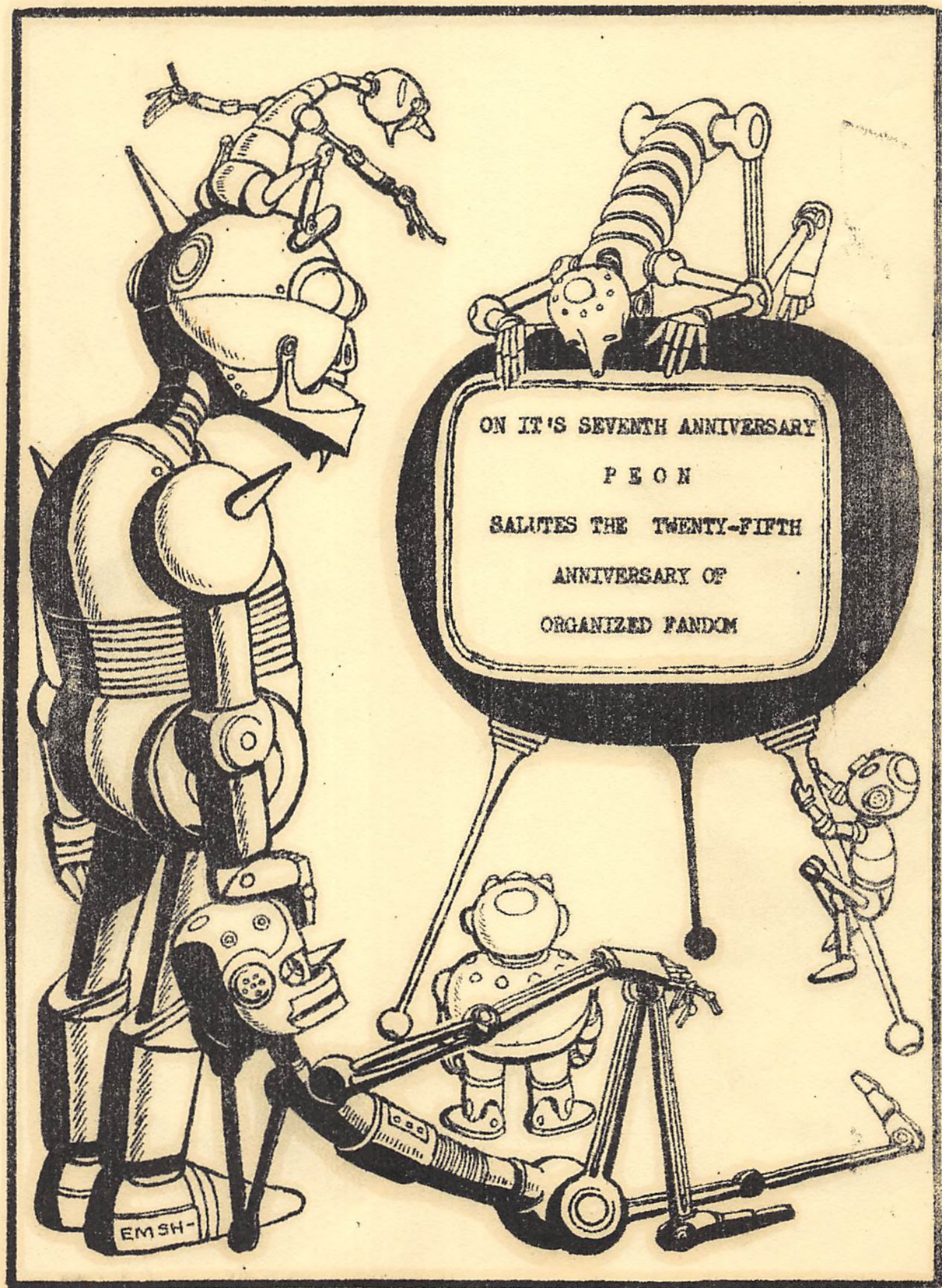


PEON

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PEON

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PEON NOTES

The month of May, in the year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Five is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first science fiction fanzine, according to Bob Tucker. It seems that way back there in 1930, Ray Palmer published the first "little magazine" devoted to those people who had like interests--science fiction. Thus, organized fandom was also born with that issue. I don't know how many reams of mimeograph and duplicator paper have been used by fans since that time in publishing fanzines of their own--in fact,

I don't imagine anyone today could even make a close guess. However, fandom has changed quite a bit since those days, but still the tie that drew together Ray and his readers is with us--the love of and interest in science fiction and its allied fields.

This also marks the beginning of the eighth continuous and straight year of publishing PEON by yours truly. Perhaps I should have made an extra-special issue of PEON this time to commemorate both fandom's 25th and PEON's 7th anniversary, but I just didn't have the time to do so. Rather than risk the chance of getting worn out and disgusted with an extra-large issue I thought it best to concentrate on bringing out another regular issue, so, outside of the special cover Ed Emshwiller was so gracious in doing for me, this is just another issue of PEON. I still have as my goal one hundred issues and as this is the 35th issue of PEON, I am about one-third of the way.

Some of you readers who have been with me since issue number one will have read several pieces of material in this issue already. The Bloch, Fennel, Boland, and Cordes items have seen print in previous and older issues of PEON heretofore, but since I have always liked these bits, I thought some of the newer readers might like them also. Also having seen print before, but in another fanzine is the Rog Phillips article. It originally appeared in the Insurgent Issue of Art Rapp's SPACEWARP, but circulated primarily through FAPA in 1950 or 1951, and is reprinted through permission of the author.

Also noticeable in this issue of PEON is practically the complete lack of artwork. PEON has never been noted for its artwork, and now is no time to start something I can't keep up when I get aboard a ship or someplace where I can't use a mimeoscope. I'm trying a new layout system in this issue, and would appreciate your comments on the way the magazine's format strikes you.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 28)

AUTHOR'S NOTE:::Science fiction is basically a fantastic genre of writing. Let's not deny it. And no matter how much we push the concept that "it's as real as tomorrow" and that "the s-f writers have to hustle to keep ahead of progress", still, if we removed that element of sheer flying fantasy, then we would soon lose interest in it, for it is that outrageous unbelievableness that makes science fiction science fiction and not, say, western adventure.

In this story there is a basic flaw, only partially explained. You will notice it. You were intended to notice it. It was intentionally placed in the story, else there could not have been a story. It is a necessary evil. Call it literary license if you will, or just admit that if we wish to enjoy the story, we just put up with the one incongruency. Bear with me as a story unfurls itself. A story of a man whose life was waste, but a waste upon which rested the future of a Universe, as he endlessly conducted his

Night Vigil

HARLAN ELLISON

Darkness seeped in around the little quonset. It oozed out of the deeps and swirled around Ferreno's home. The automatic scanners turned and turned, whispering quietly, their message of wariness unconsciously reassuring the old man.

He bent over and plucked momentarily at a bit of foreign matter on the carpet. It was the only odd color on the rug, reflecting the old man's perpetual cleanliness and love of neatness. The racks of books were all binding to binding, set flush with the lip of the bookshelf; the bed was made with a tightness that allowed a silver dollar to bounce thrice; the rug was spotless, with not a speck of lint or dust on it. Save for the piece Ferreno stopped and deposited in the incinerator, the place was immaculate.

It reflected twenty-four years of watching, waiting, and living alone. Living alone on the edge of the Forever, waiting for something that might never come. Ferreno blinked, his deep-set grey eyes seeking out into the blackness for something he never knew.

There had been no warmth, no women, no feeling, no emotion, almost

for twenty of those twenty-four years. Ferreno had been a young man when they had set him down on The Stone. They had pointed out there and said to him, "Beyond the farthest spot you can see, there is an island universe and in that island universe, there is an inimicable enemy. One day he will become dissatisfied with his home and seek yours. You are here to watch for him."

And they had gone before he could ask them.

Ask them: Who were the enemy? Where would they come from? Why would they come? What could he do if they came? What were the huge silent machines that bulked monstrous behind the little quonset? Would he ever go home again?

There at first, he had thought he would go out of mind. It was monotony. Monotony personified. The ordeal of watching, watching, watching. Sleeping, eating from the self-replenishing supply of proto-foods in the green tank, reading, sleeping again, re-reading the books till their binding crackled, snapped and the pages fell silently on the floor. First filth and throwing things against the curving walls and ceiling, then extreme neatness, then a moderation, and finally back to the neat, prissy fastidiousness of the old man wanting to know where everything was at any-time.

No women. That had been a problem. Then he had solved it. He was sterile.

But they had picked him well. He clung to his sanity, for he knew it was his only escape. He swung back over the line and soon grew content with his world in a shell. He waited, and in his waiting grew a contentment out of restlessness. He began to think of it as a jail; then as a coffin; then as the ultimate black of the Final Hole. He would wake up "nights" choking, his throat constricted tight, his hands claws that crooked themselves into the foam rubber of the sleeping cot with fierceness.

The time was spent. He could not go back and tell you how--just that it was spent. His life was so dust-dry he hardly knew he was living.

And ever and ever the huge, dull, sleeping eye of the warning buzzer stared back at him, veiled, from the wall.

It was hooked up with the scanners. The scanners in turn were hooked up to the net of tight cosmic rays that interlocked each other out to the farthest horizon in which Ferreno might ever conceivably search out. And the net in turn joined at stop-gap junctions by doggie-guards, also waiting, watching for that implacable alien that would someday come.

Ferreno at first watched the thing constantly, waiting for it to make the disruptive noise he was sure it would emit. Breaking the perpetual silence of his bubble. He waited for the bloodiness of its blink to warp

fantastic shadows across the room and the furniture. He even spent five months deciding what shape those shadows would take when they came.

Then as time progressed, he grew unaware of it, forgot it existed for long periods, till it had finally come to where the knowledge of its existence was a dim thing, nearly unremembered, but there, waiting to be used if need be.

For Ferreno never forgot why he was there. He never forgot the reason they came and dragged him off the front porch where he sat, arms tight, around his girl, on a creaking porch glider that smacked up against the wall every time it went too far back. He remembered the taste of the acidly lemonade in his stomach as they said, "Are you Charles Ferreno, age nineteen, brown hair, blue eyes, five feet ten, 150 pounds?"

"Y-yes," he recalled stammering, the intrusion of strangers on a thing so private as a love-making session, causing him to falter. Then they had grabbed him, flashed a card at Marie, and taken him howling into a helicopter--black and silent--that whirled off to a plastic block in the desert, that he was told was Central Space Service Headquarters.

Chosen best out of forty-seven thousand possible cards in the files. Best by selection. Infallible machine. Some other he could not now recall. And then the ship.

Those nose of the beast pointed straight up, up into a cloudless sky, blue and unfilmed as the best he had ever known, and then a rumble, and a scream, and a pressure as it raced into space and an almost imperceptible wrenching as it slipped off scud-wise into some other space. Then the gut-pulling again and off there to the right through the port that bleak little asteroid.

When they set him down and told him about The Aliens, he screamed at them, but they pushed him back into the bubble and left, locking the airlock so he could not take his own life that way. They left him then, rushing up till they popped out of sight as if around a bend in the road.

He bloodied his hands and the resilient plastic around the door and d vista windows for two weeks before he found they were sealed tightly.

He never forgot why he was here.

He tried to conjure up the Aliens. Were they horrible slug-like creatures from some dark star, spreading a ring of poisonous viscous fluid inside Earth's atmosphere, poisoning all; were they tentacled spider-men who drank blood; were they perhaps quiet, well-mannered beings who would sublimate all of Man's drives and ambitions; were they---

He went on and on till it did not matter in the slightest to him. Then he forgot time. But, he remembered he was here to watch. To watch and wait. A sentinel at the Gate of Forever, waiting for an unknown enemy

that would streak out of nowhere, bound for Earth and destruction.

The enemy would not stop at any little colonies along the way. It would strike deep and fully, right for the heart of the spawning Man-culture.

Ferreño hated them for a while. Then, even that passed.

Thoughts played leap-frog with themselves. Ferreño was thinking. For the first time in ten years, actually thinking. He sat in the chair which had conformed itself to his posture, the muted strains of some long-since forgotten piece of taped music the only sound---even that compressed into a corner of his mind through horrible repetition---and thought. Beads of perspiration coursed freely, dotting his upper lip and the receding arcs of sparse hair at his temples.

What if they never came? What if they had gone already and through some failure of the mechanisms he had missed them? Even the sub-hearing persistence of the scanners revolving was not assurance enough. For the first time in years he was hearing the scanners again, and did they sound right? Didn't-they-sound-a-bit-off? They didn't sound right! Migod, ALL THESE YEARS AND NOW THEY WEREN'T WORKING! OHMIGOD, all these years here nowhere and they've stopped running and no good damned things without a behind them aliens have slipped through earth's gone I'm no good here and all and Marie and everything...

!!!

He grabbed control of himself suddenly, lurchingly. The machines were perfect. They worked on the basis substance of the Universe, they couldn't go wrong, once set together on the pattern, if they had wanted to do so.

But the uselessness of it all remained.

What good could one puny man serve here, away from all and everyone? He knew that two men might have killed each other out of sheer boredom, and the same for a man and woman, and that one man was the only thing that could remain, intelligent enough to relay that message from the blinking light to Earth.

The only intelligent thing, because a robot brain equipped to perform only that simple task, including any possible ramifications that might crop up in a period as long as Ferreño was expected to stay--fifty years--would have had to be something like five hundred miles long by three hundred wide, with tapes and condensers and punch checks and the like that, if laid end to end, would have stretched to a point close to Galactic Center and back.

He knew he was necessary, which had stopped him from somehow wrecking the whole bubble and himself during those twenty-four years, but still it

all seemed so sad, so helpless, so unnecessary. He didn't know, but he was certain the bubble would inform them if he died--to be replaced.

He knew, deep inside himself, that it was a gesture of survival to the peoples of Earth. They wanted to live. But did they have to sacrifice a man for their survival?

Yes, it was inevitable.

It just happened he was the man.

Here at this junction of the Galaxies; in this spot of most importance and this key to the battle that someday would have to be fought.

But, what if he was wasted. What if they never came? What if there never were any Aliens? Only supposition by the learned ones, tampering with a human being's soul and life?

What if---

A soft buzz accompanied the steady ruby glow from the warning light on the wall.

Ferreno stared, open-mouthed. Here it was. Was this it? No strident noises, no flickering urgency of red light. Only a steady glow and a soft buzz. And at the same time he knew that this was far more effective, and that it had prevented what would have been a sure-death from heart attack, had a warning gone off such as he had envisioned.

He froze in the seat.

He couldn't move. His hands could not respond to the multiple keys set in the underside of the armrest that would signal Earth. He was totally incapacitated. What if this was a dud? What if the machines were breaking down from constant twenty-four years (plus how many men before him) of use? What if this was all a hallucination? What if---

Then he knew it was not. Far out in the dark dark of the space beyond his asteroid he could see a point piercing the tapestry of the void and he knew. A calmness covered him. He was worthwhile, he knew now. This was the culmination of all the years of waiting, and he knew, now that it was worth it all. The privation, the hunger for companionship, all of it. It was worth it. He reached and let his fingers flicker momentarily over the keys in the well-remembered pattern that would warn Earth.

He settled back and let his thoughts rest on the calm surface of his mind. He was content. He would die soon, his job was finished. It was worth all the years without. Without. Without anything he would have known good on Earth. But it was worth all of it.

The Aliens were coming at last.

CHRIST!! AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Rog Phillips

There was a man in Canada who claimed seriously to dislike Roger P. Graham, and to be in almost constant telepathic contact with Rog Phillips; a woman in Los Angeles who proved by letter and verse from the Matrix stories that Rog Phillips was perhaps the greatest "adept" of modern times; a man in Virginia who published an announcement that Rog Phillips is the incarnation of an Archangel; and a man in St. Paul, who was genuinely surprised that any of the stories by R. P. Graham were anything but straight science fiction and fantasy.

There was a young man in a southern state who thought he was taking his life in his hands in writing me, and took careful precautions to prevent my killing him. He had penetrated the secret message hidden in "So Shall Ye Reap", and was demanding to be included among those who went into the radio-active-proof artificial caves being constructed to house mankind. He had written all this down and given it to an unnamed friend to hold, to be turned over to the police if he met with some mysterious death instead of getting a ticket to the caves. There was a young lady in Michigan who wrote after the announcement of a Russian atom bomb being exploded in Siberia that she and a few others now knew that "So Shall Ye Reap" was true, and when I answered her telling her that I, who wrote the story, didn't believe it was true, she answered thanking me for trying to reassure her, but she still knew it was true--facts were facts.

Those are a few, a very few, of the letters I have received and I have read, that my stories and articles have given rise to. They have nothing to do with the Shaver Mystery. From the very start of my writing, I have consistently steered clear of sounding like Shaver -- not for any personal reason, but simply because a second fiddle, no matter how sweet, is always a second fiddle.

By far, the majority of my mail, mail from people who have never written me before, has been sensible and ordinary. I've made many friends through the mail. A good many of you reading this article have written me at some time or another, and some of you have letters from me in person. Or maybe more than a few. Probably at least 50 of you. So I'm quite sure I won't be starting a feud or creating a misunderstanding in this article, in which I am going to tell about some of the more unusual contacts and experiences I have had on account of my writing.

The most unusual by far was a young lady who lives near San Francisco. A letter from her came to Ziff-Davis some years ago. At that time I wasn't so snowed under with correspondence, and was answering most of my

mail, I wrote her a thank-you letter for her kind words about my stories, since the letter had been sent to me personally. I received another letter from her immediately. I would have scratched it off as "crackpot", but that night I had a very vivid dream in which I saw her face. The next morning when I woke up I had the conviction that it had been her.

I wrote and frankly told her of the dream, and said that I was interested in such phenomena that might have evidence of supernatural things such as esp, and would she send me her picture so I could compare it with the face in the dream. She refused, but countered by asking for my picture. I happened to have two snapshots of me in my office, one sitting at my typer, the other of me lying on my davenport. I took them out of the drawer and studied each, trying to decide which one to send her. I looked at the one of me sitting at the typer. My eyes went to the legs, and a thought entered my mind that they were the legs of a cripple. I frowned at the thought, stretched out on the davenport, and the thought returned. "Those are the legs of a cripple." It wasn't so, and the thought was irrational. But I've had a good many experiences with esp, and this thought had the "feel."

The trouble with genuine esp is that more often than not it comes disguised by one's own thoughts, and it's a problem for Freud to get underneath the symbolism of one's own mind and get to the real impressions. I reasoned, "Since I am definitely not crippled, could this mean that she is?" I took the gamble and wrote her, saying that I thought she was an invalid in some way, perhaps unable to walk. She answered that I was correct up to a certain point. By this time, she had apparently fallen for me and was comparing the two of us to Browning and his invalid girlfriend. It was about this time that I was preparing to spend a winter in Los Angeles. I decided I would drop up and see her -- not for the romantic element, it says here, but in an investigation of this pay dirt in esp that I had stumbled onto. I had another dream in which I saw her. I also saw a strange face that looked like it might belong to a Filipino.

To make a long story shorter, I did go up and visit her, staying for several days. Her features, so vividly etched to my mind through those two dreams, were exactly as I had seen them in every detail. The first time I saw her in the flesh she was looking out a window as my taxi drove up, and I recognized her. It was genuine esp, over a distance of 2400 miles.

And here is where the subtle changes in esp come in. Instead of her legs being cut off or paralyzed or anything like that, she had heart trouble in an advanced stage that prevented her from staying out of bed more than a few minutes at a time. She was not given more than a few months to live.

But at the moment I arrived I "felt" that something wasn't quite kosher. I couldn't lay my finger on it. I had already discovered that she believed that all dreams were genuine psychic experiences with an objective existence on spiritual planes. She was all mixed up, and there was

not much that could be done on that score.

I went to town alone one day, just to get away and think things out. In town I had my second surprise, and one that I can't explain. I got into a poker game, lost a few bucks, and then wandered down the street. I met and passed the Filipino I had seen in that dream in Chicago, as authentic in every facial detail as this girl's features had been.

I went back to her house still undecided about things. Then she really let her hair down and I discovered what had been bothering me. She had a certain ability at esp, but the combination of that and unrestricted dreaming with the belief that they were all the same and objectively real, had led her to a pretty absurd goal.

She believed I was the incarnation of Christ, and that I had chosen her as the instrument to prove my identity to the world. She was going to die and be pronounced dead by the doctors. In three days after she died I was going to raise her from the dead, and she was going to be my disciple, and all the world was going to accept me as Christ.

Under my breath I said, "Christ!" and made a graceful exit. A fortunately timed letter was my excuse for hurrying back to LA. She was a die-hard, and for a year after, I got letters from her in which she imagined I was still talking to her via the astral planes. It was a close call. One thing I must not do is to let the world know I'm Christ. That business is too competitive. There are fewer good writers in the world today than Christs, and more demand for them.

The second most remarkable experience brought to me through my correspondence was a letter from Dick Shaver when he lived at Barto, Pennsylvania and I lived on the west coast. The letter's contents weren't unusual. I was home alone except for my dog, a wire-haired terrier, since deceased. I don't know how to explain what happened, and I can't make head nor tails of it, so I'll tell it just the way it happened. I brought my mail into the kitchen and laid it down on the drainboard. Pepper was standing there wagging his tail, looking at me. I opened Dick's letter. Something seemed to jump out of it. Pepper backed up, then ran into the front room like the devil was after him.

I "sensed" that something came to a pause in front of me about two feet off the floor. I focused my eyes carefully where I "knew" the something to be. My eyes could see absolutely nothing at any time, yet I followed this something from the kitchen into the front room, studying my "impressions" of it. It either had no size, or was no larger than an insect, and invisible. I "sensed" a shrill whining like a high speed machine. When I went into the living room, Pepper tried to hid behind a chair, whining in intense fear. He ran about the room like he was having a fear fit. I followed this something around, bending over and trying to make out at least some visible evidence of it, always "knowing" its exact location, as did Pepper.

It was there for half an hour, and then, suddenly was gone, and never returned. The instant I "felt" it leave, Pepper quietted down and wasn't afraid any more, though apprehensive for an hour or two afterward. His reactions preclude the possibility of this being my imagination; but of course this is a personal experience of no value evidently to myself. I have often wondered what it could have been. Some phenomenon connected with Shaver and his caves? Probably. Whatever it was, it arrived inside an ordinary letter that contained nothing unusual and was purely friendly chitchat from Shaver.

Once several years ago, Ray Palmer and I almost got into some trouble over a guy who had spent his life concocting a theory about the origin of planets and solar systems. We listened to his theory. It had many good things in it and many not so sound. We couldn't do anything with it, though, and several months later a story that appeared in Amazing had some stuff in it vaguely similar to his. He threatened to sue Ray, and although he didn't, it taught me a lesson - never to read supposedly original stuff from strangers.

My third most unusual letter came to me without being mailed. It was back in the days when the deCourcies were in Seattle cultivating my friendship so they could sell Ray Palmer stories. They were dangling their "bait" in front of my eyes -- a mysterious spirit that talked through Jack deCourcy and made all sorts of claims. Later Jack and Dot asserted in an open letter to fandom that this spirit Joe was a hoax they had used to sell stories, but -- well, listen to this:

I had dropped over to their place in the housing center at White Center, in West Seattle. Dot said to Jack, "Maybe we should - " and Jack said, "No, we should wait. Joe doesn't want us to." Dot said, "But if we wait until it happens, Rog could never be sure we hadn't written it then, instead of now." Jack said, "We didn't write it. Joe did. But you have something there. Maybe we should give it to him sealed, to open when we tell him." Dot said, "But if we let him read it now, he can have that encouragement." To which, Jack said, "You're right."

He went into the bedroom and brought out a sheet of paper. It was signed "Joe", and said my wife would be released from the hospital on a certain definite date, that was about three months away at the time. ((I was married then, but am not now.))

On my next visit to the hospital, I asked the doctors if they had any idea when she could be released. They hadn't. I mentioned this date. The doctor said, "Most emphatically no. Her improvement would have to be miraculous."

On the exact date predicted by this hoax "Joe", she was released from the hospital. To make it even better, her recovery had been so good that the doctors had planned on releasing her a week earlier than that date, but at the last minute decided to keep her another week to make sure there would be no relapse.

Some of my most interesting mail has come from the female of the species. There have been outright proposals of marriage, but more often just nice letters with a (Miss) before their names. Usually, of the ones I've answered, they turn out to be young ladies who have no thought of marrying Rog Phillips. The female mind is adroitly "transparent" in that respect, and can find more ways of saying something without saying it than a null-A I've ever heard of.

In spite of the fact that my mother and father married after having only corresponded, the idea doesn't particularly appeal to me. (My dad was in the Spanish American War, and one of his buddies had a sister. Since my dad didn't get any mail, this buddy talked him and his sister into writing each other, and when the war was over my dad went up to Christman, Illinois, resplendent in his army uniform and handlebar moustache, so naturally Mom was a pushover.) A girl that falls in love with me from reading my stories is falling for a different man than she'll ever meet in the flesh. He is a part of my mind that hides, for the most part, when others are around. Even noise or troubles cause it to pull in its head. It manifests itself only through my fingers on the typewriter. So any girl that falls for that part of me is in for a sad awakening, when and if she meets me. Knowing this, I feel it's like carrying on a romance by proxy for a guy who will run and leave me holding the bag - get it? I just got it myself; that's why I asked.

For the most part, letters are extremely pleasant to get. I have received two letters that made me extremely uncomfortable. They were over the "Club House". The first was from a postal employee in Canada who took me to task over a statement I made in my column about Canadian discrimination against US magazines. He accused me of deliberately and criminally trying to upset diplomatic relations between Canada and the US, which had been amicable up to then.

The other upsetting letter was from a Britisher, who from his wording was writing for his Great American Public, although the letter was addressed to me. Its essence was that when I said in the "Club House" that "the Statue of Liberty was the only thing we ever got from any European country", I was alienating the affections and loyalty we could buy when Russia started in. He demanded that I publish his letter in the "Club House". Naturally, I didn't. All Europe, including England (which I have never considered in the same breath with Europe in my own mind) will just have to keep on having its feelings hurt, and embrace the slavery of communism when the time comes, just to spite me, rather than fighting to maintain what freedom they have.

Every once in a while, I get a letter from some fan who seems to have the belief that I am the leader of stfandom and exert a tremendous influence, being able to use the "Club House" to exert pressure on fans. Two of these letters have been from fans "being run out of fandom by some", asking for my help to save them. Another was from a "fan" who had decided

fandom was too tame lately and wanted to get another feud of some kind started, asking my help. He would write a hot open letter to fandom if I should write a hot reply. Obviously, I have neither the ability nor the desire to exert any kind of pressure or disciplinary movement against any part of fandom. The only exception to that is when I have exposed the reading public to possible mulchting in what seems to be a fraud. If -- and when -- that happens, I will publish in the "Club House" just enough of a statement to warn the public against sending any money to the thing-- to correct my previous boosts, if any.

Fan mail is the answer to my being able to so consistently sell my work. I've had rejections from publishers, but I have never written a story I haven't sold. I hear that other authors have their sacred pile of rejected stories that have made the rounds and been given up, their current half-dozen hopefuls that might be sold yet in the expanding market. I don't have a single reject hanging around, nor do I have any stories out "making the rounds". When I write a story, it is sold. Fan mail has done that. There are two ways in which it has done it, besides the fan mail that comes in on a Rog Phillips story.

The first and most important way that fan mail has helped me is this: a great deal of my stuff is published under pen-names invented by the editors. The stories are apparently the work of brand new and unknown writers. Fan mail comes in giving the stories high rating, and often top rating, and asking for more of that new author's stuff. That's the type of thing that boosts my stock with editors. There have even been times when fan letters have placed the "new author" way above Rog Phillips -- and by fans I know, who would be very surprised to learn I was this other author too!

The second way in which fan mail has helped me follows the same pattern, but with a different angle. As often as not, Ziff-Davis and Clark bought my stories without reading them. They knew they can do so safely-- because if a story were to prove too poor for publication, I would make it good with another story of the same wordage without protest. And when I say too poor for publication, I mean in the editor's opinion. There was one story bought without reading it, and when the magazine was being put together, it was behind schedule. They took a chance and sent the manuscript to the typesetters without reading it until they got the page proofs to correct. Then they read it and were horrified. It violated every rule of writing. It was definitely no good. They got me on a phone. I rushed right down and read it myself. I had to agree with them. It was absolutely no good. But there was nothing that could be done. It was set in type; there wasn't time to replace it, let alone stand for a bawling out from the front office for wasted typesetting. I was set to work on the problem of "saving" the story in some way by minor cutting out the equally minor corrections that could be rushed through the typesetters. I couldn't find anything that could be cut out and improve the story. One of the editors and I cooked up a couple of paragraphs, one in the middle of the story and one at the end. Also the name of the author was changed. Fan mail rated the story excellent, and objected only to the

two paragraphs we had inserted!

Speaking of that, I got a big kick out of the fan mail published in Thrilling Wonder Stories on my story "Quite Logical". That story had originally been 11,000 words. Sam set it back saying he wanted it if I could cut it down to 9000. I didn't see how it could be done, but did it and sent it back to him. I got it back with a note saying they would buy it if I cut it to 6500. I had already done all the cutting in the first half. I still refused to change a word in the last half, the descent on Washington and the White House. I cut the damn thing to 6500. Sam bought it. One of the fan letters published said it was cut too much in the first half!

There are two more letters I think will amuse you. One came to Ziff-Davis from a large radio and TV production agency in New York. It said that this agency was desirous of entering into the stf field, and in surveying the market, had settled on two authors they wanted to contact first, and requested their addresses. The authors' names were Rog Phillips and Craig Browning.

Howard Browne called me on the phone and read the letter, suggesting that I answer. My answer was very short: "Dear Sir: Inasmuch as I am both of these authors, your task is much simplified. Yours truly, R. P. Graham."

I've spoken in this article of a couple of mysteries in connection, with letters I've received. The biggest mystery to me is why my writings are popular. I think that is the big mystery to all writers who sell. At the start, I recognized a definite cycle to successful writers: (a) the period of learning to write and finally selling, (b) the period of success during which stories create favorable reading response but the writer does not know why, and (c) the decline, during which the writer is doing better work than ever but it's unpopular or creates no response. I've realized I was vulnerable so long as I didn't know what why my stuff was popular, and have tried to isolate that factor which made a story popular. Not having ever found it, I'm still vulnerable. I may often sound like an egomaniac, but with each story I write, I pause to frown and consciously realize my vulnerability, and to admit to myself that with this story my decline may be starting, with me helpless to prevent it.

Consequently, when I receive a letter like the one I'm going to quote verbatim, I feel very good about it. It came with a check from Z-D, and said:

Dear author:

Christ, if I could only write as good as you!

Your sincere admirer,

J. Wellington Flutch
Editor

THE SUPER FAN

You think you're a science-fiction fan? Have you circled the galaxy? Well, Kirk Allen did, and he is the fan to end all fans.

If you happen to be a science-fiction author, you have heard of reader identification. This is when the reader identifies himself with the hero of the story. You are just about to hear of the greatest science-fiction author and the top reader ident-job in history. The shame of it is, we don't know who this author is.

KAN KAN KABITZER

This is the story of "Kirk Allen", a top research physicist on atomic energy, as told by his psychoanalyst, Robert Linder, of Baltimore. Dr. Linder wrote a two-part article "The Jet-Propelled Couch" in Harper's for December 1954 and January 1955, and a book "The Fifty-Minute Hour", yet to be published.

T. E. WATKINS

"Kirk Allen" is not the scientist's real name, and this is a shame because if we knew his name we would have an important clue to the author of the science fiction series that tipped the physicist off center. The U.S. government sent Allen to Dr. Linder to get straightened out. He was a whiz-bang research scientist, but he was spending too much time "off the planet." Most of the time he was o.k., but in his spare time, Allen believed that he could travel through time to the future and was a famous space pilot in a future galactic empire.

Dr. Linder could hardly believe this unusual delusion. When Kirk Allen walked into his office, he turned out to be a "young executive" type in his early thirties, blond, clear-eyed, average height. Allen was very embarrassed about his "difficulty" but quite willing to talk about it.

As a psychoanalyst, Dr. Linder was quite interested in Allen's background. He had to probe this to find the clue to the special delusion. Allen was born in Hawaii, the son of a naval officer. His mother died when he was a small boy, and he was raised by Hawaiian nurses. His father was a hard, unimaginative type and assigned as Commissioner over a mandated island. Allen's life was a lonely one during his boyhood and young manhood. When he was eleven, his father employed an attractive fine woman as a governess. He was well developed sexually and Miss Lillian noticed this the first time she gave him a bath. She took to undressing in front of him and when she saw he was aroused she was insatiable. There were times when he had to run away and lock her out of his room. After a

time, Miss Lillian ran away with the school teacher's husband, but she had given Allen a life long block against the sex act.

Dr. Linder, who studied under Theodor Reik, a noted Freudian, suggests that this early sex experience is the basis for the development of Allen's peculiar fantasy. His sex drive finds outlet in day dreaming about space travel. This is supported by the fact that Miss Lillian is the only sex-experience Allen ever had.

There were few books to read on the island. These were mostly books of sermons, children's books, essays, biographies, etc. One day a whole crate of new books was delivered to the mission house and it contained many novels, including a set by a "highly imaginative and prolific writer" (Hint? Linder does not say who this author was. He identifies none of the authors of the books read by Allen.) It gave Allen a shock when he found one book by a famous English author in which the hero had his own name. He felt completely disoriented. He found another book several days later by an American author which had a character with his own name. Then came the clincher. He found a whole series of books by an American science fiction author, which contained a Superman, all-conquering hero, by the name of Kirk Allen. As he read these stories of the far future, he began to realize that he was reading his own biography. His everyday life receded, the books were his reality.

He grew up with these stories. Most of his spare time was spent working with the fantasy. He convinced himself that the stories were written in the future and sent back to instruct him. He believed in the co-existence of time dimensions and thought that the past, present, and future could exist together. Most of the time Allen could remember his life in the future time and could even piece out the intervals between books. One day he was trying to remember a detail about a map of a new galaxy he had explored. It wouldn't come clear. He was drawing a map of this galaxy project in his room at X reservation where he was employed as a research scientist. He remembered that the original photographs of the project were in a secret room in his palace in the future. He was frustrated and impatient at not having them available. If he could only get to his palace he could get the photographs and solve the problem. No sooner had he thought of it than he was there. He was Lord Allen, inter-galaxy hero.

As soon as Kirl Allen found out that he could move into the future at will, his visits there became frequent and extended and his work at X Reservation suffered. He was an important scientist and his work on the project valuable. So the Government wanted him cleared if possible. Dr. Linder realized two things about Allen. First, he was completely mad and did not realize it. Second, his life depended on the madness. To cure him without killing him would be very difficult.

The first thing Linder did was to get Kirk to turn over all his records. There was half a life time of work on this stuff. It would take most of the column just to list the items that composed Allen's records.

For example, there were 12,000 pages of typescript of Allen's future biography alone. There were 2,000 more pages of hand-written notes on more biography. There were maps of star systems, 82 full-color maps carefully drawn to scale of planetary bodies, land masses on planets which Kirk Allen had explored. There was a 200 page history of Kirk Allen's empire. He even had 306 drawings of people, plants, insects, weapons, articles of clothing, vehicles of the future world.

It was Dr. Linder's idea to digest this vast mass of material, the above is only a partial list, and enter fully into Allen's fantasy. To do this he had to have Allen's cooperation. To do that he had to capitalize on Allen's outstanding characteristic, curiosity. Allen though he was normal, had a wild talent, and Linder got him to help him to explore the extent and nature of this wild talent.

A great deal of the article is an explanation, based on Freudian principles, as to the cause of Kirk's madness. The enter into the psychosis with the patient and pry him loose from the inside is a well-known-technique in psychoanalysis. It had a certain danger, however, as we shall see.

Allen had a fine mind and Linder knew that in his fantasy there would be certain errors in logic as one will usually find in any fantasy. The first thing he found were mistakes in distances on a star map. He pointed this out to Kirk who was horrified. Linder remarked that the matter was not very serious, but Allen went to work at once to correct the star maps. It was very serious, Allen contended, because star pilots used those maps. No wonder he had lost so many ships! Then Linder suggested a solution to the problem which seemed to clear the whole thing up. Then Kirk realized that Linder was with him in the fantasy and for the first time he began to question it.

Linder worked hard on the records, finding all the errors he could find for Allen to re-check at the "institute." As Linder's interest waxed Allen's interest waned. The psychologist like the camel, squeezed the physicist out of his own tent. The thing worked so well, that Allen was cured three weeks before he let the doctor know it, because Linder was so obsessed with the fantasy. And Linder admits that he was almost "gone" in the world created by Kirk Allen.

It's a shame that we don't know Kirk Allen's real name. Then we would know the name of the hero of the books that started him on his future journey. And we would know the name of the author who cooked up such super reader-identification. In the last of the article, Linder admits that it has been years since he saw Allen. I suspect that this went on during the Manhattan project but he doesn't say. In the last paragraph Linder says that when the nights are full of stars he thinks of Allen and wonders: "How goes it with the Crystopeds? How are things in Seraneb?" And that sounds like Smith and his Skylark stories. Right?

One last comment. Linder spent all that time bringing back Allen from

his madness and admits that he almost got caught himself. Perhaps Allen wasn't mad. After all, this three dimension space continuum we call "reality" HAS TO BE A FANTASY! Time, as we know it, cannot exist. It is only a category of the mind. And one can look about this little fantasy we call reality and find plenty of events that defy logic as we know logic. It may very well be that all Linder did was to destroy Allen's belief in one "fantasy" and restore it in another.

In other words, Allen's Empire may be just as real as the U.S.A., and I can hardly wait until "The Fifty Minute Hour" is published. I hope Linder publishes a large section of the records. I'd like to look over a few of those star maps myself. I'd like to try a transfer into a future time. Perhaps I can be a space-exploring hero, too. Mad or not, it would be a lot more exciting and fun than banging this mail.

§ § §

FANTASTUFF

Jerry Carr

NOTES AND QUOTES::: When Richard Matheson's Gold Medal Original, "I Am Legend", appeared, the blurb-writer blurbled, "Read this novel. Watch this young writer. You may be in at the birth of a giant." I doubt it. Matheson's first story appeared in the Spring 1950 issue of Fantasy & S.F., that was "Born of Man and Woman," which was NOT about the birth of a giant, as some clever rascals may surmise; that particular monster was well into the post-natal stage. And so was Matheson, literarily, when "I am Legend" appeared. Not only did he have a few reams of magazine fiction under his figurative belt, but

he'd also published one novel already--"Someone Is Bleeding", a non fantasy Lion original. Speaking of which, it should be noted for the sake of completeness, and for the sake of filling up space, that the blurbist on that first book was pretty enthused, too. Said he: "You are looking at a first novel. Never published before, "Someone Is Bleeding" represents the first full length achievement of a brilliant new master of the macabre. We think this is an exciting book. We say Richard Matheson is an exciting discover..." Did you think this was an exciting item? I was afraid not.

RANDCMUTTERINGS:::Even tho Don Cantin has left the fan-field, his memory lingers on. So does a lot of the material he hacked out during his short stay, some of which is still appearing. Eventually, tho, that will disappear, and then what will be left to remind us that Doc was once One of Us? Answer: the shading-screens he sent out free to all fan eds interested and which are still being used--and will be for some time. ¶¶ Thinking along this line, we come to the case of one Edd Cartier, late and lamented sci-fic artist. He's gone too, but he leaves a few traces behind...those advertisement illos in Astounding, and the headings for the letter column and the reviews.

SHORTSNORT:::So, I get this piece of paper in the mail, one of those anonymous things composed of letters cut out of newspapers and pasted up to form the message. To what and who gives one?: SEND COMPLETE SET AST or YOUr NAME Will BE SeNT to N 3f. §§ It's postmarked Berkeley, Calif., tho, which points to the perpetrator. Come out, We-gars!

READ ANY BOOKS AT ALL LATELY?:::The first blurb on Chad Olliver's Ballatine sf novel "Shadows In The Sun" goes like this: "For two months Paul Ellery had gathered the facts, mobility patterns, racial stereotypes, class structures, the usual techniques of the anthropologist working up a community study. They added up to a perfect example of small town Texas culture..typical.. too typical, Paul dug deeper. When the data was in he knew there was something funny...wrong funny. And suddenly, Paul was in trouble. For an anthropologist is an intelligent man used to studying simpler cultures...What can he do when he

knows that he--and all his kind--are the 'natives'...a struggling, backward people in the amused eyes of the powerful citizens of Jefferson Springs?" §§ Remember how you used to copy the jacket blurbs on books for your high-school book reports? Don't you wish you could have been paid for it, like Robert Frazier is? Here's his review of the Oliver book in Fantastic Universe for Jan., 1955: "SHADOWS IN THE SUN is a wholly believable and highly imaginative story of a young anthropologist, who discovers, while on a research assignment in a small Texas town, that men and women of almost godlike attribute are insidiously invading Earth, forced into exile by population pressures on other planets. For two months he patiently gathers the facts: mobility patterns, racial stereotypes, class structures--using all the usual techniques of a trained investigator working up a community study. They add up to a perfect example of a typical small-town Texas culture--too typical. He digs deeper and when all the data is in, he becomes convinced there is something wrong. For an anthropologist must, of necessity, be an intelligent man quick to detect a cultural anomaly. What desperate course must he pursue when he learns that he and all of his kind are actually the 'natives'--a struggling, backward people in the amused eyes of the powerful alien citizens of Jefferson Springs?..." ¶¶ I didn't have the nerve to check any other issues of FU, but a little checking reveals that Frazier's review of "Star Short Novels" in the same issue is also largely paraphrased from the blurb. Mighu, let's just hope that Classics Illustrated does not print any sf novels.

SARCASM DEPT.:::Look Who's Talking,

Division: Paul Mittelbuscher, in "The Condor's Eye", a fanzine review column in UNDERTAKINGS #1: "He seemingly encounters some difficulties with the English language both as to spelling and proper useage of words." In the CONish of ABSTRACT, Peter J. Vorzimer attacked the aforesaid Mr. Mittelbuscher for such errors, and concluded, "Until you paragraph, punctuate, and correct your letters and mss., to the point where they contain no more errors or misspellings than the normal mss., then I will print and accept some of your work."

THOTS WHILE STARING AT A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER::: Although Boob Stewart was joking when he said, "Ghu, what conceit!" upon seeing Fulton Oursler's "Greatest Book Ever Written," some titles now on the stands are pretty bad. Take, for instance Tops in Science Fiction, or World's Finest Comics. The latest addition is a comic titled, quite simply, Terrific. ¶ How often has Bonestell depicted Mars from its moons? And is anybody so callous as to be tired of it? §§ Ruth Plumly Thompson, second author of the Oz books, was really quite a punster. Maybe that, and the fact that most fans read the Oz books as a sort of early indoctrination, has something to do with fandom's weakness for puns today. ++ Oh well, it was just a suggestion.

HISTORICAL NOTE::: Arthur C. Clarke, in an article in New Worlds #4: "A rocket-ship has one characteristic which is perfectly obvious, but which has been ignored by countless artists. Rocket motors can only provide thrust or lift along the line in which they point." Yet how often have we seen vast ships racing horizontally over exotic landscapes with their motors blasting

them forwards, but providing them with no vertical support at all? (The cover of New Worlds #3 was an excellent example of this)." But Arthur, there must be SOME logical explanation of this; artistic license, if nothing else. Personally, I think they just press a stud.

STUFF 'N' NONSENSE::: Ray Thompson, in a letter printed in THURBAN I #3 said: "I'm appalled by the seemingly contagious disease of failing to separate two different sentences with more than a comma." Warren Dennis's answer, in part, goes like this: "Thanks for your letter, your comments will help determine our future policy." § Fascinating Lines: "I have long thought that it would exasperate me to die before I had written this book and so it seemed to me that I had better set about it at once." W. Somerset Maugham, "The Summing Up."

CONVERSATION PIECE::: Local fen like Rossman and Frank McElroy were bandying the bull about at my house a few days ago when the subject of thinking machines came up. Said Rossman: "There is only one thing that man can do that a machine can not do: that is create. For instance, if I sat down and wrote a story, that would be creating. What machine could duplicate that?" Said McElroy: "A mimeo." Next question?

Due to pressure of work on the AGACON, Ian T. Macauley will not be present in this issue of PEON with his fanzine review column. He will, however, be present in the next issue, and fanzines for review should be sent to him at 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta, Ga.

ACCURACY AND SIMPLE FACT

HENRY MOSKOWITZ

Isaac Asimov, in his article in PEON, elaborated on the problem of the author who is confronted with the critic who refuses the bounds of "accuracy and simple fact." I think he handled it well, for the most part, although in not too clear a manner in some spots.

I do not believe that Mr. Asimov was "trying to nullify the effect of an unfavorable review", nor was he trying to condemn the reviewer (Mr. Henry Bott) with "untrue remarks." I think Mr. Asimov acted like a gentleman when he refrained from referring to Mr. Bott by name--using instead the title of "The Nameless One." To those readers unfamiliar with the review in question (on "The Caves of Steel"), Mr. Asimov presented the situation only. To those who recognized the review and the reviewer referred to, the situation remained unchanged.

Mr. Bott's review of "The Caves of Steel" was one hundred eighty-seven words in length, of which fifty-five actually referred to that novel. This is something over twenty-nine percent. "The canvas is of course the galaxy--nothing less. There is the robot and the super-empire." "With Tom Swiftian naivete, characters move around in a really never-never world. Insipidity and dullness characterize the plodding story." "The murdered Spaceman, a corpse in steel-roofed New York's vastness, is remembered by the robot-detective and--"

Those fifty-five are partially vague, partially without enlargement, and partially false. Vague in reference to the "murdered Spaceman... remembered by the robot detective..." What is meant? Lack of enlargement on "the robot and the super-empire." False when referring to a galactic canvas--the story is played in New York City, Earth.

The foregoing proves Mr. Asimov's contention that some critics ignore the bounds of "accuracy and simple fact."

I would say that the "review" of "The Caves of Steel" is no such thing--it is an opinion of one man of an author and his works. As such it has no place in Imagination. On the cut for the "Science Fiction Library" it is stated that the SFL is "reviewing current science fiction books."

Mr. Bott himself admitted that he had "tried to be objective in analyzing this novel, but ..." To make matters even worse, he presented no

EDITOR'S NOTE--Rarely has an article in a fanzine been singled out for the basis of an entire editorial in one of the prozines. But, such was the case on article by Isaac Asimov appearing in the November 1954 issue of PEON. The editor of Imagination recently devoted his entire editorial to the article, attempting to rebut it. I think he failed miserably. So, apparently, does the author of this article. However, since the latest issue of the prozine in question had a letter by Mr. Asimov, offering to forget the whole thing, we will do the same, after you read this article.

analysis at all. Mr. Asimov, with just cause, accused that "he substitutes invective for reasoning and personalities for analysis."

As a "review", Mr. Bott's work (what little of it there is) is inaccurate. As a "reviewer", therefore, Mr. Bott is insulting.

Mr. Bott's rebuttal seems somewhat asinine. Several of his statements are extremely questionable. He wrote of a "natural" rancor between author and critic. Even if the critic, sir, is fair and the author sensible? "I do not know Mr. Asimov," he continued. What difference does this make in the matter at hand, sir? "Mr. Asimov is determined to force me to admit that his books are 'good'." Nowhere did Mr. Asimov attempt to use force. Employing the word in this situation, as Mr. Bott did, shows markedly bad judgment.

Mr. Bott continued in grand style: "I have read most of his (Asimov's) books. I do not like his books. I do not think they are well-written, interesting, or worth bothering about." Fine. I respect his opinion. But why does he continue to review the books if he does not think they "are worth bothering about."?

"As a critic," he continued, "it is my privilege to say so."

"I do say so."

And I laugh.

Perhaps we think differently, but as I see it, a critic must back up his views with specific instances--documented facts. Bearing on this point also, the fourth paragraph of Mr. Asimov's article began with: "In discussing a novel of which they (a group of critics already named) disapprove, they point out succinctly what it is of which they disapprove. They balance that by such merits as they believe the novel to possess."

Imagination's "Science Fiction Library" reviews books; Mr. Bott considers himself a critic. Let us not have, then, a column of rank opinion!

It is quite interesting to note how Mr. Bott manages to favor his position by changing meanings and references. Mr. Bott originally wrote in his "review" that "somebody must like his (Asimov's) stories." The reason for this observation was the "endless chain" of Asimov stories, published. He concluded with: "It is hard for me to see why." Naturally if many stories by an author are published, it is because there is a market for them. In his rejoinder, Mr. Asimov remarked that 28,000 people bought "The Caves of Steel" in the first three months that it was on sale. Those 28,000 are part of the "somebody" referred to by Mr. Bott. Mr. Asimov also wrote that "some of them (the 28,000) knew what they were doing."

Mr. Bott made a sparkling return with: "if the criterion of quality is necessarily measured by the number of sales, comic books would be 'good',

the Spillane material would be great, and the vast majority of the paperbacks would be magnificent. However, I do not concede that the interests or purchases of ten million morons indicates that makes these interests or purchases 'good'."

"By the same reckoning the fact that thousands of your books have been purchased cannot make me believe your books are well-written."

But, sir, Mr. Asimov never once said that 28,000 sales made "The Caves of Steel" 'good'. He merely used that number to illustrate that part of that 28,000 might have known what it was doing. Mr. Bott made it seem otherwise--that Mr. Asimov had in fact written that quantity made quality.

A very trashy defense, sir!

Editor Hamling entered into the fray also; I cannot say that he did any good either way, pro or con.

He began with: each month Henry Bott reviews ... science fiction-books." Speaking of the 'Science Fiction Library'; "...it provides a critical review upon which a reader may base his decision to purchase and read the books reviewed."

Editor Hamling stressed review, but Mr. Bott put equal emphasis on the fact that his writings in the 'Science Fiction Library' are opinion.

Editor Hamling wrote of background and qualifications for a science-fiction reviewer, and made mention of Mr. Bott's nineteen years of experience in the field as reader, writer, and editor; that he was presently Head of the Technical Writing Section of a scientific equipment corporation.

It seems to me that a critic should also--perhaps primarily--be able to support his views when he says something is "good" or "bad".

Mr. Bott has definitely not done this!

Editor Hamling wrote that Mr. Asimov "simply created an opportunity to express his indignation by descending to a personality level, one of the things he has accused Mr. Bott of engaging in." I disagree, feeling that Mr. Asimov amply supported the points he made.

"In concluding his protest," Editor Hamling observed, "Mr. Asimov wonders how an author can defend himself without opening himself to the charge of being a sorehead. We will not attempt to define a sorehead; however, it seems to us that a non-sorehead would be a writer who can take accolades and criticism gracefully..."

Agreed!! A non-sorehead may be a writer who can take accolads and criticism--gracefully.

"Those who review books," Editor Hamling sagely observed, "are necessarily placed in an unique position. They must recognize and respect the bounds of "accuracy and simple fact."

Clearly, then, the issue becomes this question: should an individual's views--even after he has gone on record as being doubtful of his objectivity; also taking into consideration the fact that his views are unsubstantiated--be construed as criticism?

§ § §

The remarks of Tom Watkins about the Bott-Asimov-Hamling set-to in "Kan Kan Kabitzer" in the last PEON were very interesting--and I do mean very.

I don't believe that Tom knew it at the time, but he fell into the same trap as did Mr. Bott in his now-slight infamous review of "The Caves of Steel." He did not respect the bounds of "accuracy and simple fact." Mr. Asimov's book was not published in book form by Signet. That signal honor belongs to Doubleday of Garden C.ty, N. Y. The book did not sell "28,000 copies." It sold that number in its first three months on sale.

The points I bring up are small ones indeed, but they are prime examples of type. "From small acorns..."

Mr. Watkins mentioned that a Dr. Edwin Bergler has a theory about writers. "Bergler," wrote Mr. Watkins, "thinks that all writers are 'masochists'." (The italics are mine.) A real cute idea, but doesn't the word "all" denote a dogma? There ain't no such animal as "all"!

To top it all--no, better not (Editor, kindly denote said word, all!) off, Mr. Watkins came through with two masterly sentences. "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."

Therein lies the question. Should an unsound situation be disregarded because no harm has yet been done? Does one leave a bad apples in the basket because it hasn't hurt the other apples yet?

Therein lies the question.

One might also assume that Mr. Bott's unethical "review" of "The Caves of Steel" cost Author Asimov then thousand sales. What then?

TWO DOLLARS DOES IT!! Yes, for the small sum of only two green bucks, you can get in on all the fun of the next big world science fiction convention. Your support is needed, so send in your membership fee to 13th World Science Fiction Convention, Box 508, Edgewater Branch, Cleveland 7, Ohio.

—CREDO FOR FANTASY WRITERS—

—ROBERT BLOCH—

(The following oath is recommended to be administered to all professional writers of weird or science fiction by the editor who purchases their first story. It is suggested that the writer be forced to place his left hand upon a copy of The Necronomicon and raise his right hand in the general direction of the editor's check book, while repeating this pledge:)

I, John Doe, being of unsound mind and body and otherwise qualified as a potential writer of fantastic fiction, do hereby resolve to adhere to the following restrictions in the practise of my profession, viz, namely, and also, to wit:

1. Never to write a story about a mad doctor, a mad scientist, or a mad professor.
2. Or even a sane one, if that can be avoided.
3. Or if it can't, never to give one of the above characters a beautiful daughter.
4. Never to write a story about a so-called "giant brain."
5. At least, no more than 6 feet in diameter.
6. Never to write a story about a comical leprechaun.
7. Or a serious leprechaun.
8. Or any lousy leprechaun.
9. Never to write a story about a beautiful native girl named Moola, who turns into a leopard, a black panther, a cobra, a tigress, a vampire bat, a cat, or an aardvark.
10. Never to write a story about a timid, weak, poor little clerk who is suddenly gifted with supernatural powers and gets mixed up with a "hardboiled city editor" when he tries to convince him that he can foretell the winner of the Kentucky Derby or the Girls' Intercity Basketball Tournament.
11. I further resolve not to write stories about dinosaur eggs that hatch.
12. Or brontasaurus, pterodactyl, allosaurus, diplocodus, triceratops, stegatherus, or tyrannosaurus eggs that hatch.
13. Or don't hatch, for that matter.

14. I will not write stories about gallant wipers, oilmen, engineers, pilots, navigators, astrologers, or just plain stowaways on space-ships who manage to improvise some last-minute solution to keep the space-ship from crashing, and then pay for their gallantly heroic effort with their lives as a result of being exposed, during this ordeal, to the deadly fumes or rays of the Sterno which propels the vessel around.
15. I will also try to avoid writing sentences like the above, particularly in the front parts of stories.
16. I will not write stories about Martians who come to Earth and cannot get anyone to believe they are from Mars.
17. I will not write stories about Earthmen who go to Mars and cannot get anyone to believe they are from Earth.
18. I will not write stories about automobiles, airplanes, tractors, or automatic-milking machines that come to life.
19. I shall try to avoid tales wherein people are drawn into or out of mirrors, oil paintings, photographs, and drawings on privy walls.
20. I will do my best not to write about kingdoms under the sea, or kingdoms inside volcanoes or kingdoms inside clouds or kingdoms on the dark side of the moon, etc.; and if I must use such themes, I will try to change the kingdoms into republics, democracies, or Consumer Cooperatives, just in the interest of variety.
21. I shall endeavor to avoid High Priests whenever possible, including the ecclesiastical dignitaries of Atlantis, Mu, Lemuria, and all points west. Ditto for priestesses.
22. I leave the problem of "uranium piles" to my physician.
23. I will not write stories about mankind's struggle to rebuild civilization after the destruction of total atomic warfare, nor about mankind's struggle to oust alien conquerors after interplanetary warfare, nor about mankind's struggle to repel giant insects, giant reptiles, giant plants, giant robots, or giant midgets.
24. While I'm at it, I'll avoid all insect, reptile, plant and robot menaces, including the inverted device of making 1 of the insects, reptiles, plants or robots a friendly character. Anybody who wants to make friends with a giant-reptile has my permission to do so, but not for me, thanks; at least not while sober.

PEON NOTES
(continued)

PEON now has a new overseas agent, to whom all subscriptions that cannot be sent direct to me should be sent. This includes both Australia and the British Isles. Those overseas subscribers who renew should note that the sub rate has been revised slightly, and remit accordingly to Ken Slater.

Ian Macauley is all tied up with work on the forthcoming AGACON (and I

You will find these fanzines commented upon elsewhere in these notes. Here is where you can get a copy:

ALPHA: 6 for 60¢ to U. S. Representative, Dick Ellington, Apt. 51E, 113 W. 84th St., New York City 24, N. Y.

CAMBER: 15¢ each to Alan Dodd, 77, Stanstead Rd., Hoddesdon, Herts., England.

DIMENSIONS: Available by invitation only. Contact Harlan Ellison, 12701 Shaker Blvd., Apt. #616, Cleveland 20, Ohio.

EPITOME: 5¢ each, to Mike May, 9428 Hobart St., Dallas, Texas

IT: 25¢ to Walter W. Lee, Jr, 1205 S. 10th, Coos Bay, Oregon

OBLIQUE: 15¢ each, to Clifford Gould, 1559 Cable St., San Diego 7, California.

OOPSLA!: 15¢ each to Gregg Calkins, 2817 Eleventh Street, Santa Monica, California.

PSYCHOTIC: 15¢ each to Richard E. Geis, 2631 No. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon.

certainly; wish I could make it down to Atlanta for it), and was not able to make it this issue with his well-received fanzine reviews. He will be back with you in the next issue and as mentioned elsewhere in this issue, fanzines should be sent to him anyway for possible future reviewing. However, there are several fanzines of note received by yours truly that deserve some sort of recognition, and with your foreberance, I'll try to give them that recognition.

PSYCHOTIC has changed to a lithographed fanzine, due to increased circulation, and has not suffered a bit because of it. It is still one of fandom's better 'zines and Dick Geis is to be congratulated on his editorial ability. He says that he plans to change the name and format, with a possible change in policy, sometime this year, perhaps in August. It will be 1/4-size and again a monthly. PSY is very good the way it is now, and I believe the new edition will be just as good. This one is definitely recommended.

Mike May's EPITOME is another fanzine I recommend to you. The asking price is fantastically low in these days of rising costs, and you'd better get in your sub before he is forced to raise the price. The fourth issue is at hand, containing a very good article by Ron Ellik on non-fantasy APA's (did you know--according to the article--that I was a member once in the National Amateur Press Association, along with H. P. Lovecraft?). Also in this issue are two very good critical book reviews by Noah W. McLeod, fanzine reviews, letter column, and a

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 36)

harmony

JIM HARMON

MEMORIUM:::It was a sad surprise to learn of the death of Dick Clarkson in the last issue of PEON. I had got to know Dick pretty well at conventions, even though he seemed to be quite a bit younger than me. But then, people always seem younger than me---to me, at least--unless they are a great deal older. Somehow or other, I knew that he had had cancer. I don't know whether someone told me or I just guessed from his description of his ailment and its treatment, but I placed the condition in the past tense, presuming the surgery had been completely successful. The final news struck me with a sense of loss--not for myself, since I didn't know Dick that well, but for all of us in Fandom, and for our society in general.

Dick Clarkson had revealed himself as a sensitive, intelligent young man, trying to learn something at Harvard. That is a rare commodity, one our nation and the world can't afford to lose. It seems as if every generation and even half-generation, a war comes along to drain off the cream of the male population. Even if they aren't killed, this time is taken out of the period in which they would normally engage in higher education. Now there is not even a GI Bill to encourage men to take this education, out of the time they would normally reserve for marriage and starting their active career.

Such circumstances have weakened France to her present condition, deprived her of leadership and have weakened the sources and mold and development of leadership. It could happen here. In an age where survival and advancement of civilization (one aspect of such being the development of space travel) our legislators are not making adequate provisions for the maintenance of those who make possible a technical civilization -- the technicians. This, at least, we could expect. We could hope vainly that would allow men to train for the maintenance of whatever vague cultural standards we have and perhaps the improvement of them.

I suppose sooner or later Congress will be forced into making provisions for the physicist and engineer to finish his training (I am aware of the inadequate current regulations), but there is still the problem of maintaining the ranks of archaeologists, ethnologists, and even writers,

poets, and artists. If we have only a nation of ex-fighters, the fight is useless because we will have lost what we were fighting for.

Some, of course, escape the draft like Dick Clarkson and myself. I have done what I could to train and educate myself and will continue to do so. Those like Dick, who would work hard enough or were financially fortunate enough to go to college and to be worth going to college, as he was worth, are even more valuable. It is a great loss to lose him.

Fermi was lost to cancer, too. It was frequently pointed out that if he had lived a little longer, the research he instigated (which caused the cancer) would be developed to the point where it could have saved his life. It was not pointed out that if that research had been aimed at curative purposes instead of destructive ones, we would already have had the means of saving him and people like Dick.

Some months back, the president said that we were not going to work on making bigger H-bombs, since the ones we had could knock out any military target in existence. Some weeks back, that well-known power-mad bureaucrat, Admiral Strauss, announced that we were building bigger H-bombs. There is no need to build H-bombs not only for military targets, but for terrestrial targets, it is even that worn phrase "unconstitutional". Suicide is illegal in the United States. It is also the end of cultural development.

In fandom, at least, Dick Clarkson will not be forgotten. You would think that in any mass as shifting and insubstantial as Fandom, that membership in it would be as writing in sand, but somehow once in it, you always always leave your impression. Perhaps that's because, in its own small way, Fandom has its own archaeologists, ethnologists, writers, poets and artists.

THE LOCAL SCENE::The pastor's television antenna on our local church is much higher than the cross on the steeple. The TV antenna on the Post Office is closer to heaven than the American flag on the flagpole. The proprietor of the local mortuary has a very fancy TV tower atop his fine establishment. Such observations let me understand the European attitude towards American cultural standards. But, in turn, I suspect this attitude towards our standards springs from the lack of TV antennas on peasant dwellings -- and on Notre Dame, Westminster Abbey, etc. \$\$\$ There is a round barn just outside of town. A local story is that a tramp was caught in there one night and went mad trying to find a corner in it. \$\$\$\$ The other day, a man came up to me on the street and grabbed my arm. Said he hadn't seen me in years. When I looked at him blankly (which is quite easy for me), he asked if I didn't know him. "I didn't at first," I said, "but it is good to see you." We walked along and talked of small things. He finally said goodbye and said maybe we could get together the next time he was here. You may wonder who this man was. So do I. But it would have been embarrassing to ask him. That may be one of the faults of the society we live in: It's more comfortable to live in ignorance than to seek the truth which may embarrass some people. \$\$\$\$

WHAT? YOU READ PLANET?

erik fennel

The editors of fanzines--and this yuck, Lee Riddle, is as bad as any--have one particular slant when reviewing the prozines so universal that a flying saucer pilot or unenlightened Earthman would be reasonably justified in concluding it was required by law, with most stringent penalties awaiting any violator.

These fanzine-eds, almost without exception, have a trick of dismissing Planet Stories with a couple of curt and condescending phrases, frequently inaccurate at that. They seem to fear that saying anything in praise of Planet Stories or even discussing it in detail, would get them dusted off with radioisotopes--or, even worse yet, get them branded as a lowbrow.

Of course, this makes them feel scientific as all-get-out, and highly erudite, and literary as all hell, and puffs up their little egos quite no end. But it's a sophomoric trick of pseudo-highbrowism, and furthermore, it's unrealistic and several years behind the times.

Planet started with a pitifully skimpy budget and no established authors. The first couple of issues were, admittedly, not too sharp. But that was a long time ago. Planet is no longer the newest and greenest of the promags and far from the worst.

But the attitude of the fanzine-eds has become a tradition. Tradition is the continuation of an attitude or custom when the logic thereof and reason therefor has vanished. And tradition can be a stultifying and destructive influence....and it is in this case.

Certainly Planet specializes on violent characters and violent action, and for this there is a good reason. The time is long gone---if it ever existed---when science fiction was the exclusive property of a small group of scientifically trained executives of laboratories and observatories and atomic bomb plants, who want to think deeply at all times, and demand that their reading matter be "intellectual." All kinds of people read science fiction, and there is just as valid a place for the space opera, in which Planet specializes, as there is for the idea-story which Campbell's crew handles so well.

Some of Planet's yarns are excellently written with carefully integrated backgrounds, and it seems a shame to let them drop without comment simply because of an irrational prejudice against the magazine in which they occur. Others, of course, are purely hack; but even the great ASF occasionally lets a stinker slip through its pages.

At least Planet has never veered off-orbit on a monomaniacal paranoid trend like another magazine best left nameless. For sloppily written western and cops-and-robbers yarns clumsily converted into alleged science

fiction by the addition of off-Earth backgrounds, that magazine now takes the plutonium jockstrap. It also afflicts readers with "scientific oddity" fillers so innacurate they would make a dung-beetle vomit--any dung-bettle that is, who'd made "C" or better in high school chemistry and physics.

Yet because, in the years before it went to the deros, that magazine published some good stories and introduced a few new trends the fanzines give it space and attention and respect it no longer merits.

But, here is an odd psychological quirk. Fans and fanzine editors, who publicly decry the thud-and-blunder of Planet and dismiss it as almost beneath contempt, nearly always in private conversations prove to be thoroughly familiar with the contents of the current issue. Many of them are quite willing to beef up their own precious egos with letters in Planet's Visigraph section. And do they mewl and bitch like dyseptic seagulls when their masterpieces are shortened.

If these fan organizations and farmags are (as they claim to be) working for the advancement and improvement of science fiction, they could do some good by forgetting tradition and bringing themselves up to date, giving Planet the attention and detailed constructive criticism it deserves.

Me, I enjoy space-operas, and believe a diet of nothing but ASF think-pieces would grow tiresome indeed. I believe that space opera including pirates and BEMS and mad scientists and extreemely messy hand-to-hand combats and heroines who don't wear brassiers and don't need falsies are here to stay. And so is Planet. Let's face it.

+++++

O M R H E R O

As our dram begins to unfold,
We see the lovely, curvey fem;
And what is that monster behind her?
Egad! It's the horrid, nasty old BEM.

Hark! And who is this to the rescue?
It's none other than Captain Dashing.
Lightning flashes from his cool gray eyes,
And his teeth are grinding and ghashing!

The monster gives a soul-piercing shriek,
And our blood begins to jell and curdle;
But Captain Dashing fights grimly on,
While the fem calmly adjusts her girdle.

Then suddenly, the battle is over,
And the silence is that of the dead.
Our hero refuses the maiden's kiss--
For the monster has torn off his head..

---JACK CORDES

THE DEATH OF CONAN

DAVE MASON

The sea wind sang in the masts, and the black water of the harbor was flecked with white. The darkness of the coming night slid swiftly down on the city of Akkad.

Lights sprang up here and there, and the great bronze fire baskets at the principal street corners burst into flames. There were warm lights and much sound in the tavern on the quay, and drunken seamen reeled toward it, attracted as moths are, to a lamp.

Within, a long pine board and a floor of tanbark; a busy host and busier serving-maids, carrying the wine and the brown ale, dodging the occasional flung cup, and counting the clinking coins.

The soldier in the battered cuirass planted an enormous hairy foot on the table, drained his horn, and said loudly, "Conan! Va Hai, Conan! There was a man to fight!"

He belched loudly.

"I sacked Stygia's black cities with him. I rode behind him when he lived, and I was with him when he died. A man, that Conan!"

"You saw him die?" The fat man in the purple robe of a city merchant leaned closer. "How was that?"

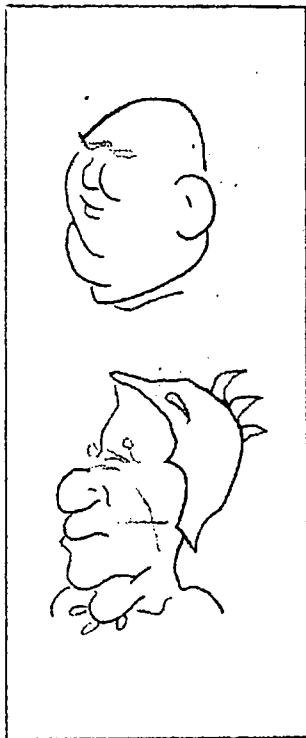
"He had been King in Aquilonia....many years." The soldier spat into the tanbark. "Another would have grown soft with the good wine and the fat living. Not Conan."

"But you saw him die." The fat man signaled for more ale.

"There came many barbarians." The soldier said. "Hairy ones, not fearing any god or any man. Conan put on his armor once more. He called together the lancers...but few we were. Very few. Most were boys who'd never held pike nor shield, so safe was Aquilonia while Conan held its throne.

"And we went forth to the North, to seek the barbarians. We found them, a mighty horde of them, skin-clad, with their yaks and their tents, and their horrible short knives...

"All day we fought them, in the pine woods of the Northern Mountains.



All day, falling and slaying, and falling again....and in the end we won. But at the last, we found the King Conan, beneath a pile of the slain, his sword through the heart of the chief of the barbarians."

The soldier lifted his horn and shouted a great oath in an unknown tongue. Then his eyes fell upon the shapeliest of the serving-maids.

"Enough of ancient quarrels," he grunted, and at the maid, "Say, pretty one...would you have a quiet spot upstairs where a man might take you with a bottle or two?"

After the soldier had disappeared, the fat man in the robe of the merchant caste turned to his bench mate.

"I could not call such a one liar to his face," he said apologetically. "But he was....at least mistaken."

The other was a very old man, his face lined and scarlet pitted from drink, his rheumy old eyes half-blind, bent over the table and drooling into a bowl of the cheapest wine.

The old man cackled unintelligibly, and the merchant continued...

"I saw Conan die, myself. He died in his great palace in the city, not in warfare. He had grown too old and wise for war by then...and too wealthy. He died surrounded by his weeping wives and by generations of sons...and his funeral rites! Such magnificence! He was buried in a marble tomb that had cost a million and a half pieces of gold, buried with seventy slain slaves at his feet..."

"You saw?" The old man peered at the merchant.

"Ah, indeed. I was in the oil and wine business....caravans of the best oil of Palmyra to burn in the lamps at the wake. Shiploads of wine.. and gold, in heaps like dung."

The merchant shook his head, his small, squinting eyes lit with the wonder of it. He took another swallow of wine.

It was too much for him. His head fell forward on the bench, and the old man came swiftly to life. His wrinkled old fingers slipped slyly through the merchant's purse, and then he rose to his feet.

Shaking and hobbling, he scuttled to the door like an ancient spider, his claws clutching the stolen gold. He vanished into the windy night, muttering.

The moon had risen, and the night birds cried strangely above the black water. The cables of the ships tied to the quay groaned, and the old man laughed loudly into the wind.

PEON NOTES
(continued)

story and page of poetry that best be forgotten. All in all, a worthwhile issue and well worth the small asking-price.

ALPHA #9 bounced in the other day from Belgium and if the description of "that continental flavor" can be utilized towards a fanzine, it fits here. For a "foreigner" (don't hit me, Jan!), Jan Jansen shows a remarkable sense of humor in selecting his material. This particular issue contains editorial columns by Jan Jansen and Dave Vandelmans, a particularly muddled story by John Kippax, column by Dean A. Grennell, fanzine reviews, a wonderful infrequent column by Eric Bentcliffe and various and sundry other items. The column by Eric struck my fancy the most, because it quoted from some recent pocket books out of Britain that fairly reeked with pornography. I wonder if Operation Fantast could supply these! This is consistently a good fanzine, and now with Jan having an American agent, there is no excuse for your not getting a copy or two of it. Incidentally, Jan, thanks for the defense of one Lee Riddle.

Another overseas fanzine is the revived-one, CAMBER formerly edited by my ex-agent, Fred J. Robinson. CAMBER is now in the capable hands of Alan Dodd and once again, shows a decided spark of interest. Plenty of stuff to see in this issue, and the half-size sports a beautiful-babe cover by Terry Jeeves. I sincerely believe you'll like this one.

The fifth issue of IT is the first one I've seen. It has a two-color cover scene from Paramount's "The Conquest of Space" and is dittoed neatly in the interior pages. The primary point of interest in this issue is a very worth-while check list of Science Fiction and Fantasy Films dating to way back there, and compiled by the editor of this particular issue, Walter W. Lee, Jr. The check-list is worth the price of 25¢ by itself, but there are plenty of other items of worth in the issue. The check-list will prove invaluable to you plenty of times in settling an argument. For example, I used it to show that "20,000 Leagues" had been filmed once before--in 1916, by Universal International. I don't know if any copies of this fine 'zine are available yet, but you should at least try to get a copy.

Gregg Calkins informs us in the 16th issue of OOPSLA! that he is now a Sergeant in the Navy's police force, the Marine Corps. Such promotions are not easy to obtain in that branch of the armed forces and I know they are given out to only the top men. Congratulations, Gregg. This issue of OOPS is its usual worthy self. And as usual, Gregg's comments are the best item in the issue, with Bob Silverberg's fanzine review column following a close second. Walt Willis continues the story of his trip across the country almost three years ago--the only man I know of who can hold your interest in talking about a three year old trip. Either he took hundreds of notes on the trip or he has practically total-recall!

The long-publicized, long-promised, and enormous second issue of DIMENSIONS finally arrived via a staggering postman here in Norwich a week or so ago,

but I'm afraid that I was terribly disappointed in it. Like the first issue, it just simply didn't live up to its advance publicity. Harlan has plenty of BNF and BNP names represented in this issue; there are over 80 pages of material, but somehow it just doesn't jell completely. Perhaps the best explanation lies in the quote from Dick Geis printed in this issue of DIM--"The total impression I received is that you are lost to us as an amateur publisher...and undiscovered as yet by the professional publishers whom you want to edit for..." You have to be invited by Harlan to send 25¢ for this issue before you can get it, so if you don't get an invitation, you won't miss much.

OBLIQUE is the name of a new little 'zine from down Sandy Ago way. For a first issue, it shows quite a bit of promise, is neatly dittoed, and has a cover done through some photographic process. Clifford Could, the editor, tries to explain the process, but I still couldn't figure it out. While I think the asking price of 15¢ for this first issue is rather steep, he should be able by the next issue to put out a fanzine that will be worth the price. He does deserve support in the way of material, and if you are one of those frustrated would-be authors, contact him. You might send him 15¢ also in the same letter to get a copy of the first issue of OBLIQUE.

§§§

So much for the more-or-less formalized fanzine reviews. What I want to do now is congratulate Maurice Lubin of Worcester, Mass., for a very nice first-issue of THE ACTI-FAN. Those of you who have been inflicted by his previous efforts (principally THE TENTACLE) will know that Maurice has not been known for any spectacular publishing. However, with THE ACTI-FAN, it is as if Ray Bradbury should write a story with some science in it! This present issue is neatly mimeographed (quite an improvement over previous publications), contains mighty few typos (another improvement), and above all, has some damned good material in it (the best improvement of all!). You certainly can't go wrong in sending him 50¢ for the next six issues, and encouraging him for future efforts. Maurice Lubin, 14 Jones Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, is the one to write.

§§§

Ken Krueger, fan of older days, has now teamed up another fan of Buffalo, New York (Bob Fritz), in the publishing of hard-cover fantasy books, under the business name of Shroud, Publishers. They are offering right now four books at what seems to be a very fair and reasonable price. The four titles are "Look Behind You", by Arthur J. Burks; "The Maker of Moons", by Robert W. Chambers; "The Female Demon" (poetry), by William McDougale; and what I consider the best of the lot, H. P. Lovecraft's "The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath." The first two are priced at \$1.00 each, and the last two at \$1.25. They will send the books to you if you request them and bill you on a thirty-day basis. This seems to be a very worthwhile project by two fans, and I'd like to suggest that you at least write them, to be placed on their mailing list for further details, if you don't want these books right now. The address is Shroud, Publishers, 819 Michigan Avenue,

Buffalo 3, New York, and tell them that PEON sent you. Who knows, mayhaps I'll get a free book out of the recommendation.

\$\$\$

Nova Publications, over in England, publishers of New Worlds, has evidently been mailing out free copies of their publication to various fans in the U. S. I've received several copies myself, several as Secretary of the now-defunct Connecticut Science Fiction League, and I've noticed references to receipt of copies in various fanzines. I take New Worlds as a subscription from Operation Fantast anyway, so this is just duplication on their part. However, it is nice to know that some prozines still do recognize fans as being important to their magazine. Incidentally, I also noticed that several fanzine editors have received copies of If and a post card later on asking that the issue be reviewed. Although I haven't been one of the editors on If's mailing list, I can still tell you that this magazine has improved a great deal since it went monthly--but then this is probably nothing new to you anyway.

I'd like also to congratulate the powers-that-be in Ziff-Davis for bringing back the fan columns and what-have-you, especially in Amazing Stories. Roger de Soto seems to be capable in his fanzine reviews (although he did mix up Harmon and Mason in his review of PEON). Now, I'm really curious--just what decided them to bring back these columns?

\$\$\$

Need I really have to say it? As you can see, the Navy hasn't sent me anyplace as yet--in fact, there hasn't been the slightest inkling out of BuPers down in Washington that I'll even be going anyplace in the near future. However, by the time you read this, things could change--so, all I can say is that when and if I do get any type of orders, I'll send out a special issue of PEON to let you all know where to write me thereafter. In the meantime, just keep sending everything, money, fanzines, money, letters, money, and what-have-you (money) to Norwich. If I do get transferred, Rosella will forward it on to wherever I'll be, I hope!

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And that winds up this issue. See you again when I can. Until next time, then, happy reading to all of you, from all of us here!

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