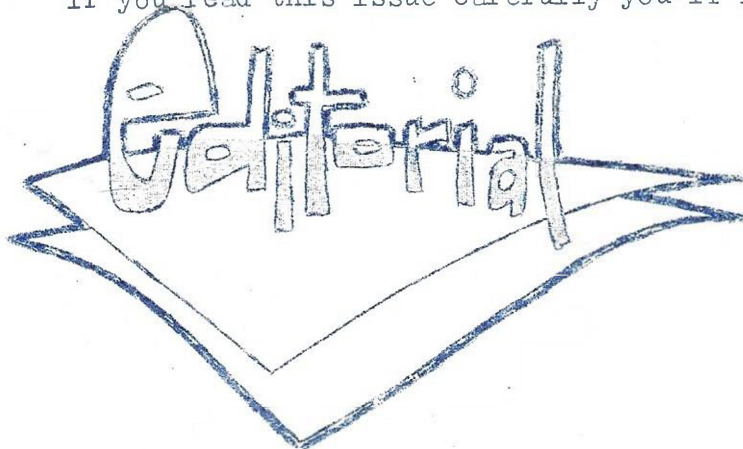


If you read this issue carefully you'll learn almost nothing.



The SCARR

Number 102

June 1966

OMPA 47

IN NONE OF THE CONVENTION REPORTS that I have seen has anybody been able to give in detail any of the long fannish conversations which took place. They have been interesting, amusing, lively — but who could remember them exactly?

There has been a Little Con almost every week in Northern Ireland, conversations have been fascinating, interesting, lively — but how can I recall them? I have a bad memory and my brain is so slow that sometimes I am minutes behind the speakers, still working out the ramifications of previous remarks.

For example, last week when we were visiting Walt and Madeline, I remarked to Bob (who was putting Colman's Mustard on harmless food) "What good IS mustard, anyway?" "It's used extensively in making pilasters," he said reprovingly.

Immediately I began working this out. By the time I had done so, Bob was giving Brian his definition of a space-dog. But all the way home I couldn't get that Coleman thing out of my head, over & over:

Colman's mustard

mustard plaster

plaster pilaster

pilaster column

column Colman

Colman's mustard Punch,

brothers, punch with care, punch in the presence of the passenjere.

It's a proud and lonely thing to be a fan — and it's crazy, too!

Slainte,

Geo
Geo. L. Charters 3 Lancaster Avenue BANGOR Northern Ireland.

THE CHO- PHO- USE

ONCE UPON A TIME a certain Belfast author (whose new book, THE WATCH BELOW, is just out) told us that he had been asked to reduce the length of one of his stories. "That is going to be a long job," I remarked. "You can't very well cut out a chapter or two somewhere — you'll have to chop out pieces here and there." "And," said a prominent Belfast fan, "you can mark the remaining pieces Chopter I, Chopter II, etc."

I thought of that episode when trying to think of a suitable title for these bits and pieces. Hence the title — and it shows to what lengths faneds will go to please the customers.

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Since the last issue I have received quite a lot of fanzines, letters and cards, and I would like to thank the senders. This in spite of the fact that I spent a long time trying to get the

stamp off one of the cards before I discovered that the stamp was printed on the card!

The Bangor Branch of the Church of Ireland also sent me a copy of their 'zine, but science fiction wasn't mentioned once. Neither was sf mentioned in a 'zine called NEW LIFE, published in Belfast, which tells all about the evils of the Liquor Business. From further afield I got SHARING, Vol XXXIV, No 2. It came all the way from San Diego — and doesn't mention sf! I wonder how they got my address! None of these fanzines said they would trade so I won't bother sending them The SCARR.

Another zine, CIVIC COURIER, came from the Bangor Borough Council. It says, inter alia, that the population consists of 12,000 males and 15,000 females. This may be significant! It also says that one third of the town's income goes on education: this may account for the fact that nowadays few young fellows can afford a hair-cut. But the most interesting item is that one of the local schools is trying to find homes for 80 French girls during the summer. I must look into this when I return from my trip to the U.S. in July. I get fed-up doing my own housework, especially the removal of dust. Everything in the house seems anxious to get its share of this useless commodity — even The Stairs Like Dust.

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In an old copy of CORONET they gave examples of phrases in an unusual form. For example, Number 2 below is obviously "Right in the middle of everything." (If you're not interested you can always skip to the next item from the chopping-block.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Number 1. Looking | 2. Every right thing. |
| 3. Your hat
Keep it | 4. Man
Board |
| 5. LOGIRL00000 | 6. GIRL £100,000 |
| 7. KEEP OFF THE GRASS
..... | 8. T I M E
ABDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ |

9. NO L CK

10. DLIHC

11. Trimouble

12. Going

home.

Not interested? Oh, well, try another chip from the chopping-block.

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The first issue of IMPULSE, the new name for SCIENCE FANTASY, contains what could easily win an Oguh, if there were such a thing as a Hugo in reverse. It is called YOU AND ME AND THE CONTINUUM and was written by J.G. Ballard. Apparently JG got fed up (mind you, I beat him to it — I got fed up first) writing stories of the earth being burned, frozen, flooded, blown off the map and pasteurised. He is now trying to verbalize it, and the weapon is a series of paragraphs with headlines in strict alphabetical order. Not much attempt at punctuation, no plot, no story, no sense. Some learned words are used, like catatonic, schizophrenia, ethnic, psychopath, etc. It's not every day you can read all those words in one "story." Here is one section:

Quasars. Malcolm X, beautiful as the trembling of hands in tabes dorsalis: Claude Etherly, migrant angel of the Pre-Third; Lee Harvey Oswald, rider of the scorpion.

If you're short of cash YOU can write stuff like this — and Kyril Bonfiglioli will pay you for it.

Of course it may be that JG is just doing this for a joke — a very poor joke!

The joke (?), with loud oncomiums, is continued in NEW WORLDS 161. In this too Ballard seems obsessed by the Kennedy assassination. Perhaps these two pieces are the forerunners of a whole series of such things under titles such as AGAIN THE WEAPON or THE RETURN OF THE ASSASSIN and so on. Or he could use titles with as little sense as the "story," like WHAT PRICE SEVERING, EASTERN GUNFIRE IN CORRIDOR, etc. The possibilities are endless. And after awhile their circulation figures won't worry them any more — there won't be any.

O+O

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From some adverbs or adjectives it is difficult to form nouns. For example, sardonic. Is the noun sardoniness or sardony or sardoncity? And from slipshod is the noun slipshoddiness or slipshoddery or slipshoddiciousness? (That "word" reminds me of the schoolboy tongue-twister: An imaginary manager of an imaginary menagerie.)

I=I

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I=I

There was this grave-digger, see, who followed his trade in Belfast. He was offered a job in the wilds of Donegal and decided that the country would be a better place than the city for his growing family. But after a week or so in the new job he became covered with red spots, so he went to the doctor, who advised him to return to the city.

"But why, doctor?" he asked.

"Something in the soil doesn't agree with you," said the doctor, gravely. "You have an allergy in a country churchyard."

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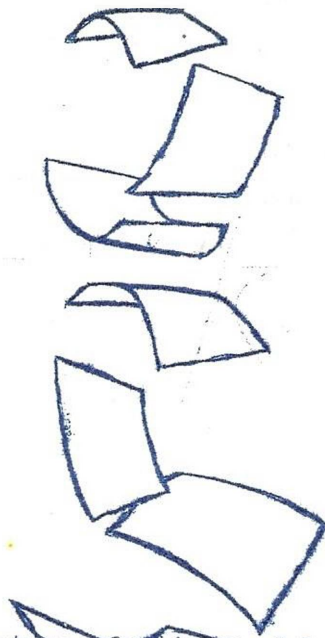
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And in case I have forgotten to say it elsewhere this 'zine is ground out in the Charters mill at 3 Lancaster Avenue BANGOR Northern Ireland.

Peeps into my Diary



Aug 1 Wed Henry Cecil 80 SETTLED OUT OF COURT. Mixture of crime and law. Nice twist at the end: the heroine murders the hero instead of marrying him, a very nice gesture on her part!

Aug 18 Sat Charles Alden Seltzer 50 LONESOME RANCH. I liked: "...the feelings that Allison's magneto touch had stirred." Meaning, I suppose, what ya think when a loco motor attacks ya.

Aug 30 Thu Luan Ranzetta 20 THE MARU INVASION. SF/pb. Invaders from the planet Maru, 3 months journey from Earth. (Where? Nobody knows!) They talk by mental telepathy, which is not to be confused with any other type of telepathy. Poor writing, poor plotting, poor spelling (e.g., guage), &c. Otherwise, good.

Sep 1 Sat John E Muller 20 URANIUM 235. Typical Muller: e.g., Professor Shau-ghan O'Riley (from Dublin, believe it or not) says, "Begorrah and bejabbers and bedad!" Pfui!

Sep 6 Thu John E Muller 20 THE DAY THE WORLD DIED. Have decided to give up JEM: can't take it the way I could when I was younger.

Sep 9 Sun Peter Dagmar 30 ALIEN SKIES. Somehow it reads like a 1000-page story cut down. Liked: "A shiver ran up my speudo-spine."

Dec 8 Sat Rafael Sabatini 70 THE HISTORICAL NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENTS. Betrayals, murders, etc., in short stories. Entertainment?? Was amused when Louis XIV said to Madame Montespan (who had 7 children by him): "Madame, you are unbearable."

Dec 12 Wed Robert A Heinlein 70 A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. Boy raised on Mars by Martians comes to Earth and tries to induce Terrans to adopt ideas and ideals of the Martians. He is telepathic, telekinetic, etc. Unusual kind of story, anyway.

Dec 28 Fri Neil Bell 60 ONE CAME BACK. (1938) Blind man dies and returns to life three days later. He can't tell much of what he saw — he's blind, see? But he is canonised and all! ARRGHH!

Jan 18 Neil Bell 50 THE NARROW EDGE. Young fellow, apparently son of Irish farmer & French mother, sets out to find his real father. (Circa 1810) After a lot of irrelevant information & experiences he winds up still not knowing. A redeeming feature is that one of the characters is called Charters!

Feb 7 George Dilnot 60 THE THOUSANDTH CASE. The hero, at one time, finds himself in a cellar which is slowly filling with water. (Written 1933.) Whatever became of all those cellars slowly filling with water?

Feb 20 William Hope Hodgson 80 THE NIGHT LAND. (Borrowed from Walt.) "And" is a very useful and unobtrusive word, and yet in THE NIGHT LAND it is something vastly different. And the reason is that it starts most of the sentences in the story. And not only that, but it is used times without number after semi-colons. And this grates on the sensitive spirit of the sensitive reader. And, still further to annoy, the hero's name is never given. And WHH repeats himself over and over in describing the country; and so one is inclined to skip many of these long descriptions. And the hero has a remarkable memory: my reason for saying this that after two months journeyings he is able to remember the exact times between meals and sleeps and so on; and only once makes mention of notes. (And why should he make notes anyway?) And there is no conversation whatever in the whole book. And the language he uses is so archaic (though verily we cannot have archaic and eat it). And here be two examples. (1) But, as you to understand, if that she not to see wisely and be still intent to the firehole, I should have her to obey. (2) And they to have power now to open the great gate, which did be done by great machines. End quotes. And it be unlikely (in my opinion) that in 1000000000 years there will be little volcanoes all over the place. And half-way through the book he to use oft the infinitive for the past tense. And lo! in spite of these handicaps the romance of the hero and heroine shineth forth as a jewel and is so well done that it saves the story entirely. Truly a story which will be remembered.

Apr 7 Terence Haile 20 GALAXIES AHEAD. SF/pb. Story of 6 men in spaceship, who are killed off one by one. Unusual things in this book: for example, an exploding sun makes this noise:- Z — BROOMER — ERANGA — OOMMERA-CRACKER — ERASH....ERASH....ASH! (I'll bet even Willy Ley didn't know that.) So if I hear this sound I'm going to run like hell! The fuel for the ship is the same as the food for the crew and it is easily grown. Jolly good idea which is given away free. They crash-land on a planet but they are not even scratched. When they are lost in some incredibly faraway galaxy and set out to look for Earth they have a unique way of searching. When a new galaxy appeared before them and they thought they recognised the formation they skirted round it and made for the next. On the other hand, if they did not recognise it they skirted round it and made for the next. The word "unique" doesn't do this system justice! They have a narrow escape when, owing to a planet's gravity, a comet turns at right angles and rushes at them.

Apr 22 What shall I call the letter column in The SCARR? The Moving Finger? No, someone's already used that. The Moving Finger Prints? No, sounds like Scotland Yard. Wait, though — how about The Moving Finger Prints Charmingly? Ugh! Just "LETTERS."

Apr 24 Am now becoming used to monocular vision. At first there was not five minutes during the day that I did not think of it, but now I often do not even think of it for an hour or more. Can see lights with bad eye but they all seem white, but for some reason I often get yellow flashes. Sometimes, too,

there is a white blob with a bright thin edge irregularly round it like a filament in a lamp. This always has a small gap in it, and this gap gets bigger until it all disappears; lasts less than 15 seconds.

May 1 Mileage on Minor 1000 now 22,500. Bob says I'll have to get new ones as in his opinion the ones I got with the car are done. This is ridiculous as the rubber can plainly be seen in several places.

May 11 Lionel Roberts 20 THE IN-WORLD. SF/pb. Aliens attacking from base in Arctic or Antarctic, which is but a small part of huge underground caverns inhabited by billions of gnomes. Couple of things I liked, though, like the 200" telescope on Mt Panama in California, and a repulsive screen. And Luna is called Lunar.

May 15 Raymond Z Gallun 30 THE PLANET STRAPPERS. Space western.

May 22 Sudden cold spell last night. There was no loss of life, however, for although many were called few were frozen. But in the drawing-office even the prints were blue with cold.

June 5 Have heard quite a few "Tom Swifties" recently (though they have been circulating for many years). Examples: I lost my way in Paris, he said ruefully. It's a sixteenth of an inch, he said shortly. Pour me another cup, she said saucily.

June 16 John P Marquand 40 STOPOVER: TOKYO. This story of Mr Moto should have been called Think Slow, Mr Moto. Spying in Japan by US agents. Long ago in Ireland it used to be said that if a boy failed at everything the thing to do was make him a priest or parson. This book gives the impression that he should be an Intelligence (??) Agent. The heroine is killed off apparently to make room for a sequel. And I did not like the reiteration of "Poor Japan," a favourite phrase of Mr Moto. If it is meant as a joke it's a hell of a poor joke.

July 5 Left Nutts Corner Airport for International Airport, Buffalo.

July 6 Left Buffalo for New York.

July 9 Left Penn Station for Washington.

July 27 Left Charlottesville Airport for Washington, New York and Belfast.

Aug 12 John Lymington 60 A SWORD ABOVE THE NIGHT. Ten thousand years ago (give or take a day or two) a spaceship left Earth, and, now crewed by dead men's bones, returns to Earth and causes consternation and stuff.

Aug 23 Pel Torro GALAXY 666. Ian MacAulay would love p. 86: The things were odd, weird, grotesque. There was something horribly uncustomary and unwonted about them. They were completely unfamiliar. Their appearance was outlandish and extraordinary. There was something quite phenomenal about them; they were supernormal; they were unparalleled; they were unexampled. The shape of the aliens was singular in every sense. They were curious, odd, queer, peculiar and fantastic, and yet when every adjective had been used on them, when every preternatural epithet had been applied to their aberrant and freakish appearance, when everything that could be said about about such eccentric, exceptional, anomalous creatures had been said, they still remained indescribable in any concrete terms.

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((The first letter this time round is a postcard! Forbye, it didn't come to me — it came to my father. And forbye that again, it's dated 2nd December, 1908. And, even more forbye, it doesn't mention science-fiction!))

National School, Ballinallee, Co. Longford.

Dear Sir, It falls to your children to supply some turf this week to our school. Will you kindly comply with this and oblige

Yours sincerely,

M. Connolly (Principal)

((Eheu! Fugaces and all that jazz.))

RR3, Hartford City, Indiana.

John Berry did indeed describe his collection, more or less, in an article on astrophilately in YANDRO. (You don't read the nags I send you...sniff, snuffle.) ((I do SO read YANDRO. But if you saw John's collection and how it is set out you'd realise how inadequate the description was.))

Enjoyed your remarks on cars. 25 mpg doesn't seem like much, if that's an Imperial gallon (5 quarts?). ((4 qts.)) We get "up to" 28 mpg (4-quart gallons) out of our Rambler. (I say "up to" because I only measure the mileage on long trips -- one gets better mileage on long drives than one does just driving back and forth to town, and thus has more to brag about.) However, many of your comments are so terribly appropriate to American-made cars -- auto manufacturers must be the same the world over. Be glad you don't live in New York City, where one must leave one's car completely unlocked to keep the kids from wrecking it while getting in to steal your stuff.

Sällskapvagen 7, Stockholm 48.

Harry Warner, I'm afraid, is too right to be funny, almost — just the other day I heard that Sweden is also to adopt zip codes, with five digits just as the US ones. Ghod — I wonder whatever this may be for, as Sweden has already a very fast postal delivery system. Anything mailed before 4:00 in the afternoon will be delivered next day, excluding packages and such. It seems to me that this should be good enough.

I personally rather liked GLORY ROAD. It wasn't one of Heinlein's best novels by any means, but it was rather entertaining, and mostly well-written. But then I seem to go for anything. I even enjoyed FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD.

About DAVY: I think the book is science fiction. Certainly it could just as easily be set in medieval Europe, or somewhere/time else, but the author chose to set it in a future US, after the Big War, and I think this makes it science fiction.

If you reason that a book which might as easily and with only a few changes be made into non-sf isn't sf even in the first place, well, I can name quite a few books which then wouldn't be sf: 1984 (this could be set in

Communist Russia or Nazi Germany-, ATLAS SHRUGGED (a small change in the plot and this wouldn't qualify either), FARMER IN THE SKY (this could as well with some small changes be set in some hundred years ago), etc.

Carl J. Brandon.

2, Kearney's Villas, Gulladuff, Co Derry.

Peeps In My Diary is an omission I didn't entirely agree with. Letters To The Editor are also not included but to my way of thinking this is no great tragedy. Just take a look at some of the mad letters fans write and you will grasp what I mean. ((But we like mad letters.))

Your writing was good, humorous stuff, informative maybe, interesting no. However well someone writes an article about a car it can never really appeal to me in any way. ((But it is connected with sf: the rubber pads on my Gestetner are not lifting the paper properly, so to weigh them down I use the magnetised box in which I keep a spare key under the mudguard.))

Your piece about stamps receives similar comments. ((More respect for age, please: Jacob sold his birthright for a MSS of "Postage," the world's first fanzine.))

Michael Colin Hendry.

40 Parrs Wood Avenue, Manchester 20.

Last week a friend of mine went for a conducted tour round a car-works (Austin's, actually, near Birmingham) and he says that the way they make cars is enough to make one afraid to ride in any car ever again.

Talk about zombies!(he said) and another thing — everything is done to a $2\frac{1}{2}$ minute module, i.e., any man's task must be done in $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes and then the belt moves on. There is no time for being meticulous: if anything goes wrong — like reaming out the wrong holes on a cylinder block — it is left to be picked up (or not) at an inspection point much later on.

Sid.

423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland.

I keep hoping that the automobile manufacturers will soon change over to plastic, like most products that were once made of metal. If this happens and the plastic is the plastic type — so that it can be kneaded into different shapes — all should be well, for each of us can twist and shove his vehicle into the shape that he wants. However, there are certain things to be said for apparent disadvantages in the autos that change their shape only when something accidental occurs. My Oldsmobile, for instance, is possessed of a ~~wood~~ bonnet that looks from the inside somewhat like the deck of the Queen Mary appears to a person standing in the centre of the deck. On certain of these Maryland hills the most remarkable phenomenon occurs, when suddenly this vast expanse of metal blots out all the rolling landscape and

I get a sensation of floating through the ethereal emptiness of either the ether or firmament (I'm not strong enough on theology to be sure what firmament is like) freed from all the material things that tie me to the three dimensions of earth. If it weren't for a nagging little thought about what might be approaching me, invisible in this isolation, I might break permanently free from my mortal envelope.

I haven't the faintest idea of the source of the little story you published. [The Girl and the Gloves.] I vaguely suspect some trick on your part, ((honestly, no!)), as if you'd written it yourself and had it published in a school publication and you aren't sure which member of your family saved this copy and left it in the attic. Whatever the facts may be, I

found it amusing in an old-fashioned way, and it wouldn't seem out of place if it appeared in a collection of short stories by Booth Tarkington. You may not be familiar with his writing, but he was enormously popular in this country during the first quarter of this century, sank into total literary disgrace after that, and only in the past few years has been enjoying a slight return to literary respectability. I've just gone through three of his novels and found one of them, *The Plutocrat*, superior to Sinclair Lewis in some ways for its merciless picture of the Babbitt type.

The John Berry item is new to me and quite as splendid as you think. The bubbles rising from the submerged vehicle make a picture that should survive permanently in my memories of things fanciful. The climax is as shattering as that in the Mark Twain account of the mountain climbers who went to superhuman amounts of trouble to reach the peak from which they would get the most splendid view of the sunrise, and then watched in the wrong direction while the sun rose unseen behind their backs.

Harry.

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1. I had some more letters I was going to quote but they have turned up missing. I will really have to have some kind of methodical filing system....perhaps next year!
 2. The deadline for this issue is upon me: I feel there is some connection between "deadlines" and "deadliness." At any rate it's murder for anyone as inherently lazy as I am to keep up with them.
 3. As I remarked a page or two back I have been having trouble with my Gestetner. Last issue the trouble was that it printed the sheets sort of catercornered. This time it's showing its teeth by not lifting the sheets — a tendency I corrected by placing a magnet above the rollers and the extra weight did the trick. Next time around it will have thought up another devilish trick.
 4. This issue will go out shortly but when it will arrive is anybody's guess. There is a seamen's strike on, and "second-class" mail will be delayed. The strike has its amusing moments: Harold Wilson, our Prime Minister, has declared that the economy cannot afford the 20 or 30 per cent rise seamen are demanding. But only a short time ago he got an 80% rise — awarded by his grateful colleagues and himself. I guess everybody, deep down, has a sense of humour.
 5. We have had some days of sunshine and that means more delay in getting this thing off the ground. Sunshine is such an extraordinarily rare phenomenon in Ireland that time must be spent studying it.
 6. At the moment all banks in Ireland are closed due to a staff strike. All, that is, except the one which has my account. This is a great compliment, of course, but I don't see why they should regard my £4. 17. 6 as being so important.
 7. If any of the pages of your copy of this zine appear to be turning green it means that you should send me your autograph with some words written above it.

00000000000000000000000000000000

the Night of the three-Wheeled by James White



THIS SCIENCE-FICTION READING FRATERNITY to which we belong is rather like a flea. By that I mean that it has on its body a number of lesser fleas engaged, not only in back-biting, but in playing electric guitars, collecting postage stamps and singing Gilbert and Sullivan. And it is Gilbert and Sullivan fandom, rather than the other perversions mentioned, with which I have become physically and emotionally involved, and it is this particular aberration I wish to deal with.

Gilbert and Sullivan is an acquired taste — an easily acquired taste for some people — and in this it is like driving small, cheap, continental cars or being married to a chorus girl, or cold mashed-potato sandwiches — Carol Carr says they tinkle and taste crunchy like an oak-tree, but this isn't a typical reaction. Listening to G & S in full stereo, performed inside the aforementioned small, slow, inexpensive continental car by the Carrs and the Whites is a deeply-moving, mind-wrenching experience. Peggy is a Top Sop. of course, and can stand in for the orchestral twiddly bits. Terry Carr's voice is an instrument of tremendous power and resonance and is almost as discordant as my own, while Carol possesses a soft, rich, rather effeminate baritone. Together they produce an effect which is quite unique. But I digress.

As is the case with real fandom the first step on joining is to familiarize oneself with the nomenclature. One must be able to tell the difference between a Sop, a Top Sop and an Alto — and be able to isolate and identify the different noises they produce — before one can be fully accepted into this fandom. But when this stage has been reached one joins the ranks of the G&S passifans, listening to operettas on the radio, making obscure Gilbertian allusions and once or twice a year subbing for a live performance by one of the active local groups — an activity analogous to convention-going. There are various grades of BNF in G&S fandom, these being the producers, musical directors, principals and ladies and gentlemen of the chorus. But to qualify for this high position a fan must be able to sing and/or act. However, for those pitiful, tragic people who want desperately to be active but who are culturally crippled by an inability to sing a note there is available a sort of semi-BNFdom called Honor-ary membership.

Basically this involves forking over One Pound Sterling, either in coins of the realm, or, if you happen to be rich or ostentatious, in folding money. Besides gaining for oneself a much closer association with the BNFs, two free tickets to any performance of the show and your name printed in very small type on the programme, there are many other fringe benefits. One is the right of admission to the male or female dressing-rooms during the interval for a cup of tea and whatever else is being offered, and another is the opportunity of getting one's neck broken helping out back-stage.

My first experience as an acting, unpaid stage-hand was as a gondola-puller in a show called, inevitably, "The Gondoliers." This was a hard, demanding, responsible job for the neofan I then was. I was placed in sole charge of a large, heavy gondola made from a thick plank, four old perambulator wheels and a graceful, brightly-painted prow and stern — these being the only parts visible to the audience. Motive power was supplied by an organic generator of more or less conventional design (no) via a rope which had broken and been knotted again several times, and, on cue, I was supposed to pull the contraption along the narrow strip of stage between the backdrop and the hard-board bollards lining the edge of the canal. Because of the kinky construction of the hall where the performance was being given the stage had wings on only one side — or to be quite fair, it had a wing and a half — so that I had to lie flat on my back behind the bollards during the entire first act because I couldn't crawl off even on my hands and knees without the audience seeing me. Despite this everything seemed to be going well. The work, though laborious, was not nearly as strenuous as playing ghoddminton.

The situation first began to deteriorate when Peggy, who was busy singing and prancing a few yards away, began feeling slightly concerned for my blood-sugar level, and threw a packet of Polo Mints at me, not realising that I had already had some

As a well-balanced — well, physically anyway — diabetic with a case-history stretching over twenty years I can assure everyone that hypoglycaemia — insulin shock, if, like me, you can't spell that word — is not nearly as violent and dramatic as the TV medical people make it out to be. I knew this and so did Peggy, but the ladies and gentlemen of the chorus, plus at least three Principals, had learned about diabetes from Doctor Kildare. Within minutes I was being bombed with Spangles, Smarties, pieces of chocolate with less fattening centres, and other brand names, not to mention one block-buster in the shape of a very hard iced bun covered with dust and teeth-marks. The whole thing was becoming ridiculous, I thought, and then suddenly had to forget all about this sweet rain from heaven because the wheel of the gondola came off.

I managed to get my toe-cap to it before the boat could sag and pitch everyone into the warm wooden waters of the canal, and for the rest of the first act I had to inch up and down the floor on my back supporting as well as pulling the gondola. The grunting and crackling sounds I made ploughing up and down the stage over a carpet of wrapped and unwrapped sweets seemed loud to me, but then I was making them. Apparently the singing was much noisier.

During the interval, after securing the loose wheel, I had my fringe benefit cuppa and chatted to some visiting BNFs belonging to another Society who had come to pick holes and eat our buns. They said they were very impressed with the way the gondola rocked realistically as it moved to and from the jetty. . .

I felt proud and kinda humble and my big toe hurt.



