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# SOL

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WILLIS DEDICATION  
ISSUE

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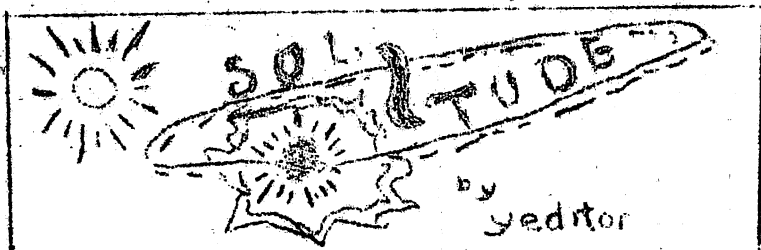
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AS WE BELATEDLY release this Willissue, originally, scheduled, for May, then June, and now July, we wonder at the events that have come to pass since the original publishing date of SOL 5. Our pages have been trimmed down this issue from a scheduled 35 to a slim 18, the barest in our publishing history. This is due to several things, one was Walt's request to have his article printed in the larger issue, rather than this issue. Another was the lathargy of columnist Gibbs to get his column in for either issue. Still another was Mrs. Carr, who under the impression that I was going to spread her two reviews and over two issues, didn't turn in any review this issue. Egoboo is present this issue, but only consists of Walt's letter. Miss Hoffman's column is rather short, and I took "all on a summer's day" out of the anniversary issue and brought it over to here because of its bearing on Willis. The article and columns this issue were, amazingly short, and everything seemed to point to the fact that this issue would be a failure, or at most, the poorest of the Willissues. However, I have cleared \$10 on contributions which along with a \$2.50 donation of my own has been sent in time to Shelby. If any of you readers are dissatisfied with this issue or any part of this mailing. Please return the same for purchase price of that particular section or return the full mailing for complete purchase price.

THIS ISSUE IS PURE WILLIS from the cover to the address. Shelby has as usual devoted his column to letting you know about Walt and the Campaign, as does Lee. My mother's article

reviews his writing as a comparison to the writings of another famous English humorist of an earlier period, Jerome K. Jerome. Willis is present himself with a reprint of his first Plinth, his first column in Confusion that originally received a poor distribution. Another article, "The Truth About Walter Willis" follows the satirical writings that have sprung up about Willis lately. All in all, we can't be accused of putting anything but Willis into this only if it is 18 pages. It's every bit Willis right down to the green paper, which is made to compensate for the horrible mess I did of Walts letter by using green ink on brown and red paper.

I won't mention much about Willis' death hoax, as Graham seems to know to be properly beaten and leathered for such a wild idea. But I would like to get in my two cents worth. First of all, I would like to address Peter, publicly (as he has a subscription to this special issue) and tell him that he did a very foolish thing. He is twelve years old, certainly, but he should realize the possible hazards such a hoax might produce. Fortunately now one of any consequence fell for it, but it could be feasible that such a tie-up could result in not raising enough funds to bring Walt over for the con. As far as I know Peter is not attending, the convention, and whether Willis made it or not would be of little consequence to him. However he should realize that fandom is a social system just like society. And one must learn in any social system to except responsibilitys. And that Peter, is common sense, no a Campbell blurb!

I am in a rather busy state now, earning enough money to get to Chicago. However, I hope to see alot of you there, and especially you Willis!

Until the anniversary issue,

(18 pages away)

-linth-  
by Walter A Willis

If you ever come to Belfast you may notice just on the left an enormous Disadvantage. You will find me labouring under it. It's this 400 word limit. Other columnists, I notice, can write most of their columns as single sentences. They just go on like this with cryptic remarks creeping in here and there, until they get to the end of the page and then stop.

On the other hand, when I was in school I contracted PARAGRAPHS, and have never been able to shake them off. That other hand of mine is worn out with trying. My mother feared something like this. She said maternally---she was very good at this, much better than my father---"I'm awfully afraid about sending you to school after the sheltered existence you have led. (At the time, we lived under an old umbrella.) I'm afraid you will pick up something dreadful..." "Like girls?" I asked hopefully. "No," she said, "like PARAGRAPHS or something." Sure enough, I did. The doctor says I will never be completely cured, but as long as I don't develop something really fatal like SYNTAX I shall be able to live a fairly normal fan life, providing of course I don't do anything rash like joining SAPS or producing a fortnightly fmz.

Talking of fortnightly fansines, I happen to have one here by a curious coincidence. Moving the curious coincidence aside, I pick it up. No, I don't mean I pick up the curious coincidence. Coincidences are very hard things to pick up, as opposed to dilemmas, which you can easily lift by the horns. Pardon me for speaking when you interrupted. As I was saying, I pick up this fortnightly fmz---it can't get up by itself, because it's too weakly...

Interval for nausea.

#### DEPARTMENT OF SUBTLE DISTINCTIONS

"First of all we'd like to say that if you read our editorial again you will find that we did not state that reprint magazines seldom last long. We stated: "It has been proven, through experience, that few reprint magazines last for any period of time." ---Reply to a letter in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.

While running thru my fanzines the other day, I found this interesting little bit in an old Joe Kennedy fmz, GREEN THOUGHTS. Dusting the footprints off it, I present this item:

...."Another notable story last year was 'The Hog' by W. H. Hodgson, whose ability as a writer is unimpaired by having been dead for thirty years." --Sidney Futurian.

No, but a thing like that could cramp his style.

o

/The preceding was reprinted from CONFUSION, vln2 -- the first Publicity Issue. The editorial address of cf. is Box 493, Lynn Haven, Fla./

CONFUSION SEZ --  
WAW with the crew in '52!



#### QUOTEABLE QUOTES

"It's funny how you grow up in fandom, just as if it was another life." . . . \*

-Walter Willis

*Shelby Vick*

I recieved an interesting card in the mail (forwarded from Dave Hammond)

FLASH!

We regret to inform you that the well-known Irish fan, Walter A. Willis, is dead. He passed away at his home in Northern Ireland, at the hour of 9:50 A.M., on Thursday, May 15. The doctor said he died of diptheria, a disease from which he had been suffering for some time. The Chicago Convention will honor his death by cancelling the Banquet, and by limiting the auction to quiet bidding. Most fanzines will have a memorial issue, which will be for sale only to fans who contributed to the "WAW with the crew in '52" fund. Fans who contributed to the "WAW with the crew in '52" fund, send your name and address to Shelby Vick and he will return your money. All fanzine publishers are asked not to treat this announcement as a hoax, but to give it full consideration and to announce it in his own magazine, so that fans may know of this throughout the nation and the world. Yours, An Interested Fan Who Is Willing To Pay Postage for These Cards.

--unquote.

(In case you're wondering how they got all that on a card, it was small type.)

Needless to say, there's nothing to it. Not unless Willis has become one of them ghost-writers in the sky -- y'see, I recieved a letter from him dated May 20th...

What puzzles me is what kind of a moronic sense of humor was behind that?

It was postmarked San Francisco, May 28th, and poorly mimeographed.

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local man couple recently had a baby. Name of William (Hope Hodgson) Merritt Green (the baby, not the couple.) He's quite active; smokes, drinks, plays poker (typical fan-type, you can see.) But none of that worried his loving parents. However, they were a trifle upset when he started running around with girls. After all -- he's too young to walk!

(In order to give this column social significance, I might mention that the couple were Mr & Mrs J L Green.)

\* \* \*

Once there was a beaver named Jake. Jake was going to build a heck. But this was going to be a different heck from the usual beaver hecks. This heck he was going to make from rocks. So he rolled a rock (a big one) into the stream. That wasn't quite enough, so he got another big rock. Then a few medium rocks. His heck was taking shape. He needed more medium rocks than big ones, quite a few pebbles, and lots and lots of sand. But finally his heck (\*) was complete.

Now, the above paragraph sure don't sound like it but I've picked this particular SV in which to stop trying to say nothing. It might end up just the same but I intend to see if I can't make a little sense from now on. And the sense to the above is simple -- it's a parable, let's say. And Jake is fandom, working on the Willis Campaign. There have been a few big, generous doughnations; several more of fair size -- lots of pebbles. Now, we need plenty of small stuff to fill in the holes. Dollar bills are excellent for such purposes. And all these Willish quarters do a lot of filling in. But we aren't turning down big denominations! It's easy to break it down into small change, you know.



WITH THE CREW

(\*) This fanzine is read by Russ Watkins. You know what that means.

# ON WILLIS...

by Thelma J. Kelly

Some few years ago I fell in love with a book. It's called "three Men in a Boat"; it's author is, or was Jerome K. Jerome, and it was written in 1889. To me it was one of the funniest books I'd ever read. The humor is remarkably up-to-date, and the reason I'm bringing all this up because, to me, Willis' writing is comparable to Jerome's.

This is strictly a compliment. If one can laugh ( and I'm re-reading Jerome at the present time) in 1952 at a book written to be intentionally funny in 1889 - surely the writer of that book is ~~be~~ way off being a genius. (Or am I an anachronism?)

Its hard to say just what there is in this kind of writing that gets me. You couldn't call it understatement, although that's there too. One thing I think that the two writers have in common is their ability to write with a straight face. This is my own phrase, and it means setting up an amusing situation in an innocent manner - giving the reader a mental picture of the story teller, face blank, eyebrows raised slightly (at the end of the incident) as though to say, "and thats how it turned out! What do you think of it?"

Also in common, these two writers have that faculty for endowing inanimate objects with self-directed malignancy. Jerome describes the inexplicable behavior of a tow rope, taking paragraphs to do it, and really making me laugh. Willis does it too - one example being something the Post Office has done to him. "They send him nothing for days, "then ostentatiously send up their parcels van with an enormous bundle tied up with rope in a v-ry pointed manner." - You get the whole picture. The patient, enduring look of the postman - the bundle itself carrying a heavy note of sarcasm in every not of the rope.

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The patience of Willis, putting up with their "childish nonsense", accepting the bundle with a quite though injured air.

What he also does in the above incident is to make you see him, not as being imposed upon, but as believing himself imposed upon, which is somehow funnier. This does not mean that Willis (or Jerome's) humor is based on self-deprecation. Quite to the contrary, as according to the written testimony of both these gentlemen, they are sometimes surrounded by unattractive, boorish friends, whose quaint actions are reported as being mysterious to the writer, and left to the reader for analysis.

I find Willis freshness and originality in spite of having compared him to a writer from the last century. What is never trite (I bet he could pun that one up) for he does indeed, pun. But in such an effervescent manner! The urge to kill is seldom operative in this case. You see that these puns rise to the surface joyfully from his subconscious, alive with their own life and imperative, for him to repress them, you feel, could result in a far more dangerous explosion at some later date.

It's really a difficult matter to consider just what it is that makes us laugh in any humorous writing. I've tried to do it here, and think that I've given at least some of the reason why I laugh. Perhaps for others, an entirely different element in Walt's writing would be chosen as the crucial one. As to his serious work, I haven't read any. Lest this sound too abrupt, let me add that when I do, I expect not to be disappointed, as I've tried both kinds of writing myself, and humor is far and away the most difficult to manage.

In closing, let me also point out that I've only chosen one example from Walt's writing, and only a few facets of his technique. The reasons for this are obvious. Lack of space, and lack of ability. And maybe I'm a little lazy, too.

-Thelma J. Kelly

# CALLOPE

## Hoffmanstuff

Breathes there a fan with a sense of humor so dead, that he never to himself hath said, "Gor' what I'd give to meet this Willis fellow in person!"

Or at least "Goshwowboyoboy!"

It's pretty nigh impossible that there could be a fan around today that hasn't heard of Walter A. Willis, The Tall Irishman, or who hasn't read some of his works. And in many fan circles the fellow who doesn't read SLANT is looked upon strictly as a deadbeat.

But you could count the number of stateside fans who've met the Irishman on your thumbs. There was Forry Ackerman, who went to the Loncon in '51. Forry could tell you about the Tall Man and what a pleasure meeting him is.

Fortunately "A" is quite a prolific writer. His columns include "Plinth" in Confusion, "Outpost" in Phantasmagoria, and "The Harp That Once or Twice" in Quadrant. At present he is writing a multiunit history of British Fandom, titled, "The Immortal Tencup" for Science Fiction Digest. And besides that he's contributing numerous articles to various other mags. and publishing the famous /, also known as Slant.

One of his most famous works was "The Harp In England", a three part report of his adventures at the Loncon in 1951. Another of his famous projects is Proxyboo Ltd., an organization which for a small fee will handle a fan's correspondence for him.

Such is the man, W.W. whom we want with the crew in '52!

-Lee Hoffman

All On A  
- Summer's Day

random  
that notes  
missed  
CALIOPE the

some thoughts on a would-be fan hoax...

Maybe you received a card early in June bearing a message which claimed that Walter A. Willis had died on May 17th. If you received one, I wonder what your re-~~a~~ action was.

I glanced at the filing card with 2 1-¢ stamps on its face, and recognizing the typing and type-face, tossed it aside as an extremely weak gag.

Maybe you acted likewise. Or maybe you, like Lee Kiddle, weren't as certain as I. Maybe you wanted facts, in the face of what might or might not be a fan hoax. Lee did. He wanted facts, so he put in a long distance call to me.

I checked the date on my latest letter from Walt and found it to be May 26, which was ample proof as to the nature of the postals.

Then I thought about it a while. I wondered if anyone would take the cards seriously enough to fail to send a contribution to the Big Pond Willis Fund because of it. And I thought about how much more worthwhile it would have been if Peter had donated the money he used to pay postage on the cards to the fund. And if the phone bill Lee Kiddle paid had gone to the fund. And any other cash that was put out because of this psuedo-hoax. With every nickel and dime important, I thought about the dollars that had been spend because of this hoax-idea.

And somehow the little card didn't seem the least bit funny.

---Lee Hoffman

# THE TRUTH ABOUT WALTER WILLIS

Anonymous

Perhaps when a couple of kids in San Francisco sent out that hoax-card a couple of weeks ago they didn't realize the trouble they might start. However, they have also, unwittingly revealed a deep hidden messagg to me, which I will reveal to the fan world with a considerable amount of shock on all readers of this startling expose. Brace yourself, for what I beleive is the startling, truth about that fan with an Irish Slant, the truth about Walter Willis.

Willis, is not, as Banister so coly suggests, a Bem. Infact, Walter Willis does not exist! I am fairly sure of this fact, and have substancial proff to back it up.

Pathaps some time ago, there was a Walter Willis. A poor neophan, who in his constant striving for egoboo, thought up Proxyboo. A crack ar electronics, he constructed a hugh tinkling maching, which would be later known as Proxyboo. Sending out printed circulars, he inticed BNF's to sign up for Proxyboo, for a very nomitable fee. The rest is fannish history. Proxyboo is now most of fandom. Somethng that most fans do not know however is the startling fact that at the very hight of Proxyboo's career Willis died. Picture the poor chap in cleaning out the dirty koke system, falling in. and getting horribly geared up by the machine-ary. (When finally spewed out, the machine took a color photograph, which was later sold to GALAXY for a cover idea). Off course there is no basis for this form of his demise, but it's



## THE TRUTH ABOUT WALTER WILLIS (2)

so much more colorful than having the bloke pass away from some obscure disease. Anyway, its pretty safe to assume that Willis has died, or at least run away from Oblique house, cowering in fear from his Frankenstein invention, while agents of the machine carry out a 24 hour search for him.

Anyway, after the disappearance of Willis, the machine gets the idea of putting out a home fanzine, and circulating Willis columns and the like, publicizing it's own creator. It even has a fiendish sense of humor, too, when in the fourth issue of SLANT it publicly announces its existence, knowing the fans will take it as a coy joke of 'Willis'. Of course there isn't any Bob Shaw or James White either. As a matter of fact, there isn't any English fandom! All the Anglofans were the first to fall before the temptations of Willis' machine. Ever notice how frightfully funny all those English fans are, how closely their style represents Willis, but isn't quite as good? After all, do we have any proof that there is an English fandom? None, except Ackerman's and a few other visitors, who might easily be duped by a few clever actors hired by the machine.

Why all this business put out by the machine, about "Don't expect much of me (Willis) at Chicago."? Simple. The machine knows that no matter how clever it may appear at its home front, it ~~can~~ not hire anyone as clever as itself to carry on at Chicago, unless it builds itself a body and transports itself in a mobile unit. That is rather difficult, I imagine, even for a machine like proxyboo, and probably not worth the small amount of egoboo (the fuel of the machine) that it will gain by such a venture. Hiring a man and sending out a little fore-warning "not to expect much" will probably do just as well.

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### THE TRUTH ABOUT WALTER WILLIS (3)

Of course the actor that Proxyboo sends will have to be fairly clever. He might even make a success out of the trip, but I don't think it fair for American fans to have to shell out Good American Money to import some English Actor While the Proxyboo wit (formerly Willis Wit) sits home on its bolts and chortles at the big joke its plying on the American fans.

Perhaps you say I have no bases for this presimse, no reason to keep my name a secret, from the machine and its agents, perhaps you think that there really is a Willis. But I have seen the mistake that Proxyboo has made, the fatal error (coupled with the hoax-postcard) that remmoved the viel from my eyes. The machine does notknow anything about human humor. It does not realize that it has revealed itself by imitating a human being. After all, no human being could be that funny.

\*. The End.

---



# EGOB000

(A Willis letter)

Dear Dave,

SOL just arrived. Gosh, it's beautiful! For a minute I thought it was ORB.

Now will you print my letters so people can read them?

How could you have palmed off your Cataclysmic Destroyer on a trusting fellow fan? Shame on you, I bet you grow up to be a filthy hucster, if not a vile pro.

By the way, I see this new fmz you mention is going to have a column by Dard. Hmmm. What does this fellow Dard think he's doing, spreading himself over all these mags? Disgusting. Already I here people talking about getting him over for a con. Look, Dard, you gotta think of your health you know. This can't be good for you. All this scribble scribble scribble. First thing you know you'll have ulcers. I'm thinking of your best intrests, mand you. You don't want to write yourself into an early grave. But of pure fannish good nature I advise you to take it easy for say two monhs. We don't want to burn ourselves out do we Roger? Or maybe have something horrible happen to us, like gett ng bombs in the mails?

I wish this fellow Silverberg would stop stealing my ideas for articles. Not content with that, he steals ideas that haven't occurred to me yet. An unscrupulous fellow this; I advise you to have nothing to do with him. Same aplys to this woman Kelly. Mark my words she's out to show us fan writers up as second-raters.

Gosh I've just realized that if and when this letter is published it will be buried among an uncritical mass of pro-Willis stuff, and that people will be looking with a dazed air wondering what all this fuss is about. You'd better print it in red this time so it will match my complexion. Look, all you good people, maybe you haven't seen me at my best. Now if you'd just see my stuff in Q?....Oh, you have, CONFUSION, then.....Oh. Well, I had some stuff in SLANT once---. Oh, you've seen that too. Well, of course my best stuff was in a mag called Le Zombie, before I changed my name.

Selfconsciously,

Walt



