

AIR WONDER STORIES

(SAP ZINE NO 3)

This issue of ? (I left a blank space above & haven't picked a title yet) intended for the 56th (July 1961) SAPS mailing is being started 10:45 AM, Saturday, 6 May 1961, by Edmund R Meskys of 723A, 45 St., Brooklyn 20 N.Y.

I recieved my invite from Brucifer day before yesterday & decided to get in my minac before school ends for two reasons. The school's ABDick Azo-graph is the only machine I know I have definite access to, which access will terminate on 2 June. I have hopes for access at several mineos this Summer but all are indefinite and the access might be severely limited in time, so rather than take chances.... Also, according to the carbon I kept the letter to dikini asking to be placed on the SAPS w/l was dated exactly 1 year ago today.

For the detriment of those few of you fortunate enuf not to know me from N'APA or elsewhere, I will devote a little space to my favorite subject. It is aged 25, 6'2" tall, & way the hell too fat. It has been reading stef as such (ie, excluding comics, occasional SatEvePost stories, & listening to such radio programs as 2000 $\frac{1}{2}$ & Dimention X, Mysterious Traveler & Buck Rodgers, etc) a little over 10 years in book form & a little under 10 years in magazine form, got into the fringes of local-club fandom late in 55 & became interested in general fandom about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ years ago.

Thanks to Sam I sure had a weird & distorted picture of APAs before I joined N'APA. Before I joined ESFA in Jan 59 I attended 1 or 2 meetings a year and it was on one of these occasions that I was one of a $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen or so people standing around Sam. He was talking to someone (Belle Dietz?) about APAs and in general griping about them. I gathered that the principle function of officers was to try to find loopholes for kicking members out and that the activity requierments were fantastically large. He spoke of the complexities of the FAPA constitution wherein he hadn't noticed that it does you no good to postmail your activity requierments under certain circumstances so that he was booted out, but how a detailed reading revealed that if he got someone to attest to the fact that the magazine was published (even tho not distributed) before a certain date &--was it 10?--members to sign a petition he would be back in. He complained bitterly of how hard it was to find people to sign it and said that the officers (assuming he wouldn't make it) had admitted someone in his place & so had to carry 66 members for a while. Finally, without giving details he also said that he was quite unfairly drummed out of SAPS too.

You can guess my opinion of APAs as a result of this and how utterly flabbergasted I was when N'APA was formed and I heard that its requierments were only 5 pages every 6 months--less than one page a month! This looked easy so I decided to give it a try and was hooked.

But I still distrusted FAPA & SAPS and after a while I decided that until I finished school I'd stick with N'APA & then join ~~the~~ OMFA at graduation (then estimated as '62 or '63--now as June or November '63). But the Nov 59 PhiliConf caused eventually a change in that too. I took notes on a talk given by L. Sprague de Camp for use in Polhode but didn't catch the details of the questionnaire it was based on. Next time I visited Steve Takaka's book store I told him of my troubles & he gave me his copy of the questionnaire. As I wrote up the item I began to really faunch for a copy of WKSP?--but there it was--the statement that only contributors will get copies & perhaps SAPS.

After I recieved my contributor's copy I decided this will inspire one heck of a good discussion of the subject in the next few mailings so I got on the WL with the intention of buying these bundles & then dropping off. I was very disappointed in the discussion but found the mailings so enjoyable

that here I be despite hell &
(After I got on the wl I got a
asking what the *** I was doing
more along my lines. SOoo,after
get on "just so I could pick up a
apparently OMPA will be the one APA
that is) which I won't be in.)

Wagh...., er,...grad school.
flood of mail (2 or 3 letters)
on the BAPS wl when PAPA was
mulling things over a bit I did
bundles to see what they're like."
(standard type & English language,-

On Friday (5 May) I went to see a revival of the Infamous Woman in the Moon (Frau im Mond) at a microscopic Greenwich Villiage moviehouse called "Bleeker St. Cinema." I am very glad I did get an opportunity to see this sobekant "classic" but I think Siegfried Kracauer ~~MMMM~~ described it perfectly in his book From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological Study of the German Film with,

In his third film /of the stagnant period of German films/, DIE FRAU IM MOND (THE GIRL IN THE MOON, 1929), Lang imagined a rocket projectile carrying passengers to the moon. The cosmic enterprise was staged with a surprising veracity of vision; the plot was pitiable for its emotional short-comings. These were so obvious that they discredited many an illusion Lang tried to create by showy virtuosity. The lunar landscape smelled distinctly of Ufa's Neubabelsberg studios. /page 151, Noonday paperback edition, 1959 (original 1947).7

Julius Postal, who'd seen it some 2 years ago at the Museum of Modern Art, had warned me not to expect too much. He said that the first half (up to where they land on the moon) is very good but that then the crew finds gold, etc., and the picture becomes pure "Hollywood" shit. To top it off, the blurb outside the theatre was enuf to scare anyone away: "Way back in 1929 Fritz Lang created this prophetic realistic drama of a multi-stage rocket flight to the moon which carried scientists, love interest and even a stew-away!" Bleeck! Garghkrh! Etc.

The picture as a whole really wasn't that bad, however, tho admittedly the opening and closing scenes were wretched. And I suppose that to a certain extent statements like that of Julius do color ones own reaction to a film by putting one into a sympathetic or unsympathetic frame of mind before the picture starts.

In essence the picture told of the conception of and financing of the space-ship, its flight to the moon, and the antics of the crew up to about one minute after the ship left for earth. The total running time was 2 hours plus/minus 1 or 2 minutes.

The picture opens with the professor presenting a paper, at a scientific meeting, on something like "Hypothetical Gold Deposits on the Moon" & being laughed off the stage when he says that man will someday fly there to claim them. Thirty years later a Mr. Helius visits the impoverished garret dwelling of the professor and informs him that a rocket ship is being built, the professor arranges to be on the first flight, and presents Helius with the tattered copy of his gold paper (which he dug out from a hiding place).

The next scene shows 5 bankers looking over the plans and a model of the ship and a secret film somehow returned to earth from a drone rocket which had carried an explosive charge to the moon. After much discussion, including the noting that their representative Turner is willing to go on the trip, they decide to finance the completion of the ship. This way they can gain controll of the gold on the moon which they say they must in order to keep controll of that on earth.

I suppose they had to put this idiocy in in order to explain why people would pay for such a venture without having to fall back on the "we're go-

3// ing because it's there" bit (which still would have left the finances unaccounted for.) And this was probably among the best economic rationalizations for non-government space travel of that romantic period. Wasn't Heinlein's "The Man Who Sold The Moon" the first story to really ask who would pay the fantastic price? (And if I remember correctly after all these years, Heinlein guessed a cost for the trip which was less than 1% of the current estimates of \$40 billion. For that matter, von Braun et al guessed at only 10% or so some 8 years ago. Unless that was a purposed underestimation intended to not scare off the ~~guc~~...er, taxpayers.) Oberth surely realized the idiocy of trying to haul back gold economically even then, but some sort of justification was needed.

It was only at the bankers' meeting that the famous cutaway model of the spaceship was shown & then without any explanation of its parts (tho it admittedly would be very difficult to do so in a silent film). But there is a closeup photo of the top stage in Willy Ley's Rockets, Missiles & Space Travel with the parts identified in the caption. There was a parachute for landing back on earth, a control room, a passengers' cabin, a store room, fuel pumps and rocket motors but no fuel tanks! Like I kinda suspect that someone forgot something.

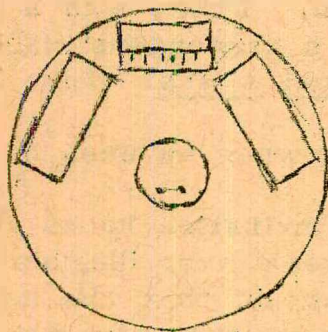
Helius bristles at Turner's terms but finally gives in when he sees no other way to finance the ship.

Interspersed in the above were several shots of an invitation to an engagement party for a Friede and a Windegger, and several near illegible letters involving Helius and these two. I am fairly certain that the letters, cards, & dialog titles were newly made from the strange way the former were presented and the unusual lettering (for old movies) of the latter. But the handwriting on the former was so fancy that it was very hard to read. Only one shot of the ship's log (much later in the picture) seemed to be original. But all in all the print seemed to be in perfect condition with no spots or scratches, and this was probably a new print made from a good negative with the above mentioned additions. Incidentally, the print Julius saw at the Museum has "flash" titles in German. Flash titles appear on the screen for only a small fraction of a second and Julius tells me that there are two reasons for their use. The first is to cut down the per foot import duty (and the shipping weight) on the film since not more than 1 or 2 frames of a title are needed by the U.S. distributor's translator to make up the English titles. The other is chemical--apparently certain chemicals are hard to wash out of the solid black areas during development and these speed up the decay of the film. Thus, the fewer the frames with titles the easier is the film to preserve.

Next was the famous take-off scene. Four great cranes supporting the ship carry it along tracks to a water tank in which it is 3/4 submerged "because it is too light to stand by itself"! (Probably a translator's goof, and it should have been that the ship was too heavy for the long fins to support it.) Only the top stage is above water.

Inside the ship are the Prof, Turner, Friede, Windegger, & Helius. About 50 minutes before blast off one of them (Windegger?) tries to dissuade Friede from going but she appeals that she doesn't want to be shamed in front of that great mob watching outside. (When those mobs were shown during the very long and impressive scenes of the preparat-

4// ions for takeoff I had remarked to Carl Frederick that it reminded me of the hords of newsmen seen on TV that AM at Cape Carneval during Shepherd's joy ride. That was certainly an appropriate day for seeing the film.) After a short speech to the effect that they must achieve a speed of 11,000 meters per second (24,600 MPH) but that if they exceed it they will be forever lost in space, and that the human organism can't stand an acceleration greater than 40 meters/second² (4.08 G's -- I'm sure Shepherd will be interested to learn this) they strap down in their bunks and blast off (to the tune of presumably the world's first countdown). ((Willy Ley says that this was put into the film for dramatic purposes but it certainly wasn't done very dramatically! I suppose that this is just another example of the limits of the silent film media and after all this was the first time it was tried.))



It is hard to imagine a clumsier or more awkward arrangement for the pilot's acceleration couch and the controll board. To reach it the pilot must prop himself up on one elbow and reeeaaach waaay ooover. So, once the ship starts accelerating everyone grunts, groans and makes faces and the pilot falls out of his couch trying to push up the lever to kill the engines.

But when they do kill the engines, everyone proceeds to walk around and there is no free fall. They go thru that old song and dance about the point of 0 gravity partway to the moon. Oberth must have really screamed and cursed a blue srteak when they over-rode him and included that bit. I mean, it MUST have been done despite Oberth...he couldn't have voluntarily let a thing like that get past!

So the motors had just been shut off and everybody is groggily walking around. So someone suggests a little schnaps for der circulation and everyone makes a mad dash for the store-room...but they stop short for they see something sticking out from behind a packing case. I didn't notice what this was, but it was probably a hand. Carl says "A boy scout and his dog!" and he was almost right too. It was a boy scout but no dog. After some discussion of what is to be done he says that he can be of help to them for he knows all about space and rockets. He pulls a mess of comics, dime novels, or some such out of under his shirt and each has some sort of bem or futuristic rocket on the cover.

Well, after some more small talk they turn the ship around and later it is finally time to land. They show the view from the port as the ship is coming in low and almost parallel to the ground, and from the curviture of the ground and their speed relative to it they must have gone around the moon some 20 times before landing, and done it at a speed of many thousands of miles per minute. For the final approach they chase everyone away from the port and to the couches and shut the port. But the "scientist" keeps coming back, opening it, and waving his hands in ecstasy.

They land in the midst of sand dunes and while others make various tests inside the ship one (Helius?) goes out in a space-suit, lights a match, dances a jig when it burns, and throws off his space-suit.

5// Then the prof comes out with a dowsing rod and takes off with it practically dragging him over the sand dunes. Hi Ho Campbell!!! He eventually crosses a boiling mass of mud pits and enters a cavern or canyon where he finds great deposits of gold. After shouting "GOLD!!!" for about 5 minutes he tries to pick up a piece as big as himself, falls backwards into a very deep pit, and is killed. Meanwhile Turner goes off (saying that he's looking for water) and follows the prof, and finally one of the two remaining men and the boy scout go looking for the first two. Turner looks over the gold deposit (he heard the prof fall) and sneaks around the approaching group and towards the ship.

He returns, binds the man who was left behind and digging under the ship in order to prepare it for the return trip, but that man shouts a warning to Friede as Turner tries to sneak into the ship and catch her off guard. They struggle at the door pushing at it from opposite sides but the other 2 return. There is a gunfight and Turner is mortally wounded. But he gloats as he croaks that his last shot wasn't aimed at a person but at the oxygen tanks.

They run to check, find half the oxygen has leaked out, and close off the valves to save the rest. Then comes the question of who should stay behind--Windegger or Helius so that the others would have enuf air for the return trip. There is no suggestion at all that it should be the stowaway brat or the broad.

With great dramatics they choose matches three times while the brat keeps score very partially. As expected from the buildup, Windegger wins and is to return with his fiancée and the brat. Helius takes it all very calmly and they have a fairwell drink which he had doped. When the others pass out he and the kid put them in the acceleration couches, he shows the kid how to fire the rockets (saying the acceleration will wake the others who will shut them off at the proper time, and that he is doing this to make things easier for them).

So he climbs out, the ship blasts off, and he finds the broad standing behind him. He is momentarily shocked, and they walk off hand in hand.

There you have it -- the plot of the famous "Frau Im Monde". It isn't as bad as it sounds from the above and has its good scenes (particularly the preparations for blast off) but some are also as bad as they seem from the description. But the blast-offs themselves (both from Terra and the moon) looked funny because one instant the rocket was standing there, the next it was whizzing off into space, at extremely high speeds. There was no majestic slow lift-off as we have come to expect. The explanation probably comes from the fact that at that time no large rocket had been launched. Their only experience had been with small models and toys which, due to their small size, do seem to accelerate at tremendous rates. If a toy goes 10 feet in the first second, it seems to have gone a tremendous distance. On the other hand, such a displacement would be barely noticed for one of the monstrous spaceships used today.

Sorry about the lack of mailing comments this time around, but I just didn't have the time to finish reading the last mailing, much less comment

6// on it. School work piled up so much that by when it was over I had a pile of unread fmz over a foot high and have since started in at deminishing the mess of em. Since I started at the top (with the most recent arrivals) I am still rather far from the mailing. Well, soon....

But there is certainly a switch in that I did get 22 pages of MCs into the last N'APA mailing while I have only 6 pages of non-MC stuff in SAPS. However I had already read the mailing and started in on the MC's before, so it was less of an effort. But it was very hastily done and composed on ditto master so it came out pretty cruddy. After re-reading it I pretty well decided to avoid verbose and hasty MC's and hope to be able to 2nd draft my future efforts. It was pretty sick.

Another thing that is keeping me pretty busy right now is Tightbeam 8 (a round-robin edited letterzine I am working on) and whose deadline is also July 15th.

I got a summer job at the newly opeded Institute for Space Studies run by NASA and it sure is a weird place. People come here for short periods of time (a year or so) and work on problems pretty much of their own choise and which are extreemly theoretical and have little if any practical application to space travel or elsewhere. For instance I am helping one of these people who is trying to find another causal relationship between variations in the density of the earth's atmosphere and in the intensity of the earth's magnetic field. (There is already one known connection but he thot of another possible one and is trying to calculate whether or not the contribution is appreciable.) Another group of people is working on the problem of what Venus' ionosphere could be like.

And things are very informal here. Altho working hours are nominally from 8:30 to 5 a number of people show up at 9 or even later. But then they are so enthusiastic about their "problems" that they work on 'till 8 or 9 PM on many occasions. Ghu, but I've never seen such an enthusias-tic bunch. It kinda scares me! Why, a couple of days ago I walked into the john and heard voices from two adjasent stalls discussing some problem.

And the location of this is odd too. NASA has rented space in River-side Church's "Interchurch Center", 2 blocks away from Columbia U. I wonder what the other tennants of this building thing of us. (For instance, between 2 of our offices is one belonging to the "Protestant Council of New York"!)

And the place seems to be crawling with fans. Of the 5 other students here, one is an ex member of the Nameless Ones and a current member of the Washington SFS (Mark Walsted) and one is a good friend of Dave MacDonald and John Closson (Steve Maran, tho he isn't a fan. But he does read the stuff). Two others read the stuff quite a bit and only 1 doesn't.

That @#%+! Dan Blackburn still hasn't given me those zines he claims to have printed for me and which I mentioned in my one sheeter last mailing. If and when he ever does get them to me they will be so damn ob-solete that they just won't be worth the postage to send out. I can see a person who prints them for free being a bit slow, but six months!?!

And so the 2nd fanzine to be typed on this Underwood Raphael Tru/jillo typewriter of NASA's draws tooa close. Till next time, Ed Tru/jillo