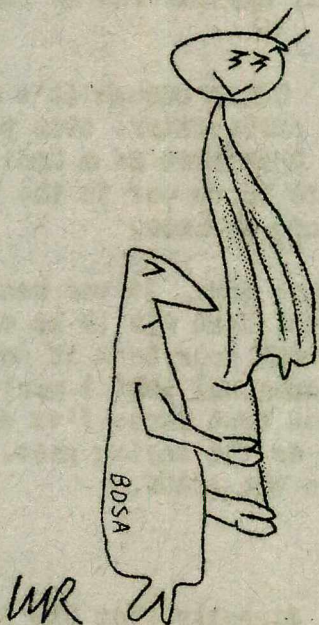
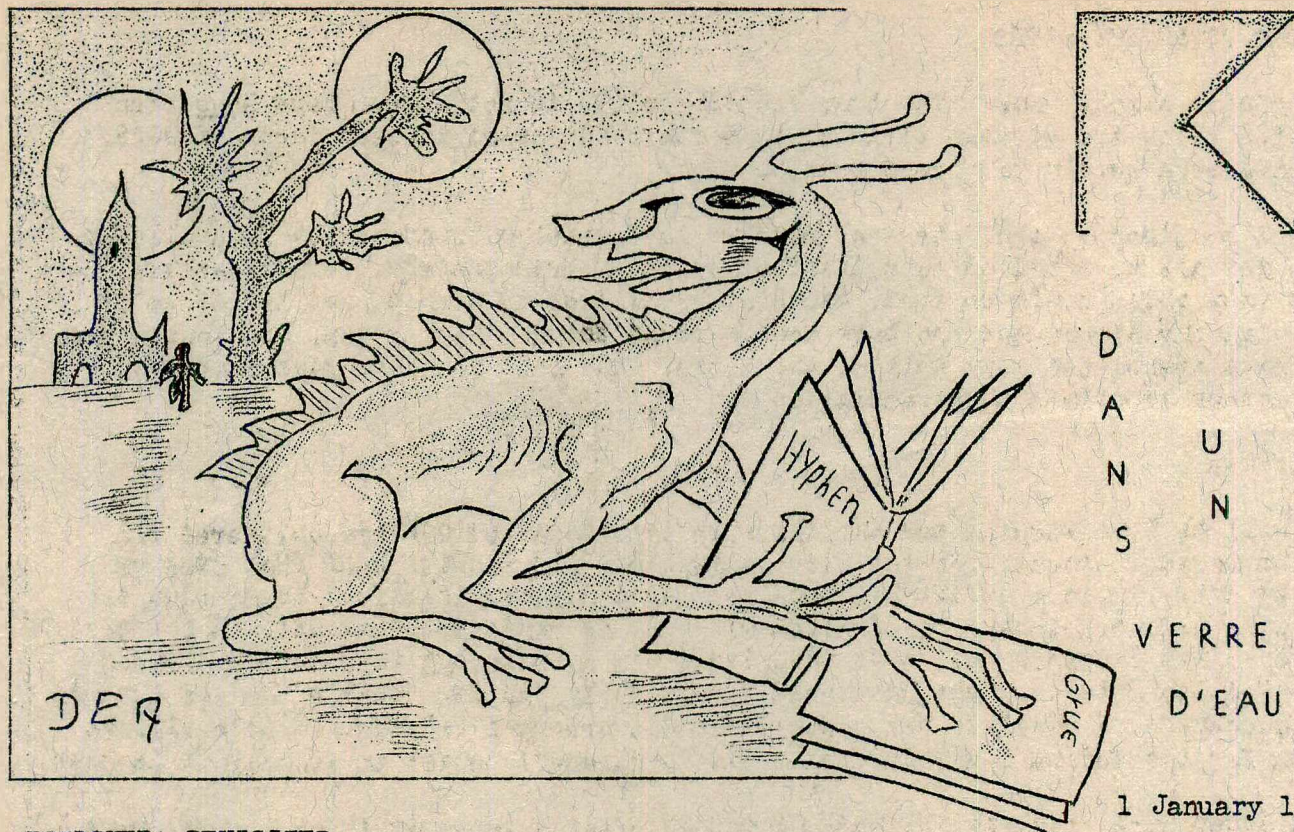


. 20 - OOPS! - 20 .



THE FAKE FAN'S ALMANAC





BEERSHEBA REVISITED

Fill my plate...fill my plate. The all-too-possible has just happened again. Our young friend, Gregg Calkins, is about to eat some more of his words. It seems that I went to some length in the last issue to describe my new 1955 Chevrolet and repeatedly exclaim my satisfaction with its six-cylinder, 130 h.p. engine, with automatic transmission.

Now how am I going to explain or justify or even account for my actions without eating a large platter of my words? Can't be done. No...no, I did not pull a Lee Jacobs. I have not resigned from FAPA, neither have I fallen for the sports-car-party-line propaganda from Canada. Instead, I bought still another one of those bloated Detroit monsters.

This one is a power-blue-and-something-grey 1956 Pontiac. Oddly enough it's a V8. Even more oddly, it has a 240 h.p. engine (with 4-barrell carbuerator, twin pipes, and afterburner). It is, in short, as different from the Chevrolet as a Cadillac is from a Jaguar. I do not have to explain to most readers which car is the best of each of the two comparisons, although we will never convince Toronto.

Speaking of Toronto reminds me of a rather classy car I once saw. It was small, as regular cars go, and although it gave a slightly rough ride, that was to be expected. It started from a dead stop with a jerk that could break your back if you didn't happen to be ready for it. The gas mileage was so phenomenal that I won't even try to repeat it here. Lines? That car had just about the best lines I've ever seen on a car, and it cornered just like it was on rails, as the saying goes. Of course, in this case it was on rails...it was a flatcar on the AT&SF.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA TUESDAY

That is a line handed down from generation to generation, directly from the original Latin (with a minor translation.) Oddly enough, it was written with this year, 1956, in mind, although I can't understand how the Lats of Latindom could see so far in the future. Translated, it means that since New Year's Day falls on a Sunday this year, Monday is a holiday and we don't have to go back to work until Tuesday.

...Dans Un Verre D'Eau II

A GILDED TITLE REVISITED

Aha, my shot struck home. The true fannish spirit is not dead. Fans have been wondering about the strange title of this first editorial in each issue of OOPS... they have been merely too proud to ask.

Still, I am disappointed. Several persons have written in answer to my challenge but so far all have failed to solve the mystery. Triumphantly, they translate the French (any child could do that, especially children in France) and let it go at that, with the air of men who have done a great thing. Poo, I say, and double poo --you have translated only half of the title. And once you have done that, you must further translate the translation.

IN ABSENTIA

There will be loud weeping and wailing when this issue of OOPS is delivered all over the world. Absent, for the first time since #10, is THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE by Walt Willis. As if this were not bad enough in itself, I think that John Berry will also be missing, so Ireland will not be represented at all. A far cry, this, from #18...people said that that issue did nothing but represent Ireland. As Wee William Rotsler might have said but probably didn't, "that's the way the wee ball bounces." To complete the roster, Bob Silverberg's FANZINE FANFARON will be missing for the second issue in a row. It is strangely quiet in Brooklyn this year.

On the other hand, back is THE MARK OF mcCAIN after a lapse of three issues, plus that sage chip-off-the-old-Bloch, Robert, speaking with wisdom and humor about a field of wisdom and humor. Also present is Lee Hoffman, last seen in OOPS #6, and long missed. To wind up the selection we have Phyllis (PHLOTSAM) Economou in as funny a story as any ever turned out by Belfast, reprinted from FAPA for those readers not fortunate enough to have seen it the first time.

There. I'm through making like Harlan Ellison.

THE HARP STATESIDE

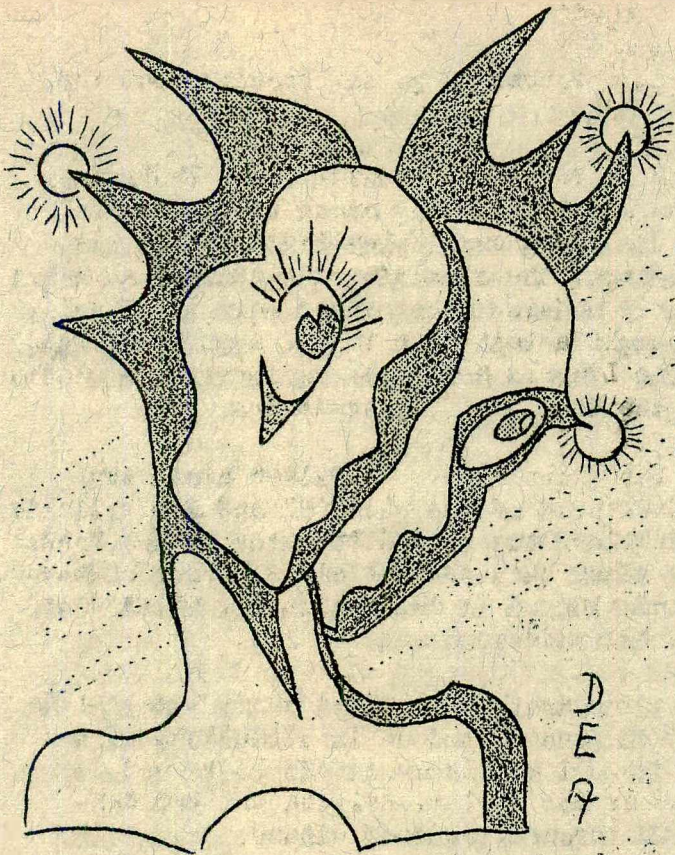
No progress report from Willis is on hand at this early date, but fifteen quarters have been received at this address as of today. These people are: GM Carr, Bob Pavlat, damon knight, Cliff Gould, Neal F. Wilgus, John Quagliano, Bill Courval, Lee Hoffman (2), P. Howard Lyons, Wm Rotsler, Phyllis Economou, Boyd Raeburn, Ron Kidder and Bob Farnham.

For those of you who missed the huckstering last issue, this special 50-pager will be the complete journey of Walt Willis to the USA in 1952 to attend the Chicon. It will be reprinted from QUANDRY and OOPS, primarily, but rewritten, condensed and expanded just a little bit, and with about ten pages of new material that has never been printed before. It will be illustrated throughout by Arthur Thompson (ATOM) and printed on the Starflame Press.

Copies will cost you 25¢ each, not deductible from your subscription, or 1/6 from Alexander Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. This is strictly a "I-hope-we-break-even" venture, promoted by the WE ARE HUCKSTERS, INC., division of HANDS ACROSS THE SEA, LTD.

Well, what are you waiting for? Let's get hot with the quarters, huh?

wgc



A FAN GOES TRAVELLING

Washington D. C. is rather nice. It is convenient to the railway station, full of picturesque buildings, museums, and at the time of my visit: fans.

I arrived in Washington at a ridiculous hour, something like 7:30 am, and far too early to expect fans to be up and about. So I made my way, aided by a native bearer in a taxi-cab to the Statler where I was to leave my

luggage while in that city. I checked in, got a minimum rate room for a price only twice what I could afford. The room was small and stripped of all but the bare essentials, namely a TV and an ice-water tap.

I lay down on the sofa (there was no bed) and waited for the phone to ring. I had followed the Bulmers to Washington from Savannah, and it was our agreement that they call me. Eventually they did and it was arranged that we meet in the Statler lobby, a jungle of yellow mirrors and marble, inhabited by the animals indigent to hotel lobbies.

In the lobby I was located by Mr Bulmer and beaver. He led me into the street where I was to await the passing of Bob Pavlat's vehicle and to leap in as it drove past, halting or parking being impossible in Washington. Pretty soon a convertifile fire-truck colored Ford whizzed past and Ken leaped for it, pulling me after.

In deference to Mr Ford and to John Wilkes Booth, we stopped by Ford's Theater before travelling on out through a winding mass of new housing, to the home of Chuck Derry, a fan-type who gives away mimeographs. The neighborhood in which Chuck lives is outstanding for two things: his presence and the fact that he has a neighbor who builds elephants.

Chuck has a book called THE WORLD DESTROYER by Horace Mann. It is sort of sf-ish, and if any other fan has a copy, Chuck would like to know about it.

After an afternoon of browsing Chuck's unusual books, admiring his mimeograph and his artwork, and watching his TV, I wended by way back to the Statler to lie on the sofa and rest, meanwhile awaiting a phone call from Larry T. Shaw or Fake Pro who was scheduled to arrive in the late hours of the evening. Larry showed up during the lastest hour of the evening, namely the one between 11 and 12 o'clock. We made a date for breakfast in the morning and I called it quits for the while.

Saturday, October 8, I met Larry in the lobby and we had breakfast. Soon thereafter we all walked the seemingly infinite distance to the Smithsonian. Stopped

A Fan Goes Travelling II

on the way to look at the White House but didn't bother to go in, knowing that the host and hostess weren't at home.

The Smithsonian is flanked by the Museum of Science & Industry, and the Museum of Natural History. We went to the former Saturday, browsing among the airplanes, the ship models and the antique autos. Saw the space suit Wiley Post wore on his ascents and the plane that Lindbergh kicked across the Atlantic, the saddle and horse that Phil Sheridan rode, and some handsome ship models, among other things. Finally we ventured forth for nourishment and then caught a taxi over to the Academy of Science, which was closed to visitors. On to the Lincoln Memorial, an impressive place, reminiscent to those older fans among us to the Temple of Pallas Athena.

The day was lovely, overcast and cool, but quite nice. We walked along the mall and Larry Shaw recounted some of the adventures of the old PSNY and Don Wollheim. We drifted in the general direction of the Statler, but paused to watch as two bands, one obviously British in red coats and fuzzy black hats and the other almost unbearably Scotch, squared up against each other and slugged it out musically, while four mounties on black horses held back the irate bystanders.

After a late supper, Larry and I went our separate ways for a short time. I had hardly got settled when my phone rang. The fans wanted us in attendance at a party somewhere on the other side of the bridge. I met Larry in the lobby and we got his car. We followed at a short distance as Bob Pavlat, driving the red convertible, led, and Ken Bulmer made faces at us through the back window.

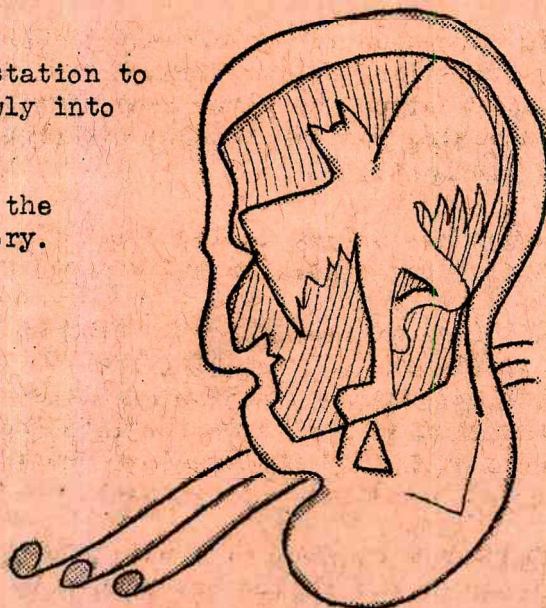
We found the party on a hillside. It was cluttered with fans. I chatted a while with Pavlat and Jack Harness, reminisced about the "Good Old Days" with Briggs, and met the much-touted John Hitchcock who lived up to all his publicity. Met Ted White, Larry Stark, some Britisher with a beard, and some other fans too. A lot of them. We listened to a couple of tapes, including a sound-record of a ghoddminton game indulged in by the Washington fans, which evoked from Mr Bulmer a comment of "tsk tsk."

We played "Queer but not Peculiar" and tried "Virgin Sturgeon" but the latter was too deep for most of us. Especially after those Nuclear Fizzes. So around 5:30 we called it all off, gave up, and returned to our respective abodes.

Sunday we made a feeble stab at the National Museum of Natural History, and managed to get through the Gems and Minerals Department before collapse set in.

And around 6 or 7 pm, we met in the train station to bid me a fond farewell and my train chugged slowly into the distance.

I will go back someday and see the rest of the minerals in the National Museum of Natural History.



leg

LETTER

FROM BLOCH

My position is that of a mild Pogophile, in a world that seems to be equally divided between rabid Kelly fans and those who detest him.

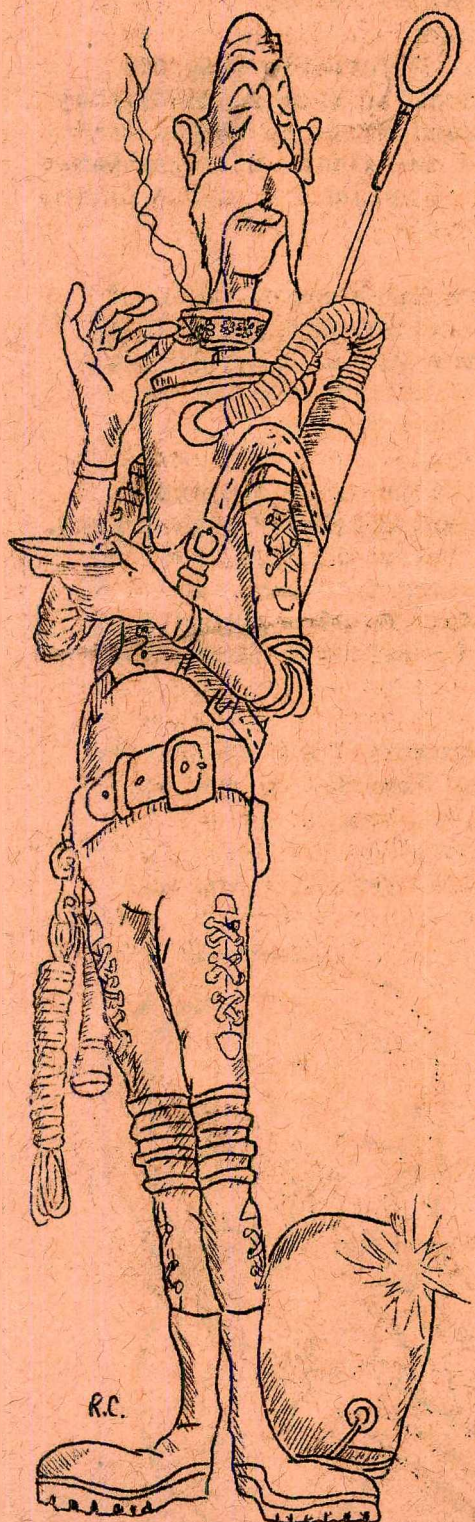
I'm very fond of the Pogo books and the sections of the daily strips which deal with satirical material. I think the Sunday strips are putrid: imagine Kelly does too, and regards them as a wearisome chore. They certainly read that way...endless dragged-out repetitions of the same tired situations (somebody gets something stuck over his head: somebody tells a long, nonsensical but non-funny version of a bedtime story). The only thing intriguing to me in the Sunday Pogos is just what psychological significance that pot-on-the-head holds for Kelly himself. Freudians could have a field day with this gambit.

But the daily strips are usually rewarding and the book versions even better--I suppose because of the continuity and Kelly's little prose or poetic addenda.

The interesting thing about Pogo, and about all comic strips, is the fact that they change...change radically...but these changes go almost unnoticed by the constant reader. Some years ago LIFE ran a comic strip feature: as a part of it, they printed 20-year old excerpts from some of the national favorites and ran them side by side with more recent versions.

The results were startling. The drawing was, in some cases, radically different: JOE PALOOKA of years ago scarcely resembled his present limning...the BLONDIE characters were drastically altered...LI'L ABNER had undergone great transformation. The same holds true in my own memory of others. One of the most amusing (in a disgusting sort of way) transitions is that of DIXIE DUGAN.

You are far too young to remember, but DIXIE DUGAN was born, originally, as a fictional character. She was the heroine of J. P. McEvoy's two serials for the old LIBERTY magazine--titled "Show Girl" and "Show Girl in Hollywood." Both appeared in the late '20s. They were illustrated by Striebel, I think, and he chose for the heroine a living model...one Louise Brooks, a silent motion picture actress who wore her black hair in bangs and resembled a long-legged, sophisticated version of Colleen Moore. The DIXIE DUGAN of the books was a tough, slangy, competent



Letter From Bloch II

chorus girl with a no-good boy friend and a ne'er-do-well family. She was brash, amusing: the stories were told in the form of letters, telegrams, etc.

The movies made films of the saga, starring Alice White (who was a blonde, not brunette) and then a comic strip was launched--largely, I suppose, to "promote" the film at the time. Now here's another oddity: before writing DIXIE DUGAN, McEvoy had done a Sunday Hearst feature about another family, THE POTTERS, which Striebel illustrated. And for DIXIE DUGAN, Striebel merely took the same drawn characters and transposed them: PA POTTER became PA DUGAN, etc. And for the first few years, DIXIE DUGAN was still a chorus girl with a rapsallion family.

Then the transformation began. Without going into any details, by the end of the '30s DIXIE DUGAN had become the very epitome of Clean American Girlhood. She wasn't in show business, she wasn't slangy, her parents became loveable (PA still bungled, but he wasn't a loafer or a sponger). And DIXIE dressed ever so discreetly--with little girls sending in "designs" for her clothes, yet!--and she became sort of an "authority" on "proper conduct." I've not glanced at the strip in recent years but I'd venture to guess she isn't "comic" at all now: probably she's involved in the sort of soap-opera mystery-type thing they all go in for nowadays.

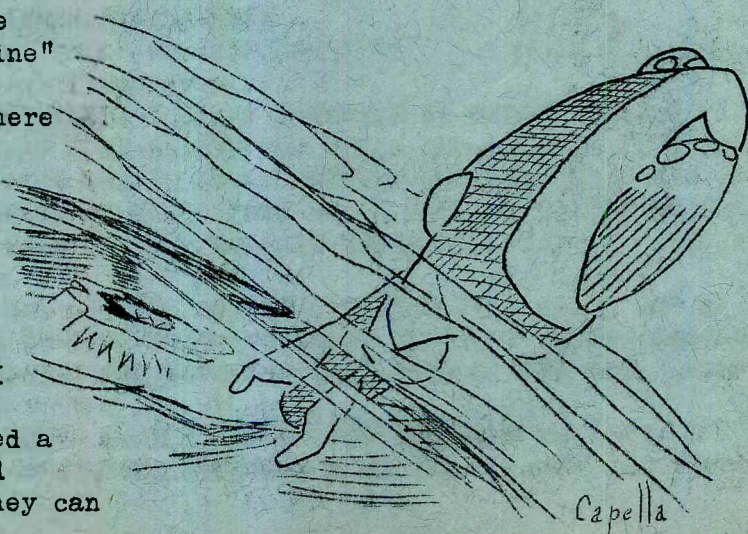
The point, if there is any, is that comics and comic strips change. POGO of five years ago was drawn differently too, and the content was different. Just different enough to provide a noticeable contrast with today's version. Personally, I like the early POGO much more.

What happens to any "comedy material" or "comedian" working in a mass media is inevitable. The very elements which make for popularity: freshness, originality, individuality, are quickly exhausted due to the demands of daily or weekly deadlines. The necessity of working within a rigid format, time-wise, takes its toll.

Georgie Gobel became popular because of his free-and-easy monologue style. But neither he, the factory-worker who wrote most of his famous monologues, nor the five other writers hired since then as a team, can hope to turn out sure-fire material week after week. So now he's got a "wife" stooge and "guest stars" to exchange insults with, and a series of meaningless chatch-phrases which were funny at the beginning within their intended context but are now completely meaningless and adolescently idiotic. Twenty years ago the same thing was true. Joe Penner and his "Wanna buy a duck?" and "You nasty man!"...Jack Pearl and his "Vas you dere, Sharlie?"...Ed Wynn and "So-o-o-o!"...same thing. Same pattern. Start funny, start as "originals"...run into the necessity of keeping up the pace, so it's off into a weekly "story" or "situation comedy" or the old "guest-star variety" routine. No escape from it.

The "quieter" type of humor, the kind that starts out with a "story-line" from the very beginning, eventually peters out and dies, again because there is no inexhaustible supply of material. AMOS 'N' ANDY (once SAM AND HENRY) are good examples. The same holds true of such old standbys as VIC AND SADE, EB AND ZEB, etc.

A good many people like Bob and Ray. So do I, but twenty years ago I heard the same approach, done better, with Stoopnagle and Budd, who suffered a similar fate. The real "offhand" and "inspirational" humorist--even if they can



Letter From Bloch III

keep up the quality of their material--seldom find a permanent following or (what is more important to them) a permanent sponsor.

In this connection, it is well to examine the so-called "superior" humorists. Now in decline, Fred Allen was once regarded as the darling of the sophisticates because of his "dry" humor. He was often cited as a striking contrast to the "low corn" of routine radio comedies.

But a close, objective survey of the Fred Allen shows from the 1930s through the 1950s will afford definite surprises. Fred Allen always had a formula show. It was just as rigidly contrived and stylized as anything else on the air. Intro. A bit with Portland ("Mr Allen," etc). Allen's Alley. The Guest Star. A skit. Another skit with the Guest Star. And despite Allen's reputation for "dry wit" one will find his scripts include the same puns, running gags, malapropisms, etc., which were used interchangeably on such then deplorable vehicles as the Abbott and Costello Show, the Hope-Colonna stanza, or the Eddie Cantor - Mad Russian (and/or Givot or Parkyakarkis) grinds.

What distinguished Allen was the whimsy he injected into his characterizations for stooges. He took the old stock vaudeville types (the Stage Irishman, unchanged: the Stage Hebrew, switched to a female role: the Old Shakespearian Ham, switched to Falstaff Openshaw: the stage Southern Fireater, switched to Senator Claghorn, etc.) and brightened up their lines. His sketches showed much ingenuity...and then showed merely the toll of the years. He got to repeating them: sometimes five or six times. He'd drag in guest stars year after year (Peter Lorre, for instance) and repeat their original interview verbatim.



This is not criticism of Fred Allen or any other comedian. It is merely an indication that nobody can be consistently funny on cue for a specified time-length week after week. Comedy is not that common a commodity. So the Jack Bennys go in for their "running gags" and the Jackie Gleason who failed miserably in his first TV appearances as RILEY in THE LIFE OF RILEY now does a variant on just that (minus the kids) in his HONEYMOONERS shows. And Walt Kelly, to get back to him, finally, keeps putting Albert's head inside a pot.

From this derives Thorne Smith's standard plot and the standard plot dependency of Wodehouse, Clarence Budington Kelland, and the others who did book-length humor years ago.

We don't know what the imprisoned head means to Walt Kelly--unless he happened to be a breech-birth baby--but we can guess that Thorne Smith was his own hero: the middle-aged man who was discontented with suburbia, his wife, and the maudlin mores of the day. We can guess that Kelland's endless variations of the naive bumpkin or scholarly professor who wins out over the slick villains represents somehow his own wish fulfillment.

We can guess, but we can't prove. All we can prove is that apparently these situations, these types do represent some kind of symbolic satisfaction to a general audience...and can be used over and over again once the formula is found.

The trick in comedy seems to be to make a name for oneself by doing something original, and then revert to a standard pattern in order to keep going.

Letter From Bloch IV

Kelly has found his own audience, apparently. Not an overwhelmingly large one --not the kind of audience enjoyed by Martin and Lewis--but a sizeable minority who probably still mourn the passing of BARNABY or even SKIPPY.

The trouble with that audience is they usually end up by destroying their idol through over-praising him. The "sophisticated" audience is great on reading "significance" into their comedy. They are ashamed to just admit that a guy makes them laugh...they've got to flatter themselves by pretending that there's something "cosmic" about it all.

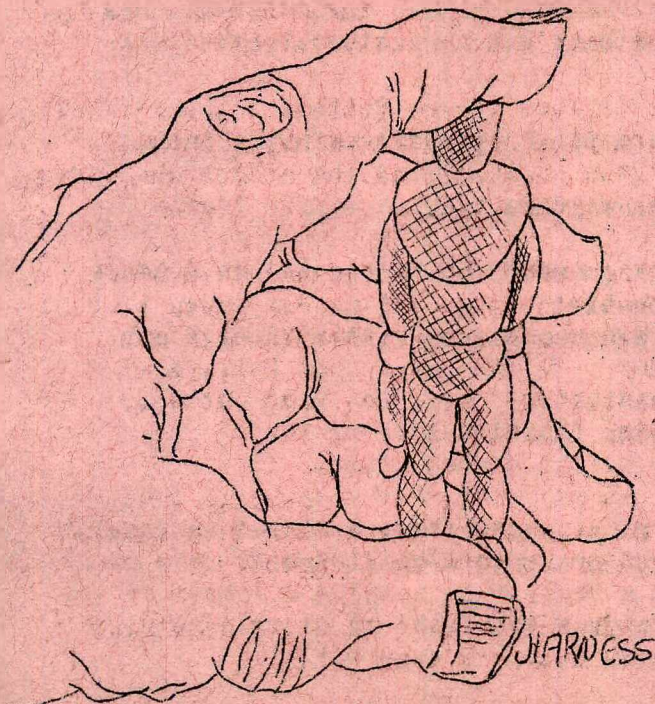
So the pretentious critics and the self-styled intelligentsia begin to look for "meanings" and "universality" and all the rest.

They take a fine knockabout comic like Charlie Chaplin: a pantomimic clown with a streak of sentimentality in his work. They take him and insist that The Tramp is The Common Man, and that Charlie Chaplin is Mr. Charles Chaplin, the Creative Artist. So Chaplin becomes a "Creative Artist" and stops being funny most of the time. He gets Ideas and concerns himself with Causes. I happen to sympathize with some of his Ideas and Causes, and enjoyed MONSIEUR VERDOUX. But I'd trade it any day for another SHOULDER ARMS or GOLD RUSH or the short, incredibly vulgar and brutal comedies which elevated him to rightful fame.

Harpo Marx was much funnier before he was "discovered" by the snooty press. Then he became self-conscious and waned. Groucho was an exaggerated and brilliant version of the old vaudeville Professor in the "schoolroom skits": now he too has been elevated into the intellectual hierarchy and is just another fast-gag artist. Even W. C. Fields suffered a bit at their hands: the trouble with many of those who extol him in learned journals is that they never saw how much better he was in his silents and early talkies, before he became an "institution" (at a time, actually, when he was sick and old and tired and not half the man he was in his comic prime.) The same holds true for Durante, Ben Blue, and a dozen others.

Something of the sort, on a very minor scale, is already happening to Walt Kelly. I hope he's aware of the dangers and I hope he has a continuing supply of humorous material. If not, he'll go "arty" completely...and the very people he is trying to please will rush off in search of a new idol.

-- Robert Bloch ...

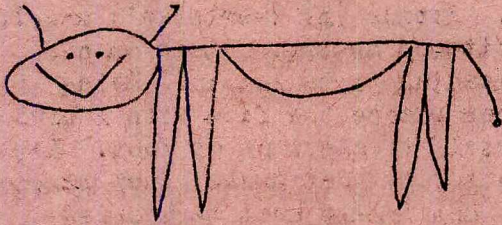


/oooOooo/oooOooo/oooOooo/oooOooo/oooOooo/

It happens that here I am stuck with a clear, open, empty blue space on the stencil, and (I've myself to thank) I just can't leave it blank, so I'll pick up my paper and pencil and dash off a verse (neither better nor worse than those of the great poet, Wansborough) that will bring to my name egoboostings and fame...or else be a flop, to my sorrow. What choice is there to it? I've naught but to do it, I can't leave this hole unadorned; too much blank space, I find, in a 'zine (to my mind) is a thing that is much to be mourned. Now a short little line of wit (yours or mine) would set off this space quite in tone, but alas! and bad cheer! none of your lines are here, so I'm forced to print some of my own.

ODE TO AN UNFILLED FILLER

(Reprinted by permission from
the 72nd FAPA mailing, 1955.)

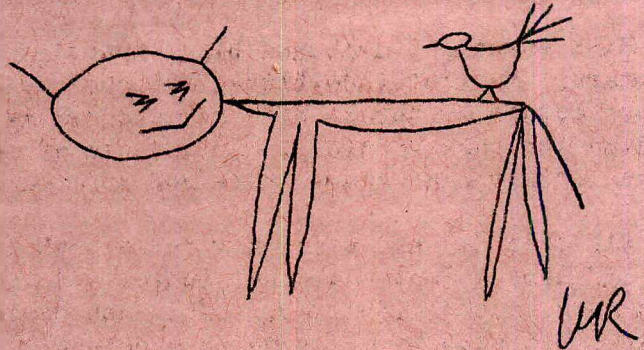


cats unlimited

For a long time I've considered myself quite immune to surprise at unexpected twists in a cockeyed life. But these days I sit back, look at me--and I'm flabbergasted!

Fact #1: I don't like cats.

Fact #2: I suddenly find myself the reluctant proprietress of a full-fledged cat--er--hostel!



Yes, the West 20th Street Economou abode currently has a glaring, multicolored neon sign (visible only to felines) blatantly beckoning from the living room window. I would imagine it invites somewhat thusly:

KOZY * KITTY * KAMP

Komfy Kouches Kontinental Kuisine
Kongenial Kompany Kopacetic Kativities
Freeloaders Welcome
Permanent & Transient

Now I'm the doggy time, myself. If and when I ever gave a thought to cats, it was to conclude that they were altogether too arrogant, independent and catting for my taste. I'd have thought cats had the sensitivity to sense and share my indifference, but not so. Or maybe they just don't give a hoot. The present bewildering situation appears to be directly traceable to a female who just couldn't keep her mouth shut. (At first I romantically called her Bast but have since renamed her Preggy for obvious reasons.)

At latest count the guess list at KKK; the cast of this cat-astrophe includes:

PREGGY: (formerly BAST) The pretty, capricious, white-with-black-spots female who started it all. Semi-permanent.

SWITCHEROO: A white-with-black-spots tom who masqueraded as Preggy in her absence until he became accepted. Semi-permanent.

TIGER-TAIL: A runty, tiger-striped, treacherous, pugnacious, hypocritical tom. Permanent.

PANTHER: The sleek, ebony City Inspector. Transient.

PATHETIQUE: A big, black, wistful, harrassed tom, "Outside looking in."

PROSPECTIVE EXTRAS: (Perish forbid.) Preggy's little consequences.

The prosaic locale is the Economou living room, overlooking a closed courtyard hemmed in by apartment buildings. This apartment presents a challenge to cats as it is accessible only by climbing a vine, crossing a roof, then leaping a four-foot gap at a tight angle to our high-up window sill. Not for the faint of heart!

It all started one cold, snowy February evening. Arthur (my everlovin') and I, seated snugly before a roaring fire, heard a faint, piteous mewling. There on our window sill was a shivering, half-grown white cat, pleading to be let in. Being reasonably tender-hearted, I brought her in and set her before the fire with a bowl of warm milk. She settled down cozily and purred herself to sleep on my foot. Later, at bedtime, I hopped around the room awhile trying to jar my foot awake, then carried kitty to the window to shove her out into the storm. Her family must be worried about her, I reasoned. However, that gap to the roof looked so formidable and the court so far below that I was afraid to have her jump. After thought, I ripped the cover off one of my ironing boards and laid the board across the gap to form a bridge. The house temperature blew down to 45 while I tried to make her cross. No soap. Okay--in for the night.

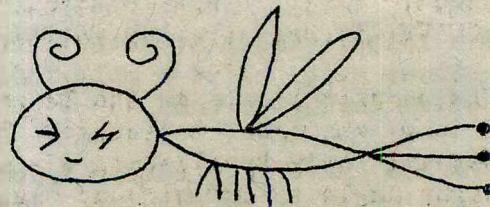
Next morning I awakened blue, sweating and goggle-eyed out of a strangulating nightmare. My gratitude-bitten kitten, overcome with emotion, had sprawled her carcass across my throat with her head on my left ear. Rudely I shoved her off and tried to get back to sleep. Optimistic of me. In the middle of the living room rug I found Arthur's newspaper shredded into confetti to form a rest room for the lady.

All that day and every day for a week I tried vainly to force Bast to take herself off home. Bast would not budge. It was cold, she cried, and besides, she loved me so much! (Shudder.) This she demonstrated not only by strangling me each morning, but also by using me as a cat-walk. Whenever I flopped on the couch she would march unsteadily up and down my torso like a drunken picketer. However flattering her excessive affection, I was adamant. I didn't want a cat. I hadn't chosen to have a cat and had no intention of permitting any cat to thrust herself on me.

Finally came a nice, warm day. I hardened my heart and placed Bast on the ironing board to banishment. For hours I ignored her heart-rending cries. I refused to glance at her pacing endlessly back and forth on the window sill. She's got a home somewhere, let her go to it, I told myself. When I felt myself weakening I betook myself off to the movies. Sure enough, when I got back Bast was gone. For awhile I missed her--you can get used to anything!--but not too much.

Two weeks ago, Bast, now very Preggy, paid us a return visit. The window was wide in hope of luring a stray breeze. She hopped in and immediately headed for my couch where she proceeded to pace up and down my frame, finally settling on my neck. When I had dislodged her sufficiently to get my breath, I bleated over her with those strange cries of incredulous joy uttered by slight acquaintances who meet unexpectedly in a foreign port. But no milk--she wasn't being invited to move in again. She stayed briefly, then hurtled off into the night.

About an hour later Preggy returned with Panther, her husband--I dubiously hope. Panther is a sleek, coal-black, power-glide-equipped creature with an elongated neck who appears to be the official City Inspector for Kat Kamps. He now visits us regularly and his procedure is an unvarying duplicate of that first night's performance. Without a glance at us mundane mortals, Panther briskly trots about the entire apartment, meticulously examining every nook. He defies catching and is contemptuous of flapping newspapers trying to shoo him out of the house. For some inscrutable cat reason, Panther always winds up his tour in the fireplace, staring disapprovingly up the chimney with his giraffe neck stretched almost out of sight. Convinced that whatever he suspects isn't going to come down at present, he liquidly flows out the window and away.



That first night, Panther apparently stamped the Ekonomou Kozy Kat Kamp with his official Seal of Approval for his girl friend, because although Panther went, she stayed--I think. There was nothing

Cats Unlimited III

we could do about it as the heat forced us to keep the window open 24 hours a day. I refused to feed her, but she took that nicely in stride, going out now and then to return later, fat and contented. About three days after her return, I noticed a puzzling change in her character. She became aloof and even stopped stomping on me. I gave it little thought, attributing it to the heat. How wrong can you get?

A few nights later I paused at the chair she had appropriated, to scratch her head. In a rare--for now--demonstration of cattish ecstasy, she rolled over, stretching and pawing the air. "An impostor!" I shouted. This was decidedly not Preggy! He leered at me greenly. Percival seemed altogether too mild. We named him Switcheroo. The names were mostly for the record, though, because we seldom knew which one we were stumbling over.

It was just about a week after the advent of Preggy/Switcheroo that one of them--loud-mouthed Preggy, I assume--turned up with Tiger-Tail in tow. He was a runty little critter, very unprepossessing, who wandered about miowing endlessly. He was the absolute last I would have chosen to be a permanent boarder. Not that I had anything to do with the choosing... Tiger-Tail is dull brown, with black stripes, a hypocritical beast with a nasty disposition, the only cat I've ever known to growl like a vicious dog. He took one fast look around and apparently rubbed his paws together, purring "What a set-up...WHAT a set-up!" And that was that.

All the other cats managed to remain sleek, despite my resolve never to feed them. (I was still naively hoping they'd go away.) However, Tiger-Tail stayed suttbornly present, crying whenever I went to the refrigerator until I was on the verge of joining him in his tears. I was as stubborn as he was, though--I thought--and stuck to my guns. Periodically I'd put him out, certain that hunger would drive him to his home eventually, but he would clamber right back into the house the minute I turned him loose. It finally became obvious that if I didn't feed him he was determined to starve at my feet, so I unhappily flew the white flag and ordered a supply of cat food.

I wouldn't mind so much if he'd only show a little gratitude or at least be half-way civil. He's the complete hypocrite, fawning all over me when he's hungry, rubbing against my ankles, purring full mit love, even cutting up cute-and-tricky. Otherwise he's about as friendly as a tarantula. Until I learned my lesson he could coax me to rub his neck and belly, rolling and purring voluptuously, but when he felt satisfied he would suddenly halt the proceedings by treacherously seizing my hand with needle teeth and gouging claws. He also has the endearing habit of unexpectedly leaping at my ankles scratching and biting. The fact is, I am stuck with him. Therefore, for the sake of my own self-respect, I try to convince myself that he is only playing--rather than making a fool of me.

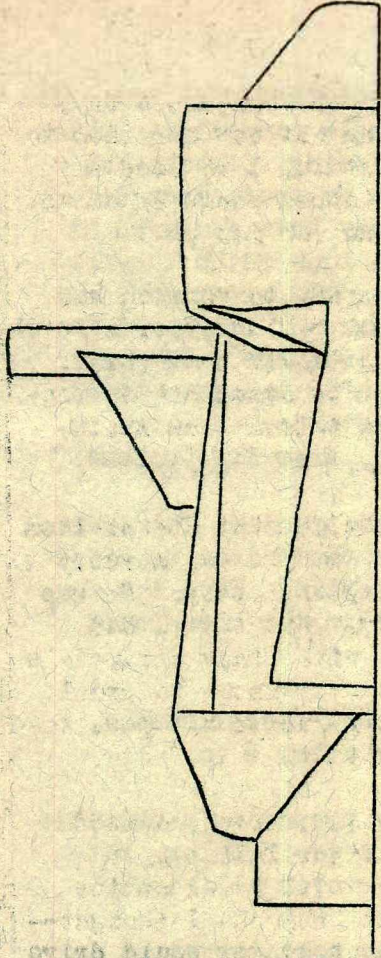
Bringing up the rear, in about every way possible, is Pathetique, an outcast tom. Pathetique reminds me of nothing more than a wistful kid watching the other kids on a hot day from the wrong side of a fenced swimming pool. He steps tentatively in through the window, big-eyed, friendly and yearning. But Tiger-Tail says no. He says it in no uncertain terms. "Out!" he snarls with much spitting and growling. And poor Pathetique pathetically outs, where he remains peeping in at intervals, lonely and forlorn.

The roster stands at five. Five uninvited, unwelcome, uninhibited, uncaring, presumptuous cats. I've a cold feeling that Preggy is sizing up the joing for a prospective laying-in home.

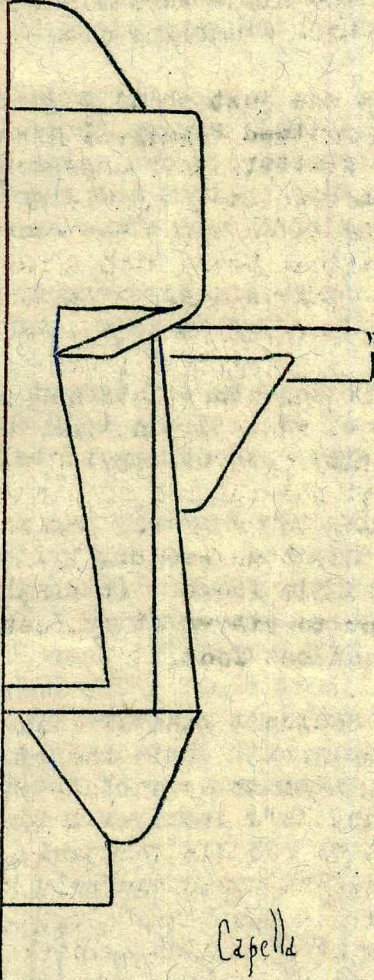
I still don't like cats. I yearn to inhale once again nice, sooty New York air, uncontaminated by cat fur. Besides, I'm planning to get a defenseless pup soon. Suggestions, anybody?

-- Phyllis Economou ...

VERNON L. McCAIN



THE MARK OF McCAIN



If you had a time machine, what would you do? Go back and see who the man in the iron mask was? Probe forward to find what fate is in store for our civilization? Go back and tell your teen-age self how to live more sensibly? Strangle Hitler in his crib? Or would you be more conventional and shoot your grandfather?

Not me.

If I had a nice, handy time machine I'd equip it with a good, anonymous-looking tape recorder, a supply of suitably dated currency, and every spare evening I'd go back to some period in the thirties or early forties to a preset date, check into some hotel, plug in a radio and my recorder and tune in the Duke Ellington broadcast I know to have occurred that night.

The Duke was the first bandleader to really avail himself of the potentialities of radio for making a band well-known and, although he's never had a sponsored or sustaining network show in the thirty years of his career, he's probably made more broadcasts than any other leader, a tremendous amount over networks and even more of a local nature. The trouble is that during the most fruitful period of his career, home recording was, at best, clumsy, expensive and unsatisfactory. From 1945 and the first availability of magnetic recorders, practically every broadcast note by the orchestra has been captured by someone or other and is available at a price to dedicated Ellington collectors such as myself if you know what channels to use. But pre-'45 broadcasts are comparatively rare and pre-1940 ones almost unheard of (I own one.)

Of course, there are literally hundreds of Ellington commercial recordings which were released in the '30s and which can still be obtained one way or another, again if you know the proper channels. This would appear more than adequate to most people

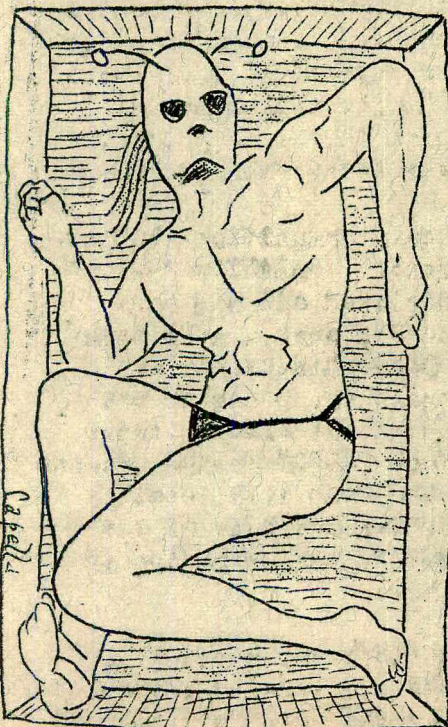
reading this, but the peculiar nature of dedicated record collectors eludes you. You see, the devoted admirer of the Ellington group wants every single composition which the band ever had in its books (and despite their prolific recording, probably at least 1/5th of these never appeared on shellac) and in addition to that, each different arrangement of the same piece which the Ellington band may have featured at varying times. While most large bands have one arrangement of a tune which they always use, the Ellington aggregation was unique; they were constantly experimenting, changing and revamping the way they played each number. It's unusual if you find them repeating a composition in the same arrangement two weeks in a row. In fact, during the late '20s, when they were sometimes recording for ten or a dozen record companies simultaneously under various pseudonyms, there are instances of three recordings of the same piece in one month, each differing markedly from its fellows.

And since such variations bear for me a similar, though far greater, fascination to that I feel towards several similar Sturgeon treatments of a theme like symbiosis, each possesses its own value and important identity in my collection. Thus the frustration that follows the recollection of all those priceless Ellington broadcasts which vanished into ether and memory during the thirties.

Wanted: One time machine with capacity for one passenger and miscellaneous equipment. Must be safe, simple to operate, economical. Phone after 6 pm.

According to the latest VARIETY, Ray Bradbury is currently preparing a dramatic version of "Fahrenheit 451" for Paul Gregory. I presume this is for filming, but with Gregory you can never tell. It might be for stage or tv or even all three.

Certainly Bradbury has now unmistakably arrived amongst the most respected and sought-after of American writers. The honors of five or six years ago whose reflected glory fandom basked in, are pretty unimpressive compared to the prestige Bradbury has now achieved. Dramatically, at least. Bradbury moves only in the best circles. Not that "It Came From Outer Space" or that Warner Brothers adaptation of his Collier's short ("The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms"?) were of startling quality. But Bradbury was selected by John Houston to script the film version of "Moby Dick" and working with Houston is a privilege almost any writer could envy. Certainly Houston possesses one of the three greatest creative talents in Hollywood (roughly speaking...it's been years since he actually filmed a picture in that area) and his may be the most important film genius since Chaplin's.



Gregory has less importance in his own right as a creative individual, but he has developed a reputation for flawless taste and the much more uncanny ability of making it pay off. For those of you for whom the name rings no bells, Gregory is the amazing young man who, in partnership with Charles Laughton, has in the past half dozen years produced, to unanimous critical acclaim and gaily swinging turnstiles, four quite unconventional stage productions... "Don Juan in Hell," "John Brown's Body," "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial," and "Three For Tonight," plus one film ("Night of the Hunter") which has also been a critical success though it is yet too early to know whether or not it will also succeed financially.

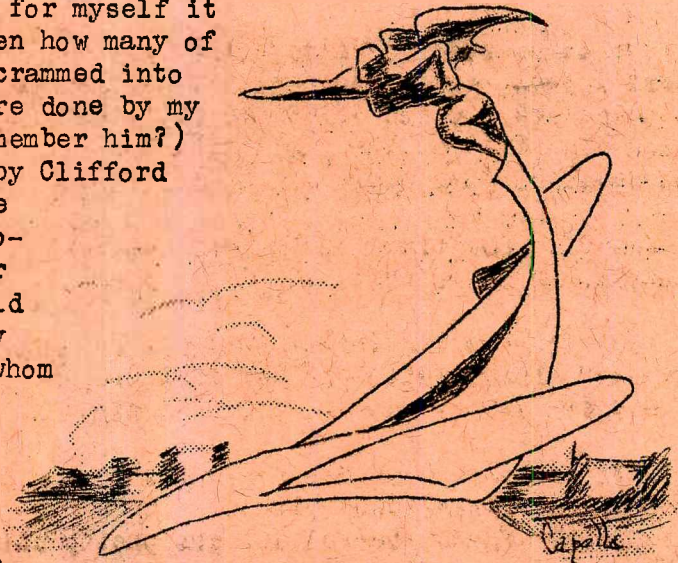
Certainly if the slightly offbeat Bradbury talent can ever be successfully adapted by others, Gregory and Laughton should be able to do the trick. I could wish that some other Bradbury work had been chosen, since for me "Fahrenheit 451" presents Bradbury in his most pretentious and least sincere guise. But I seem

to recall hearing somewhere that you can't have everything. More interesting would be the once-rumored plans by Houston to film "The Martian Chronicles." Wouldst Ted Sturgeon had similarly skilled and powerful sponsors among the difficult commercial world of mass drama.

Five years ago at the NORWESCON, Forrie Ackerman exhibited an advance copy of the first issue of GALAXY. It caused considerably excitement and surprise; and little wonder. Very very seldom in science-fiction's history has there been quite such a "special" issue of any magazine. The deliberately concocted issue Campbell assembled in late 1949 in line with a prediction in his letter column is the only other which comes to mind.

The contents page was unbelievable; for myself it seemed as if someone had deliberately seen how many of my very-very special favorites could be crammed into one issue. Most of the illustrations were done by my then-favorite stf-artist, Paul Calle (remember him?) and the contents page revealed a serial by Clifford Simak, novelets by Sturgeon and Katherine McLean (then at the peak of her brief productive period), shorts by Asimov, Leiber and Fred Brown. The only name which would not, by itself, have made purchase of any issue a must was Richard Matheson, with whom I was still unfamiliar.

Several weeks later, when I was able to purchase the magazine, I found myself not at all disappointed. Save for the Asimov and Matheson stories, each represented the author at the very top of his form. Reading that first issue was an intoxicating experience and it scaled such dizzy heights as to make the hitherto-unchallenged ASTOUNDING look pretty drab.



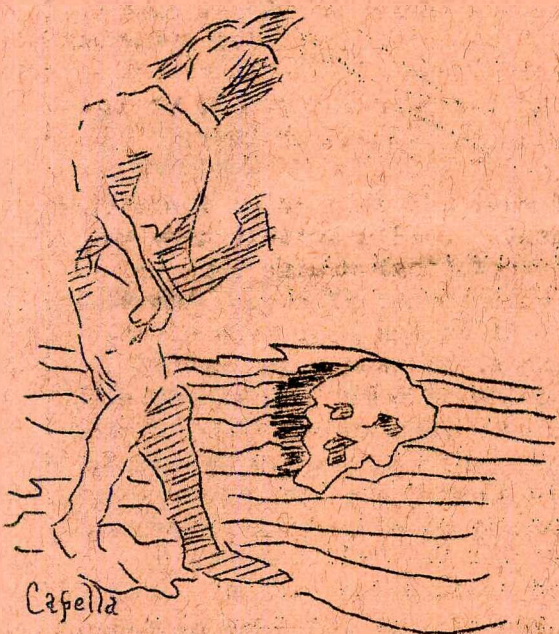
The second issue, while hardly so splendid, would, without the first issue for comparison, have provoked almost as much excitement had it been the first. But by the fourth issue the rich lode of backlog which Gold had piled up during the months prior to publication began to thin out and GALAXY began to subside from an unbelievable phenomenon to the status of another ordinary magazine, albeit still somewhat a special one. And, as it happened, during that first winter Campbell managed to print a larger percentage of poorly written, uninspired stories than in any other period during his career, which made the competition look even better than it was.

But almost from the time GALAXY ran through its first heavy ammunition, mutterings began to be heard in fandom from the more juvenile elements. GALAXY's 35¢ price-tag provoked some animosity (one fan growled that he disliked all 35¢ magazines and that they were actually of poorer quality than the 25¢ ones...at a time when in four selected states ASTOUNDING, which he cited to prove his point, was trying out a 35¢ price); others, out of misguided loyalty, jealousy, pique or possibly indigestion perused the magazine with a microscope hunting for flaws...these were few and far between, so it was generally decided to attack GALAXY on the grounds that it imitated ASTOUNDING. Perhaps the most asinine of these went into detail about how it was a carbon-copy because it used three-part serials and some of the same authors...I don't recall whether Gold was also judged guilty for appearing in an oblong format, but this may also have been one of the charges.

Meanwhile, either Gold or some of his staff exhibited a flair for publicity. The name of GALAXY appeared on the wires of the national press services on several occasions in its early days as on the occasion when a space-suited actor distributed

copies on the streets of New York. The practices of common salesmanship were used ...a generally optimistic tone was sounded both in and out of the magazine about its prospects, future issues, honors already won, etc. This is standard practice throughout the commercial world. You run into it a hundred times a day on billboards, in your newspaper, over the radio, etc. With one exception, the same techniques had been employed, though more crudely, by every other science-fiction editor in the past. That exception was, of course, John Campbell, a man with a very special editorial personality who aimed for a special select audience and found the best way to do so was to talk to them on their own terms (since he was one of them) using the technician's soft-spoken understatement spiced with several oft-repeated, hard-hitting adjectives.

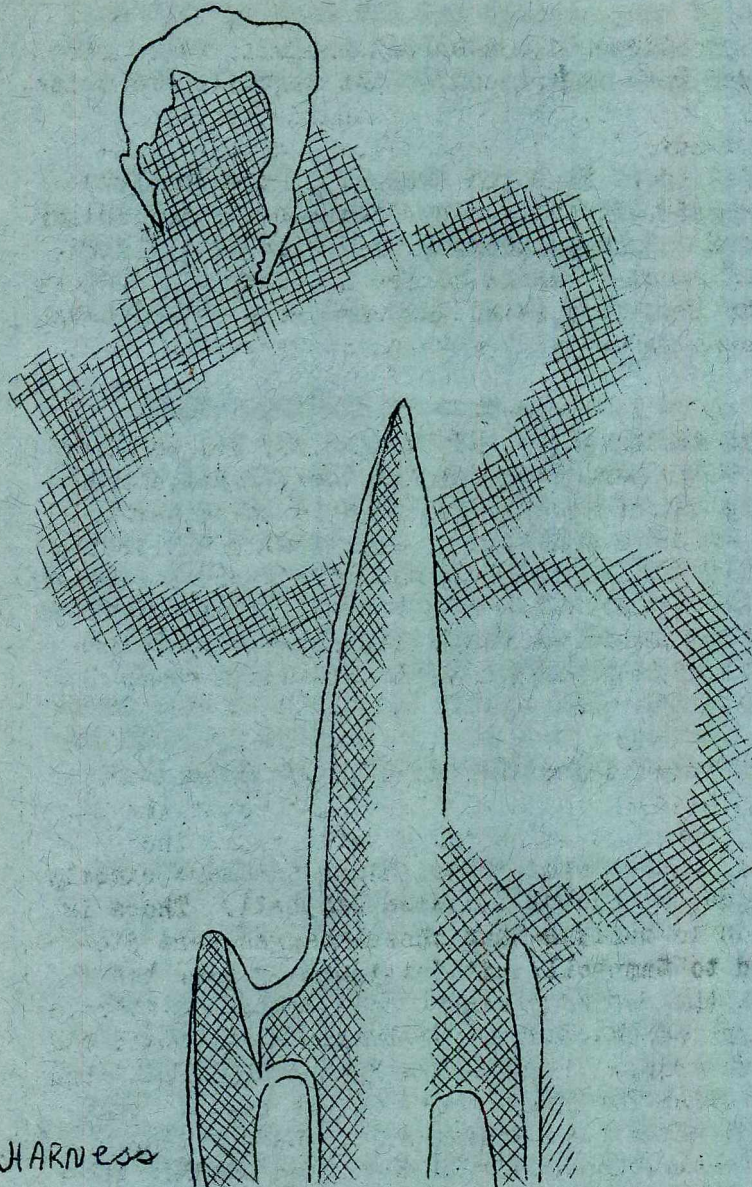
The inconsistency of fandom was soon evidenced in that while they originally criticized Gold for imitating Campbell, they thereupon switched their tactics and criticized him even more loudly for using normal advertising techniques rather than imitating Campbell in this one aspect where he was unique. A particular hullabaloo arose when Gold, inspired by some backstage skullduggery by some of Campbell's Street & Smith associates, took some public swipes at ASTOUNDING in his editorial, citing several recent instances of blatant copy-catism in which ASF had carboned his innovations and asked, rather nastily, if it wouldn't be simpler if he sent a blueprint of his future plans around in advance for their use.



Fandom chose to ignore the fact that ASF had slavishly imitated the GALAXY cover (as did every other magazine for several years thereafter) and several other things far more exactly than Gold had ever imitated Campbell. There is reason to believe that these changes were dictated to Campbell, not initiated by him, but still the record plainly shows fandom deliberately ignored the facts. No matter what GALAXY did it was wrong. If GALAXY did what ASTOUNDING had been doing for years, only did it better, than GALAXY was to be condemned for theft. And, apparently, when ASTOUNDING copied GALAXY, it was still GALAXY's fault for not waiting and allowing ASTOUNDING to create these new ideas first which apparently Gold had snaffled through some time-flaw and was falsely assuming credit.

About this time it became fashionable to attack Gold personally. He was caricatured as an untalented egomaniac and a prancing idiot. The peculiar thing throughout was that there was never anything to base this widely accepted prejudice upon except the previously mentioned use of standard selling techniques and his open and understandable ire at some of the underhanded methods used against him...such as the time Ziff-Davis waited until the expensive color-process covers for "Needle" had been printed before sending word they would not allow the book to be reprinted. (Editor's note: McCain wrote Ziff-Davis but possibly meant Street and Smith in this instance, since, to the best of my knowledge, "Needle" first appeared in ASTOUNDING. wgc.)

From that time to this, the trend has continued. For every favorable mention of GALAXY in fanzines there must be at least four unfavorable, patronizing, or slighting ones. Even in such respected fanzines as PSYCHOTIC there have been some unofficial contests in the letter columns to see who could come up with the pattest answer to the question "What's wrong with GALAXY?" The interesting thing is that, so far as I know, no one has yet established that anything is wrong with GALAXY. Admittedly, GALAXY has neither the depth of ASTOUNDING nor the daring of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION. But neither does it print as many poor stories or stories as bad



as either of these. Possibly twenty years from now the well-remembered stories of today will prove to have originated more frequently in the other two magazines. But, for my money, GALAXY prints more readable enjoyable stories...stories that you enjoy tremendously while you're reading them...than any other magazine in the field today...possibly more than any other two combined.

This is not to say GALAXY is flawless. Every so often a distressingly poor short turns up. For my tastes, Gold's selection of serials has been appallingly erratic. As far back as 1951 he printed such crude space-opera as "Tyrann." Then there was the shallow gimmickry of "The Demolished Man" which is Alfred Bester's substitute for writing technique. And there has been a monotonous procession of cheap cynicism ... "Gravy Planet," "Gladiator-at-Law" and the recent supposed prizewinner in the GALAXY contest.

I must add this is an individual judgement. Gold's serials have won him more critical praise than anything else he has printed. But I believe it is the same type of unthinking enthusiasm which caused "The Legion of Space" to be hailed as a masterpiece in the '30s. There are die-hards who still so maintain

but most of the one-time enthusiasts find their former exuberance a bit embarrassing. I have yet to discern or have anyone point out one single item of literary merit in either "The Demolished Man" or "Gravy Planet."

As a matter of fact, it seems to me the key to what is wrong with "Gravy Planet" is also the key to fandom's attitude towards GALAXY. Fans are so afraid of being considered naive or gullible that they tend to adopt an attitude of extremes; they don't like anything. This attitude isn't confined to GALAXY. You can find these curbstone critics sounding off about practically all the current sf magazines...but GALAXY, being an obvious success, is their most frequent target and offers less actual justification for their brickbats than any other. So stories are criticized or torn apart whether they actually are poor enough to warrant it or not. A skillful Sturgeon short is the equal of a Ray Cummings story in their eyes...at least they seem to be equally peeved by either and to find an equal number of flaws in both.

There is a generally peevish tone to all of this..."I'm bored with this stuff" they say or imply. "Why don't we get something new?" or else "The heck with this, why don't we get anything like we had in the good old days?" As can be seen, every story is subject to one or another of these criticisms. Science-fiction today is criticized for being slightly adapted Ladies' Home Journal style fiction and also for being so concerned with machines and mechanisms that all its characters are robots; for being a child's garden of outre horrors and because all its aliens are too

human; for concentrating on plot instead of human beings and for dealing with dull families who sit home and watch television rather than exciting action. Quite frequently both of the paired complaints have been made at different times by the same person.

Why do these people read science-fiction if it bores them so? Most science-fiction is not great literature (I say "most" because I have my doubts about much of Sturgeon, a couple of Bradbury shorts, and one Simak story); if it is too shallow for you, there are huge libraries full of great classics of the last five hundred years which would take years to read. If your mind is so deep and profound as all that, why not go and read them?

There can be two possible justifications for this sort of carping. First, is the critic a professional writer or a fan making the transition to pro who actually wishes to analyze a field he feels is now too shallow, both for his own and others' aid in writing professionally and to help the field expand? Most of these extreme critics show the greatest ineptitude at writing, themselves, and haven't the vaguest notion how to equal the efforts they criticize, much less surpass them. The second justification for acid criticism is if the critic has a sufficiently brilliant writing style that his criticisms themselves can stand on their own as creative works enjoyable in themselves. This is true of damon knight. William Atheling is a borderline case; it's a bit difficult to judge. The rest? They're even more amateurish in their criticism than in their writing. As I say, it's cheap cynicism because they haven't worked their way up the hard way, thus earning the right for their views to be expressed.

Getting back to GALAXY, it appears that somewhere along the way Campbell was elevated to Godhood by fandom and Gold must be eternally punished, a la Lucifer, for having dared to challenge him. But why cannot it be solidly grounded criticism, or at least kept within reason? There is one fannish critic, one of our more erudite ones, who seems unable to write a single review without taking at least one vicious and frequently gratuitous swipe at either Gold or GALAXY. It cheapens the rest of what he has to say and degrades the man. I don't know what the reason for such determined malice is; possibly Gold rejected one of his stories rather brutally; I know from experience that Gold rejections can range from the most gratifying of any editor to the most irritating. But I, for one, am getting sick of the "hate GALAXY" campaign in fandom. After five years, it's about time to bury it.

Gold's selling technique was never more than 5% as high-pressured as the ones Ray Palmer has been using upon himself and his magazines for far too many years and never exhibited the paranoid traits ("Is an editor God?") which makes the Palmer products so unhealthy and repellant. Yet most of fandom tends to either ignore Palmer or exhibit something of a fondness for him and his magazines, despite the fact that he's printed at least twice as much trash as any editor in the field, and, in his entire career, has printed approximately as many good stories as Gold produces in three typical issues.

But perhaps it's Gold's fault for not having had the foresight to be part of organized fandom before turning professional.

-- Vernon L. McCain ...

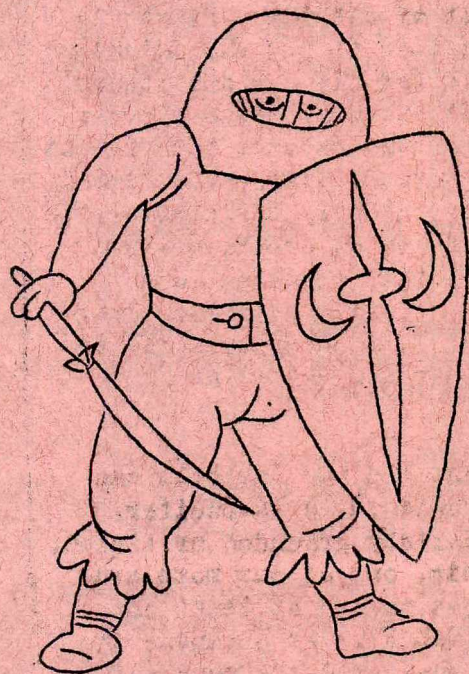
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EDITORIALLY SPEAKING, I can only hope that both Mr Gold and Mr Campbell can be persuaded to comment on this article. Copies are being sent via first class mail to each editor with a short explanatory note. I am sure that Mr Gold will make comment and explanation on behalf of GALAXY, but I have never had occasion before to hear from John W. Campbell, Jr. Comments? --wgc...

After finishing the first editorial, in which I explained the absence of JOHN BERRY from this issue, what else arrived in the mail but his column, fresh from Ireland. This one was untitled, so I have taken the liberty of calling it...

VICIOUS CYCLE



The summons from Bob Shaw had been short, but I could tell that it was imperative for me to be at our room at Oblique House at 7:30 pm on the dot! I brought along my wife, Diane, who had been trying to withstand fandom for many moons. I knew that Bob and Sadie would shortly be leaving us to travel to Canada, and although Walt had a new male neo lined up, I decided to try and get Diane to replace Sadie. Our group would seem so strange without Sadie's naive presence, and I thought maybe it would stimulate the rest of us trying to convert Diane. I had worked hard on her, nurtured her dormant fannish instincts with care and deliberation. Now, I felt, she was ripe for Willis. There was something personal in it, too. I wanted my wife to share my mail, bask in my egoboo, type some of my articles.

Usually, as one approaches our room at 170, one is conscious of vibrant activity. More than once I have found my way barred by the aged form of Charters gasping for breath on the first landing, or maybe Bob sniffing hopefully for tea on the second. Normally, to even get in the room is a hazard, as the door forms an integral part of the Ghodd-minton court and several fen have copied my trick of using the door as extra momentum for serving.

But tonight all was quiet. In fact, this was so incredible that I would have thought myself in the wrong house except for the old familiar and well-used first aid box fixed to the left of the door, adjacent to the Shuttlecock Fund collection box. (Tobacco coupons not accepted.) I whispered encouragement to Diane, opened the door slightly, and peered 'round.

Suffering Catfish!

Without wishing to depreciate in any way the normal attire of our members, I must say that what I saw was ridiculous. I might at least have been warned. Willis, for instance, is a cast-iron certainty to be dressed in filthy trousers and grubby shirt, duper stains rampant. Shaw, less pretentious, normally favours a check shirt, well worn flannels and co-respondents shoes with big toe-vents that were not a feature of the original footwear when purchased several years ago. James White, by trade a purveyor of immaculate clothing, usually follows the recognized precepts of psychiatry by wearing such old clothes as he can muster in an effort to forget the tribulations of his occupation.

But the assembly I saw waiting for Diane and myself would have done credit to the London Circle.

Vicious Cycle II

Willis was in his office kit, bow tie, spats and striped trousers. James was adorned in the same general style, except for the addition of a spotted cravat. Bob was wearing his usual social outfit, although I noticed the lace trimmings had been removed from his knee length Harris Tweed coat. Sadie, Madeleine and Peggy were in evening dress, complete with flashing jewelry and beautifully manicured nails.

I sensed Diane attempting to attract my attention, which she achieved by dragging me away from the doorway and pressing me against the bannister on the landing.

"I can't go in there," she shrilled, "...look at me."

I surveyed her jumper and slacks, the latter complete with my own patent saucepan-lid knee pads.

"But you always maintain you like to dress differently," I urged, edging into the dark shadows of the door in an effort to hide from her my gardening jerkin and wellington boots. We were ready for Ghoddminton, you see. But what was the idea of this formality?

George appeared nestling under his shawl.

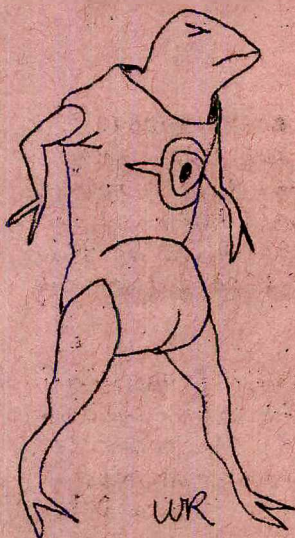
"Come in, children, come in," he panted, "this is gwine to be good. Heh heh." We followed him.

"Who is the old critter?" asked Diane in a stage whisper, then she put her hand to her mouth and gasped in case George heard. However, I could see by the way he was happily ruminating in his sports bath chair that he had not heard.

We joined the group. The chairs, benches and stools were formed into a semi-circle facing the far end of the room, where a long curtain covered the gable-end of the wall.

Bob stood up and turned to face us. This...this was the real thing. This was the parting we had so long dreaded...the frightful blow to Irish Fandom was now about to take place. I could see now why Bob wanted us all together just this once more. The atmosphere was one of compassion, of...of heartfelt sadness and foreboding.

"Mr and Mrs Willis, friends, and Berry," began Bob, his voice trembling with the emotion we all felt. "Sadie and myself have to leave you so very soon and I would like to say a few words to you before I unveil my parting gift, here behind me..." (indicating the long curtain) I felt pretty awful. This was really something. I have attended many touching ceremonies, but this was emotion personified. This atmosphere, of all things, typified the deep understanding that exists amongst all of us of Irish Fandom...sincerity, feeling, vibrant consideration and pure honest-to-goodness companionship. I looked at Diane. Tears were in her eyes. She looked at me, nodded mutely. A sign that she accepted fandom, realized the full meaning behind the beanie.



Bob continued his touching speech and I noted the surreptitious sniffing of hankies. How happy I was to have purchased the dreaded typer off of BoSh...what a great favour he had done me.

"...and during my sojourn with Irish Fandom, I have progressed from a simple neo-fan right up the scale to become a vile pro who owns his own typer and married Sadie," continued Bob. "Fellow fen, until I came here I hadn't lived, so to show how much I have loved and cherished these few precious years Roscoe has granted me, I want to leave behind a small token of my appreciation."

Vicious Cycle III

The pathos was gripping. With tear-filled eyes, Bob reached for the cord to pull the curtain, when Walt leaped to his feet. In a choking voice, he addressed all of us.

"Before Bob reveals his magnificent gift to us all," breathed Walt, "I think we should all say a few words about this boy...this paragon of fannish art...this utterly likeable glutton. James, as senior pro, would you like to say something?"

James shuffled to his feet and looked grim.

"Because of my long association with Bob, I would like to say one thing. You all know that I am on a diet and am restricted to arrowroot biscuits and water. How often during these years have I seen this boy's jaws munching onwards, ever onwards. Cream puffs, tarts, chocolate wafers and custard pies, etc, have all found their way down this fantastic gullet. WHY HAS HE TORTURED ME! WHY?!"

With a suppressed sob, James vaulted over his chair and attempted to strike Bob with his Ghoddminton bat, but in his haste he fell over a spare table leg. We picked him up and led him back to his seat.

Walt cleared his throat with an embarrassed rasp.

"With those treasured words, which I am sure touched Bob deeply, we come to George. Hey, Sadie, wake him up. Hey, George, George, say something for Bob."

George screwed up his bloodshot eyes and ran a gnarled hand over his wrinkled face. "Er, heh heh," he began, "unaccustomed as I am to, er, what was I, oh, er, heh heh, er, now that James has sold his first story, er, heh heh, where's my hot water bottle, hey, who's pinched me humbugs, oh, er, heh heh..."

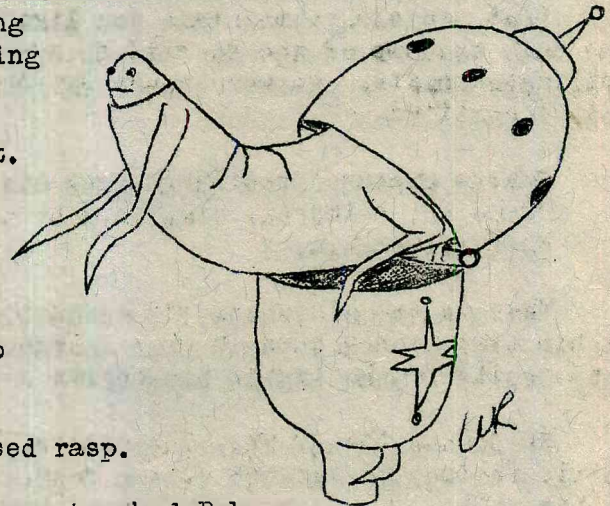
Gently Sadie led him back to the seclusion of his bath chair, leaving him to reflect over his childhood memories, happy in the knowledge that in Irish Fandom, at least, age is respectfully revered.

Walt struggled to retain the atmosphere of sorrow at Bob's departure. "John," he pleaded, "say something."

I stood and faced the assembly.

"I have always liked Bob Shaw," I shouted. "Don't think these scars across my body caused by his reinforced bat cause me any concern. I - I like Bob Sahw. He sold me that dreaded hunk of metal, the Shaw Typer, but, all the same, I like Bob Shaw. He uses my moustache as a bait for his warped humor, but I don't care. I like Bob Shaw. True, he usually scoffs my share of the food. Come to think of it, he always scoffs my share. Hey! I've just thought. What makes me think I like Bob Shaw? I - hey, Walt, put me down. I..."

"And lastly, friends," beamed Walt with his left boot in my mouth, "I want to say something about this great friend of mine. This boy is one of the most unassuming characters I have ever met. His literary ability is undreamed of, his humor is puckish, his Ghoddminton ability unlimited. Without his assistance and guidance, Slant and Hyphen would never have appeared. Canada's gain is our loss. Okay, Bob, unveil your gift."



Vicious Cycle IV

Bob rose and gripped the cord in his big fist. He beamed at us all as the curtain gradually parted. What was it? A marble slab with his best pun en- scribed upon it? ...A ghoominton score board? ...His science fiction collection in a built-in bookcase?

The curtains revealed, as if in confirmation of that old adage, "Man's inhumanity to man."

Bracketed to the wall, overlooking the ghoominton court, was...the...most... horribly...rusted...bike that the elements had ever hammered away at. It was in- credible, even worse than the wreck re- posing under Shaw's Bridge.

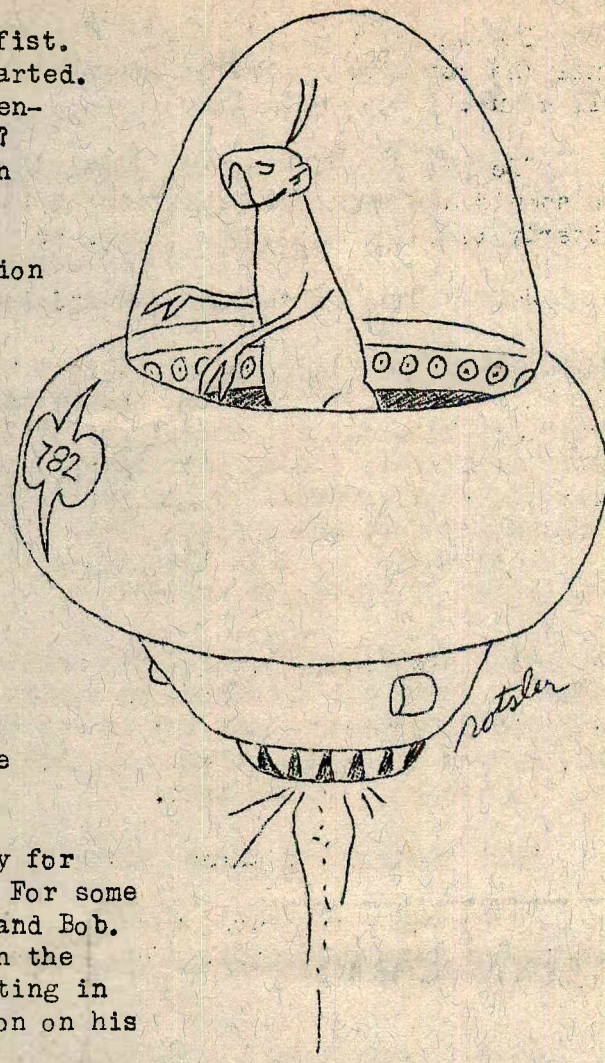
A sign escaped from the opened mouths.

Suffering Catfish!

"It's nothing, I know," said Bob, coyly looking down, "but I wanted you to remember the real me, as I have always been..."

Folks, sometimes things happen too quickly for my mind to grasp the full sequence of events. For some seconds a blur of action centered around Walt and Bob. My fingers were trodden on several times. When the fanzines finally settled, Bob was revealed sitting in the middle of the floor, an indignant expression on his face, the rusted frame around his neck.

I helped Diane down from the top of the bookcase and we hurried home.

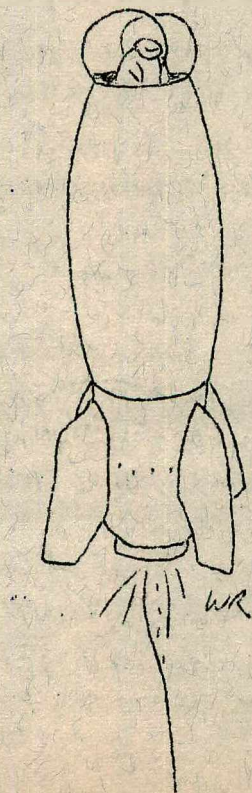


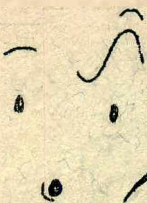
I sometimes find it difficult to assure normal people than fandom is such a happy existence. But some things are difficult to explain to the uninitiated.

Very difficult.


Even now, I still think that Diane would have made a very good fan.

--- John Berry ...







THESE YOUNG FANS... JUST
DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY
INTEREST IN SCIENTIFCTION'S
HISTORY... WHY, SOME OF THEM
HAVE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF
THE MUNSEY MAGAZINES!



SAW ANOTHER NEW
MAGAZINE TODAY... NAME
IS UNKNOWN OR
SOMETHING... JUST
ANOTHER ZINE TO
FLOOD THE MARKET



DID YOU READ
KRAZY KAT THIS
MORNING?




THE TROUBLE WITH
FANDOM TODAY IS THAT
THERE'S TOO MUCH TALK
ABOUT FANS AND NOT
ENOUGH ABOUT SCIENTIFCTION.
TAKE TUCKER, FOR INSTANCE...


TERRY CARR'S

FACE CRITTURS


FAN MEETING:
1940 STYLE



SCIENTIFCTION ISN'T WHAT IT
USED TO BE ANYMORE. THE
"SENSE OF WONDER" HAS
GONE OUT OF IT.



DID YOU HEER
ABOUT THE NOO
SIVENTIFILM WICH
IS CUMMING OUT
SOON?



YESSIR, SCIENTIFCTION IS
REALLY COMING INTO ITS OWN
OWN... LOOK AT ALL THE
NEW MAGS. WHY, PRETTY
QUICK IT'LL SUPPLANT
WESTERNS AND MYSTERIES

This twentieth issue of OOPS, so close behind the nineteenth, will no doubt startle quite a few readers. What is that guy Calkins trying to pull, anyhow? they'll ask. He's been claiming to be bimonthly for two years now, but this is the first time he's ever come close.

Other readers will be quite positive that this deviation from the norm will signify "the end of OOPS" because, for them, any change is likely to be bad.

Me? Well, I dunno...the real reason is probably that I happened to have a little extra time this month and quite a bit of material on hand, so OOPS came out "on time" for a change. There are several added features this time and one or two normal features missing, most notably Willis' HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE...a letter of explanation is printed further on in this section.

OOPS #21 will be out practically right on the heels of this issue. Most of you know that I am getting out of the Marine Corps on 10 March, and I'd like to have the next issue out before that time...most probably around the first of March. That will definitely be the last issue to be mailed from this address...all future issues will originate in Salt Lake City.

The address for all correspondence, fanzines or other mail scheduled to arrive AFTER 1 MARCH 1956 should be addressed to:

2878 East Morgan Drive
Salt Lake City 17 Utah

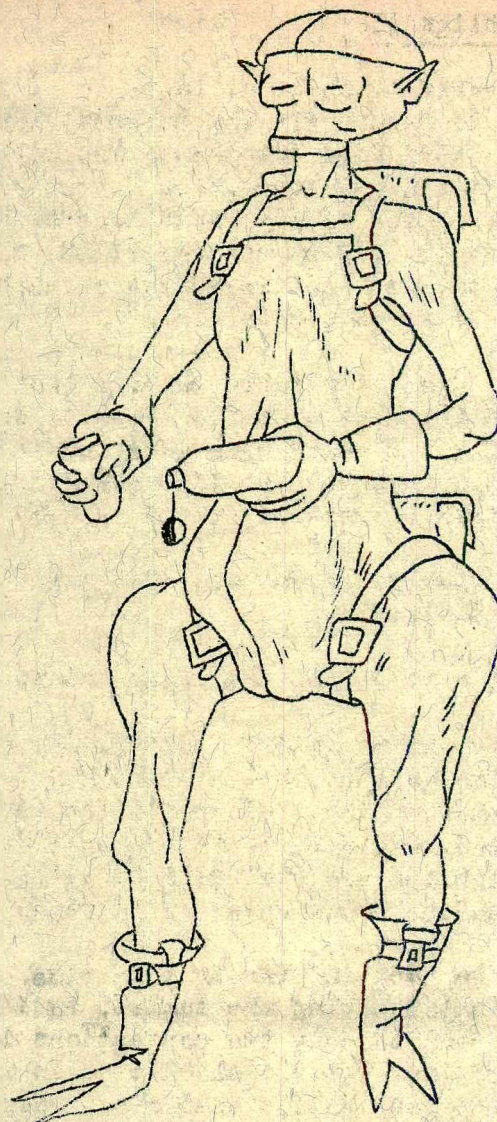
THE RBLGS:

rather small pile of mail this time and dig right in. Because this issue follows so closely on the heels of #19, most of the regular letter-writers are still in the process of either writing or mailing their comments. Nobody thought Calkins could put out another issue so fast...least of all, me.

Walt Willis explains: "Driven by the remorseless agenbite of inwit, I had another look at your last letter just now and found that as I feared I'd possibly messed up your schedule. I'm tearing this off in the hope it'll arrive before Christmas and explain what's going on, so you can stop watching the mail for a Harp from me. Briefly, Madeleine's been told she has to stay in bed all the time now and I'm keeping house (well, I'm still breaking things but I hope to keep some of it) and it means that I have hardly no time at all for fanac, or even to write people and explain that I haven't."

And that is what happened to THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE this issue. It will be back in OOPS #21 if all goes well at the Willis household.

Dick Geis explains that: "PSY, in a moment of weakness, was killed; SFR, in a moment of disgust, was shelved and PSY revived; then SFR was revived; and the latest and final development is that SFR is now dead and that I have no other pubbing plans. Nor any inclination for further fannish activity. Man, I'm just plain burned out! So toodle-oo, Gregg, it's been fun, and now OOPSLA!



Well, now that the most serious part of the business is out of the way, we can pick up the

Therbligs II

will catch up at last. # I did a bad thing, tho...I think. I was just about to return all the subbers' money when I came under the influence of a Cerebral Palsy Fund Telethon. You perhaps don't know it, but I'm crippled, and...I had the money handy...so I stuffed it into a big envelope and mailed it in. I figured nobody would lose much...and it went to a very good cause...and... # Well, I'd appreciate it if you'd print this along with my regrets. And also that I'm not reviewing anymore, so unless I comment or something, no more fanzines should be sent."

Well, Dick, I'm sorry to hear that both PSY and SFR are dead, but I can't say that I can think of a better thing to do with the subscription money left over than what you did. I could wish more fanzines would practice this gesture...those that are folding anyhow, that is. I'm still sorry to see PSY go. Even so, fear not--you'll continue to receive copies of OOPS as they come out...compliments of the house.

Rick Sneary, Ed Cox and Lee Jacobs pchtsarcd from Las Vegas: "We all think of you. Sorry."

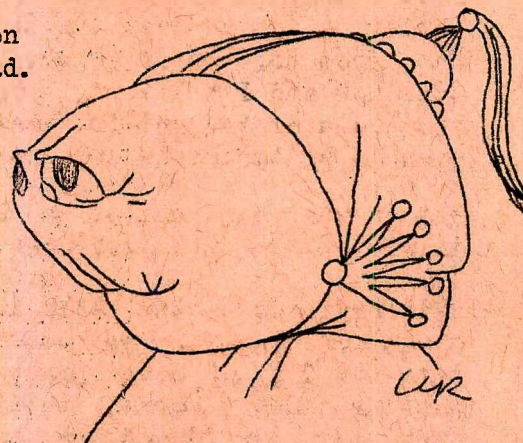
It is a very touching card. Makes me humble and sort of proud.

A very formal letter from Marilyn R. Tulley introduced herself to me last month as Chairman of the 1956 WESTERCON. I regret that I am not being quite so formal with my announcement, but that's the way OOPS is. Anyhow, the WESTERCON will be held in Oakland, California, at the Lake Merritt Hotel, June 30th and July 1st. Advance memberships are now being accepted at \$1 each from WESTERCON, 432 - 23rd Avenue, Oakland 6, California. # Anybody here want to go?

I'll be back in Utah by that time, of course, or possibly working on a farm in Washington during the summer, so I doubt if I'll attend. It's a sad thing, but I have been to only two conventions in the five or six years I've been a fan, and only one of them was a real success in my mind...the CHICON II in 1952 at Chicago. That was the year Willis came over, when Hoffman was about at her highest and Vick was at his best, Keasler, Elsberry, Boggs all about their most prolific, and I was at my most impressionable. I had a wonderful time. The second convention was this last year's WESTERCON in Los Angeles. I've never been really "in touch" with most of California fandom and few people from back east were here. To top it all off, I was at my most cynical at the time so I didn't think too much of the whole affair.

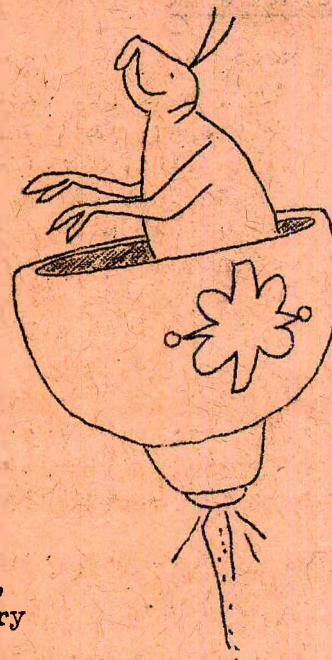
Now I'd like to attend another convention, but how and where? They always fall at a time where I am in school (and I'll be in school another three or four years yet) or else busy working during the summer. However, I think I have a solution. Older fans will remember the "Invention" hoax of several years ago--a convention consisting of members by invitation only--and possibly the next one will be quite real instead of a hoax.

If Mohammed can't make it over to the mountain, then possibly a few rocks can travel the distance instead. I'm seriously thinking of a small convention in Salt Lake City for 1957...small being 100-200 fans in attendance, with a high percentage of prolific pro's and active fans and a very small percentage of the usual hangers-on found at most conventions. Attendance mostly by invitation but not only so. The idea is to let only those people actively interested know about the convention...person-to-person publicity. The fringe-fans and neurotic non-fans will have a hard time crashing the party if they haven't heard of it. Comments, anyone?



Therbligs III

P. Howard Lyons sends: "...about two bits...for the Harp Stateside thing. The rest is because I'm beginning to feel uneasy about my Ooops subscription and I'd hate like anything to miss. Say, I have the WAWish of OOPSLA! Does that make me famous? I don't have several of the earlier issues. Do you have a private stock for friends? I remember my first contact with you produced SOME back issues, but not those. # DANSUNVERRE. I'd say "in a glass of water." Reference possibly to water reading a la crystal gazing. I know a woman who sees the future in a glass of gin. I see not future in it. # All these special deals for the TAFF that I feel blowing up my back. Feel assured that if you churn out any special issue for such purposes, good old Lyons will contribute, so let him in on it. Not that I want the issues, just that I'll be glad to see Kent Korey out of the kountry for a while. How much will they charge to keep him?"



In order...I don't know why you were worried about your sub--it now runs all the way up to #28. You are second only to Des Emery...his runs to #32. Whew! Sorry, no back issues of OOPS here except my own personal copies, but possibly some of the readers will help you out. # You're half right on the "Dans Un Verre D'Eau" translation. That is, you got the French switched to English okay, but you're (pardon the expression) all wet on the rest of it. # I dunno about Korey...as far as the TAFF goes, the closest he'll get to England will be Chelsea...Oklahoma.

The next letter, to my delight, comes from a long lost fan...one I'd never really expected to hear from again. I only hope he finds himself with sufficient time on his hands to revive an old OOPS standby, LETTER FROM MINNEAPOLIS. It will have to be retitled, however...

Letter from Richard Elsberry: "You probably don't believe it, but--yep--it's a letter from old Dickie Elsberry. As you may have surmised, I'm one of Uncle's dogface soldier boys. That's the way the world goes. Seems like about a year since I wrote...can't exactly recall. There was the final quarters of the University, preparations for marriage, the wedding, honeymoon, move to New York, back again and into the army. I feel like a travelling salesman. # There's one nice thing about Camp Chaffee...it's only the second worst Army camp in the country. Ft Leonard Wood has the distinction of being the worst. Of course, I'm speaking of Army camps, not Marine. # Know any fans in Ft Smith, Arkansas? They may give us a leave, some day. If I ever get settled down to some sort of routine in the army, I may take up my typer again."



I hope you do, Rich, I hope you do. Would be a good deal, too, if you were to be transferred to Ft Ord just as soon as you got out of boot camp. It's not far from here and I'd run up to see you a couple times before March. It'd be good to talk to you again...guess the only time we've ever met was at the Chicon II. That was a ball. You had poor Webbert on the skids all the time, what with pretending to be "Redd Boggs" and "Bill Hamling." Whew...what a convention. If I stick around fandom long enough to attend a dozen more, I doubt if I'll ever have as much fun again as I did that time. # Cheer up about the Army...two years or less and you're all done. My three went pretty fast, in retrospect.

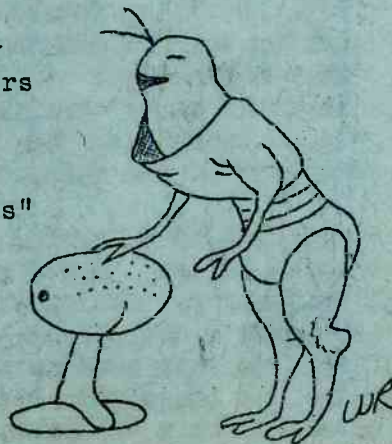
Therbligs IV

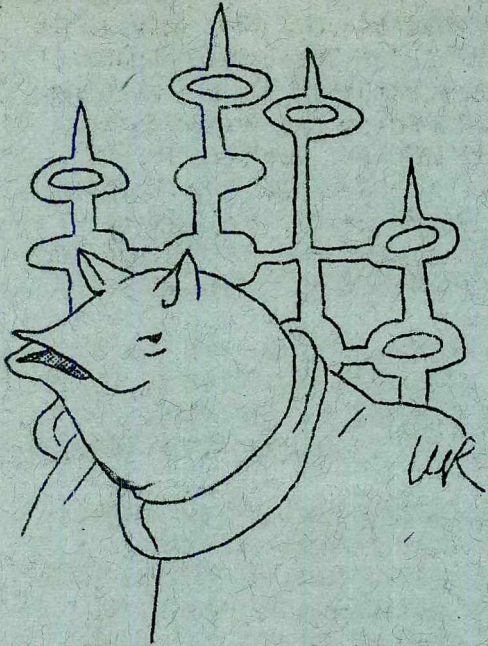
Lee Hoffman notes: "Pogo went sercon too, I trust you noticed. And you, good sir, have changed. As of this letter and the last Rambling Fap, you wax oddly embittered. All those years in the service? I contemplate starting a club for old embittered fans. Do you want to be a charter member? # Fanhistory is a faaanzine. It'll be in the Feb FAPA mailing. It is sercon, but tongue-in-cheekedly so. I imagine those fans who, like myself, go through life tongue-in-cheek will recognize it as same, while the real sercon fans will herald it as a Big Deal and the non-comprehending element will shake their heads and say "we expected great Humor from Hoffman." They will be bitterly disappointed."

I dunno, Lee, if you expected me to print parts of this letter or not...if you're mad, hit me. I'm looking forward to Fanhistory and I'm glad that you told me about it...I'm traditionally a member of the non-comprehending element of anything. You name it and I'll non-comprehend it. Didn't you publish another fanzine once before?

Among other things, Bob Pavlat says: "Therbligs is good, Gregg, and you do indeed wield the blue pencil with good judgement as far as this reader can tell. I think, tho, that I prefer the more extensive letter column such as FFW in GRUE, where an argument can wax hot and enthusiastic. I'm wondering if you would devote the space to, say, an extended discussion of whether or not "-" is a clique fanzine and whether clique fanzines were good or bad, or similar discussions having darn little to do with OOPS. Considering that most of the letters you printed were condensed to less space than I've already used on this letter, I don't see how you could. # To be entirely trutyful, it doesn't matter a hell of a lot to me whether the letters you print run long or short. If you run long ones, your only choices are to omit printing many of the comments you do receive or expand your letter section beyond all reasonable size in relation to the rest of the magazine. If you run short ones, few subjects will receive a going-over in your letter section--and, after all, OOPS isn't a letterzine or beer-hall where long bullsessions are in order. # With which nothingness we return to the subject of "-" and cliques. It is cliquish, since the majority of the magazine revolves around a few characters--the Wheels of IF and certain adopted cousins. This makes it like a continued story--it's difficult to pick up in the middle and understand immediately all that's happening. The same complaint could be levelled against the POGO comic strip in the daily papers--you have to read it for a couple of weeks before the story starts to come out. As to cliquishness being bad--nuts. Any reasonably intelligent reader can enjoy part of any given issue of HYPHEN, and within three issues he'll be able to understand most of the circular references."

I print, Bob, as much of any letter as I think will prove interesting to the majority of the readers of OOPS. One pitfall I try to avoid is that of printing too much of any one letter. I have a very lukewarm feeling for most letter columns in most fanzines because the letters are too long. After half a page I lose contact with the editor and I'm not quite sure who the individual letter writer is or what he's trying to do. Some letters, of course, don't fit this characterization, but a good many do. In OOPS I try to cut out the excess parts of the letters I print and get only the meat of the matter(s) at hand. I hope I succeed, but it's hard to tell. You are one of the first people to comment upon my letter section, with the exception of those people who write either "too many letters" or "not enough letters" and let it go at that. When a long letter says something, I'll print it all...up to several pages, if necessary, if I think the readers will enjoy it. Bloch's article in this issue came to me in the form of a letter, discussing other things as well. I didn't want to run it in the letter column, however, but I did want to see it printed. Hence, my solution.





People are always hard to please, though, as a group. I have no doubt that there will be a number of general complaints about this issue on the grounds that THERBLIGS this time was much too short. Admittedly, it is shorter than usual; but I do not have the letters on hand, my own brand of writing goes into FAPA not OOPS, and there was a wealth of really good material on hand to take up the extra pages. # As far as HYPHEN goes, it is a clique magazine, true. So is GRUE, if you look at things that way, because it represents writing aimed at and written by a certain group of people. This is best, I think, and is why I have to classify GRUE and HYPHEN and KTEIC high above OOPS, even in my own biased-for-me mind. My magazine is more of the generalzine type (as you noted in your letter and I let get blue-pencilled out) and will tend to appeal to any number of assorted people (I hope) the first time they pick up an issue. You need know no

special references or jokes necessary to full enjoyment of the issue, except for the rather complicated terminology of fandom. There is no sense of continuity or story-line found from issue to issue, things so prominent in HYPHEN and GRUE. And I wish there were. If only I knew the secret, I'd transform OOPS from a generalzine to an inner-circle type so fast it would make your head swim. Pardon me for being so trite.

Thom Perry questions: "IN A GLASS OF WATER? -- which baffled phrase comes completely equipped with wrinkled nose and arching brows, and an afterwards dirty look. Mis-ter Calkins!"

Well, I've got to be esoteric about something, don't I? If this helps any as a clue, Charles Wells is the culprit behind this all.

Bill Courval sounds happy: "Your material was of such uniform high quality that I don't believe I've ever read a zine in such a short time as this one. Even when the last pages gave way from the feeble support of the short staples I went on reading, undaunted. # In re GRENADEAN ETCHINGS, I am of the school that as long as we're going to have people grouped together trying to make their lot a little better than the next fellow's, we're going to have spectator sports. However, there are healthy and unhealthy ones. Corrida de toros is an unhealthy one for what it does to the spectators. It stimulates a "live or die" competitive spirit whereas our sports are on a much milder basis. From baseball to boxing there is never such a fatal finality in defeat as when the bull is killed for his mistake of being driven into blind rage. # I was comparing the few chapters I've read of the Harp with WILKIE'S DISCOVERS AMERICA. Such a contrast! It is interesting to note the transition from excessive dialogue to almost entire use of the narrative. It goes without saying that he found himself in the latter. # The best of Berry is not in HYPHEN. # How's chances of you doing another satire like "Baby Is Fifty"?"

Personally, I have nothing against practically any sport in the world. If people want to do things...any things...then by all means let them go ahead. If I happen to like their particular brand of sport, I'll watch it; if not, I won't. I would rather watch a bull-fight, however, than a boxing or wrestling match. The latter two have, in this country at least, degenerated to little more than acting, with bruises. At least with bull-fighting, you know it's real. It is a toss-up as to which one is more foolish...the bull who lets himself get goaded into anger, or the man who is crazy enough to step in there and do the goading.