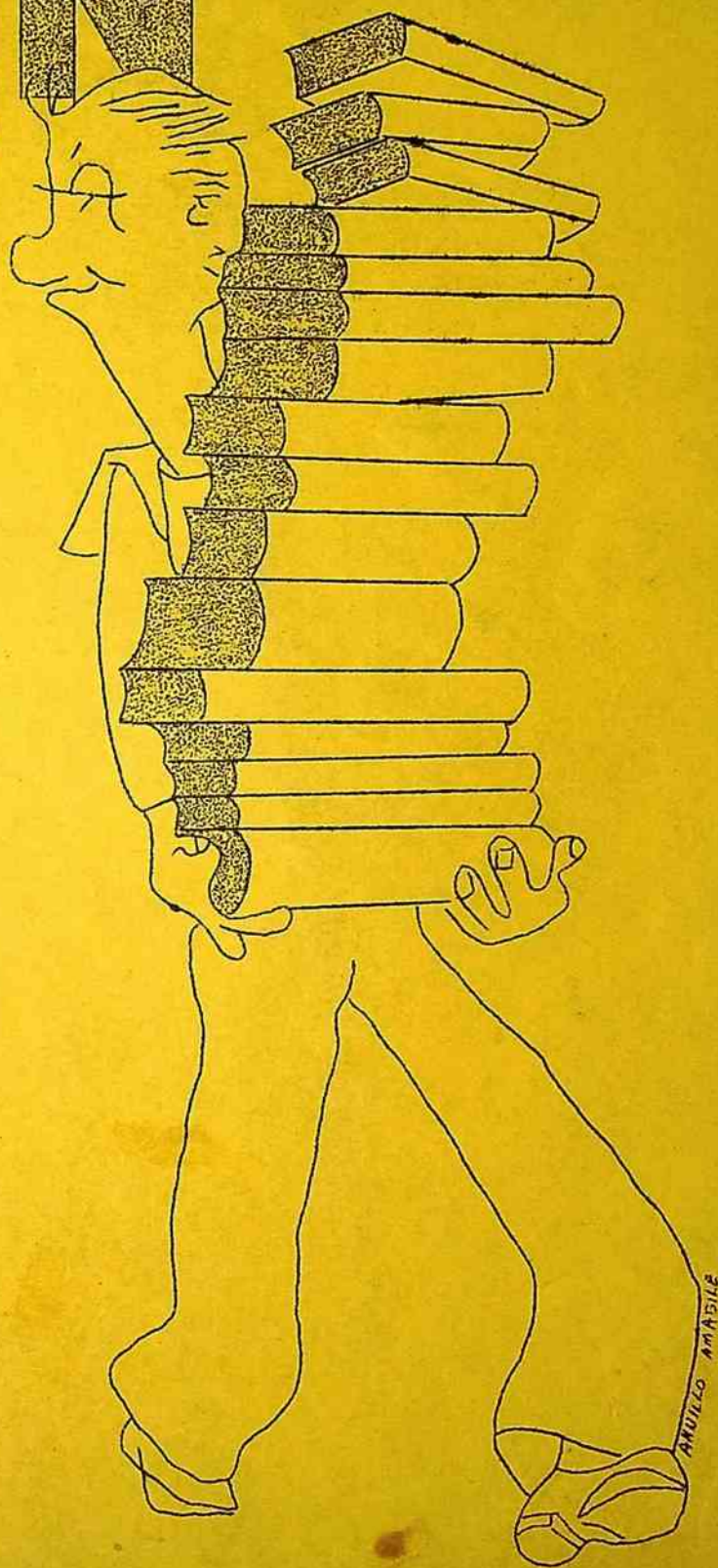


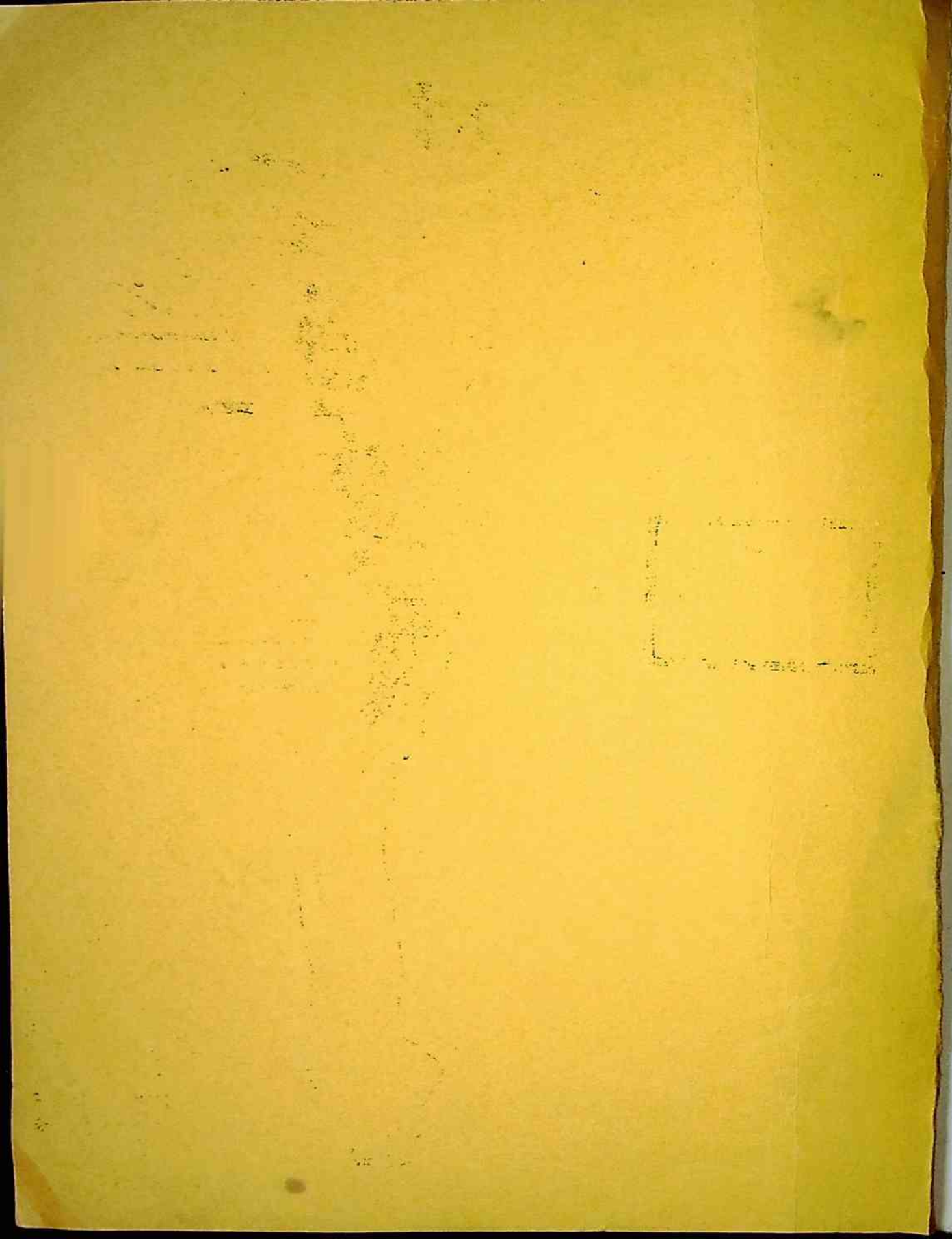
# PEON

MAY 1952

Fourth  
Anniversary  
Issue



ARULIO AMABLE





# PEON

number twenty-two

VOLUME FIVE      NUMBER ONE

MAY 1952

## EDITOR:

Charles Lee Riddle

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The opinions and views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor.

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PEON, A "Fantascience Publication", is published irregularly (but at least four times a year, time, material, finances, and the U.S. Navy willing, by--

Charles Lee Riddle, PNCA, USN  
U. S. Navy Underwater Sound Laboratory  
Fort Trumbull, New London, Connecticut

In spite of what you may have heard, the Riddle family is now settled down for what we hope will be a mighty long stay here in the beautiful state of Connecticut. The last issue of PEON that we mailed out stated that the Navy had transferred us to duty in New York City, and that future PEON's would reach you from there. We lasted exactly seven weeks in that big city. Guess we are just country folks at heart, for that hour and a half long subway ride to work and the same back home in the evening was just too much for the male end of the family. So we requested a transfer to another activity in the third naval district, and were very fortunate enough indeed to get assigned to our present duty station. The countryside is actually beautiful, the people around us are friendly, and we just like this area. So don't be surprised if you read in some future PEON that we have settled down permanently in this state!

The map on the right represents the states that we drove across on our recent transfer from Hawaii to New York and finally to Connecticut. We were rather undecided at first when we received our orders out in Hawaii as to driving across the country and seeing the fans and readers of PEON along the way; or to just take a train straight across the nation. We finally decided to take the car, but if we had known what was in store for us, we would have sold the darn thing out there and came across the country on the train. One of the main reasons there was no February issue of PEON is that the car trip set us so far behind financially speaking, that it will be a mighty long time before we recover. Among the many items that we had to pay for on the entire trip was a new rod in Arizona, a new engine in Texas, a new starter in Oklahoma, a new generator in Ohio, and to top it all off, we were presented with a traffic ticket the very first day we arrived in New York City. On the other hand, though, we had very enjoyable visits in Los Angeles with the Moffatt and Ackerman families (with a very enjoyable side-visit to Rog and Mari Graham; and a nice New Year's party with a host

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 33)

PEON  
NOTES

# field day

LARRY SAUNDERS

An unearthly shriek was followed by a noisy and deadly bombardment of falling concrete.

Hanniford Jackson stepped gingerly away from the scattered ruins of a wall that had just missed him by inches. He whistled softly between clenched teeth. Gazing up cautiously, he could distinguish the rapidly fading shadow of his antagonist as he vanished over the roof tops.

That there were aliens from Mars on this world, Jackson was left very little room for doubt. The wall -- he backed up against the opposite foundation -- the wall was composed of steel gratings and concrete. It was no accident that it collapsed. No human device could cause it to shatter so completely.

Scrambling down from the piecemeal ruins, he jumped into his car and drove top-speed directly to his city office. When he stepped inside, a small blonde that looked like small blondes should stopped him cold..

"Well?" she inquired icily.

Jackson shrugged. Why relate an experience that made him seem foolish? After all, he had his reputation to consider. Turning abruptly, he motioned his visitor to sit down. She complied demurely.

Abstractedly, he took in her subtle mouth and fragile beauty. One had to be brutal with Gerry. Else a carefully fabricated client-employee relationship would be dangerously jeopardized.

"No soap." he said grimly.

The girl's eyes hardened. She lighted a cigarette and stared at him through the veil of smoke.

"Twenty-five dollars the first week for each day, now fifty a day." she said quietly.

Jackson shrugged non-committedly. He turned away impatiently and snapped, "Fire me!"

Gerry shook her head slowly. A tight smile appeared and vanished. "No," she said, "no, I won't fire you. You'd like me to wouldn't you? But I won't. I value your service. Besides, I like you too much, Jackson. You're in this all the way."

Jackson twisted around belligerently and glared. "I didn't ask to be, remember. It's your idea." He felt silly about the senseless wrangle that always seemed to occur. It ended each time in her solidly beating him down. He decided to remain calm, no-matter what she said.

Gerry continued casually, "It really makes no difference, one way or the other. It's their cunning pitted against mine, and now, yours." She appraised him coolly. "For a supposedly hard-boiled detective, you upset very easily."

Jackson laughed unpleasantly. "You're cute." His voice was uneven, in spite of himself. "You can't seem to get it through that rather thick little blonde head of yours that we're not fighting anything human. We're fighting--" he choked down the wave of ridicule--"we're fighting men from Mars."

"Well?" she demanded, "What about it?"

"You hired me to find them," he said desperately, "and I did try. I agreed to nothing more. I'm under no contract. Risk or no risk, I can quit whenever I want to. That lets me out." Fuming over, he stood defiantly and waited for an excuse to quit, to be fired, to end the nightmare.

Gerry ignored his challenge, however. When she spoke, her voice was calm and eliberate. "Yes, you can quit whenever you want. But it doesn't let you out. You're in it as much as I am, Jackson. You know that. You didn't find them. But they've found you. So, obviously, you just can't throw up your hands and say 'I quit! I'm through with it all.' It's not that simple. They won't let you do that. They'll kill you. You have to fight, whether you want to or not. For your survival, they have to be destroyed. If you don't believe me, or if you chicken out and won't help, I'll do it myself."

Jackson stared at her for fully a minute. He admired her, but oh God, the incident was really ridiculous. This little girl -- Gerry -- sitting there and plotting the destruction of invaders from Mars. And he was to be her little helper. He should have told her to go to hell, then and there, but instead, he broke out into uncontrollable laughter, which proved to be a mistake. Gerry rose stiffly and with her lips curled, scornfully slapped him across the mouth. Shocked into action he grabbed her, shook her, and gazed savagely at her parted lips and blazing eyes. Waiting for her to struggle, Jackson suddenly pressed his lips to hers fiercely. Kissing spreads germs, he thought, inanely.

Meeting no resistance or cooperation, he released her abruptly and steered her to the door. Before she could utter a protest, he had shoved her into the hall and slammed the door behind him.

Letting out a great sigh of relief, he hooked one leg over his desk and leaned to dial a number on the phone. He'd have to be careful about the tips he received. The last wild goose chase---which resulted from a



phone tip -- had nearly cost him his life. He puzzled over the girl and wondered if she were sore at him. And what was her real interest in the investigation? At first, he had just laughed at her. Then she took out her bank roll, and Jackson knew he was hired--Martians or not.

Across the street from Jackson's office, two men waited in a car that kept its motor idling. When Jackson stepped out innocently onto the busy sidewalk, the bustle of high noon was pierced by the staccato rattle of a submachine gun. Spouts of chipped metal, flying concrete and dust kicked up around the fallen victim. Shocked bystanders gaped in open mouth amazement, while several women screamed and fainted. When the air of panic had cleared sufficiently, several frozen-legged bystanders edged up to the scene of the shooting, finding for their arduous trouble nothing.

Jackson was visibly disturbed over the incident. At the last moment of frantic dodging he had caught a glimpse of the gun car's license number and later down a one-flight tavern, he related the incident to his client. Outside of a raised eyebrow she evidenced no show of emotion, though inwardly she felt her heart turn over when he told her. Jackson noted, thankfully, that she seemed to have forgotten the office incident.

"Unusually clumsy," she remarked thoughtfully over a cocktail. "Why should they resort to street violence? That doesn't make sense. It's sure to cause an investigation. What could be the logical answer?"

Jackson gulped down a gin fizz and smacked his lips angrily. Wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he said, tensely, "Damned if I know. Nothing makes sense anymore. And I'm not beginning to cave. It's really very simple to me, my dear." He poked his finger at her. "I want out--now!"

Gerry swept back the wave of his hair and grinned. "You're cute, too." she crooned. "Now, we'll check on that license number."

A lengthy checkup revealed the fact that the license number came from a car last reported being in the possession of a rental car agency. After hightailing it to the car lot, and after a moment's bickering, and the permanent release of a ten-spot, the car registration book was passed over to the eager hands of Gerry and Jackson. Fingering his way down the list Jackson soon spotted the number, and subsequently the borrower's name and address. Jackson was puzzled over their clumsiness and said so. Hopping into his car, the pair sped rapidly to the designated neighborhood. They drew up before a large brokendown hotel that had seen better days. The two went up a dirty flight of stairs and entered a stinking hallway--Gerry flatly refusing to wait outside in the car. After checking with the desk clerk, they went up three more flights and started searching for number six. Gerry eventually discovered it and in a low tight voice, called Jackson to her side.

Jackson drew a pistol from his shoulder holster, then with a vicious swing, kicked the door in. After delivering the explosive blow, he poked

his way gingerly into the room.

Immediately he noticed the pungent odor that seemed to hang in the air. He was conscious of Gerry being at his side. He drew his arm around her.

"Gun smoke," he said.

She nodded and shivered. In the next room, Jackson found two dead men on the floor, both riddled with bullets. He viewed the room objectively, meanwhile forcing Gerry to stay in the other room. He told her to search the room, and to be careful of her fingerprints.

On the surface, it appeared to be a simple case of brawl and violence; an incident whereby both produced pistols and shot it out. The motive? Jackson bent down and scanned the floor. Cards, money--he counted three hundred dollars--and a smashed bottle of gin. He rose and sighed. The case was settled for the police. Tempers flared out of control and violence substituted reasoning.

It was all wrong. Jackson mulled over the problem, then whipped into action. He went over the room inch by inch, and found nothing. When he forced the closet, however, he discovered a submachine gun. Fumbling with the cartridge chamber, he discovered it had been recently fired. Replacing the weapon, he scrutinized the room for the last time, then went out to Gerry, where, after calling the police, he explained the situation as best as he could.

Once outside, they drove to her apartment. Gerry mixed drinks while Jackson fell into a brooding silence. After handing him his drink, Gerry fell back into a cushioned divan and said seriously, "They were dupes."

Jackson nodded. He scowled and said, "Life was a cheap commodity as far as they were concerned. Why bother to kill those two though? Not that I give a hang for their lives, but it's just insane logic behind it all."

Gerry pouted, raised her glass on an eye-level and peered thoughtfully at the swirling liquid within. She said reflectively, "Not so insane. I've given the matter quite a bit of thought. I think the answer is they are afraid to use their own methods. It would have attracted attention and I don't think they can afford that. After all, who would ever connect an old-fashioned street killing with invaders from Mars? And as for those thugs' murder," she shrugged lightly, "they were no loss. They tried to murder you and did actually succeed in hitting an innocent pedestrian. Besides, they were bound to be caught after that bungling. It was the simplest way. Just eliminating them."

Jackson turned to her grimly. "If they can do it to them, they can do it to us. What I can't understand is what they're waiting for. They know all about us, who we are, where we live. What do we know? Nothing!"



Gerry smiled impishly and swept up from the divan over to the phone. After dialing a number, she motioned Jackson to join her. Rising, he went to the phone and listened to the brief one-sided conversation. A voice on the other end of the wire said briskly: "This is the Atven Novelty Company and who is it, please?"

The Atven Novelty Company was hidden among a congested cross-section of bustling warehouses. Gerry had come across the phone number in the thugs' apartment. The building itself was shabbily tucked in between two towering giants. Inside the establishment, the pair waited nervously in an outer office, while a secretary buzzed a certain Mr. Haines.

Mr. Haines was a tall and rather ugly man. He greeted them cordially, and offered Gerry a chair, which she refused. Gerry eyed him with candid dislike. Jackson, though more subtle, was brusque and came to the point faster than he had intended to do so.

Mr. Haines did not know what he was talking about. He knew no such men as Jackson described. Was this some sort of joke? He was assured it was not. Jackson realized he was getting nowhere. And Gerry was no help. She stood there like a sullen schoolgirl. Well, if the move were up to him...throw caution to the winds...

He drew in a deep breath. "Mr. Haines, what do you think of the possibility of aliens from Mars invading earth?"

Gerry gasped and color flowed from her face. Haines, however, just laughed. Jackson didn't think it so funny.

Haines laughed a while longer, then said, "Possibility? I'm afraid there is no possibility. Good joke, though. Besides, they couldn't possibly afford the present cost of living." He burst out laughing anew at his own joke.

Jackson was on the verge of leaving and ready to say so when Gerry spoke up with a question that made him glance at her sideways.

She asked, "What do you make here?"

The question was perfectly innocent. Mr. Haines did not think so. He eyed her suspiciously but after all, Gerry was a blonde. Failing to detect any evidence of guile, he answered evenly. "Novelties. But isn't that obvious?"

Gerry smiled innocently, and swayed over to a nearby display counter. There were a number of pistols arranged about in neat order. Up above them was a large sign, that read: "Toy Raygun. Four Corks and Flint Provided."

She tinkered with one and carried it over to Mr. Haines. She asked, "You manufacture these?"

Mr. Haines nodded and smiled dourly. Holding the pistol out, he pressed the trigger. A cork popped out, accompanied by sparks, and flew across the room.

"It's quite popular, you know." His laugh was a big strained.

Gerry smiled vacantly as she accepted the pistol back. Then quickly, before Mr. Haines could protest, twisted one of its component parts. Mr. Haines made a frantic swipe at her and met the very solid fist of Jackson. Gerry smiled her thanks, and fired at the far wall, which immediately collapsed.

After a moment of dead silence, Mr. Haines picked himself off the floor and turned a pale face to Gerry. "You know." His voice was empty of expression.

Gerry pointed the gun at him. "You're the one."

Haines face suddenly contorted and his eyes bulged. "Wait--don't!" he screamed.

Gerry squeezed the trigger and Mr. Haines exploded like a ripe melon, only the effect was much nastier.

Controlling his voice, Jackson asked, "Do you suppose the others might have heard this?"

The girl's brow knotted. She was obviously under a strain. After a moment's hesitation she said, "I don't believe there are any others. Their entire scheme depended on one man and one man only. When he failed, their scheme failed. I know I let you go on under the assumption there were more, but it was easier that way."

Jackson stared at her. He then turned distastefully to the mess on the floor and frowned. He muttered, "Then this was probably their factory where they could use human dupes to do their dirty work." He turned to Gerry with a puzzled expression. "How did you know their scheme depended on one man? There could be more?"

Gerry smiled crookedly. She said in a small, tired voice, "There are no more, Jackson. At least no more Martians. Oh, why hide it any longer I'm sick of this masquerade. The truth of the matter is that we couldn't possibly allow a situation where two extra-terrestrials were constantly at war for final command. One had to go, quite naturally.

Jackson understood and she knew it, yet she said it anyhow. "I'm from Venus, Jackson."

"It's that simple," he said in a low tense voice.

"It's not that simple..." she began heatedly, then stopped. She gazed

at him sadly. Gerry simply could not account for the emotional upheaval that stirred within her. When she spoke again, she meant to be ruthless. Her voice was scarcely a whisper, as she said, "Jackson, no one must ever know...you understand what I must do..." She hesitated and the pistol wavered. Standing sideways, Jackson suddenly wrenched the gun from her grasp and fingered it himself. Gerry bit her lip, then burst out sobbing.

"I'm glad!" she wailed.

"Then, you'll tell me everything?" he demanded.

She nodded brokenly. Tearfully and in a faltering voice, she said "I'll tell everything. Everything I know about the invasion. I'd do it for you, Jackson."

Jackson lit a cigarette, and dragged on it carefully. "No." he said.

Gerry stared at him disbelief. A wild surge of hope surged through her. Her eyes stared at his face eagerly. No reaction out of... Her eyes narrowed. Smothered reaction....

"You...." she began slowly.

"Saturn." he said flatly and pulled the trigger at point blank range.

After Jackson strolled out, the outer-office secretary switched off the office intercom, picked up her heavy handbag, and leisurely sauntered out after him. Venus and Mars gone; and Saturn before her. Her chance had come. She kept within easy range of Jackson, for what she had in mind would have to be done suddenly.

Across the street in a shady back alley, a man watched the man and woman with uncommon interest. The man--Saturn--with the stalking girl--Mercury, he thought it was--behind him. If he allowed events to shape themselves within the next few hours, in all probability, there would only be one to deal with, and Jupiter would be in a most favorable position...

A large tomcat eyed the man lazily. The man did not notice it. When the man left, the cat was not far behind.

If you were given the job of ordering ten books for a library that had just discovered science fiction literature, what ten books would you order? Assume the library has no science fiction or fantasy books on its shelves, and you are to have a free hand in ordering.

If you will list your ten, with your reasons why you choose these particular books, and send the list to the editor of PEON, you may win five bucks; for that is what we will pay for the list and reasons chosen by our readers. Entries must be in our hands prior to June 15th, for publication in the next two issues of PEON.



# THE VIZIGRAPH AND I

JERRY BIXBY

Lee Riddle has asked me to spin a few thousand words on the subject of my editorship of Planet Stories. I will begin by saying that my editorship of Planet Stories is pretty much like my love affair with Lana Turner in that it never actually existed. Malcolm Reiss, whom you will find listed on the masthead as General Manager, is and has always been the man behind PS; the other editors--Whitehorn, Peacock, Payne, myself--were in reality only assistant editors who had no authority to buy stories on our own nor any control over policy. Our activities in that direction were limited to reading the stories as they came in and either recommending or not recommending them to Mal; and if, he disagreed with our opinion, to pleading and swearing and stamping around the office until he either became convinced and bought them or told us, in that certain tone of voice, to shaddup! We also served as: art-editor; layout and makeup man; manuscript editors; proof-reader; and (in my case, at least) as athletic director for the office girls....I kept 'em running.

With this in mind, and with a fond nod in the direction of Mal Reiss, who endured so much of my browbeatings in his attempts to convince me that we were NOT publishing Galaxy, we can now proceed to a discussion of my "editorship" of PS.

Nothing special comes to mind.... The satisfaction of buying an unusually good yarn; the helpless shrug that accompanies the purchase of a stinker simply because you happen to need the length; the pleasure of working with artists (I enjoyed this particularly, inasmuch as I like to draw a bit myself and always burdened the artist with detailed sketches of exactly what I wanted). Also enjoyed fooling with styling and layouts, and spent lots of time after hours at it. And I disliked intensely blurb-ing the stories in the traditional PS manner, i. e.: "Grimly, his terrible eyes, flaming like ice-cream cones, Rakk-k Durble lanced his little spacer into the heart of the Crab Nebula....could he defeat the foul Itch-men and save the beautiful Queen Oowotapairanockers?" I myself prefer the more elusive, or Campbellian, blurb: "A culture that is founded on the intrachange of tangentials can topple under its own weight, unless it has the right kind of foundation; and that's liable to rise under its own bouyan-cy!"

While at Fiction House, I also handled Action Stories, Jungle Stories, Two Western Books, Two Western Action-Books, and Frontier Stories, in addition to PS and TCS-AB; and every week or so an occasion of great importance would arise: the "cover-title conference."

Cover-titles (which are the story titles featured on the cover, Junior), you may but probably don't know, are considered to be extremely im-

portant: according to the big brains of the pulp business, cover-titles, along with the cover illustration itself, are what sells the book. It's the package that counts.

The theory is: a potential reader, dead bent on making his train, is scurrying past a newstand when suddenly a swatch of color knives the corner of his eye and he skids to a halt, staring at it; he extends a hand, and begins to tremble as the colors resolve into hero-saving-babe-from-creep; then.. the muscular cover-titles leap upon him, and he's hooked. His other hand goes into his pocket for a quarter...

To this end, Mal and I would sit across the desk from each other and stare moodily into space; cigarette and pipe smoke would cloud the air.

Suddenly, from the cloud of smoke surrounding Mal, would issue: "Witch Queen of Venus's Ooky Jungles?"

"Nah." I would say.

Silence.

From my cloud of smoke: "Purple Princess of the Voluptuous Void?"

"Nah."

Silence.

Mal: "Red Priestess of Dimension  $X_{\frac{1}{2}}-52/25\frac{1}{4}$  Plus?"

"Nah.. red's no good; political."

Silence.

From me: "Brawny Babe of Bollixed Binary \$16(H<sub>2</sub>O) Minues?"

Mal, leaping to his feet and emerging head and shoulders above his cloud of smoke: "That's IT! That's IT!"

I remember one western cover-title that everyone was happy about..until the thing was just about to be engraved. Then someone--I forget who--leaped to his feet like a cat full of Metaxa and hollered: "Jesus God, stop the presses...we can't use that title!"

The title was "Blood On Her Saddle."

Herewith, a few random remeniscences...which is the easiest way to write this sort of thing...

There was the morning Fred Young, the foreman of our print shop, called up to tell me that the first three pages of a Poul Anderson novelet had

fallen into some machine or other before they could be set up in type, and had gotten mangled somewhat beyond legibility...."Can you send me some stuff to fill in," Fred asked plaintively, "So we can set the thing?" So I sat down and batted out a beginning for Poul's story, working from memory...except that I did it in two pages...these wordy authors....

Speaking of which, there was the time Ted Sturgeon came visiting and saw a new cover Andy Anderson had just brought in....Ted clasped his hands and wanted to do a story around it. "Sure," I said; "give us about 7,000 words on it." So, Ted, bless his novelist's heart, showed up a while later with 27,000 words...what that did to our schedule that month!

Then there was the time two little fans came up to FH, swept grandly past startled secretaries and receptionists and somehow found our office, planted themselves behind our desk and yelled, "Hiyah, Jerry!", almost scaring me right out the window. I mention this only because it was my first experience with fans..now I don't saare so easily.

And the guy who called me one morning...an out-of-town author, he stated, with a manuscript he'd like to peddle, and could he take me to lunch? I deliberated a split millisecond, wondering what the chances were of getting stuck with the check, and then said sure. I met him downstairs. He was an intense-looking beanpole of about sixty, looking about ready to take a bite out of the nearest squad-car if he felt like. We found a resturant and sat down, ordered, and he then showed me his manuscript. It was as thick as an L. A. phone-book, and it was math, math, math....pages of it, with a little text thrown in for the morons like me and maybe you. I looked at the first line; it read something like: "From Einstein's elementary (and not entirely correct)  $E = mc^2$ , we can now proceed to...."

Difficult luncheon, that.

Reminds me of the note which J. W. Campbell is supposed to have framed on his office wall: "Dear Mr. Campbell: I hear you pay money for stories. You send me some money, I'll send you some stories."

Enough? I think so!

Like to eat? Like to cook? Want to cook the science fiction way and enjoy the favorite recipes of other fans? No telling what'll happen in this line, when I get a change to arrange YOUR favorite recipe with those of other Travelers in Space. So, send me your version of "what's best around here" in the food and/or drink line and I will put 'em together, mimeo the result, and your copy of this cookbook will come to you with my compliments and best gourmet wishes for a good tour, ala S.F., of course...

CALDWELL, E. REID

MAGNOLIA, MISSISSIPPI



# LIVER ALA CARTE

HARRY WEATHERBY

General Practitioner Kur Miller sighed pensively between latherings of Yardley's, the bathroom mirror and a single-edged blade. He was delighted with Flossie, who fitted his plans so completely. A Hebeephrenia case seen often as rural characters, Flossie became the perfect servant when he rescued her from Hovack's Home four months ago.

Miller trimmed the pointed brown mustache, mere wisp of a thing, eyed pridefully his dapper build.

Not bad for a country doctor of forty-five, not bad at all, he mused and noted the slim, not-gone-to-pot, stomach, the leonine head topped with wavy brown hair and a suggestion of gray.

Power of Suggestion! He recalled Mary's words of yesterday when he gave her the nerve tonic, prescribed an iron-lung twice a week and took away her mystery novels.

"Suggestion can bring acts of good or evil," May avowed. Her thin face shone with sickroom valor. Gold-blond tresses, violet eyes, skin of old ivory: what a waste they were.

Power of suggestion, what food for thought!

His feminine clientele admired him, professionally, of course. There was the little redhead at La Plat . . . what he wouldn't do...

"Doctor Miller. Uh, doctor." Flossie called outside the door, her voice a moronic oboe thing. Poor Flossie. What she lacked in gray matter was atoned and bettered by her excellent cooking.

"Yes, Flossie," he said, pulled the knob, from gaunt face and scarecrow figure. No starlet was Flossie. Her sterling attributes glittered in the culinary art, housekeeping and nursing, only. Those dead-alive eyes, and deep facial furrows, that dirty-gray pendant hair....

"Madame..." she flushed scarlet, the work-reddened hands bunching her apron, "...wantsa know when ye'll be comin' back from yer fishin' trip." Flossie watched her steadily, her stare that of an adoring Saint Bernard. She tucked a greasy tentril straying from her half-fallen cap, the moist green eyes never leaving his person, the hands never silent.

He laughed, turned consciously to the mirror and finished his shave. One, two steps, Flossie moved up the portal; then stood silent.

"Tell Mary this is my day off. Refer all phone calls to Horace Mayden who knows most of my patients." Miller whirled suddenly, stared piercingly at Flossie. "I'll be back at four. Before nightfall, anyway. Take care of Mary. . . Be certain she's comfortable, wants for nothing."

Mary, his wasted wife. She deserved surcease from pain, undoubtedly, after nine years of poliomyelitis. He rinsed and wiped the razor as Flossie crowed:

"It'll, uh, uh, be done as ye say, Doctor." Her face flushed again the Lithuanian sunset, loose mouth drooling just a little, the horseteeth shyly peeping above her lower lip. "Uh, uh, jus' as ye say, Doctor." She turned to go, the eyes preserving their well-meant expression.

"And Flossie." He patted the lavender scent on his jewels.

"Yes, Mas-- uh, Doctor Miller."

"I'd like some liver and onions for supper." He replaced the shaving items, locked the cabinet, knotted a chartreuse tie.

"Liver an' onions--" she cried her disappointment, almost, "--but to-day's Sunday, grocer's closed...I'll do what I kin." Exeunt Flossie.

\*\*\*\*\*

The convertible purred down an asphalt highway with Doctor Miller deftly handling the wheel. Beautiful country, this, and there were six river trout on the back seat. He paused, slowing through Maryland's La Plata, and wondered if the redhead were in town. Probably at dinner, he mused, and stepped on the gas.

Summertime and country foliage caressed his glance-- the car sped along. Robins and irioles caroled Sunday hymns. He turned left and maneuvered the convertible onto Miller Manor, feathery wisps of willow trees brushing the hood. It was way past four, he decided, noting the silent wristwatch, the glorious pink and gold sunset.

Flossie Turner met him at the oaken door, a strange smile of welcome creasing her face; the look almost told him he was the man of this kingdom. He stepped in. She moved aside, then pointing to the table. The exquisite odor attacked his senses.

Remarkable Flossie, he thought, eating hungrily. Such liver, unusually tender and smothered with home-grown onions---planted by Flossie---while the yams, cauliflower, olive and avocado salad, were delicious unequaled accessories. Flossie stood in front of the many-paned window and watched him steadily.

Maple-paneled walls framed her weird Slavic face; she seemed the epitome of all existence past and present. He knew that something was amiss; Flossie's dead-alive eyes roved the room--some phobia unmentionable and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 20)

# EXPERTING SECOND HAND

JAMES BLISH

When Mr. Iiilllkkk (or Stien, or Tuning, or whatever he's calling himself these days) responded to my article about Venus with a series of positive statements about flying saucers and water vapor, Jerry Bixby of TWS asked me to compose a reply. I sat down to do this in a cheerfully venomous state of mind which faded rapidly as I began to write.

My complaint with Mr. Iiilllkkk, of course, was that he didn't know what he was talking about; and that he had gotten his information from Frank Scully and other sources equally unreliable. It began to grow on me however, that I was about in his position. I had gotten most of my information from books, too -- I am not, God knows, an astronomer -- and how did I know that my books were any better than his?

I satisfied myself on this point eventually, but it was a near thing. The fact of the matter is that the series of articles on the planets very nearly got written with as many little green men and flying saucers in it as Mr. Tuning could have ever wanted. It happend like this:

I had just finished writing "Sword of Xota" for Jerry (while he was still editor of 2CSAN) and was sitting over a pair of Martinis with him one noon near Times Square discussing possible further projects. Several days before, we had had lunch with Ray Gallun, when a small argument developed about surface conditions on Venus; Ray, who knows Mars so well that it's hard to believe he hasn't been there, had maintained that he didn't quite believe the findings of astronomy 1950 about the surface of Venus, and just to be contrary I had taken the opposite tack. Jerry came back to that subject; it seemed to him, he said, that if 'green hell on Venus' was no longer in good order among astronomers, science fiction readers would like to know about it. Why didn't I write a whole series of articles about present day views of the planets? Such a series should find a natural home in Planet Stories, if it could be written colorfully enough.

I still don't know exactly why Jerry picked me for this project, since, as I said, I'm not an astronomer (except an amateur one; I do own a 5" reflector); and up to recently, I had never done any article-writing for a science-fiction magazine; fiction is what I prefer to write. Since I was a biologist for some years before deciding to take up writing full time, I did have some knowledge of scientific method, and I still preserve some curiosity about new developments in several sciences. Of course, any science author worth his space rates follows astronomy at second hand as a matter of course. But had I been Jerry and wanted such a series, I think I would have yelled for Willy Ley, not James Blish.

I wrote one article -- this one on Mercury -- and turned it into Jerry



for approval. I made it as "colorful" as I could without abandoning fact entirely; Jerry liked it.

But Mal Reiss didn't. Mal is one of the gentlest and most civilized human beings in the world, I am convinced, but underneath his soft voice there sounds the iron of the Man Who Knows His Audience. The article series, he said, just didn't shape us as "colorfully" as Planet's readers would require; no BEMs, no breastplates, no .. uh, no color.

So Jerry and I had to retire the project as far as Planet was concerned. My agent (Fred Pohl), however, is an indefatigable man, and ten days later he had sold the idea to Sam Merwin. He did a thorough job as Merwin wanted the articles longer than I had proposed to write them for Jerry, and he wanted more of them. (There are now so many of them that the series will be running in TWS through December of this year.) Merwin also provided the final neat touch with which the series will wind up: why not, he said, stand off from the Earth at a good long astronomical distance, and consider objectively whether or not the Earth is habitable and what kind of critters might live on it?

Sam's requests and suggestions are largely responsible for the fact that the whole series, extensively expanded and illustrated with a long series of charts, drawings and Mt. Wilson photographs, is now due to appear as a book. They also forced me to dive back into the literature in a hurry. For Planet, I had planned to write the articles from my general knowledge of the planets, checking here and there to make sure I wasn't retailing obvious boners; but for Sam's needs, I had to go to the recent literature with a vengeance. Some of the things I found nearly lost me my eyebrows; specialized knowledge of the planets had gone far beyond my acquaintanceship with it in almost every case.

Nevertheless, the articles aren't free of questionable and/or outmoded assumptions by a long shot, as Hal Clement recently pointed out, and I'd be unhappy if any reader took every statement in them as gospel truth. I've tried hard to indicate where 'fact' stops and speculation begins, but for some readers that's not enough (one reader, for instance, took my story "Let the Finder Beware" as an authoritative article on the present state of scientific knowledge about telepathy) some reader think anything that gets into print (even Listerine ads) has to be authoritative, and many can't tell the difference between an article and a story even when both are clearly labelled. And, in some cases, I've offered theory 1948 under the impression that it was theory 1951, simply because I haven't seen every single study published on the planets in the intervening years. I depend upon alert confreres like Clement and Clarke to point this out wherever it happens.

The forthcoming book will be still further researched, of course, but it will probably still contain some errors. That's the fate that lurks around the corner for all second-hand experts. The books, when you come right down to it, are not good enough sources by themselves. Mr. Tun- was clearly naive in quoting Scully as an 'expert' --but he also quoted(ing)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

# ODD IDEA

KILIAN HOUSTON BRUNNER

"Oh Hell!" said Shamus Hoskins. He chucked his pointed cap across the room, broke his expensive ebony-and-ivory wand in three pieces and danced on them. That was the outcome of three years' hard study in his spare time, with every tome on magic and witches from the works of Simon Magus and Michael Psellus down. Now, he had an expensive and useless brazier, ditto wand, ditto robes and hat, ditto apartment - he couldn't think of anyone who'd want to buy it before he fumigated it - ditto very dead cockerel, ditto skull, ditto stuffed alligator, ditto about ninety-four assorted cabalistic items. So --

"Oh hell!" said Shamus. He chucked himself into a chair and miserably contemplated the red chalk pentacles on the floor, the brass lamps filled with sweet oil and the appalling reek of burnt feathers.

"If this hell," said a deep voice, "I've come to the wrong place." He was about seven feet tall and as thin as a poker. His face was pointed, and his clothing, where it wasn't skin-tight, was hanging loose in a wide cloak. He conveyed a simultaneous impression of blackness and redness, and he stank most abominably of sulphur. "But if it is hell," he went on, "It's a new suburb. I've never been here before." He stepped out of the pentacle, glanced appreciatively at the fitments. "Nice place you have here," he added, and sat down.

Shamus Hoskins couldn't believe his eyes. He whispered hoarsely, "Mephistopheles!"

"Sorry!" said the other, helping himself to a handful of coals out of the brazier and swallowing them with relish, "not Mephisto. A good friend of mine, he, so when he heard you calling him up, being engrossed -- well, with a rather charming young vampire with a lakeside house overlooking Phlegethon, to be strictly honest -- he asked me to come on this call, instead of him. I agreed, though I never answered a call here before. I usually keep the Sirius run."

"You mean there are devil-worshippers on Sirius too?" exclaimed Shamus, poyeyed.

The visiting demon offered him a coal, said, when he refused it, "No? Well, I can't say I blame you. Coal's not up to much -- not a patch on the stuff we get in hell. Now there's a coal with a bouquet, a body, a -- a je ne sais quoi -- oh yes, there are devil-worshippers on one of the planets of Sirius. What can I do for you, by the way, or did you call me up to have a chat? Those Sirians have no particular desires except conversation. But I haven't had a call in five centuries so I'm expecting a transfer. Something in this area, I shouldn't wonder. Alpha Centauri, maybe, when the intelligent race masters the proper formulae. Odd-looking objects, you men, aren't you?" he broke off to remark.

"You can't talk," Shamus remarked with spirit. He was accepting the demon as a matter of course now. "You look the same yourself."

"Uh-uh," corrected the demon. "My name's Agadzabadzon, by the way -- and don't call me Aggie! No, you see me as your own preconceived idea of a devil. Actually, to myself I am quite different, but not having the same set of sense-perceptions, I can't explain exactly how I differ." The fire in the brazier was getting low. Agadzabadzon added fresh coal and made it burn up with a pinch of sulphur. He sniffed the aroma appreciatively, said, "Keep any qua regia?"

"Methylated spirit?" Shamus ventured. When the demon asked, "What vintage?" he nearly tore his hair, but got up and fetched the jar.

Agadzabadzon sniffed, pronounced it excellent, and knocked back a pint. When he next exhaled, he breathed pale blue flames. "My body temperature is about five hundred centigrade," he apologized, "but I won't harm your chair -- I've an asbestos cloak on. And now -- your request?"

Shamus thought feverishly. Now he'd really gotten his hands on a live demon, he wondered if there was any request he'd rather make more than the one he'd intended to make previously. It seemed the best he could think of, so he said, "I want to find out how I can do nothing for the rest of my life. Ah, dolce far niente!" He began to rhapsodize. Shamus Hoskins was a supremely lazy man, and all his life he had dreamed of doing gorgeously and absolutely NOTHING for evermore.

The demon was regarding him curiously. "What does that one mean?" he demanded. "I was only conditioned to English this trip, with a few posh foreign phrases for good measure. Quit the Iti and explain."

"It means 'it is sweet to do nothing'," Shamus translated off-handedly for outside of 'a rivederci' it was the limit of his Italian, but the demon seemed impressed.

"Do you mean that?" he said. "Does that go for the whole of your extraordinary race? Do you all want to do nothing, or are you a freak?"

Nettled, Shamus Hoskins said, "I guess so. I guess it's everybody's desire to do nothing most of their lives."

"Good Belzebub!" said Agadzabadzon. "Well, I can fix that easy enough. Thanks for the meths, by the way, though your coal's pretty poor. I won't be seeing you again. Auf nimmersheen!"

And he turned on a deep freeze paralysis for the whole of the human race.

Then he mused for a while on the extraordinary paradox of a race wanting to do nothing, and went back to hell, still puzzled.



# FANZINES: A PERSONAL OPINION

## EDWARD WOOD

The present unsatisfactory condition of the fan magazine field can be laid to the acquisition of slovenly and reprehensible mental attitudes. Instead of a sober and serious demeanor toward science fiction, needed by fandom today, there is the all too common idea, that the whole thing is a joke and thus fandom becomes the object of ridicule.

This, in itself is unimportant, but fandom by giving itself a bad name gives science fiction a bad name. Fandom is in serious jeopardy of losing the invaluable contacts with the professional magazines which so many fan magazines have abused. The recent episode reported by Rog Phillips in the "Club House" (Amazing Stories, December 1951) shows that there are ~~some~~ people who refuse to accept the "Oh, it's all fun, you know!" attitude.

The average fan publisher and/or editor puts out a fan magazine of sorts and is lucky if he gets back a quarter of his investment. Then he gets to the red ink and proudly proclaims a seventy-five percent loss. Yet in dealing with a hobby, it is difficult to speak of "loss." One pays for entertainment these days. Home movies, stamp collecting, model building, etc., would all cost him money. But the fan, usually not a bookkeeper of intangibles, looks upon his vicarious fun as a "loss."

Some fan magazines have the attitude that they are above criticism and should be praised because the editor was energetic enough to turn out an issue. The editor, perhaps young in the ways of the world would do better to expect to be trammelled by the vindictive critics in which fandom abounds. To expect otherwise is in a way, hypocritical, for if the fan field can dish out criticism regarding all aspects of the professional field, then the reverse must also be true. The Immortal Storm by Sam Moskowitz amply accounts the all too numerous faltering of fan magazines after a few issues, due to the lamentable support which has come to be an accepted part of fandom.

A number of fan magazines go in for humor in large doses. Their prevailing conception of humor is that of burlesque, heavy-handed parody, the yak-yak. Such qualities as irony, pathos, subtly, as exemplified by Chaplin, Keaton, and Fields are never touched by these humor champions. There is a hierarchy of humor and it is regrettable that only the lower most levels are expounded by the fan magazines.

Value of content, not beauty of form should be the important object of fan magazines. However, some have considered this a license to put out indescribably crude magazines. Illegible, poorly produced, these publications indicate an almost incredible contempt of the people expected to read (or even buy!) them. Let the amateur publisher practice at his own expense to master the techniques of his medium. If his first efforts are poor, let him for the sake of his own reputation, learn from his mistakes.

# A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

from  
Dave  
Mason

The statement recently found in a well-known fanzine that Soviet life contains no stf literature; that there are no stf mags in the USSR; is typical of the bourgeois myths in currency in the Western World. Having recently made translations of some of the leading stf in the USSR, and conducted a course in the same for the Jefferson School of Marxist Studies, I feel that American fandom should know the facts.

I have before me three recent issues of three of the more widely circulated Soviet stf mags: Novy Komsolok Scientificktash (Novkosif for short), Uny-  
arokolikmov, and Skashayak Krokodil, The Young Comm-  
unist's Sciencefiction, Wonderful Tales, and a scientific fiction supplement to the humor magazine, Krokodil. With a total net circulation well into the hundred thousands, trimmed edges, and three color illustrations, these magazines stand comparison with American pulps easily.

Nor is the story content less extensive or exciting than American mags. The lead story in the first of these magazines, "Trouble on Titan", deals with the thrilling adventures of a young lady tractor driver who goes to Titan to establish a collective farm among the natives. In the second magazine, which specializes more in off-trail material of a fantastic nature, the lead yarn is called "Kolkhoz in the Stars" and deals with the adventures of a young lady tractor driver to establish a collective farm among the inhabitants of the Fourth Dimension. And the Krokodil supplement contains an extremely humorous story about how a young lady tractor driver succeeds in poisoning the last Trotskyite left alive, who is leading a Martian invasion of Martian Trotskyite Fascists in the year 1990.

These covers, printed in twenty-two colors, depict first, Stalin rescuing a young lady tractor driver from a Titanian native; second, Stalin's discovery of the Fourth Dimension, and third, a young lady tractor driver in the grip of a BEM who looks like Trotsky, but who is about to be shot by a spacesuited figure smoking a hooky pipe.

Excerpts from my translations will shortly be published by the Daily Worker, in serial form, and later, will be available as an anthology. I hope fans everywhere will see by this, that slanderous and warmongering cracks like that issued by this reactionary lackey of imperialism who said that bout stf in the USSR are branded as the foul slogans of fascist-social democratic cancerousness that they are. And I hope that this mild criticism will awaken the deluded fool who said that nasty thing to the error of his ways, before we have to take stronger measures and brand him for the Titoist he undoubtedly is.

Sincerely yours,

*Dave Mason*  
DAVE MASON

# STUDIES IN POE

## george wetzel

A curious physical quality -- that of "nightedness" -- overhangs many of Edgar Allan Poe's horror tales, a quality never before aluded to by any Poe scholar. No phrase or metaphor suggestive of "day-lighting", much less of color, does he use in such constructed tales. Personal subjectiveness of the reader will not banish this impression. Such writing is "Rembrantain" prose pictures. This gloom broods over such tales as "Manuscript Found in a Bottle", "The Man of the Crowd", "Fall of the House of Usher" and consistant with the Rembrantian parallel, stares awesomely out from his canvasses in the single ghastly highlight of his climaxes.

Poe was fond of penning cryptic poetry -- "ulalume" is perhaps the best known -- for which literary scholars still ponder the meaning. "The City in the Sea" is a less well known but nevertheless perplexing legacy from him for which he left no clue. This poem, full of words and allusions to the sea, has simultaneous words and expressions in the minority relating to the sky.

By a coincidence I once read it through, stressing the "sky" allusions, and discovered what in my opinion was the key to interpreting it, for it seems obvious now to me, though questionable by some others, that Poe was painting an impression of a sunset in terms of sea expressions. To make his sunset literal and obvious would have perhaps destroyed for himself the beauty of the thing. Instead he resorted to subtlety so that the reader is left with a sense of a meaningful thing

hidden in the depths of Poe's surface expression.

It is a truly remarkable fantasy, especially the wondrous picture of clouds that are "the strange city lying, alone, far down under the dim West" and the line "light from out the lurid sea, streams up the turrets silently" should clearly recall to many minds similar personal views of sunset. But it is the master's touch that calls up the pain of a drug habitue on seeing "that city sinking in the west that Hell will do reverence."

Poe's indebtedness to E. T. A. Hoffman has long before been shown, but Poe's borrowing from Washington Irving and Alain Rene le Sage has never, to my knowledge, heretofore been suggested.

Taking Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and reading its opening paragraphs and comparing them with the following quotation from Irving's "Westminister Abbey" one is struck by the similarity immediately:

"One of those sober and rather melancholy days, in the latter part of autumn, when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together, and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey."

Irving's sketch, like Hoffman's "The Entailed Estate" which also was copied by Poe into his work, was published before Poe's tale. Poe himself admitted familiarity with the various writings of Irving -- the images, the mood and even the sentence rhythms of the opening of both Poe's tale and Irving's



sketch are too obvious to argue.

Then, there is Poe's "The Man Who Was All Used Up". Compare this quotation from le Sage's "Asmodeus, or The Devil on Two Sticks" with the Poe tale just named:

"... the other is a gallant sexagrmarian, who has just returned from a love campaign. He has already closed one eye

in his case, and placed his whiskers and peruke on the dressing table. His valet is easing him of an arm and one leg, to put him to bed with the rest."

Here again, there are obvious similarities existing that suggest where Poe received some of his inspiration for his tale.

- o -

#### EXPERTING SECOND HAND

(continued)

Lowell, and a better astronomer than Lowell never walked the Earth. How was Mr. Tuning to know that Lowell was often wrong? And by the same token how am I to find out where Kuiper, 1951's number one expert on the planets may be found wrong tomorrow?

One thing is sure: I'm never going to detect any error in Kuiper's work though my 5" telescope. The telescope shows me some magnificent sights, but it isn't big enough to allow me to do planetary research. I'm going to have to take the word of Kuiper until some professional astronomer with a telescope as big as Kuiper's (and without the need to run a trade paper for a living) tells me that Kuiper was wrong on point X or point N. Then I'll take his word for it, though I may go through my file of Mts. Wilson and Palomar photos before I'm convinced, or decided to disagree.

In the long run, the difference between someone like Mr. Tuning and someone like me on a question like this boils down to which first-hand experts you accept. Mr. Tuning accepts Scully, who is himself only about a 16th-hand "expert" with a weakness for political gossip. I like my experts a little closer to the telescope and a little farther from mentioning the Pentagon or the Republicans every fifth word.

But I could have written the articles for Mal with the BEAMS, the breast-plates, the flying saucers and the little green men all included--like the back covers of the old Ziff-Davis Amazing. Mal would have bought them in that shape, and furthermore, they would have found book publication that way too; one of the fantasy book houses owns the reprint rights to those Amazing back covers, and wanted to publish my articles with the Amazing back covers as illustrations. I wouldn't write them that way; and I wouldn't let them be published with those back covers. As a second-hand expert I owe that debt to my primary sources; I'll be responsible for my own mistakes, but not for anybody's else's.

But don't believe a word I say. Check. You can be as good a second-hand expert as I; the books are there for everyone to read. You need to know only where to find them. If you're thorough, you'll wind up knowing a hell of a lot more about the planets than I do!

# LIFE WITH FODDER

LEN J. MOFFATT

A Combined Play and Novel, Condensed to Watchpocket Size

I was drinking beer, as usual. Well, no. Not as usual. Not that it is unusual for me to be drinking beer. But I don't want people to get the impression that I drink beer all of the time. After all, I do drink other things. Coffee, tea, milk, brandy, scotch... When I can afford them.

My wife doesn't care for beer. She doesn't even like the smell of beer. But, oddy enough, she likes the smell of beer on MY breath. In fact, she finds my beer breath irristible. Maybe it's the combination of the corn and the hops.

Let's get back to the plot. I was drinking beer, and--as is usually the case--(well, it was only about a quarter of a case) my good friend and Upper Katchlekicklekalkanese opera star, Pietro J. Pistachio arrived on the scene.

The scene, incidently, was Len's Den, the Moffatt House, Bell Gardens, California, Somewhere In The U. S. A.

"Halla, amigo!" said Pistachio. "Glad to see you up bright and beery. No, I really don't care for any at this hour..."

"It's three o'clock in the afternoon," I replied. "So have a can. You will anyway."

"Obligato," said Pistachio, biting open a can and draining same.

"Obligato?"

"Yes. Musical pun meaning thenx. What's news, my friend?"

"It's a new year." I said. "Has been for some time. Celebrated it with the Riddles."

"The whoses?"

"Riddles," I said, "Charles Lee and wife, and two sons.."

"Never heard of 'em." muttered Pistachio. "Must be fans."

"Uh-huh. And a baby."

"How old the baby?"

"I dunno. It was about yay long."

"Not a very long yay." observed Pistachio, biting into his third can.

"Well, it was a baby, anyway. Boy type. Say, Pietro, did you ever see a baby (whisper, whisper) in its own face?"

"Can't say that I have. Why?"

"Well...oh, never mind. You know, the Riddles are fine people. They arrived about nine PM New Year's Eve. Told them about the party the fans were giving over on Baxter Street. So we drove over there. Left the kids with Mother of course."

"Where's Baxter Street?"

"Oh, I dunno. Somewhere in L.A. All sorts of people there. Fans, some not fans, I guess. Some drunk. Others sober. Everybody yakking. Boys chasing girls. Girls chasing boys. Beer. Brandy. Whiskey. Riot."

"Anybody I know was there?" asked Pistachio, wistfully.

"Yeah. Sneary, The Grahams, Freddie and Hal Curtis, Taylor, Pederson and so on. Thing broke up sometime after midnight, after having sang and well-wished the New Year in."

"Fans singing 'Auld Lang Syne'?"

"Sure. Why not? Fans are people, too. I tried to sing it in Japanese, but I've forgotten the lyrics."

"Where's Anna?" asked Pistachio, trying to change the subject. He disliked discussing parties at which he was not present.

"Anna? Oh, she's sitting in the kitchen with an ashtray on her head."

"Your wife is sitting in the kitchen with an ashtray on her head?"

"Yeah, she always sits in the kitchen with an ashtray on her head when I make a very bad pun. Sometimes when I make a very good pun."

"Oh."

"Yes. Well, to go on about the Riddle's visit. We bedded them down here for the night---after we got home from the party. Up early the next AM--the kids insisted, you know--and Lee went out several times to make phone calls, arrange to have some clothes washed at a nearby laundermat,, and so on...."

(Music played backwards to indicate going back in time and a change in scene.)



Charles Lee Riddle (into phone): Hell! This is Lee Riddle. Is this Francis T. Laney?

Phone (angry voice): What in hell's the idea gettin' me outa bed at this time in the morning?

Charles Lee Riddle: Happy New Year. (Hangs up receiver and retreats.)

(Music played backward to indicate returning to present time. Was going to pay the record forward, but it happens to be one of the current "Hit Tunes" and it sounds better backward.)

"So what happens next?" asked Pistachio, wearily. The beer still held his interest.

"Well, the Riddles found a motel and stowed their luggage there. (They were enroute from Honolulu to New York, you know.) Then we visited with the Grahams and the Ackermans. Nice folks, the Riddle family. Paid for the Moffatt's dinner that night. They left the next AM, heading east..."

Pistachio eyed the empty cans. "I must depart now also," he said.

"But I haven't finished," I replied. "I haven't told you of how Riddle wrote me from Texas, inquiring about the pants to his Chief's uniform. Thought he'd lost 'em. Actually, he had packed them in his wife's suitcase, thinking they were her slacks, or something...and so I wrote him a very punny letter which...."

"I have to exit," grunted Pistachio. "Some other time, mabbe. O Diablo! It's raining outside, now."

"That reminds me of a story a fellow told me today. At work, He and I exchange puns occasionally."

"Ummm. Raining pretty hard."

"Yes. Sit down, Pietro. It seems in olden times a certain prince fell heir to the kingdom and turned out to be a real stinker of a king. This kingdom was famous for its game preserves and before this, the hunting season and game laws had been strictly enforced and observed. But this wastrel king hunted when he felt like it, which was often and encouraged others to do the same. He shot sitting birds. He killed every animal and fowl that came within range, regardless of what season it was, and so on. The nobles of the land--being true blood sportsmen--hated the king and finally brought enough pressure to bear to cause his abdication. On the day of his majesty's stepping down, the nobles assembled before the royal palace, carrying a big banner, which read: "Reign called on account of game..."

"I think it's letting up a little. Have to get home anyway. Vranduskii is expecting me to fix refried beans this evening. Hopla, amigo..."

Exit Pistachio. I sat there frowning at the empty cans. I had emptied two of them. The others... Oh well, he's a terrific tenor-bass.

"Not a very long yay." observed Pistachio, biting into his third can.

"Well, it was a baby, anyway. Boy type. Say, Pietro, did you ever see a baby (whisper, whisper) in its own face?"

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"Well, the Riddles found a motel and stowed their luggage there. (They were enroute from Honolulu to New York, you know.) Then we visited with the Grahams and the Ackermans. Nice folks, the Riddle family. Paid for the Moffatt's dinner that night. They left the next AM, heading east..."

Pistachio eyed the empty cans. "I must depart now also," he said.

"But I haven't finished," I replied. "I haven't told you of how Riddle wrote me from Texas, inquiring about the pants to his Chief's uniform. Thought he'd lost 'em. Actually, he had packed them in his wife's suitcase, thinking they were her slacks, or something...and so I wrote him a very punny letter which...."

"I have to exit," grunted Pistachio. "Some other time, maybe. O Diablo! It's raining outside, now."

"That reminds me of a story a fellow told me today. At work. He and I exchange puns occasionally."

"Ummm. Raining pretty hard."

"Yes. Sit down, Pietro. It seems in olden times a certain prince fell heir to the kingdom and turned out to be a real stinker of a king. This kingdom was famous for its game preserves and before this, the hunting season and game laws had been strictly enforced and observed. But this wastrel king hunted when he felt like it, which was often and encouraged others to do the same. He shot sitting birds. He killed every animal and fowl that came within range, regardless of what season it was, and so on. The nobles of the land--being true blood sportsmen--hated the king and finally brought enough pressure to bear to cause his abdication. On the day of his majesty's stepping down, the nobles assembled before the royal palace, carrying a big banner, which read: "Reign called on account of game..."

"I think it's letting up a little. Have to get home anyway. Vranduskii is expecting me to fix refried beans this evening. Hopla, amigo..."

Exit Pistachio. I sat there frowning at the empty cans. I had emptied two of them. The others... Oh well, he's a terrific tenor-bass.



28

Enter my lovely wife, Anna. Sans ashtray.

"Dear," I said. "Have I told you the story Joe was telling me at work today...about the king who...."

"I heard it, darling," said Anna. "I shouldn't complain, though. At least puns are better than most dirty jokes. Of course it depends on the joke and on the pun."

I brightened. "Then you think that--generally speaking--a pun is a more effective form of humor than a filthy story?"

"Yes...."

"In short, you think the pun is mightier than the sordid?"

"Sweetheart."

"Yes?"

"Pass the ashtray. No, no...not that little one. The BIG one!"

"But the big one will fall off your head, silly. Oh....oh?...OH! Wait, dear, I'll get a basin....."

## FANTASIOFF

terry carr

### DOARWAYS TO DOUGH:::

A writer by the name of Graham Doar seems to have made quite a partel over hisstory, "The Outer Limit".. Though it is his first. published story, it saw print first in the Saturday Evening Post, then was heard over the air (Dimension X), then finally was broadcast by T.V. (Out There). When you figure that the Post must've paid about a thousand smackers for the yarn in the first place, you get an idea of what I mean. More on Doar: After selling initially to the Post, where does Doar wind up next? Amazing Stories, no less.

### IDLE THOTS:::

Avon Publications is publishing a lot of the workd of A. Merritt lately, as many of you have undoubtedly noticed! Maybe you'll remember they also pubbed a lot of them in Murder Mystery Monthly editions, some years ago. Those were the days.... A h yes, Don Wollheim thought he was a better writer than Merritt, even so much better that he rehashed the Merrittales for M.M.M. publication. Now, however, in these new editions you'll find the words "Complete & Unabridged" on them. I wonder if Wollheim means "complete & unabridged" from the M.M.M. editions....

STARTLING  
EXPOSE:::

A lot of the Mack Reynolds-Frederic Brown stories that have appeared were not actually written by the Two from Taos. For instance, "The Switcheroo", in Other Worlds. That was started by Reynolds, and handed over to Walt Sheldon, who did the middle, then Brown did the end. They did a couple more that way, sending them out under Sheldon's

name, or as collaborations betwixt Reynolds and Brown. Finally, Sheldon quit for some reason, and the chain was busted.

ADD  
INFINITEMS:::

In the February Thrilling Wonder Stories, there's a yarn by Walt Sheldon called "The Star Minstrel" which I nominate as the poor man's "Green Hills of Earth."

NOMINAL NOMINATIONS

"The time has come," said the makron to the bem,  
"To speak of many things --  
"Of Merwins, Brownes, and Palmers,  
"And Gnaedingers and Hamlings.

"To nominate the yarns we like  
"And pan the ones we hated;  
"To drink our fill of writers' blood  
"Until our thirst is sated.

"First off, I think I'll nominate  
"The things I thought were really great.  
"Best story--"Iceworld", by that gent  
"Who calls himself Hal Clement,

"Best cover--Startling for November.  
"That one we will all remember.

"For writing yarns that made me dance,  
"Best author of the year--Jack Vance.

"For 'best new author', guess who'll win--  
"Why yes, of course, it's Wyman Guinn.

"For painting covers very well,  
"Best artist of the year--Bonnestell.

"Best magazine was Galaxy,  
"Best fanzine of the year--QUANDRY.

"Since it's the holidays, you know,  
"I'll simply let the bad ones go;  
"And hope that they'll not happen more--  
"Cause if they do, we'll all get sore!"

# THOUGHTS WHILE STROLLING

E. HOFFMAN PRICE

I recently received a letter from a veteran science fiction author of some note, in which he said, "...the wife and I both read and really liked that novelet of yours in Planet about the chap who came back from Venus to an atom-war-ravaged earth. I wish you'd turn out a lot of such stuff. My God, look at the crud they run--and that yarn and your shorter one in Thrilling Wonder were really crisp, first-rate stuff. I think you know by now that I try to be reasonably honest in speaking of stories, and we really think you're good at s-f and ought to plunge in and capitalize..."

That Thrilling Wonder yarn is probably the one wherein a guy is separated from his lady friend by the conniving of a rival, who boosts him into a fourth dimensional enclave, where the quantum constant is unity.

Anyway, I got one cent a word for that one, and am tearfully grateful. The yarn had been kicked around by various master minds of the editorial profession. Their objections are a classic. One genius said that the story wasn't "important enough". "Now, if the fourth dimensional people had menaced the world, ... well, even only the United States, it'd be different, but nothing was menaced except the hero..."

I have just sold my last science fiction novelette---I mean, the one last written, that is---in February 1951. Columbia bought the 12,500 jewelled words, for \$105, after everyone else had booted script around. If THAT is an idea of plunging in and capitalizing, I shall apply for a job at the Leland Stanford High School, as a janitor, which is infinitely more remunerative than writing at the rate I've cited, and waiting more than a year for the encounter with the genius who recognizes genius, and rewards it so richly.

On hand is a yarn of like length, give or take a thousand, "Mutineers of the Asteroid." A 1950 yarn, still begging. I'm not complaining. People buy what they want to buy.. I merely submit a few facts that while the team referred to in the first paragraph are good judges of s-f (he at least sells his stuff), his criteria doesn't seem to apply where I am concerned. I treasure his kind words, which I can, after discounting them by perhaps 30% to 50%, still consider high praise and generous appreciation, generously expressed. Some chap in England wrote comparable words, though from the fan viewpoint.

I have just sent out an 80 page sample and synopsis of a whodunit for the crime pocket novel trade. I devoted 1951 to mastering that technique, and December 24th, got the final installment of the \$500 advance royalty. As profitable as s-f, and, a theoretical chance of a bit of additional royalty....and a chance of sales, eventually, in the topflight pocket editions, which advance \$1500 or \$2000 or so, with a print order of 200,000-300,000, and royalties at better than one cent a copy. So I recanvass



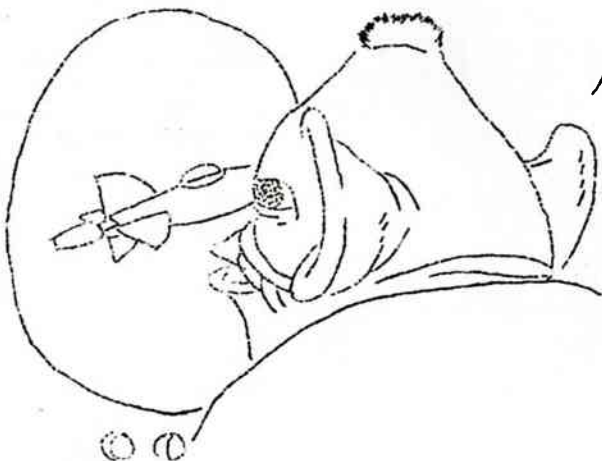
the mags who publish 20,000 to 55,000 word crime novels, and the s-f field will have to get along without me. It does, you know.

On my return from a recent trip to Los Angeles--my first in four years actually--I saw Hugh Rankin, who used to illustrate Weird Tales and did the cover for Infidel's Daughter (1927), and others--I found a heap of astrological work awaiting my attention. Six horoscope jobs @ \$25 apiece, and then a problem case, just an interview, nothing to write. Merely strok the long white beard and render judgment from the chart.

I pinpointed that case, giving the other member of the conference (female), an accurate history of her past, back to 1907. A bit of showmanship to prepare for the judgment about to be delivered. Also, a way of checking the horoscope to make sure I had received accurate data. It was manifestly that woman's history and no other's, so I knew I was on firm ground.

Far more profitable than s-f and far more interesting. I don't expect astrology to continue at the pace just set, though I do expect other bits of business during the year. And, I'll do a bit of private advertising, here and there, to keep things moving. Be a long time before I can dispense with writing fiction entirely.

Meanwhile, hordes of admirers babble gleefully about my occasional bits of science fiction, but the stuff moves very slowly. The admirers are very poor judges, and the editors know better, and chaps like Columbia put up with my offerings because they know they can get the stuff at cut-rates--and that everyone else has rejected it. Apparently I do not conform to the abracadabra, the shibboleths and the traditions. Wherefore I get applause from the readers; and much as I value it, they don't consider it negotiable at the bank.



MOVING SOON?

O R --

If you have moved already,  
please send us your new  
address, so future PEON's  
will reach you promptly.

# THE FAN PRESS

Reviewed by the Editor

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** I seem to have lost contact with Al Nebi, since my transfer from sunny Hawaii. The last time I saw him was just before I sailed, when I gave him a big batch of fanzines to review for PEON. Evidently his mind snapped under the burden of reading all those fanzines, for nothing has come from him since!....Then I asked Helen Wesson down in Long Island to do the reviews this issue for me, and when she agreed, gave her another big batch. Now, she's on the way to Japan with her husband, so, no fanzine review from her either...So, evidently, it's up to me personally to try to review what fanzines I have on hand. I admit right off the start that I'm not half as good as Al or Helen, but the fanzines listed below do merit some bit of attention from you. I recommend them all to the readers of PEON....Does anyone want to do fanzine reviews for PEON? If so, please let me know at once.....

STRAIGHT UP, Fred J. Robinson, 37 Willows Avenue, Tremorfa, Cardiff, South Wales, England. Six issues for one American pro magazine in good condition. A new fanzine recently issued by a section of British fandom, and one that deserves your support. If you want the latest on what's happening in British and overseas fandom, along with the news of the pro world over there, then this is your dish. Issued monthly, this zine even includes a gossip column by yours truly. When you send your pro mag for your subscription, how's about sending them one of the 35¢ prozines instead of unloading your Amazing and Fantastic Adventures duplicates off on them?

SLUDGE, Bob Foster, 2 Spring Gardens, Southwick, Sussex, England. 20¢ per copy, or one issue of a current American promag. This is a printed zine, and while not up to the big standards set by SLANT for printed fanzines, I think the asking price is well worth it. It's filled with mighty interesting matter, typical of the British type of fan humor we have come to expect. The remarks about sending Amazing or FA above apply here also.

PENDULUM, Bill Venable, 610 Park Place, Pittsburgh 9, Penna. 15¢ per copy. This is a new venture of Fanvariety Enterprises (organized and directed by Bill and also Max Keasler), and promises to be one

worth-while comer. I admire especially the two-color work done on the index page of the first issue. One question, though. PENDULUM is published bi-monthly and single copies are 15¢ each; but a year's sub will cost you one buck. Doesn't quite figure out, does it?

RANDOM NOTES:::When is another issue of SLANT due, Walt Willis?...Is it true that Lee Hoffman is about ready to quit publishing QUANDRY after establishing such a good record? The editorial in the 19th issue seems to have a note of pessimism in it along with previous editorials. Stick with us, Lee, and don't give up so easily--or is it just spring fever---or, WHO IS HE?.....Aloha!...

## PEON NOTES

(continued from page 2)

of fans in the Los Angeles area. We also had a brief chat and visit with Darrel C. Richardson in Covington, Kentucky. I know we saw more fans than this, but these stand out in my memory, for about all I can remember of the trip is the money I shelled out on the car. My advice to anyone who attempts to drive across country is that if your plans call for a drive through Texas, be sure to take along a spare car with you. You never realize how big that state is until you break down between towns, with the nearest one about 75 miles away. And on a Sunday also. My hat is off, though, to their state police, who were very courteous and helpful in getting the car towed to the nearest repair station.

-0-

I had originally planned to present you with a fifty or sixty page fourth anniversary issue of PEON, but as usual, what with my transfers, etc., my plans had to be set aside. However, as we usually try to do, PEON brings you about the best there is in the fan and pro field of authors this issue and I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. Some of these days, I'm going to sit down and write out the story of PEON--it's birth, growing pains, etc. It's been a grand time these past four years in putting out PEON, and I hope to be here for that many and then some more!.....In the past four years, I've never been able to adhere to a regular publication schedule. Actually, for a fanzine editor in the service, it's practically impossible anyway. I've announced several schedules in these past 22 issue---bi-monthly, monthly, eight times a year, quarterly, and now, if you will notice on page one, PEON is going on an announced irregular schedule. I might as well, for it's been nothing but irregular the past year, anyway. We'll be out at least four times a year, and might even surprise you with more than that. At any rate, if you'd like to subscribe to PEON, our subscription rate remains at nine issues for one dollar, regardless of how long it takes to complete the contracted amount.

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My fellow fanzine editors will be saddened as I was to learn of the death of Whipple McClay of Hollywood, who was the editor-in-chief of GALLEY, one of the best aids that a fanzine editor could have. Due to his sudden death, the future plans of GALLEY, which was to be combined with PREVIEW, are rather indefinite, but his staff will inform all concerned of the new plans in the near future.

-0-

I'd like to add my recommendation to the plan proposed by several fans to bring Walt Willis of Ireland fame to the convention in Chicago this year. The amount necessary to bring him over by ship is estimated to be around \$540.00. Now, we all know that no one can spare that entire amount, so that is why we are asking for any contributions you can spare, 25¢, 50¢, \$1.00 or more. If you can spare \$2.50, you will have a chance to win a beautiful A.B.Dick Model 96 Electric Mimeograph Machine, well worth over \$250.00. This is the machine that was used to reproduce Manly Bannister's Beautiful fanzine, and if you have seen a copy of that 'zine, you will know what I mean. The cause is a good one, and I sincerely urge you to



support it. Your contribution can be sent to Shelby Vick, P. O. Box 493, Lynn Haven, Florida....and in the event that you haven't joined the convention committee yet, your dollar should go to Bea Mahaffey, S. F. Con., Box 1422, Chicago 90, Illinois. PEON is planning on being there, and we hope to see you there, too!

-O-

A new fan club that has recently been organized down in Missouri should be of interest to the social-minded fan. To give you a better story on it, I will quote in part from a letter from one of the organizers: "...to announce formation of the Bachelor's StF Association of the World. The BSAW is Fandom's Fun Organization. We are composed of the social type critter in fandom and dedicated to the proposition that the primary reason for man being man is that he may enjoy himself. There are no limitations to membership due to sex, marital status, race, religion or lack of any or all. There are also no dues outside of a 25¢ initial fee to cover cost of cards and bulletins. We are aimed at organizing and maintaining a chapter in every major and minor city of the world so that traveling fen will have social contacts wherever they go. Primary purpose, however, is to hold social gatherings of individual chapters. There are no officers outside of the board of directors..." Further information can be obtained from Sgt. Hal Shapiro, 790th AC/W Squadron, Kirksville, Missouri, if you are interested.

-O-

Since this is being written after this issue of PEON is practically done, I can see some of the mistakes that have cropped up in the typing. The majority of this issue was put on stencil while your editor was trying to stay alive and out of bed. Evidently, I had an attack of virus, but with the help of the navy doctors, managed to get to the office every day, but my work sure suffered during that period. Also, we have been attempting to master a new type of mimeograph machine, the Gestner Mimeograph, which uses an entirely new type of duplicating from any of the American machines. Our thanks go out to Eli Landau, who has been very patiently teaching us, and thanks in advance to John Ring who is to help assemble this issue of PEON. Both are science fiction fans, natch, or they would not take the time to help get this issue of PEON in the mail. Incidentally if any of your readers correspond with, or know of any, fans in the state of Connecticut, please send their name and address to me. There are several of us around here who are trying to form a state-wide club, and would like to contact any and all fans residing in the state. We'd certainly appreciate your help.

-O-

This about winds up this fourth anniversary issue of PEON. The next issue will feature a thought-provoking article by Dave Mason among other things, and we hope to have our regular columnists, T. E. Watkins and Jim Harmon, back with us and alongside our new columnist, Terry Carr. The next issue should be out, if things go as they are planned, sometime in July. Deadline for any material that would care to send for possible publication in PEON is June 15th. Don't forget to enter the contest announced on page nine of this issue....Until the next time, then, happy reading!

Lee

