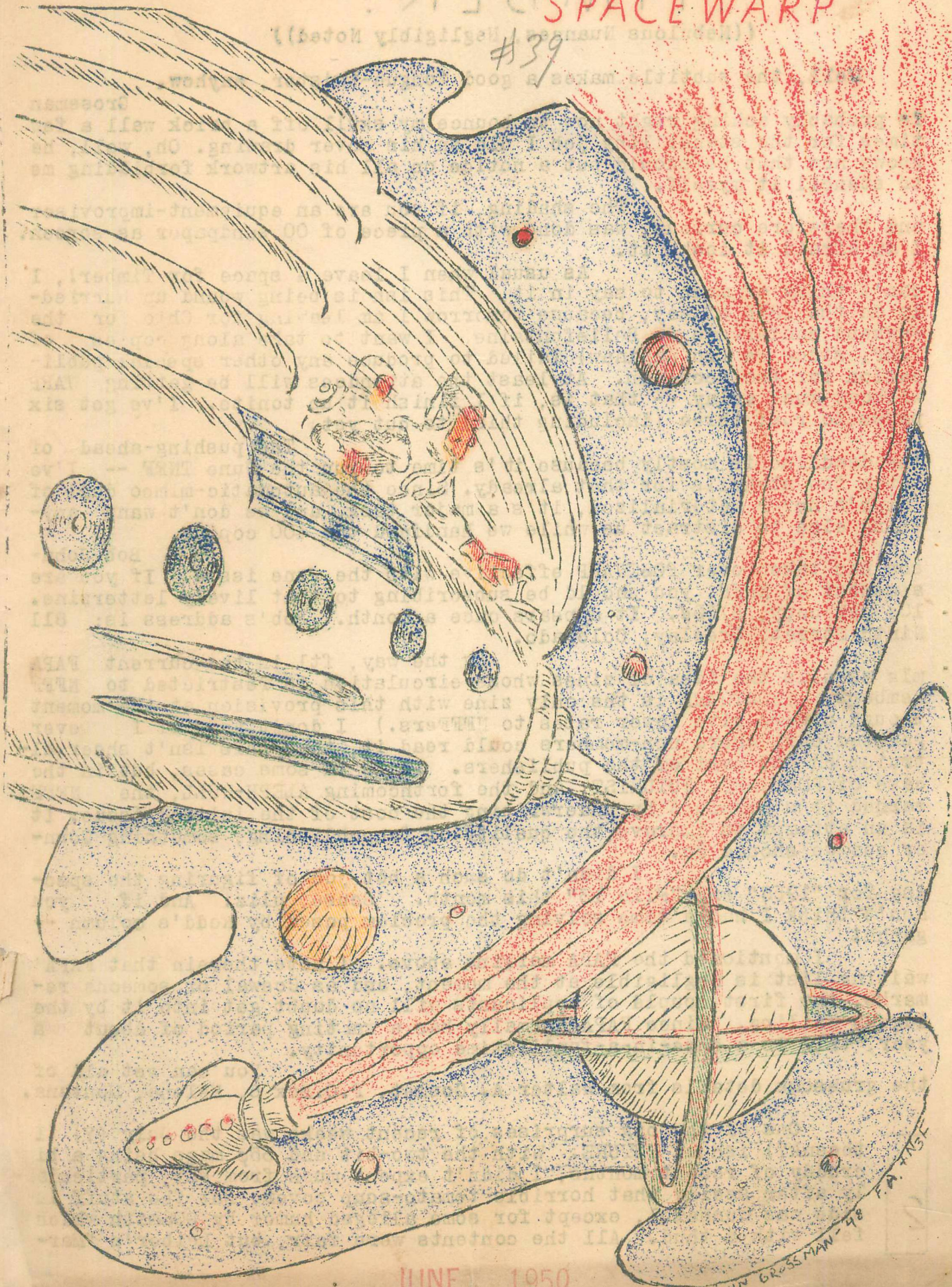


SPACE WARP

#39



JUNE, 1950

JOHN GROSSMAN-48 F.A. #135

TIMBER!

((Nebulous Nuances, Negligibly Noted))

Well, the subtitle makes a good tongue-twister, anyhow.

Grossman is probably aching right now to bounce my skull off a brick wall a few times for the stencilling job I did on his cover drawing. Oh, well, he knows now that he should put a notice on all his artwork forbidding me to stencil it myself.

The shading, if you are an equipment-improviser and therefore curious, was done with a piece of 00 sandpaper as screen. I am afraid it looks it.

As usual when I leave a space for Timber!, I can't think of much to say in it. This ish is being wound up hurriedly on the 18th of May, because tomorrow I am leaving for Chic for the weekend conference in Bellefontaine. I want to take along copies of WARP, since we (in Saginaw) failed to produce any other special publication for the occasion. At least the attendees will be getting WARP without much delay -- that is, if I finish it up tonite. I've got six pages to run; three (including this) to cut yet.

The pushing-ahead of the deadline is mostly because it's time to run the June TNFF -- I've cut a few stencils for that already. Since the automatic-mimeo deal of Ralph's never materialized, it's a major task, and we don't want anything else to distract us while we handfeed the 400 copies.

Bob Johnson has taken over POSTWARP effective with the June issue. If you are a member of NFFF, you should be subscribing to that lively letterzine. 10¢ per copy, 6/50¢. It appears once a month. Bob's address is: 811 Ninth Street, Greeley, Colorado.

By the way, ftl in the current FAPA mlg assails the idea of zines whose circulation is restricted to NFFF members. (POSTWARP is the only zine with this provision at the moment though others give lower rates to NFFFers.) I don't know if I ever pointed out, where non-members could read it, that this isn't sheer altruism on the part of the publishers. It is in some cases, but in the case of POSTWARP, FUTURIST, and the forthcoming ALEPH-NULL, the NFFF earned it's discount by underwriting the cost of the initial issue. It is an attempt to improve the quality of fanpublishing, something Town-er sez we should do.

I didn't do such a hot job of figuring the spacing for "1958" and "File 13" this month. 'Scuse, pliz. And if you don't think I had a time solving the problem posed by Redd's column -- gahhh!

I mentioned the FAPA mailing above. I note therein that FAPA's waiting list is negligible at the moment, and as Coswal or someone remarks, the first couple of applicants will no doubt get into it by the August mailing. Since FAPA normally has a waiting period of about a year, this is a once-in-a-fanlifetime opportunity.

You can get all of the gruesome details from Walter A. Coslet, P.O.Box 6, Helena, Montana.

2 One of the big surprises of recent weeks was the July (?) (I theenk?) ish of FUTURE. With the two-bit and 35¢ mags being a bit cruddy of recent months, I didn't expect much from FUT, particularly after seeing that horrible tomato-soup cover. But the stuff inside was wunnaful, except for some alleged humor by GOSmith which fell with a thud. All the contents were fair, but Leiber's "Mar-

tians. Keep Out!" and del Roy's "Shadows of Empire" rang the bell with me. particularly the latter, which reminds me very strongly of a tale by Stephen Vincent Benet called something like "The Last of the Legions" and applying the same theme to the withdrawal of the Roman troops from Britain. And there was a story in ASTOUNDING along about 1943 or '44, by C.L. Moore, I think, in which the same theme was given yet a third handling. Hamm, round up a few more, and you'd have the makings of a fine anthology.

Another unexpected find was "The Dreaming Jewels" by Theodore Sturgeon, in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES (!!) for Feb 50. Perhaps it shone only by contrast with its surroundings, but this story knocked me for a loop. The science is fuzzy, the plot is undistinguished, but the characterization and style are marvelous, even for Sturgeon, who is by no means inept in those respects at any time.

I hear tell the Detroit Science-Fantasy League has published an anti-Insurgent one-shot, but so far I haven't seen a copy. Can it be that they are ashamed to let the Insurgents read what they have to say about us? Tsk, and after we were obliging enough to pull a lot of Insurgent propaganda out of the recent SAPS mailing after the Detroiters visited us while Ralph, Bea Mahaffey, and I were engaged in publishing an Insurgent zine which would have been a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

I hear that the three Michigan schizophrenics, Nelson, Shapiro and Metchette, finding themselves caught in the crossfire because they attempted to join both sides, are now planning a third party. Anti-everything, no doubt.

Bill Groover was over last night to report that his copy of that epochal tome, Dianetics, had arrived. He hasn't been seen since, a fact which has sinister implications, since it is presumed that he has been reading the Sacred Words in the meantime. Next time I see him I will check for tendrils and advise you.

Reason I'm trying to get this WARP polished off tonite is so I can take off early tomorrow for Delaware, Ohio, to impose on the hospitality of the Lavenders for a night, and then go on to Bellefontaine with them. Since I haven't yet told Roy and Deedee of this, having WARP along should simplify things. I'll just knock on their door, hand them a copy of WARP, and let them read this paragraph.

Seriously, I'll have the story of the Bellefontaine conference in next month's WARP. It sounds like it will be quite an interesting affair.

van Vogt's "The Enchanted Village" in the current OTHER WORLDS is his best tale in some time, don't you think? I do. If OW could bring the rest of its contents up to the level which vV and Bradbury reached in the current ish, it'd be without question the No.1 prozine on the stands. As 'tis, it at least has the best covers, now that aSF is trying to disguise itself as a mundane zine and most of the other pulps have a Bergey fixation.

Oh gloop, it's 10 p.m. (tsk, Army and Navy usage has helped spread the European system of writing dates, but the equally useful 24-hour clock system seems to have died out at the end of the war) and I still have the contents page to cut, and also have to run these things...and I gotta get up at six tomorrow if I wanna get an early bus out of here. Get moving, fingers, get moving!

Do I have any volunteers to do a fanzine review column for WARP? Or maybe one of you regular columnists could concentrate on them...I always intend to stick reviews of 'em into some corner of the mag, and then never get around to it.

jibberjibber

ahr

A Stf Master Nobody Remembers

BY LYON DE COEUR

Fame is a fleeting thing, and it is certain that not even in the pulp-fiction trade is the name of Howard O. Axtell a well-remembered byline. To certain veteran Western and adventure-fiction editors, the name attached to a poem in Harper's or Poetry: A Magazine of Verse may obscurely recall the days in the mid-1930's when his fiction appeared in the pulps under his own and various other names, but to science fiction editors, even those -- if there are any -- that signed the checks made out to him, the name of Howard O. Axtell probably does not strike a responsive chord.

It is just as certain that even those knowledgeable students of the stf field, the science fiction fans themselves, do not readily recall Howard O. Axtell. This situation is not surprising. Axtell's fame rests on a total output of exactly five science fiction stories, which appeared over a seven year period, centering more than a decade ago. Those five stories created no sensation such as greeted the advent of a Weinbaum or a Heinlein. No scintillating adjectives were expended to describe them in the editorial blurbs and their appearance was marked by only a few brief and noncommittal comments in the letter departments of that era. But to the alert critic of 1950, looking with retrospective eye on the pulp magazines of the "old days", Axtell's five yarns present certain qualities of excellence and distinctiveness that cause them to stand out from the rest like rare and valuable gems.

Howard O. Axtell's first appearance in science fiction came after he had served an apprenticeship of some five or six years in other pulps such as Triple-X Western and Ace-High Magazine. It was in the Spring 1933 Wonder Stories Quarterly, and the story with which he made his stf debut was "The Man Who Followed April", a "pure" fantasy of the Clark Ashton Smith type that, atypically, nevertheless did not rely on purple patches and exotic names made up of nonsense syllables to weave the "fantasy" atmosphere. Perhaps the story might be considered hewing closest to the C.A. Smith formula used in "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" for, like that story, "The Man Who Followed April" was a fantasy in a science-fictional setting.

Verdor, the lonely protagonist of Axtell's fantasy, is a mysterious millionaire who travels from planet to planet in the galaxy in a swift black spaceship, arriving regularly at certain resort cities on each world just as the tide of spring reaches it. Tarrying only briefly, Verdor flits off to another planet when summer's heat approaches. Thus he lives perpetually in April weather, and his arrival on a planet is a harbinger of Spring. Then, after many years, one April he fails to arrive on Earth as spring rustles up from the south -- and, strangely, the full tide of the vernal season never came to N'york.... The climax of this delicately-told story is a masterpiece that reminds one of an old fairy tale or an Oriental legend of fragile charm.

Axtell's second stf tale appeared almost coincidentally with the first --

it was in the May 1933 Astounding. Though a fantasy atmosphere still pervaded his work, this story was somewhat different from "The Man Who Followed April". If similarities to the fiction of Clark Ashton Smith can be seen in the original Axtell story, "Lost in the Stars" (not to be confused with the current Broadway musical of the same title) seems to reflect influences of C.L. Moore's Northwest Smith. The hero, Jolly Roger McKay, is a tough, humorless, but colorful outlaw that reminds one of Miss Moore's famous character; the untamed "frontier of the sky" is vividly described, as in "Black Thirst" and "Shambleau", depicting terrestrial conquest and colonization against a background of an alien culture mankind can never understand. But Jolly Roger is a more realistic hero than Northwest Smith. Where a romantic motive of chivalric loyalty, or sympathy for the underdog, is sufficient to move Northwest through his adventures, Jolly Roger McKay is a much more complex personality, more subtly motivated. He is pushed into his adventures in "Lost in the Stars" because of his Robin Hood pretensions. His sensitive, inquiring mind has found the times (circa 2000 A.D.) hopelessly out of joint and has driven him from society into outlawry in an effort to "change things". His efforts, all the more pitiful because of his color and innate sincerity, have a Don Quixote grandeur about them. Though this tale's plot sometimes borders on space opera, the depiction of this realistic hero against the romantic background keeps this yarn solidly interesting.

More than three years passed before Howard O. Axtell contributed another story to the science fiction pulps. This time it was a novelette that appeared in Wonder Stories for June 1936, a yarn distinguished for several things. Stylistically, this story found Axtell abandoning his science-fiction-with-fantasy-atmosphere for a gadget-ridden, technological tale that might easily appear in ASF today and -- what is more -- take a top place in the Analytical Laboratory. Furthermore, this story has the distinction of including a prophecy that ranks beside Dr. David H. Keller's lucky guess about World War II in the opening paragraph of "The Bloodless War". Axtell's yarn predicted the flying saucers!

His story was titled "The Silver Wings" and, though throughout the tale the flying discs are called "wings" -- for Axtell could not be expected to know exactly what they would be dubbed -- the story contains a solid sfinal conception of the mysterious fleet of flying discs that appeared over America eleven years to the very month after his story appeared. The world is threatened with stellar invaders in the latter chapters of "The Silver Wings" and is saved on the last page in the approved Hamiltonian manner, but the early portion of the story reads remarkably like the newspaper reports of June and July, 1947, not to mention more recent reports:

"It [the wing] came down slantingly, a disc-shaped thing that shimmered in the hard sunlight.... For an instant it poised quiveringly above the swaying treetops, then it whipped away into the steely blue of the sky at an incredible speed. This was a visitor, Reed felt instinctively, as alien to Earth as a meteor, and carrying with it, aegis-like, an eeriness that touched the tangible world as chillingly as though a door in the heavens had for an instant opened on the mysteries of the stars themselves...."

Another several years went by before Howard O. Axtell's fourth sf yarn was published. Once again, his new story represented a switch in approach and treatment from those that preceded it. In the first place, this was a long story -- a "novel" according to the contents page, though it was hardly one in the true sense of the word. Published in the September 1938 issue of Marvel, it re-

vealed that Axtell, who as a poet has shown himself most adept at shaping short lyrics rather than lengthly narrative poems, was not the master of longer works even in prose. The story is rambling, episodic and often diffuse, employing altogether too many characters and often developing offshoots and subplots that detract from the effectiveness of the main story line. Disregarding its faults, however, this story -- which bears the poetic title of "The Long Night of Waiting" -- must be regarded as the best of Howard O. Axtell's work, and one of the greatest short-novels of all science-fiction.

"The Long Night of Waiting" portrays Earth in the mid-25th century -- Earth, the proud capital of a solar empire comprising colonies on Mars, Venus, and the moons of Jupiter. But Earth is an old and dying world; the colonies are young and virile. The plot centers upon the efforts of Jan Elodar, premier of Earth, to increase the population of Earth, fill the planet with young, strong men, and thus avert the looming danger of being conquered by the colonies which have adopted fascistic policies in their long vattles against an overwhelmingly hostile environment. The vast scope of Elodar's plan is strikingly told by Axtell, who uses a cosmic viewpoint to communicate everything to the reader. As powerful as this depiction is, it is equalled by Axtell's description and analysis of the great Elodar Plan itself -- a plan that is obviously not merely a gimmick dreamed up to fit the plot but actually the heart of the story, intricately and intelligently worked out by the author before being put into fictional form.

Axtell's thesis, that it takes generations to carry out such projects in human engineering, would have formed a useful text for Adolf Hitler, who tried and failed to reverse the falling German birthrate through measures somewhat less drastic than Jan Elodar's. I suspect that all the ramifications and implications of "The Long Night of Waiting" can be understood only by those who have taken a year's course in social statistics, but the story is well worth reading twice for maximum comprehension.

Howard O. Axtell's fifth, and so far last, stf tale appeared in Future Fiction for January 1940. The only stf story to appear under his pseudonym, Orrin Howard, a penname he had used often in Black Mask and Argosy for mystery and adventure tales, it was titled "Caverns of the Night". Somewhat inconsequential, this yarn may have been a reject from another stf magazine, dug out of Axtell's files when Future Fiction was launched; nevertheless, it has its moments.

"Caverns of the Night" is a story of probability-worlds that might have been influenced by Jack Williamson's "Legion of Time," but the use Axtell makes of the concept is far different from that which Williamson utilized. Presenting almost as bewildering an array of probability time-tracks as Robert Heinlein did in "Elsewhere", which it slightly resembles, the story emphasizes the psychological reactions to time-travel of the protagonist, an introvert who wishes to escape from his coldly scientific world into a more congenial one, and in this facet, the story succeeds admirably in depicting frustration and fear. Taken altogether, however, "Caverns of the Night" is Axtell's least moving story, and for him, something of a failure, though it mates well when compared with its contemporaries, including those in Astounding.

One phase of Axtell's stf output that has generally been overlooked is that he had a "history of the future" outline, somewhat resembling Heinlein's, to background his stories. Axtell's "history of tomorrow" was based on the premise that science and technology will continue to accelerate in their advance against the unknown and that undreamed-of scientific achievements will be the heritage of our grandchildren. In a passage in "The Long Night of Waiting" Axtell prophesied the advent of atomic power in 1956, and the con-

quest of space in 1965. Running from the near future (when the story was written) in "The Silver Wings", the history continues through the early days of space flight, as dramatized in "Lost in the Stars", to the days of colonization of the planets in "The Long Night of Waiting" and into interstellar empire era in "The Man Who Followed April". Apparently, "Caverns of the Night" fits into the pattern somewhere between "Lost in the Stars" and "The Long Night of Waiting", tied into the history by references to events depicted in other stories.

To my knowledge, Howard O. Axtell received mention in the fan press only twice -- once in a brief filler in Bob Tucker's one-time fanzine Fan Jester, and once in a short article by Forrest J. Ackerman in New Frontiers, the FAPAazine of Sam Moskowitz, circa 1937.

In the Fan Jester item, Axtell's birth was stated to have taken place in July 1903 at Dennysville, Maine, while Ackerman credited Lubec, Maine, as Axtell's birthplace, the date being July 19, 1903. Both articles reported that Axtell had graduated from Bates College in 1925, and had taken his master's degree at the University of Minnesota (1930).

Ackerman's article, "Three Main Tremaine Hopes", described Axtell as a history instructor at the University of Idaho and Illinois Wesleyan before his retirement from teaching in 1933 to devote himself to freelance writing. According to Ackerman, Axtell was a million-words-a-year man, a contributor to such diverse markets as Love Story, Ranch Romances, Black Mask, Complete Stories, Wild West Weekly (where one year his bylines appeared in 39 out of 52 issues), Clues, Ace-High, etc. An historical novel psychoanalyzing Lorenzo (the Magnificent) de' Medici was slated for 1938 publication, Forry reported, but whether this book ever appeared is uncertain.

"From evry indication," wrote Acky in completing the section of his article devoted to Axtell, "the xln't work dun by HOAxtell in the past will b added 2 in the near future. He has 6 stf scripts on the fire & if Axtell's tales get the ax, tell (pardonu la pun!) the editors they made a mistake! HOAxtell promises 2 b 1 of the great stffrs of the next 10 yrs."

Apparently, the six yarns mentioned by Ackerman did get the editorial axe, for Axtell did not, unfortunately, become one of the great stf writers of the last decade. It is a great pity that this writer, who had more talent than nine out of ten stf scribes, did not stay in the science fiction field. As it has turned out, Howard O. Axtell is a stf master that nobody ever heard of.

- END -

BACK ISSUES OF SPACEWARP

Guess what George Young dug up last week? Right -- the long-lost extra copies of the January 1949 issue of SPACEWARP! Which makes copies available of these back WARPs:

1948 - August, December - 10¢ @
1949 - January, February, March, November - 10¢ @
1950 - February, March, April, May - 15¢ @

Only two or three copies of some of those issues, so don't dawdle if you need any of 'em to fill gaps in your file.

Speaking of files, why don't you file an application for membership in SAPS if you are not already one? Last mailing had 177 pages!

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FANZINE SCOPE

BY F. TOWNER LANEY

A MACHETE FOR METCHETTE. It is something rather new to me to be challenged to "a fight to the finish" by some fugghead I never even heard of. Stewart Metchette! Unless this is one of the many pseudonyms of Calvin Thomas Beck, I don't know who he is. As far as I'm concerned, there is no quarrel between Metchette and myself. Unlike him, I cannot work up even spurious wrath against someone who has never done anything to me. His attempts to insult me didn't even take. After all, what does one expect from the rear end of a horse but windbreaking?

However, I did re-examine the portion of my column which dealt with the incredible James Lynn Kepner (author of SONGS FOR SORROW AND BEAUTY). I'm sorry if Kepner took umbrage at anything I said, because I deliberately toned down my comments on him. It would be very easy to do a whole column on the subject of Kepner, but there is no sense to it. Kepner has enough of a load to carry without my adding to it. Item: the--shall we say--exotic flavor of so many of Jake's friendships. Item: his active membership in the Communists Party and his writing of a column for the DAILY WORKER.

Loyalty to a friend is a fine thing, Metchette, but I can't see anyone sticking up for Kepner (particularly when Kepner was not even under attack) unless the sticker-upper is of the Kepner type.

Or was your purpose merely to have me give you some free publicity?

---oOo---

READER, COLLECTOR, GENTLEMAN. Fandom lost half its savor when H. C. Koenig ceased publishing THE READER AND COLLECTOR. Koenig was that all too rare type of fan: adult, serious without being stuffy, and a gentleman in the Lovecraftian sense of the word. Surely it is not hard to imagine "Heck" sitting in the coffee house with Dr. Johnson, equally ready to talk about literature or lambaste a fugghead.

H. C. Koenig is a man of middle age who is a big wheel in an electrical testing laboratory in New York City. Primarily a reader and collector of good books, he joined FAPA back in 1938 and was promptly disillusioned. He had expected fans and fanzines to be interested largely in the things he was, such as literate science-fiction and fantasy; and when the scales fell from his eyes it was not long before his solid critical ability was finding targets right and left. For years, Koenig waged what was practically a one man war against fuggheadedness in fandom and in the fantasy pulps.

And what a redoubtable insurgent this guy was! Fanzines and pulps, then as now, teemed with fantastically fuggheaded statements. For page after page Koenig would publish selected quotes followed by the most devastating comments ever to appear in a fanzine. I have some slight reputation for sarcastic invective, but my sternest stuff is skimmed milk by con-

parison to Koenig's average. And by way of precept, Koenig would also have in nearly every issue of his magazine a serious article on some phase of literate fantasy, book collecting, or less frequently a critical article on some phase of fandom. At first, he strove mightily to improve the quality of contemporary fanzines--a task as hopeless then as now--but as time went on he concentrated more and more on publishing stuff of interest to the bibliophile, writer, reader, or critic.

The vehicle for all this wonderful stuff was THE READER AND COLLECTOR, a varityped magazine beautifully mimeographed on one side of the page. Twenty issues of it appeared in FAPA from August 1938 until October 1943, and a complete file is one of the most cherished things among my fanzines. An indication of the uniformly high quality that Koenig consistently attained is that I can still reread his articles on fantasy with as much interest and pleasure as I did when I was daft on the subject. Even if I sell my fanzine collection, READER AND COLLECTOR is one of the few sets I'll keep.

-oOo-

THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO RAPP! Here is a quotation from the March 1941 READER AND COLLECTOR which every fanzine publisher and wouldbe publisher should mull over:

IF

If you are unable to carry on for a period of at least one volume (6 or 12 issues) with very few subscriptions----

If you don't have the necessary equipment to turn out a legible and easily-read magazine ----

If you don't have the time or ability to properly edit a magazine and to reduce the typographical errors to a minimum----

If you don't have enough interesting material to enable you to run the magazine for a reasonable subscription period with very little additional assistance----

If you are unable to maintain a definite publication date---

THEN FOR GAWD'S SAKES DON'T START A SUBSCRIPTION MAGAZINE!

-oOo-

HISSESSSSSS... No mention of Koenig would be complete without mention of his great anti-hissing campaign. He found himself somewhat annoyed and mildly obsessed by the insistent way in which so many pulp writers had their characters hiss a non sibillance. His collection of these quotations shortly outgrew all bounds, with no effect on anything, except of course to relieve Heck's blood pressure a bit, amuse most of his readers, and occasionally caused some idiot to attack him much to the delight of all concerned, especially Koenig.

-oOo-

With the wealth of solid, timeless articles and glorious examples of inspired fuggheadness singled out and showcased with appropriate remarks; it would be easy to fill pages and pages with topflight R&C reprints. But let's content ourselves with the fragment of a poem from THE CHRISTIAN STEFAN (R&C, June 1943):

"But do not weep, ye loved ones, so
O'er this body broken and bent.
It once held a soul that had to go -
That has to Heaven went."

LONELINESS

BY WILLIAM JAMES

At first there was darkness, a smothering blackness that pressed all around him. And pain. A tingling sensation that became a million needles being driven slowly into his body. He tried to open his eyes, but the lids were stuck together. He moved slightly and the sudden increase of pain drew a low groan from him.

He lay still then, while billows of pain surged over him and tried to drag his slowly waking mind back down into darkness. But slowly his thoughts cleared; and slowly the pain subsided. And he lay still, thinking.

It seemed hard to think, as though his brain had not been used for a long time. It hurt. Not with the same kind of pain as his body, but with a sickening dizziness, a sense of being disconnected. He could not reason; he had no starting point from which to reason. Only darkness and pain.

He attempted to explore the paths of memory, but it was as if doors were closed against him. Who was he? Where was he? The questions hammered in his mind. The dizzying sickness worsened, threatened to overwhelm him.

He stopped thinking then; his mind floated on soft darkness.

Awareness crept back slowly. The pain was gone. Only a tingling was left, uncomfortable but not unendurable. He heard the slow pound of his heart, felt the surge of life through his body. He moved.

He almost screamed in agony. His flesh burned with fire and his bones ached but slowly he brought his arm up. He touched his face and felt astonishment. He had a beard! And then he wondered vaguely why the heavy growth of hair should astonish him. He moved his hand up slowly to his eyes and rubbed away the gritty substance that held the lids together. His eyes opened.

They burned, and he saw nothing but darkness. Slowly he became aware of faint light; and lifting his head he saw before him a hard blackness spattered with little cold points of brilliance.

Stars.

The word meant something. One of the locked doors of memory swung open. Stars. Space. The ship! And as the first door opened he found keys to the others. He put his head down and let memory flow back.

His name was John Logan. And he was somewhere in space beyond the atmosphere of the Earth. For, he realized with a dull wonder, he was the first spaceman. His destination had been the Moon.

He felt as though he had slept for a long time, but he knew that could not be so. For his orbit had been carefully calculated; and had he slept for any great length of time he would now be dead, smashed to bits on the surface of the Moon.

He pushed himself slowly forward out of the heavy padding that surrounded him, until his face was pressed against the curving invisible surface of the port. Every movement of his body was painful, but he gritted his teeth and searched the sky for the bright lunar globe.

11

Dismay gripped him when he could not find it. There was only darkness and the stars.

He felt the chill of space then, and realized he had been cold ever since he awakened. And he was panting for breath, as though the air in the rocket had grown thin. Both facts heightened his dismay. He knew suddenly that he had slept for a long time; for months, perhaps for years. Somehow there had been an error in the calculations and he had missed the Moon, had gone beyond it and the limits of the Solar System, out into the interstellar darkness where only stars shone and there was no Sun to warm him.

As the horror of his position dawned on him, he slid back into the padding and lay still, while madness sought to engulf his mind.

It was a long while later that he struggled back to some semblance of sanity. It was the chilling cold and a ravenous hunger that drove him out of his semi-comatose state. Painfully he struggled forward until he could reach the valves of the spare oxygen tanks. As oxygen hissed into the cabin he opened the locker containing his food supplies. He found a can of thermo-soup and opened it.

The first spoonful caused a retching spell that left him weak and trembling. After that he forced it down a drop at a time. It took him half an hour to consume a third of the can, and that was all he could swallow. But he felt strength flowing back into his muscles.

He lay still for a time, while his body gathered strength, and thought. But he kept his eyes from that ominous darkness beyond the forward port.

What could have caused his long sleep? He searched his memory, striving to find some clue. He remembered blast-off -- the roar of the rockets, the increasing acceleration, his body pressing down into the cushions as his weight increased. Near-blackout as the pressure grew almost unendurable. And then, after what seemed a long time, the blessed relief of weightlessness. And he had looked out on space, realizing as he did so that he was seeing the stars as no man of Earth had ever seen them.

Then had come that prickling sensation -- perhaps the cosmic rays or some previously unsuspected radiation -- and a terrible weariness. And his eyes had closed in sleep.

had he slept? How long?

But how long

His eyes lifted to the darkness framed by the port, and a mind-shaking loneliness gripped him as he stared out at the star gemmed beyond. The aloneness of a man far from home and lost; lost as no man had ever been lost before.

And at first he did not see the brightening of one side of the circular metal frame. When he did see it he began to tremble and found he could not move. And a spark of hope began to grow within him.

He was afraid to look out of the port, afraid his imagination had tricked him. If it turned out to be imagination, he would go mad!

He made it to the port in a rush, ignoring the pain that tore his body, and shakily pressed his face to the glass, looking out sideways. A cry of joy rose to his lips.

He saw the Moon!

At that moment he thought he had never seen a more beautiful sight than the full globe of Luna glowing against the harsh backdrop of space. For it meant that all the fears he had built up

in his mind during those first waking moments had been baseless. He was still on course. But as he changed position and felt again the stiffness and pain in his body, and when he remembered the long beard he had grown, he realized his first fears had been correct.

And that was not the Moon!

For he saw now a fuzziness about the edges of the globe that bespoke an atmosphere. He was looking at a planet, and -- it took a little time for him to change his viewpoint and realize it -- the planet was Earth!

He looked downward for the first time and saw a dark mass that blotted out the stars; a mass now faintly illuminated by glowing Earthlight. Shakily, he realized that below him lay the Moon. By some strange freak the error that had caused the rocket to miss the Moon while he slept, had brought it close enough for Luna's gravity to capture it. He was in a closed orbit about the Moon.

Happiness rose again within him. For he could return now. There was plenty of fuel remaining in the tanks. He raised his eyes to the shining Earth, and for a moment mist clouded his vision. Home.

He settled down to calculate his orbit.

It was some twenty hours later, when the ship had made a complete circuit of the Moon, that he made the jump. Flame jettied from the cold rocket tubes and the ship moved out of its orbit. Acceleration was not as extreme this time as it had been on the trip up. As the ship fell into its new orbit he shut off the rockets.

An overwhelming fatigue gripped him then. He tried to fight it off, to stay awake and check his orbit on the way down, but his body was too weak. He slept.

A high thin screaming sound brought him up out of sleep with a jerk. He lay listening, only half awake, while nightmare fear clutched him with freezing fingers. And then as the wail died to silence, he realized it had been the friction of air against the hull. The ship had made contact with the tenuous outer fringes of Earth's atmosphere on the long braking curve he had calculated for it.

He had slept for a good many hours. But the orbit the ship was following seemed to be correct. Second contact would not come for some hours yet.

He lay during those hours with his face pressed to the glass of the forward port, pausing in his observations only long enough to consume another can of hot soup. It went down easily this time. And he discovered as he moved around in the cramped control room, that while his body was stiff much of the soreness had disappeared. He watched the stars swing past as the ship turned under the pull of gravity. And slowly the Earth bulged into view below the nose of the rocket.

Emotion choked him as he saw it rolling below, and again mist clouded his vision. And pictures seemed to overlay the mist -- memories of forested hills and a blue lake glinting in the sun; of friends and family who undoubtedly thought him dead. A girl's face swam in his mind, the features unclear but the depthless blue eyes calling him across distance and Time. And the tenderness that welled in him at the memory told him what he had not known before. He whispered a name: "Anne...."

Only a man who has been in space can know the real meaning of home.

The ship vibrated when it struck atmosphere again and the high whine dropped to a lower pitch. Contact lasted longer

this time; the ship sang throughout its length to the buffeting of the air. And then again he was in space.

Hours passed slowly; and again the ship sang as it contacted atmosphere. The high scream of air past the ship became a long-drawn howl, dropping slowly to a lower key. Logan lay back in the cushions, enduring the battering of the ship as its speed decreased.

At thirty thousand feet the speed of the rocket had decreased to the point where deceleration was no longer noticeable, and he moved forward and looked out of the port. The stub wings had taken hold now and the ship was gliding down at a steep angle.

Heavy clouds lay below the ship, stretching away to the horizon. He let the ship drop to ten thousand feet and then boosted with the rockets, keeping above the clouds. Ten minutes later he had cleared the fringe of the clouds and looked down on the rolling Atlantic.

Half an hour later he raised the coastline of the United States. He could not restrain the cry of gladness that rose to his lips at the sight. Below and to the left he recognized Delaware Bay, and turning the ship to the right he headed north along the coast.

The ship could not move fast enough for him. Below, only ten thousand feet down -- almost close enough to touch -- lay home. His eyes devoured the familiar coastline eagerly.

The day was bright and clear. The glint of sun-brightened water, the flash of white spray on a rocky shore far below, filled the hungry soul of the man who had thought but a short time ago to gaze on blank emptiness forever.

But slowly he became aware of something wrong with the picture.

He could not put his finger on it at first, and it puzzled him. But as the ship passed over a small, heavily forested headland that thrust out into the sea, understanding came and a nagging unease of mind.

For in all the length of coast he followed he had seen no sign of greenery, no visible indication of living vegetation; and a careful search of the forested headland revealed no vestige of green foliage. Only a dull, uneven brown met the eye, as of plants and trees long dead.

What could it mean? His anxiety increased; and as the ship fled north, he searched the land below desperately. But as far as the eye could see lay the dull brown color of death.

A thought began to form in the back of his mind; an idea so horrible the mind refused to accept it. He looked down at the widespread brown death and a sick fear grew slowly within him.

When he sighted New York a few minutes later a low sob choked in his throat. All his fears and suspicions were suddenly confirmed, and a terrible hopelessness gripped him.

For of New York proper there remained only a gigantic scar glistening like glass in the sunlight. A few crumbling ruins still stood in Manhattan and on Staten Island, amid the scattered wreckage of other structures; but the rest of the city was gone as if it had never existed.

14 He circled over the ruins in a daze, looking down at the scarred ground through blurred eyes. Shock had left him temporarily bereft of all feeling. He began to tremble; a mad voice seemed to chant in his ear "Dead, dead, dead. All dead!" And he realized suddenly that the voice was his own.

Atomic war had ravaged the Earth while he slept, unknowing, in the rocket circling the Moon. And there were no survivors. The dead land, the destroyed vegetation, told him that. Radioactive dust dumped from planes -- there had been talk of such before he made his epic flight into space. Dust filtering down through the atmosphere, destroying all plant and animal life, turning the very ground into radioactive death. Dust that the winds of the world had spread over the Earth, turning the planet into one great cemetery.

"Anne," he whispered in an agonized voice; and words ran round and round in his mind: "Dead, dead, dead!"

Afterwards he could not remember landing the ship. He had been dreaming of Anne, talking to her -- and suddenly he was standing in a field under the open sky. The ship rested on its tail fins a hundred yards away.

It frightened him for a moment, as he realized his mind was weakening under the strain. And then it did not matter. Crushing loneliness descended on him.

Wind whispered through the dead trees that edged the field; dead grass crunched underfoot. Alone, he thought all alone. The last man alive on a dead, dead world. He shivered and started to walk.

Where he was going he had no idea. He had to do something to escape the madness that chattered on the fringes of his mind. A road ran past the field, and he climbed over the rusted wire of a tumbled fence and followed it.

The wind whispered in the dead branches of the trees that lined the road; ghosts of voices seemed to speak to him. "Anne," they whispered, "Anne....She's dead...dead...." He screamed and ran to escape the voices.

And then she was walking beside him, walking with him. "John," she whispered, "John, darling...."

The sun was setting when he stumbled into the village. He had lost Anne -- where? Somewhere back along the road. She was somewhere back there with the whispering trees, with the whispering ghosts in the trees.

Suddenly he saw her standing before the door of a house beside the road. He stumbled toward her, whispered her name -- and she vanished.

A skeleton lay across the doorstep.

He screamed and ran and stumbled, and fell in the dust of the road.

When he awoke the sun was high in the sky. Slowly he sat up and looked about at the village. All of the houses were standing, but they were dust covered and dilapidated. The village had been dead a long time.

He rose slowly to his feet, conscious of the stiffness in his joints, and slapped the dust from his clothes. A skull grinned at him from the road, and in sudden unreasoning anger he kicked it. It bounded away; grinned at him from beside the road.

He shuddered, feeling the loneliness of the empty village. And when he extended his thought to the world, imagined the jungles, the plains, the cities and towns, all empty of life, the loneliness crushed down on him until his mind tottered. He put his hands to his head and great dry sobs racked his body.

The wind began to rise, whining down the road and between the houses, swirling the dust into little clouds, pluck-

ing at him with little cold fingers. Like the fingers of death. He dropped his hands and raised his head, listening to the lonely sound. Death. The wind was death now; all Earth was death now. And he welcomed it. He would die, be one with the rest of the race, with Anne...

He started back up the road the way he had come, listening to the little ghost voices of the wind. "Die...die...die...." And he laughed.

He reached the field two hours later. He was beginning to burn with fever and it made him strangely happy. He climbed over the rusted wire of the fence and walked toward the ship. Wind sighed a funeral dirge in the dead tree-tops as he climbed the ladder to the control cabin.

With the door sealed behind him, he settled back into the cushions and reached for the firing keys.

Flame roared from the tubes and the ship lifted. Up and up it surged, out beyond the atmosphere, with a dying hand at the controls. And then the fuel ran out and it plunged on, out into the emptiness of interstellar space.

The mausoleum of the last man was the star-gemmed void.

- END -

WILL YOU TOO BE IN

T

TOO

WITH

TSP?

ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE POSTMEN

or: "Lock Up The Typewriter, Mother; Radell Is Plastered Again."

REFERENCES: SPACEWARP, March 1950, page 19
SPACEWARP, April 1950, page 23

CAST OF CHARACTERS: Warren Baldwin and Ghod vs. Ray Nelson

- 1) Postcard, 22 Apr 50, Nelson to Rapp: Dear Art. I wish to make a public apology to Warren Baldwin for my gutter-level attack on his review of "Human Destiny." The whole thing seemed frightfully funny during the wild drinking party during which it was composed. Due to a dare from my girl, I mailed it to you -- then forgot about it. It didn't seem quite so funny, somehow, in cold, sober print. As a matter of fact, I really liked the review. It showed a remarkable objectivity for a review of a book on such a subject as religion. If there is anything I can do to square things, Warren, say the word. Yerz, Ray.
- 2) Postcard, 26 Apr 50, Baldwin to Nelson: Dear Ray-- Roscoefucius say: "He who have glass head is easy to see through." Warren.
- 3) Postcard, 29 Apr 50, Nelson to Rapp: Dear Warren, Don't hit me again, I'll be good. Yerz, Ray.
- 4) Postcard, 4 May 50, Baldwin to Nelson: Dear Ray-- Well-known plumbing expert says: "Leaky faucets are usually found to have loose washers." Warren.
- 5) Postcard, 6 May 50, Nelson to Rapp: Dear Warren, OW! OW! Leggo! You're breaking my arm. Ray.

BEWARE THE LEMS
ALL YOU BEMS
WHAT IS A LEM ?

A LEM IS A "LADY-ENTICING-MIRACULOUS" !!!

THE NFFF HAS SCORED AGAIN!

A NEW WORD

HAS BEEN BORN.

HOORAY!!

FOR LEMS!!!

P.S. At least, if the response to the new word is ditto, so to speak -- no response. There'll be Ray Nelson at least -- who will like LEMS !

George Andrews.

ANNOUNCING

a
volume
of
space-poetry
entitled

BLACK NIGHT

Contributions of original poems on space themes are cordially invited. As well as original pieces, I would appreciate information concerning reprints, which are scattered through out the legion of fan zines.

BLACK NIGHT will feature poetry on space themes: saga and epic, legend, hero, exploration, doggerel, appreciation, adventure, chronicling, chanties.

From Rapp's SIACEMEN, by way of illustration:

** Death comes to us with sudden speed
And sweeps our ranks away;
"Be a spaceman," goes the song,
"Your hair will ne'er turn grey!"
Our graves are wrecks on ragged rocks
Or in some unknown sea;
But though the men of space die young,
The men of space die free! **

Publication date, price, and contents announced as soon as possible after assembly and editing tasks are completed.

** WATCH SPACEWARP FOR THIS INFORMATION **

Stewart Metchette Editor

c/o 3555 Mission #E
Hillsdale
San Mateo
California.

a space
publication

'1958'

BY RICK SNEARY

SCIENCE FICTION CYCLES: I suppose we have all read articles from time to time on cycles and trends in living. Everything from war, babies, and floods, to finances and eclipses are said to run in cycles, that if studied, give a prediction of the future. Now I wouldn't say I believed it, but I haven't studied the subject very much. It seems though to verge on fatalism, and a preordained fate for everything.

It was only a few weeks ago that one of my fan friends in college reported that according to his teacher we have minor depressions and major depression cycles. And all the 5, 10 and 20(?) year depression cycles coming together next year. If so, it will be a lovely time for the revaluation.

Of course the professor added that there was still a large back-log of orders for goods that might postpone the depression about five years. In other words, if things don't get worse or better, they will stay the same.

But I was looking at the new magazine-checklist Art got out for the NFFF the other day, and got to wondering just how many magazines were edited each year. Using that as a basis, I worked out a regular graph on them, and got some rather surprising results. They made a very even number of waves, just ten years apart... Amazing and Weird were the only ones out in 1927. By 1930 there were 8 publications. Then came bad times, and in 1935-6 there were only 4. But by 1941, there were 20. But then the war came, and the line swung down, and in 1945-6 there were only 8 again. But now, in 1950, there are already 22 publications out...with how many more to come next year? Note, the peaks and valleys are just ten years apart. Does this mean our boom is to run out in 1952? Could that depression cycle really be going to hit us? Who knows?

BOOM OR BUST: Whatever the reason for the rise, it hasn't stopped yet. Ackerman has announced, and had pried out of him, the fact that there are five new magazines coming out soon. No, I don't know their names -- in the case of two edited by Gold (who wrote for Unknown) the titles haven't even been decided upon. One of them will be edited by Ken Crossen, a local radio man, and reviewer of science-fiction books in a local paper. The mag will resemble ASF in size, and the material is to be similar, with a little less leaning toward the heavy science.

Not only are they coming out in this country, but elsewhere. One is reported in Cuba, and a letter from Roger Dard of Perth, Australia, tells of one he had heard coming out in Sydney the first of April. He hadn't seen it, but he had heard that it was to have one reprint from TWS.

All this gives one to wonder where it will all end. It is a fairly safe bet that the general result will be a lowering of quality of all the magazines. There are only so many good writers, and they can write only so many stories a year. And if you are thinking about new names, just stop to think of the Mystery stories. They have a nice little circle of top writers, and those under them are mere hack. Even if we got ten or fifteen writers equal to van Vogt, that still would not be enough.

Of course, now there isn't any excuse for fans that have always dreamed of seeing their

name on the contents page of a promag, not to realize that dream. The field is still nearly virgin, and if you distribute through an agent like Ackerman, you hit even the magazines that are just starting. Some of the new ones have nearly bought their whole first issues contents through him. Gad, if it keeps up I might have to give up the NFFF and start writing storkes myself.. After all, we can all condemn DAW for Out of This World Adventures, but we must admit his money still will buy beer and bagles.

THE GREAT STF GAMBLE Would you invest \$4.50 in something, if you knew you would save up to \$3.90? Well that is the question I, and I suppose a few other fans are facing. As things now stand you can go out and get a two year subscription to Amazing for only \$4.50, a saving of \$1.50 over what it would cost you at the newsstand. BUT, long about Nov. they are coming out in the new format.. Slick paper, two color pictures, 144 pages the size of Blue Book, a rotogravure section, and articles in about the same proportion as the Sat EvePost. All this results in a price rise of 10¢, so a sub now would make a saving of up to \$3.90, depending how close you timed it.

But Amazing Stories as of early 1950 stinks. But Editor Browne says he wants better writers, and is going to back this up by paying more per word...a writer's top price other places will be Amazing's bottom, so they say...they want Heinlein, van Vogt and Bradbury stories...they say. But how often have fans heard promises from the Amazing editors and then failed to live to see them come across? Is this another case of so much talk? Will AS keep on buying 5 stories by Graham for every issue? Or will the big writers submit their best to AS, to get higher rates? That is the gamble. Anyone want to bet?

UNKNOWN: R.I.P. While still on the subject of magazines, I will come forth with a statement that is bound to startle a few of you. I hope Unknown Worlds isn't revived. Yes, that's right, the greatest fantasy mag of all time, and I hope it won't be brought back. Why?

Because I am pretty sure it wouldn't be what we want. Not the Unknown that is sung of around campfires at night. Not the Unknown of the Roaring Trumpet or Mislaidd Charm. Why? Well, look around you. Who do you see that could be expected to write for it? Hubbard has been changed by time and war, and is now settling back to rake up the easy money from his book on Dianetics. L.deCamp has lost ground, and Kuttner is doing little writing. Van Vogt might of course, but it is doubtful. -- Oh, go over the list for yourself; it all is about the same. And then try and think of new authors that might replace them. Fredric Brown might, and some others, but....

Then there is the most important factor of all, the editor. It is well known that toward the last, Campbell was all but writing the mag himself. He thought of ideas and plots and passed them on to his best writers. He also knew what was needed to give the magazine that extra life. And even the most loyal follower of Astounding will admit that Campbell is not editing the same way he was back in 1939-43. Whether it is better or worse, it is different, and it is reasonable to assume that a changed Astounding would mean a changed Unknown. And could anyone else give it that spark? I doubt it. So, I fear we will just have to mourn the memory of Unknown, as we do that of greats like Merritt, and realize that no one could bring them back or take their place.

20 ARE WE HAVING TWO CONVENTIONS? Well, that is what it looks like from all the reports one reads out here. Of course New York is calling theirs a "conference"

but that is only word magic. A rose or a convention is still a rose or a convention no matter what you call it.

There was a little unrest and ill-will a few months back, when the PortlandSFS jokingly announced they had planned to hold a rump Convention, if they didn't win the bid. This proved to be what most fans took it for, a joke. But it seems New York isn't joking. They did have plans laid, and are now carrying them out, presumably over the 4th of July holiday.

They aren't calling it a convention, as they know they couldn't get away with that, but they are holding a three-day Conference. No Conference has ever lasted that long that I know of. It breaks a tradition. It also verges on being unsportsmanlike. Portland, located in the far Nor-West, will have a hard time getting Eastern fans to come as it is. Fans as a class are always short of money. What will be the result of a fan in Ohio, say, hearing of this "three day Conference"? He will figure the fare to Portland and New York, and find it cheaper to go East. He will probably see as many big names. After all, aren't a lot of the "sponsors" pros themselves? Isn't it easy to see that they can talk their friends in the magazines to help them, with pictures and by being there in person. Why they ought to boost the sale of their books by a couple hundred.

I say it is an unfannish thing to do, and I for one have decided that if I get to Portland, NYC will be the last place I'll vote to see the 1951 Convention. I'm also going to try and get the clubs I belong to to write letters of censure to the New York group, protesting this unfair action.

There is no call for it, as the QSEL has had one Conference, and plans another, and probably the ESFA will in the Fall. So what reason has the Hydra Club got for wanting a three-day affair? More fun? Sure. Why don't all the cities have a three or four day Conference, and then the fans wouldn't have to bother to travel a few thousand miles to a Convention? Maybe if we did it we would get more publicity for the pros, and sell more of their books. Heh!

DIMENSION X: In a letter dated April 20th, Van Woodward, the producer of "Dimension X" told me that one of their chief dilemmas was that the trained science-fiction writer didn't know anything about radio writing, and the good radio writers knew little about technical matters. This, he says, is the reason for "boners" that have appeared. He agreed, though, that the show should not become a "Buck Rogers" type series, and that "we hope we will be able to keep it on a fairly adult level."

This has been partly borne out by the last few broadcasts, though they still have a long way to go. And it is not merely the medium at fault. The series was originally planned for the West Coast, and some scripts were written out here. But at the last moment New York yanked it back there. This was done despite the fact that two months ago a large number of fans and local writers went down to KFI (the local NBC station), and watched them cut the record for "With Folded Hands". This was not the record that was used on the air. And those that heard the West Coast record said it was much better. The suspense was allowed to build up to a higher peak. There was, in fact, more to it. Add to this, Ken Crossen (not Cross as I said last month) who worked for months to get a science-fiction show, has been left here.

Just another case of the West Coast being given the short end of the stick.

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FILE 13
by redd bogg

BANISTER TAKES IT IN THE NEK. It begins to look as if I'm the only dissenter in fandom on the subject of Manly Banister's Nekromantikon. I have yet to see an unfavorable comment about this "little giant among fanzines," and the following sentence may well be the first deprecating remark written about that publication: I saw a copy of Nekromantikon over at Richard Elsberry's a couple of months ago, and didn't think it was worth reading, so I didn't send for a copy for myself.

I have since been sent a sample copy, and from now on I'll probably buy all future issues (all both of them, for I don't believe the magazine will last longer than that), if for no other reason than I like complete files of any fanzines I own. The mag is considerably better than my first impression suggested, but I still do not consider it a completely worthwhile fan magazine.

I will agree that the Nekromantikon is a sharp-looking product; Banister must have sunk a lot of money into it. Well, I do like a fanzine to sport a neat format, one that's easy on the eyes and fully legible -- but then again I like a fanzine that is worth reading. Is Nek worth reading? I glanced through issue #1, read Eva Firestone's insignificant article, and scanned the openings of most of the stories and further passages here and there, but nothing excited my interest in the least, and if I'm to actually read this magazine, I'll have to force myself. I do not intend to do this, just on the theory that there must be something there that's worthwhile. The chances are, I'll be wasting my time. Consider: This fiction is stuff that Weird Tales rejected -- and I don't read the stuff that WT does print! Why should I try to enjoy this fiction just because Banister is so inconsiderate as to put it out in amateurish form rather than quietly burying it somewhere?

Furthermore, I've got a lot of unread fiction here in prozines that I do buy, and chances are, the fiction in them is better than the WT rejects Nek publishes. Fact is, I've even got a lot of unread fanzine fiction here -- most of the crud in Vortex #1, for instance, that sensational (and dull) printed abortion of 1947.

The excuses for publishing amateur fiction magazines such as Nek are usually either (a) to furnish a market for fiction that for some reason does not fit into a commercial magazine; or (b) to encourage amateur writers who aspire to make a success in the fantasy field. Frankly, I believe such reasons are usually merely rationalizations; most fan fiction editors put out all-story fanzines to reap a twofold egoboo harvest: egoboo for their editorship, and egoboo for their writership -- for normally they write 90% of the stories they publish.

In any case, however, such excuses for fan-fiction mags are not valid. Out of all the fan fiction ever published, only a small portion has been truly and basically material that did not jibe with professional standards and taboos. Nearly all of it is commercial enough in type and intent; it is simply not good enough to appear in a prozine. This, I submit, is no worthy reason for publishing such a yarn non-professionally. If it's not good enough to meet the low standards of such present-day pulps as Weird Tales, why should it be published at all?

The point about encouraging aspiring scribes seems more worthy of consideration, for any fledgling writer can tell you that there's an undeniable lift to seeing your work in print, even in a minor magazine like Nek. However, it seems to me that if one wants to write professionally, it might be a good idea to write stuff aimed directly at professional markets, rather than merely shooting inferior stuff at an amateur market.

All rationalization for its existence aside, Nekromantikon would not strike me favorably even if it did fulfill its stated function. This is because I prefer unpretentious, amusing, satiric and occasionally "meaty" articles to fanzine fiction. The publication of articles, satires, and other non-fiction items concerning the fantasy field seems to me the only good reason for fanzines existing at all. There is no other place for such material to see print than in our own fan journals. And since fanzines have a legitimate function of their own, they should not be judged on the basis of their resemblance to a professional product, but should be rated on their own standards. If fanzines are supposed to be "almost like a prozine," as enthusiastic critics insist on rhapsodizing concerning Nek, we might as well fold up our amateur mags immediately. The well-heeled, well-trained commercial publishers have us beaten four ways from Sunday.

It makes me very sad to calculate that Manly Banister undoubtedly spent more publishing one issue of Nek than Charles Burbee spent on all his issues of Shangri-L'Affaires. The difference is that Banister published an amateur publication that is "almost like a prozine," while Burbee published a classical fanzine. I sincerely believe Banister threw his money away.

What a treat it would be if Banister scrapped Nek, joined FAPA or SAPS, and published a real fanzine, devoting only half of each issue to printing his rejected MSS while filling the rest of it (which I would read!) to blowing off steam about the high cost of beer in Missouri and other weighty matters. How much more entertaining that would be!

As things stand, I believe such fanzines as Burblings, Fan-Dango, Grulzak, Etacoin Shrdlu, Wild Hair, Spearhead, and Horizons are twenty parsecs ahead of Nekromantikon in importance. I rate Spacewarp the same distance ahead of it, too. If I didn't, I wouldn't be batting out this instalment of File 13 now. I'd be busily rewriting my great epic, "Green Ghouls of the Goo," for Nekromantikon.

I PASS UP \$17,000! On 12 May 1950, I received an airmail letter from Madison, Tenn., which contained no return address and was unsigned. Hand printed in blue ink, the letter read: "United-Western-Airlines Treasury Phone 2265. The luck of the cards has been sent to you. It has been around the world 4 times by an officer. The one who breaks this chain will have bad luck. Please copy this and see what happens to you 4 days after receiving it. Send this and 4 other copies to whom you wish Good Luck. Do not send any money and do not keep this. It must leave your possession in 24 hours after receiving it. General Bolton received \$13,000 and lost it after breaking the chain. General Allen received \$15,000 after receiving it. You are to have 4 good days after receiving this. It's no joke. You will receive it by mail. Good Luck." Well, maybe I'll still be lucky in love.

SUGGESTION ABOUT CRACKPOTS. Also in the mails recently I received an envelope full of stuff from a wack organization that calls itself The Puritan Church -- The Church of America. (The name, by the way, is probably meant to imply that The Puritan Church is unofficially the state church &

this country -- which was actually founded on the most agnostic principles of any nation!) The crud they sent me included a letter addressed to "Fellow Pilgrim into the Kingdom of God, whither all of us are bound," and a magazine titled Liberty Bell. The sickening import of this stuff is indicated by such headings as these: "Roman Catholics have torn down the 'Stars and Stripes' and hoisted the Red Flag of Anarchy over the United States" and "Murder, Rape, High Taxes, Bankruptcy, Socialism and Communism /in that order or all at once? I wonder/ always follow in the wake of the Rule of a Country by the Catholic Party." This stinking propaganda was capped by the declaration prominently displayed on the outer envelope: "Jail, Or No Jail We Will Not Fight In Europe In World War III."

I mention this crackpot exertion only to report the disposition I made of it, and to suggest that perhaps you may wish to do the same when you receive such stuff. I stuffed the whole wad of crud into a sealed envelope and sent it back to them. But -- I didn't put a stamp on the envelope, and I didn't put my return address on or in the letter! This is important, because the post office department will inform The Puritan Church -- The Church of America that there is a postage-due letter in the Minneapolis post office and please send 6¢ or 9¢ or whatever it is if they want it. So, thinking it is a big contribution, they eagerly send the money -- and when the letter is forwarded, they receive their own crud back!

This sounds like a petty way to deal with such people, but it's the only definite way I can think of that will slap them to hurt even a little. At least I will reduce their miscellaneous-expense fund by 6¢ or so, and register my disapproval of their program in the bargain. If enough people followed this suggestion, maybe we could even put a dent in their budget that would cause them to spread their manure less widely.

P.S.: I've just sent off my unstamped letter. As an added touch I marked the envelope -- airmail!

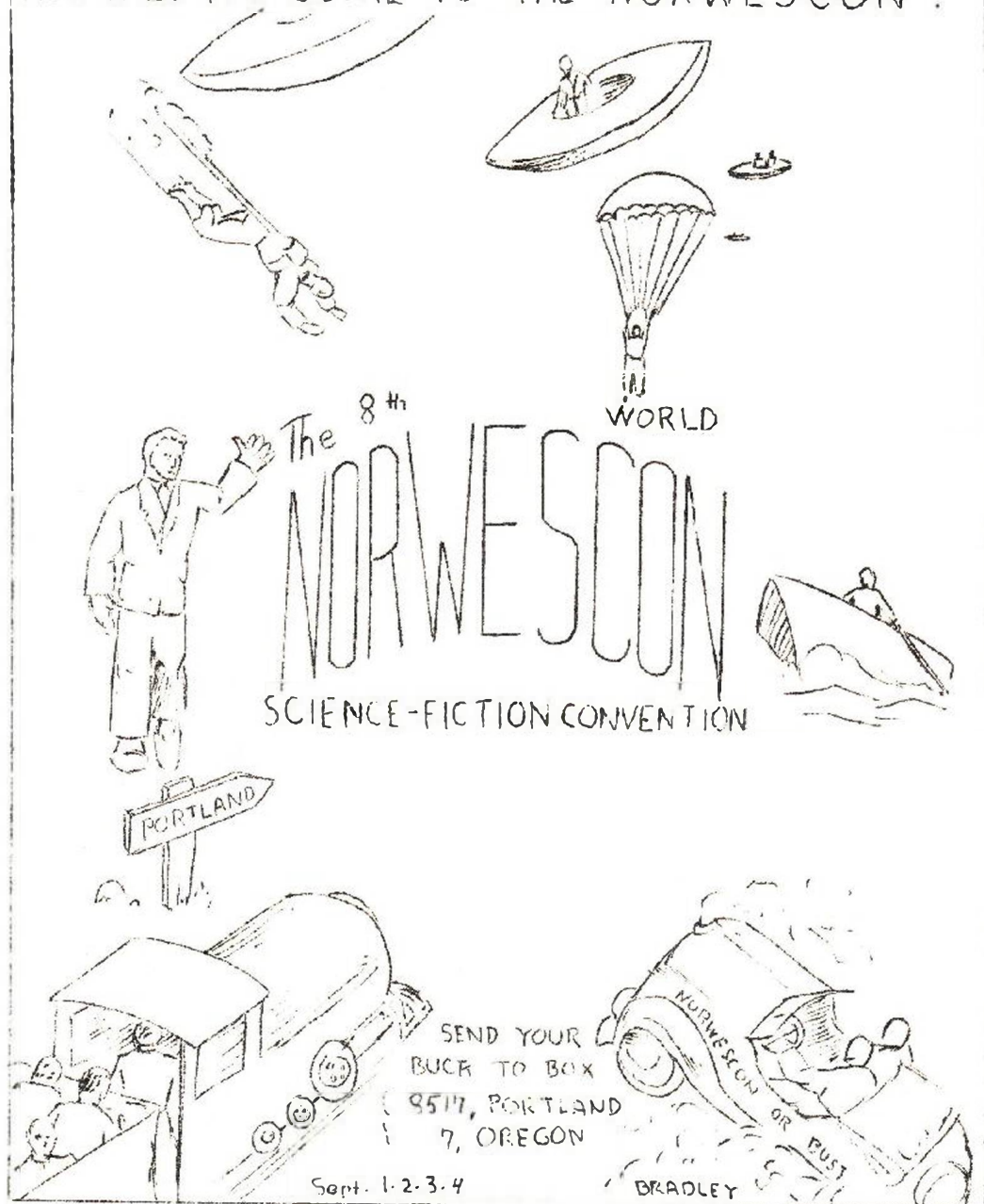
FORGETTABLE FACTS. Aganbite of Inwit (or more conventionally Ayenbite of Inwit, Robert W. Lowndes' former fapa zine, which is still being published in the Spectator Club and Vanguard, derives its title from an old Kentish manuscript of 1340 A.D., which in turn is based on an old French treatise (compiled 1279), which in turn was borrowed from other writers. The term means the "again-biting" of the inner wit, the remorse of conscience. # A touring company of "Dracula" in Minnesota and Wisconsin cancelled its remaining engagements after five performances recently. Failure of the tour was attributed to the choice of play, which was said to lack drawing power, having "little popular appeal." # The first British edition of H. Rider Haggard's Morning Star, reprinted in the February 1950 FFM, was published 11 March 1910 by Cassell & Co., Ltd., in an edition of 13,500 copies. Isn't that exciting to know? # Haggard, by the way, was a letter-hack of the first water, contributing dozens of letters to the London Times on such momentous topics as: a new argument against cremation; the motor problem; the British cinema -- production of reputable films; arguments against the three-volume novel; loans from the British museum -- respect for donors' wishes; and farming in 1899. # The first item Haggard ever wrote for publication was "A Zulu War Dance," which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for July 1877. # The William Rotsler drawing, depicting a naked sprite and a demon assembling a "demon's edition" of Futurist, which appeared on page four of that magazine's issue #1 has a curious history. The original was drawn for Shangri-L'Affaires, and that title appears on the mag being assembled in the pic. Dream Quest fell heir to

the picture, but when it folded, the item was turned over to me. I stencilled it for Chronoscope, inserting that title into the drawing. When Ron folded, I used some correction fluid on the stencilled picture, and ultimately used it for Futurist.

NOTES THAT MISSED MY WASTERBASKET. Walter Winchell (that infallible columnist) itemed the other dayem that one reason editors get gray is indicated by the current situation wherein Coronet and Esquire have the very same article, by the same author, in their latest issues. Wonder if WW knows that Coronet and Esquire are issued by the same publishers? # Sam Merwin says in Fantastic Story Quarterly that the new stories he's published therein are "just to permit the business of comparisons" with the older, reprint tales. Didn't I read somewhere that a magazine must contain at least one new item in order to secure printed-matter mailing privileges? But that, of course, doesn't enter into the problem at all, does it, Sam? # Wonder what Don A. Wollheim/1938/ would have said about a cruddy promag that actually contained -- get this! -- a colored comic section! Times do change.... # E. P. Dutton Company has published the first ten volumes in the New American Edition of Everyman's Library. In attractive format, with cloth bindings, gold-stamped titles, stained tops, and heavy cellophane wrappers, these books are bargains at \$1.25 each. The two books I'm buying are New England: Indian Summer and Pride and Prejudice. Additional volumes will come out regularly. You can get a listing of titles available from E. P. Dutton & Co., 300 Fourth Ave., New York 10. # Wonder if the Encyclopedia of Food by Artemus Ward, is really such a fascinating book, or whether it's because I'm an epicure/glutton that I like to skim through this volume once in a while? # Avon has issued Ray Cummings' Princess of the Atom as the first of its paperback Avon Fantasy Novels series. The cover is nice, and there's a small photo of Cummings himself on the backcover, but of course you know (if you've ever read a Cummings "masterpiece," as the ifc plug calls it) what's between the covers. Avon paperbacks are somewhat unique in my collection -- they're mostly unread, though I don't mind buying them since they cost only 25¢. If Wollheim doesn't put out something better than this Cummings thing in his new series, I guess the unperused quality of these books will be their distinguishing characteristic. # Ed Cox's Altair has the distinction of being the best of quite an effusion of new fanzines to hit the mails in the past month or two. The Bradleys' Mazrab looks like a valuable newcomer, too. # One author I know of, who had a yarn in Astounding during 1948, has had several other yarns sold to Campbell for more than three years, and they've never appeared! What goes, Jawn?

THAT'S TELLING 'EM DEPT. "In night dreams, which are a very free-flowing process, control is at a minimum; in problem-solving, it is at a maximum. Between these extremes are various types of thinking commonly grouped under 'imagination.' This is a term often used for various types of literary and artistic contributions, in which, while associations are subjected to some control, there is more freedom than in a practical situation that has to be met on the plane of reality. Thus, an author may write a story describing events in 2000 A. D.; this is well beyond the daydreaming level, because ideas have to be adapted to the story form and some are eliminated and others chosen." -- The Psychology of Development, by John E. Anderson (Holt, 1949). Science fiction exonerated!

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Testimonial from one Arthur H. Rapp: "I have attended two sf conventions so far. Unless I'm in a plaster cast or the Con is in Australia, I plan on being at all future ones. There can be only one reason why you aren't planning to attend the NORWESCON -- and that is because you haven't yet been at a World Sfcon. You should."

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