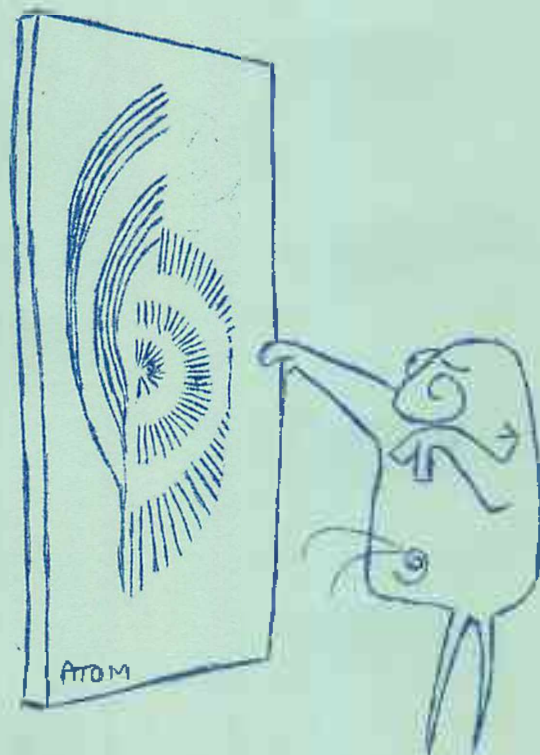
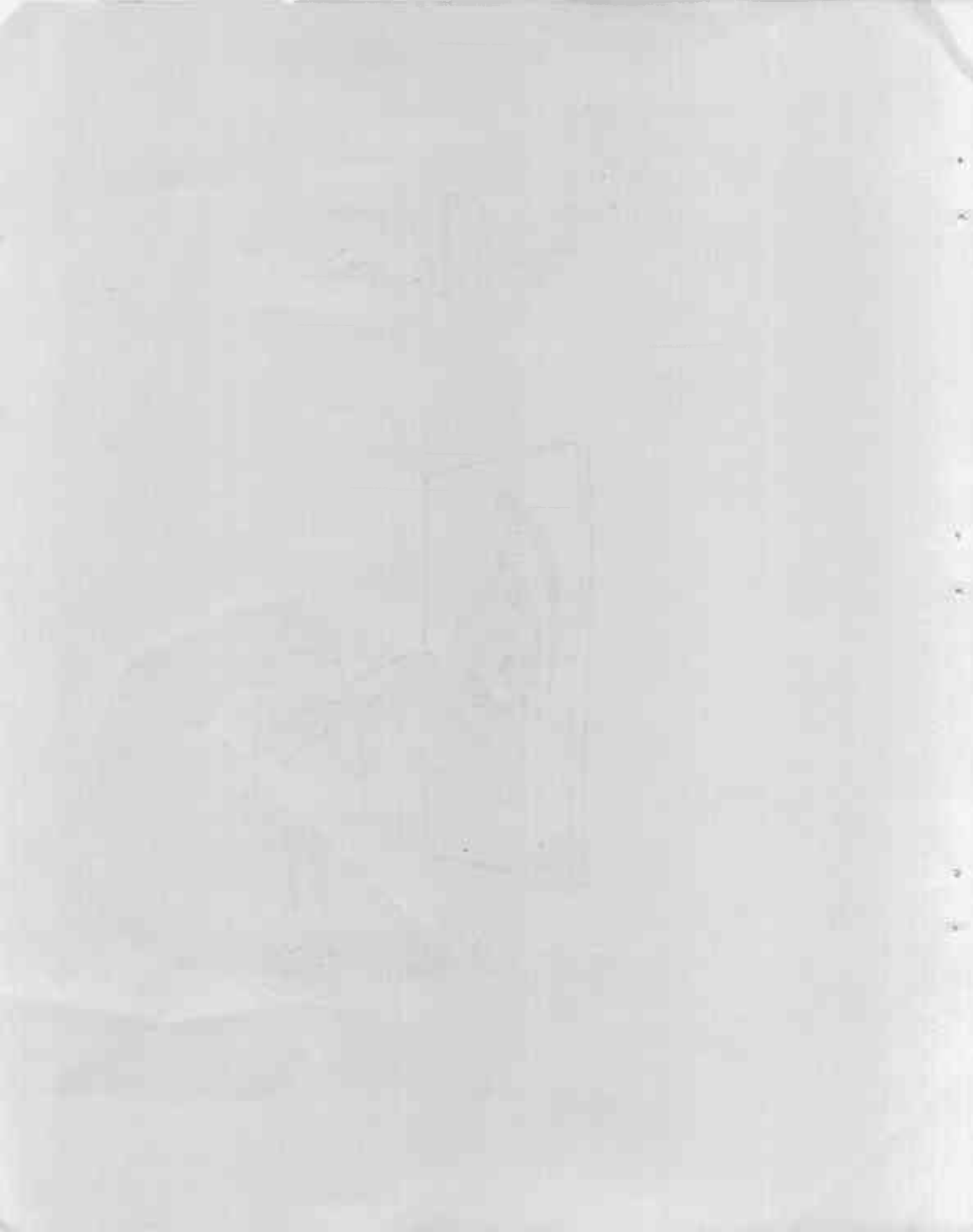


THE SCARR





I am the most modest man in Ireland.

The SCARR

Number 112

March 1967

O.M.P.A. x



It is really surprising the way a duplicator can get up to all sorts of tricks to annoy the operator.

It reminds me of my schooldays when I cycled three miles to school. Each morning the wind blew against me and each evening it had veered round in the opposite direction.

More recently, I drive a car to work. So, since the wind cannot affect me the sun comes out for half an hour to glare in my eyes both going and returning.

The latest trick of the Gestetner is to send anything from two to twenty sheets through at a time instead of one. And no, they are not stuck together; and no, they are not damp -- just obeying the whim of a diabolical machine (see Lord Dunsany.)

It shows the intransigence of inanimate and insensate objects towards pre-clears, as John Campbell would say.

+ + + + + + + + +

Not once have I mentioned Harold (Mush, you huskies!) Wilson.

+ + + + + + + + +

Cover & cartoon by Arthur Thomson.

Typos, dirty thumb-prints, appalling errors all by

Geo. L. Charters,
3 Lancaster Ave.,
B A N G O R,
Northern Ireland.

THE

CHO-
PHO-
USE

A COUPLE of years ago I bought a Rhyming Dictionary. It is a more up-to-date version of the one brought out by John Walker about 200 years ago.

At that it is not so terribly up-to-date.

Pokenoso: "How much did you pay for it?"

Me: "A shilling."

Pokenoso: "Well, what do you expect for a shilling? The Bodleian Library, huh?"

Me: "Shurrup!"

It does not have any of the words descriptive of the amenities of modern civilisation, such as radar, napalm, H-bomb, blitzkrieg, and so on.

And, naturally, it does not place together words which rhyme. How could one put in any easily-found order: tea, enmity, tepoo, khaki, precis? All it actually does is to put the words in the order they'd be in if spelt backwards. So coming together you'd find through, cough, enough, bough, rough, lough, although. Which don't rhyme very well.

The first word is A (the definite article), the second is BAA. When I saw that I tried to guess what the last word would be: I decided on BUZZ. I was wrong: BUZZ is the last but one.

There are two words ending in V: leitmotiv and Slav. So I added two more in the margin: shiv and spiv. There are no words ending in Q; it just goes on from POLYP to BAZAAR.

It might be a useful book at times for crossword puzzle enthusiasts. You want a word ending in -DOUS? Easy: HAZARDOUS, TREMENDOUS, STUPENDOUS and a dozen more. But for some reason it omits HORRENDOUS. I think that's nefarious!

PARIS: The most appropriate city in which to get plastered.

Somebody -- maybe it was Dickens -- once said that the law was an ass. He could have added that in many cases it's administered by asses. For example:

A boy found a motor-cycle abandoned in a narrow street. To prevent anyone being hurt he very foolishly brought it to the police barracks and shortly thereafter found himself in court. The magistrate complimented him on his good citizenship and fined him ten shillings for being in charge or possession of a mechanically-propelled vehicle, to wit, a motor-cycle, without third-party insurance and without a driving licence. Ripley would have loved that.

More recently, the police set up a radar trap on a section of road. One man was so angry at being caught that he stopped just outside the area and warned motorists by flashing his headlights. When the police found they were getting no victims they investigated, found him and summoned him. He was fined for preventing people from breaking the law by speeding.

Bata, the shoe manufacturers, have a way of frustrating rail and dock workers who indulge in pilfering (and apparently the railwayman or docker who doesn't pilfer is a rare bird). Their system is to right shoes and left shoes separately. I'm waiting until the police hear of this dirty trick!

COPPER NITRATE: Overtime for policemen on night duty.

On another page Harry Warner mentions what was for him an embarrassing matter. My own most embarrassing event happened like this. I was coming home on the last train one night and tried so long to find a third-class carriage not completely filled that the train began to move off. I grabbed the handle of the nearest door and opened it. Inside, a lady had carefully placed her shopping-bag and handbag against the door where they'd be sure to fall out when the door was opened. To her surprise they did so. She made a grab for the shopping-bag and caught it; I made a grab for the handbag and missed it. I bent down and groped for it on the platform and when I found it and stood up the train had moved a good twenty yards, so I opened a door as it passed and stepped into a brightly-lit, first-class compartment, with a man reading in each corner. They all looked up, saw me with my handbag in my hand and went back to their reading. My face burned all the way to the next stop.

What was YOUR most embarrassing experience?

SPACE-DOG: Animal, living on the fabric of space, whose woof is warped.

I detest quizzes. Having a bad memory I always get a low score. I look with envy on the man who can remember the best sf novel of '61, or the story which caused such discussion in '58. But I wouldn't mind a quiz like this. Who wrote the following books:

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold	She
The Postman Always Rings Twice	Ben Hur
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty	Ivanhoe
No Orchids for Miss Blandish	Moby Dick
The Murder of Roger Ackroyd	Betty Zane
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn	Don Quixote
Lady Chatterly's Lover	Peyton Place
The Vicar of Wakefield	The Green Hat
Appointment in Samarra	The Egg and I
The Building of Jalna	Hatter's Castle
The Guns of Navarone	Robinson Crusoe
The Man from Bar-20	The Coral Island
The Pickwick Papers	To Sir, with Love
And Berry Came Too	East Side General
The Saint in Miami	The Maltese Falcon
The Four Just Men	Pride and Prejudice
Farewell to Arms	Mutiny on the Bounty
Treasure Island	The Mill on the Floss
Captain Blood	The Man Who Was Thursday

Just possibly the authors are le Carre, Cain, Thurber, Chandler, Christie, Smith, Lawrence, Goldsmith, O'Hara, de la Roche, McLean, Mulford, Dickens, Yates, Charteris, Wallace, Hemingway, Stevenson, Sabatini, Haggard, Wallace, Scott, Melville, Grey, Cervantes, Metalious, Arlen, McDonald, Cronin, Defoe, Ballantyne, Braithwaite, Slaughter, Hammatt, Austin, Nordhof & Hall, Eliot, Chesterton.

Score FIVE points for each author named correctly. Score FOUR points for each named incorrectly. Score ZERO for "Don't know."

I'll look at that again in six months and I'm sure I'll score 150 points.

JAMES WHITE

I REMEMBER....

ONLY A GENIUS could rise from complete obscurity to the upper echelons of the BNFs in so short a time, and all those who have read him or met him will admit that Walter Willis is truly a giant among fen. But there are some who hold the popular fallacy that all genius must necessarily be akin to madness, and that he is a monster who practises forbidden rites at the full of the moon, takes a sadistic delight in beating his wife and family at frequent intervals, and is probably addicted to chain-smoking reefers to boot. This, however, is not strictly true. Admittedly he has a few harmless idiosyncrasies, but these only served to make him an individual different from all other individuals in this space-time continuum. If you were to meet him in the street you wouldn't know him from Finn McCoul. It is very difficult to describe him in words, but he has a face and hair. The hair is the most striking feature: it is long and exceedingly fine, and tends to stand out and undulate gently if there is a draught in the room. It is a muddy brown colour. If you've ever seen old prints of Beethoven you'll have a rough idea.

One of his little mannerisms is to break suddenly into Latin or French to force some outlandish pun into the bilingual stage before it dies (a rare occurrence, fortunately). This has caused a select circle of his enemies (i.e., those luckless ones he writes about as well as for) to refer to him as Voltaire Willis.

People often expressed their surprise and awe (and pity, too) at the amount of long tedious work involved in typesetting SLANT. Admittedly the work was long and hard, but it was never tedious. Walter, you see, used to be a man (no cracks, please!), and nearly every room was liberally sprinkled with veery efficient loudspeakers disguised as framed embroidery and floor mats and things. When working, he turned the volume up until we could hear the music about six times louder than the conductor of the orchestra could, so that

nearly every page of SLANT was set to music! What can be more pleasant, he argued, than floating in a sea of the great classics, with triumphant chords and the terrifically inspiring passages of Sibelius, Beethoven and Brahms symphonies crashing and roaring about one's ears?

This is all very well, but not all of us can swim -- and what if one prefers one's seas Blue?

There was one time a nice restful piano piece was being played and Walter had turned the gain 'way up so's not to miss a single note or phrase of it. There are some things you can't listen to six times louder than normal, and the overture to Act 3 of Tannhauser is one of them. It was during the summer so we didn't really need the windows anyway.

Not many people realised that there were times when getting out the magazine called for sheer, raw, physical courage of a very high order from the editors. One incident will illustrate this. When I arrived for the Tuesday night stint Walter informed me that Madeleine had come down with something and had gone to bed and taken the electric fire. Now the press was in the attic, and in winter the attic got cold, cold. The heater had to burn for hours before the place could be used at all, so this was really bad news. After we'd taken stock there was a grave discussion in the frigid pressroom. I suggested that we could work in our overcoats and mufflers, and take off my glasses to keep our breaths from fogging them up, and running round the room at frequent intervals to protect our feet from frostbite. Rags tied around the lever of the press would protect the operator's hands, and a battery of candles under the inkplate would keep the ink from freezing and dropping off in black flakes while the run was in progress. But somehow I don't think Walter really wanted to do any work that night. I pointed out how well such an act of self-sacrifice would look in his memoirs. That made him look thoughtful for a minute. Through chattering teeth he suggested we go down to the sitting-room (the one with chairs) where there was a fire, and come to a decision in comfort. Finally, what looked like being one of those nights turned out to be quite a success: we spent the whole time in armchairs by a roaring fire, listening to Doris Day records & talking.

Several Bir Names visited O'Bleak House since Walter became an actifan, and the welcome and treatment they received will long remain in their memories. It was never dull there. One was as likely to find oneself among a party engaged in bombing a city far below (tin can in the garden) with guided missiles (stones) from a satellite station (second floor front room) as to see model spaceships rising from the back yard; or even a magazine being produced. The first really important personage to visit him was Clive Jackson, our star author, who was soon destined to crash the prozines with a SLANT reprint. He was a trifle off-colour during the whole of his stay, but he put that down to a touch of the flu and the change in food and climate. Walter suggested that we show him the town and give him a chance to get the fresh air about him and generally take himself out of himself. (This may be a purely local expression, but for the psychology of it see Occupational Therapy.)

Now any native of Belfast knows that the only way to see the town properly is to go to the peak of Cave Hill and look down on it. So early one Sunday morning the three of us (two wearing dirty mags and berets) set out. The climb itself is not difficult: for the first 4,000 feet there is scarcely any overhang at all. I took the lead, closely followed by the others, Walter talking to Clive about plot ideas and how popular this particular stretch of cliff was

with the town's suicides.

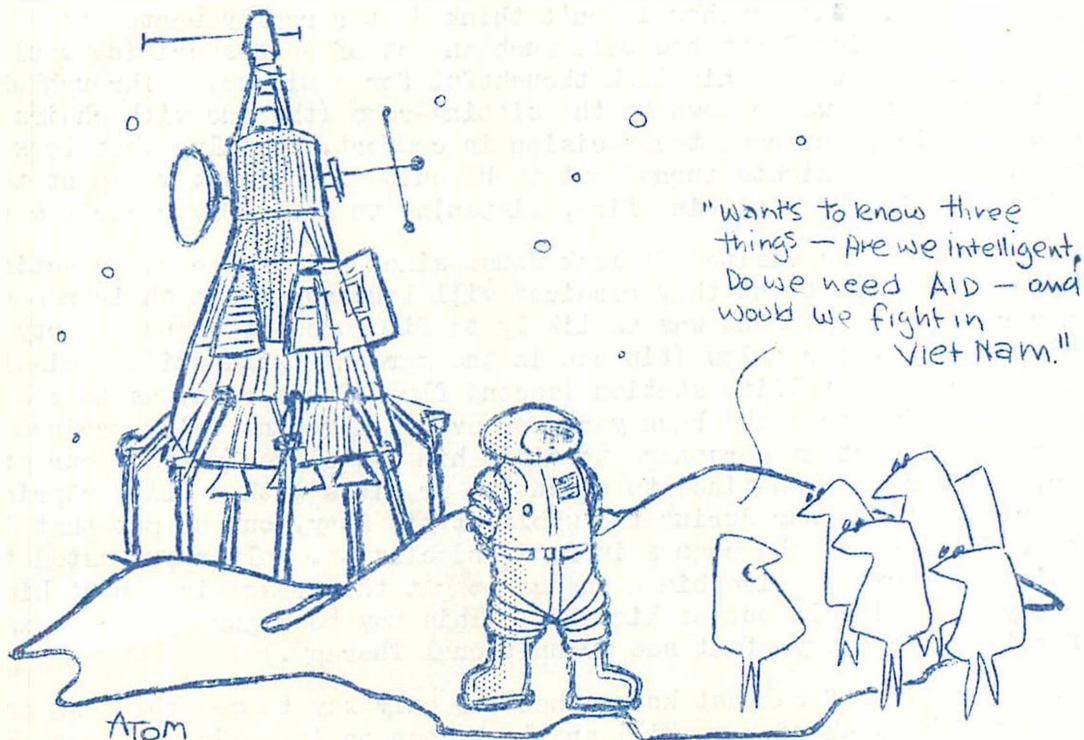
But the weather turned inclement. A strong wind rose, and with it came heavy rain. The rock began to get slippery. The fresh air hadn't made Olive any better, and his sneezes were starting small avalanches. He told Walter not to go to any more trouble on his account and how about turning back, huh? After apologising for not taking him all the way up Walter agreed, and pointed out that the cloud base wasn't very high that morning anyway, and he must have looked down on plenty of clouds in the Air Force, so perhaps it would be better to see the town from a bus.

We took a short-cut back through the forest at the foot of the mountain. The heavy rain had by this time made the soft loam under the trees practically liquid, so we were in an awful mess when we got home.

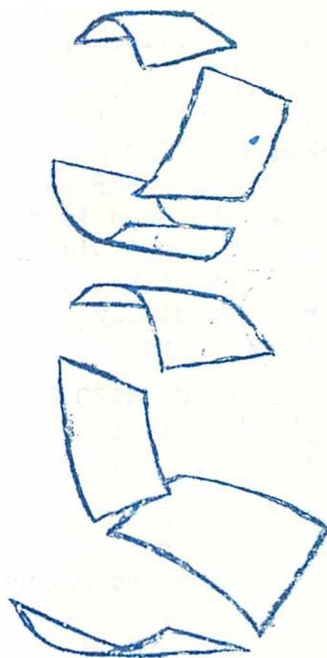
It's a funny thing, though, that every BNF that has visited Walter has either been sick or taken sick shortly afterwards. Even the mighty Ackerman succumbed, though he fanned gallantly to the end. The only exceptions have been Evelyn Smith and Lyell Crano. Lyell ate and slept at a hotel in town, but Evelyn stayed at the Willis's.

Walter may do some unusual things at times, but there is one thing certain: he could never bring himself to poison a lady!

|||||



Peeps into my Diary



1965

Sep 2 Walter Moudy (60) NO MAN ON EARTH. Alien outlaw goes around planets planting his seed. His son on Earth is a genius and goes to find him, and when he does so brings him home to make an honest woman of his mother!

Sep 8 Poul Andersen (50) SHIELD. Fella goes to Mars, gets a shield that keeps out nearly everything, so instead of giving it to one political party or one country he gives it to everybody and that's all.

Sep 16 Four visionaries find a high-walled, uninhabited valley where they settle down. They have a mutant strain of horses, sterilising and selling off those which do not come up to their exacting standards. Later they bring in a boy to rear and inherit. A gambler and a girl try to steal one or more of the horses. Their attempt makes the story of THE GARDEN OF EDEN by Frederick Schiller Faust under his Max Brand pseudonym. Not a shot is fired, not a steer is stolen, not a mortgage foreclosed, not an outlaw chased. Just a love story with a fantasy background.

Oct 8 Edward P Bradbury (30) WARRIORS OF MARS. A copy (and not a very good one) of ERB's Barsomery. Instead of 15-foot green giants we get 11-foot blue ones; instead of thoats --- daharis; instead of Princess Dejah Thoris --- Princess Shizala. Etc. Parody? Don't think so: just trying to cash in.

Oct 24 James T McIntosh (60) WORLD OUT OF MIND. Alien comes (in human form) to Earth as spy but becomes so human he turns against the Nwyllans, who are of vegetable descent & telepathic. (Wonder if vegetable telepaths make puns? "Lettuce rule you in peace or we'll beet you into submission!") If 100 pages of padding were taken out the remaining 88pp would make a nice story.

Nov 29 S C George (80) FATHER WAS A HORSE. Not SF. Humour about a zany family

called Charles. They are: Prince (who tells all), King (his big brother), Florrie (his big sister), Mother, Grandma, Father and Rover -- all characters like Thorne Smith's....well, nearly.

Dec 24 Michael Keon (20) THE DURIAN TREE. "A violent, unforgettable novel," the blurb says. I think I'll find it easy to forget. There is an enormous mass of words packed into 240 pages. But does Keon put across the impression of jungle? Not (to coin a phrase) bloody likely. The verbiage is much greater than the foliage. All he does is mention a few uncommon (to us) trees, and have the characters say how hot it is & mention mosquitos & leeches & things. As for the story, it's brutal & stupid & very badly told. Couldn't get interested in the characters, especially the main baddie: Ng. The heroine, too, is a queer one: she seems to spend almost all the time saying & thinking nothing.

Dec 28 Jim Bowden 50 BRAZO FEUD. P.31: "You're gettin' at me McCoy," he hissed. P.1: "Get it through your fool head," he hissed. P.136: "All right," he hissed, "you win." Is this a record?

Dec 30 A Bertram Chandler (60) THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE in which an sf writer finds himself in the body of a space officer in far future. He takes on their troubles, solves them and returns to his own body. (Cf SHIP OF ISHTAR)

1966

Jan 9 Philip K Dick THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH. Sometime in future most people are underground because of a war above. But up there (surprise! surprise!!) are just a few people in luxury & idleness with no war at all at all! I could only (hardened though I am) read about 25 pages of this badly-written verbiage. Dick gives me the impression that he's either a dope or a dope addict. At that, it might have been a good story if written by a good writer, but this dreary stupidity is merely depressing.

Jan 10 Kenneth F Gantz 40 NOT IN SOLITUDE. Madman on first manned trip to Mars from USA. Naturally they bring guns with them -- possibly for the banth-shooting. The crew: 125 men. Repeat, 125 men. They find planet-wide intelligence which takes the form of waist-high plants which doesn't like humans and tells them so. Eventually they return after a bit of mutiny & insanity. It says it was specially revised by the author. It must have been a mess before the revision. Incidentally, the Martian mentality uses a septenary (or octenary) scale of notation.

Jan 12 John Brunner 70 THE LONG RESULT. Roald Vincent, assistant to the Chief of the Bureau of Cultural Relations, is mixed up with the Stars for Men League and the colony world of Starhome who want freedom from Earth, and, after settling their differences, becomes head of Instellar Cultural Exchange. (A good sentence, that.)

Jan 15 Leonard Davenport 60 A MAN OF DOUBLE DEED. Future (2090) telepathist, married to two women, one a latent telepath. They achieve a sort of gestalt.

Jan 20 Bee Baldwin 60 THE RED DUST. Hole is made in Antarctic. Red dust pours out & covers Earth. Kills almost everyone. Small party of immunes set up house-keeping in N.Z., kill would-be dictator and start the whole thing over again. Side result of dust: everyone & everything is bigger. Bee? Who heshe?

Jan 25 ERBurroughs TARZAN AND THE MADMAN. It's been a lo-o-ong time since I read a Tarzan story so I was curious. It is a really extraordinary story: it contains all the stock characters & all the stock situations which appeared in

the previous Tarzan books. The characters divide into groups, each group having its own chases, escapes and so on, separating and merging, before coming together in the grand finale. There is even a "lost Race" bit. Reading it I got the feeling that somewhere I'd read it all before. Maybe I had, at that....

Jan 30 Dennis Wheatley SIXTY DAYS TO LIVE. Only people left in England after collision with a comet. 4 men, 3 women. They go south to a warmer climate since England is frozen. Oddest character is Lavina, the "heroine." Whether DW was writing tongue-in-cheek or not he seems to like her: "...her courage, her independence, her sense of fair play and her real integrity...." Actually, her courage is mere foolhardiness and stupidity, her fair play consists in getting everybody to work for her, and her real integrity is shown by her willingness to forgive her husband for her adultery. A most unpleasant character. The conversations are odd and somehow unnatural. The best example is Lavina's remark when her stupidity gets Roy killed: "He's dead. And it's all my fault. Oh, how wicked I was to insist on staying here." EESmith never wrote anything as bad as that.

Jan 31 ~~Mar~~ Brian W Aldiss EARTHWORKS. Brian's getting better at this type of book. GREYBEARD was a struggle; this one's impossible.

Feb 10 Letter in Daily Mirror: "Perhaps I shouldn't be russian into print, but when the first diners sit down to dine on the moon will they use soviets?" And the Editor's reply: "Yes, if they have star-spangled manners."

Apr 13 John Christopher 50 THE POSSESSORS. Alien from good ol' outer space takes over the bodies, one by one, of a group of people marooned on a mountain-top. Four escape & kill the alien/s by burning the possessed. Padded out to 220 pages by lo-o-ong conversations.

Apr 17 "Outer Limits" episode on TV: Bees make girl who will help them take over Earth. Mixture of horror, madness & stupidity.

Apr 22 Ernest J Blow (20) APPOINTMENT IN SPACE. Mr Blow has re-discovered favorite. By its aid his heroes go in a spacious spacioship to Mars. Just as they leave their leader is shot by a traitor, but they get a message from ~~WATAT~~ Mars telling them to inject X27Y, a drug I can't find mentioned anywhere except in my Algebra. The leader seems to recover, but actually he is dead. They find that owing to loss of air over the centuries the Martians have gone underground, ~~where everything~~ is done for them & they become decadent. Tough animals above-ground adapt, evolve, and try to wipe out the underground cells. They are succeeding in doing this, helped perhaps by some strange beings from outer space. These outer spacimens are never explained: that may be done when the sequel is published but as I won't read it I shall never know.

Apr 24 Arthur Sellings 40 THE SILENT SPEAKERS. Arnold Ash & Claire Bergen find they can merge their minds & help others to do so. There is little action in this 184-page book, as nearly all is speculation & conversation. Speculation & conversation can be interesting, but 184 pages of speculation & conversation, well.....

Apr 25 John Brunner 80 TELEPATHIST. Almost as much talk and speculation as in The Silent Speakers, but a much better story, telling how Gerry Howson, a hopeless cripple, becomes a healer of mental illnesses, finds happiness for himself and a chance of a repaired body. After a story like this it is hard to see why why Brunner writes a thing like THE SQUARES OF THE CITY, where the hero goes to a specially-built city in South America and tries to do something about the

numbers of poverty-stricken characters who have settled there and refuse to budge, spoiling the appearance of the place. Actions of the hero & other people are supposed to be based on a chess game played many years ago, but I found it all so vague and dull that after about 75 plodding pages I gave it up, even though I had a copy of YANDRO 156. This issue has an article by Thomas Stratton aligning the book and the game. Somebody wrote a short story with the same gimmick a few years ago and did it rather well, but this thing.....och-h! I skipped to the end to see if Brunner had at least given us an exciting climax, but it was all as dull as his speech at the Convention in London last year.

May 14 J Hunter Holly 60 THE RUNNING MAN. Invasion of Earth!! Takeover bid by stupes from another planet who have been taken over by giant intellects (themselves unable to move) from another planet. But Jeff Munro, who is no dozer, enlists the help of the stupes, promising help & rewards from Terrans afterwards, and so beats the brains. The stupes, of course, had not heard or read how black and red men had been rewarded for their help at times....

May 30 Kingsley West (80) RIDE WEST TO PUEBLO. First western I've read which has an anti-hero. Sam helm is punched, battered and crucified and keeps coming back for more. (First crucifixion in a western, too.) He gives orders & makes protests which the baddies always ignore. Even at the finish, with the baddies reduced to two, he is useless: one shoots the other and Sam's girl-friend sends the last one on a one-way trip. Kingsley West (or James Gribben, a Bangor man) must have had fun writing this.

Jun 21 John Lymington 30 THE STAR WITCHES. Aliens take over the bodies of Earth people. (Sky Miller won't like this: it's been done before!) Invasion succeeds. JL's usual long, long conversations and his use of "then" in every other sentence bored me.

Aug 14 John Lymington (30) FROOMB! Don't know what "froomb" or even "froomb!" means. Nor do I care. This is a sort of story about a man who is either killed or sent into the future, finds the world a sort of matriarchy, has about a page and a half of action and returns to find he has forgotten all about it. JL is a bit like Ballard: he can write but prefers to drool.

Aug 31 Bel Kaufman 70 UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE. A teacher's life in a N.Y. school, told through answers, intra-school memos & communications, occasional letters to an outsider, etc. I liked the answers of a pupil asked to make up sentences illustrating the use of three words:

- enigmatic - She was very enigmatic
- vindictive - She was very vindictive
- vacillating - She was very vacillating

Sep 8 Have just read Amazing for August. It contains 6 stories & a serial. The serial, Stopover in Space by Murray Leinster, reads like a short-short padded out. One of his dullest, and the only thing good about it is that it is the final instalment. Dick's is also new (Your appointment will be Yesterday), and that's the only good thing about it: most time-travel stories are dull and this is no exception. The remaining 5 stories are reprints. . This works out at 75pp bad new stories & 78pp bad old ones. Heigh-ho!

Sep 26 James Blish (20) TITAN'S DAUGHTER. Wonder why he wrote this dull mess of tetraploids, polyploids, &c.

Sep 27 Silas Water 60 THE MAN WITH ABSOLUTE MOTION. Interesting statement here: "....every atom in the universe -- numbering one to the 420,000,000,000 -- would be in...." So the Universe is just one big atom! Well, anyway, the Alphirkians want to take over everything, and they're opposed by Yjul (who

looks like a tree and has a heart of oak), Remiggon (who is just a ball of energy), and the Bryd (sometimes called the Byrd, a thing that goes to sleep in someone's brain), Erle Bertron (a human being) and Naomi (another ditto). When all is satisfactorily settled the last two find that they are the new Adam and Eve. An awful lot of stories end this way -- and I mean awful.

Sep 28 Bart Somers 50 BEYOND THE BLACK ENIGMA. John Craig fights a machine grown powerful & intelligent, which plans to take over the Universe! Craig wins! Hurrah for our side!!

Oct 1 Anthony Burgess (30) A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. Story of a juvenile delinquent of the future, told by himself. With his pals he robs, maims, destroys, rapes. Sent to jail for murder he is hypnotised into hating violence, is freed, de-hypnotised, and decides to get married. That's all. To enliven this sordid story AB uses a gimmick: thugs use a few dozen slang words, made up perhaps from Russian. I can just imagine Burgess as he coins a new word saying to himself, "Boy, am I clever!" After a few pages this palls, as does his trick of interjecting "oh my brothers" at intervals, as often as four or five times in a page. In *Catcher in the Rye* the repetition of "really" was amusing, but AB has no sense of humour whatever and his attempts are merely aggravating.

It has long been a fad to look for a "message" in the works of any popular author. There may be a message here but it eludes me. The blurb (a notoriously inaccurate source of information, admittedly) says it can be read on a deeper level as a fable of good and evil and the importance of human choice. And I say the blurb lies in its teeth!

Incidentally, Burgess doesn't know how to spell "height."

Oct 5 In his CLASSICS & COMMERCIALS Edmund Wilson says of THE ADVENTURES OF WESLEY JACKSON by Saroyan: "This is surely some of the silliest nonsense ever published by a talented writer." Of Somerset Maugham. "I have never been able to convince myself that he was anything but secondrate." Of Maugham's criticisms of other writers: "...we find him patronizing, in what seems to me an insufferable way...." He does not realize that this applies to himself also. He is fond of saying something like, "This book is very good, but...." I'd like to see his criticism of Irene Murdoch's SEVERED HEAD.

Oct 9 Ray Ainsbury 50 WHEN THE MOON RAN WILD. The book is a bit vague about it but apparently some major power detonated a 10,000 megaton nuclear bomb some thousands of light-years out in space: it orbited the moon once and then exploded "near the bottom of the satellite." On the face of it this is extremely difficult! Just to make it clearer the blurb says it was in the outer atmosphere. Anyway it sends the moon on a new orbit round the Earth three times a day (after meals?). Result: huge tidal waves & only a fraction of humanity saved on very high ground. Queer forms of life met by survivors. The Tree of Life is found. Eventually the remnant of humanity settle in Patagonia, which now has a lovely climate. I liked this Robinson-Crusoe-ish type of story -- but I do wish I could understand that explosion.

Oct 16 Philip K Dick (30) THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH. Eldritch goes to Prox Cent and comes back as a virus in the shape of himself or something. He wants to take over the population of the Earth or something, but can only do this if the victims eat virus-impregnated stuff or something. Eating it throws them into a state where they are under the control of Eldritch or the thing which is Eldritch or something. He can change shape at will, in the present or future or in or out of cataleptic, fantasmal states. At one point, while in the form of a little girl, he is choked to death by the hero, but why he couldn't escape by changing into 7 gallons of water or something I

don't know; and in any case he is still alive in another form in another past/present/future. When, towards the end, he changes into Barney Mayerson, the hero -- not into his shape, but into Barney himself -- I gave in, so I don't know if it all ended happily or not. The 3 stigmata (absolutely immaterial, of course, as one might expect) are steel teeth, artificial arm & queer eyes. Even his best friends would not boast that Dick can write clear, precise English, but this hotchpotch must have been written while he was drunk as a lord or doped to the eyeballs.

Nov. 3 J G Ballard (30) THE CRYSTAL WORLD. A mysterious plague, its origin only vaguely hinted at or explained, transforms everything into glass in several places on Earth -- spots which expand. Dr Sanders, a leper doctor who has caught the disease himself, visits one such spot. Meets Louise, a reporter, meets Suzanne, an old flame whom he infected with the disease himself, meets various assorted madmen who are fighting senselessly amongst themselves and are crudely rammed into the story to lend some interest to it. Unfortunately this does not succeed so we are left with a queer sort of love story and drearily repetitious descriptions of the glass forest. Ballard (to misquote Joseph Heller) seems to have lots of brains but no intelligence.

Dec 29 STEFANTASY from Bill Danner. Unusual kind of cover he got from Harry Devon -- a fetching etching. Humour-zinc in Bill's unique style. Puzzle on P 7: I was never very good at cryptograms and this one beat me. At one time I was a member of The American Cryptogram Association. Wonder if they're still running.

1967

Jan 1 Russell Braddon (70) THE YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT. (RB wrote THE PROUD AMERICAN BOY.) In trying to wipe out rabbits Aussie scientists invent Supermyx-amatosis (or Supermyx) which is the weapon to end all weapons and gives Australia world supremacy. RB is satirical about anything and everything and does it well.

Jan 2 Saw a book in a local bookstore by Nigel Haseltine called THE MYSTERIOUS PREGNANCY. That's a dilly of a title: I wouldn't buy or read the book for fear all my illusions would be shattered.

Jan 9 Lord Dunsany 20 THE LAST REVOLUTION. A very embarrassing book: it might have been all right if written 40 years ago -- in fact it's very like some of the early pulps -- but this 1951 story is a purely daft tale of machines revolting. And at the end he drools on for 8 or 9 unnecessary pages.

Jan 14 NIEKAS came from Felice & Ed. It has 90 pages, equal to 300 of The SCARR. Don't know how they do it. The Gaughan cover shows a geni coming out of a bottle apparently made of rubber as it's twisted a wee bit here & there. The geni's neck is twisted, too -- I even turned it upside down and it still looks like no geni I ever met. The contents cover nearly everything except guns and algebra. Like a big chunk of the Tolkien glossary or index: in this I am as interested as Ed is in ERB. Diana Paxson has a very interesting article about the Arthurian legends. Piers Anthony has studied the Arabian Nights and gives us the benefit therefrom -- most of it was strange to me. Ed himself tells about his travels and a con. In addition the artwork is good so it is well worth 50 cents or 3/6. The bit I liked best was a letter from Lin Carter, the best bit of tongue-in-cheek writing I've seen for many a day.

Jan 15 Today's Sunday Citizen says: "What to do if you get in a skid? I'll admit that the advice about 'steering into a skid' only bewilders me. If your front wheels swing to the right, you gently turn the steering wheel to the left. In fact you do what comes naturally. Keep your foot away from the brake

pedal; of course, and dab the clutch pedal. Honestly, there is nothing more to controlling a skid." First time I ever heard that advice -- and it makes sense, which "steering into a skid" doesn't.

Jan 16 LIGHTHOUSE #10 from Terry Carr. 90 pages of interesting stuff. Like this piece by Philip K Dick. He starts off: "Recently I took another dose of LSD-25...." Maybe that helps to explain why I don't like any of his stuff! Later he says: "I have written and sold 23 novels, and all are terrible except one." Now if he'd only omitted the last two words! Thomas Disch tells about his travels in Mexico. Greg Benford discourses about the paucity of humour in sf, giving examples of non-humour -- but he also quotes as being humorous a story which isn't. Pete Graham writes engagingly of his travels, especially in Ireland. There is a humorous story by G C Edmondson which has no humour in it except the fact that it is marked copyright. An article by Pat Lupoff about Western badmen. A piece by Walt Willis the only fault of which is that it is too short. George Metzger writes about his travels as only George Metzger can. Terry & Carol Carr entertain for a few pages each. Alexei Panshin eulogises Roger Zelazny though as far as I'm concerned anybody who wants Zelazny can have him. But Alexei loves him, although he admits that "Zelazny needs practice in plotting." Agreed -- but why does he have to waste space in sf mags to practise in? Alex also admits that some of his idol's writing is confusing. He can say that again! A lettercol winds up an interesting issue.

Jan 17 YANDRO just dropped in. I wish I could write criticisms of books and fanzines like Buck. I wish I could produce a zine like YANDRO. I wish..... Buck gives a list of the short sf he remembers best. With my bad memory I'd have to look up the magazines to find my choices -- and it would take weeks. YANDRO's two editorials and letter column interesting as ever.

Jan 18 Helga Harrison 940) THE CATACOMBS. After a nuclear war a few score people live in tunnels, with a debased form of religion, and stealing food from the "Communes," the dictatorship under which they refuse to live. But after a while they come up anyway. Everything is vague & nebulous and I kept wishing that Helga would make the characters do something interesting.

Jan 19 THE NO-EYED MONSTER #9 from Norman E Masters, back to back with THE UNKNOWN #9 from, I think, John H Morkel. Runs about 90 small dittoed pages, some of which are hard to read. All fan-fiction, no better and no worse than any other fan-fiction I've seen.

Jan 20 Jane Gaskell (30) ATLANTIS. Apparently a sequel to another story, as it gives a sort of synopsis early on. About Atlantis, of course, but mainly the sex-life of Cija, a sort of Empress. 286pp, which aren't interesting even when she uses four-letter words. I didn't wade through it all -- life's too short to spend it thataway.

Jan 24 THUD-F from Chris Priest. A one-shot? A diverting language piece by Iver Lattic; ditto from an unnamed fan; a poem (I think) by Chris; ditto by Graham Hall; half a page by Murray Keisinger (the outer half is torn off); a bit by John Denson; and fillers and letters. Liked it.

Jan 29 Samuel R Delany (60) BABEL-17. Rydra Wong, poet, telepathist, philologist, spacewoman, etc, and how she helped save the Alliance from the Invaders, whose language is called Babel-17 -- don't know why. It has no words for "you" or "I" and is much faster than English. I'll take his word for it.

Jan 30 John Norman (40) TARNSMAN OF GOR. Straightforward imitation of Edgar Rice. It even stops where ERB himself would have stopped -- to leave a sequel if desired. And among the adverts at the back it gives a list of ERB's books.

Jan 31 James Blish (40) MISSION TO THE HEART STARS. Sort of juvenile about Dr Langer & two young assistants going on a two-year trip to the rulers at the heart of the galaxy, have a 15-minute interview and return. Blish has done much better.

Feb 3 Edward P Bradbury (30) BARBARIANS OF MARS. More ERB. The only thing of interest is introduced early on with names like K'cocroom, Drallab, Gelana, Blomplac the Mad, Modnaf, S'sidla, Nosirrah, etc. For example, the Flowers of Modnaf are "attractive at a distance but highly dangerous when you come close to them. Their scent from here is pleasant, but when approached more closely it induces first a lethargy, then a creeping madness....."

Feb 6 YANDRO #166. Only fault I can find with this issue is the poetry. Two of them in particular, by Sarnic and Zelazny, seem to me to make as much sense read backwards as forwards. But the rest of the issue more than makes up for this. The Editorials, the reviews and the letter column are all good. And the artwork, in case anyone asks me, is good, too.

Feb 7 HAVERINGS # 25 from Ethel. Every schoolboy knows HAVERINGS -- or if they don't they ought to. Anyone who doesn't like it must be hard to please. ::: Larry Niven (40) WORLD OF TAVVS. Alien with super mental power comes to earth, but finds it difficult to take over. Kzanol has opposition from Kzanol/Greenberg, Greenberg, Belt-men, the Arm, etc. I didn't try very hard to sort it all out. Niven tries to be van Vogtian and can't bring it off.

Feb 8 Letter from Harry Warner, Jr.: Bob Shaw's wonderful article had multiple effects on my memory and my current situation. The memories go back to very early years, when my father constructed a six-inch reflecting telescope without any local assistance -- he just bought some printed materials on how to do it, sent off for the glass blanks, abrasives, and so on, and accomplished his goal without a single serious blunder. I'm sure I'll never get over the belief that he could have done anything he wanted to do, no matter how difficult or mighty the goal might have been, and I wish I had set out to do something that would have made him famous.

Then there's the more recent memory involving a telescope that lies even now on the dining room table, only a few feet away from this typewriter. It looks like one of those telescoping telescopes that ships' captains used to peer through in the movies, and for all I know, that may have been its origin -- I inherited it via an aunt who collected antiques. This fascinated Ella Parker during her safari to Hagerstown a few years back. I had to leave her alone in the house one night when I went out on something involving my work, and she confided me that I came back before she had a chance to go out and observe the heavens with it. I broke as gently as possible to her the news that she would have stayed out if she'd done that, because the door on this house must be opened with a key, and the telescope doesn't work because some of the glass in it is broken.

And finally, BoSh has reminded me about the ebbing and growing desire within me to own a beautiful & expensive American-made telescope called the Questar. I could afford it in the sense that I can buy one if I make up my mind to do it, and I can't afford it in the sense that I should reserve the money for more

necessary things. So I keep swaying between determination not to and to, knowing perfectly well that if I buy one, I'll promptly spend a lot more money for another camera because I would want to take lots of pictures with it, and it is not suitable for either of my two cameras for various technical reasons. In any event, I imagine that Bob's article will produce much reaction among your readership, because an interest in astronomy seems to be the common factor of scientific curiosity among fans, even the ones who are totally unmoved by a dinosaur's thighbone or a resounding axiom of Euclid.

One entry in your diary caused me to wonder Whatever Happened To Algis Budrys? Three or four years ago he was almost back in fandom, and since then he has vanished totally from fandom and apparently from prodom as well. It's a pity, because he came so close to writing very fine novels on several occasions. I'm now reading for the first time *The Falling Torch*, one of the nearer misses. It is terribly disappointing in the sense that it is very close to a mundane novel about rebellion and politics changed into science fiction by introduction of a race from another star. It also has some routine sections in its middle stages, the guerrilla warfare. But it also contains a superb portrait of a blundering and stupid commander and what makes him tick, and a quite complex hero who reveals more and more aspects of his personality and inner self as he reaches one crisis after another.

I must remember to send you some clippings from the Hagerstown newspapers to show how these little journalistic blunders are common to the entire species of reporters, defying all international barriers. Of course, I prefer to think that in the British Isles as in the Colonies, the reporters were right and it was some stupid copyreader or editor who decided to change something, mangling the sense of the statement in the process. My own particular bugaboo has always been the disappearing line, a trouble that derives from composing room clumsiness. A line of type gets dropped, something immediately occurs to distract the attention of the man who dropped it, and it never gets picked up again until the newspaper is on the streets. That caused my most embarrassing mistake, the one that concerned the halftime entertainment at a local football game, when a vanished line caused me to say "Because the new uniforms have not yet arrived, the band will wear white shoes." Some unkind soul immediately suggested that we transfer the National Anthem from the start of the game to halftime, because of the appropriateness of its opening words.

Atom continues to produce utterly impossible successions of new ideas and fresh angles on old ideas. Even the pages falling from your diary are absolutely distinctive, each a little different from the others, yet recognizably from the same source. I thought for a moment that he had even done the stamp which you used on the envelope, but then I saw some ugly lumpiness in the face of the king and I knew that even the most unprepossessing Atom creatures are always beautiful amid their ungainliness, never ugly.

Feb 9 SPINNAKER REACH #7 from Russ Chauvenet. A FAPazine so some pages are too esoteric for me, but it does give a complete list of even prime numbers & some kind of cryptogram which I can't decode -- if it can be decoded. Three short pieces by Alvin S Fick and they may be OK for all I know. To finish it off there are three or four bits of poetry, but whether they are tongue-in-cheek or not I wouldn't know. It's odd, but the only thing I am sure of in this zine is that list of even primes.

Feb 12 Continuing my re-acquaintance with ERB (50) SWORDS OF MARS. Quote: "...an earthman transported to Mars would be able to jump 225 feet into the air...." I doubt it. And though I more-or-less skimmed through it I caught

Feb 15 Wallace West 40 LORDS OF ATLANTIS. Brings in all the old-timers like Pandora and Hercules and Zeus and all. Mildly funny in spots.

Feb 17 Note from Buck Coulson: Shaw's article in #111 was lovely. I read most of it along to Juanita, who is an astronomy fan, and we both chortled over it. I must say that while I agree with Bob's conclusion that the stars are somewhat disappointing after all we've been led to expect, Juanita emphatically disagrees with it. She can look at stars by the hour. We have no telescope of our own, but we're keeping a 6" one for a friend, who bought it cheap. (The original owner had tried to adjust it by sighting in on the sun, and set the tube on fire. He sold it under the impression that it was ruined, but Juanita assures me that it works as well as any 6" telescope, or will once we modify the base somewhat. Currently it can't be locked in position.)

Currently I'm reading THE PROUD TOWER by Barbara Tuchman. History of Western Europe from 1890 to 1914. (She's writing her history backwards; her previous best-seller was THE GUNS OF AUGUST, concerning the immediate prolog to World War I.) Cost \$1.25 -- I can remember when paperbacks cost 25¢, with an occasional fat one running to 35¢. Of course, she does have almost 600 pages in this, and it's a good book. Her portrayal of the members of the Salisbury cabinet is fascinating. I know England produced a lot of wacks, but my knowledge was limited. She has one lovely line early in the book, concerning this cabinet: "they undertook to manage the affairs of the nation as inevitably and unquestionably as beavers build a dam." (She doesn't have any kinder words for the anarchists of the period, either.)

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