

July 1957. FAPA Mailing No. 80
Walter Willis, 170 Upper N'ards
Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Harry Warner The BBC, amid anguished outcry from the intellectuals, has recently announced the curtailment of the Third Programme to some five hours a day. The remainder of the air time is to

be devoted to a new program for other specialised minority interests....like sf fandom? First use is a non-stop ball-by-ball commentary on the Test Matches with the West Indies. (Note to ex-colonials: these cricket matches each last five days, 7 hours per day. They had to introduce a time limit some years back.)

I've been meaning to send that fine article about the 'Silent Planet' trilogy to C.S. Lewis, if you haven't done so. He's a Belfast man incidentally, though now living in Oxford.

The Justice of the Peace & Local Government Review (I apologise for quoting it, but its circulation in FAPA is probably small) reports an interesting legal case in Cologne. A local businessman who specialises in emptying cesspools has a special truck for carrying away the odoriferous....er, end product, and being anxious to increase his clientele has emblazoned his phone number in huge letters on the sides of it. So far so good, but through some quirk of fate, or the action of some ribald telephone employee, his telephone number happens to be 4711. He has been sued by a well known firm for, as it were, bringing their business into Bad Oder. I haven't seen the result yet, but it's an interesting point, isn't it? Can a man equitably be prevented from advertising his own phone number?

Richard Eney It is not illegal to send money into Great Britain, only to send it out. Do you think our Government is mad? Well, maybe they are, but not that way. We can change dollars into sterling at any bank with no questions asked.

Surely the Japanese were dickered about surrender before Hiroshima? In any case there were plenty of uninhabited places near Tokio where the bomb could have been dropped as a lesson.

No, I never did get that tape. Who has it?

G.M. Carr Yes, I sent you that Reporter. I thought it was a credit to America.

Keep your Sateveposts: they always make me feel like joining the Communist Party. If you think ignorance, stupidity, corruption and plutocracy are good advertisements for your country I can understand your admiration for McCarthy; personally, I think you're unamerican.

Are you satisfied with the TAFF results now the election has been fought on your principles? The English fans who subscribed to the Fund aren't.

Ray Schaffer Do you mean to say they still separate mothers and babies in your maternity hospitals? That went out here years ago, and they're crazy for breast-feeding. Incidentally it's curious that the National Health Service here has in 12 years become so accepted as natural and right that people view with incredulity American tv plays and films about people suffering because they can't afford medical attention, as they would the customs of some savage tribe. One has to explain to children that the doctor won't come unless you give him money. Yes, the NHS is shocking.

LeeH Shaw I don't often care for your stuff when you're on one of your hobbyhorses, but that account of the Shepard affair was one of the most utterly fascinating bits of reporting I've ever read. // Congratulations on your reply to GMC about her accusing Speer of prejudice. Well said. As Atom said of a letter I once wrote to her, I feel like standing behind her as she's reading it, hitting her now and then on the head with a baseball bat and shouting "See?"

Editor's Note: GMCarr's suggestion in the last mailing that non-Fapans shouldn't be allowed to have contributions in FAPA mailings was as new to me as it was to LeeSh. Why ever not? To have the benefit of another fine famish mind in our discussions without having to run off a copy of our fanzine for him, why we never had it so good! I had three pages of comments on the last mailing but one from Gentle Ol' George Charters, but in deference to the feelings of Mrs Carr on this subject, I will omit the 2 pages of detailed and unrestrained praise of Gemzine.

which leaves us with:

CHARTERS ACCOUNTING BY GEORGE

WELL 300 The story of the Charge Of The Light Brigade film does not seem to correspond with the account given by the RD some time ago. This is very surprising indeed.

A FANZINE FOR HARRY WARNER A one-page fanzine? You can't DO this to us.

A FANZINE FOR RICHARD ENEY a two-page fanzine. This is more like it. Noted your trouble with "a" and suggest you just put in a "q" every time it occurs.

BURLINGS c/w ELMURMURURINGS So you finally capitulated and bought a television set. I am still holding out, aided by nothing but will-power and lack of money.

CELEPHAIS I can't decide whether the typo on p.5 was intentional or not: "...did you see the item in the paper recently about the new American can that litterly fell to pieces on the road..." Beautiful.

FAPESMO Re the book SCIENTOLOGY: THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THOUGHT, does it teach spelling?

SUNDANCE An interesting zine---but why do you waste so much space on that alleged poetry? It is after all just a lot of words put together without much rhyme and almost no reason.

I PROTEST If you couldn't be bothered to send in material for a year or more and couldn't be bothered to see that it was definitely mailable, you ain't got no kick coming. And what makes you think Clyde is better than Perdue? How do you know you're sane?

SUDDENLY IT'S 7000000 BC. With bigger-size paper, better drawings, well-written material and good reproduction this would have very nearly been interesting.

PHANTASY PRESS with such an ancient lineage, one would expect better reproduction. Most of it was unreadable. And one page wasted on a poem; a page of Sanskrit would have been as good---maybe better.

GASP Two big blank pages. Don't tell me that anything on the inside would hurt the front cover. NOTHING couldhurt that cover!

DIRECTORY OF FANDOM George Charters here too. Goody, goody. But...an active fan? At his age?

J A E M E M B E A

W A L T E R W I L L I S

PART II

At the end of our last thrilling instalment our two innocent neefen, Walter Willis and James White, had just sent out their first fanzine....a little twelve-page affair called Slant, hand printed on a junked machine...and were anxiously awaiting developments.

The first one was a copy of Slant returned through the post. This was all right though--it was a copy I had mailed to myself to check that the mailing would get through in spite of its defying the postal regulations. I opened it and read it through, trying to put myself in the mental attitude of a stranger. I don't know if you ever do this, but anything I publish I can read over and over again from differing points of view: when I'm not pressed for time and when, as sometimes happens, it's something I like myself, I often read through the copies going to various people...Grennell's copy, Ken's copy, Russell's copy...seeing each one afresh from a different aspect. This time the synthetic stranger thought Slant #1 wasn't too bad.

The first outside reaction was from the nearest English fan to us, T.L.MacDonald of Carlisle, the same one who had been so mysteriously concerned with the non-printing of the illusory BFL Directory of AngloFandom. It wasn't a comment though, or even a letter, just a few lines of verse in answer to some of mine about the pronunciation of van Vogt. For the first taste of egoboo we had to wait another day, and it came from one Raymond Bailey of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. His momentous letter began:

"I thoroughly enjoyed every word of Slant...the illustrations were very good..."

As well as this heady stuff he sent some stamps to help with production costs, so there could be no doubt he meant it. Bailey has vanished from the fan scene these many years, but I hope he somehow sees this and realises we're still grateful. For days afterwards we lived in a rosepink cloud.

During the next few weeks we got some ten other letters, all more or less appreciative. They converted us from amateur publishers to fans. The writers were people called Medcalf, Fears (who started "Dear Mr Wallis", enclosed a copy of Science Fantasy News #1 and invited me to join the SFS, of which I was already a member), Gunn, Bell, Hillman, Jackson, Walker, Kerr and Clarke. Clarke was the A.Vincent Clarke who had reported the Whitcon and whose address appeared to be the source of SFN (no editor was named). He was obviously a serious thoughtful type and his 2¹/₂ page letter was much the best we got. If the present day Vinz will forgive me, I'll quote...

"Dear Walter, Many thanks for 'Slant' 1. It was a complete surprise (sic. Vinz has always had trouble with that word), and its printing rather shook me after having been struggling with the rudiments of duplicating, in helping to turn out

SFN No.1. It must have taken you an awfully long time to do, but it certainly looks better than a mimeographed mag.

When we were discussing the possible name of SFN, I believe 'Slant' was mentioned as a possibility, but as we all had names that were thought were good, we settled on the prosaic 'SFN' as favouring no one. 'S's s-f-ish ring is probably due to the 'Slan' part.

...Well, as to general criticism, I like the layout, and the woodcuts haven't come out at all badly--the cover's good. Tell James White to watch that tendency, in a lefthanded person, to draw spaceships with their noses pointing right (left on the copy). Or am I wrong? If all one needs is some plywood and a razor blade I must see what I can do! I seem to recognise the illustration at the end of the story---Uranus eclipsing the Sun, is it not?

I like your sense of humour as exhibited in the Editorial and the bits of terse verse (or terse Erse verse), but would have preferred a serious treatment of the telekinesis theme.....

....Well, as you will have gathered, I think you've put up a pretty good show for a nearly one-man effort---I shouldn't make it too much of a one-man show if you can help it however, and pu-leese don't have too much facetious comment.

Good luck and good reading,

A.Vincent Clarke.

He was wrong about James being lefthanded and we thought he was a little solemn to have taken seriously our pretended ignorance of 'Slan', but it was a very intelligent letter and we felt the future of the SFS was in safe hands.

But Ken Slater didn't seem quite so confident. This first issue of SFN had apparently come out just in time to avert an explosion from Germany, where KFS had been pacing up and down impatiently like an expectant father. In OF6, dated December 1948, he had rumbled:

"By the time this page gets out, I hope the SFS have produced their first newsheet. It is intended that this be sent out every six weeks...But, my friends, I am not running the Society, and I hope you will all join me in chivvyng, in a friendly spirit, the committee when they seem to be, er, not showing any action. First issue of the News Sheet was due before Christmashave you had it yet?"(and on the back cover.) "To date, I have not had any more news about our lil' club...hope the Committee haven't started to hibernate...someone down in the South of England give em a nudge for me please."

However he can have had little fault to find with SFN itself. The editorial said earnestly:

"It is intended that this magazine shall provide a common meeting ground for all lovers of science, weird and fantastic literature. In it, all are invited to air their views, opinions, likes and dislikes, for it is 'our' magazine."

This was followed by a long article by Ken Slater about the history of British fan organisations and the aims of the SFS, and 3 pages of news and reviews. The names of the SFS Committee were given as Fears (Secy.), Plumridge (Treasurer), Clarke, Clay, Duncombe, Newman and Slater. In accordance with Ken Slater's draft constitution, all communications to them about the Society from ordinary members were to go to the Regional-Secretaries, whose addresses were listed.

Shortly afterwards I heard from my own Gauleiter, one Peter Bell of Glasgow. He was "glad to see that we've got such a flourishing fanz going in our group already." I eagerly offered to help by printing announcements and advertisements, but heard nothing further until early February, when Bell apologised for the delay, but he had "been engaged in trying to form a fan group here in Glasgow." I had a brief mental picture of Peter wandering the streets of Glasgow ringing his bell and accosting passers-by.

Spring brought a minor renaissance in British fan publishing. There was the first issue of WONDER, by Mike Tealby of Leicester, an SFN Bulletin announcing a one-day Convention in London at Easter, SFN2 with six pages of news and reviews including the very first published egoboo for Slant ("an interesting little affair") and the news that Ted Tubb had replaced John Newman on the SFS Committee, another Alembic, an OF Trading Supplement and another SEMinor acknowledging the loan of a rotary duplicator from Ken Slater. Previously SFN had been run off on a flatbed...if the word "run" can ever be used in connection with a flatbed. Just as a matter of interest, the current US fanzines round about this time included Liebscher's CHANTIC-LEER, Burbee's SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES, Sneary's GRIPES & GROANS and Rapp's SPACEWARP. I didn't see any of these until much later of course...this list was from an N3F leaflet. Eva Firestone had inducted me into the organisation by offering to pay my dues by way of a subscription to Slant and sending me an application form. I was too busy assembling material for Slant 2 to pay much attention.

I wrote again to the "C.Walker" who had commented on Slant 1, now identifying him as the Cedric Walker who had had a good little story in OF. He had offered to send material, otherwise I wouldn't have dared; at the time I was doubtful about the ethics of such matters. In fact I had written to Mike Tealby for advice...

"...what are the ethics of this contributor business? I mean do you think other fanzine editors would think it a low act if you wrote to people whose work you admired in their zines and asked them for a contribution. Stealing authors? Would be glad to know what you think....Particularly interested in Newman and Ridley."

Mike's reply was evasive...I think he was trying to hold onto his own authors.

I also wrote to Wilkie Conner of North Carolina, whose name had been given to me by N3F Welcommittee member Zeda Mishler as a willing contributor, but my main hope was Clive Jackson. His letter of comment on Slant 1, written on 9th January 1949, had read:

Dear Walter, This is just a brief note in appreciation of your brain-child, SLANT. I'm not a fan of long standing or great experience, but I think your zine is a praiseworthy effort. The only fault that I can find with it, an unavoidable one, is that there isn't enough of it. The part I liked best was "Telekinesis and Battered Toast"---did you write it, I wonder, or was it some other lunatic?

From the slender evidence of this first paragraph I deduced that here was a kindred spirit and eagerly took him up on his suggestion that he might supply material. Having heard nothing further, I wrote again in May and got back almost immediately a brilliant little Bradbury pastiche called "The Still Small Voice", which was subsequently to see republication in prozines, books and newspapers. I also got a nice little story from Walker, who was a much more solemn type and abhorred my attempts at humour, but the approach to Conner hadn't been so rewarding. He had sent me an article about trends in American sf which I thought was wordy and trite. (There's nothing like setting type by hand to give you a respect for brevity.) I

held onto it until Slant 2 was finished and then plucked up the courage to return it on the grounds that I hadn't been able to fit it in and that anyway most British fans knew about American sf: I suggested something about US fans and fan doings would be more acceptable. Because of the length of time it took to produce an issue of Slant we were stuck with fiction for most of the contents, but I still wanted some gossip stuff.

Another thing that worried me a lot about this time was a solicited contribution from Frank Cooper of London, who ran a bookshop and library and had some connection with Nova Publications, and was therefore a person of awe-inspiring importance. This was the time just after Fantasy Review had published a translation of the notorious article in the Russian Literaturnaya Gazeta attacking American science fiction, the reverberations of which have still not quite died down. Everyone assumed only too readily that the Russian article meant that sf was proscribed in the Soviet Union, but I knew this wasn't so. According to Ashby's book "A Scientist in Soviet Russia" science fiction was very popular in Russia and there was even a special section of the Soviet Writers' Frasegidium devoted to it. But unfortunately this was all I knew. I tried to get further information by writing to the British-Soviet Friendship Society, but they never replied. So I wrote to Frank Cooper, who had seemed to be the only pro-soviet contributor to the discussion in Fantasy Review, and invited him to state his case in Slant. Unfortunately his article didn't seem to me to be up to much. I tried rewriting it, but when I'd finished the result bore so little resemblance to what Cooper had written that I didn't dare print it. After a lot of mental anguish I guiltily returned Cooper's article. After that I took care to solicit material only from people I was pretty sure would come up with the sort of thing I wanted.

By the 13th May 1949, Slant 2 was nearly finished and I wrote to Vincent Clarke asking him for the next SFN mailing date. We had to have some two weeks notice because it would take that long to set up and run off the last few pages with news and Peter Bell's SFS advertisements and other perishable stuff. Clarke had invited me to send out Slant with SFN and I was only too willing to save the postage and trouble: anyway the list of SFS members published in SFN hadn't given any addresses so I'd no choice.

By the end of May I'd received no reply, so I wrote again. Another month passed. In desperation I appealed to Frank Fears. He didn't answer either. I was furious. Here we were kicking our heels again for months, just like last time. I wasn't going to stand for it. On 7th July I wrote a registered letter to Clarke and sent copies to Fears and Plumridge...

Dear Vincent, I suppose that since my letters of the 13th and 31st May remain unanswered there is very little point in writing to you again, but I feel I should give you a final opportunity to reply.

If I don't hear from you by the 15th July I don't see what else I can do but print the enclosed explanation and send out Slant No. 2 myself.

I must say that this has been a great disappointment to me. I could understand it if you had thought Slant not worthy of SFS distribution---though I have already told you that the second issue is a considerable improvement.

PS. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

Note the undertones of hurt pride and insecurity. The awful Special Announcement ran as follows. (The first sentence refers to the note "Issued free to all members of the British Science Fantasy Society.")

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The reference on the contents page to the SFS is no longer applicable. As far as Slant is concerned the SFS has apparently ceased to exist. Letters to Vincent Clarke and Frank Fears over the last two months have failed to elicit even the courtesy of an acknowledgement. Accordingly, as I have been unable to obtain even a list of SFS members, this issue of Slant is being sent out only to people on my own mailing list and at my own expense, as was No.1. (Note the sideways swipe at John Gurn. I was right in there, bitching.)

If circumstances remain unchanged future issues of Slant will be distributed in the same way. If the SFS has really folded we will be happy to offer our facilities to other fanzine editors on a co-operative basis by providing regular quarterly mailings for their own productions. Our present circulation is 240.

This got results. Both Plumridge and Clarke replied by return of post. Plumridge sent the list of SFS addresses and promised to refund our postage on sending out Slant separately if we hadn't heard from AVC by the 15th. He himself hadn't heard from him in weeks and thought he must be ill. He hoped the 'Special Announcement' wouldn't be necessary.

Vince's letter was contrite and poignant, and enclosed a copy of the new SFN, No. 3. There was, surprisingly, a reference to Slant in the editorial...."We are hoping to include the second Slant with SFN4; Walt Willis, editor of this printed fanzine has been ready to produce for some time, but not knowing when this SFN (which sets the date-line for the next) would appear, we have not been able to contact him about it."

The reasoning behind this explanation confused me somewhat, but Vince's letter threw some light on it, even if it didn't make it look any more logical.

"The trouble has been caused by the fact that up to the present, the SFNews, and most active administration by the Committee has involved yours truly as the most active agent. ...Unfortunately ...if anything happens to me the whole business is kaput for a time. (He went on to explain that he had been under the weather for a while.) I suppose the best thing would have been to have posted off some of the work to other fans with typewriters, but I foolishly credited myself with more energy and spare time than I actually possessed, and thought I could manage it myself. At the moment, I'm looking for another job and lodgings away from home (these lodgings turned out to be the famous Epicentre), which also complicates things.

....I never dreamed that this SFN would take so long to prepare. I thought it would be out at least five weeks ago, when I could have sent you the information...If you would overlook my rudeness and send Slant along whenever it's ready, I'll push it out whether there is anything to accompany it or not....

As you see from the enclosed, I haven't been exactly idling my time away, in spite of everything. I've duplicated 130 SFN3s, 150 new membership forms, 100 odd copies of the 'Introduction', 170 SFNminors, all of which I stencilled, and have also turned out, with help, 50 of the "Hints on Stencilling" which were stencilled rather badly by Ken Slater...Happy, carefree days!

I reflected ruefully how much trouble would have been saved if some of this energy had been devoted to the writing of one postcard, but I was learning, the hard way,

that fandom has different standards from the Civil Service. We set to and finished off Slant (without the special announcement) and sent it out ourselves, with a friendly postcard to Vince. Yes, I even kept copies of postcards---didn't I tell you I was in the Civil Service? Look:

Dear Vincent, ~~Thanks~~ very much for your letter. What a relief! Was afraid I was going to be left high and dry. You seem to have got enough to do at the moment so I'm sending out Slant myself. Hope you like it. Am sending out another 160 to other people---BFL members, Americans etc. If you like, let me have some of those SFS brochures and I'll send them with it. You seem to have had a poor time of it lately---hope you're feeling better.

As you can see, I was already beginning to acquire the attitude of affectionate tolerance which enabled me to remain friends with those unreliable but likeable Londoners throughout the years.

Slant 2 had 26 pages and a cover woodcut by James showing a helicopter dropping flares on a wrecked spaceship, a scene from the Cedric Walker story chosen because it was all sharp angles and highlights and had lots and lots of black. (In a woodcut, white is work.) We innocently thought Walker would be overcome at "getting the cover", and such a wonderful cover too, but he seemed to take it quite calmly. As well as the Jackson and Walker stories there was one by me with a highly complicated plot related with such regard for brevity as to amount to little more than a synopsis, an allegedly humorous story about how an underground railway tunnel through the centre of the Earth foundered in a pool of Universal Solvent, a short short ghost story (which was later to have the rare distinction of being reprinted in a US hectored fanzine called THE PURPLE BEM), a column called The Prying Fan (an allusion to Merrin's The Frying Pan) and the editorial. None of these had my name on them except the long story (well, it must have been all of 2500 words), which I was very proud of at the time. Having set it up in type letter by letter I could see all the subtleties and profundities quite clearly, and was quite disappointed when readers complained it was hard to follow. I read it just now and damned if I can make head or tail of it myself. However it was a pretty wonderful magazine, we thought at the time.

James and our original co-founder Dick Merritt, by then in England, had been rather disappointed in the response to Slant 1. A dozen letters seemed poor return for six weeks spare time. However I'd been pleased that even twelve people had taken the trouble to write, and since it was obvious that Slant 2 was several times better than Slant 1, we were happily confident that the response would be more than twice as good. Alas for the innocent hopes of neofans. Two weeks after the mailing I was unburdening myself on Clive Jackson....

Maybe you'll be surprised at my answering your letter (received today) so soon, but don't feel yourself rushed. It's just that I'm all keyed up for writing long letters ever since Slant went out and haven't been given the opportunity. After No.1 went out there were about a dozen nice commentful letters like yours from various people and I expected to get more this time, in the proportion that No.2 was better than No.1. But NO. We got about half a dozen straight off from people who confessed to having read nothing but the 'For Sale' ads and couldn't wait to get their hands out. Two or three from dim but well-meaning types who "haven't had time to read the mag yet" but were very grateful. We were beginning to think that nobody would read it. Finally two letters from semi-illiterates, or possibly elementary school

children, also about the ads, but saying also a few ill chosen words about the mag...And that's all so far. Very disappointing. But I suppose a lot of people are on holiday and anyway I sent nearly as many to America as to England this time...

The US recipients were mainly picked at random from the N3F membership list, and all the officers of that noble organisation.

It wasn't as if there was nothing going on in British fandom at the time. SEN3 had had a report by Plumridge on the 1949 Loncon, a one-day affair that ground on right to 10.30 in the evening. Familiar names there included Gillings, Temple, AV & AC Clarke, Laurence Sandfield, Daphne B., Ted Tubb and Derek Pickles. Ted Cammell was absent, suffering from vaccine fever contracted as part of the preliminaries for his visit to the Convention later that year.

In July the first printed OF came out and I wrote Ken Slater 2½ pages of enthusiastic comment. Ken replied commenting on my comments but failing to refer to Slant. This was a pattern that was repeated for quite a while, until I stopped commenting on OF. At the time we suspected he was peeved at our having beaten him to the post in the matter of printing (we didn't consider Fantasy Review a fanzine) but probably he just didn't care much for Slant, an idea that was inconceivable to us at that stage. His published comments were usually to the effect that it must mean a terrible lot of work and we were rather to be pitied: this used to annoy us quite a lot, because our subconscious agreed that we were mugs. Besides, Ken had his own worries. At this point he had spent £25 for 1000 copies and got in 20 subscriptions.

The gloom of the rest of July and part of August was relieved by short but kind letters from Mike Rosenblum and Ted Tubb, but that was all. I wrote to Mike Tealby commenting on Wonder 2, ready to share our woes, but he replied disgustingly cheerfully that he had got much more comment on his second issue than on his first. He thought it might be because he charged a subscription rate.

But on 11th August the tide turned, because on that day we got a letter from the fabulous Perry Ackerman: "Hello Walto--I set the brand new TWS aside to glance thru Slant 2, got interested in reading the contents. "The Still Small Voice" is "Ray" markedly Bradburyesque (My Ghod, eight years and I set it up in type, and I've just noticed that's a pun!) and I'm sure my friend Ray would be amused to have a copy..." In 1952 in Los Angeles Bradbury was to tell me he'd got that copy and commented on it, but I never got his letter. Perry went on to express interest in the Walker story also from the agenting point of view and asked for 25 copies of the magazine, offering a promag per copy. He also sent a story of his own for us and said he was asking his client EEEvans to send us one too.

This was by far the most wonderful thing that had happened to us and I wrote post-haste to Jackson and Walker with the great news. By this time I was carrying on a close correspondence with both of them and had invited them over to visit us. Walker's plans fell through, but Jackson came over for a week or so towards the end of August.

His visit was something of a disappointment. This was our very first meeting with another fan and we'd been expecting too much. We'd innocently assumed that Jackson would sparkle continuously, like he did in his letters, which were witty, fluent and sophisticated. Instead he was quiet, almost lethargic. We liked him, but conversation after the first few hours was full of embarrassing lulls. I hadn't yet realised that for bright conversation you need between four and eight people.

There was also the affair of the abortive ascent of the Cave Hill. This is a mountain just outside Belfast, about 1100 feet high and very steep on one side. It's a popular walk for Belfast people, at least those who live on James's side of the city--I'd climbed most of the prominent mountain in Ireland but never even been on this one. James, acting as guide, scorned the easy path and led us up the steep face

of the mountain. We soon found ourselves in a forest of fir trees growing at an acute angle from a wet and slippery slope, so that the only way you could make progress was in a series of desperate lunges from one tree to another, throwing your arms around the trunk until you found a secure foothold for the next lurch. By this method we traversed back and forth until we were about halfway up, and then Clive went all white and shivery and sat down, clinging to a tree. We thought he was probably scared, but we didn't like to appear to assume that, with him being in the RAF and everything, so we all passed it off as a sick turn. I told James the route was too difficult for me anyway and he agreed he'd been foolish to try it in wet weather and we made our way down again shortly with, we hoped, our visitor's face saved. It was a trivial and silly affair but I've felt ever since that it created a barrier between ourselves and Clive, us thinking he might be embarrassed or resentful, and suspecting he thought that we thought he was a coward. It would have been better if we'd been frank all round and laughed it off---after all there's nothing to be ashamed of in being allergic to heights even if you are in the RAF---but we were younger and less knowledgeable about people then and having once started on the path of insincerity we couldn't see any way to get off it and clear the matter up. The subject was never mentioned again..though for all I know Clive never gave it another thought. And I still haven't been up the Cave Hill: the highest point we now take visitors on the usual fan tour is the Tower of the Enchanted Duplicator, on a grassy hill on my side of Belfast. Though even there we had trouble with the ultra-urban Evelyn Smith and a stile...but that's a long way ahead yet.

Clive's visit was far from a total loss of course. We did have a lot of good talk, just not as much as we'd foolishly been expecting, and on his last night we kicked around various plot ideas, one of which was The Swordsmen Of Varnis, which probably holds some sort of record for number of subsequent pro republications.

After the visitor had left I resumed my fanac. Arthur Rapp, then an N3F official, had started sending me Spacewarp: I wanted to go on getting it between issues of Slant, so I sent him a letter of comment, part of which he published. It was a very poor letter, but it was the first thing I ever had published in another fanzine. Having become an adherent of Roscoeism, the revelation of which was in the first Spacewarp I got, I asked for permission to reprint the Sacred Writings: and availed myself of it a mere seven years later.

Round about this time Wonder 3 came out, with probably the most hideous cover girl ever seen on a fanzine, even including Femizine. There was a story by Walker and an article in defence of the Shaver Mystery by Ron Deacon. There was also an editorial, which I read with mixed emotions... "In a letter to this address Walter A. Willis said that he was rather disappointed in the response to the second issue of Slant. Whatever the reason, I'm glad to say that such is not the case with Wonder. If you read Slant, drop Walt a line now and again..." It was nice of Mike, but I didn't want charity especially from what even then I regarded as a crudzine, tho I probably didn't know the word then. This just about completed my disillusionment with British fandom and accelerated my tendency to turn towards American fandom which had been started by Forry's letter and Spacewarp. And by another great event of that month, a letter from Rick Sneary, already a legendary figure to me from his letters in promags. The one to me was a full two pages of interesting and sensible comments: it was the first real letter of comment we'd got on that second issue which we'd thought so wonderful, and I was so grateful I made him our first life subscriber. There was one thing, though, which I couldn't understand in his letter, the slogan at the end. I asked him about it. "What is the purport," I enquired, "of SOUTH GATE IN '58?"

Then, on 9th September 1949, came a letter which stopped me writing off British fandom...and indeed did as much to keep me in fandom as any single thing. It was 3½ handwritten pages from somebody called Bulmer, who was apparently now living with

Vince Clarke at 84 Drayton Park, Highbury, London. It started off with some enthusiastic praise of Slant, which was meat and drink to us, with a passing recommendation of an old mag called Zenith published by one Harry Turner, and then went on to technicalities...

I notice you used an ordinary M.F. Printing for the most of the mag with a centre of Cream Laid and it looks like 'Kingslens' Cream Wove for the cover. For the M.F. the ink must have been too runny, for she shows through. Try an S.C. and see if you get better results--although an S.C. is hard on type face.

We didn't understand a word of this--we'd just been asking for 'paper'--but we were immensely impressed and felt quite proud of ourselves for using all that stuff he mentioned. After commenting on Slant in detail he went on to make a brief mention of his own activities...

...I've started a small effort called "Nirvana", to be increased later on--if enthusiasm and money permit--to a full size subscription magazine.

and then referred briefly to the enclosure, a story of his own called "Wishful Thinking" which he was submitting to Slant. We ran it in the next issue with the title changed to "Last Wish" because we hadn't got enough large letters for two long words like that. Any facility I have for thinking up titles can be traced back to early training in coping with such eventualities. Ken finished up in a blaze of glory--for us, that is:

If I do see it in No.3 Slant I'll know it's in good company in the best fnz in present existence...I haven't seen Operation Fantast in its printed guise (or even duped) but I hear it's a flop...I gather you are in the trade--the whole atmosphere of Slant reeks of a professional job...

Naturally this unbounded enthusiasm for our poor little brainchild gave me a deep affection for this Ken Bulmer, but it's a feeling that a more adequate acquaintanceship with him has not diminished: quite the reverse. What he said may have been overly fulsome..we even thought so at the time..but it was nice of him to say it and take the trouble to give us some encouragement, which he must have guessed we needed. And I like people who can show enthusiasm and appreciation. Equanimity is a fine virtue, but as expressed through the mails is hard to distinguish from torpor. Anyhow, I like to think that the regard we felt for Ken after this letter wasn't just gratitude, but a subconscious appreciation of the kindness and sensibility I was to find in him when we really got to know one another.

I replied at once, in a letter I would quote if I could find the slightest trace of interest in it, but didn't hear again from Ken for a couple of months. Meanwhile I'd been looking for material from the NZF Manuscript Bureau and in October three pieces arrived from Wrai Ballard, who was running it at the time. There was a story by Wilkie Conner and a poem by Ed Ludwig, which I returned at once, and a piece by Bob Johnson (then publishing a fantastically ostentatious thing called ORB) and his girl Sandy Charnoff, which I returned to them for revision and never got back. I tried to explain my Editorial Policy. "I'd like Slant to be a bit more sophisticated--it's hard to avoid the word highbrow--than most fan magazines, so I'm looking for material that's original, off the beaten track. I don't mind if it's obscure or even queer, as long as it's intelligent and different...The trouble is that the people I'm after don't read fanzines, and don't think of writing for them, but I might get a few of them in time."

IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT our sophisticated Hero, bless his little cotton socks, gets a typewriter, encounters Chuck Harris, and has other wonderful and terrible things happen to him. Will he survive?

SOUND THE ROAR OF THE ROCKETS

Bill Venable

Sound the roar of the thunder-shootin', high-falutin'
bass note rockets

Let me hear those great big decibels
I want to hear them

I want a slim silver cylinder
Going up

I want a pearly pointed pencil
Perched on a fiery pillar of hot gases
Singing
That great big decibel bass note
And inaudible-treble high

I want a big noise
Going up

. S
I
N jetwash dan was a deep-space man
G with thunder in his tail
I he steered his course with good white horse
N and fueled his ship with ale
G

. Give me
The clean white heat of a rocket backwash
A column of flame to ride on

Give me
A sphere of star-strewn space
A pot-bellied planet fore, aft
A metal bright moon, and
An asteroid
Or
Two

I want to sing a thunder song, a big bright thunder-song
Roaring
A hallelujah from a big metal mouth
An orchestra of slim silver cylinders that knows
the music; give me the music
I'll write the lyrics.

ROLL CALL

Rory Faulkner

Alpheratz, Algol, Aldebaran, Antares,
Answered the Roll Call, one by one:
Gave an accounting for all of their charges
"All's well with the planets surrounding
this sun."

Sirius, Vega, the long Roll continued
Throughout the Galaxy thundered the
Call
Betelgeuse, Fomalhaut, Regulus, Mira,
Laughing Capella, Polaris, ---Sol?

Then came a silence heart-breakingly poignant.
All through the Galaxy stars hushed their mirth.
As sombrely, sadly, Sol gave his accounting:
"Dead by her own hand, my fairest one---Earth!"