

# Sphere



WINTER  
1958



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# KANADU REGAINED

-by  
BRIAN W. ALDISS

How do writers go about the actual business of composing a science fiction story? What goes on before anything visible happens? This sort of question should be of increasingly general interest now that sf is growing up - I take SPHERE to be one sign of its increasing maturity. Accordingly, I thought it might be worth while to probe as far as I could into the origins of a short story of my own; it has to be one of mine because this is not the sort of autopsy you can perform on someone else. Perhaps it may stimulate some others to reveal how their wheels creak.

I have chosen "Judas Danced" ("Judas Dancing" as appeared in STAR S-F) for dissection. This story appeared in Fred Phol's STAR SF No. 1 in the States and Ted Carnell's Science Fantasy No. 27 here in England. For me, there are two sorts of story: the sort that arrives out of nowhere, ready made, and the sort that accumulates gradually, lying around in its component parts in old notebooks or cuttings for months, getting riper like an old cheese. "Judas" belonged not to the manna but to the cheese variety, and here - to change gear on my metaphors - are some of the ingredients that went into its stew.

1) This was the oldest ingredient, although I think the rest of the items are not in chronological order. I had written down the following in the scruffiest of five notebooks I run haphazardly:

'Opening sentence for a story: "Wm George J-, this is the second time you have murdered Fanny G-." ' I had a picture in my head of a judge saying it in the Old Bailey. It didn't mean a thing; no possible situation was attached to the words; I just thought it was a startling start.

2) I reviewed a book called "The Boy Down Kitchener Street," by Leslie Paul, for the OXFORD MAIL. This absolutely delightful book reminisces about a poor Edwardian childhood spent in London; it opens up a picture of a world as distant as the days of Queen Anne. In particular, I was intrigued by the chapter about a pair of comedians and dancers who called themselves the Comedy Tapdance Duo.

Their dialogue went like this:

I say, I say, does your mother know you're out? What's that you said? What's that you said? I said does your mother know you're out? Does she know? I'll say she does. Why, she met me at the prison gates.

Probably you know the sort of thing. Into this pathetic rubbish, the duo poured all their energies; they talked like fools and danced like demons, capering desperately in the footlights' glare. And then '...when they finished, and took the last bows and ran back almost blistered by the heat of the auditorium and the blast of the lights, in one split second they moved from the still odd illusion of being incredibly young, to that haggard grey corpse-like look of make-up, especially make-up riven by sweat and movement into wrinkles and crevices, under ordinary light.' This contrast, and the contrast between their super-human efforts and their subhuman jokes, was very moving; I remembered it, involuntarily.

3) I had a cutting from THE LISTENER (a weekly middle-brow) of a review of a new translation of 'Madame Bovary', which I had kept because the implications of the book interest me although I confess to being indifferent to the book itself. The reviewer talked about the shift between 1856 and 1956 from religion to literature as the governing ethos. I began to wonder how radically different the world would be when the literary ethos had also been superseded by - well, what?

4) Another note, another notebook. This read, 'The dancers five centuries from now, living on their nerves, interpreting all history for the masses.' The notion of interpreting history through dance bubbled up during one of those long, liquid conversations that occasionally take place in "The Gloucester Arms", a nice little pub down Friars Entry, Oxford. The rest of the sentence shows that item 2) was busily working away on the obscene leaven of the subconscious.

5) This was the first stage at which I did anything that could remotely be called work: I flicked through my notes. During this agonising labour, I stumbled on to the first four items; they began to bear a significant relationship to one another. The urge to write a sotry about history-dancers grew. If literacy was to be banished from the age of which I should write (as was required by 3)), this raised a difficulty. Most of our history is comprehended through the medium of literacy; if my history-dancers were to be appreciated generally, their audiences would have to know more history than the average crowd of showgoers today. How could this be in an illiterate age? The answer lay in a limited sort of time travel, with machines but not humans able to bring back records of the past and show them on a screen.

6) I had a background now. I needed plot and characters. When possible, I think up characters and let plot spin out of what they are (which is very roughly what happens in 'real life'), rather than dream up a plot and fit characters into it - though here an author doesn't always have a choice. About now, I discovered the framework and odds and bobs from a projected but abandoned novel called 'The Worrier'. A fragment of dialogue caught my eye: "You're lonely; why not join a club?" - "Sure, why not? I have a club foot already." Not really very funny, but come hell or high water, I decided I would use it. Ergo, I was landed with a fellow with a club foot.

7) Well, in an age of dance, he sounded like a man with enough potential



frustration to be useful as my hero. Why, he could get worked up enough even to commit murder... And then I turned up item 1) again, and a few more cogs moved. After all, with a time device it should be possible to murder someone twice.

8) By now I was hot on the trail. The period of brooding silence descended. The assorted chunks of patchwork looked like making a quilt. The one snag was that I dislike writing about murder. Humanly, it strikes me always as egotistic and crude; aesthetically, it seems to me overdone in fiction. If, as it seemed, I was landed with a murderer, I was going to see that his egotism, his obviousness, his abnormality, were well on display. This boy was going to be really round the bend.

9) Rubbing all this together, I suddenly produced the one original point of the story. If a madman could view all history, what character would he identify himself with? Napoleon? No, there are bigger fry than Napoleon. He would identify himself with the Son of God.

10) There and then, "Judan" was in the bag. I knew who this madman would have to kill. I saw my dancers scream, and the throttling hands slip in make-up as they tightened round the throat. I went to hunt up that damned indispensable fountain pen of mine....

Up till now, you will notice, I had been engaged in very little but an obscure process of selection. It had taken several months, during which I had written several other stories. There was no hurry. The chances of another writer's coupling those same items and fragments together is very remote; it needs an Asimov to compute the exact degree of unlikelihood.

After selection comes creation. Although you may (and should) have the story perfectly clear before you begin to write, it has still managed to transmute itself somehow by the time it is written. Again the question of unlikeliness comes in. Give a hundred authors all the ten points as assembled above, tell them to cook up a five thousand word story from them, and you will find yourself with a hundred very different stories. It is because of the simple fact that we are all individuals that it is unlikely any two stories will be the same. But then, as a friend of mine remarked, "Judas Danced" is a very unlikely story: I'm still trying to work out what exactly he meant.

From all this I deduce no general rules to help either myself or anyone else. For one thing, I have a distrust of general rules. Some stories need more ideas, some less, to get going; seldom is one able to pinpoint them all with certainty, as I was able to do in this case. Nevertheless, one thing's certain: the world of non-science-fiction reading is strewn with ideas and images of all sorts, just waiting to be turned into SF. A writer is well advised to stop reading SF for a while and turn instead to - well, anyone's welcome to borrow my old copy of the LISTENER; it's probably stuffed with material! Has anyone else any suggestions for making an author's life easier?

-Brian W. Aldiss

# Blimps

## REVOLTING NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN AIRCRAFT

by - D.H. FRANSON

(Inspired by pic in SPHERE /Nov.-Dec.'57, "Hemispheres"-Page 20./of a new space ship that looks like old dart-type paper plane.)

With sketches by the Author.

You delinquents, adult or juvenile: What do you do when you are in a classroom, theatre, or other place of order, and suddenly authority is absent? Yes, that's correct, confusion reigns, and suddenly from nowhere comes the paper planes! (Not to mention rubber bands, paper wads, balloons, etc.)

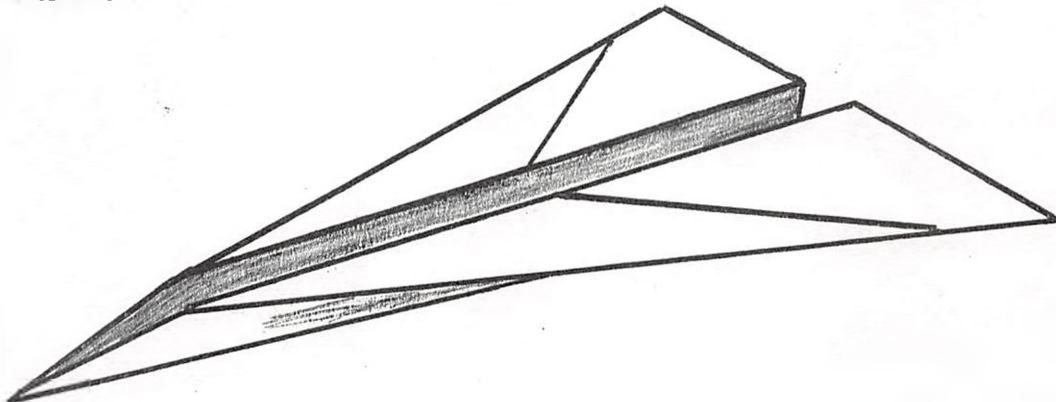
You too, wish to annoy your neighbor.

Want to get into the mad race? How do you make a paper plane?

Ten to one you are a traditionalist, and you make yours in the way your grandfather and grandfather's grandfather made theirs, long before the Wright Brothers knew a kitty from a hawk.

Raw material might be a theatre program, notebook paper, or communist handbill, but anything in the general shape and about the size of a piece of typewriter paper will do.....Yet, you make it in the same old way. At least, everyone I've seen does it that way.

You fold the paper lengthwise. Then you fold the front corners toward the middle, then again. Then you fold back the wings and you have something like this:



You hold it at the point and launch it with some force, and it goes for a while forward. But it soon stalls, or nosedives, and generally performs like a present day jet plane if the engine were suddenly removed. The trouble is, like the jet plane, it doesn't fly. It has to be pushed through the air. And it ends up as easily upside down as right side up. (Depending on which side you consider right-side when launched.)



When I was a kid, my brother and I used to scornfully call these "blimps". Our little two-piece paper plane flew like planes, looped the loop, and always landed right-side up. We used no glue, clips or anything, just folded paper. The wing was made from a square, and the tail from another piece, and folded into it. The wing had to be heavy, and the tail long and narrow, for it to fly right.

So then, as the tail sometimes came off in flight, I designed the one-piece paper plane. (As a matter of fact I designed ALL the plane for Fugg-head Aircraft, Inc./This was during the War Between the States:i.e. Confusion & Panic./ This one will fly with a gentle push, will glid some distance and do all kinds of clever tricks.

Take a single sheet of typewriter paper, or a page torn out of any old 1926 Amazing--anything that is handy--and follow these simple directions. Fold from the end about an inch and a half, and again, and again (three times). This is the wing. Now fold up the other way, creasing the fold good at all times. Now take scissiors and cut out a tail and along the wing. ( You should have known better than to use a SPHERE cover. Go on, it's too late, now.) Fold down the wing and tail, keeping the folds level and bend up again so it looks like this:



Grasp it at the front and push it gently, don't throw it, or launch it straight up. It may stall, back off, and if there is sufficient space it will resume the flying position and glide like a seagull. Or, it may loop. Or it may do an Immelman turn or half-roll and still come out right side up. (OR, maybe you didn't make it right---perfect construction is not absolutely essential, but uneven folds may make it fly sloppily.)

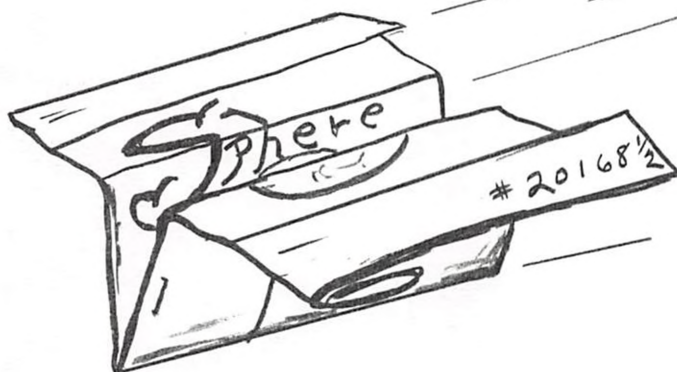
You may want to use this as a means to distribute one-page fanzines at Conventions, or propaganda leaflets boosting "Singapore in '64", or "Krushev for TAFF." If so, you will not want any cutting out of any portion of the paper to make the tail. So going back to my drawing board, I have come up with another masterpiece of design. This one does not fly as well as the other model, but it has some stability.

Take the paper, or the one-sheet one-shot, fold in about one half inch on each side lengthwise (for the P-38-like tail) fold over the three-layer wing as before, but downward, opposite the tail. Fold up lengthwise with tail up and wing down, bend back as before, but leave more fuselage and less wing. This one may be unpredictable, but flies better than a "blimp". And of course, now that you know that improvements can be made, you can make improvements.

Science fiction fans shouldn't be hidebound by tradition. At the next Con I want to see some improvements in other fields, too. I would like to see

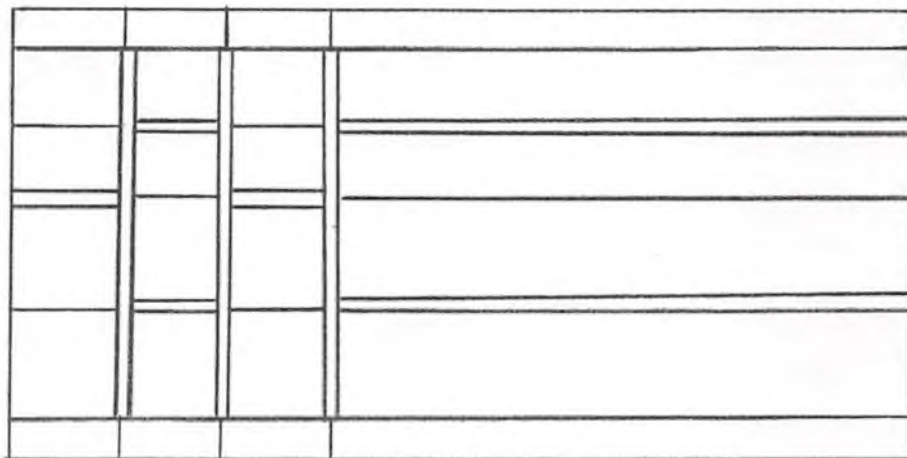
some fan-carrying beanie props. As well as self-reading and self-destroying fanzines.

-The End-



Folds shown as laid out again after folding:

Double lines fold thataway, single lines fold thisaway.





# "Mission"

by  
CAM WILLIAMS

After carefully checking the corridor outside, Professor Ivan Chekov entered the laboratory, and began to make a minute examination of the walls and scientific equipment for hidden microphones. Only when he was certain that he was completely alone in every sense of the word did he approach the closet that held the reason for all the careful precautions he had taken, and the fruit of years of secret experimentation and research.

His assistants and technicians were under the impression the closet contained certain dangerous chemical compounds, an idea carefully fostered by Professor Chekov. Since only the professor had a key, and none of his co-workers had ever seen what kind of chemicals they were, speculation was rife about the contents of the mysterious closet. Some thought it contained explosives or incendiaries, while others believed it contained acids or deadly poisons. Perhaps the most fantastic, and therefore the most popular, of these theories was that the closet contained a new, secret nerve gas, one gallon of which would suffice to wipe out the entire population of a certain country across the Pole. The professor knew of the speculation concerning the contents of his closet, and it amused him to think that none of them could be further from the truth.

The Professor turned the key and threw open the door. As he gazed upon the contents of the closet, strong and varied emotions made themselves felt. For there, complete except for a few details, was the first real android robot. It would be a thinking, rational, self-powered robot, the first in history. For three long years Chekov had done research for his government by day, and on all his free nights he had worked on the robot, risking death for keeping such an important discovery from the government.

But it was worth every stolen moment, every evasive lie, every risk he had taken to procure tools and materials. The robot was built on the general form of the human body, and at night, wearing clothes and a hat pulled over it's face, it could hardly be distinguished from a man.

It had two major advantages over human beings: it was telepathic, and it had a powerful weapon built into it's chest, drawing it's power from the tiny atomic reactor that also powered the robot itself. These two features would enable the robot to seek out and destroy a certain type of people.

The job Chekov had planned for it was simple: it was to find and destroy every indi-

vidual whose motives and basic personality was evil or partially evil. After this, Chekov would be unmolested when he announced that he had come to lead the misguided people along the right path, and after he had assumed power there would be no one to assassinate him or incite the people to rebellion.

While making the necessary final connections and adjustments Chekov started dreaming, as he had done so often before, of the government he would form when his one-man revolution had succeeded and he had assumed power.

It would be a scientific state, with him at the top, to direct and administer. The interests of the people would be turned from war, and there would be peace and prosperity.

As a child, Chekov had been a weakling, and had been ordered around by the older boys, and often soundly beaten if he did not obey their orders. Even after he had become a scientist, the government had told him just what should be the subject of his research, and just how far he should carry his research, and all the discoveries he had made had been taken from him to be adapted for war. So the prospect of such absolute power as he would soon have was dazzling and exhilarating.

Now he was through making the connections, and a touch of a button was all that was needed to bring the robot to life. Chekov hesitated before pressing it, savoring to the hilt this ultimate fulfillment of all his dreams and ambitions, and then gave it a quick, exultant stab with his forefinger.

The photoelectric cells serving the robot as eyes lit up, and it's head swiveled slowly around as it took in it's surroundings, and then it's gaze fell upon the professor. He knew that the robot's telepathic powers enabled it to recognize him immediately as it's creator.

The robot, instead of proceeding immediately out the door to fulfill it's mission, took a few steps forward, turned to face him, and began to move slightly to either side, at the same time fixing Chekov with glowing red eyes. Chekov started in terror. He knew instantly that the robot was aiming the blaster in it's chest — and at him!

"What are you doing?" cried Chekov, his voice almost a scream.

"I am preparing to begin carrying out my Basic Directive," replied the robot in a cold, toneless, mechanical voice that sent a chill of terror over Chekov.

"But I'm your creator! And-- besides, my intentions aren't evil -- far from it!"

"A robot has no emotions, and therefore cannot feel loyalty, so your plea that you created me is meaningless. And no matter how you disguised your motives and emotions to yourself, they are perfectly clear to me."

Chekov wondered how this could be happening; it was all so nightmarish and unreal. Then he realized that there must have been some mistake in the pre-education of the robot brain. He had to be sure.

"Quickly," he snapped. "Recite your Basic Directive."

"My Basic Directive is: Seek out and destroy all individuals whose motives and attentions are evil," the robot said in his cold, emotionless tones. "And I shall begin with you, my creator."

Chekov looked around frantically, desperately, for an avenue of escape, but there was

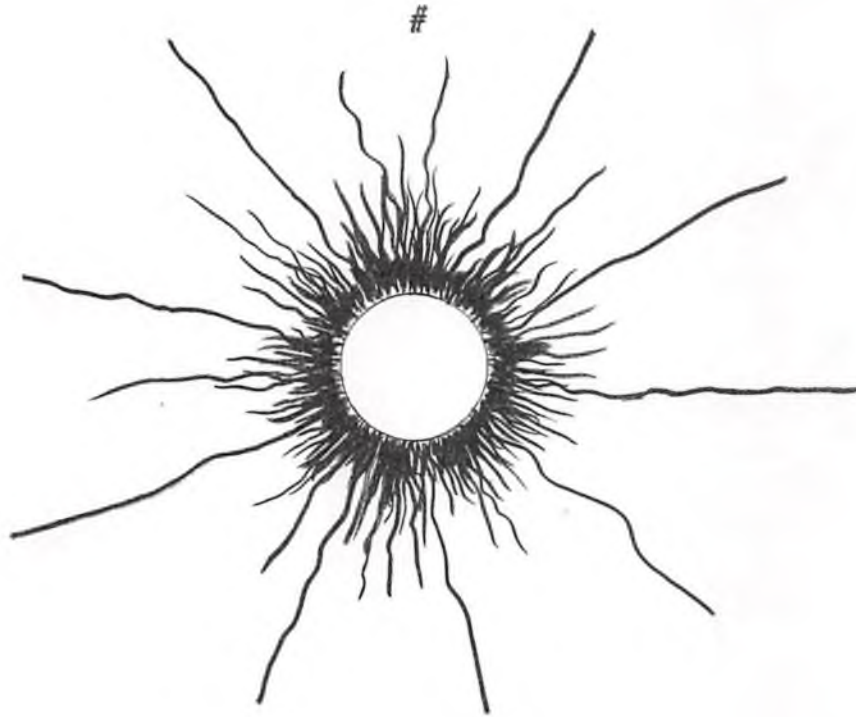


-MISSION-

none, for he himself had locked the doors and windows against the intrusion of any unwanted visitors. The robot aimed again — it had been distracted by the sound of Chekov's voice.

And suddenly, as Chekov stared in terror at the small, black barrel of the blaster, the full meaning sank in, and he realized his mistake.

He clawed at the locked door, pushing, pulling on it at the same time. And then suddenly the door disintegrated and the robot mechanically walked past the pile of mangled flesh and moved down the corridor to complete its mission.



# FANZINE

# QUOTES <sup>AND</sup> COMMENTS

(Introducing new reviewer for this department: Clay Enders )

/Unknown Fake-Fan/

- by: C. Enders

In life there is only one certainty, to quote the prophets: DEATH. It is not certain that you will be born, but there can be no doubt that if you are born, you must die.

Fan publishing differs slightly in that there are two certainties: Life and Death! As long as fandom continues, there will always be new fanzines cropping up. And, as long as fanzines continue to appear, there will always be a certain amount of deaths among them.

Few are the zines that can be numbered as having been published for more years than there are fingers on the hand. In fact, without going to a great deal of troublesome research, I can't name one at the moment.

Fan publishing does have one other certainty connected with it. As long as there are fanzines, there will also be people like myself who set themselves up as reviewers, to say what is good, or bad, about the various productions. I sometimes wonder why someone doesn't take it upon themselves to write a column reviewing reviewers.

Now into the current ones that have found their way into my P.O. Box:

QUIRK #4, Larry Ginn, Route 2, Box 81, and Johnny Holleman, Box 77, Choudrant, La. 10¢

My vote for the fanzine that has come the furthest in fewest issues would most certainly go to QUIRK. Issues 1 and 2 were really sad affairs in comparison to others current at the time. By the printing of number 3, Johnny and Larry had taken their zine to heart, improved on reproduction, and raised the quality of their material. The present issue #4 is their best to date.

As always, when John Berry appears in a zine, he usually walks off with first place. His "Seat of Yearning" is no exception. Here, for the first time, all Berry-ites may at last find how to construct a John Berry desk. Too bad that the building of the desk does not assure productivity of John's quality when you sit behind same. John is making one serious mistake, however, in his writing: he is constantly referring to previous articles or stories that he has written and seems to expect his readers, all to have read them. If he must make reference, then it would seem that he should give at least a brief resume so that the 'unread' will know what he is talking about.

Robert Coulson comes up with an article that has been done too many times before of the popularity of sf. We all know science fiction is not accepted, that it has a chance by appearing more often in the slick zines and improving itself, but why must so many fan writers take it upon themselves to write about it? It grows weary after the second or third reading. The Lee Edwards bit on Elvis is interesting. However, he left out the one vital fact. The screaming and wailing of the girls over the 'shaker' was entirely pre-arranged. It's a trick used by performers that the public never seems to catch on to until that have already made fools of themselves.

Bill Pearson's satire on public reaction to celebrities is actually the best thing in this issue. Could the people only see themselves at a time like this, we wouldn't have had this article, of course.



BARBARIAN #1, Barbara W. Lex, North Shimerville Road, Clarence, N.Y. 3/50¢

I think Guy Terwilliger said it first in a letter to me that BARB. has the appearance and contents of what Lars Bourne's BRILLIG featured until he became involved in material away from the sf field. I must agree with Guy on this. In fact, did I not know for sure that this wasn't Bourne's work, I would have taken it for one of his zines, right down to the mimeoed page. The editorial by Miss Lex is as good as any item in the issue. The girl has a way of putting words on paper that is highly entertaining. She should try her hand at writing more material for other zines. ((SPHERE has bright green light of welcome to any material from Barb shining in our P.O.Box window--Eds.)) Ron Ellick's column is of interest mainly because of the inside story of the Berkely fans. Contrary to what the world thinks, says Ron, living around active fans doesn't mean a lot of fanning. Actually, the whole issue is interesting, but I do wonder about the old TWIG. He is supposed to be a school teacher, yet from the tone of his offering, he thinks psychology is the worst thing to hit mankind. Come, come, Guy! You, a teacher, and saying a thing like that?

The man who doesn't exist, Alan Dodd, has one of his more interesting items in this issue. In this he converses with an English comic strip character, 4-D Jones. Highly ammusing.

Reccommended as an excellent first issue.

JD (combined with SCURVY) #28, Lynn A. Hickman, 304 N. 11th, Mt.Vernon, Ill. 20¢

This, of course, is one of the old timers and regulars. But for some reason it seems to be much thinner than the usual run. The cover is very outstanding in reproduction. The subject matter, however, is so similar to what Mr. Adkins usually turns out that it tends to become a little monotonous. In understand that Dan is varying his style more, now.

Robert Madle continues his "Fake Fan In London" report of the late WorldCon, and it maintains high interest. This is the report of the second day and is quite detailed.

RETRIBUTION #10, John Berry, 31 Campbell Park Ave. Belmont, Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockman House, Brockman Dr., London, S.W. 2, England. 15¢

There are Goons everywhere, and, for an evening of relaxing, nothing is better than reading about the real-gone-Goons. Berry and Tomson have a wise schedule of publication, not too often to over-do a good thing, but rather well spaced appearances that ring the goon-gong every time. In the four-a-year flights, the reports are always welcome.

This second annish features reports from both sides of the Atlantic, all interesting, all goonish. And what more one say about the zine. It's real GOON!

OMNIVORE #2, Bob Ross, 955 E. Walnut St. Frankfort, Ind. 15¢

OM has good possibilities of becomming an interesting zine. Yet, a few changes will have to be made before progress along this direction can be made. It needs to relax and enjoy itself. Too much seriousness, even more so than SPHERE, tends to give the impression of striving too hard to be a literary fanzine. The two articles to date by Prof. Walter Hirsch are fairly interesting, but he would have more success if he would slant his topics more on the level of the layman.

This issue contained aprox. 23 pages, the art work is not too good, nor is the mimeo reproduction. Yet, who knows what the future may bring in the way of improvements in this new contribution from Indiana.

# The Last Word

"Marbles"

So- - - on with the Marble Game.

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There are many new fanzines too that have come in which we would like to acknowledge, but these too will have to wait until next time.

-14-