

# PHANTEUR

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Number 4

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F A P A

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## P H A N T E U R

(Formerly Phanny)

Whole Number 4

October, 1947

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Greetings once more, ye Knights of FAPA! Any brickbats you may wish to heave my way will be received in the humble and contrite spirit befitting a returned backslider. But for those of you who didn't even notice that that sterling publication, PHANTEUR, had been missing from the mailings since the summer of 1946, and particularly for those who heaved a sigh of relief each time this paragon of the publisher's art, this stinkeroo of stinkeroos, failed to appear, one Bronx cheer. Only one, though.

This issue was to have a cover. The cover is all printed, and has been stored away since February, 1946. Unfortunately, during my recent peregrinations, it got stored in my parents' home in Lincoln, whereas, until just a few moments ago, I thought it was stored in a box in my closet here in Imperial, Nebraska, where I am now helping build Enders Irrigation and Flood Control Dam--with a pencil, planimeter, and Friden calculator.

When the last issue of PHANTEUR appeared, I stated that I expected to go to Japan in a civilian capacity for the War Dept. I got only as far as putting in my application for passport, after securing the job, when I received a telegram to the effect that recent raising of the physical requirements for all overseas personnel automatically left me stranded. So, I didn't go to Japan. Instead, I started writing letters and application blanks, and late in July, '46, went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation on the Cedar Bluff project, with headquarters in Hays, Kansas. Unfortunately for FAPA activity, Hays had a rather good nine-hole golf course, situated only half a mile from the office, and about a mile from my rooming place. It was remarkably easy to get out there for nine holes after work during the summer and early fall months; and even during the entire winter, most weekends found me on the course. There were, of course, other contributing factors which, taken altogether, resulted in a complete cessation of fan activity, except for the writing of a few letters.

When, because of certain legal tangles resulting from Kansas ambiguous and incomplete water-use laws, the Cedar Bluff project closed down temporarily, I transferred to the Republican River District in Nebraska, and was assigned, as mentioned above, to the Ender's Project. When complete, Enders Dam and lake will store 75,000 acre-feet of water in a lake five miles long, in a part of the state which was in the center of the dust-bowl of the thirties. (There is no sign of a dust-bowl here now; seven consecutive years of plentiful rainfall have resulted in bumper crops of corn and wheat, and the wealth of the area per capita is very high. There are, for example, approximately half as many passenger automobiles as people in Chase County, of which Imperial is the County seat.)

Imperial itself has a population of about 1400, and the whole county has only some 7000 people. The main street has a paved width of about 90 feet, and is a mile long. Rest of the streets are graveled, and a pall of dust hangs over the town most of the time. Enders dam is about ten S. E. of the town, near a little community of some 85 population, name--yep, you're right--Enders. Directly across the railroad tracks from Enders is the camp at which the Construction workers and their families live, and this community has about twice the population of the town itself. Lincoln is 300 miles East, and Denver is 200 miles West-South-West. (cont. on p. 7)



## The PHANTEUR Opines--

CAMPBELL and MERWIN. From casual perusal of various fanzines, plus a bit of desultory scanning of the letter sections of the Standard Magazines, it has become evident that a considerable portion of the FaNation has become somewhat hipped over the recent switch by Heinlein from Campbell to Merwin. Since I have nothing of any real importance to say anyway, I can see no good reason why I shouldn't add my bit to the general confusion.

Various reasons have been advanced for the change, the most frequent being that put forward by the group whose members maintain that Campbell ain't whut he useter be; that he was a good editor before the war, but that he has gradually narrowed his requirements to the point where Heinlein and several other leading writers have revolted. Personally, I don't agree with this indictment, although I will admit that the long-time leader in the field has been rather over-full of the World After World War Three of late. Anyway, it will do no harm to look at some other possibilities.

Suppose, for example, that Campbell got mildly swamped with stories of considerable merit dealing with his favorite topic, during the period immediately following the first A-Bomb. He may have bought a few too many of those stories at that time, and thus reduced the market for stories of other types temporarily. Then, some of his authors who wanted to sell some more stories began looking around for other markets. Meanwhile, Merwin, with something of a fan's viewpoint, was busily engaged in the laudable task of changing the Standard magazines for the better. The old Tarzan formula was being given the heave-ho, and writers who had previously been restricted almost exclusively to ASF, discovered with glad cries of joy that, with only slight alterations of a type which did no great harm, their stuff would go in THRILLING WONDER and STARTLING. Simple, isn't it? It might even have happened that way!

Heinlein, however, presents a special case. He has been aiming for, and hitting, the SATEVEPOST. The kind of stories he had published therein were not, by any manner of means, the type of story which lead to his selection as Guest of Honor at the Denvention, and kept him at the top of the pile so long. I don't think the relatively light, frothy stuff he has been writing lately would ever have gained for him the position he once held in the esteem of active fans. Neither, however, would his older type of stories have made the grade in SATEVEPOST. He still, to a considerable extent, follows the Campbell dictum, "Assume the gadget, and go on from there," -- but he "Goes on from there" in a somewhat different fashion. Since the vast SATEVEPOST reading public does not have the specialized interests and the highly trained understanding of the technical jargon of pulp science-fiction, he has had to emphasize the human and dramatic values at the expense of the scientific and social-economic elements. The result is a better "story," from the unspecialized viewpoint, but one which is likely to be less satisfying to the technically minded fan.

And what has all of this to do with TWS and SS? Quite a bit, Son; quite a bit. For, under present requirements, or aims, as the case may be, the story slanted for the slicks fits perfectly in the new style in the Standard Pulp. So, a story which just misses the grade in the slicks can still be marketed. The writer gains, and Merwin gains too, since he gets a story of near-slick quality at pulp prices.

This isn't meant to imply that the other sf prozines never use material which "almost" makes the slicks; quite the contrary; but the present policy at Standard comes closest to meeting the needs of science fiction writers aiming at, but not quite reaching, the big national magazines.

In the meantime, some of Campbell's veteran writers continue to turn out the kind of stories ASF has always published, and is still publishing. And along with them, new writers, with fresh ideas and viewpoints on subjects in the traditional ASTOUNDING field, appear in what is still, in my opinion the best of them all.



## The PHANTEUR Opines-----

AVON FANTASY READER. This is a subject upon which I should like to write a page or two, because, from what I read in the fan press, it must be quite a worthwhile publication. Unfortunately, however, I've never seen an issue of thing, and am somewhat of a loss as to how I am going to get possession of any copies. I wouldn't expect it to appear in such places as Hays, Kansas, or Imperial, Nebraska, although at Hays, most of the regular Avon books were available, as well as all the usual prozines. (Here in Imperial, I haven't seen a single issue of any sf magazine on the stands; but AIR TRAILS appears regularly, and even more surprising, THE WRITER'S DIGEST is for sale regularly.)

But AVON FANTASY READER has never appeared in Lincoln, either, as far as I could discover; and Nick Carr, during his visit to me here in June, said he had been unable to find it in Chicago. Perhaps he was always too late, but Nick is a fairly persistent book-hunter, so that seems unlikely. Have any other fans bought the publication in Chicago? It seems very strange that such a magazine should be distributed in such a haphazard manner. Perhaps the continuing paper shortage is the real answer back of the situation.

And now, I'm wondering if the two projected Avon fantasy magazines will be distributed in the same restricted fashion. And also, whether or not they will be available by subscription. I scarcely fancy the idea of paying a premium price to some dealer for a current magazine.

BOOKS I HAVE RECENTLY READ. Mostly fantasy, or fantasy-tinged, and mostly not particularly good, but there are some outstanding exceptions to both those conditions. Take "Jurgen," for instance. Now, as have many before me, I found it a well-written, curious, and diverting book, with a lot of truth in it; also a lot of sophistry. If any reader over nine years old failed to translate the words sword, spear, and staff in exactly the same fashion as "The Tumblebug" did, then I am sure Mr. Cabell would feel that he had failed through over-subtlety, which would certainly be a gross canard, since, in most respects, the book is only slightly less subtle than a bull-dozer. Cabell's satirical insistence on these words being taken literally reminds me of Bok's "defense" of the well-known Le Zombie cover which never appeared on an issue of LeZ. All of which is not to imply that I either dislike or disapprove of "Jurgen," at all, at all. I'm just pointing out in my own unsubtle way that Cabell must have had a very sore cheek from pressing his tongue into it while writing the "Tumblebug" episode.

"Brave New World" is another rather old book that I have just read, through the courtesy of Mr. Carr--Nick, not Dick. This iconoclastic satirical fantasy is a wonderful piece of writing; as the blurb on the jacket says, much of it is "almost pure poetry." Only slightly less of it is pure corn, Hollywood variety, too, which, perhaps, makes the book more readable than it would otherwise be.

Without saying so in so many words, Huxley seems to have been presenting the case for the lofty Grecian type of culture, in which everyone who really mattered would be a great thinker, artist, mathematician, or, ghoo forbid, philosopher like himself. One of his characters presents the idea that a colony of such "Alphas" would fail when left to their own devices; had failed, in fact; but still, through the rather broad satire, Huxley seems throughout to be arguing just the opposite. Perhaps he prefers slaves to the Ford Assembly line; but whether or not that is the case, it remains true that the ancient Greek culture was a culture for the few, supported by slaves of varying degrees of independence and ability, not so unlike Huxley's Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons. And their modern counterparts, without the direct service of human slaves, do depend upon the Ford Assembly Line for most of their material needs, just as their prototypes in all ages have de-



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pended upon the contemporary industrial and commercial system.

Since most of these intellectual giants are hardworking, selfless, and enormously valuable to the human race as a whole, it is hardly possible to argue with the idea that they, after all, are the people who really matter. I take issue only with the implication that, if the population of the world was to consist exclusively of such superior men, the human race would soar on and on, instead of going to pot.

"To Walk the Night." This is undoubtedly the finest story that I've read during the past year. There is little point in praising it (although it is rather wonderful to find such real people in an off-trail tale like this) since I've failed to find any derogatory comments in the various fan reviews I have read. One point I should like to make, however, and that is that, while it may, like "The Edge of Running Water" by the same author, be classed as a supernatural or weird tale, it is really much more closely related to science fiction, in my opinion. It is true that a sense of brooding terror permeates the tale; but this is almost exclusively due to skillful mood evocation, rather than to the nature of the events portrayed themselves. This mood is used very effectively indeed, as a background against which the action, while of a type well outside of ordinary human experience, is still well within the limits of scientific speculation, takes place. (That last "sentence" folks, is what comes from attempting to make major revisions on the stencil. In case you are wondering, the subject of "takes place" is "action.")

And now for some lesser tales. "Dreadful Hollow" was one of these. Light reading, this, all about a guy and a gal and a real live vampire from Romania. I found the author's style quite pleasant, and her slightly satirical treatment of the young doctor's emotional reactions to the sweet young thing was quite amusing. Oh, yeah; there are some rather gruesome episodes for the benefit of the horror-addicts.

"Space Hounds of IPC." Curiously enough, I had never read this early space-epic by the well known Ph. D, although I have read almost everything else Smith wrote. "Spacehounds" really is a good adventure in the super-colossal style, in spite of the incredibly corny characterizations and conversation of the principals. It really shouldn't be necessary, for example, to state in so many words that a guy and a gal with such mental and physical attributes are strong and brainy; even a small boy in the comic-book stage could deduce that without much strain. But, aside from this typical Smith defect (much less noticeable in his more recent stories than in this earlier work) this is a lusty tale of high adventure among really interesting extra-terrestrial creatures; a story which any s-f fan with tastes not too highly specialized or too completely sated might read with enjoyment. I may add that the book is very unlikely to get a favorable review in "The Daily Worker."

"The Green Man." This is a diverting, well-written story, in which a considerable number of actual people in public life -- Winchell, Fadiman, Kieran, Levant, Hutchins of Chicago U., Mayor La Guardia, Kaltenborn, and numerous others appear under their own names, in their relations with Numar, The Green Man, who came a trillion miles from his home planet of Talamaya on a mission to Earth. All the above-mentioned men come in for a bit of lampooning in this joyous, high-speed farce. You'll enjoy it much more if you stop at the bottom of the page-before-the-last. Harold M. Sherman has previously written some sixty adventure and sports novels, and he uses his long experience to advantage in this happy-go-lucky tale.

"The Ship of Ishtar." I was a little disappointed with this story. I had tried to get it for so long before it finally appeared in the 25 ct.

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 edition, and I had heard so much about it, that I may have expected too much. It is certainly far above the average fantasy, but is not, in my opinion, the equal of "The Moon Pool," "The Face in the Abyss," or "Dwellers in the Mirage," to mention a few of my own favorite Merritt tales. Which reminds me that the least satisfactory story by Merritt that I have ever read was "Seven Footsteps to Satan." Definitely not so good.

"On Borrowed Time." This well-known little story is pleasant and thoughtful, and spiced with bits of penetrating, humorous satire. It is all about an old man who traps Death up in an apple tree by virtue of a quite unexpected power to make his wishes come true, and thus prevents all deaths everywhere for a considerable period of time.

"The Stray Lamb," and "The Bishop's Jaegers," by Thorne Smith. These are as hilarious and spicy as anything and everything by Thorne Smith, guaranteed to keep you chuckling, if, by any chance, you are one of the very few fans who hasn't read them long ago.

There were certainly some others, but I'll not go any farther with this.

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"IN THE INTERESTS OF PEACE AND HUMAN UNDERSTANDING," or, "POLITICIANS ARE NOT THE ONLY CRACKPOTS IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP."

-----Consoling crumbs of "truth" from a speech by Elder Carlyle Haynes of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, delivered at Lincoln, Nebraska on August 24, as reported in THE LINCOLN DAILY STAR.

"Men are more interested in hearing fables than the truth. One of these fables is the popular teaching which is heard even in some churches, of the universal brotherhood of men and the universal fatherhood of God." "False Doctrines" included the teaching that churches should support the United Nations and work for one world, that races of men ought to live together in anonymity, that there should be no racial segregation, and there should be a universal church. "These," said Elder Haynes, "are the ideas of men; they are not the ideas of God. Once before men tried to build a united nations and erected a structure binding them all together and God stopped it; this was at the Tower of Babel."

Elder Haynes, it seems, is still living in the world of 2000 BC.

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PHANTEUR is an amateur publication, released upon an undeserving world at increasingly longer intervals by one D. B. Thompson, whose current address is: General Delivery, Imperial, Nebraska. The opinions expressed herein are those of the Editor, except when credited to some one else, in which case they are, naturally, the opinions of the writer of the item in question.

The Guest Publisher of this issue (if I get the stencils cut in time, before he heads for Lincoln and the University of Nebraska) is Gordon Rouze, Imperial's only ex-FAPAN. You probably remember his XENON, which was a very neat little publication.

Most of this issue, as is readily apparent, is being composed directly upon the stencil. This is a practice I deplore, large because nearly everything I write needs careful editing to make it readable. But, one way or another, I've got to get eight pages in this mailing, folks. I promise you that the next issue will be better.

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Negroes and Science Fiction  
by  
Russ Willison

Science fiction is today a little over twenty years old, and, as yet, I have not read one story in which Negroes figure. I have read stories in which two-headed Martians and other equally unusual creatures are put in a good light, and there have been a very few in which Orientals were presented as working to advance Earth civilization.

But there has not been a single story among those that I have read, that has included a Negro---even as a villain. The Negroes are just ignored. Why? Is there to be no place for these dark-skinned humans on other planets, or for that matter, anywhere in the future civilization of a hundred years from today?

Negroes are just like anybody else, startling as that may be to some people. They are just as intelligent as most white people; just as capable of operating rocket ships and other scientific developments of the future. We will need their great ability to endure hardships; for example, their ability to withstand heat would be valuable in colonizing a hot planet like Venus. Similarly, Siberian and Alaskan natives would be best suited for a cold planet like Mars.

But, most of all, Negroes will be needed as peace-makers with any strange life-forms Earth settlers might meet. Negroes, as a persecuted group, are more sensitive to mental attitudes of other races; more understanding of the other fellow's viewpoint than most other racial groups. Thus, they would certainly be able to help compromise any differences and prevent warfare, because of this ability to understand and to give a little. They should be able to do this because they have had plenty of practice. White men tend to be too aggressive; Mongolians too polite and indirect. What would be needed in dealing with Martians, Venusians, or Jovians would be the Negro "touch," which combines White cockiness and Oriental humility.

It is about time, I think, that the science fiction editors realized that the Negro, as a distinct race, will be around when we begin visiting the planets. They should ask writers for stories in which Negroes play an important part. Maybe not the hero, but at least the hero's friend and aid.

The introduction of Negroes into science fiction stories would have two major results. One: It would help fight race hatred today. Two: It would help educate all fans, mentally, to the fact that Negroes will take part in developing the planets, just as they have helped settle this country. And, of course, it would also greatly increase the appeal of science fiction for Negroes, thus boosting circulation.

The magazine that should take the lead is, of course, Astounding SCIENCE FICTION. This is the most adult of the science fiction publications, and once it begins such a policy, the other magazines will follow, if only to attract the Negro reader.

The End

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(Cont. from page 1)

This issue of PHANTEUR introduces a name new to FAPA. Russ Willison has written on a topic which hasn't received much attention in fan discussions; namely, the presence--or rather, the absence--of Negro characters in science fiction. You may not agree with all Russ says, but I think you will agree that if and when interplanetary travel is a fact, there will still be Negroes around, and they will play their part in interplanetary activity.

I am not at present at liberty to reveal just who Russ is, nor where he can be reached by mail. Suffice to say that I've been corresponding with him for nearly a year, and that I have a picture of him. He is a young man, a veteran of World War II, and a former President of a one-time flourishing Fan Club. He has been reading science-fiction only since returning from overseas, having previously lived on a farm in a rather backwoods community. He assures me that he is personally acquainted with a number of Negroes who read science fiction regularly.

It isn't quite true, of course, that there have been no Negroes in sf. stories. A notable example is the Negro Doctor in the "Jay Score" series. Another was the "Head" (World President) in the first of the Usufurm Robot stories. There have been a few others. But in the main Russ is right about that, and it is not surprising that in his relatively brief contact with our favorite fiction, he has failed to find any story with Negro characters.

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#### THE ONE AND ONLY REPORT ON THE DAMCON.

This important event occurred during the first week of June, 1947 A. D. Participants were Nick Carr, of Chicago, and yours truly. For no really good reason that I can think of, Nick traveled all the way to McCook from Chicago on the Burlington Zephyr, and thence to Imperial, 60 miles by taxicab. (There was a bus strike at the time, and regular transportation was hard to come by. You or I would have thumbed our way the last sixty miles, but not Nick.)

Features of the meeting were a trip to Kingsley Dam at Ogallala, 60 miles north of here, the largest Earth-core dam in the world (it impounds some two million acre-feet of water in a lake 17 miles long) and a last-night gab-fest on the topic of a perfected society. Nick postulated a society in which all "problems" had been solved, and in which mankind would continue to advance happily and steadily toward an undefined goal. I maintained that in a society in which there were no more "problems," there could be no further goal, and there could be no further progress, but only retrogression. We were at odds, of course, primarily in the matter of definition of a "problemless" society. Nick seemingly meant a society in which there were no strikes, no industrial crises, no government "interference" with activities of corporations, and practically no taxes, with all the people happy in the knowledge that they could, by luck and pluck, corner the market and so get themselves rich in a hurry. He is a very firm believer in the universal benevolence of wealthy people, (whereas in fact, wealthy people, like others, vary through most of the levels from bandit to near-saint.) He deplores the construction by the government of flood control and irrigation dams, and was definitely incredulous when I explained that the water-users paid back to the government the cost of construction of irrigation dams and canals. All in all, though, we had an enjoyable time, but, as you have no doubt guessed, neither of us succeeded in convincing the other of anything.

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there is plenty of room here for two lines of beard matterings but I can't think of anything to say



## MISCELLANY----

Since typing page 1, I've talked to Gordon Rouze, and there may be a cover of some sort on this issue, after all; if so, you already know it, so I won't have to tell you.

One book omitted from the list, and which should be included among the best of them, was "The Grim Thirteen." I got this as a prize in the Gorgon contest, and consider it one of the finest books I own. Most of the stories, while grim, and sometimes forbidding, are not fantasy, although two or three may be so classified. The writing is invariably excellent, and the characterization very fine indeed. The stories are old; that is, all were written before 1916. Most of them--but not all--would probably be acceptable in the more literate magazines of today, although they were somewhat too strong for the pre-world-war-I world.

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I grow increasingly weary of the fashion in which the organized Communist Party in this Country lays claim to every liberal or progressive movement attempted or espoused, thus contributing immeasurably to the defeat of said liberal movement. The Communists have proclaimed so loudly and so persistently that liberalism means communism, and vice-versa, that ordinary folk have at last begun to believe them; and since they do not know just what liberalism may be, but are very sure they do not want Russian Communism, they automatically reject anything tagged with the "liberal" label, as Russian-inspired.

Several years ago, in PHANNY, I wrote that Russian Communism was only one of several divergent but related types of dictatorships. It seems more evident today than ever that this is so. Russia, to be sure, has reason to be suspicious of her recent allies, and, perhaps, from the Russian viewpoint, we do nothing to ameliorate that suspicion; I can't say as to that, not having the Russian viewpoint. But it is fairly obvious, from where I stand, that Russia is doing nothing to offset the suspicions of the English-speaking nations with respect to Russian designs. Instead, it almost seems that every major Russian move is dictated by a desire to stimulate the rapidly-rising anti-Russian feeling in this country, although I suspect that the delaying tactics so typical of all recent Russian action (as opposed to the prompt and rapid action during the war,) is due primarily to lack of any concrete plan, plus a feeling that nothing may be lost, and perhaps much gained, by delay.

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The recent freeing of India in the form of two distinct States, one Moslem and one Hindu, is an event that has interested me considerably. I regard religious belief as the poorest sort of line for dividing peoples; yet, in India, I can hardly see how any other type of division was possible. It will be interesting to see whether or not, after the first few weeks of mutual murders and destruction are over, the two States can live peaceably side by side. As elsewhere, the people of India, whether Moslem or Hindu, desire to live peacefully--or so I think. But a few hundred evil and/or fanatical men can stir them to fury very easily. I very much fear that India is in for a religious war.

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I'm worried about Old England, too. The Socialist Government, having inherited a creaking and decrepit industrial system based on a huge excess of labor, seems to be moving in the dangerous direction of dictatorship. I can't imagine the British submitting to anything like that, but the signs are ominous--and a weary, hungry people constitute the natural soil for Hitlers, Stalins, Francos, and Peron's to flourish in. This time, though, I don't think the British will fall into that error.

this is the last page of this drivel, anyway russ wrote better than i did so there is one good page