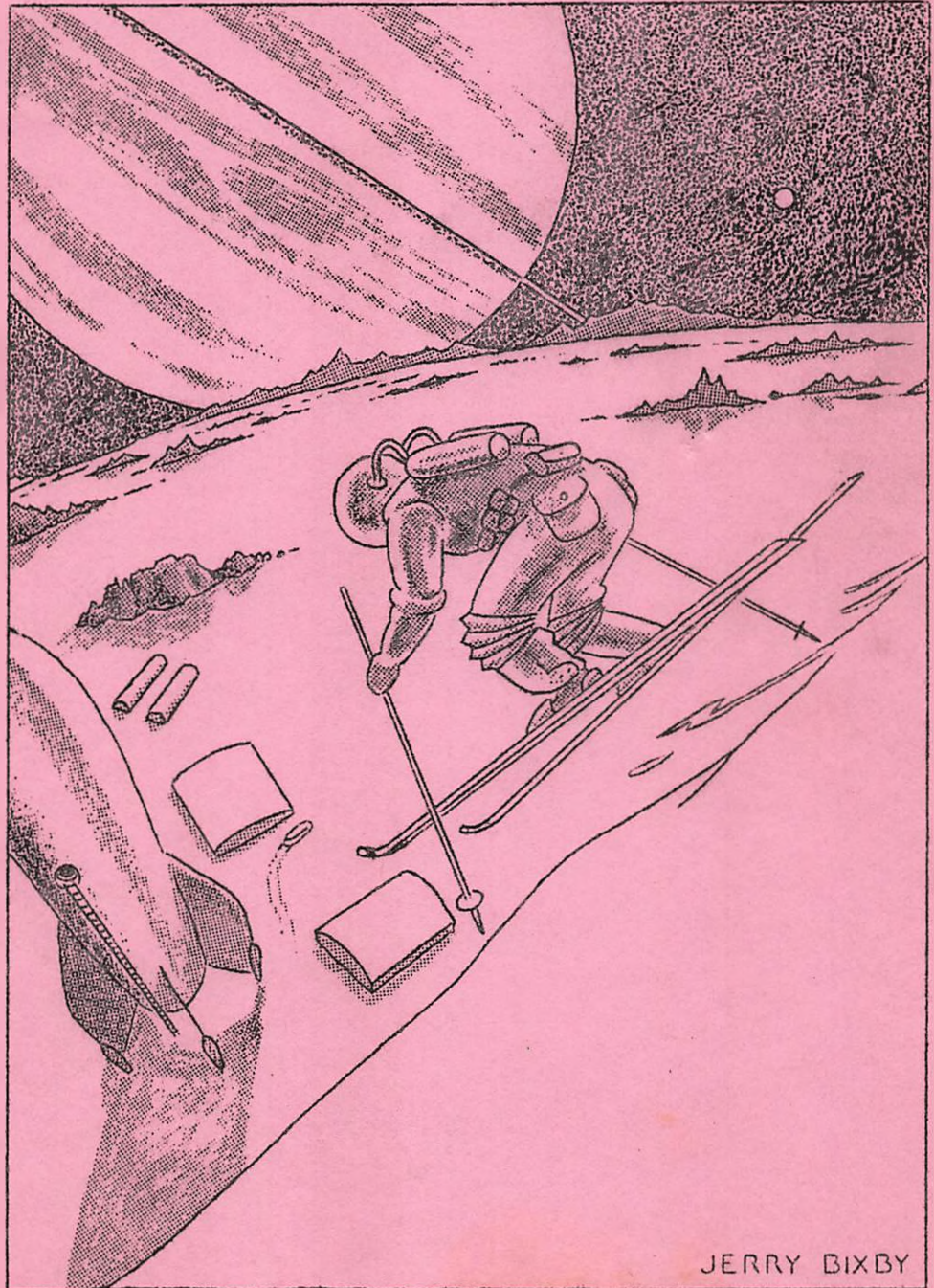


PEON

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1954



JERRY BIXBY

IN MEMORY OF
DICK CLARKSON

It is with deep and sincere regret that I have to announce the death of one of my best friends, Dick Clarkson. Dick died in a Baltimore hospital on the 13th of December, from a cancer of the leg. Most of you will remember, from his columns in PEON, that he has been having operations to correct a bad situation in his leg, and in the middle of November, Dick left Harvard to return to Baltimore for further surgery. He died less than a month later.

We're going to miss Dick Clarkson. He was a nice guy to know, a grand person to talk with, and a swell fan. Fandom will be just a little less nice now that he's not around with us all.

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THE TENTH OF FEBRUARY



DAVE MASON

"Excuse me, but could you tell me the date?"

"It's February 9th," I said. "For an hour or two more, anyway."

I looked down at him. I couldn't see him too well; I was a little bit drunk, and the street was dark. But he looked odd. He was young, but his hair was definitely white; and his clothes looked like a costume.

"I know," I said. "You're a time-traveller."

"As a matter of fact, you're quite right." He peered at me. "But tell me, how'd you know?"

"I read science fiction," I said. "If I were entirely sober, I would not have admitted it, though. I wouldn't know what you were, either. What year you from, chum?"

"Several hundred thousand years from this time." He said it quite soberly. It was easy to believe him.

"Any special reason for a visit?"

"Oh, of course." He glanced nervously at the sky. "But I'm afraid I'm off in my timing, a little."

"Well, what reason?"

"There's going to be a war. A big one. Most of the human race are going to be wiped out."

It was rather anti-climactic.

I nodded. "We know, we know."

"You know? And yet you stay -- here?"

"No place else I can make a living, friend."

"I see." We had come under a street lamp, and he looked up at me with those odd, green blue eyes. They glittered.

"You believe me, don't you? Yes, I see you do."

"Of course I do. Not many would, though. I'm a special case. Tell me, though, when is this blow-off supposed to happen?"

"On the tenth of February. Tomorrow."

That cooled me a little. "Tomorrow." I said flatly. "Anyway out?"

"I'm afraid not."

We continued to walk, but I speeded up. The little man trotting beside me consulted a notebook.

"Your name wouldn't be Kevin Foley, would it?"

"Yes." I said, thinking hard.

"Good. Then my timing wasn't so far off. I'm supposed to meet you here at 11 P.M. and apparently I did."

"Me? Why me?"

"Because you're important."

I nodded. "I am. Damned important. To me. Do you know where we're going?"

"To your house." the little man said. "You'll pack up some clothes and get in your car and run away."

"How did you know? Am I in the history books or something?"

"No. Not a word about you personally. It's just that - well, everybody did that."

"I've got a head start."

"That's right."

We were there. I unlocked the front door. I live alone. There's nobody I give a damn about. Let them all fry. Except Cleo.

Cleo got up from her cushion when I switched on the living room lights; she came toward me with the lovely, flowing walk, and rubbed against my leg. Cleo is a white Persian.

The little man had followed me inside, and stood looking down at Cleo. He leaned down and scratched her under the chin, which she accepted with haughty dignity.

I looked around the room. Not a damn thing I wanted to carry along. Not a thing that was worth weighing myself down with, at any rate. Ex-

cept for the two bottles of bourbon on the bar, and the Savage .303 on the wall. They went along, naturally.

"Drink, Chum?"

"Yes, thanks." He accepted it, sipped it slowly.

"Least I can do. Big favor, after all." I nodded slowly, thinking about what a big favor it really was. "What is your name, anyway?"

"Name?" He smiled a little. "Our names might be a little strange to you. Call me....Tom."

"You still haven't told me why you came back. Can you alter the past?"

"Not very much. A little, though. I'm back to do just that. One of my ancestors was caught in the bombing. As a matter of fact, this was a sort of common ancestor. All of us are descended from this single ancestor."

"Something happened to her; she survived, but a tiny hereditary flaw was caused. It may make trouble later, when it begins to show up generally."

"You said she?"

"She."

"Then I don't get out alive? It's somebody else?"

"I didn't say that. You might get out alive, if you hurry. Quite a lot of people did."

"They did?" There were things here that I couldn't quite figure. But I wasn't going to waste any more time. I took down the Savage, got out a box of shells, and tucked the full bottle in my pocket.

"Of course. We have dozens of their descendants about. We're really quite fond of them."

He was still petting Cleo, running his hand along her heavy flank. I looked at her, wondering if a prize Persian could manage the kittens she would soon have without a vet. I had an idea a vet would be hard to find.

"But you had better hurry, my friend. Meanwhile, I will make the minor adjustment to history that I must make, and then my own descendants will be free of mange forever. Come, ancestress," he said, and picked up Cleo very gently. His long white tail reached around to his chest and pulled a switch.

I stood and looked at the empty air for almost a full minute. Then, I turned and went out slowly. I was really in no great hurry anymore.

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PRURIENCY ANYONE?

ROBERT BLOCH

To me, the most intriguing item in the last PEON, was the "Book Corner", where Dave Mason points out that "the trouble with stiff characters is of course that they don't have any bowels, literally and figuratively."

I am inclined to agree with him, after reading several thousand space-travel yarns in which nobody goes to the bathroom, even to wash his hands, in endless lightyears of voyaging.

There are, of course, exceptions, and notable ones: McIntosh, Sturgeon, Bradbury, Matheson, in many of their stories; Kuttner, too, and Leiber, (as Mason notes.) And a novel like Tucker's "The Long, Loud Silence" is a realistic character-study of disintegration on the personal level. As a matter of fact, a conscientious researcher (which I am not) could undoubtedly unearth at least a single example of this type of story in the work of most of the prominent practitioners in the field today. The "properly expressed shriek", as Mason so aptly puts it, has emanated at least once from the mouths of the majority of writers. Why don't they continue to howl?

It is my belief that they have been gagged. Stifled, as it were, by the demands of economic necessity.

Mr. Mason cites, as examples of the sort of writing he admires, five titles: "The Journal of Albion Moonlight," "Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer" "Death on the Installment Plan", "Journey to the End of the Night", and "Tropic of Capricorn."

I'm afraid his very citations contain in themselves the answer to his query regarding the comparative infrequency of this type of writing.

Now it so happens that I've read all of the volumes he lists: I own one of the Patchon items and both of the Celine books. From time to time, I recommend them to friends; I've lent them frequently. I've yet to find many who share my personal enthusiasm for the works.

More the point at hand, I am quite certain that the United Book Guild did not declare any dividends on the basis of profits accruing from the publishing of Patchon; that Little, Brown grew no larger through printing Celine, and that Henry Miller's Parisian Press profited on the sale of "Capricorn" and "Cancer", and at least two other titles, solely on the

pornographic aspect of the material.

Let's face it, Dave -- the stuff isn't being written because it just doesn't sell.

How one of the Celine books ever managed to appear in pocketbook form I don't know...but I'm sure that any resultant sales will be based on the alleged pruriency of the material. Another novel in the Celine tradition (Chandler Brossard's "The Bold Saboteurs") is a Dell paperback, and is blurbed, "He roamed the back-street jungles in search of sin." And so it goes.

Introspective writing just doesn't seem to have any appeal. Proust and Joyce have influenced the technique of many modern writers...who promptly discover that they must modify and formularize their own output in order to eat regularly.

For almost twenty years, I have beaten the drums vainly in behalf of Jules Romains' monumental Balzacian series, "Men of Good Will." Knopf issued all 14 volumes, and although one ("Verdun") hit the Book-of-the-Month-Club, Romains never captured the public's fancy. They preferred the soap-opera "realism" of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" or "Whistle Stop." Just as they presently prefer "From Here to Eternity" to "The Naked and the Dead"; they buy "A Rage to Live" rather than "Steppenwolf."

The world is full of crewcuts who talk Kafka and Sartre, but who read "Mary Worth."

It is, to my way of thinking, useless to place blame or assign responsibility. The writer supplies the editor, the editor supplies the publisher, and the publisher supplies the reading public. I, for one, am heartily sick of an all-too-common tendency on the part of critics or reviewers to castigate the writer as a villain who churlishly insists on grinding out inferior material instead of producing masterpieces. I fear it is an acknowledged fact that none of the science-fiction writers I cited earlier in this article could have hoped to live solely on the proceeds of their best work; the sole possible exception being Bradbury, and even he has turned to other media where the moola is greener.

That many writers (science fictional and/or otherwise) are capable of such an output, I have not the faintest doubt. But they must be either crazy and/or subsidized in order to produce it.

For if there is a moral problem facing mankind, as Mason believes, then perhaps it can be summarized thusly: the moral problem facing mankind is that mankind refuses to face a moral problem.

Mankind, collectively, doesn't want to be reminded of the present mess nor admit the possibility of individual responsibility -- either for the mess as it exists, or for a potential solution. Consequently, that portion of mankind which reads science-fiction still eulogizes the Superman

hero. Those who espouse technology prefer him in the guise of an "engineer" or "scientist". Those who are aware of inner psychic conflict prefer the father-image of a "psychotherapist" (often involved in a disguised chase-detective-story which symbolically dramatizes their own neuroses and solves their problems satisfactorily by a final inversion of plot.) Those whose aggressive drives are more simply and naively exposed will settle for the plain, oldstyle space-opera Superman; big, burly, and bloodthirsty at that!

As a counterpoint, one finds an endless succession of short stories and fillers about "just plain folks" who manage to survive in an alien environment, and who triumph over problems and perils of the future by dint of their very "folksiness" -- in the reassuring manner of any soap-opera.

But the theme is science is wonderful and don't be afraid and authority knows best because it has the slide rule.

And that's what most readers demand in this age of inflation, conscription, H-bombs, and rampant social, economic, and military aggression.

The so-called "down-beat" story has always been a literary luxury. And the secret of its success -- even the "proletarian" literature of the depression-years -- lies in its allegedly pornographic content. People didn't buy Erskine Caldwell to lament over the fate of the poor southern sharecroppers; a goodly share of Steinbeck's readers thought they were buying something with "a lot of dirty stuff in it"; Farrell's "Studs Lonigan" was not sought as a sociological study alone. Until the advent of the pocket-books, a surprising majority of citizens in this country were completely unaware that there any books available above the counter which dealt with matters sexual or scatological; they pounced on such specimens with avidity. Thorne Smith, in the '30s, was not read for his humor-- he was purchased by highschool and college students who had heard he wrote "dirty books".

This is an opinion validated by the booksellers I have talked to--the same booksellers who now sadly confess that their market is vanishing in the swirl of pocketbooks.

So today -- without the use of sex as a sales-lure -- the downbeat story is totally taboo. All protest is "communism" anyway. All questioning of status or standard is "egghead."

Thus it is, that although I share Mason's liking for certain types of literary expression, I can also understand why one does not see more of it in science-fiction. And rather than decry its absence, I am inclined to congratulate those few authors and editors and publishers responsible for its infrequent presence. That we find any examples at all today is, to me, heartening in the extreme.

ROOMS AT THE CON --JOHN MAGNUS

At conventions, the activity naturally centers around the rooms of the delegates. They are slept in, gone to, and told about. They are bedecked with used clothing, deprived of fixtures, and soaked with water and more volatile liquids. Occasionally one takes on a special aura of legend, such as the proverbial 770 at New Orleans, or the penthouse of the Elven, Gnomen, and kleine Manner at Chicago. Some merely provide the scene for centers of activity or infamous doings without gaining more than a modicum of notoriety of their own. Such is the case with the Seventh Fandom suite in Philly and the fan publishers' co-op at ill-famed Bellefontaine.

In Frisco, for mayhaps the first time, we have to speak in terms of plural rooms. Lack of any close-knit group in either fandom or prodrom made the smoky-rooming generally less smoky and considerably more room-to-rooming. Single rooms take on their usual significance, but only when we remember them altogether can we get the full spirit of the SFCO. Like any other self-respecting convention, most of the activity began after 9 p.m., and dismissed only at the urging of a well-dressed, pipe-smoking, and officious-looking gent who seemed to have inside connections. Ennyhow let's take the elevator:

526

I mention this room first, because it seemed to be a rallying place for members of deposed parties. We all went there to mope. It was Frank Dietz' room, and his ability to maintain a fair degree of silence, combined with the rather remote spatial properties of the room, provided an apt hideaway. There were a group of recurring and rather anonymous parties there Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, ultimately climaxed by the house detective's finally fruitful sleuthing on the latter day. Keith Joseph reposed in a trance before the door, myself on the bed, a sober Art Rapp in one corner and a rather likewise Irene Baron in another when the final Armageddon was rung down. An unremembered mass of Terry Carrs, Fred Prophets, and Frank Dietzes floated angel-like about my head.

On Monday, the final night of the convention, Pete Graham and myself managed to lure in EEEvans, Ackerman, and another interested and interesting person or two for the purpose of recording a message to Walt Willis via Graham. Later this same night, 526 was to be deprived of its accustomed habitation by an outrageous policy instigated by the management of expelling anyone from the hotel who wasn't registered, and directing the delegations to their respective rooms.

903

Terry Carr and Pete Graham were registered in this rather significant room, but also peopling it under beds, rugs, and curtains were an immense

array of Westfans consisting approximately of Bob Stewart, Frank McElroy, Don Wegars, Dave Rike, and Keith Joseph. A good half of these must have been registered in other rooms....or didn't bother to sleep. It was but a double room.

Shortly after I had spotted Graham, Rike, Stewart, and McElroy checked in, and we had become the best of friends. I took up a collection and bought a case of beer; and we went up to 903.

These fans have a prodigious quantity of fannish songs, parodized from popular and traditional themes. Six or eight of them can make some mighty impressive sounds, when they all can carry a tune, and all know the songs. Bob Stewart delivered a sermon, and we sang these same songs until Carr arrived, and then we sang some more. I was introduced to Carr as a myriad of personages, but he wouldn't bite. I don't imagine I look much like a Boggs, or even a pseudo-Boggs.

I chose Sunday night not to be present in 903. A fan, who shall remain permanently unidentified, had occasion to tell the house detective to take his cotton-picking hands off of his person. This inspired the house dick to call Hans Rusch, fan-at-arms, who promptly promised the exclusion of the unnamed fan from future affairs. Two other fans were arrested... both also to remain unknown impressarios. One was left standing in the lobby while the detective called the local police. The returning detective found the fan gone. All this I learned as a late arrival to the Room-of-Many-Shades. I returned to old standby...526...and was soon lost in a quiet, fannish conversation with Rapp, Rike, Young, Davis, the Austens, and a sleeping Sims. Soon Graham, Stewart, and Joseph joined us from the unfortunate 903.

1806

Methinks this was the room of Kris Neville. At least that was how the legend began. It began around the nucleus of Neville, Karen & Poul Anderson, Mari Wolf & husband, Evvie Gold, and a few others, who were having a quiet party. It was early invaded by youngfen, until they predominated with their loud jokes and rudeness, driving the pros out. I acted like a pro. They and I kept returning, only to become more and more discouraged. I wound up alone in my room writing limericks.

318 et al

There were many other parties, but I think if we remember the above-mentioned and the few to follow, we will have a fairly complete gestalt of the carryings-on. This is the room in which were registered the Eastfen, who had followed Horrors Greely's, advice with an absence of wisdom and an overpresence of fannish frenzy. Namely Harlan Ellison, Rog Sims, George Young, and my own demented self.

When we stopped in at the Coles' on our way into San Fran, Les notified us of a probably absence of all but a few official convention suites.

We hurried to the Sir Francis Drake, and the assistant manager hastily more than confirmed the statement. As a matter of fact, he doubted they had any rooms at all. We must have really looked like bums after our 3-day marathon trip. He finally agreed to let us have two demonstration rooms at a nominal fee of \$10.50 per night apiece. We foolishly accepted his offer. For two nights we wasted our money in this manner. We finally came to our senses, and deciding four heads were better than two, George and Harlan checked out of their room and slipped into ours. Mattresses on floors don't make altogether unacceptable beds.

Unfortunately, the next morning, the maid came in to clean the room. Someone had failed to lock the door when they left, or entered. About 3 p.m., that afternoon, I got a call from the dear old Assist. Manager, politely informing me in Anglo-Saxon monosyllables that six bucks would be added on to the hotel bill, and that our uninvited guests would have to register or beat it. Damned impudent of him. Ellison had a tiff with ole A.M., with the consequence we moved a half block up the street.

It had been such a nice room. It had seen parties each night, in which nearly everyone at the convention passed through at one time or another. The gates of 318 had been hallowed with a golden array of names both fan and pro probably unequalled since early times. It had proved the psi powers of a fan when a delegate of a former party of five returned with the bottled fruits of a frugal collection from temperate fen, only to find the room being emptied of fifty-three thirsty fans by an H. D. The epic struggles of two fans' oft-repeated efforts to rid the room of its extraneous populus shall, of necessity, be retold elsewhere. If told--in completeness--this saga alone would fill a whole article. But such is life. The seedy five-and-a-half buck room in the Hotel Regent wasn't too bad.

Our new number was 316...not too much of a loss. It distinguished itself mostly in fannish history by being the site of my reading of "The Long Loud Silence" during an otherwise dull part of the convention, and by being the site of Ellison's fabulous battle to save his share of one night's hotel bill because he had stayed up all night the night before, and ergo hadn't used the room. We didn't quite swallow this bit. It was further distinguished by Ellison's repeated attempts at phone-calls, each one postceded by Harlan's demand of the operator-bellclerk-manager: "We won't be charged for this call, will we?" The adventures of 316 were finally brought to a close when somebody asked at the bell desk for Harlan Ellison. He wasn't among those registered. We decided it best to check out then and there and avoid further friction with the management. We moved down the street to the Cartwright Hotel, which in the end proved to have much better accommodations for the money than the Regent. The number was 518, and the elevator girl was cute.

The next day at 11 a.m we checked out, and almost lost our 3,000 mile-ride home because Ellison and Young were an hour late getting back from breakfast. Our host had an abominable temper and an intricate knowledge of Nevada. But that is the proverbial different story.

A RECONSIDERATION OF S.F. IDEAS

== S. J. Sackett ==

Some years ago I published an article, "Ideas in Science Fiction", in the RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST. Stated briefly, the thesis I supported there was that what was chiefly valuable about good science fiction was that it had ideas in it. I pointed out furthermore, that this was a quality not necessarily limited to the "aristocrats"; Bradbury, for instance, came up in Planet Stories and Startling Stories, which were at that time two of the three most despised magazines in the field, and published only three stories in Astounding, which was contemporaneously far and away the best s-f periodical.

Now I should not like to recant on that position. It seems to me an eminently reasonable one. It derives from the fundamental principle that the value of any literature is the pleasure it gives to its readers, and from the corollary axiom that intellectual delight is a legitimate kind of pleasure. It needs, perhaps, to be shored up by a plain statement that I do not minimize or ignore other kinds of pleasure, such as being emotionally moved by a powerful story, which are as obtainable in other kinds of literature; but I feel that one is more likely to meet the challenging, stimulating, brain-stirring concept in science fiction than in other kinds of literature, and thus that it is on those grounds that science fiction can most reasonably be defended, given equal literary skill with other genres.

But I should like here to take the position as a starting point and go on to investigate the nature of the ideas which, it seems to me, science fiction can best develop. It may seem in the course of this essay that I am toiling fruitlessly in the abstract, wandering lonely in the rarified regions of the theoretical; but I write out of my experience as a reader of about ten years' standing---which is more than some of these fourteen year-olds I see at conventions can claim---and I shall try to come down to earth as often as I can.

To begin with, the name "science fiction" itself seems to me an unfortunate misnomer today. It was accurate to describe the sugar-coated science of the Gernsback era; but, as the publisher of Science-Fiction Plus recently discovered, those days are long since gone. It used to be that the backbone of many a science-fiction story was the popularization of a principle of science, or some fact or other, by the device of "extrapolation"--showing its applicability in an extended use. Thus you might have seen a story based entirely on the fact that the freezing point of salt water is lower than the freezing point of fresh, or on a situation in which some future technology had the skills to make use of some scientific principle--such as the possibility of atomic power--which was then still in the theoretical stage. That was science fiction; and you still get a very few stories of that type today. I think probably that we might extend the term "science fiction" without much straining to stories of the

social, as well as the physical, sciences; but even with that extension the "popular science" kind of story is very rare today.

But it is a mistake for criticism ever to become too deductive. We cannot limit "science fiction" to what the term ought to mean etymologically. I merely point out that in using the expression today one should be aware that it describes something a little different from what you might be led to think by the first word in the compound. It has become one of those omnium gatherum words like "Romanticism", which convey a perfectly clear impression, but which defy any precise definition or analysis.

What I am leading up to is not August Derleth's point that science fiction is merely a kind of fantasy. He is right, of course; but his concern is with the differentiae of literary genres, and I am inclined to wave such considerations aside as pedantic and of little importance. It seems to me that in practice people use "science fiction" to describe one thing and "fantasy" to describe another, and I am not purist enough to bewail the fact that, taking the historical view, they are misusing the terms. The distinction, in fact, seems like a convenient and eminently useful one. So that I am not attempting to fuse "science fiction" and "fantasy" under one label.

All that I am saying is that the science has really gone out of "science fiction", except for a few atavisms; and I should like to approach the subject I have set for myself by trying to see what happened to it.

During the recent war, it was said that four hundred copies of Astounding were sold every month at Oak Ridge. This is an interesting fact, not from the largeness of the number; but from its smallness. You can't make a magazine pay with a circulation of four hundred atomic physicists. The appeal of abstruse scientific speculation is limited. I suggest that the reason science moved out of science fiction was that not enough people were interested in science for its own sake; that the buying public wanted something else from science fiction (what that was I shall not attempt to determine at this point); and that it was automatically mandatory to soft-pedal the science.

There were probably contributing factors. For one thing, it was more difficult for a writer to base his story on a really valid scientific fact than to "extrapolate" a science so far in the future that he could write in double-talk without his readers being any the wiser. For another, the number of scientific facts which lend themselves to this kind of treatment was, apparently, limited; in any event, the vein was mined out rather rapidly, and every few years or so, when some writer came across a new nugget, the discovery was greeted with high acclaim. It was also the case that a lengthy scientific explanation was generally poor art, often slowing down the story right at the climax (which is a major structural weakness in "The Lovers".) For this last reason, it became the fashion to use a set of assumptions which had been developed by previous writers and to which the readers were thoroughly accustomed. Thus, when a writer said, "Time Machine," his readers knew what he meant if they had read Wells; but

a time-travel story is not a science-fiction story in the original meaning of the word unless it has something fresh to say (or to popularize) about the nature of time as a scientific concept, any more than a space-travel story is science fiction in that sense unless it makes (or popularizes) substantial contributions to the theory of technology of space flight. (Consideration of this principle will reinforce my contention that the science has indeed gone out of science fiction and it is a branch of fantasy: for in most space travel stories for "rocket ship" you could as easily read "magic carpet".)

All these forces, then, worked and had their effects. I cannot say that I think the result was a bad one. After all, abstruse scientific speculation is limited in appeal because it is limited in applicability. Topology is a lot of fun for a scientist to play with, but the layman is apt to ask whether it does anything. And thus science, which prides itself (at least in academic conferences) on being a practical discipline, became too impractical for science fiction.

But science had done something for science fiction. It had created in science fiction a forum where ideas of all kinds could be kicked around. Ray Bradbury has said that science fiction gives a writer a means of turning problems into big balloons, like those in Macy's Christmas parades, which he can turn around and handle from various angles. That isn't enough, of course, to make a good story; but it is one thing that science fiction can do, and that's roughly the idea I was attempting to express in the opening paragraphs of this essay.

I have implied that one of the criteria for these ideas should be applicability. Perhaps I am being too pragmatic; perhaps I should not be so wholly mundane as to say that the value of an idea--though not necessarily its truth--depends on how useful it is. On the other hand, I think it is safe to postulate that literature is (among other things) an interpretation of experience, and that one at least of the justifications for reading anything is that it helps the reader to form a more accurate picture of the universe in which he lives. Hamlet, for example, re-evaluates the standards by which we judge men; Jane Austen's novels define a series of false impressions about the nature of life; "The Old Man and the Sea" shows that success is not always victory, that victory sometimes comes with failure; and these are all interpretations of experience, attempts to arrive, through the use of almost amazingly different media, at some kind of accurate picture of human life in its environment. The value of science fiction in this particular province of literature is that it can exaggerate, heighten, symbolize--and, by doing so, clarify. This makes s.f. seem like a primarily didactic form of writing; and so, as I believe, will be found upon an empirical examination, it is.

Granted this much, then I think I am justified in using applicability for a measuring stick against the ideas of science fiction. After all, "Paradise Lost", which is the most abstract and theoretical thing I can think of among the major works of literature. (except possibly the "Divine Comedy"), was not designed to demonstrate a theology; it was designed to

"justify the ways of God to me," to reinterpret human experience. I can not think that it is unfair to hold science fiction to the same standards until it produces a writer superior to Milton.

I realize that science prides itself on the purity of its researches--and that scientists are prone to sneer at a man who engages in a series of experiments with a view to finding out the solution to some specific problem; he is ~~acmere~~ technician, unless what he is doing is completely without applicability. On the other hand, the literary man is uninterested in the purely intellectual problem; he is concerned with people and with life itself. I have not the space at my disposal to digress here into a consideration of whether the relationship of science to fiction in science-fiction may not profitably worked out in these terms, but I leave the suggestion for some other critic.

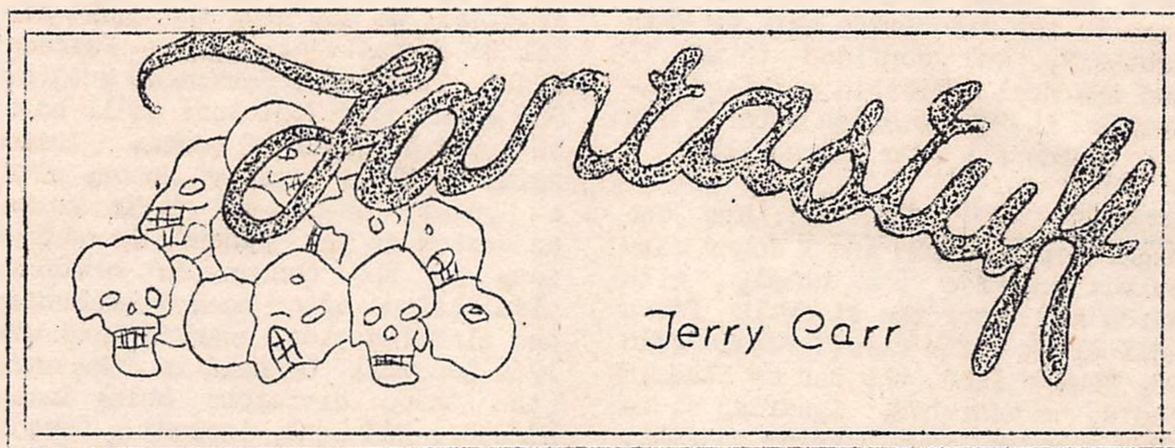
What brought all this on was a recent letter in SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER, in which the writer declared that "other magazines virtually never publish an idea as new as can be found in almost any issue of the Better s-f magazines." To illustrate his point, he cited a typical Saturday Evening Post idea--"virtue will be rewarded, and the good guy will get the girl"--and compared it to a typical concept in Astounding--"the purpose of an interstellar flight, many generations out of port, might be reduced to a religion."

Now, these two concepts, as stated, seemed to me to be about equally foregone to human experience. To one of them it might be replied, "Virtue is NOT--Samuel Richardson found out to his sorry--always rewarded; in real life the 'good guy' (and who, in life, is good?) does NOT always get the girl; and as a matter of fact, three-quarters of the marriages in the Saturday Evening Post, not being based on factors which make a happy marriage, will end in bickering, misery, and divorce." And to the other it might be replied, "Yes, but we're not going on an interstellar flight (at least not until long after this story has been forgotten), and so why bring up the point at all?" Both of the ideas, although for entirely different reasons, fail to present anything which can do a man any good if he tries to make it a part of his life.

Now, the difference is that the science-fiction idea might be made to have some relevance. I fail to see that the SEP idea could be turned into anything useful at all. But the science-fiction author might have been using his interstellar story to make a statement about the nature of the religious experience generally; and in that case, no matter whether I agreed with him or not, I would want to listen to him carefully, because he had something to communicate. He had, let us say, an idea.

I have thus attempted to suggest a criterion by which the ideas of science fiction may be judged. It seems to me that science fiction readers are often too uncritical in their acceptance of stories and ideas. For some reason--probably that there are attacks on science fiction from non-readers--the science fiction reader tends to be on the defensive. But it does not help his cause if he defends himself with indefensible arguments.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 22)



SFCON SYMPHONY::The registration, I am told, was almost a thousand, though the attendance looked far less to me. In the hall, during the sessions were perhaps three or four hundred during the biggest ones. Highpoints were the showing of Richard Matheson's short film, "Born of Man and Woman"; BoBloch as toastmaster at the banquet; Campbell's off-the-cuff speech at the banquet; and the masquerade ball. There was a lot more, a lot of it interesting.....I wouldn't really know because I didn't see a lot of it.

FANNISH INSTITUTIONS:::Various and sundry things began at the SFCon which may continue at further get-togethers. Mainly the quiet party. I rather hesitate to call this one fannish, though. The convention suite and room 318 were notable examples of this. Don't blame it on the fans, tho: the house detective was responsible. ## Art Rapp launched his Society For The Preservation Of Basic Fanspeak, or some such thing. It was called by various names, but I can only give you the above because I've forgotten some others and the rest are unprintable. ## Quote-cards were

the mode o'day, with three sets making the rounds: those of Dean Grennell (Ellison: "I've got Dean A. Grennell quote-cards and you can't beat 'em, buddy!"), Boob Stewart's, and Ron Ellick's. Slight twist with Ellick's: fans took to slipping them in their registration badges, to the puzzlement of non-fans who simply couldn't resist taking sly glances at them while riding elevators with fans.

PIECE DE CONVERSACION:::Ellison, who TALKED IN SHORT, CLIPPED SENTENCES all during the con, to Carr: "Got to find Young. Young must be near. Have seen?" Carr: "No. Harlan, do you realize you're liable to make a reputation like Keasler? He talked in interlineations, and you talk in telegrams." Ellison: "That is nothing. Last year, spoke in free verse."

ADD MYSTERIES THAT FELL THRU:::The SanFrancisfans mimeo'ed up a batch of small cards, saying simply BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU and planned to place them in strategic places (over toilet bowls, under pillows, on mirrors, in purses, between the pages of speeches, etc.) anonymously. It leaked out gradually,

Fiction, with many fan-slanted affairs. We may have the whole hotel to ourselves, Noreen Falasca hints, except for permanent guests. She seems confident that we'll have at least a block of rooms. Isaac Asimov will be Guest of Honor, with a Mystery Guest of Honor to be announced at the banquet in addition. ## The convention rotation plan passed after much questioning and clarification, meaning that the 1956 Con will be held in the east (the three divisions being East, Midwest, and West, including Canada and Mexico being placed in the mid-west, Ghu only knows why.) Horrid thought: According to this the '58 convention site must be in the mid-west. No South Gate in '58??

PARTING SHOTS: I liked it. I'm going to Cleveland if at all possible because I enjoyed what parts of the program I saw and vastly enjoyed the parties. Also the people. Even the nonfans (except for the hotel staff) were tolerable.

If you are interested in having a regional s-f conference in the New England area this Spring, please write or contact me at once. Guest speakers have been assured for the event. I would like to have your views and opinions concerning the date, type of program to present, the desired city, etc. We want to have a program that will be enjoyed by all, so let me hear from you!

MAURICE LUBIN
14 Jones Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

THE ART OF NOT Much has been written
ATTENDING AA on the gentle art of
CONVENTION conventioning, but
little on how to not
attend a convention successfully. In
order to grasp the full implications
on the second subject, it requires a
certain knowledge of the first.

To attend a convention, several
things are required. Most noticeably:
guts. Several guts of salami and
balogna (balogna is very prevalent at
conventions) should be taken along to
eat as you drink beer. If you need
to have the function of beer explained
to you, you can already success-
fully stay at home without finishing
this column.

After beer, comes money. In
fact, money comes before beer in cer-
tain establishments. (These are to
be shunned.)

Next, you need some mark of identification. Odd sizes and shapes of
pipes are popular, but variations such as rodeo ties, canes, guitars, and
Colt .45 Peacemakers are often employed. One of these will set you apart
from the neophan. Certain pipes will set you very far apart from every-
one, and carrying concealed firearms will at times actually put a stone
wall between you and the outside world. So much the better.

These identifying symbols often serve to open a discussion in symbolic
logic. Everyone will ask you where the hell you got the crazy thing--they
want one like it. Offer to get another and send it to the inquiring per-
son. Of course, NEVER DO THIS. You can't have every proletarian tagged
with your identifying gimmick.

Identification is very important. On this, your egoboo is dependent.
In sad times like this, when official programs are controlled by dirty
pros or senile fans who keep alive only through their medical knowledge,
it is your unofficial behavior at a science fiction convention that pro-
duces your egoboo.

You must not, of course, go unnoticed. Obscurity is the nemesis of
egoboo. If you are an introvert, you can still be noticed. Hide under
the lobby sofa for the three days of the convention. Have your meals sent
under. You won't have fun, but you will have egoboo. (It may well be
noted here, that in these times, sanity hearings are well publicized.)

Do the unexpected. Don't get drunk.



As Joe Gibson can testify, this produces many fine comments, in which your name is prominently mentioned.

If you get nomally and routinely drunk at convention after convention you will go unnoticed. (Remember, obscurity is the nemesis of egoboo.) However, fans who are also active in the AA can take heart. Progressive Drunkenness can also produce many interesting comments and hence, egoboo, i.e., "I didn't think Bob Bloch could get any drunker than he was last year, but..." and so forth.

If you can arouse such comments, it speaks well of your ability to gather egoboo, especially if you can do it while drinking nothing stronger than soda pop. You will find that fans are actually eager to help you. Merely make sure you stub your toe on the corner of a rug while holding a glass and you will find dozens of faithful fans congregating to the spot to see you sprawled in a drunken stupor, even after you are as long gone as Huey.

If you have a heart condition, you will find this helpful. In the case of women, you can actually share your egoboo (not of course, divide it, but give it an equal amount). If you are a woman and have a heart attack and have to be assisted by a man, you will arouse many fine remarks about both yourself and the fortunate man, i.e., "Ther goes Blank carry--ing Blank's wife up to his room." If your name is Blank, you're made.

Cardiac fans of the masculine gender or sex (sex is still possible even with a bad heart) can gain even greater egoboo. Merely pass out somewhere conspicuous (in front of a fire plug, elevator, boy scout or house detective) and you will hear remarks about this ever afterwards--especially with discussions of problems with you.

More drastic egoboo-harvesting activities as raping a girl or drowning a man or breaking out windows or doors are not recommended to beginners. Do one of these things at your first convention, and how can you ever top it? Progressive Criminality should be practised. Start simply--break a lamp, steal a kiss, use a water pistol, and work up the hard way like everybody else.

It should now be obvious that a convention is only an excuse for gathering egoboo. If you miss one, you miss a fine opportunity to get egoboo. But all is not lost. You can enhance your reputation to the same degree by doing a few little things around home, such as:

Murdering your parents...

Asking the Reds to let you come over to their side in Mother Russia...

Or do as I did...

During the recent Metrocon and even before it, I was involved in a two-fold plan. Knowing I couldn't come, I made extensive plans with Lee

Riddle and Calvin Thomas Beck for my attendance. When I didn't show up, this resulted in a long distance phone call from Lee. This alone should have enhanced my reputation almost as much as if I had asked to become a Russian citizen.

CHILDHOOD'S END
AND THEN, THE
NEXT ONE.

Tom Mix is really the only comic book I buy -- he's in "Six Gun Heroes" and "Cowboy Western Comics" these days. But, once in a while I pick up a copy of "Mad" or "Panic" to puzzle over what fandom sees in all that corn and smut. In a recent issue, there was an ad for the latest Johnson Smith catalog. I sent in my dime. If you've never seen a JS Catalog, you don't know what pleasure there is in just reading it, much less ordering. In this Christmas season (and my Greetings to you and hope that Uncle Sam doesn't extend his in 1955) when you read so much about what you can do for people, it's refreshing to read a catalog that, among other things, shows you what you can do to people.

The cover shows underneath a functioning Two-Way Dick Tracy Wrist-Radio (for \$2.98), a package of Garlic Gum--"the flavor lasts" they add fiendishly (15¢). A \$1.35 Surprise Package is next to the gum. I anticipate the surprise and decline to let myself in for it.

The back cover boasts a pair of handcuffs for 35¢ that cannot be opened without help -- just right for Cops and Robbers. I don't know about Cops.

Inside you can find more gum -- Red Hot Gum (12¢), Exploding Gum (39¢) and Squirting Gum (39¢). There are plenty of other squirts (I wonder how Ellison is these days?): Ring (25¢), Pen (50¢), Goin (25¢), to name a few. These should add variety to conventions (Isaac Asimov, please note).

There are a few other things for science fiction fans. Bob Tucker might be interested in Marked Stripper Cards (\$1.50). These have no girl strippers on them -- the aces and high cards are shaved slightly so you can always cut them. The backs are also marked in the mechanical design.

Some fans might like to get a science fiction emblem -- like a college letter. You can get them made to order -- any letters, lettering or picture. Send a rough sketch and the art department finishes it. Two colors if you want. Four inches square; five for \$3.25. Six inches; 5 for \$4.95 or eight inches square \$6.95. It would be thoughtful of you to send me (gold old Harmon told you about it) one if you get any stf emblems made.

The address is Johnson Smith & Company, 6615 E. Jefferson, Detroit 7, Michigan. (Oh, you know mine--I hope!)

I sent for some stuff.

A 16mm Tom Mix Movie, three short films, complete plans for building and flying a real Aeroplane, a book on how to practice Real Black Magic, a boon on how to practice Real Stage Magic, a live white mouse (already got

some dead brown ones in a box -- take them out and play with 'em every few weeks, especially my favorite: Stinky), an assortment of 100 games & puzzles, a complete fire-eating outfit, an authentic-type Press Card, a sign-printing set, a Make-Your-Own Jewelry Set, and a surprise package--one that wasn't next to Garlic Gum. Goshwosboyoboy! And do you know what all that fabulousiest treasure cost me? Only five bucks. Where else can you get a bargain like that? (Sometimes I wonder about me too!)

There is one other thing in the catalog that might be of interest to some fans -- for \$9.98 you can get a Printing Press completely outfitted that will print a - quote - two-column digest-sized magazine -- printing area: 7x5 inches. This is a good deal if you have the guts and patience to set type by hand. Get a \$1.98 type case -- it helps. I once had a stationery-heading size press and know. This thing sounds like it would do the work of a \$50.00 job. It's made out of light metal. It's such a bargain that I may even get one to help Crawford print up our 100,000 copies of "XScience Fiction"--which I edit -- which will be on sale this year. So, plugging away, I close up this "Harmony", blowing my own horn..

A RECONSIDERATION OF S.F. IDEAS

(continued from page 16)

There are enough sounder points to be raised in a justification of science fiction: chiefly, I think, that science-fiction offers an area where ideas can be played with, certainly more than in any other form of popular literature. I do not think that this is necessarily true of unpopular literature--the small-circulation magazines--but certainly the writer who is interested in ideas, who has something to say, will be better off financially in science fiction, even at 1¢ a word, than in the little magazines; and I should say that this is the chief attraction that science-fiction has for a writer like Bradbury.

A lot of science fiction--and I think the only way in which the fan can gain a hearing for himself is to admit this at the outset--is trash. To argue with that is to demonstrate a complete lack of intelligent, critical reading. But some science fiction--the minority, it is true, and a small minority at that, but still a much larger proportion than in any other kind of popular literature--serves as a forum for the expression of challenging and stimulating ideas. The only question is whether the wheat is worth the chaff; and the answer is that if one's reading is at all discriminating (or perhaps I should say rather if one's selection of reading material is at all discriminating) a good deal of the chaff can be avoided.



The November 1954 issue of PEON contained two noteworthy complaints. The first one was from Isaac Asimov, a top science fiction writer. He says a critic, whom he calls "The Nameless One," unfairly criticized one of his books. Mr. Asimov points out that he has had some unfavorable criticism from sf writers and editors--this he can

take, he can even learn from good criticism--it's unfair criticism that gnaws at Isaac's gizzard.

"Nameless One" said that Asimov wrote too many books, that he wasn't even a writer, and that no one could possibly like his last one. Asimov's last book was a serial in Galaxy, published in book form by Signet, sold 28,000 copies, got many rave reviews in top book columns all over the world, some of which were quoted in the article. Asimov wants to know what he can do about unfair critics like "Nameless One."

If "Nameless One" had hurt the sale of the story in any way, we could understand Asimov's concern. But he has a complete success--why bother about this one guy who don't like it, however unfair his remarks. With such a success, Isaac ought to be floating up on that pink cloud, smoking the 50¢ El Producto cigars, dreaming up the next smash hit. Instead he is crawling around here on the ground among his unsuccessful and jealous contemporaries and finding a hot little bonfire he jumps in, bare-assed, and hollers, "HELP!" One is tempted to say, "Drop dead, Asimov!" After all, even GOD doesn't get universal adoration.

However, we want to understand Asimov. Unlike "Nameless One" I have enjoyed his stories to the hilt. We have a clue to our author's difficulty in an article, "Psychoanalysts and Writers" by Malcolm Cowley (Harper's for September 1954). It appears that writers have been put under the Freudian spotlight by a few eager psychologists. Freud warned against this. He told his boys to let all artists alone because the artistic gift was beyond the reach of the Freudian theory. But Freud is dead and his boys have everything on the chopping block, poems, songs, children's stories, to see what makes them and their creators kick.

Cowley, a high priest among the critics, knocks heads together in this article. He tags the psychologists off-base in a dozen places, but one of the boys, Dr. Edwin Bergler, has a theory about writers that made me think of Asimov.

Bergler thinks that all writers are "masochists". This type of person enjoys getting beat up. The difficulty goes back to early infancy, when the child tries acts of aggression against the mother and gets punished for it. Most babies desist--future writers, being hard-headed, persist. They get so they enjoy that spanking. They become masochists and are writers, alcoholics, or homosexuals. (Fine company!) They are also voyeurs (Peeping Toms) and exhibitionists (Strip Teasers). "He exhibits himself before the reader," says Bergler. Shame on you, Asimov! Shame on all of us, for that matter.

So, if you were feeling sorry for Asimov because in hunting the world, for reviews of his book (he even had one from Honolulu), he found one unkind critic too obscure even to name, don't. He was only enjoying himself.

Harry Harrison has a familiar complain in "The Death of Science Fiction." He says today's science fiction, ain't! He don't like today's luke warm stuff. He says the mags are full of "re-hashed adventure plots" and "frou-frou, watered-down, New Yorkerish cuteities." (Wow! Shame on you, Boucher!"

In another article in his magazine, Science Fiction Adventures, editor Harrison writes an editorial on the same subject. Here he complains that modern prozines are publishing too many "Un-science fiction" stories. An "un-science fiction" story is one based on a false premise by authors with no science knowledge, the story endings have their feet "firmly planted in mid-air."

What does Harry want instead of this awful stuff? He wants stories with new science conceptions. He wants a story with a fact, theory, or gimmick extrapolated into an exciting future civilization. (And you can't hardly get those no more, as George Gobel would say.)

Does Harry Harrison have a complaint? Let's think a little bit. What is science fiction, anyhow? Some people seem to think that God handed down the basic science fiction story to Moses along with the Ten Commandments and a science fiction story is an effort to reproduce this basic concept like pitching horse shoes as near a stake as possible. Well, science fiction isn't like that at all. It is an art form. Art forms have an uncomfortable habit of developing. They evolve. They are different today than they were yesterday.

Because of this changing quality, no art form can be exactly defined. A lot of learned old goofs have tried to define the short story, poetry, music, baseball pitching or violin playing and all their definitions get-out-of-date and are discarded.

An art form at any given moment is what the people using it say it is. Therefore, science fiction at any given moment is what the editors, writers and readers are editing, writing and reading. So, if the circulation leaders are publishing "re-hashed adventure plots" and "frou-frou, watered

down, New Yorkerish cuteities" and are calling that stuff science fiction, then, by God, that's science fiction. And what John Campbell published ten years ago is what used to be science fiction.

Harrison is right about the way science fiction has developed. Why did it evolve into the watered-down stuff he described? I read one place where one critic insisted that all the science ideas had been used over and over until they had become stale. It is true that most of the exciting and easily understood themes have been explored. And a lot of the published stuff now are stories on these old themes with a slight new twist. And some of these twists get a little far fetched. I sent one of my stories to a New York agent with a \$5.00 fee for sale or criticism. It was on the the underground community theme where the outside air is poisoned and civilization has moved into caves. The agent sent it back saying it was too old hat--he didn't even think he could sell it if it had a new twist.

But science is expanding rapidly. Why aren't the new concepts being used by science fiction authors? Because science has moved to the edge of the three dimensional world and now deals with ideas that are impossible to visualize. The other day I ran across Oppenheimer's idea of the electron. The only way he could describe it was what it was not--it was not a very necessary part of the atom. These new concepts can be described only in mathematics.

In the January 1955 Galaxy editor Gold suggests themes around ordinary things extrapolated into future civilizations. He suggests breakfast cereal premiums dominating a future world. To promote some ordinary item out of its true proportion is fun, but that is what Harrison is complaining about. He calls it "un-science" fiction. Yet, this is the way modern writers are finding fresh ideas.

Another factor in this movement of science fiction is the increase in the number of readers. Harrison says we used to have a slogan among the fans, "Boost Science Fiction". We sure did. And like Toulouse-Lautrec, whose posters advertised the Moulin Rouge into such popularity that it lost the character that he loved, we have boosted science fiction into a development that we did not intend. To these new readers extrapolation might be a dirty word.

What are we going to do about it? Harrison wants everyone to knock science fiction. He wants it criticized right back into pre-Galaxy. Well you can't put the tooth paste back in the tube, Harry. Perhaps old fans ought to fade away with their old science fiction. What is that science idea? Adapt or die! You learn to like the new stuff, or else you fade away with your collection and read all the old stories over and over again. Perhaps that's what all those collections were for, after all--to fade away on. And there you are, and this is the column. Just another Govel, I guess!

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A complete listing of all the
stories appearing in science
fiction and fantasy magazines
published in the United States
during t h e year of 1953.

THE 1953

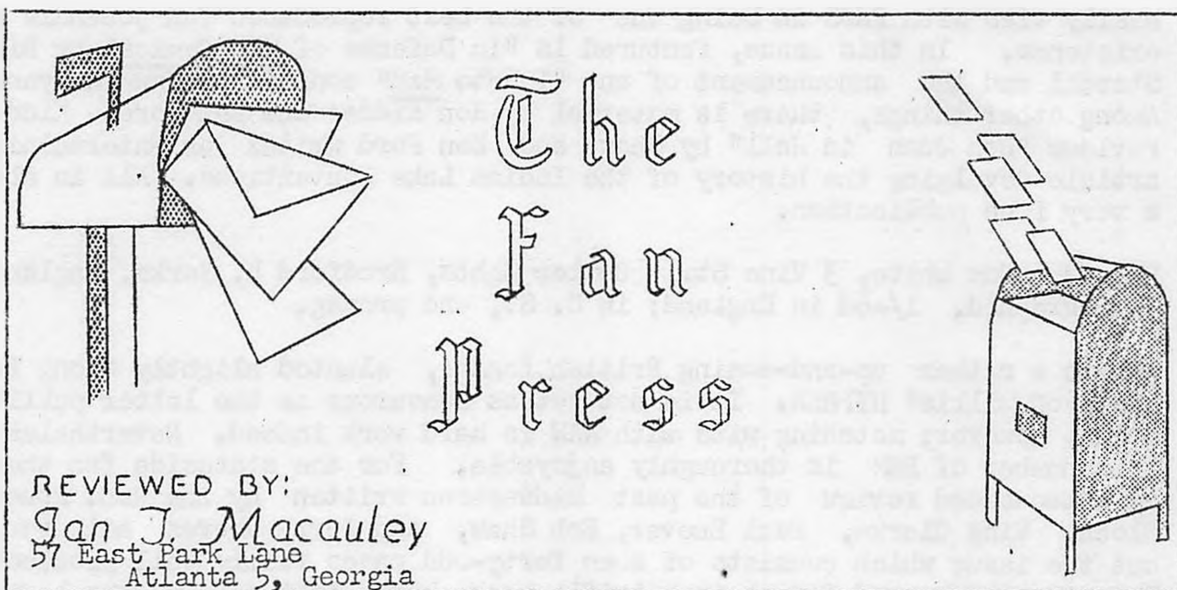
CHECKDEX

COMPILED AND PUBLISHED BY CHARLES LEE RIDDLE

P E O N P R E S S

108 Dunham Street - Norwich, Connecticut

25¢



Simplicity is the word here--at least as far as my policy is concerned. All fan journals received are immediately considered for review in this column. The only exception to the latter is that I will delete occasionally those periodicals which appear most often. This will leave room for the more irregularly issued publications to have a chance for review.

-oOo-

ABSTRACT #8. Peter J. Vorzimer, U. of Calif. at Santa Barbara, 104 Toyon, Goleta, Calif. Dittoed. 25¢ per copy; \$1.20 the year.

This issue is one of those bulky, convention numbers. Evidently published in honor of the previous world convention in San Francisco, it contains reports of the latter affair as well as reviews of the recent Okla. and Fantasy-Veterans converences. Each of the one-hundred pages present is neatly reproduced and attractive to the eye. Much of the material is extremely good; some of it would have been better off not printed. In the latter category, we have John Fletcher's immature "Fanvetcon Report" which was written in very poor taste. Fortunately, most of the contents were on the better side including three very excellent items by Bob Bloch, Dennis Moreen, and Dean Grennell. Moreen, I believe, is one of the better newer writers in fandom; he pens an enjoyable and informative article. Dean Grennell's advice in "Filler #97" is a necessity for all faneds who are desirous of producing a note-worthy publication. Harlan Ellison does an entertaining story--surprisingly realistic. There is much other material, including Vorzimer's convention report which I enjoyed.

CANADIAN FANDOM #22. Gerald Steward, 166 McRoberts Ave., Toronto 10, Ontario, Canada. Mimeographed. Quarterly. 15¢ each, \$1.00 for 8.

CANFAN is the usual standby for excellent format and mimeography; it

easily vies with PEON in being one of the best reproduced fan journals in existence. In this issue, featured is "In Defense of Mad Comics" by Bill Stavdal and the announcement of an "I Hate Mad" contest by Howard Lyons. Among other things, there is material by Ron Kidder and Don Ford. Kidder reviews "Don Juan in Hell" by Shaw, and Don Ford writes an entertaining article devulging the history of the Indian Lake conventions. All in all, a very fine publication.

BEM #3. Tom White, 3 Vine St., Cutler Hgts, Bradford 4, Yorks, England. Mimeographed. 1/-6d in England; in U. S., one promag.

BEM is a rather up-and-coming British fanmag, slanted slightly along the lines of Willis' HYPHEN. It is not yet as humourous as the latter publication, however; matching wits with WAW is hard work indeed. Nevertheless, this number of BEM is thoroughly enjoyable. For the stateside fan there is a two-sided review of the past Midwestcon written by the Hon. Robert Bloch. Vinç Clarke, Paul Enever, Bob Shaw, and Terry Jeeves help round out the issue which consists of some forty-odd pages fairly well produced. The mimeography and format is a trifle weak; but, fortunately, the latter is one of the few defects.

COUP #1. Dave Mason, 14 Jones Street, New York 14, N. Y. Mimeographed. Bi-monthly. 25¢.

Here we have an extremely interesting periodical. Interesting because it is unique, enigmatic, and highly esoteric in many respects. The format is fairly good; the mimeography, adequate. The cover is a shield, the centre of which holds a prostrate bird with a tremendous sword in its gullet. I presume that Mason is slanting his new publication among the lines of a general-zine, as there is SOME discussion of science fiction by Don Chimbo Dave Foley, Mason, Dan Curran, and Fred Chappell. However, COUP is primarily the organ of the Fanarchists and you may expect to find a good deal of their philosophy and political theories imbedded therein. Nevertheless, this is, I repeat, an interesting magazine and warrants your attention. Certainly, it's a left-winged periodical, but the editors aren't a bit surreptitious about it.

DAWN #23. Russell K. Watkins, 110 Brady St., Savannah, Georgia. Dittoed. Bi-monthly. 15¢.

This issue has fewer pages this time than customary. However, Russ readily explains this fact away by mentioning that he has recently completed a 12 week course in Analytic Geometry in 5½ weeks. The reproduction is certainly adequate, but not up to the standards set forth in previous issues. Also, the material featured is not as good as that usually presented. Moreen, one of fandom's most promising critics, writes of the monthly sf magazines that are now in existence; Ray Thompson contributes his column, "Slag" and reviews a recent issue of New Worlds; Art Kunwiss a humorous article on "How to Live to the Age of 135." And, there are the usual features rounding out the issue.

FANTASTIC WORLDS #7. Sam Sackett, 411 West 6th St., Hays, Kansas. Photo-offset. Quarterly. 30¢.

If any amateur publication is worth its selling price, FW most assuredly is. Perhaps the finest offset fan journal now in existence, FW comes closer than almost any other amateur fan publication in being a true "little magazine of science-fiction"--a semi-pro. The cover is quite artistic, being a simple-design by professional artist Neil Austin. Contained in this issue are two fine short stories, "The Winners", by Raymond T. Shafer, and "Susan" by Clive Jackson. But, the best item in the issue is an article on Henry Fielding by Editor Sackett himself. Sackett extols the career and writings of Fielding, father of the English novel (c.1750) and emphasizes the latter's fantasy prose. I should like to see more of this literary discussion in the amateur press myself. Above all, don't leave FANTASTIC WORLDS off your shelf.

FIENDETTA #8. Charles Wells, 405 E. 62nd St., Savannah, Georgia. Mimeod. Quarterly. 15¢.

It is surprising how strikingly similar FIENDETTA is to QUANDRY in format. But not too surprising however, considering that Wells was the protege of Lee Hoffman herself. Nevertheless this is good in itself and not because he is attempting to emulate the defunct QUANDRY. This issue is rather small, but is definitely well-produced and presents an attractive format. Vernon McCain is on hand with a poltergeistic-type article on "Time-Travelers in the White House", and Russ Watkins speaks of Vorzimer and things. There is also material by the editor, Jesse Floyd (Wells again?), Ted Dameck, and John Fletcher.

INSIDE #6. Ron Smith, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif. Photo-offset. Bi-monthly. 5 for \$1.00.

With this number INSIDE has combined with Roy Squire's SF ADVERTISER; and for this issue only, Smith will retain the Glendale mailing address. However, Ron's new address is 111 South Howard, Tampa 6, Florida. This issue has quite an attractive format with justified margins on every page; the artwork, photographs, and headings are also outstanding. Editor Smith is also basing his publication along the lines of a "little magazine", and this issue is no exception in bringing high quality material to the eyes of its readers. There are three very fine short stories grouped together under the topic "Evolution" by Robert Gilbert, David Bunch, and Don Howard Donnell. There are two provocative articles, "The Science Fiction Movie" and "What is Science Fiction?" by Doyle Lewis and Chad Oliver, respectively. Lewis seeks to compare "The Egyptian" with sf films, but his article is more of a contrast because he continually exclaims of the vast inferiority between science fiction movies and Darryl Zanuck's current epic. Oliver writes a well-worded answer to the perennial question stated above. Other material is by Poul Anderson and Alan Hunter. All in all, in every aspect, Smith's periodical is indeed a fine one. It is hoped that the new combination will carry on the good work initiated by SFA in bringing the seller and buyer of sf items together in the future.

OOPSLA! #15. Gregg Calkins, 2817 - 11th St., Santa Monica, Calif. Mimeod. Bi-monthly. 15¢.

Always an attractive-appearing publication, OOPSLA! leads off this issue with what is perhaps Harlan Ellison's best piece of non-fiction writing. Ellison defends savagely the well-informed, educated person's place in contemporary and future society, complaining of the illiterate's fear of knowledge. Harlan is certainly justified in all his statements; I, too, share the distaste of witnessing the crude babblings of the moronic ignor-amuses assembled at local theatres, concerts, operas, and lectures. Bob Tucker is also at hand with an account of his recent westerly excursion, and Walt Willis continues his fascinating tale of his stateside tour in 1952. Bob Silverberg does an adept fanzine review column. Calkins' zine is truly a perennial favourite; every issue features a storehouse of s.f. best critics.

OPERATION FANTAST #16. Ken F. Slater, 22 Broad St., Syston, Leics, Eng. Printed. Quarterly. 7/-6d yearly in England; in U. S. \$1.00 for a year to P. J. Rasch, 567 Erskine Drive, Pacific Palisades, California.

The one dollar is not solely a subscription fee, but also it enrolls you as a member of the Operation Fantast Trading Bureau (the largest and most efficient of its kind in the world) and places your name on Slater's mailing list to receive the annual OF HANDBOOK, an item of necessity to all sf enthusiasts. But on the magazine size, OPERATION FANTAST is, to my knowledge, the only remaining regular type-set periodical in fandom. Several FAPA publications are still printed, I understand, but gone are the days when fans were confronted with the printed-works of such magnitude as those by Vernon McCain, Roscoe Wright, Bob Foster, Walt Willis, Burwell, Macaulay, etc. Material in this neat 5x7 edition of Slater's is by J. T. McIntosh, Laurence Sandfield, F. G. Rayer, Cedric Walker, and Ken himself.

TELLUS #2. Page Brownton, 1614 Collingwood Ave., San Jose 25, Calif. Multilithed. Quarterly. 15¢.

TELLUS #2 shows an immense improvement over its predecessor. For one thing, this second number is twice the size of the first issue in page dimensions and at least two or three times larger in number pages, and has been converted to the multilithed medium of reproduction. This provides his readers with a fairly neat format. The cover is certainly excellent enough, but editor Brownton would do better with a nicer selection of interior artwork. Justified margins would also be an asset, but then, we can't all be perfectionists. Appreciated is the Ralph Rayburn Phillips' illustration on the inside back cover; Phillips is all too lacking in the fan press these days. As a whole, however, TELLUS is shaping up very well. The next step for improvement would be Brownton's acquiring a more discriminating taste in the material he selects.

-PEON-



The announcement of the death of Dick Clarkson is no hoax, as have been several other reports of death of famous fans. I first received word of this in a letter from John Hitchcock, and verified it personally by a phone call to John Magnus. I know you all agree with me that Dick is really going to be missed.

-oOo-

In spite of the death of one of your best friends, the world, science fiction, and fandom moves on. So, let's get back into swing of things. I must admit, however, that this is not being written in the spirit that I had originally planned.

First of all, those of you who read the contents page will note a change in the subscription rates to PEON. In fact, the rates have been doubled. This change--one that I've been trying to resist for the past year or so--is one that has been made necessary by increasing costs of paper and the breakdown of the old relic I've been using to mimeograph PEON. In addition to this, within a few weeks, you will see a new address for yours truly, and I want to clear off my mailing list those people who have been receiving PEON on a complimentary copy basis.

BUT, if you want to renew your subscription to PEON at the old rates (regardless of when your present sub expires), you can do so, if you send the dollar for 12 issues to me within the next thirty days after you receive

CONVENTION ANYONE??

The following is a resume of conventions announced so far:

AGACON::April 2 and 3, in Atlanta, Georgia. \$1.00 fee. Contact Ian T. Macauley, 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta, Ga.

OKLACON::Scheduled for July 4th weekend. Further details from Don Chappell, 5921 East 4th Place, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

FANVETS::The best in the east so far. Werdermann's Hall, 3rd Ave. & East 16th Sts., NYC., on April 17th. No admission or registration fee.

AUSTRALIA::March 18 and 19. U. S. Fans can help with a \$1 fee to Arthur Haddon, Box 56, Redfern, NSW, Australia, and receive in return, a copy of the Souvenir Booklet, etc.

NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE is being planned for Worcester, Mass., in early Spring. Contact Maurice Lubin, 14 Jones Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, for further details.

...and the big one...

The 13th World S-F Convention will be held in Cleveland over the Labor Day Weekend. The \$2.00 membership fee should be sent to 13th World S-F Convention, Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland 7, Ohio. This deserves your support, so join up today!!

this issue of PEON. But take fair warning--after that time, renewals and new subs to PEON will cost you still a dollar, but you'll only get half as many copies! This thirty day period is also good for new subs, so if you are getting this issue of PEON as a complimentary or sample copy, you can take advantage of this offer also. Incidentally, the number of the issue you sub to PEON expires with is marked on the mailing label of the envelope.

-oOo-

This is probably the last issue of PEON you will get from Norwich. As some of you know from our correspondence, I have been expecting my transfer orders for sometime now, and in fact, had delayed this issue of PEON in hopes that I could give you the new address. However, all mail sent to me here in Norwich will be forwarded by Rosella after I am gone, and I will try to mail out a circular giving my new address as soon as possible. It actually doesn't seem that three years have gone by since we left Hawaii on the 24th of December in 1951. So much has happened since that time--moving here to Connecticut, attending our first world convention, buying the house, a new car (and wrecking it not very long afterwards!), the birth of Alice; all these things seem as though they only happened yesterday. However, the Navy says that after three years on shore duty, I have to have 18 months aboard ship now, and since my three years are up, I can expect my sea-duty orders shortly. Last fall, I thought I'd anticipate the Navy a little bit, and requested transfer to a new carrier being built down in the Norfolk, Va., area. The request was turned down saying that I hadn't enough shore duty for that transfer--but then, the very next month, my name was sent in to the Bureau of Naval Personnel as having completed a normal tour of shore duty, and as being eligible for transfer to ship-type duty.

Shipboard duty will be rather different to me. In spite of being in the Navy for twelve years now, I've only spent, during that time, a grand total of 42 days aboard a ship--and that has been only as a passenger! Rosella and I think we have been very fortunate, considering that we are a service-family. During the nine years of our marriage, we've been separated only about six weeks. That was the time I was transferred out to Hawaii and was necessitated by a wait for navy housing out there before she could come out with the boys (Ira and Robbie only in those days). So many navy and army families are separated so long by duty in far fields, that I think I don't have any complaints if I do get duty aboard a ship for the first time. It will be a complete change for me, and I'm more or less looking forward to it. However, I will still publish PEON wherever I will be. Arrangements for publishing it, naturally, will have to wait until I get settled down, but you can rest assured that the next issue will be reaching you in about three months.

Lots of thanks to all of you who sent us so many wonderful Christmas cards--and our apologies to those of you who did not receive one in return from the Riddle family. We were completely swamped with cards, and I don't think we could have afforded to answer each and every one, so

please take this as our sincere wish for a very prosperous and lucky new year for each and everyone of you. The boys enjoyed the cards a great deal, and are using them to decorate the walls of their room upstairs. Incidentally, thanks also to those of you who have inquired about the children. They are all well. Ira is now in the third grade, Robbie is in the first grade and both enjoy school a great deal. David stays at home and helps to take care of his baby sister, Alice, who is now five months old, sitting up and trying to talk a blue streak. We took the entire bunch, to the movies the other day, thinking we would save on baby-sitting fees. Alice didn't cry but she certainly gooded and made bubbling noises throughout the entire picture--so much so that Rosella and I had to take turns sitting out in the lobby with her. And to make matters that much more difficult, when we returned to the car, we discovered that the City of Norwich had given us a holiday present--an overtime parking ticket! Net result, more money than we would have spent on a baby sitter. Oh well, some days you just can't win!

THE YEAR OF THE JACKPOT

1953 will be remembered as the year that PEON had so many goofs. In checking over back issues the other night, I discovered that I had given the volume number throughout the entire year as "SIX" in error. All issues of PEON published in 1953 should be Volume SEVEN--and this issue marks the beginning of Vol. EIGHT.

-oOo-

My thanks to Tony Boucher for the recommendation in the February Fantasy and Science Fiction concerning my 1953 CHECKDEX. As a result of that mention, I've practically sold out the entire run; however, I did save a few for the readers of PEON who like to have a copy. If you want one, I would like to suggest that you get in that quarter to me right away. The supply is definitely limited and will not be reprinted--main reason being that I threw away the stencils by mistake!

Speaking of the CHECKDEX, the 1954 edition is almost ready for being typed up on the stencils anyway now and will probably be published shortly after I reach my new duty station. Price of it has not been determined as yet, but a full-details announcement will probably be made in the next issue of PEON. Maurice Lubin, Harvey Segal, and Hank Moskowitz are helping out with this one.

-oOo-

I was very happy to see a few of you readers of PEON down in NYC last fall at the Metrocon. Didn't you have a grand time? Those of you who missed it, really missed a wonder ful occasion. I went down with Maurice Lubin of Worcester, Mass., and Bill Wilcox of Milford, Conn., and I think I can say for the three of us that the conference committee are to be really congratulated. If you stick around for a littlebit, I might even be persuaded, to give a small con report--but then, for that report, you're going to have to turn the page....

ANYONE HERE WANT TO BUY FIFTY COPIES OF THE NOVEMBER PEON?? Those of you who attended the Metrocon in New York City will agree with me when I say that all conventions should be run like that one. It was big enough to support itself financially, but small enough where you could meet and talk with other fans. Maurice came down to Norwich early Friday afternoon. I got off at the Lab about 1200, took him out to a countryside school where I made an impassioned speech about the joys and benefits of a naval career to a bunch of seventh and eighth grade students (they have a small bit of time to make up their minds), and after bringing Rosella home from the Sub Base, we started for New York City, picking up Bill outside of New Haven. We talked and talked all down the parkways, and the usually boring trip didn't seem to take quite as long as it normally does.

We got into New York City around 2100 and after finding the hotel, told the bell boy to park my broken-nose Willys in the hotel garage until we were ready to leave Sunday. We inquired at the hotel for our reservations, only to find that someone had slipped up and didn't reserve a double and connecting room for us. However, we did get hotel rooms, and just as I was getting ready to go up to my room to change clothes (I was still in my uniform), Dick Clarkson grabbed me--our first fan contact at the convention. We later ran into Dave Mason and friends, who invited us to an small party down in his house in the village, but Dick, who was waiting for a girl friend from Chicago, couldn't make it.

Maurice, Bill, and I followed the party into the subway system of NYC and some hours later staggered out into the middle of Greenwich Village. Dave is a super in one of the apartment houses there, and holds his s.f. meetings in the basement--a wonderful arrangement if I ever heard one, for who is to complain about the noise if the super is holding the party? I guess I'm getting a little old for such stuff, for after about an hour of watching people drinking themselves stupid, I gathered up the Connecticut contingent, and went back to the hotel. No one else around, we gave up--- at the request of the management--and went to bed.

I was up bright and early the next morning (with four kids, you learn to get up at six a.m., no matter what time you got to bed the night before strangely enough!) but couldn't find any fans or pros around at that early hour. Later on, around nine, characters began to pop up in around the lobby, the Cleveland group drove up outside, and things began to hum. I latched onto Honey Wood, taking her on her first subway ride to eat at her first automat. I had to remind her that the program officially began at one, so we just got back in time to be on the official opening of the con.

The speeches? I guess they were okay--I didn't hear most of them. I was very busy out in the anteroom gabbing with anyone who'd stop by and trying to huckster off enough copies of PEON and the CHECKDEX to pay my hotel bill (with four kids you don't have very much money left to go conventioning!). Maurice had taken along my flash camera and was very busy snapping con photos left and right, while Bill was actually listening to the speeches in the hall!

The afternoon wore on and finally the convention program broke for supper and for the ball to be held later on that night across the park in the Lotos Club. I had made plans with Maurice and Bill to go to supper--gathered up Dick Clarkson, and we all started out. Cal Beck and mother and unidentified friend attached themselves to our party and we all walked uptown to a very good cafeteria. After supper, I excused myself with a convenient headache and went back to the hotel to change for the ball. I got into my formal dress uniform (blue uniform, black bow tie, ribbons--oh I was very pretty!)

There wasn't any dancing as promised (that's good) but I think a grand time was had by all at the Lotos Club. It was the highlight of the convention in my estimation. Everybody who was anybody showed up there. The committee showed several movies, "Metro" (the robot energized by Dave Mason) was introduced and put on his act, and a humorous panel-type quiz was also on the entertainment. Unscheduled and unplanned entertainment was given by Isaac Asimov goosing Evelyn Gold and getting his face slapped for it (but not too hard). We broke it up around midnight and a group of us walked downtown to see the lights and back to the hotel about two-thirty. The management wouldn't let us congregate in the lobby to talk, and definitely frowned upon private parties in various rooms (this seems to be a contagious disease amongst hotel managements lately). The discouragement was done in a nice manner, but it was definite.

The next day was a repetition of the first afternoon--speeches were made, while Riddle still tried to make enough money to pay his hotel bill. (For your information, I finally did do it). One of the incidents still stands out in my mind. A little neo came up to me and said, "Mr. Asimov--may I have your autograph?" I told him that I was sorry, but I wasn't Mr. Asimov, but I would be glad to sign his book anyway. I still can remember the look of awe on his face when I signed it "Hugo Gernsback."

We left the convention about five p.m. on Sunday afternoon, taking Dick Clarkson along with us, to ride to New London, where he would catch a train on to Boston and school. We stopped off in Brooklyn, where we ate Jerry and Jackie Bixby out of house and home and staggered off towards Connecticut. Dropping Bill off at his house in Milford, we went to New London, where we discovered that Dick's next train would be at five-thirty in morning (this was about midnight). So, I brought Dick and Maurice both over to Norwich, put them to bed on a couch and chair and went to bed myself. Dick and I staggered out of the house about four thirty in morning, I took him back to New London, bid him adieu (that was the last, incidentally, that I saw or heard from him), and went back home for about half an hour's more sleep.

Fun? Enjoyment? Yes, certainly, these came from the Metrocon. The committee deserves full credit for the hard work they put in, and my appreciation for a job well done goes out to Dave Kyle, Sam Moskowitz, Jean Carrol, Dick Ellington, Art Saha, Lin Carter, George Nims Raybin, Dan Curran, Dave Mason, Fran Farrell, and Phyllis Scott. With this job behind them, perhaps they can throw another convention in the near future--and

believe you me, if I am anywhere in the vicinity, I am going to try to be there!

Overheard at the convention, when two fans were talking about "The Immortal Storm": "Where else can you get a detailed description of a fan-feud for only five bucks?"

-oOo-

LAST MINUTE AND Just received this past week at the Riddle household was
LAST PAGE NOTES the revived LE ZOMBIE from Bob Tucker. Those of you who remember this fanzine out of the legendary past will rejoice with me in its revival. I had one of the best hours of the past few months in reading and rereading this issue. Bob is certainly to be congratulated on bringing back LEZ to fandom, and I certainly hope you can obtain a copy from him. No price or publication schedule was listed, but try anyway to get a copy from Bob Tucker, Box 702, Bloomington, Illinois. The mimeographing was perfect, and that is an understatement. The material--well, I'm not going to spoil your pleasure by telling you anything about what is in this issue of LEZ, The Aristocrat of Fandom, but will let you find out for your ownself.

A new and final address for Ken Slater: 22 Broad Street, Syston, Leics., England, where he is operating Operation Fantast in full swing again.

Notice something this issue? This begins the eighth year of continuous publication of PEON, and in spite of a reviewer (like Asimov's celebrated critic who shall be Nameless) calling PEON "commercialized", I believe the majority of you readers like PEON as it is. Thanks for all the nice letters you've been sending -- and I hope you will all still be with me when I celebrate my 100th issue -- about fifteen years from now.

Until next time then, happy reading to all of you from all of us...

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