

SPACE WARD

JULY - 1948



VOLUME THREE - NUMBER 4

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ISAO 10000T
 TIMBER!

(Giggles from the editorial cell)

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Foof! Wonder if we'll survive the last few hundred turns of the mimeocrank necessary to get this final page of the July WARP in shape for the staple-banging? I don't know when you're reading this, but I will have entrusted it (get that future perfect tense-slinging!) to the tender mercies of the postman by the 9th of July, the third day after getting home from Toronto. If you think I haven't been a busy stfan in that time, oh, bro-ther!

I trust that, if you attended the TORCON, the report in this WARP will not contradict all your impressions of the event. If you didn't attend, I hope it puts across to you some of the fun which we got out of the Sixth World Stfcon, and makes you resolve not to miss next year's CONVENTION. I bore down heavily on my personal reactions, and skimmed lightly over the formal program, because, primarily, I was in Toronto to enjoy myself, not to work as a reporter; and so I kept only sketchy notes of who did what and when. Obviously, every fan gets a different impression from an event like the TORCON -- after reading mine, check on what others write in their fanzines, and the average will be an accurate version, I imagine.

I wish to tender my personal congratulations to the TORCON committee for the wonderful job they did. Apparently every detail was taken care of; I saw no last-minute rushing around -- although I had an eye peeled for same. The program was balanced perfectly between serious and humorous features, the Program Booklet and other publications are excellent, and the only disappointment was Ron Christensen's failure to kick his bathtub off the hotel roof.

You fen on the Pacific Coast -- if you haven't heard about it yet, contact the LASFS for details of their Labor-Day conference, which shud provide all the entertainment of a minature TORCON for you.

Midwestern fen -- Stein and I are kicking around the idea of an informal gathering at Milwaukee on Labor Day. Anyone feel like joining us for a beer and a bullsession?

Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and Fourth-Dimensional fen -- have you made complete plans for your actions in case of a supernova? Is your personal atombombproof dugout well-stocked with old SF's and liquid refreshment? Have you outfitted all your Finlay originals with shatterproof glass? Good. You'll need stamina to stand the shock that is about to rock the world of fandom. Yes, indeed. Yes. Yes. Yes.

r-tRapp has joined SAPS

! ! !

Members of the Spectator Amateru Press Society, you-all have my deepest sympathy. You brought this on yourself, but still, I feel for you. But I can't seem to reach you. MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN

r-tRapp

* TORCON DAZE *
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* * * * * cr * * * * *
* GHOD, SINGER, and the MSFS *
* * * * *

Now let's see...what was the outstanding thing about the TORCON -- aside from the Tucker Report, that is? Singer and the Birthday Suit? Singer and the Explosive Telephone? Singer and the International Incident? Singer and the Alum? (I will tell of Singer and the Alum, though it means getting SPACEWARP barred from the mails, perhance!) Not to mention Singer and the Rabbi.....

Oh, well, let's tackle this vast mass of data in chronological order. It all began last Thursday, with Martin Alger and r-trapp chuffing weezily along the streets of downtown Detroit in what Alger laughingly insists is an automobile. According to frenzied last-minute postcards, we were to meet about nine Michifen in front of the City Hall shortly before midnight.

Came the City Hall. Came zero hour. Came no fen.

Hours passed, while Martin walked the downtown area looking for the absentees, and I reposed comfortably in the auto, alternately observing the legs of passing girls and speculating on what a pleasure it would be to have all unpunctual stiffen in the Army under my supervision -- a feindish concept first voiced by Martin.

By one a.m., Martin decided to take one last look before giving up until morning and a suitable hour for phoning. Presently he returned, towing one Benjamin Singer, who, it turned out, did not agree with George Young about where the fen were supposed to meet. Shortly afterward, Young himself arrived, delayed by a frenzied and unsuccessful effort to get UNITED FANDOM hestood before taking off. The rest of the Michifen couldn't make it -- but Ed Kuss, Steve Metchetto, and Erwin Stirmweis followed separately next day.

It developed that Singer had been passing time while he waited by discussing religion (of course) with a passing rabbi. This gentleman was also on his way to Toronto, and since only four of us were in Martin's car, he was allowed to accompany us, thus spreading the per-capita expense a bit thinner. Yes.

And so, through the blackness of Canadian night we hurtled toward Toronto, the Mecca of all good stiffen. Argument filled the car, but being half asleep at the time, I remember nothing but the Rabbi's polite incredulity that anyone could believe in deros. We reached Toronto at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, 2 July. In passing, let me say that roadside billboards seem to be prohibited in Canada, leaving nothing to look at except trees, houses, hills, rivers, and suchlike scenery. Backward country, isn't it?

With many cheerful admonitions to devote less time to religion, the rabbi was helped to get his luggage from the trunk by Singer, who was so absorbed in this bandinage that he forgot to collect any dough for the trip. Is this sufficient to get him expelled from the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism?

We checked in at the Prince George, a most fascinating establishment. Ultra-modern all-glass doors swing aside to admit the visitor to a pastel-and-chrome lobby slightly larger than Mammoth Cave, indirectly lit, and decorated with artistic murals and functional furniture. Yes. So we registered, and the bellboy took our baggage.

"This way," he said, leading us toward an inconspicuous door in one wall, marked "elevator." In the twinkling of an eye we found ourselves in a bare-board corridor littered with old newspapers and the remains of some employee's lunch, not to mention a couple of dog-eared phonebooks and an ancient pedestal-type telephone. We skirted some slabs of wall-board propped against a flimsy partition, and found ourselves in a paleolithic elevator presided over by something out of Lovecraft, who eventually, after several attempts, got us level with the second floor so the door could be opened. Dodging a light-switch which dangled by its wiring from the cracked plaster wall beside us, we entered our rooms, which proved to be the 14-foot-ceiling type so popular in the Victorian Era. Great black sprinkler pipes sprawled across the ceiling in mute reminder not to smoke in bed. In one corner jutted the rusty taproots of the hotel sign. There was a radio of the quarter-in-the-slot variety, but this we didn't mind, because the hammering of the workmen perched on scaffolding outside, dismantling the sign, would have drowned out a radio anyhow. These workmen carried no watches, finding it simpler to pop their heads in our window at intervals, and ask us the time.

Singer got on the phone while we repaired the ravages of travel and no sleep. He announced that Bob Tucker was the only other arrival so far, making us relative earlybirds. Also, Don Hutchison of MACABRE fame would be over shortly.

After breakfast we returned to that lovely lobby to await Don. Almost simultaneously, Les Croutch sauntered in, spotted us as stiffen from a mile off, and introduced himself. A bullsession filled the rest of the morning.

Don, Ben, George and myself took off for chow and to buy some fire-fuckers. Les and Martin remained in the hotel. At this point Ben decided he was in dire need of a telescope and developed a tendency to rush madly for hookshop windows. (In Toronto, traffic lights have practically no significance. You walk across the street whenever you please, and traffic obligingly stops for you -- even streetcars. Detroit should only live so long!)

So we proceeded down Queen Street, Ben behaving like a puppy-dog investigating a picket fence, much to Don's bewilderment. George and I are used to Singer. Incidentally, Don Hutchison is a quiet guy with a friendly grin, rather short and slight in comparison with the rest of Canadian fellows who run to massive and towering physiques. Les Croutch has the build of a moving van, and is himself amazed that he can be so fat and at the same time enjoy perfect health.*

Eventually we talked Ben out of attending a burlesque show at 1:00 in the afternoon, and returned to the Prince George, where he got on the phone again, and presently announced that Ackerman was coming over.

4sJ arrived (he's tall, energetic, friendly) together with Beak Taylor (also tall) and Chan Davis (short only by comparison, dark-haired,

*I hope my reactions don't start any feuds. In describing people for WARPreaders, I'm merely stating how they struck me at first meeting.

with an incisive manner that carries authority and is probably a heritage of his wartime Navy experience). More discussion, punctuated by arrival and departure of various fen. George occupied the afternoon by digging a hecto out of his suitcase and finishing up UNITED FANDOM. George also provided himself with a typical MSFS touch for the Torcon -- one of those futuristic helicopter caps. Somehow or other, I was wearing it most of the time, tho. It seemed to go with my 12-inch droopstem pipe.

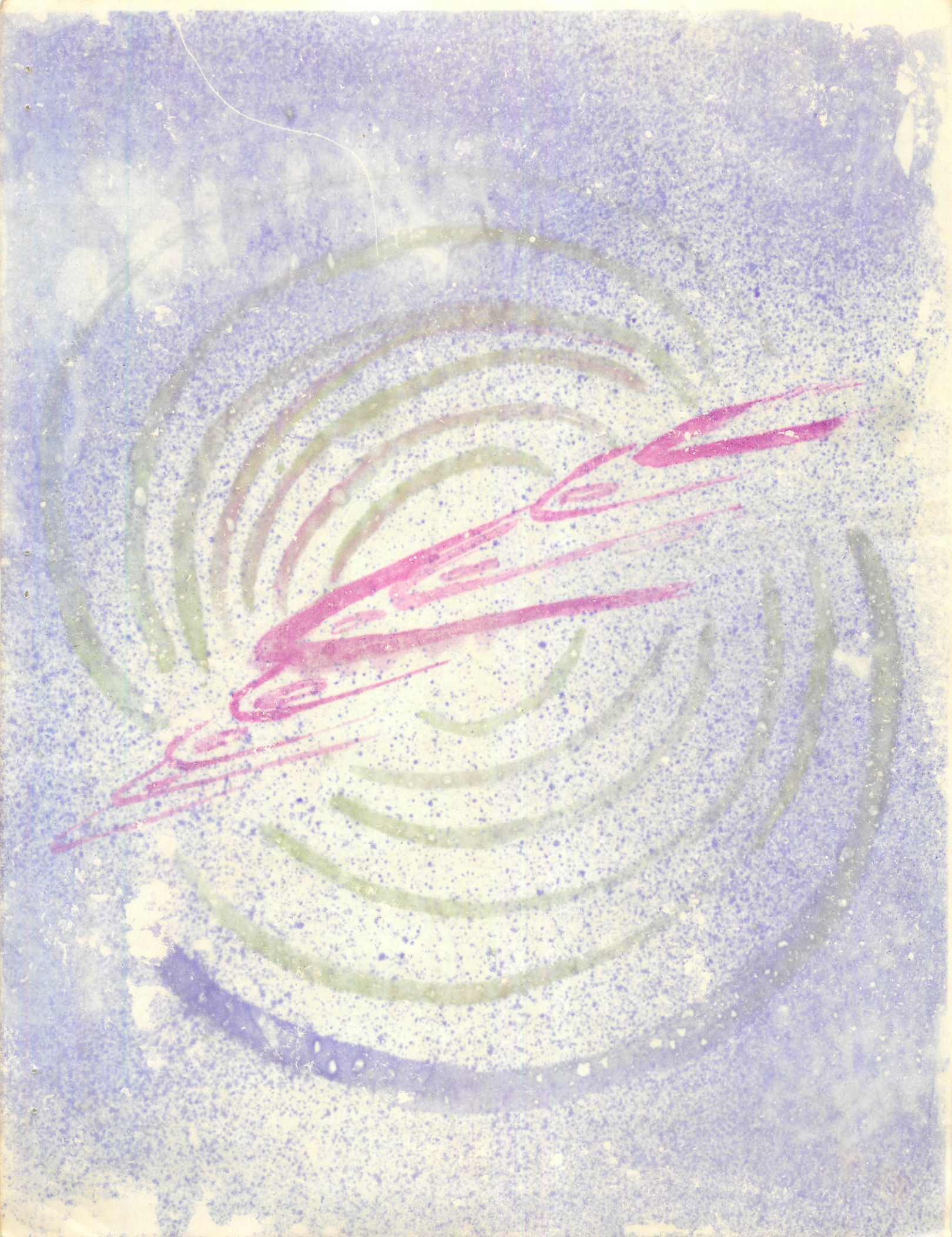
The evening of this pre-convention day passed in the same manner, with groups assembling in various hotel rooms to discuss everything in the Galaxy and a few other things. I recall one point at which Singer, Young, and Bob Tucker were sailing paper airplanes from a 16th-floor window of the King Edward, while Chan Davis and Moe Diner discussed nuclear physics or something in one corner, and Dr. Keller with a circle of fascinated fen considered politico-economic theory in the center. After 48 hours without sleep I was about ready to hit the hay, when who should appear but the SAPS (Spectator Amateur Press Society to the un-enlightened) (I am now a member, too!). These energetic gentlemen: Andy Lyon, Lloyd Alpaugh, Paul Cox, Ron Christensen, Joe Gross, Joe Schaumburger, etc., etc., were about to take off for Toronto's amusement park, and somehow I got involved in the expedition. Ben and George had left for a burlesque show about this point. So the SAPS and I filled the back end of a trolley-car with stifled jabber, and ultimately drove away sleep with rollercoaster rides, etc. It turned out these boys were quartered just a hop-and-skip down the Prince George corridor from we-uns.

Pause for personalities once again: Andy Lyon and Paul Cox have, as you might expect, southern accents of the North Carolina and Georgia variety, respectively. These have always fascinated me. I particularly enjoyed hearing them converse with Toronto waitresses, who have a sort of combination French inflection and Scottish burr. You could spot the NY and Jersey fen by their speech, also. Andy is about 5'9, light hair, glasses. Paul is several inches shorter and a bit wider. From his notorious PLANET letter, I'd visualized a tall, thin fanatic. My mistake.

We ended up at a soda-fountain at 2 a.m. where other passing fen stopped to chat until the crowd blocked the aisles, much to the disgust of the waitresses. Feeling like one of the walking dead after all this activity, I tottered back to the Prince George to find the rest of our group already fast asleep. No endurance, them guys.

Bright and early next morning Singer and I visited the SAPS' rooms. Finding they had improved things by knocking a hole in the transom of the connecting door to give water-pistols an unobstructed field of fire. We paused long enough to toss a few lighted firecrackers in the door and went on. The next room was (I think) Alpaugh's. When the door opened, Ben spotted a well-known publication of the Gidean Society on a bedside table. Like a flash he leaped across the room, opened the volume, and began ripping out pages and tossing them over his shoulder. Picking himself up from the corridor floor, he returned to Alger's room, where he phoned the SAPS and engaged Ron Christensen in light conversation until he got a firecracker lit, then held the transmitter of the phone close to it. Great sense of humor, that lad.

It was little things like the above which inspired someone to leave under our door the message reproduced on page 13. But as Rick Sneary would say (if we didn't review in AS, that is), poo to them!



WALLY WEBER

Luna looked deliciously bewildered as she viewed the backward scene before her. People were running away from the displaced camp of the warrior-women in all directions -- backwards. One of the onlookers appeared to have carefully spread a number of magazines on the sidewalk, stood up, and then watched the magazines leap from the sidewalk into a neat pile in his arms.

"You sure fixed things," snapped Starr. "Now we are reversed in the time stream!"

"Well, that can be fixed easily enough," said Luna confidently. "All we have to do is start the time-machine again and turn the dial all of the way around in the opposite direction." She turned and walked briskly back into the dome followed closely by a scornful Starr. Once again Luna's hairpin came into play and in an instant the machine was humming contentedly. The dial was turned completely around and the machine duplicated its electrical acrobatics of a few moments ago. When the sickening shift was completed, the two girls staggered to the door and looked out. This time everything was in the correct order; the crowd was gathering instead of thinning and people were moving forward instead of backward. In fact, a rather annoyed policeman was walking very forward at that particular instant.

"Kindly tell me what you think you are doing," growled the officer of the law.

"We are attending the Torcon," announced Luna happily as she gazed about the Toronto street at familiar faces. "You see, my husband writes science-fiction, and her boss," she indicated Starr, "is -- or rather, was -- the editor of Frankly Incredible Tales of Science, better known among fans as FITS."

The policeman seemed bothered by something. "Look," he said patiently, "I can take so much; but too much is enough!" His voice rose a bit. "Today has been the most hectic day of my entire life!" His tone became suddenly confidential, as if he was revealing a secret. "You know for the last four hours there has been a parade of lunatics around this part of Toronto that has been driving me nuts. People walking around in cellophane costumes; people advertising an alcoholic Ghod; people running around with petitions against magazines; and--" his voice choked, "PEOPLE THAT APPEAR OUT OF THIN AIR WITH PLASTIC DOMES THAT BLOCK TRAFFIC!"

"Oh, these are just the houses of the warrior-women," explained Starr cheerfully. "And we just came out of the past with a time-machine." The policeman managed a green sort of smile.

"But the traffic--" he mumbled weakly.

"That's your job," replied Luna sternly.

"What is more important to the world, traffic or the Torcon?" asked Starr impatiently. Then the two girls turned away and headed for the dome where Upperberth, von Heine, Bill Storm and JaClem were having a fine time with the aid of the cooperative warrior-women. The police officer, quite at a loss as to what to do, followed them. Interested fans

were leaving the crowd to look over the time-machine. Fortunately the fans did not have a hairpin to run the device with or the officer might have been treated with a personal venture into time; a journey, incidentally, that he was in no condition to take.

Bill Storm started guiltily as his wife, Luna, entered the dome. A surprised blonde looked from her place on the floor at the lap she had so recently occupied. "Just thinking of you, dear," Bill managed.

"That lipstick on your face looks like it," his wife gritted. "Anyway you won't have time for that sort of thing any more. We are at the Torcon."

"The Torcon!" shouted the three men and JaClem in unison. Three more warrior-women hit the floor, JaClem being the only one whose interest in females rivalled his love for science-fiction. The three men rushed out of the hut, trampling the dazed policeman who had the misfortune to be in the doorway.

Outside, the men were met with a mighty cheer from the fen in the crowd and soon they were being carried down Yonge Street by the enthusiastic fans on their way to the convention. Behind them was left the camp of the warrior-women. Let Toronto figure out how to get rid of it.

At the convention, Upperberth and von Heine took over. They related their experiences with the transmitter and how it had been converted into a time-machine. Von Heine had invented the transmitter under the influence of "der true Gott" and could not remember just what he had done to get such a fantastic amount of power as the transmitter produced from the house current it ran on. Fortunately Upperberth had taken exhaustive notes during the transmitter's construction which covered everything from the fastening of the sodium crystal in the revolving force-field to the bottle-cap insulators and from these notes the scientists among the fans managed to piece together a general idea of how the device worked. Plans were being made to rebuild the transmitter, the original having been destroyed by the mob -- and begin broadcasting stf as soon as possible. Suddenly one of the scientists had an idea.

"Since we have so much output in this transmitter, why don't we broadcast our first program from out in space? We have enough power here to carry all the way to Sirius and back again."

At once the fans began to all talk. Obviously they thought it fitting that the first program be broadcast from space and all wanted to be the first to say so. One dissenting note was raised in the back of the room, however. "Say, how are we going to get out in space in the first place? No one has invented a spaceship yet." The room quieted as the fans and authors turned to glare hatefully at the practical member.

"Ach, how revolting," said von Heine, putting the thoughts of the entire group into words. "Dot van uf us mit such details iss bothered iss incredible."

"Aw, leave him alone, he's just new here," said one fan, coming to the rescue.

"Well, I still want to know how you plan to do it," the new member said belligerently.

"Ohfergawdsake," howled the ex-rescuer, "but you're dumb. All we gotta do is pick any one of the methods of space travel we have read about in the prozines and use it."

"But they are just fiction," protested the dissenter.

The room got deathly silent. The new fan looked nervously at the ring of horrified faces around him. "J-j-just fiction, I s-s-s-said," trembled the unbeliever, uttering the terrible blasphemy once again.

"No hope for him, fellows. We'll have to get rid of him."

"Where to? The Moon, Mars, Pluto?"

"He might still be saved. Just put him in the Sahara and maybe he will forget all of this nonsense about fiction."

The next instant, Joe Glumph, stf unbeliever, found himself teleported to the geometric center of the Sahara Desert by a beam of mental force. Back in Toronto, all was well once again.

"Which method will we use?" asked Luna as if nothing had interrupted.

Upperberth got up from his seat. "Having had experience with the financial side of science-fiction as editor of FITS, I suggest that we devise a method never before presented to avoid any authors claiming royalties on the process used." Although many of the fans did not care much for Upperberth, they had to respect his ideas about financial matters. Who else had the ability to pay authors at rates of a cent per fifty words with checks that bounced and get away with it?

"Und I der method got," announced von Heine brokenly. "Mit a few changes, der transmitter a sbase drife pee. Und der power from der sun it giffs."

"Say, that would be all right," agreed the fen who had managed to figure out what the professor had said. "Let's get to work on it at once."

With that, the Torcon came to an end and the first spaceship came to a beginning.

Several weeks passed before the sixty-foot craft was finished and the talented transmitter was installed. The city of Toronto was still suffering from the after-effects of the Torcon; the warrior-women had refused to leave and continued to block traffic. The fan in the Sahara had not been heard from yet and Upperberth belatedly remembered they had left a number of fans and autlors back in the prehistoric past. Except



for these things, the universe continued its confusing existence as usual.

Then came the time for departure. The ship was loaded with fans and beer; the scientific members agreed that beer was one of the few substances that took the place of both food and drink. Von Heine gave last minute instructions in ruptured English.

"Der ship py der control here starts. I vill to der back mit der transmitter go, und ven I der signal giffs, vun of you begin it going." With that, the professor left for the rear of the ship. Several minutes of tense silence passed.

"I wish he would get the lead out," one fan said at last. "I am just itching to press that button."

"That shows how much you know about spaceships," muttered another, "because you don't press the button, you turn it."

"It wouldn't be a button if you turned it," replied the other. "It would be a knob if you turned it."

"That's probably what von Heine meant, only he didn't know the word for it."

"He wrote thirty-four stf stories last year, not counting reprints; he should know the difference between a knob and a button by now!"

"Aw, you don't know from sour grapes. You turn it."

"Push it!"

"Turn it!"

"I'll show you. See, you push it like this."

"Well bless my bems, you're right," admitted the knob-supporter as the Earth dropped swiftly away from them.

"HELB!"

"Did you hear something?" asked one fan.

"HILFE! Kommen Sie schnell! Teufel und Blitzen! Warten Sie!"

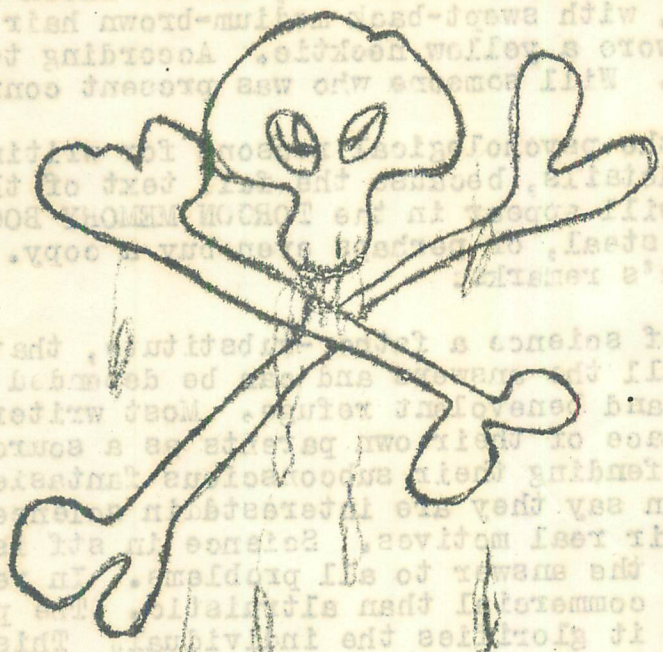
"Sounds like somebody hollering in German."

"Good Lord! Von Heine!" gasped the one who had pushed the button. "Find him, some one. He is the only one who knows how to run this thing out in space."

And while the fans were searching the inside of the ship, especially the beer compartment, a pale, frightened von Heine was clinging to the outside of the craft as it screamed through rapidly thinning air.

- TO BE CONTINUED -

((What next? We've given up trying to guess. Due to the short time before the August issue of SPACEWARR, we've made special arrangements for a Part Seven -- so save those brainstorm of yours to use in Part Eight after you get the next issue of SPACEWARR.))



GREETINGS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE ABOLITION OF MICHIGAN

((continued from p6))

Ed Kuss, Erwin Stirmweiss and Steve Metchette arrived, and with Ben, George and I went to the railroad depot to meet Joe Kennedy, who the SAPS expected on the morning train. We had no idea what JoKe looked like, so developed the scheme of standing around with copies of MUTANT and the WARP prominently displayed, much to the edification of Toronto's citizens, especially a 6-year-old who seemed fascinated by Trev Nelson's WARP cover until George pointed out that if he read magazines like that he might grow up to be like Ben Singer. The lad fled, screaming.

Eventually we gave up and went to the Rai Purdy Studios, where,

after all this time, the first session of the Sixth World Science-Fiction Convention was about to begin.

The auditorium was a stfan heaven -- scores and scores of originals decking the walls, publishers' displays hither and thither, a big table of fanzines for sale, including special editions of the SYDNEY FUTURIAN and Tucker's immortal LE ZOMBIE. There was also a big board prepared by the MacInnes' to show future NECROMANCER covers, and last but not least, the elite of fandom milling about everywhere.

To me, the most fascinating aspect of this whole affair was the experience of seeing those stfanous names suddenly come to life: George O Smith, Erle Korshak, Don Wolheim, Lloyd Eshbach, Sam Moskowitz, Bob Bloch, EEEvans, Ackerman, JoKe (who showed up later in the day), the MacInnes, Woolston, Frank Dietz, Sykora, Redd Boggs (who does have red hair -- I never imagined that before!), Dr. Keller, John Blyler, and dozens of others. Some I wanted to see because I'd heard of them so often; others I have been corresponding with, and without exception, they turned out to be swell guys who I'm looking forward to seeing again next year.

The auditorium was spacious and well-lighted. The stage was hung with red and blue curtains, and was equipped with a rostrum, two mikes, and a piano. The microphones, rather unfortunately, were of the directional type, so those speakers who moved about while talking were hard to hear at times. The outstanding exception was Sam Moskowitz, whose bass voice would have filled the room even without electronics. Doc Keller, too, had lung-power to carry to the rear of the room above the sound of fangab.

After introductory remarks by Ned McKeown, Robert Bloch took over. This famous writer is tall, with swept-back medium-brown hair and glasses. According to my notes, he wore a yellow necktie. According to my memory he also wore other clothes. Will someone who was present confirm this?

Bob's talk concerned the psychological reasons for writing and reading stf. I won't go into details, because the full text of this and all other convention speeches will appear in the TORCON MEMORY BOOK, of which I suggest you beg, borrow, steal, or perhaps even buy a copy. But here is a rough summary of Bloch's remarks:

Stfreadders make of science a father-substitute, that is, something which has all the answers and can be depended upon as a wise, enduring, and benevolent refuge. Most writers are trying to take the place of their own parents as a source of criticism, and are defending their subconscious fantasies and pressures. When stfen say they are interested in science, they are rationalizing their real motives. Science in stf is presented as infallible, the answer to all problems. In real life, science is more commercial than altruistic. The prime appeal of stf is that it glorifies the individual. This basic psychology and motivation is healthy and constructive. A great proportion of all literature throughout the ages has contained elements of fantasy, and has often been shunned by critics at the time of its appearance. But the readers go right on reading.

The most important aspect of fanactivity is the cooperation between fans. There are baseball fans, football fans, all sorts of fans, but it is not fair to say the former are extroverts and stfen are introverts. The former merely have more public opportunity to display their extroversion. A gathering such as this is one of the healthiest aspects of fandom. You come here today not to save the world, but to have a good time. All of you are your own justification for being.

Next on the agenda was messages from the publishers -- Eshbach of Fantasy Press, James A. Williams of Prime Press, Korshak of Shasta, Ack pinchhitting for Fantasy Publishing Co., Abe Childs of New Collectors (who are now tentatively known as Hydra Press), Moskowitz of Avalon, and Maitland of New Era Publishers -- all giving the latest info on what is available and forthcoming from their various publishing houses.

This concluded the afternoon session; Saturday evening, the program began with a movie tracing the history of atomic physics from Dalton to Einstein and beyond. It was highly technical, but fascinating to all who like the scientific side of stf.

Following the film, George O. Smith attempted to discuss interplanetary communication for the illumination of fandom. He soon became embroiled with several people who couldn't see why people on two planets separated by a ten-minute transmission lag would have difficulty in carrying on a conversation. Until he fled from the auditorium an hour later, Smith was surrounded by a three-deep circle of fen firing a barrage of technical questions somewhat in the manner of detectives giving a suspect the third degree.

Sunday afternoon was devoted to the auction of originals and was capably presided over by Erle M. Korshak. The auction set a new record by netting over four hundred dollars to help defray TORCON expenses. The



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by r-trapp

I haven't the heart to get sore at Morgan Botts -- after all, it wasn't his fault -- but I do wish he'd figure out some way of getting my envelope back.....

Botts was at his usual table as I entered Joe's Tavern. Obviously he'd been nursing one beer for three hours, waiting for me to show up and buy him more.

"The world's full of jerks," I told him, seating myself across the table and plopping a fat manila envelope down on its marble top.

"Meaning?..."

"Meaning you, of course," I assured the stfan-inventor blithely. "But more particularly meaning the dops who bumped into me and almost knocked me down just now on the Fourth Level ramp."

"Some people never look where they're going," agreed Botts. "Of course, I suppose you were entirely blameless?"

"Well, I might have been a bit abstracted," I admitted. "After all, an occasion like today is plenty to give one that walking-on-air feeling."

"What's today?" asked Botts, waving for Joe the bartender to hurry up with the beers.

"Today marks the emergence of a glorious new addition to the ranks of stfwriters," I told him modestly. "On the table before you is the story which will make me famous in the annals of our noble literature. I have finally succeeded in my long efforts to crash the proxines!"

"I knew it," commented Botts gloomily. "Didn't I always say stf is going to the dogs? I never thought it would degenerate so far that your crud would sell, tho."

"You're a mere fossilized relic of prehistory," I told him. "Grab a beer and help me celebrate this memorable occasion."

Joe approached with a heavily-laden tray. "Do me a favor, Joe," I told the bartender. "Run out to the corner and drop this envelope in a mail-slot for me. It's gotta get into the evening pickup."

"Sure, Bud," said Joe. "So you finally sold one, hey? Congratulations."

"Thanx, Joe," I said. I fondled my manila-clad brainchild affectionately before entrusting it to Joe's brawny grasp.

Botts helped himself to a brimming stein as Joe went out with the envelope. "Awright, give with the gruesome details," the stfan-inventor said, settling back resignedly in his chair. "You will, of course, whether I want to listen or not."

"It's that time-travel yarn I've been working on for so long," I said. "You know -- the one where the hero tracks down the villain after months of effort, but too late to overcome him before the horrible plot to destroy Earth has been set in operation. So the hero goes back in time to the villain's childhood and beats out his brains with a baseball bat."

Botts shuddered slightly and took another long pull at his beer. "Oh, NO!" he pleaded. "You mean some poor deluded simp of an editor actually bought that old chestnut from you?"

"The plot has been used once or twice before," I admitted grudgingly.

"Ye gods! Once or twice!" Botts mumbled inarticulately for a moment, then with an expressive shrug of his shoulders tackled a fresh stein.

"So what?" I said defiantly. "You've often said yourself that there's no such thing as an absolutely new plot. In fact, if you remember Conner's famous book on the subject, the whole secret of successful stfwriting is to make old plots seem new."

Botts regarded me quizzically. "You say you've already sold this story?" he asked. "How comes you're just mailing it out, then?"

"Well," I explained, "I have sold it, but the editor wanted me to rework the passage where I explain time-travel paradoxes. He said I needed to bring in more technical terms so that the science would be authentic, as well as absolutely clear. Since the whole point of the story depends on the time-travel incident, it's important that everyone understands the paradox-theorem."

Botts downed another beer. "I can just imagine you trying to explain the science of time-travel," he said sarcastically. "Your idea of an explanation is to use ten-syllable words to express one-syllable ideas. Your college education has ruined you, Bud."

"Oh yeah?" I retorted indignantly. "At least I know the principles behind time-travel. I bet you couldn't give the basic factors of Wolfgang's Temporal-Continuum Equation without boning up on the subject."

"What's that got to do with a trip into the past?" Botts wanted to know.

"Why, don't you know the seventh transformation of the Wolfgang Parameters alters the hyperspatial matrix so that the plasticity of future-time is also applicable to past-time, thereby generating a Weber Self Annihilating Paradox? In other words, if you alter the past so that it affects the future, thus creating alternate probabilities, both probabilities cease to exist."

"Oh NO! Oh, Great Simpering Ghu-Lovers!" Botts tore at his hair with both hands. "Bud, don't tell me you've had the Ghu-drenched imbecillity to use Weber's Metaphysical Basis of Extratemporal Physics as your source-book!"

"Why, yes. What's wrong with--"

"Haven't you heard? Haven't you seen the papers?" asked Botts. "The Physicists' Association has just revealed that Weber misinterpreted

a quantity in the original Wolfgang Equation and built his entire theory on a false assumption!"

"What!"

"It's all in the latest issue of Science Journal. By the time your story hits print every fan from here to Kokomo will laugh himself sick at your doubletalk about hyperspatial matrix plasticity!"

I was already on my feet, looking wildly around the dimly-lit tavern for Joe. "Where is that guy?" I yelled. "I gotta get back my manuscript before he mails it!"

Just then Joe entered the green swinging doors. I rushed up to him frantically. "Joe! Joe! Did you--"

"Worried about your story, Bud?" asked Joe, smiling cheerfully. "Relax, Bud. I put it in the mail-slot with my own hands. You got nothing to worry about."

"Morgan! What'll I do?" I wailed. "Either the thing will get into print and I'll be disgraced for life, or they'll catch it before the mag goes to press and toss it in the wastebasket. Either way, I'm sunk!"

"This," said Morgan Botts, "is the time for action!" He slid back his chair, rose to his feet, picked up a beer and drained it in one mighty gulp. "Come along, Bud," he said, hustling me out into the twilit street.

"Where are we going?" I panted, trying to keep up with his swift strides.

"To your place," he said. "You've got a carbon of that manuscript, haven't you?"

"Yeah -- but it's too late to get it into the mail, and--"

"Don't worry, just leave everything to me," said Botts, pulling me along a bit faster.

The next three hours were the most hectic I've ever lived thru. I couldn't figure out what Botts had in mind, but I blindly followed his orders, rewriting the crucial paragraphs and substituting them for the erroneous pages in the carbon copy of my story.

Botts fairly snatched the sheaf of flimsy from my hands. "Now we put this into an envelope and address it just like the original was fixed," he barked. "Make sure it has exactly the same outer appearance."

That finished, we hurried to Botts' apartment. I was beginning to have a dim idea of what he intended to do.

"Your time-machine!" I said. "You're going to switch manuscripts on me!"

"Of course," said Botts. "Don't you remember the guy who jostled you on the Fourth Level ramp? It couldn't have been anyone but me!"

"Botts, you're a genius," I said. "I don't know how to thank you for all this--"

"Aw, nuts," said Botts gruffly. "I remember how I felt about my own first story. You sit down and have a beer while I fix things."

I watched him step thru the Temporal Disc, then fished myself a plastican of suds from the coollex and sipped thoughtfully as I waited for his return. Eventually he reappeared, a triumphant smile on his dissipated features. "All taken care of, Bud," he announced, tossing the retrieved envelope on a chair. "Fish me out a beer."

It was almost an hour later when a sudden chilling thought struck me. I set my half-empty plastican on the floor beside the others and bent a panic-stricken gaze on Morgan Botts.

"Botts," I said. "I just happened to think...."

"Yeah?" asked Botts encouragingly, brushing a trace of foam from his white moustache.

"Back in the tavern -- when I handed the envelope to Joe--"

"I remember. What about it?"

"Botts! I remember feeling that envelope -- and the manuscript was on stiff paper!"

"Nonsense!" said Botts. "You're letting your imagination run away with you. Here -- look at this manuscript I brought back. See if it isn't the original."

With trembling fingers I tore open the heavy manila. Sure enough, it contained a thick sheaf of bond paper. I gave a sigh of relief -- but then I withdrew the sheets from their envelope, and uttered a cry of horror.

The paper was blank.

"Incredible!" murmured Botts, gazing at the virgin pages. "Do you realize, Bud, that this vindicates WWeber's theory of Self-Annihilating Paradoxes after all?"

"Ghu drench Weber's theory!" I yelled. "What happened to my story?"

"Unfortunately," said Morgan Botts, "I'm afraid your story has vanished somewhere in hyperspace, or perhaps hypertime. Tsk -- both copies, too. It looks, Bud, as if you not only have to crash the promags all over again -- you also have the job of explaining to an editor just how you happened to mail him a fat envelope full of blank second-sheets!"

- END -



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