lee and I had some fun about this in the letter section and there may, God knows, be some fan somewhere still wondering what that famous sentence was. It occurred just after I'd mentioned that Eva Firestone had called me 'an armchair critic' for criticising N3F, and it read: "That's ridiculous, Eva--I have the highest possible opinion of armchairs." That was all.

As for the other---well, did you ever wonder just how much Rog Phillips used to read of the fanzines he reviewed in "The Clubhouse"? One thing I can tell you, he didn't read the Quannish very thoroughly. In fact I doubt if he really read it at all, because it's impossible to look at a page containing one's own name without it leaping to the eye, and I had a whole paragraph about Rog:--

"Today's new subber kindly pastes on the back of his letter a copy of SLANT's latest review in AMAZING. I can hardly believe it, but Phillips has done it again. In the first issue I ever sent him there was a mild little pun about my grandfather having been a printer and I having merely reverted to type. An innocuous thing compared to some of the monsters I have created, but it must have left a lasting impression on Phillips. In every review but one in the last few years he has quoted it. Less and less verbatim each time, but there's no doubt he got the point all right. It registered. I can just imagine Rog that first time, reading solemnly through the heap, restapling tidily the last disintegrating mimeoed crudzine, and going home to a quiet read and a smoke and then to bed. At about four o'clock in the morning it hits him. He awakes, screaming hysterically. "Reverted to type! Ha ha ha. Ho ho ho." Alarmed, the neighbors send for the doctor. He arrives, makes a quick diagnosis. "Nurse, the hypodermic!" At last Rog quiets down, save for an occasional tortured murmur. "Grandfather, printer, type." The neighbors go back to bed. But Rog is never the same again. I can tell you, I'm scared to make another pun in case it kills him."

There is a sequel to this. After the Chicon, Forry Ackerman and I went to Palmer's place for some sleep and then back to Evanston to drive to Los Angeles with Rog and Mari Phillips. I hadn't met Rog at the Convention so he spoke his first words to me as we moved off along Dempster Street. They were: "You know, Walt, I still remember that first issue of yours. It had a darned good pun in it, something about your father being a printer and you having reverted to type."

#### The Harp That Once Or Twice. IV

I looked at him doubtfully, sure he was pulling my leg. But he wasn't, and he never knew the reason for my getting purple in the face at his innocent remark.

UP THE GARDEN PATHOLOGY      Have you noticed how short-lived BNFs are nowadays? In the old days three years was considered the normal life cycle for a fan, from serious constructivism through BNFdom to permanent gafia, but these Seventh Fandomers seem to have speeded the process up. Nowadays us oldtimers sit back dazed as a bewildering succession of BNF's flash past us like meteors in a "B" movie, vanishing into inactivity almost as suddenly as they appeared. From comet to comatose, you might say.

I have studied this phenomenon and I have come to the conclusion that it's largely the result of a new disease, which I have called annishthnesia. I know that Professor Boggs in the Vegannish pointed out that annishes were a plague, but as Dean Grennell is my witness I thought of it first, and as the discoverer of Stigwort's Disease I feel that my researches go more deeply into this vital matter.

Annishthnesia attacks fans in the prime of life and is so much more deadly on that account, wreaking as it does such havoc among the very flower of fandom. There are two forms of it, primary annishthnesia and secondary annishthnesia, but the first symptoms are identical. The young and enthusiastic fan publishes several promising issues of his fanzine and a type of euphoria sets in, indicated by an insatiable thirst for egoboo. This in itself is not a serious complaint, being almost endemic in fandom. But often the young fan neglects the most obvious precautions and with a reckless expenditure of energy begins to produce more and more ambitious issues, like a child throwing stones into a pond to make splashes. This can have only one result--annishthnesia sets in. He decides to publish a hundred-page annish.

In primary annishthnesia, which is almost invariably fatal, the effort is too much for him and after a short fever he succumbs to permanent gafia. Those with stronger constitutions survive and eventually publish their annish. Haggard, wan, his fingers bleeding from misguided staples, his back stooped from gathering, his pores stopped up with mimeo ink, in advanced malnutrition through poverty brought on by the high cost of paper, the fan stumbles to the mailbox and mails his annish. In his ignorance he thinks his troubles are over. But no, secondary annishthnesia has still to strike.

Back at home, the fan eagerly awaits the plaudits of fandom, the prospect which has given him strength to carry on through all those months of toil and strain. He half expects to receive that very same afternoon an enthusiastic telegram from the Postal Inspector. But the days pass and there is utter silence from fandom. But the poor wretch is not dismayed--rather is he awed at the effect he has produced. Obviously, he thinks, fandom is stunned. All over the world fans are sitting open-mouthed, dumbfounded with admiration, refusing meals, neglecting their families and jobs while they gaze and marvel at the wondrous thing he has wrought. It is just a matter of waiting until they recover enough strength to crawl to their typers and air-mail paeon after paeon of praise. But no. The days, weeks go by, and still no paeon. (That's why it's called annishthnesia--there's no paeon.) Finally, just as he has wildly decided that the Postmaster General is in the pay of rival faneds, two letters arrive. One is from Dave Ish, who says it's not a patch on the Quannish. The other is from Redd Boggs, who says it's not as good as the Insurgent issue of SPACEWARP. In another week or so he gets a letter from Vince Clarke saying it's not to be compared with the November 1943 issue of ZENITH. He refuses to open the letter from Bob Tucker.

This is the crisis. If the fan survives this he will slowly recover. The treatment is complete rest and frequent injections of egoboo. It must also be patiently explained to him that he has unwittingly run counter to one of the fundamen-



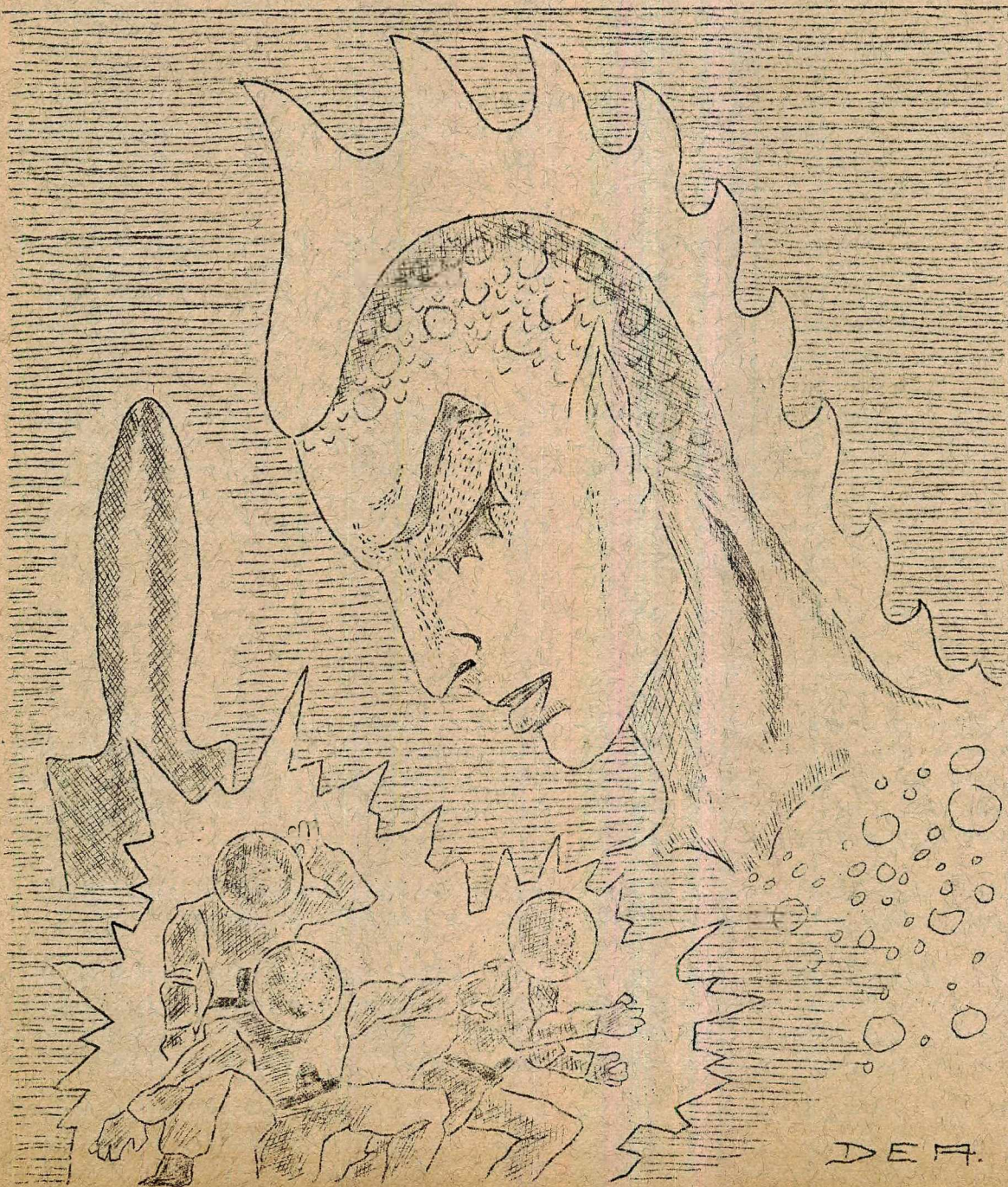
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He could have been an actor. He could have pursued a career in theology. He could have taken permanent refuge in the red-and-black dream world of chess. He might have elected to continue as a college professor. He may have been content to remain an editor, and nothing more.

But he chose otherwise—and in so doing, delighted all of us who enjoy fine fantasy.

The name, of course, is Fritz Leiber, and it's well worth conjuring with. It has produced such magic as "Gather, Darkness", "Conjure Wife", "You're All Alone", and "The Green Millenium," plus a number of distinguished short stories ranging from the early appearances in Weird Tales to such recent items as "The Night He Cried."

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## A Candle To Light Our Way. II

There has already been a good deal of legerdemain in connection with that name. Originally, of course, it was Fritz Leiber, Jr. Senior was a famous Shakespearian actor who for many years headed his own repertory company; the last fifteen years of his life were spent in Hollywood where he won wide recognition for character roles. Leiber, Jr., travelled with his father for a time--indeed, several years before I made his acquaintance I saw him play the role of the Prince of Morocco in "The Merchant of Venice." At the time I met him he had just married Jonquil Steph-ens and was living in Beverly Hills. He had been corresponding with H. P. Lovecraft who did much to develop his early aspirations towards fantasy writing. Soon his efforts were appearing in Weird Tales and Unknown Worlds; a number of these stories were later collected in "Night's Black Agents" (Arkham House).

But his novels, "Conjure Wife" and "Gather, Darkness" brought him to the awareness of fans in the early 'forties. "Conjure Wife" was filmed by Universal, starring Lon Chaney, Jr.: "Gather, Darkness" was widely acclaimed when it appeared in Astounding. At the same time, Leiber made his mark by a series of singularly erudite essays on Lovecraft and fantasy fiction.

Then they dropped the atomic bomb on him.

They dropped the atomic bomb on a number of people in the field. When its smoke cleared away, disintegration of many famous names was apparent: radioactivity was eating the flesh from the reputations of others. The world of fantasy had exploded; what remained was science-fiction.

Leiber was the victim of a direct hit. So much so that he was finally forced to subscribe to the oldest of military tactics--"If you can't lick 'em, join 'em." Which he did, accepting an associate editorship of Science Digest, and gradually abandoning his fantasy efforts in favor of the science-coated placebos which were eagerly swallowed by the readers of the late 'forties.

But it was not until 1950 or thereabouts, with the coming of Galaxy and The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction that Fritz Leiber came into general prominence once more. His appearance as Guest of Honor at the 1951 Convention in New Orleans signalized his new repute. And the boon of hardcover publication since that time--with "You're All Alone" appearing as a pocket book--helped to establish him firmly as a "name" in the field.

So much for the facts in the case.

Now let us consider the fancies.

The hideous sado-civilization of "Coming Attraction"; the war of nerves in "Poor Superman"; that classic of modern ghost-stories, "I'm Looking For Jeff"; the ultimate absurdity of cybernetics--the Giant Brain concealing a beer-drinking wise guy who knows almost all the answers--the list can be extended almost indefinitely. It is long and varied and all the same.

For--let's face it--Leiber never made the switch from fantasy to science-fiction at all. From almost the very beginning, he has written satire.

With the exception of his earliest efforts, Leiber has held the mirror up to Nature--a mirror with the proper, approved uranium handle, but containing a glass that subtly mocks and distorts the face of mankind today; at the same time perfectly reflecting the foibles and fetiches and fears and follies of homo ignoramus.

The odd part of this performance lies in the eyes of the beholder--for few people seem to have recognized or commented upon the intrinsic quality of Leiber's work. In one or two instances--"The Night He Cried," a brutally ribald bullet in

### A Candle to Light Our Way. III

the belly of Mickey Spillane--the intent is unmistakable. But it is everywhere subtly apparent.

"Gather, Darkness," acclaimed as a 'science-fiction novel of the future' is in reality a concise dissection of Science-as-Religion and Religion-as-Science. "Conjure Wife," that study of woman as a witch, is a caustic commentary on the mores of middle-class educators: almost an Alice-in-Wonderland approach to the college campus and its faculty.

"You're All Alone" (which appeared originally in Fantastic Adventures and was thus probably ignored by the 100% Pure White American Type Fan) carries with it the terrifying implications of our modern neurosis, our growing lack of identification with reality--although on the face of it, the story appears to be a fast-moving suspense vehicle built upon the fascinating premise of a machine-built world, where only a few individuals are actually 'alive.'

"The Green Millenium"--Leiber's most recent book (Abelard) is in the same category. It is only when one stops to analyze the premises whereby the future civilization is depicted that the realization of its irony becomes known. His thrill-thirsty characters are the logical evolution (not extrapolation, mind you, but evolution) of today's kick-crazy youth.

Now all this requires writing on at least two levels. It's hard enough to build a fast-paced, literate novel of the future as a "straight" effort. It's doubly hard to erect the foundation on a solidly satirical basis. Leiber's craftsmanship is obvious; better still, its results are delightful.

Some years ago, when reviewing "Night's Black Agents," I ventured to remark upon Fritz Leiber's preoccupation with darkness. Darkness, to Leiber, seemed to be an omnipresent blight in the modern world, a compound of industrial smudge hovering over a mechanized civilization and giving birth to horrors typical of the new Dark Ages. This concept was implicit in his outright fantasy tales, and it was presented through the sombre spot, the grim grime of night in the big cities. In his few essays into the past, Leiber offered darkness as a cloak draped about the form of a swashbuckling adventurer.

Both of these attitudes towards darkness remain in Leiber's work today. Most of his dramatic settings are nocturnal; the element of horror stressed in such items as "I'm Looking For Jeff" and the picaresque [sic/ m:ti:] pronounced in the mad chases of "The Green Millenium."

But to this darkness, Fritz Leiber now brings a candle--a flame of satire to illumine our present night and to guide our way through nights to come.

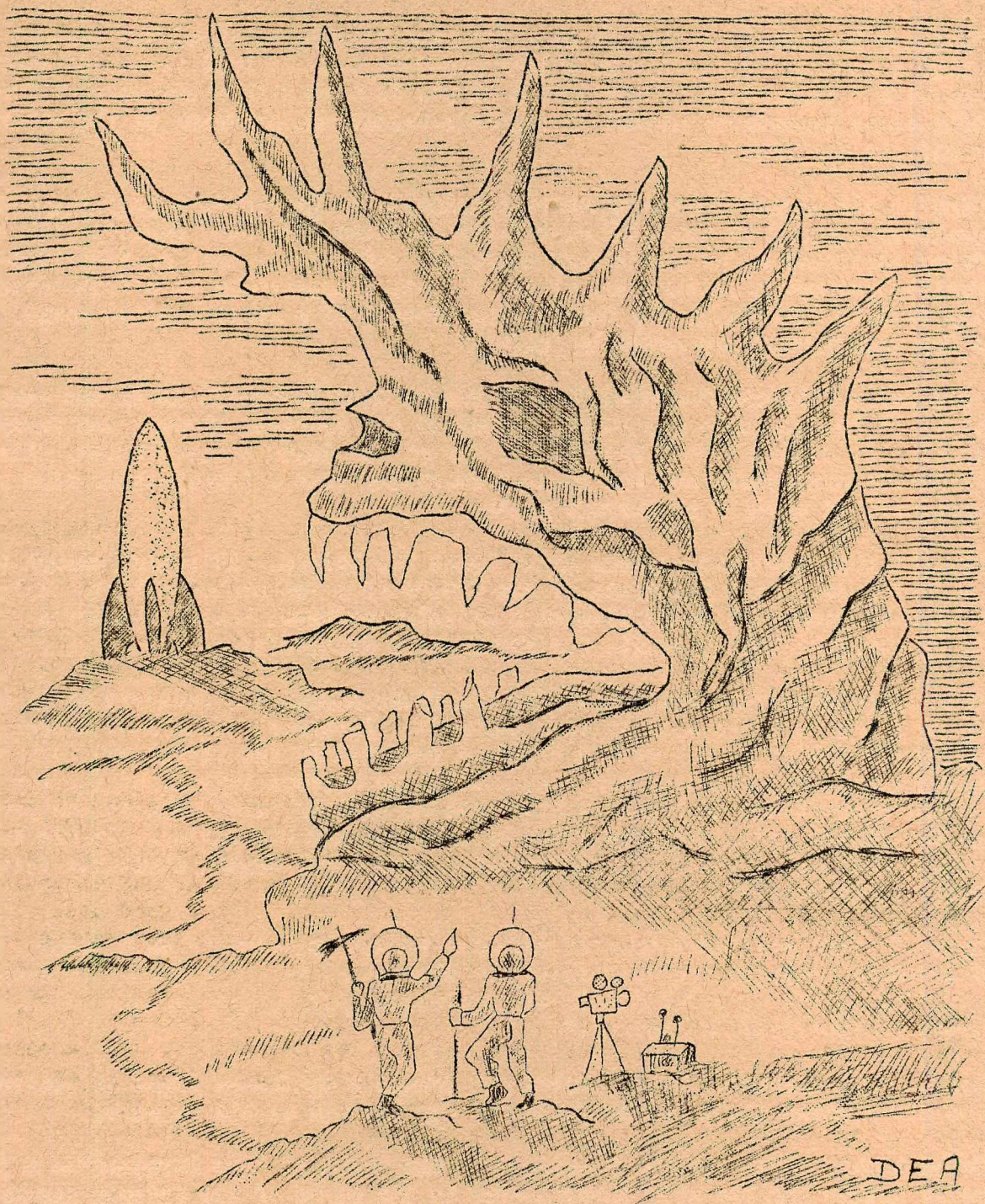
Perhaps this flame was first kindled in the pages of "New Purposes"--a joint venture of Leiber and his wife Jonquil--for in the pages of its fifteen issues appeared such gems as "Caspar Scatterday's Quest" and other whimsical disquisitions upon things that go bump in civilization's night.

It is my hope that this flame of satirical fancy will continue to burn brightly and serve as a beacon to attract the literate reader.

And it is my belief that, since every flame must exist by virtue of having first been ignited, that Fritz Leiber's flame springs from a single spark.

It may not be too far amiss to say it is a spark of genius.

-- Robert Bloch...



# D R I B B L I N G S

'The voices of Sixth Fandom are sweet music in my era' -- anon

It would appear that another issue of OOPSLA! is about to be dumped in your mailbox, but I should like to say a few words about it, first. For instance, this time I have a contents page, lacking in #11. Last issue, as I suddenly found to my dismay, I didn't have a place to state the price of OOPS, the contents of the issue, the frequency of publication...all those little nuances that should appear somewhere, but didn't.

You'll also notice on that page, hidden in amongst the letters scattered indiscriminately thereon, that OOPS is somewhat reluctantly abandoning the six-weekly schedule it used to hold. The reason is that old, old reason: money--or the lack of it. It's true that the Marine Corps doesn't leave much time for me to put out OOPS, either, but you can get around that to a certain extent. You just type a little bit faster, print a little bit faster, assemble a little bit faster and collapse a little more often. But money is a different matter. Accordingly, you may look for issues of OOPSLA! approximately (sic) on the 1st day of the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November. That is six times a year, and if the schedule happens to be the same thing as a bi-monthly schedule, please don't blame me...I didn't invent the calendar. I didn't even kill time.

I did make a calendar, once, tho. I took it from an old advertising stunt that IF ran one time, plus a blue piece of cardboard that the Helms Bakery company had printed all over with numbers for some obscure reason, and after I had attached them together by means of scotch tape, staples, more cardboard and glue, it presented a fairly accurate method of determining which month was current. Emboldened by this success, I have high hopes of eventually producing one accurate enough to predict the phases of the moon. This shall be signified by a chime, ringing one bell for a full moon, two for a first quarter, and so on. The hours, of course, will be noted by a cuckoo, as always.

It seems that a couple of my regular columnists this issue decided to stand up at no small risk to their persons and challenge a few things I was about to enlarge upon in this editorial. One of them was McCain's attack on MAD, and although it is hardly commendable for an editor to go against the words of his columnist, I must admit that I read the latest issue of the comic book with a good deal of enjoyment. Donald Duck to the contrary, MAD produces some of the best satire to be found anywhere in this day and age, whether you look in comic or classic. Never approaching the brilliance of POGO, which shall evermore be my favorite, MAD nevertheless stands some head-and-shoulders above the crudeness of Al Capp's "Li'l Abner" in presenting its satire. Hardly vicious, yet pulling no punches, MAD lampoons such sacred cows as "The Lone Ranger" and "Flash Gordon" with impunity, and with its latest issue even dares to mock that mightiest of the mighty, LIFE magazine. Not since Richard Elsberry's satire on TIME magazine have I enjoyed anything quite so much. MAD: heartily recommended.

My second rave concerns Robert Bloch and his sound support of Fritz Leiber, only this time I'm for 'em and not agin' 'em. More especially, I was concerned with the one piece, "Conjure Wife," which recently appeared in pocket-book form. I picked it up off the newsstand about a week ago, thereby affording myself an evening of reading pleasure comparable only to that I found in reading Fredric Brown's memorable "What Mad Universe" over three years ago. I am not ashamed to admit--along with Damon Knight--that at the end of Chapter 14 I jumped not one but at least three inches out of my seat...never before have I found a novel which moved me so literally. This is easily the best pure fantasy I have ever read, and the fan who sees it and passes it by is making one of the biggest mistakes he could possibly manage. Most heartily recommended, with congratulations to Fritz Leiber for outstanding writing, is "Conjure Wife." Read it.



Apparently faneds are starting to get the idea that OOPS is back in circulation again, and trade copies are appearing at my door once again. Some editors seem to feel a bit ashamed that they'd dropped me from their mailing lists, I think, because I've been getting some back issues as well as current ones. And then there's the case of PEON... When Riddle found out I was publishing again, he sent a trade copy. About a week or so later, another copy of the same issue arrived. I mentioned it to Lee, who said it was probably a case of one hand not watching what the other hand was addressing. Well, that seemed a good enough explanation, but it didn't at all account for the fact that I received a third copy, hard on the heels of the second. Heck! that hand of his isn't even watching what it's doing.

A possibly desirable supplement to the old N3F manuscript bureau is Terry Carr's Fanzine Material Pool. Under this arrangement, authors and artists submit their work directly to the Pool and the material on hand is listed in a monthly newsletter. Editors then decide what they want, and write in for it. Editors may also submit their wants to the Pool and have them advertised. For further information, write Terry Carr, 134 Cambridge St, San Francisco 12, California.

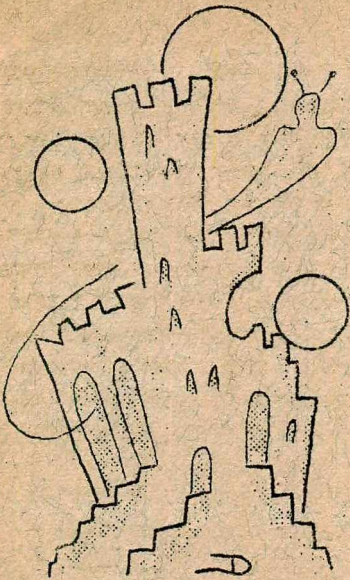
My personal opinion? For a fanzine just starting in business, it's probably a very good source of material. But for an older fanzine, already well-established in the field, it is no more than a more efficient counterpart of the N3F affair. Why? Because the older fanzine already has its columnists lined up and its artists chosen. Occasionally, however, some items are of use--as in the case of the illustrations on this page, by Terry Carr. On the whole, I think neofandom, per se, will benefit by the Fanzine Material Pool. Certainly, if nothing else, it is another proof of what the N3F tried to offer its members but failed so miserably.



For those of you who enjoy really excellent science-fiction, pick up a copy of John Wyndham's "Out Of The Deepes" (Ballantine, both in pb and \$2 hardcover editions). The blurb calls it "a realistic science-fiction novel..." and more, but I think those five words are enough. Wyndham writes with a forcefulness that is almost that of truth, and you find the story highly acceptable. In fact, if a report should suddenly come over the radio while you are reading the book, claiming that 'sea-tanks' were landing on shore-lines all over the world, you should not be too greatly surprised. The story is very realistic and highly probable.

While we're speaking of pocket-books, it might be well to mention the new line that ACE is putting out. Selling for 35¢, it consists of two novels bound back to back in inverted fashion, somewhat in the way Tucker's "Fantasy Jackass" and Hoffman's FAPA magazine were bound in past FAPA mailings. The selections I have are Howard's "Conan the Conqueror" bound with Brackett's "Sword of Rhiannon" and van Vogt's "World of Null-A" bound with his "Universe Maker." Another one is already on the stands--an anthology bound with some other novel, but I can't remember the titles, offhand. A bargain price at 35¢, however, in each case. My only complaint is in the case of Brackett's "Sword of Rhiannon," which ACE claims to be an original, but was actually first printed in PLANET stories some years ago. I am very much against publishers claiming their books to be original, when they are actually reprints from some older source. I wonder if they think that nobody will know--or if Brackett's agent is pulling the wool over their eyes, selling them a reprint novel at original rates. Somebody's fooling someone, somewhere...I wonder who it is?





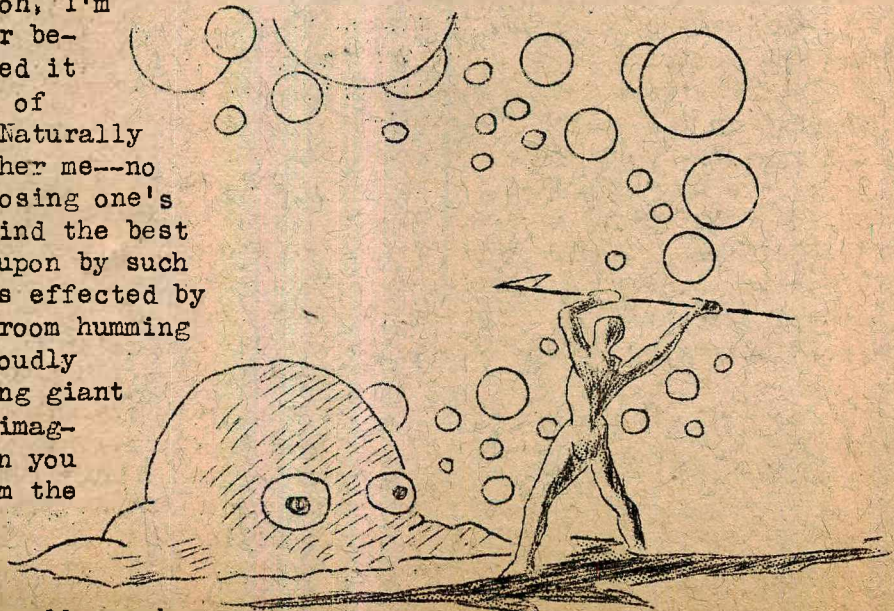
I didn't know February could be so hot! Here in California, of course, the sun always shines (except at 5:30 in the morning, when you'd think it would be a wee bit more necessary...when I'm usually getting out of the rack). I hitch-hike into Santa Monica almost every other week-end to work on OOPS, but when I'm not cutting stencils or relaxing on the beach, I'm occasionally being talked into doing some work. Last week we decided to put in a flower garden around the front and sides of the house and my job was digging up the yard.

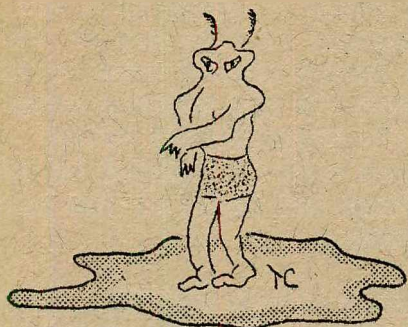
Far be it for me to shy from a little physical labor, so when I was found in the back of the closet I claimed to be looking for the garden tools which were around somewhere. I was very carefully taken by the hand and led to whence they reposed, malignantly, in the corner. The next thing I wanted to look for was a pair of gloves, but before I could get my safari organized I found myself in the middle of a large grassy plain known to the natives of the region as "the lawn." There didn't seem to be any escape, unless I could jump the fence, but I didn't think I could run very fast with a large black ball chained to my ankle, so I decided to get to work and get it over with.

Time flies, it is said, but in this case I think it went back to a good old fashioned horse-and-buggy method of travel. I've got five blisters and that blamed flower bed is only half-finished.

Recently finished Heinlein's "Starman Jones" and found it highly readable. It is hardly apparent that the book was intended to be a juvenile except for a few of the remarks the hero makes in regards to the femme fatale. He is old enough to consider the rather innocent prospect of marriage, but hardly bold enough to think of even kissing her once. But I suppose all of that can be overlooked in the enjoyment of a good story, and perhaps he's brighter than you think when he doesn't marry her at the finish of the book. After all, sapiens dominabitur astris, said the Romans, and surely his choice is an indication of this.

Blast! If there was ever a clumsier person than I am, he certainly must have fallen down and broken his neck long since. So far I've managed to spill almost one complete bottle of correction fluid. Oh, no, not all at once--I conserve the stuff. It takes me at least six times to spill half a bottle, and what with dropping it from my hand, knocking it off of the desk, tipping it over when I try and put the brush back in the bottle...oh, I'm a cool head and you'd better believe it. Last time I tipped it over it ate the finish off of part of my nice new desk. Naturally I don't let any of this bother me--no inanimate object is worth losing one's temper over, you know. I find the best release of tension brought upon by such extenuating circumstances is effected by stamping wildly around the room humming the William Tell Overture loudly under your breath and drawing giant equations of  $E = mc^2$  on an imaginary blackboard. Then when you are finished, quietly inform the bottle that the next time it pulls a stunt like that, you'll throw it through the window. That usually works.





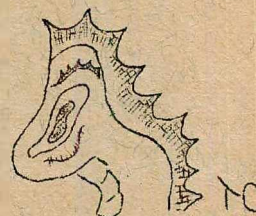
DEVOTED READERS DEPARTMENT: The following is a letter received from one Wm Wylie, 2 Merrill St, Hingham, Mass.

"I read your fanzine for the first time today. Hmmm... That takes care of that. After reading it through, rather laboriously, I reached the back cover. I'm doing well, I reached it. Then I noticed the little bit about having to send you a letter in order to get the other copies I subscribed to. This I had to do. I spent a dollar on this group of magazines and I intend getting some of my money back. There will be a demand for used paper shortly, I expect. Enough of this blunt criticism

--I'll at least say that it's worth the two cents you used to mail it.

... Who is your optician? He must be very good if you can read that print off yellow, blue, green and pink paper. Second, fire the person who is in your shipping department, he goofed on the ninth sheet. If it happens to be thyself so much for the better.

... PS This sort of thing looks easy, if it's worthwhile I might try editing a fanzine. Anyone got a spare mimeograph machine and a blotter they aren't using at the time?"



.....sometimes I wonder why I even struggle.

Hal Shapiro informs me from Detroit that "...the Detroit Holiday Convention will be held at the Hotel Detroiter on July 3, 4 and 5. ...I am convention chairman and there shall be a buck registration fee and it shall be a highly informal affair and costs are held down due to many things we can't mention just yet and Betty (Mrs Phil) Farmer will be toastmistress at the low-cost luncheon (to be held instead of a high-priced banquet.) Small auction and dance and masquerade and fireworks and air-conditioning and all that sort of rot."



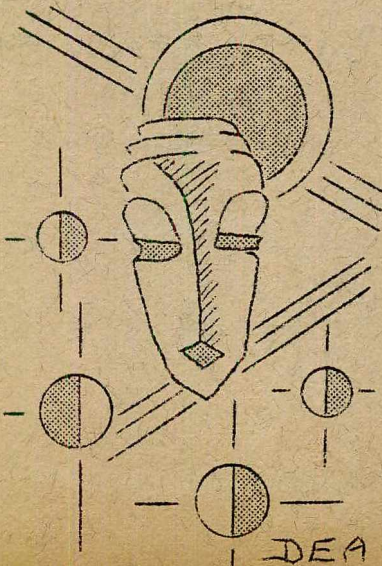
Sounds most enjoyable, Hal--I wish I were going.

I think, however, I shall be most fortunate if I am able to attend the convention in 'Frisco over Labor Day. I sent them my buck some time ago, and as yet I have not heard anything from them. I take this to be a sign that they're so busy entering new members for the convention that they haven't gotten around to me, yet. I trust this will be a gala affair. Perhaps there shall be a special convention report issue of OOPS for the occasion, but that remains to be seen. Of course, as usual, there will be at least one convention report in OOPS, and my own snail's eye view.



I had a gay time at Chicago in '52, as most of you know. Of course, that time I was a little bit more free than I am now, and there was nothing to stop me from wandering down into Georgia and Florida. Now, I think, if I took an extra week or two, there would be objections in certain quarters.

In my convention report don't look for a run-down of the program or anything remotely pertaining to it. If you are looking for that, I suggest a different fanzine. I shall endeavor to give everyone a drink-by-drink account of the happenings of the 12th World Fan Gathering...as seen



## Dribblings, VI

by bleary eye and weary head. Actually, my purpose in going to a convention at all is to meet those people in person that I've been meeting all along by mail. And, naturally, to see Bea Mahaffey! Who cares about a program?

A line in rhyme for your reading enjoyment...

They drifted listlessly in space,  
Their engines dead, their fuel all gone;  
What shall we do? the crewmen asked,  
The Captain said: sail on, sail on.

Behind them lay Centauri's shores,  
Behind, the far-flung Pleiades;  
Ahead, a million years away,  
The cluster known as Hurcules

What shall we do? the crewmen sobbed,  
Fearful of the morrow's dawn:  
The Captain gave a bitter smile--  
"Sail on, sail on, sail on..."

-- anon

When I sink to such poetry, you know it's time for me to stop writing. An editorial of more than four or five pages is exceedingly hard to write for one who has as little to say as I have. I wonder if the pages are wasted and could be better used for columns and stories? Which would you rather have...five pages of editorial mish-mosh or another column or article by some fanwriter?

Another fanzine has appeared from the state of Utah, this time by Sam Mines' favorite letter writer, Carol McKinney. On the whole, the issue is very attractive and nicely done. Certainly one of the best first issues I've come across. You can get a copy from Carol at 377 East 1st North, Provo, Utah.

THOUGHTS I USUALLY THINK WHILE THINKING: Why in the world OOPS never seems to make the fanzine review column in other fanzines. Somehow, somewhere, it always gets left out. # What happened to the snows--and fans--of yesteryear. Where is Earlan Ellison, for one? And Tucker--surely he isn't still on that honeymoon? And where is Bob Peatrowsky's MOTE? And etc? # What ever happened to Art Wesley? # Has Science Fiction Plus gone under? # Who sawed Courtney's boat? # Will MAD eventually replace GALAXY?

Looks as tho issue #12 is slowly drawing to a close. Sometimes I wonder what I'm going to do with those stacks of #11 I have left over from last time, but I don't let it really worry me. I was intending sending them out as samples, but now I'm not sure...I've been thinking of ripping them up and using them for slip-sheets. Oh how I wish they were copies of my first annish, instead!

"All the world's a stage" said Shakespeare. Ah, yes, but I do wish I could find some way to keep the footlights out of my eyes.



Gregg Calkins, Editor  
Starflame Publications



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