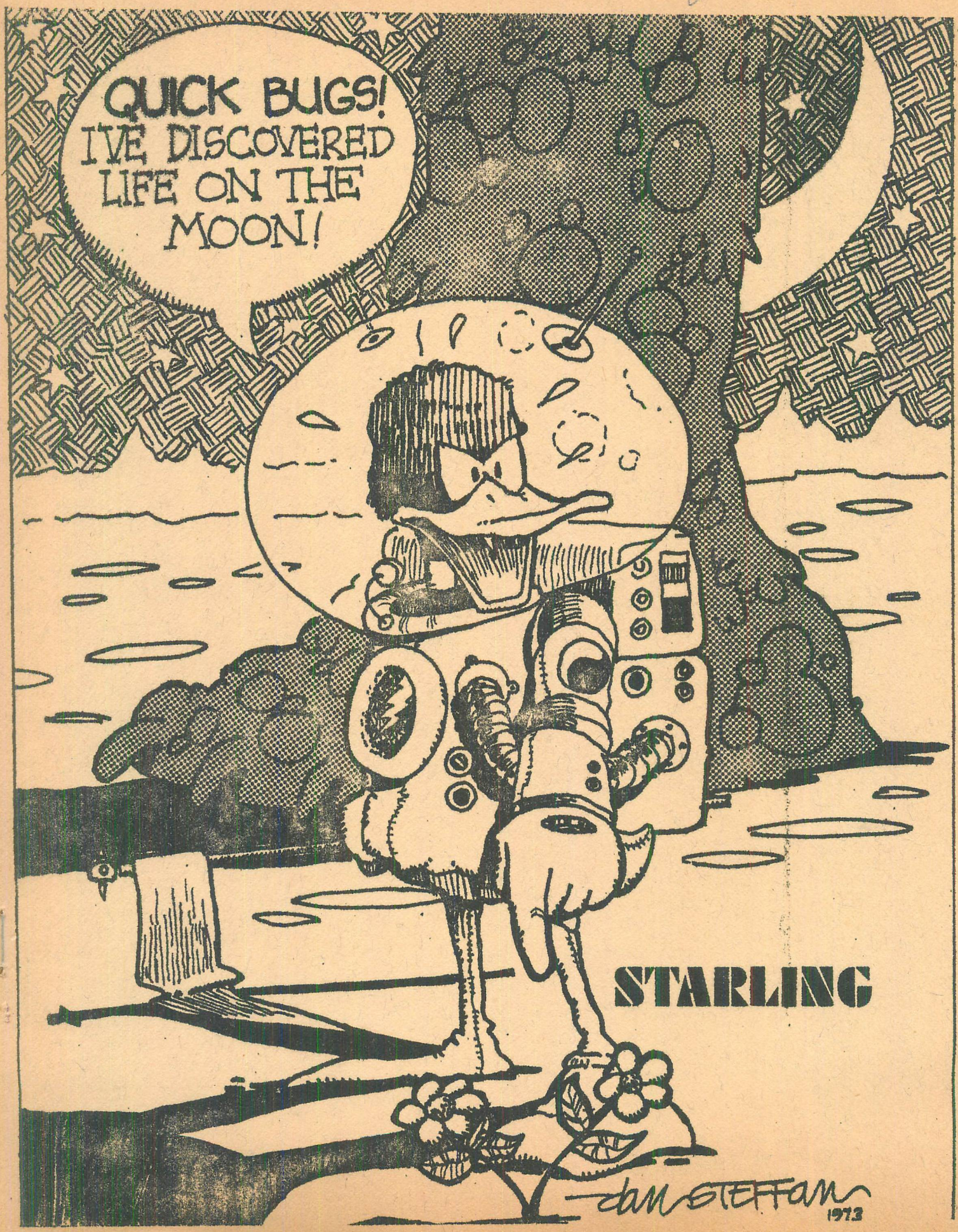
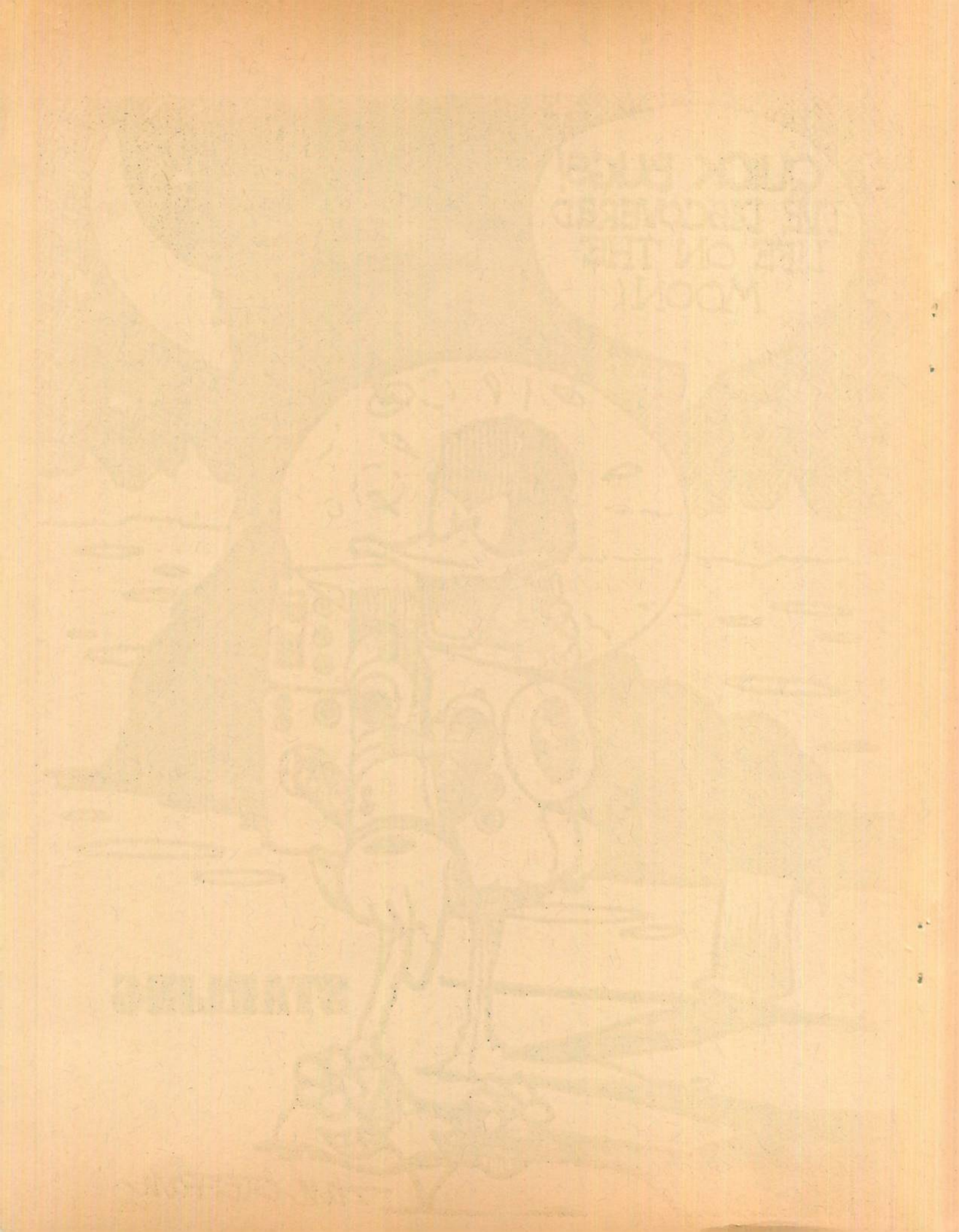
Jackie Franke 28





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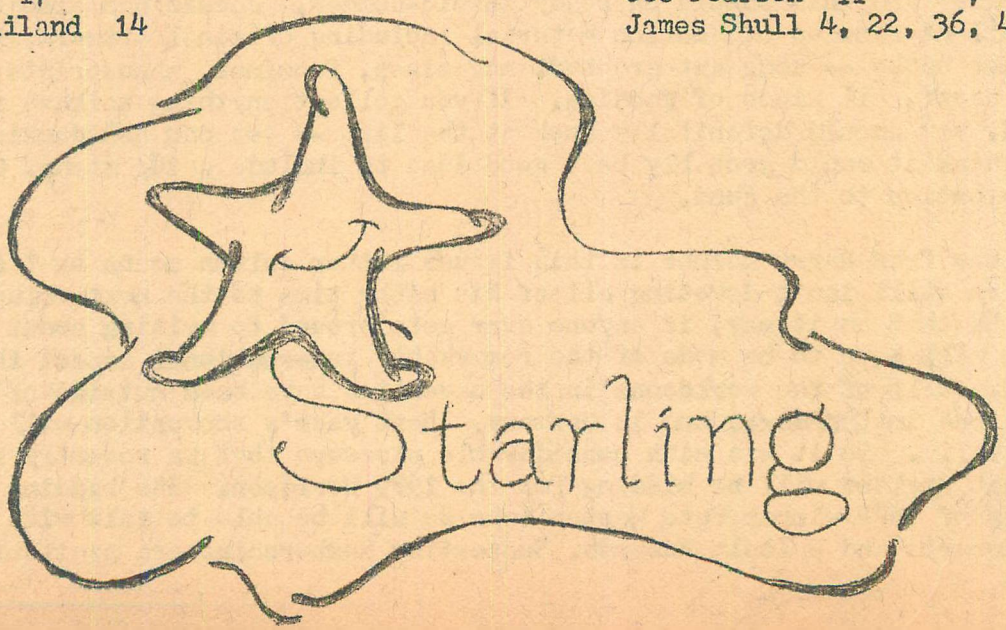


NOTEBOOKLINGS

+ Hank Luttrell +

We will soon be publishing the last DUFFund Newsletter with all the details, but I want to mention the news here as well. . .the DUFF bidding is completed and the winner has been chosen: Leigh Edmonds. With some spirited voting in the auction, some generous support by several conventions, and of course a wonderful number of voters, DUFF has enough money to bring Leigh the United States this summer. On a related topic, Lesleigh's DUFF report is done and ready to mail. It is titled "Lesleigh's Adventures Down Under (and What She Found There)," and it is illustrated by Steve Stiles and Ken Fletcher. You can order it from us for $1, and the proceeds will help with next year's fund -- which will be taking a US fan to the Australian Worldcon

There is not apt to be another issue of "Lesleigh's Adventures Down Under," since even if she ever goes to Australia again she probably won't write another long report, and that means that the Adventures Down Under might not normally have a letter column. However, we have already gotten a few comments on the report, which we enjoyed, and I want to make it known that I would certainly consider setting aside some space in the letter column of Starling should any of you like to respond to or comment on any of the trip report.

With the DUFFund at a successful conclusion this year, it is time that I direct your attention to another matter: The Tucker Fund. I think that probably many of you have already heard of this worthy venture; for those of you who haven't. . .this is a fund intended to allow Bob Tucker (alias Wilson Tucker, alias Hoy Ping Pong, alias Bob Bloch, alias Smoothie) to attend the Australian Worldcon in 1975. The Tucker Fund Administraters are Jackie Franke, Box 51-A, RR 2, Beecher, IL 60401 and in Australia, Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic 3001. The Fund is prepairing a reprint-zine of Tucker fan articles, which should be great, to be called "The Really Incompleat Bob Tucker" and this should be ready in mid-summer. Jackie has also come up with an excellent line up of auction material including original artwork, first editions and other books -- some autographed, magazines, fanzines, manuscripts, a Tucker galley proof, all kinds of goodies. If you collect anything science fictionally related, you should definitally look at the list -- you can ask Jackie for a copy, and I think it would probably be a good idea to include a 10¢ stamp. Or better, send a contribution to the Fund.

The letter from Harry Warner in this issue's letter column means that fandom's best historian still isn't devoting all of his hobby time to the next volumne in his history. Be that as it may, if anyone ever gets around to writing about the 70's, some mention will have to be made of the remarkably international aspect that fandom has acquired. Half of the worldcons in the seventies have been outside of the United States: one in Canadaand one in Germany. Next year's convention will be, of course, in Australia. So it was with considerable pleasure that we recently received the news that England will be bidding for the 1979 Worldcon. The bidding committee so far consists of TAFF winner Pete Weston (who we will be able to talk with at Discon), and Peter Roberts and Malcolm Edwards. Supporting memberships are available for $1 US funds,

from Malcolm Edwards, 19 Ranmoor Gardens, Harrow, Midds, HA1 1UQ, United Kingdom.

While on the subject of Worldcon bids, I must say something about the flyer which we've mailed with most copies of this Starling. The flyer comes from the Kansas City in 1976 Worldcon bid. I suppose one of the most delightful things about the Kansas City bid so far is the obvious fact that when Hallmark Cards acquired the services of Tim Kirk, so too did the Kansas City fan group. Lesleigh and I visited the Kansas City club once quite a while ago when we lived in Columbia, and more recently we got a chance to visit with them again, when a large contingent made an appearence at the Minicon. Lesleigh and I find the idea of a Missouri Worldcon irresistible, since it would be a fine opportunity for us to visit our families and friends in St. Louis and Columbia. And we also think that the Kansas City group are willing and capable of putting on a fine World Science Fiction Convention.

So far, the only convention we've made it to this season was the above mentioned Minicon. . .actually, that is one more convention than we had made by this time last year, so I guess we are ahead in the game. The Minneapolis committee is to be congratulated for putting on a good, friendly science fiction convention. We were surprised at the large attendence -- over 300, which to me seems large for a midwestern regional. One of the more important things that we did at the Minicon was to collect votes and contributions for DUFF, and in that pursuit we were very successful. Since this sort of thing doesn't show up in talleys of contributers, this would be a good place to thank the Minicon committee and Gerry Wassenar who ran the huckster's room for allowing DUFF to use a table for free.

As it happened, the place where I was sitting in the Minicon huckster's room placed me within ear's shot of what must have been a continuing source of difficulties at Minicons. Right in back of us, there was a group of young men who were very irritated that the convention wasn't more huckster-oriented. They were horrified when they learned that the convention had tried to avoid some advance publicity by taking down posters in book stores. They were livid when the huckster's room was closed early in the evening and during the banquet. The result of this sort of attitude apparently will be that Minneapolis will now have, in addition to the Minicon, a seperate comic-book-oriented convention. The comic book hucksters who were so irritated at the room closing early packed up every night and went home each night and didn't bother staying for the parties. The new Minneapolis comic book convention mentions in advance publicity that there will be no convention-sponsored open parties. What I hope all of this means is that the fans who come to Minicons in the future will know what kind of convention to expect, and that those fans who don't like science fiction conventions won't bother to attend. I always sell both science fiction and comic books

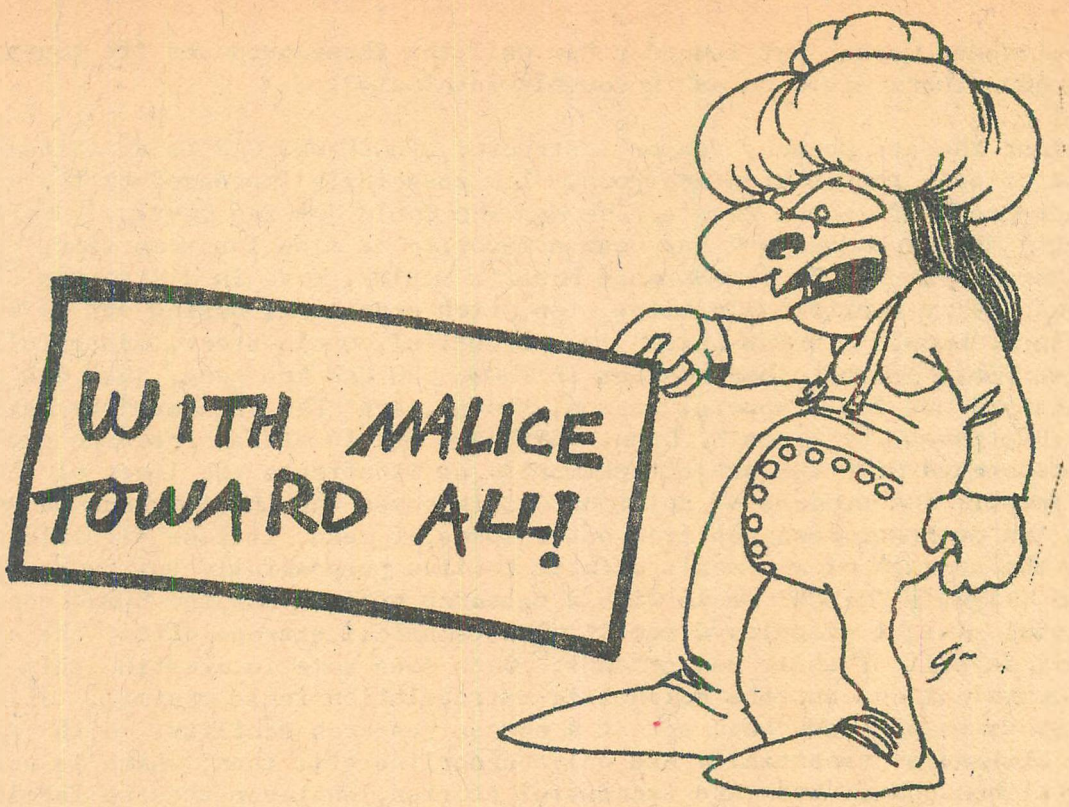
on my huckster's table, and after a hard day of stealing nickles from everybody, I'm more than happy to adjourn to the party suites as early as possible. I guess I'm just lazy.

I understand there was one particularly noteworthy program item at the Minicon -- which I didn't see, of course, because I was busy stealing nickles -- was a panel on fannish myths, starring that great fannish myth himself (and Minicon fan guest of honor) Bob Tucker. Leigh Couch was also on that panel, so I'm sorry I missed it. Lesleigh tells me that the secret mysteries of Rosebud were discussed, among other occult matters. The art show was particularly large and featured an impressive amount of fine material -- particularly the always impressive Kelly Freas, pro guest of honor. I'm pleased to report that at the moment I even have a Freas painting here in my office -- but only until the Midwestcon, when I'll be turning it over the owners. I was able to attend the speeches made by the guests of honor after the banquet because the committee had thoughtfully closed the huckster's room. Kelly Freas' speech was an interesting and thoughtful history of his involvement with professional science fiction graphics. I feel I must, however, object to Mr. Tucker's speech. It was, in fact, nothing more than a thinnly veiled attack on Nixon and the whole US government. Further, I must mention that as soon as Tucker left the head table there was talk everywhere of having him deported. I understand a brave St. Louis fanzine publisher will be printing this talk, so you can judge for yourself how amusing it was.

The Minicon parties were neat. I especially liked the peanuts provided by the Minneapolis hosts, and the Kansas City party, which really got into high gear when Sarah Sue Bailey announced that she had been in fandom for some time and still didn't know too many people. Moments later she and a host of others were sitting in the hallway outside of the KC room (because it was too crowded) sucking on a bottle of Jim Beam with none other than Bob Bloch. Or somebody.

About the rest of our convention plans for this summer -- as usual, we will be showing up at the Midwestcon and then at the Worldcon in Washington, D.C. With conventions getting bigger, it has sometimes been hard to find everyone at a convention who you want to visit with. You shouldn't have any trouble finding us, however, since we'll be stationed most of the time at our huckster's table. For instance, if you want to buy a copy of Lesleigh's DUFF report, you could pick one up then. We always like to visit with Starling readers when we run into them at conventions, so do look for us.

As it happens, the Watanshauung Press number of this Starling is 100. I might ordinarily have considered such a milestone to be reason enough for a special issue of some sort, except that we just got finished doing our last issue, a Gala 10th Anniversary. Well, we more or less try to make every issue as good as possible anyway, and this issue turned out sort of nice. One of the items with which we are most pleased is the debut of Jim Turner's long promised new column. Readers who remember the issues of Starling published while we lived in Columbia will remember Jim, and I think our newer readers will find Turner's column interesting. . .though they may feel that they have started reading in the middle of a long complicated story. Jim may decide to tell the whole gory story himself sometime, so I don't want to spoil it by giving any of the background details here, except to say that the operation he refers to in his first paragraph was an intestinal by-pass. As for the rest of this issue -- some of you will probably feel that we must have contrived to arrange that the various Disney related articles and art all appeared in this issue -- but no!, it just worked out that way. Although at least three of the pieces in this issue are Disney-related, I don't think you'll find them redundant.



+ Joe Sanders +

THOSE WHO CAN: A SCIENCE FICTION READER, edited by Robin Scott Wilson. Signet, $1.50.

This will be a very personal, rather rambling review. THOSE WHO CAN is an exciting anthology, one that I read with delight and recommend earnestly. But also I think it's a seriously flawed collection. To explain that apparent contradiction, I'll have to spend some time explaining what I see in the book, and explaining also my especially strong personal reaction to it. Bear with me.

The problem results from the effort to make the book at once a specialized textbook and a general anthology. It's presented as both. On one hand, it's put on the rack with regular paperbacks. On the other hand, it's priced considerably above anthologies of similar size, its content and organization show that it was designed for teaching purposes, its title is based on Shaw's aphorism that "Those who can, do. Those who cannot, teach," and the publisher sent me an examination copy for a freshman comp course.

Basically, then, THOSE WHO CAN is an instructional anthology directed first of all toward young writers (with possible strong secondary use as a text in Introduction to/Appreciation of Literature courses.) It contains thirteen stories by different authors (two by Frederik Pohl), each followed by one of eleven essays (Damon Knight 'annotates' his story) explaining how that story was written and/or how the author goes about writing generally. Stories and essays are grouped by topics like "Plot," "Character," etc. With a few qualifications, the stories are good. Also with a few qualifications, the essays are interesting and valuable.

Valuable in what way, though, and for whom? The general reader, the student/teacher of stf, or the apprentice writer? Editor and publisher obviously would be happy if everybody who could afford a loaf of bread bought a copy, and they want to attract all three classes of people. I happen to be a member of all three; I <u>am</u> attracted to the book

in all those ways. But I wonder how well the three purposes fit together, and I wonder how many others would be as thoroughly fascinated.

Consider the stf person, fan or instructor, THOSE WHO CAN is an attractive book because, first of all, the stories are good. I'm especially impressed by the unpretentious but expert craft of Joanna Russ's "The Man Who Could Not See Devils." Harlan Ellison's "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes" has been a favorite of mine for some time; damn, but that's a fine story. "We in Some Strange Power's Employ, Move in a Vigorous Line" by Samuel R. Delaney is terrifically alive, too, rich sensations oozing out of every crack. And Ursula K. LeGuin's "Nine Lives" is a beautiful, whole story, masterfully done from any angle. Most of the other stories in THOSE WHO CAN are good, just not as good. Two that stand out for a special reason, though, are "The Planners" by Kate Wilhelm and "The Listeners" by James E. Gunn. Both are set in stfish research projects, but both are concerned with the project primarily as it affects the lives of the scientists working there. The success of an effort to increase the intelligence of apes or to identify and decipher messages from outer space, I mean, is less significant in the story than the success of one man's efforts to live purposefully but humanely. As a contrast, Damon Knight's "Masks" deals with a research project and the human consequences of its success. Knight grapples directly with technical extrapolation; the others use it mostly as part of their backgrounds. Gunn does some interesting things with the theme of communication, but the scientific extrapolation feels minimal. Wilhelm's story could almost as easily have been set at a cancer research facility. Both "The Planners" and "The Listeners" essentially are only borderline stf, then, which is not necessarily to put them down. Both are successful stories, whatever they're labeled. It's just that the two together in "a science fiction reader" are a bit much, and their basic similarity is a bit much for any short anthology of general fiction -- if it weren't for the essays.

Even if THOSE WHO CAN contains several fine stories, the essays are what makes the book special. They're full of Inside Stuff -- not gossipy trade talk but the-story-behind-the-story. Fascinating. And the Wilhelm and Gunn stories are accompanied by interesting essays about how the writers dealt with, respectively, Point of View and Style; thus they seem to justify their presence for the student of writing.

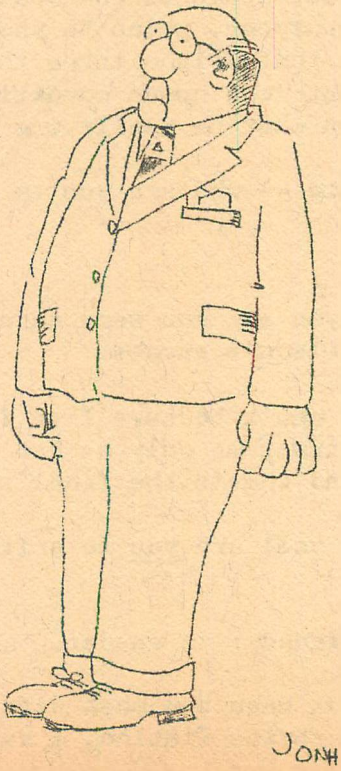
That's the book's primary intent, remember: to serve as a text for people who want to learn to write fiction. Other readers are welcome, but the people in the book are analyzing the technique of their stories so that someone else can see how to apply the same methods himself. . .and, yes, that doesn't quite jibe with what I've said above; the story behind the story and the techniques used in writing the story are distinct though related matters. The latter is rather more likely to be useful to a young writer. Most of the writers in THOSE WHO CAN mix the two, the proportion varying with the writer. Harlan Ellison's essay, for example, is essentially an autobiographical ego trip -- brilliant ego trip, but still. . And even in the essays that strike a better balance or stress analysis of the story, I'm not sure that the audience-writer gets much that's helpful.

This brings up a whole new objection and it's a personal one, so be warned. It seems to me that creative writing -- which is not merely fiction but any writing where something in the writer grapples with words and creates a new, meaningful work -- is murderously difficult to learn, and even more difficult to teach. I'm not questioning the sincerity of teachers or the fact that writers sometimes have spent learning time in Creative Writing classes. Teachers and students, working together, can move along toward the acquisition of skills and self-evaluation. But that, to reiterate my rather flimsy distinction, is a matter of learning, not teaching. You can learn to write in a Creative Writing class, a library, or a rat-infested garret. Perhaps it's more pleas-

ant to do so in a classroom. Less lonely. But a lot of people don't get much from a class in creative writing. Even the people who do, I think, were on their way already. The class is a place where they can offer things they've written for the inspection of other interested people. Also, it gives them justification for blocking off part of their time for writing. But that's something they do for themselves. For myself, I think I've learned at least as much about writing by these years of doing "Malice" as I did by doing a Ph. D. dissertation that theoretically was a publishable book, and I'm sure that I learned more struggling with my teachers than from all the how-to-write stuff I've looked at.

I'm not sure that creative writing can be taught in the classroom. Probably not by a teacher primarily; almost certainly not by a book. Teaching and learning are different activities. At its most insanely formal, teaching consists of reading a textbook to the class. Don't laugh; it happens (especially in literature classes.) Or, more sensibly, the teacher can lecture from books -- or from his own experience, which brings a whole new immediacy to the situation. Or he can try to reduce still further the gap between the students' experience and his own, trying to discuss his ideas with them -- or participate in a discussion of their ideas, using the book as example or springboard. Or he can get into the act of writing with them. I believe in the last method, because I think it's the best way to help students learn to write. "Learning" here means the active process of acquiring a skill -- a student in a painting class, for example, puzzles over his colors, wondering how to catch the right flesh tint; a teacher, walking among the easels, looks at the picture and at the model, and points out that "flesh" is composed of many colors, including purple. And the student sees and picks up his brush. It becomes much more difficult if the teacher herds the students into a classroom and delivers straight mass lectures on color-mixing technique -- almost impossible if he doesn't demonstrate as he goes along. In a book. . . Well, it's possible to use a book in learning art. Bridgman's books on drawing techniques leap to mind. But those are full of working drawings, sketches really, that involve the reader to the maximum extent in the process of creation as it is done. How else can one learn how to do it?

You certainly can't be taught by a lecture -- or a book. James Gunn mentions in his essay that he likes to show students the first draft and a revised version of one of his stories to help them understand the process of revision. I do the same thing when I'm trying to help my students learn how to write a research paper. But that's only an expedient substitute for going over each paper as it is being written -- the kind of interaction you are able to get in creative writing class -- and probably the interaction of writers is the only way that process can be learned in a classroom setting. Just giving the students both papers, by themselves or with comments, in a classroom or in a textbook, is a poor substitute. You reduce drastically the chances that a student will ever catch one of the ideas thrown at him, see it, and go from there. So I question the practical usefulness, for the learning writer, of



essays explaining how a story was written, because they are difficult to apply in one's own work. I'm aware that the student isn't taught by a book alone. But neither can the teacher count on making a less than satisfactory text work in a classroom by the inspiration of his presence. And I think THOSE WHO CAN would demand some teaching as a writing text.

A few of the people in this book seem aware of this difficulty. Knight, for one, uses running annotation of his story to involve a reader in the construction of the story as it unfolds. And Delaney partially refutes my point above by miraculously revealing the act of writing in his essay. Or perhaps its not such a miracle. Delaney doesn't talk about the story he wrote; instead he talks through the writing of a brief section of a new story, showing how the process of adding one word to another determines where the story can go. It's a remarkably good essay, and one that seems to me to be really helpful to someone trying to learn writing. It shows not what the writer comments on what he did, after the fact, but how he does what he's doing.

Not too coincidentally, Delaney's essay also reveals a great deal about fiction for the general reader. (It makes concrete, for one thing, a feeling I've had about Delaney's work since THE JEWELS OF APTOR; it is gorgeously alive but awfully arbitrary in reaching a conclusion.) And that suggests another possible use for THOSE WHO CAN as a text. I mentioned above that the essays were good as explanations of these particular stories. And so I think the book would work quite well for an Intro to Lit course, in which students might very well be turned on by the writer's own explanations of what they're doing. Several such texts are already on that market, but THOSE WHO CAN is good enough to get a share of that market. Except that a major part of the apparatus that qualifies it for that market, the brief introductions for each section that gives technical literary terms, are godawful: jargony, quoty, cute and pompous. They are like random slices from a very dull textbook on Literature. And while I'm at it, Wilson's own story, "For a While There, Herbert Marcuse, I Thought You Were Maybe Right About Alienation and Eros," is cute borderline stuff, and the accompanying essay is pompous, unhelpful, and dull. The problem with the story is that Wilson really doesn't care much about students and what bothers them, so he sets up a cast of dumb, cartoon-simple stereotypes, which he shoves through a "funny" plot; the disturbing thing about the essay is that Wilson takes the story very seriously, as an attempt to say something profound about "the human condition". Alone among the contributors, Wilson doesn't seem clear on what he really was doing. That part of the book is a dead loss.

(Wait a minute -- who are you to criticize Robin Scott Wilson?

A reader.

(But didn't you say you were an aspiring teacher and writer? Couldn't it be that you're jealous of Wilson's success?

It could. I can't be sure I've filtered out my prejudices. The safest thing to do, then, is to trust me only as far as you must. But look at the book. That's what I try to do, and that's the final test of any criticism. Look at the book.

(But who the hell are you to criticize a successful teacher, writer and editor like Wilson?

I told you already: a reader. And a teacher, and a man.

Look, this has been the most difficult "Malice" I've ever done. When I read over the last one, on series fiction, I was pleased at how well it went, outside of a bad ten-

dency to drag in allusions to everything I'd ever read. But that column was fun to write, and I think it read pretty smoothly. This one has been painful. I've been bothered by the questions you raise, Interior Demon, and by the overall question: Why bother? By now, I accept the fact that this review will have no impact on the book's sales. Moreover, I'm not trying to hurt its sales. Remember, I began by saying I was excited by THOSE WHO CAN and that I recommended it earnestly. So why bother to qualify that liking, to point up confusion of purposes, subtle misjudgements, and superficiality of execution?

(That's what I asked you -- why?

No, you asked me who I am to dare. But okay; the questions are related. I do it because I am who I am: a reader, a teacher, and a man. One who believes that personal honesty is the real aim in communication and in teaching. So I try to be as honest with myself as I can and to express my ideas as well as I can.

(That's awfully nebulous. Do you really believe that crap?)

If I didn't, Brother Devil, I'd not be as excited by what THOSE WHO CAN promises or as let down by the ways it misses its goal.

* * * * * * *

Followup to my last column, on series books:

In my recent reading, I've run across some interesting quotes. Here's one from SMOKEY VALLEY, a western by Donald Hamilton, better known as the writer of the Matt Helm series. Hamilton's western hero, has just committed himself to fighting the bad guys and is reflecting on his situation: "he took no pleasure in the deaths he had helped to cause; yet the fact remained that as long as he was engaged in a bitter struggle for existence he could not be expected to pay much attention to more intimate and personal problems. It was a respite of sorts. For the moment, at least, he was free." Again, here's Richard Stark's Parker, in THE OUTFIT, uneasy about another criminal he's teaming up with for a special job: "It was a bad sign when a man like Handy started owning things and started thinking he could afford friendships. Possessions tie a man down and friendships blind him. Parker owned nothing: , the men he knew were just that, the men he knew, not his friends and they owned nothing." These seem to support my point that the hero in action novels -- necessarily so in series books -- is isolated and narrowed by the demands of the action. And that this is an escape from personal concerns and from the need to adapt and grow.

I suppose this isn't true absolutely; no generalization is. John Creasy's Gideon books, for example, do have plot threads linking the books together, and Gideon's job changes slightly and his family grows older. But my basic description of the character holds true. Ted Tubb's Dumarest series is a nice stf example.

I also see that E. Howard Hunt is the creator of several paperback series. It figures.

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

+ Jim Turner +

"Twas but one year ago today when Anita delivered my beer-soaked body to the Medical Center for the week of tests and tortures that preceded my operation. As of two weeks ago, I had lost 206 pounds since then. I did not go to weigh in last week because I went to see and hear Vincent Price instead but that's another story if and when I have the time for it.

Strange things were taking place two weeks ago. On that Wednesday, the Associate Director of the Clinic, Dr. Burkhart, came down and told us that our jobs would almost certainly vanish June 1, unless Ghod and/or the Curators intervened. I don't think that's much to put hopes on but I'm not worried. I can collect six months of unemployment insurance which would come within ten bucks a week of what I normally clear in pay anyway. I wouldn't even have to pay taxes on that. I doubt that I'll have a job this summer. University coolie jobs are hard to come by in that season; the workers with lots of seniority snap them up. I wouldn't mind a three month vacation at all.

That evening after work I was walking to the Med Center to weigh in and attend group therapy. Lo and behold...the Shack was open and going full blast. I went in and drank a couple of beers. Old Ray has retired to his farm and sold it to somebody named Charlie with whom I had a long and nostalgic discussion of my former frequency at the Shack. I will definitely be back there.

I continued over to the hospital and dropped in at the ward I was a patient in at the bughouse to visit with the staff. I sat around talking to one of the R.N.s for a while and had a shock. I was facing the wall of the ward's lobby which has a mirror running its length. I looked up into the mirror and for a good long moment I didn't recognize my own face. I seemed positively gaunt. Maybe the beer at the Shack earlier had something to do with it.

The Vincent Price lecture was billed as "An Evening with Edgar Allen Poe." It completely sold out Jesse Auditorium in a week. Anita picked our tickets up about five days after they went on sale and we wound up sitting two rows from the rear which, in Jesse, really isn't unreasonable. Price came on and apologized right off, saying that, billings or not, there would be a minimum of Poe since he had gotten very sick of Poe before his tour was even half over. He read a few of Poe's poems and talked about villiany in general, telling a lot of funny stories, some of which may even have been true. We enjoyed it very much. My favorite part, I think, was his remarks on the Devil, the "Superstar of Evil." He did a long reading from Shaw's "Don Juan in Hell," taking both parts.

I was very sorry as a kid that I never got to meet Price. His wife, or former wife, was the sister of a local doctor and Price came down to Iron County pretty often to visit the old boy. Quite a few locals wound up meeting him but I never did. It might have made the Arcadia Valley bearable for a while. But probably only for a while.

On show business subjects, I noticed that MY WICKED, WICKED WAYS by Errol Flynn was back in print, in a new paperback. I snapped it right up and read it Saturday. Very strange book, alternately very funny and very sad. Flynn was a very frank man, from his sex life to drugs to his early criminal career as a jewel thief and slave trader. There was a section I've read reprinted before about how the Mexican muralist Rivera turned him on to marijuana in the course of a discussion on painting. The artist asked him if he'd ever heard a painting and went on to explain that there were these funny cigarettes. . .

I read THE MOON'S A BALLOON by David Niven last year about this time. Flynn and Niven were roommates for a while in the 1930s. Niven's book is better written and not overly depressing. Flynn had ambitions as a writer and turned out a few screenplays and a couple of books in his time. But he was in such bad shape toward the end that Putnam's hired Earl Conrad to put MY WICKED, WICKED WAYS together. Conrad maintained that it was Flynn's book since his work consisted of interviewing Flynn and transcribing his replies, that Flynn was a very articulate man. I got the impression that he was a pretty miserable and dejected man for a good part of his life as well.

On the subject of movies, I thought that JERIAMIAH JOHNSON and AMERICAN GRAFFITI were the best movies I saw in 1973. So far, the movies I liked this year were DON'T LOOK NOW (which is a fantasy), SERPICO, MASSACRE IN ROME (Burton seemed to be sober; a good flick which seems to have dropped out of sight.) I was dubious about seeing THE STING since I must be the only person in the world who hated BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID and wasn't all that mad about SLAUGHTERHOUS FIVE but George Roy Hill came through this time. I pinched a nerve in the heel of my foot on the way and was in dire pain all the while and still had a lot of fun seeing THE STING. THE EXORCIST is starting soon at $3.25 for reserved seats. I'll see it even though it was a dumb book. Blatty doesn't write quite as well as Robert Moore Williams. At least Williams had a vague idea of how to construct a complete sentence. The Jesuits should have taught Blatty to write while they were teaching him to think.

I think it would be a gas if somebody would make a Newman-Redford caper movie in which they were a couple of homosexuals. Newman could play the butch. Can't you see him with a rag over his hair, in a dainty apron, working the carpet sweeper, getting bent out of shape because Redford is late for dinner and the roast is spoiled? Ah, yes

READING MATTER: Today I finished THE DEFEAT OF JOHN HAWKINS by Rayner Unwin. This is one of quite a few books on English history that I've gotten lately. I bought a bunch of paperbacks on daily life in various times and some books on the age of discovery and today a biography of William and Mary that I find quite interesting. I'm also reading a book of stories by Doris Lessing called THE HABIT OF LOVING that I like. I read the title story from Blish's MIDSUMMER CENTURY book and found it very up to the Blish par (which is pretty high, at least to me) but something happened toward the end. He must have gotten bored and wrapped the whole thing up in a couple of pages. He might as well have gone for a dream ending. Also read LORD JIM and ALMAYER'S FOLLY. . .I intend to read a lot more of Joseph Conrad now that I'm not in a high school English class with him being foisted off on me anymore. I read an anti-dope book called GO ASK ALICE that impressed me. I got a Cthulu book from DAW by Brian Lumley that I found unreadable and fairly predictable.

I've been listening a lot of late to Joy of Cooking. I don't have their first album yet but it's on order. I really like the last two and even more than those I like the work of Toni Brown who has since left the group. She had an album last spring with Terri, the other woman in the group. It was country music and on Capitol and got no particular distribution. It's called CROSS COUNTRY and is one of my favorite records along with Toni's new album GOOD FOR YOU TOO on MCA. Lots of country, jazz and R&B touches with very well written lyrics, mostly about her own life apparently, a life that doesn't seem much out of the ordinary but whose life is?

I've been buying Rounder Records lately. I have one by Don Stover and one by George Pegram that I like. Have you heard Rounder 3001 called MUD ACRES: MUSIC AMONG FRIENDS? Nearly everybody I've played it for has gotten their own copy. There are nine people on it -- Maria Muldar, Happy and Artie Traum, John Herald, Eric Katz (he wrote "Love Has No Pride" that Bonnie Raitt recorded), Bill Keith among others. It's all acoustic folkie stuff, from Leadbelly and Ewan MacColl to Gene Autry. Lots of good picking and singing.

If you can find it, on RCA's cheapie Camden label, you might like THE GREATEST BANJO PLAYER OF THEM ALL: HARRY RESER. It's old time Dixieland from the '20s, no vocals. I though about buying a banjo myself but I know I'd never get around to learning to play the thing.

You have no excuse for not having bought the new Waylon Jennings records. I bought an album on Vanguard by Kinky Freedman. The Texas Jewboys aren't on this one but I like it. There is the "Ballad of Charles Whitman," a bona fide truckdriver song, and two songs or so worth the record; "Ride 'Em Jewboy" and "We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to You." Funny, Kinky appeard on the Opry with Dobie Grey (who's black) and got a real fine reception, being introduced (I think by Roy Acuff) as being a new record -- the first full-blooded Jew to appear on the Opry. I understand that Bill Monroe is already a fanatic fan of Kinky's. I bought Donna Fargo's first album which is total slush and which I rather like for all of that.

Work has been a big drag. We are in the midst of the flu season and are quite short-handed. I have been working a good many of my days off and yesterday I put in 12½ hours. That, boys and girls, was a bitch. I'd be making a lot of coin but for the fact that I was sick last week and out of work.

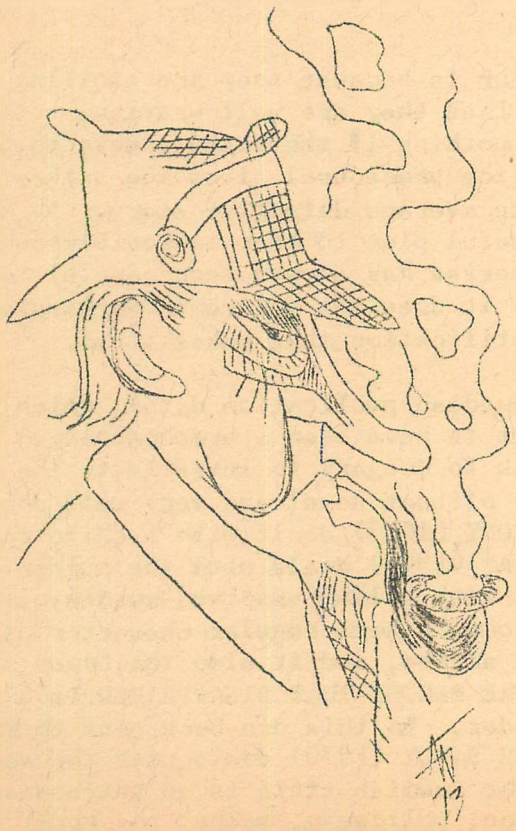
I woke up with a sore throat. I'd had the sniffles for a day or so and sinus headaches but those are par for my course and I didn't think much about it until, one day, I kept feeling worse and worse. I was sneezing horribly and with no warning at all. More than once I nearly sneezed directly into the steam table while I was serving lunch. I went upstairs after lunch and saw Dr. Guyer. She felt my throat, looked into my ears and said ominously, "Jim, you've never had mono, have you?"

"No," I said, "and I don't want it either."

It developed that I had the dreadful seven day virus that had half the campus low and home I went to feel wretched. I'm feeling better now but not a whole hell of a lot. The main routine though is to go to work and work like a sonofabitch and come home and flop down until I just can't keep my eyes open any longer for anything. This has more or less been things since January and it's getting to be a hell of a drag.

FRÅN SVERIGE MED NÅGONTING

+ Michael Carlson +



There are many kinds of detective stories. So many, in fact, that it seems each is rather a little genre of its own. There are hard-boiled dick stories; little old lady detective stories; the locked room mystery; and many more. There is also the police procedural.

This latter is a story wherein the reader follows the progress of the police investigation, generally as an observer only of the investigators, rarely of the criminals, except perhaps to watch them as they commit their crimes. It is a difficult form to handle well, because the author is in even more obvious control of what facts reach the police (and the reader) than even the usual detective novel.

The police procedural has as its most famous practicioner in America the writer of the 87th Precinct series, Ed McBain (Evan Hunter.) But the biggest stir in the past few years has come from a Swedish husband and wife team, Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo (pronounced, more or less, "my hew-vall" and "pair vahlue". More or less.) However their names are pronounced, their series of novels centering on Martin Beck and the Stockholm homicide squad has become one of the most popular and honored in the world. They have won an Edgar from the Mystery Writers of Amerca, and my cousin Inger writes from Sweden that some of their books have been translated into Russian and published in the Soviet Union, a rare privilege indeed.

Why the extreme popularity for the adventures of a very bland detective, virtually the antithesis of all the Shafts and Destroyers and Killmasters we have running around today? He's no supreman, like a Travis McGee, who can handle all dangers, physical and emotional, easily. In fact Beck can't even handle his own marriage. The crimes related in the books, no matter how sensational, are covered as unsensationally as reporting in the Christian Science Moniter. So why the popularity?

Firstly because they are well-written. Tremendously well written, in a flat easy modern style that is both revealing and casual.

Swedish tends to translate into English as a very simple language, because it has a much smaller vocabulary, and this further increases the immediacy of the prose. They are real, they sound real -- not clumsy, but not consciously written. The reader reads them as if they were real.

As best i can tell, the translations, by Alan Blair, or Joan Tate, or the Knoespels or others, have been good; faithful to the Swedish while keeping English idioms. A couple of times situations have arisen, such as a dying man's accented last words, which were handled marvelously well in translation.

They are popular too., because the characters, like those of the 87th Precinct, are real yet engaging people, and the authors don't hesitate going into their private lives in accurate, human detail. Besides Beck, the quiet professional, rather the epitome of the cold Swedish professional stereotype, there is Gunvald Larsson, the big tough loud-mouthed cop; Lennart Kollberg, the young modern; Ronn, mediocre to the end; Melander, the human memory bank; Måtsson, the detective in Malmo whom Beck meets in the fifth novel and who keeps a weekend wife in Copenhagen; and the incompetant patrolmen Kristiansson and Kvant. Human beings made somehow different by their professions.

The novels are revealing too in their portrayal of modern Sweden, a country which has progressed from literally nothing to industrial prosperity unmatched in most of the world in less than three generations. It is a society with all the ills of prosperity, but without the tradition of violence that the USA possesses. A society able to virtually eliminate poverty, yet still unable to find real happiness for all its members. Sjowall and Wahloo have an eye not only to criticism but for analysis. . . an eye that combines satire and social awareness. For anyone familiar with Sweden, or interested in it, or just interested in modern society, these books make engrossing reading. Perhaps the Russians were impressed by their candor in reporting the ills of the capitalist society.

But the main reason the Martin Beck series is popular is because they are exciting suspense reading; they are not-to-be-put-down books. That they are well written, better than all but a few mystery novels, would amount to nothing if the authors were unable to keep your interest. As mentioned before, thepolice procedural gives the author complete control, in a more immediate sense than the average detective story. In such a situation it is very easy for any sort of suspenseful plot to seem incredibly contrived. . .this has been something which the Beck series has always been careful to avoid. The suspense holds your interest as much as it does the policemen working on the case; and perhaps it is the high degree of identification that makes it so.

The first book in the series was ROSEANNA (1965 - Swedish publication date), which dealt with a murdered American tourist who turns out to have been a nymphomaniac. THE MAN WHO WENT UP IN SMOKE (1966) sent Martin Beck to Hungary to investigate the disappearance of a Swedish journalist; it is a very offbeat novel and very well done behind-the-Iron-Curtain stuff. THE MAN ON THE BALCONY (1967) dealt with a child rapist, and is a very powerful story. THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN (1968) deals with the murder of a policeman and other people on a bus; it is tied in with a long unsolved murder of a prostitute, and the dead detective's girlfriend becomes a semi-regular character as she joins the police force. This is my favorite of the series, and it also the Edgar winner. . .the two not necessarily coinciding. THE FIRE ENGINE THAT DISAPPEARED (1969) deals with smugglers and an unusual firebombing murder. In this one Beck goes to Malmo and meets Måtsson for the first time. MURDER AT THE SAVOY (1970) deals with the assasination of an industrialist in a hotel in Malmo. The Swedish title is an untranslatable pun, POLIS, POLIS, POTATISGRIS (literally, "policeman, policeman, mashed potatoes". . . "Polis, polis, potatisgris," or "policeman, policeman, potato pig" being the way Swedish

children call their cops pigs. The pun refers to a search of a bowl of mashed potatoes by a detective looking for a bullet, and also the fact that Kristiansson and Kvant miss their chance to arrest the killer 1/3 of the way through the book because they stop to abuse a father whose son was playing "this little pig" on his hands and the two dumb cops thought he was calling them pigs!) The seventh, and last that i have read, is THE ABOMINABLE MAN (1971) which is slightly offbeat, in that characters are beginning to be killed off, and the series takes a decidedly pessimistic turn. The 8th in the series, the 1972 entry, was released in October 1973 in the USA; it is called THE LOCKED ROOM (which brings up a log of genre associations) and has been referred to as a black comedy in many reviews. I'm so crazy about the series that i may not wait for the paperback, or for Tarton Books to get the returns from libraries.

All the Martin Beck novels are published in hardcover by Pantheon, in paper by Bantam books. Tartan Books usually carries 2 or 3 titles at a sizeable hardcover discount.

Mystery novels are not the sole province of the British, Americans, and Simenon. And like so many things Swedish, these novels retain an extremely high artistic integrity throughout. Their reviews have compared them favorably with McBain, with Ross MacDonald, with Simenon. . .and the National Observer has even conceded that they are "mystery novelists who can also be called novelists." Thanks a lot, N.O. You don't need those reviews. . .these Swedes can write.

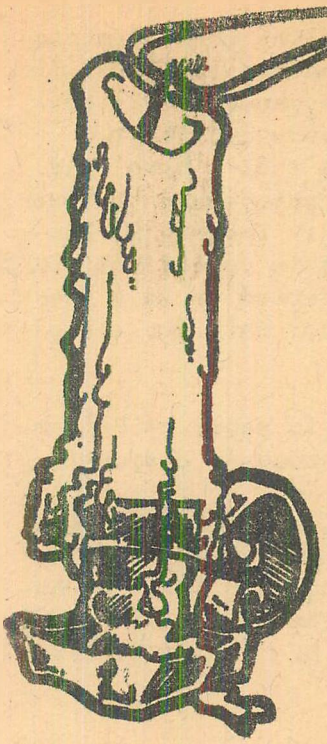
Afterwords

It may also interest some of you that Per Wahlöö has also written five novels of his own, two of which i have read and can mention here. One, MURDER ON THE THIRTY-FIRST FLOOR (1964) is an sf-mystery featuring a detective who seems to be Martin Beck in the near future. It deals with a threat to blow up the government monopolized publishing house, and the secret 31st floor, where the individualists work. It turns out that the threat is. . .no i can't do that. Let me just say that this is a book the NYTimes called "related to Kafka and to science fiction", and that has drawn Orwellian and Kafkaesque comparisons elsewhere. Like all good sf it defines the future in terms of thought, of ideas. . .not just objects; it's a very stark and powerful book.

The other i've read is THE LORRY (1962) (American title A NECESSARY ACTION, the Swedish title is LASTBILEN, which translates literally to THE TRUCK. The edition i read was British, hence THE LORRY.) It too is a stark novel; Wahlöö combines a journalist's economy with an artist's eye. It deals with an ineffectual painter in Spain whose only friends are killed by revolutionaries. The British edition i read featured some prattle about the "connection between political frustration and sexual violence", but i paid it no heed. Again, the Sunday (London) Times called it a "thriller-like" framework, using the NYTimes logic that if it were good it couldn't be sf or a mystery. At least they admit it is good.

It is a fascinating study of a man committed to nothing being forced by personal and group violence into some sort of committment, and stemmed from Wahlöö's own experiences as a journalist in Spain, from which he was deported. Again, he uses insight into individuals to comment on the effects of society, in a way that is, to my mind, unmatched in modern fiction, except perhaps, in a much different manner, by Pyncheon or Burgess.

Wahlöö's other novels are: THE GENERALS, THE STEEL SPRING, and THE ASSIGNMENT. Anyone having information regarding their whereabouts is requested to notify me. That is an overview of Maj Sjowall and Per Wahlöö, and again i'll leave further discussion to the letter column, so you can have a chance to read them. And by the way, the title translates as "From Sweden with Something." Maybe i should have said "Something Else".



words from readers

Juanita Coulson, Route 3, Hartford, IN 47348

Meant to comment on Sussan's letter in #26, and here are all these people both serious and non-serious beating me to it. I'm used to several of the sort of comments poo-poohing the udder nonsense of it and cheering up Susan. There are pros and cons in both departments surely. There've been plenty of times when I would have sold Susan some of my surplus, because it gets to be just too damn much, really. One time L. deCamp hit my syndrome precisely on the head was in Rogue Queen, which may be why I have such a burbling fondness for that novel. His description of Groedh's reaction to her sudden, borgeoning femininity after the humans had discovered the secret of feeding the locals royal jelly equivalents. . .were mine on reaching puberty. I was, like Groedh, a dedicated tomboy and able to lick any kid male or female in my class and tough and never cried and in all other respects a prime candidate for getting my head scrambled by this culture. And all of a sudden my running speed was being thrown off because my pelvis was widening ridiculously, and then there were these. . .THINGS . . .bobbling along idiotically in front of me. . .even painfully if I tried to run fast, because like all my German low dutch foremamas/mutters I was turning out more than ample. I learned to live with it, but I still occasionally irk at some of the drawbacks thereof, and there are some, Susan. Be of good cheer. You are gamine, elfin, fey, charming, petite. . .all those terms that conjure up interesting and attractive and somewhat ethereal ideas. When you are buxom, blowsy, zoftig , plump, etc. . .the mental picture seems to be of a not too bright cow. Not a universal assessment, but oftener than I care for.

I feel like this faunching for the good old times jazz is getting entirely out of hand. Sickeningly so. Yeah, good old days of the 50s. I'm getting old fast enough, people, don't push. I can't really believe the burblings of the producer of that abomination "Happy Days." He must be my contemporary, and here he is talking about all the great times of the early and mid 50's. Age of innocence. Ignorance, yes. I assume he walked around with horse blinders and hearing protectors on throughout

that blessed era. Never heard about witch hunts and civil rights and Korea and. . . all he babbles is sock hops and malt shops and hot rods and d.a. haircuts. I never heard of a malt shop until this latest "reminiscence" bit started. Drug stores and ice cream stores and various other stores. And as for "D.A.". . .I assume he's being cute and avoiding the no-no of "Duck Ass." Except that term wasn't in very general usage till reasonably late in the era, either. Ducktail gradually glided, mostly up from the bottom on the culture via the blacks, into duckass, by which time it was passe anyway.

Susan Wood Glicksohn, 139 Mayfair Cres., Regina, Sask. S45 451 CANADA

How can I go to the wardrobe department to pick out a costume when I don't have a script? Or any idea whether it's my movie, or someone else's?

Ray Nelson in his letter says his image of me is of "someone who has never tried to create herself." That's interesting, because at the advanced age of 25 I'm trying to decide what to create. Ray, along with the rest of you, saw me becoming aware of the variety of choice. All clothing is ultimately costume; that's how Ray regards it, asking me why I don't wear hoo-skirts, doublets, or flapper dresses. I agree that clothing can be costume, a means of expressing the identity I've found or role I've chosen. But, thank you, though I may see myself as flat-chested or subtly shaped, I don't feel much like a flapper; and like everyone else, I have other reasons for arraying my body as I do than my awareness (or lack of awareness, or defiance) of the shapes of my body.

Right now, my costume is 1974 North American Basic Grubby: pullover, jeans, bare feet. Ohyes, and underwear; despite Germaine Greer's rejection of "knickers" I have no desire to get my crotch hair caught in my zipper. Why this costume? Well, it's comfortable, I can relax, unconfined by restrictive or fragile garments (pantyhose, for instance) and the behaviour they impose (can't sit crosslegged in a straight skirt.) It's practical, this costume. I can wash my other clothes and my kitchen floor without worrying about "spoiling" my outfit. I can cuddle my adopted cat, Sesame, who has an extra claw which she can't retract, on each foot, and who is always snagging herself on the clothing covering someone else's lap. It's appropriate, this costume. Today's Sunday, so I'm not at the university facing classes, but at home, facing a sinkful of this week's dishes; the clothes reflect a mental changing of gears.

Interesting, says my devil's-advocate voice, but surely bare skin would be even more comfortable, practical and appropriate? Well, it's still winter in Regina, and I only have the thermostat up to 68° -- a comfortable, healthy temperature to maintain if you have a sweater on. Soon I have to go down to the slightly chillier basement to finish the laundry; in fact, for that I'll need to put on, ugh, shoes. Besides, there's a slight draft coming from the picture window overlooking the street in front of me. The kids playing road-hockey and their parents paying Sunday visits in this respectable suburb of this fairly conservative midwest city might be upset to see a naked lady, typing away at 2 PM on a Sunday afternoon. And no, I won't close the curtains; I want to see the snow melting at last!

So: my clothing, basically, protects. It keeps my body warm. Once that function has been filled, though, it becomes costume, worn for psychological reasons. Social protection is one -- defence against taboos. Nekked ladies are frowned upon in public. But social pressures not only demand that we wear a costume; they tend to decree which costume, and which behaviour. A little boy puts on a suit, and is told to act "manly" and not cry at a funeral. A girl puts on a pretty dress and her first pair of nylons, and is told to "act like a lady" at the wedding or party. Gone are the days when the Duke of Wellington was turned away from the door of Almack's, the exclusive

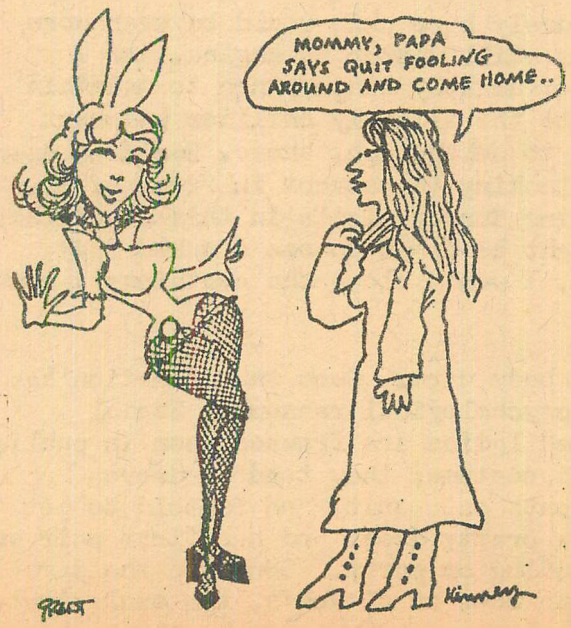
London club, ~~because he was wearing trousers~~ instead of the appropriate ~~evening~~ costume, knee-breeches; most restaurants now will admit tieless men and pant-suited women. Still, when a friend of mine received his notice to appear at citizenship court, it asked him to "dress in an appropriate manner, as if for church," in a suit. He teaches in jeans.

Social roles and functions choose our clothes for us: not just nurses' or officers' uniforms, but student jeans, professor tweeds, suburban-matron-pantsuit behind the stationwagon wheel. With memories of "Queen Christiana," I developed a craving for a black velvet pantsuit, which I satisfied this year. In that costume, I play Elegant Theatregoer. Sipping sherry in the foyer of the Arts Centre before the ballet, I may be conversing wittily with the elegant professor of 18th century literature, whose office is next to mine, who will be wearing his claret velvet suit. Or we may turn up at the student film society's smoky screening of "Casablanca" in our jeans. At school, I can only admire this transplanted dandy from Queen Anne's London, assimilating the best fashions in clothes, or books, or teaching techniques into an assured personal style. This week, he turned up to teach Alice in Wonderland in a burgandy shrink with white rabbits round the waist!

At this point, we're back to clothing as self-expression. In part, "fashion" dictates what we all wear. The men who used to sneer at women's real or imagined subservience to Paris couturiers were equally slaves to a white-shirt-wrapped, narrow-tied rigid package of "right" non-style. So you reject fashion? How? I loathe platform-soled shoes, but when I went to buy winter boots, all I could find were three-toned uglies with four-inch yellow crepe soles. I finally located a subdued pair of black boots with only a one-inch black leather sole; once I adjusted my walk to them I discovered I liked them, because my feet, with an extra inch between them and the snow, stayed warm for the first winter in my life.

Besides, fitting in with fashion is a psychological protection. Do you have the chutzpah to walk down a crowded street in bobby socks below a thigh-length pleated plaid skirt, despite "American Grafitti"? I, for one, still bear the scars of being "different," having to wear orthopedic oxfords("boy's shoes") and round pink glasses in public school.

But more than camouflage, fashion can be a way of asserting personality, outlook, choice of roles. Look at my elegant collegue next door, with his velvet bow ties; the Victorian literature prof, whose Harris tweeds and old school tie show his adherence to a transplanted British ideal of what life should be; the young teacher of modern American lit, hip in his jeans, boots and tooled leather belt, teaching "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail"; or the pleasant, withdrawn thirtyish woman in her highnecked sparrow-brown wool dress, teaching the same safe, dull, old Canadian novels every semester. . .



And my own role in all this? That's where Ray Nelson and the rest of you came in. As I was going through several heavy changes last spring and summer, not the least of which was a imminent move of 1,600 miles to begin my first "real" job, I went through a major rite of passage. I ruthlessly re-evaluated my wardrobe. The old self-image and plans had been denied, so why keep the old clothes, that the discarded me wasn't wearing anyway? Out went my brother's paisley shirts I'd been wearing to do the housework; the pretty

pastelly party dresses I should have dumped with long straight hair and Donovan; clothes bought by others, or to fit other's images of me. The Salvation Army got a great haul of cast-off Susan.

What to make out of the remains, the jeans and convention-gowns and sweaters? The job had no role-models for women, except the memory of one thirty-going-on-fifty spinster whose safe-little-wool-dresses reflected her safe, dull, approach to literature by safely dead people. (Canadian literature, at that; it has a terrible image I'm trying to change!) The city was midwest: casual and be-jeaned, in from the farm for implements -- or the ballet -- but the town itself seemed conservative, not used to style, even mistrustful of eastern, affected high fashion. Purple suede platform shoes and t-shirts with silver sequinned spiderwebs from Toronto would be as wrong for the environment as for my personality. . .

I made one high-necked beige-and-blue Viyella dress, just to play it safe. I wanted to make the one-year job permanent, not to offend anyone with my clothes or my ideas. I wore it once, to a department meeting.

Psychologically, it's fine to fight for an innovative sf class in a conservative dress; mustn't frighten the conservative curriculum committee. But it's all wrong to teach that class, sitting on the edge of the desk or crosslegged on the cushions in the experimental classroom, in a straight skirt. The conservatives took one look at me, I took one look at them, and we decided to leave each other alone. I soon discovered that I really was free, to be a person looking for her own style along with her own life. There are so many possibilities I'm just discovering. Like music: back to my old-folky past, but catching up on rock, and circling the fringes of the symphony and choral society when my friends are performing. So what clothes? committed folky jeans and workshirt, flared pants and purple sweater, silky elegant black blouse with the long skirt my Mum crocheted? There're all part of the experimental me.

So where does that leave me? All I know for sure is, I'm a costume freak, a little girl dressing up in Mummy's clothes -- literally, since my three favourite garments were Mum's: two beautifully-made '30's skirts, one in black satin for evening and one a midi-length plaid velvet that freaks out my classes; and an eighteen-year-old sweep of well-preserved muskrat, an embracing beastie named Woolff who keeps me warm.

And that, ultimately, is how I'm dressing these days: warm. Costumes are fine; protection is better. My main role is Regina Resident: someone who woke up on the third day of spring to hear the cheery radio announcer say it was twenty-nine degrees below zero, with winds to 30mph; someone who still can't open the back door because there's a four-foot snowdrift blocking it; someone who, sitting here on March 31, 1974 waiting for spring has just realized that. . .it's snowing again! My clothes say to the world: "I, Susan, like my body. I want to protect it and be comfortable in it." They say it with two layers of sweaters, a wool hat over my ears, heavy socks, boots, a fur coat. Flapper costumes, hoop skirts? Thank you, but I'd rather have an extra pair of mittens!

Jerry Kaufman, 622 W. 114th St., Apt 52A, New York, NY 10025

Ray Nelson asks Susan Wood Glicksohn why she doesn't wear costumes instead of clothing, without realizing that what Susan wears is a costume. In fact, everything is a costume now. Some of what he mentions is the costume of the fifties, some of the late sixties counterculture, some is of the wallfadinginto costume. Are there any clothes left alive? In the fifties, I think, clothes were so much alike that the costume aspect did disappear, then and there. Being alike they were ignored. Now different, they are studied. Even an attempt to blend stands out. So there is no clothes but costume.

What Ray really wants is to dictate his idea of costume to Susan.

I read my own article in the last issue first thing, because I wanted to see what I'd done. I notice that in my letter I think I've done something I didn't do; I didn't really come to grips with the different levels of reality the characters move through. I meant to bring out that there is a bedrock level of reality; George is based in it, and the Aliens move through it. What George changes are the different faces of this reality, so that his changes are not true changes. Like dressing a man in all sorts of clothes. When Haber tries dreaming it is like dressing a man in cement.

Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona, El Cerrito, Ca. 94530

My idea of flowing with the Tao is somewhat different from that of Jerry Kaufman and, it would seem, Ursula LeGuin.

To me flowing with the Tao is not being passive: it is being active in harmony with my inner nature. To force oneself to be passive or inactive is not be be with the Tao, but is the opposite of it. There is no forcing oneself in Taoism.

I feel I was with the Tao when I thought of the propellor beanie as a symbol for fandom and popularized it in my cartoons. There was no forcing. I didn't rack my brains. I saw that something like that was needed, and I supplied it. The flow of the Tao carried it out into the fannish world and made it such a permanent thing even I could not change it if I wanted to.

I was with the Tao in 1950 when I went to the University of Chicago, dwelling in a converted truck. At that time I was the only student living in a truck at that university, perhaps at any university. Now, in 1974, there are so many students living in trucks the Berkeley City Government (calling itself a radical government) has passed laws against it. I didn't force myself to live in a truck. It seemed like a good thing to do, so I did it.

I was with the Tao in 1950 when I let my hair grow down to the small of my back. I was the only student at that university who was both male and long-haired. Now it is so commonplace to wear long hair that I have stopped doing it.

I was with the Tao when I invented the Globbly, when I wrote what may well have been the first "New Wave" science fiction story, "Turn off the Sky", when, together with a few good friends, I founded The Brotherhood of the Way, first of the do-it-yourself churches. . .or any one of many other thing I could mention.

It is a great mistake to regard the man of Tao as passive: the man of Tao is passive only toward the Tao, the flow of creative force that acts through him. He is active toward the world-as-it-is. The world as-it-is is a dead, rigid thing, and the Tao grows through and around it, constantly changing it.

The man who is passive to the world is not the man of Tao, but a mere spineless jelly-fish, a follower of fads, a conformist. So is the man who tries to force things on the world not a man of Tao.

The man of Tao has a feeling for the organic flow of life, and makes himself the channel through which it flows. He is creative, aggressive, free.

But of course everything has its price. The man of Tao is unpopular, egotistical (in his way), and a misfit. Everyone suspects he's crazy. But he doesn't care. He just dances and sings his way through life, and the Tao itself is all the company he needs.

douglas barbour, 10808 - 75th avenue, edmonton, alberta,
canada t6e 1k2

i was most interested in jerrykaufman's article. i have thought about heather, but i dont know if i 'understand' her. reading le guin and russ for my thesis, especially le guin, got me into the Tao, which i really dig, & that led to me talking about it, but then, like kaufman, im no sage. however, i think he goes a littlefarther than i on a limb when he says he believes (id say 'i think') "that Orr causes a real change in the world, where I know that Orr changes illusions." that sure as hell isnt sage-like, i can tell you. i only think any of these things, & i dont know if im right or he is. nor do i think i'll ever know that. i read the book, now, as if Orr has changed "reality," but it's le guin, invented, fictional, reality. the reality of the novel, only. actually, what is really mind-expanding about stuff like the Tao, & novels like LATHE is the way they make it possible for one to question all realities, & even the concept of reality itself. i do it all the time, but i keep breathing right just in case.

Jackie Franke, Box 51-A, RR 2, Beecher, IL 60401

Someone recently wrote that they didn't enjoy Lathe of Heaven very much until someone pointed out all the Taoist references in it. I was surprised about that, as I found the novel very readable, and quite able to stand on its own without knowledge of any mystical basis. In fact, after reading Kaufman's analysis of it, I'm happy I read the novel first. If I'd been busy looking for all the tie-ins he mentions, I'd probably not have liked it half as well as I did. I do agree with his final paragraph though. I don't think his statement requires any background in Eastern thought to appreciate.

Re: Choo-choo Charlie. He was a cartoon character (vaguely drawn along the lines of Peanuts-style) used in commercials for Good-n-Plenty candy on TV. "Charlie says, get some Good-n-Plenty; Charlie says. . ." was sang in a little-child, nasal-toned voice as an accompaniment to scenes with kids playing train and using boxes of the candy to imitate the sound of a chug-chugging steam engine. They were shown in the Chicago area for ages it seems.

Alex's comments about early science fiction TV shows really turned the clock back for awhile! "Captain Video" never did interest me much, I like "Tom Corbett" and "Rocky Jones" much better. I watched both "Twilight Zone" and "Outer Limits" faithfully, and enjoyed them both, and I can't agree that TZ was "far superior to OL Better, yes, but not all that much.

George Fergus, 3341 W. Cullom Ave., Chicago, Il. 60618

I disagree somewhat with Sander's statement that what we actually like about series heros is that they do not question their roles and do not change as the series progresses. This may be true of John Carter and Jame Retief, but I don't think it really applies to the better series such as McGee. I know that I am usually glad to see the hero undergo an emotional shakeup or otherwise learn something that is not forgotten by the time the next book rolls off the presses.

Philosophy seems to be running rampant in Starling. The turgid article by "Lance Hardy" in #26 was bad enough, but Jerry Kaufman's summary of Taoism and The Lathe of Heaven piled on top of Richard Gordon's disjointed ramblings was quite enough to turn me off. I have never been fond of Mainstream critics who interpret the Meaning of a piece of Literature for the benefit of the masses, and I don't need anybody to explain Ursula LeGuin's novel to me either.

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

It's strange, I'd known right along that Bob Tucker was a projectionist, and yet it never occurred to me that he followed that trade at one particular theatre at a time, showing one or two individual movies each day, undergoing changes of employer and working conditions from time to time. It all seemed as vague as what we'll do when we get to heaven and sprout angel wings, and now I know all these things, having acquired that knowledge in the most entertaining manner imaginable. The article came at the precise moment in one sense because just last week I finally saw the John Ford version of Stagecoach for the first time, having missed it on a half-dozen previous TV runs because of a half-dozen calamities of one sort or another. I do wish Bob had tossed a few more morsels of information into his article which he apparently intended to include and overlooked, like his nomination for the best Ford movie if Stagecoach is second-best and the name of the Ronald Colman movie on which he worked in Hollywood, which I suspect was The Late George Apley.

Terry Hughes' "The Battered Beanie" scared me to death for the first few sentences because I feared it was about to beat me to the draw on something I want someday to write. Then it turned out that Terry wasn't picking on Travis McGee, so I'm able to dream safely of my forthcoming adventure for him, A Purple Place for Doodling. "The Battered Beanie" was very funny, and possessed the rare added virtue of a real plot. Students of the original John Berry and his Irish contemporaries who want to excel in their manner should note carefully that even their wildest flights of fancy were always built around a genuine plot with a beginning, development and conclusion.

Barry Gillam, 4283 Katonah Ave., Bronx, NY 10470

The best article by far is Bob Tucker's fond reminiscense of forty years as a projectionist. It's not a question of criticism, since I hardly think anyone would agree that Stagecoach is first rank Ford, not to mention his second best film. Tucker describes what it is like to live with films. That's what makes his job at Fox so moving -- he's gone to the source of all the images he has projected. And he's disappointed. That's marvellous. He prefers the projection equipment to the fakery of the studio -- that is, he's partial to the mechanics of successful illusion.

Angus Taylor's Ballard parody-cum-critique is delightful also. Taylor's vision of a Ballard hero mashed into a pulp by old magazines and then being filed among them creates a tantalizing circle. Because, of course, Ballard's protagonists consistently become the thing that obsesses them. And the absurdity of Ballard's automotive sexual fetish is shown up by the heroic breasts that run through "Crush!"

Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ont., M6P 2S3

It sobers me to see my wife's breasts a major topic in Starling while all I can manage is a cameo as a corpse in Terry's amusing fable; not even a walk-on, by ghu. There's got to be a moral there somewhere.

I can set the record straight on a couple of questions in re Chandler and Howard Hawks films mentioned, as far as my involvement was concerned.

My first job with Howard Hawks was on The Big Sleep.

Michael Carlson is incorrect in his assumption that William Faulkner had a small part in the writing of that screenplay; that Furthman probably wrote most of the dialogue; that I did most of the scenario. Mr Faulkner and I did the entire screenplay with which Mr Hawks went into production; we did alternate sections of the Chandler book, and neither one of us ever saw what the other had done. Much of Faulkner's dialogue was rewritten on the set, by Hawks, Bogart & Co. (not by me, I was on another picture then) because no actor born of woman could fit all those subjunctive clauses into his mouth; I was told at the time that this was standard practice for Faulkner's dialogue. He had, however, an awesome grasp of structure. Furthman was brought in when it was apparent that the picture was going to run greatly overlength, and he rewrote about the final third or so, to get it down to size.

Murray Moore is quite wrong about my having worked on To Have and Have Not; I did not. However, he is quite right in saying that there is a great resemblance between that film and some of the relationships in Rio Bravo, which I did work on with Jules Furthman. The reason is very simple. Mr Hawks began with the idea of simply turning THAHN into a western. The drunken deputy is a direct descendant of Eddie, with Stumpy as another aspect. The character of Feathers stems from as far back as another Hawks film, Underworld.

Grant Canfield's comments on The Long Goodbye were most interesting. Due to the extreme length and introspectiveness of the original book, plus the time element (WWII romance upon which entire plot was based did not translate well to a later war) necessitated, nay, absolutely forced a number of changes. However, I can say that there was a good bit more who-dunit-and-why in my script than got onto the screen. . .all directors absolutely hate expository scenes, where actors stand around and talk plot at each other, because they tend to be static. They hate them even when they're pared down to two succint irreducible lines. They forget them, purposely, which can be damaging to the structure of a mystery, and a source of screaming frustration to the writer. The script retained a surprising amount of my stuff, but I could have wished it might have retained just a wee bit more.

The Sterling Hayden part was originally written for Dan Blocker. All that dialogue, or most of it, was changed. . .Hayden and Blocker don't speak the same language, apart from being totally different types. . .and some lines were lost in the shuffle that might have clarified things, such as some musings on suicide. Ah, well. One cannot fault Mr Altman's brilliant direction, nor Elliott Gould's Marlowe. . .The thing that has to be understood when viewing the film is that it is not an attempt at another Big Sleep (which Chandler's book was itself emphatically not) but a sort of 1970's approach to a set of attributes and ideas which were fresh and new and brilliant in the '40's but have come to be cliches from the endless imitations and repetitions. The idiom has changed.

The film was a critical/boxoffice flop on the West Coast, in its original release; people went expecting another Big Sleep and didn't get it, and the purists among the reviewers were shocked. (One rave review in the REPORTER, bless it.) The New York critics loved it, and the film has done well. . .not exactly setting worlds afire, but holding its own. The new ad campaign undoubtedly helped, and I understand that that was Mr Altman's idea. It was a good one.

Michael Carlson, 35 Dunbar Rd., Milford, CT. 06460

The Long Goodbye is a fine detective film, and an impressive statement about just what Raymond Chandler's fallen angel hero is worth in the 70s. As a statement about Chandler it is excellent. . .as Chandler it is less than effective. It might have been my imagination, but Gould seemed to be trying to look like Bogart, and to my mind Bogart has always been Sam Spade, not Philip Marlowe. (Aside: Paul Newman, who was far too 'involving' to be an effective Lew Archer is now my front runner for Marlowe. Runner up: James Caan.) The romantic in me doesn't necessarily agree with Altman in the rejection of the slightly perverse worldview of Chandler, or the highly romantic view of Marlowe. Some of the changes are improvements, particularly the dropping of the hint of homo that Chandler has to throw in to try to explain Terry's betrayal of Marlowe; but TLG is a huge and involved book, and it loses much in transition to the screen. Some of the additions aren't all that impressive, particularly Mark Rydell as the hood and the neighbors of Marlowe's those yogaing sunbathing girls whom Philip would have paid no mind.

One thing I liked was Gould's tendancy to mumble, which fits Marlowe's character to the extent that anyone who narrates as he does must talk to himself.

So Altman, who has already declared the cowboy genre dead (McCabe & Mrs. Miller) and the war movie dead (Mash) has now declared the hard boiled dick dead, and buried him in the finest possible style. But I resent such a premature burial.

The Laughing Policeman switches Martin Beck and the boys out of Stockholm to San Francisco so they can do the obligatory chase scene that all detective films are required to present and screws up the characters completely -- since out of their Swedish context they don't have all that much relevance to American audiences. The worst part is, the casting is almost good. Matthau is passable as Beck, and Bruce Dern would have been perfect for a flashbacking Ake Stenstrom, the dead detective. As Kollberg he is all wrong and the character is switched to account for this. Larsson is changed to a very cool black guy. Which works for SF but not for Sweden.

Rosenberg tries to do a "realism" bit about the awfulness of the cities. It doesn't work in flashy San Fran. In Stockholm, done in the same straightforward manner as the novels, these glimpses of street scenes would work. Sjöwall and Wahlöö write in a style that is very consciously documentary although lately satire and even farce have been creeping in, and in Sweden this would work for a film.

Ditto Beck's private life. He is a classic Swedish case of the men wedded to his work, and his children are more or less typically Swedish and independent and beyond him. Swedish parents set their kids free at a very young age. This same difficulty, projected between Matthau and his son in the US carries far less weight.

The whole suspense part of the book is dropped -- we learn who the killer is very early and Stenstrom's clever clue under the blotter and in the pages of the sex book are not used. Neither is the very clever audio clue from the dying bus passenger. It could have been used very easily, but seeing the botch up job they did everywhere else, I wasn't surprised it wasn't.

Joe Sanders' column makes me want to dig up the rest of the Parker novels by Richard Stark (Donald Westlake). I unearthed 3 of them and read them, and they are excellent for that sort of stuff. Bob Tucker's piece was fascinating and brilliant. I've always envyed the tight projectionist's union and their high pay. One thing I do hate is the projectionist who uses a loud bell alarm to let him know when to wake up and change the reels.

Mike Deckinger, 649 16th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118

I don't think this was mentioned in your Raymond Chandler round up: The premiere feature, appearing on CBS' hour long CLIMAX show, in 1954, was Chandler's The Long Goodbye. Dick Powell played Marlowe and Teresa Wright also was in the cast. I never saw it myself, but knowing the level of competency attached to this show during its infant years, and also the fidelity with which they approached most adaptions, I would guess it worth at least the initial observation.

Neither The Long Goodbye, Harper or Sinatra's two execrable "Tony Rome" films took place in San Francisco. Will Straw must be thinking of Bullitt and a few others, that are shot here for two reasons: the lack of drastic climatic changes permits almost 10 months of uninterrupted shooting without breaks for snowstorms, sub-freezing temperatures, or hail, and also because the hilly terrain provides a setting for some nifty car chases. (Although there are hazards to this. Remember that wild chase at the end of Bogdanovich's What's Up Doc? At one point you see several cars coming racing down a series of stone steps, chipping away pieces of stone as they go. This was shot at a park not far from me called Alta Plaza. The scene was not rehearsed. Bogdanovich assured worried city authorities that the stone work was quite sturdy and could easily withstand the passage of several automobiles. He payed $25,000. for his misjudgement.)

The Laughing Policeman is a flawed film but since I saw it being shot all over the city I went to see it as soon as it opened. Note well a very brief scene near the end when Bruce Dern converses with a nurse at a funky restaurant. On screen this episode lasts about five seconds. In actuality it took the technicians two hours to set up lights, adjust reflectors, and rearrange scenery until everything was perfect. Then a complete interlude was filmed at the cafeteria, with persons getting in line, taking trays, bringing their orders to a table, all before Dern and his co-star took their cues. I know, I watched it all being done. At the beginning of the film, during the bus ride, the bus driver makes a detour that countless San Francisco drivers have been trying to do for years. He begins his run from the bus terminal on Mission Street, proceeds several blocks, then makes a turn and winds up in Chinatown, nearly ten blocks away.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: lots of kind people. The harsh realities of fanzine publishing (like, the cost of paper and postage) have forced me to keep this letter column much shorter than I would have liked. I'll be saving some letters in the hope that I'll be able to publish some of them next time. , Rick Dey, Andy Darlington, Jeff Kipper, Pete Colley, Eric Mayer, Don D'Ammassa, John Carl, Peter Roberts, Gary S. Mattingly, Gil Gaier (with one of the most unusual letter of comment that I've seen in a while), Sheryl Birkhead, Eric Lindsay, Paul Anderson, Leigh Edmonds, Buck Coulson, Ralph Alfonso.

URGENT

FOR ADULTS ONLY

RICHARD GORDON
LONDON, U.K.

existential

Dear Jean-Paul Sartre,

I have heard that you rank as the Charlie Parker of modern philosophy and wish to ask you a question: how is it that, unlike Charlie Parker, you are still alive? It seems to me that your continued existence contradicts your stated convictions. At least Charlie Parker had the decency to go out laughing. Can it be that you do not really believe yourself, and how does this fit into your scheme of things?

Yours, etc.

I do not expect to receive an answer. But receive one I do. One fine morning a plain brown envelope addressed to myself comes through the bathroom window. The envelope is marked URGENT, EXISTENTIAL, and FOR ADULTS ONLY, in heavy black felt-tip lettering. My name and address are typewritten in a neat hand which I feel sure belongs to the master himself. Ensuring that the gas is on and that a razor blade's close at hand, I open the envelope with trembling fingers. Out falls a thick sheaf of white quarto paper, folded twice, which I spread out on the kitchen table, brushing away brown bread crumbs as I do. The price of bread has recently risen to 15p a loaf, and it seems that Labour government subsidies will not succeed in pegging it down for long. The situation is desperate; I must find the solution before the collapse of the global economy. David Bowie gives us five years, Nostradamus tips 1999, but what does Jean-Paul Sartre have to say? Eagerly I scanned the first densely typewritten page. Then I realised a terrible mistake had been made.

Dear Hank (I read),

Thank you for sending me a copy of your most prestigious publication, Starling. I am, as you may know, always interested to dip into the thought-stream of modern occidental philosophy. It is good of you to remember an old illusion in his dotage, and I hope you will bear with me if I take issue with a number of matters raised in your magazine.

In particular, I feel that I must comment upon passages in your selection from CRUSH! I am not acquainted with the thought of M. Mallard, though I deduce from his style and subject matter that he may well enjoy a vogue among the young, particularly in the nursery schools of psychiatric institutions. While I find much of his studied infantilism altogether commendable in its fearless elucidation of dissociation, I am disturbed by the nihilism of his thought. Cartwright 'made his way downstairs and out into a new cosmos'. Why? Why bother? Why downstairs, to enter a new cosmos? Is Mallard a prophet of devolution? I observe a tendency to self-satire and to disbelief in his own statements run through this piece, and it further occurs to me that this

'Mallard" must surely be a nom-de-plume. For whom? Surely it is obvious. The cover gives the clue. Mallard is none other than your own famous Donald Duck! Have you realised this? Can cartoon characters gain autonomy in this increasingly fantastic world? Further, the political implications are sinister. It is said that the board reports of the Kinney Leisure Co. are printed in two languages - English, and Sicilian. If this is so - and is not entertainment the true modern opium of the masses? - what price Walt Disney, what price the world? Can it be long before capitalist entrepreneurs seize upon the figures of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck as fronts for mind-control and takeover? For half a century the western world has been indoctrinated into loving these figures. Now here, in 'Mallard''s piece, I see an attempt to propagate a philosophy of nihilistic infantilism, and I say: Beware! Be on your guard! Think again! We must be on our guard against the cranks and madmen who. . .

I could read no further. It was some dreadful mistake. I cut a slice of bread and found a scaping of butter, passing to eat and estimate the cost I came to the conclusion that I could afford a small tin of baked beans tomorrow week - if I was very careful. In the meantime I had the problem of this letter from Jean-Paul Sartre to consider. From Sartre it certainly was - a glossy magazine photo of him was stapled to the final page of the letter, it was signed in that same neat typewritten script - 'Best of luck and have a good time on that road to freedom - Jean-Paul Sartre'.

But intended for me it certainly was not.

Perhaps, I thought, he got his letters mixed up, so that the magazine Starling got the one meant for me, while I got this one meant for Starling. This set me to thinking.

Starling. Starling. Where had I heard that name before?

And what was the importance of Sartre's suspicion that the editor, perhaps all unconsciously had accepted for publication the underhanded propaganda of a fascist cartoon character? Was Sartre correct in believing that the Godfather had moved into Walt Disney already?

Of course, it did not escape me that this letter might in fact be Sartre's true reply to mine, Sartre's subtle existential joke, in fact, a ruse to set me thinking along positive lines. For in this it had succeeded already. Quite unconsciously I had put away the razor blade and turned off the gas, I could no longer afford the wasted expenditure of wishful thinking, and, drawing the curtains for the first time in weeks, I discovered that the sun was shining.

But still there was this matter of Starling. Either it was Sartre's fabrication, or it existed. If the latter, I had to get hold of a copy. I had to read Mallard's CRUSH! and see for myself if Sartre was right. If so, it might after all be possible to avert the catastrophe.

Immediately I wrote again to Sartre, explaining the situation as I saw it, requesting elucidation and Starling's editorial address. In a week my letter was back with a covering note from Sartre's Paris publisher, which said: (translated)

Dear Sir:

We regret to inform you that M. Sartre has severed his connection with us and can no longer be reached at this address. We enclose a copy of our current list, and hope that (etc).

It was obvious what had happened. And if my guess was correct, Sartre's life was in danger. Perhaps he was dead already. If his hunch about the Disney takeover was correct, and he had already aired his views, they would not let him live to air them much longer. I rushed out for a newspaper. It was there. Front-page. A picture of him, and beside it, the news. PHILOSOPHER DEAD: HEART-ATTACK. I felt a stab of despair, and almost threw the paper away there and then. But it cost 4p, it had gone up another penny, toilet rolls were scarce and expensive. I read on. Just as well. Near the bottom of the brief piece it mentioned that the philosopher had been found dead in his deckchair with a rolled-up copy of a magazine called Starling in his rigidly-closed left

hand. All attempts to open the fist and pry the magazine loose had failed so far, but further efforts were expected to be successful.

Now I knew that Starling existed. And still I was sure I'd heard of it before. Then in a flash I remembered! The science fiction convention!

Once, years earlier, by mistake I'd stumbled into a hotel occupied by a horde of curious people living in the future. Realising myself to be on quite the wrong plane (I was supposed to be helping Danton out against Robespierre and his mob, a bum job, as it turned out, though Danton put up a good defence when it came to it) I started to stumble out again. But not before a bearded beanie confronted me at gunpoint, demanding I buy a copy of his magazine. It was Starling. 'Not now, I'm in a hurry,' I said, and tried to push past.

He pulled the trigger. I shut my eyes. I heard laughter, and opened my eyes to see a flower, which had popped out of the end of the barrel. That was '67 - 1967. The good old days.

All this I remembered there on the street. An hour later I was writing to a prominent writer of science fiction, requesting the address of Starling.

A week later I received a letter from his wife, saying that she was sorry, but Arthur had been swallowed by his brain-child from Saturn, only a week earlier.

So they had got to him too! Did they know about me yet? I went to a showing of Snow-White and The Seven Dwarves and laughed all the way through, just in case I was being tailed; I didn't want them to think I was suspicious of Disney - yet.

I wrote to another famous science fiction writer.

A week later I received a letter from his wife, saying that Isaac had bought a house without foundations, and it had collapsed on him, only a week earlier.

This was getting serious. There was not much time. Then I remembered something else. Of course! How could I have been such a fool? That time at the science fiction convention, I had actually bought a copy of Starling. Where was it? Had I thrown it out?

All night I searched feverishly through the attic, flinging aside Grateful Dead albums and books of eastern wisdom. Near dawn I found it. Tattered and torn - but whole. And I wrote to the editorial address in St. Louis.

DEAR HANK LUTTRELL,

PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF YOUR MAGAZINE, THE ISSUE WITH THE EXTRACT FROM THE STORY BY G.J. MALLARD. I AM INTERESTED IN MALLARD'S WORK AND FIND AFFINITIES IN IT WITH MY OWN. I ENCLOSE A MONEY ORDER TO THE SUM OF $1 TO COVER COST -

YOURS SINCERELY,
JIM BALLARD.

I waited anxiously, nay, nervously, for a response. I did not have to wait long. The morning after I had sent the request, I answered a knock at the door. The polaroid-shaded man outside handed me a large brown envelope which was marked URGENT, EXISTENTIAL and FOR ADULTS ONLY, in heavy black felt-tip lettering. 'Monsieur Sartre?' he enquired in a voice thick with Italian, or perhaps Sicilian, intonation.

'You're mistaken?' I said, 'my name is Ballard.'

He looked at me, puzzled, and put away the automatic pistol with which he had been about to shoot me between the eyes.

'You are sure?'

'Quite sure!'

"In that case," he said, snatching back the large brown envelope and turning to to leave, 'this is not for you.'

And he started away down the street. I scratched my brow. There was something damned queer going on. I had to have that Starling. I took a chance. I ran after the messenger, caught him by the shoulder.

'There has been a case of mistaken identity,' I panted, 'I am Sartre, and you must be Ballard, don't you want to know why?'

He scratched his forehead with the automatic pistol. 'Ballard?' he said disbelievingly. "I thought I was Dick Tracy.'

I took advantage of his existential confusion and grabbed the large brown envelope from his nerveless fingers. I tore it open. A magazine tumbled out. The cover artwork caught my eye immediately. Yes, it was all there. The name: STARLING, bold against a pebbled background. And the art... 'Look!' I caught his arm, directed his attention to the top left panel. 'See there! Dick Tracy! This is the source of your confusion.' He stared. And the other two panels caught my eye. One a scene from 2001. The other...Donald Duck stared out of it. In that instant I knew that Sartre was correct, and that inside, in the Mallard piece, I would find the answer.

Then I realised that I was covered by the pistol again. Dick Tracy lit a cigarette. His cold eyes glared at me. He removed his shades and put them away. He tapped the drawing of Donald Duck. 'Now I remember,' he grated, finger tightening on the trigger.

I lunged. The world exploded. I spiralled into blackness.

Much later I came to in hosptial. My recovery was long and slow. I asked for reading matter. The nurse brought me a copy of Starling.

'It was found beside you where you collapsed,' she said.

"Collapsed? .Wasn't I shot?'

She looked at me oddly. 'No,' she said, trying to make light of it. 'Just another case of urban psychosis. We get them all the time.'

'Oh," I said, and watched her leave the ward, trying to decide if she really wore a Minnie Mouse head, or if it was just me. Perhaps it didn't matter. I settled back and read Starling from cover to cover, including the Mallard piece. When I had finished, I called for the nurse, and asked for writing materials.

'You can dictate to me,' she said, 'you must rest.'

'I really would prefer to write it myself.'

'Hospital regulations,' she said.

'Okay,' I shrugged.

'Fire away,' she said.

Dear Hank,

I've enjoyed reading Starling 27. Some strange things have been happening this end, and the price of bread is ridiculous, but nothing that can't be put right. I hope to be out of here in some months, perhaps late summer, but everything depends on good Doctor Fate who runs this joint. And he says it's all up to me. Maybe he's right. Perhaps I'll get over to the States this summer. I hope so. It depends as much upon the price of bread as anything. This current scene is winding to a conclusion, you can't go on doing the same things over and over forever. . .or can you? Nothing stays static, it seems we move or get moved, and amen to that. When the floating's over, the ground must get dug. (Jean-Paul Voltaire.) And Manchester United have been relegated to the Second Division of the Football League for the first time in 36 years. It's a very strange world we live in.

'Did you get all that?' I asked.

My secretary nodded and closed the shorthand pad, crisply uncrossing her legs as she did. We smiled.

'I thought I was Jean-Paul Sartre,' I said after a while.

She didn't spoil her smile by speaking.

'I thought you were a Minnie Mouse nurse.'

She was used to this sort of thing and she was very well paid.

'I thought I was in the hospital of Doctor Disney Fate.'

"Aren't we all, Mr. Rothschild,' she said.

We both smiled. But I had a lot to do.

'Have you booked for that New York flight?' I demanded

'A ticket's open anywhere anytime you care to go,' she murmured, as the telephone rang. She picked it up, after a moment she passed it over the leather inlaid desk to me. 'A Mr. Luttrell,' she said, 'speaking from Madison, Wisconsin.'

'Hello...Hank...How are you...How's Lesleigh...what? - the line's terrible - yes. Ah! So what are you doing? Australia or Europe? Well, you know if you come over here you'll have a good time. Ascot! Henley Regatta! Cricket at Lords! Grouse-moors in Scotland on the Glorious Twelfth...what? What? Disney? My God! I thought he was dead! Well....I don't know. Sartre? Uh-uh. Not now. That's right, Rothschild. Penthouse office and all. Well, it makes a change. Conspicuous affluence and all that. What next? Well, I don't know. Philip K. Dick? Why not? Must be plenty of people getting confused with him...yes...yes...yes. Well, let us know what's happening. I've written to you, from hospital, or wherever I was ten minutes ago. Yep, it all goes round and round...okay...stay well...bye-bye, see you when I do.'

I stared at the telephone kiosk in the high street. Saturday afternoon shoppers bustled all about, traffic inched angrily. The tail-end of an imagined conversation drained from my mind. I went out, ignoring the record-store which had new discs by Lou Reed, Canned Heat, Van Morrison, and a host of others in the window. I left the high street and turned down an alleyway. Some feet along it, I stopped. On the brick wall, someone had sprayed, in great white letters, the Dylan lines -

'There must be some way out of here,'
Said the Joker to the Thief...'

I looked along the alley, and realised it was a cul-de-sac, ending in a broken-down garage where broken-down cars were broken down. I looked again at the writing on the wall. Then I shook my head, and turned back to the high street. It was Saturday, and it wasn't worth worrying about. I caught a bus and went round to see a friend, we drank tea, watched colour tv, and later went to see Fantasia.

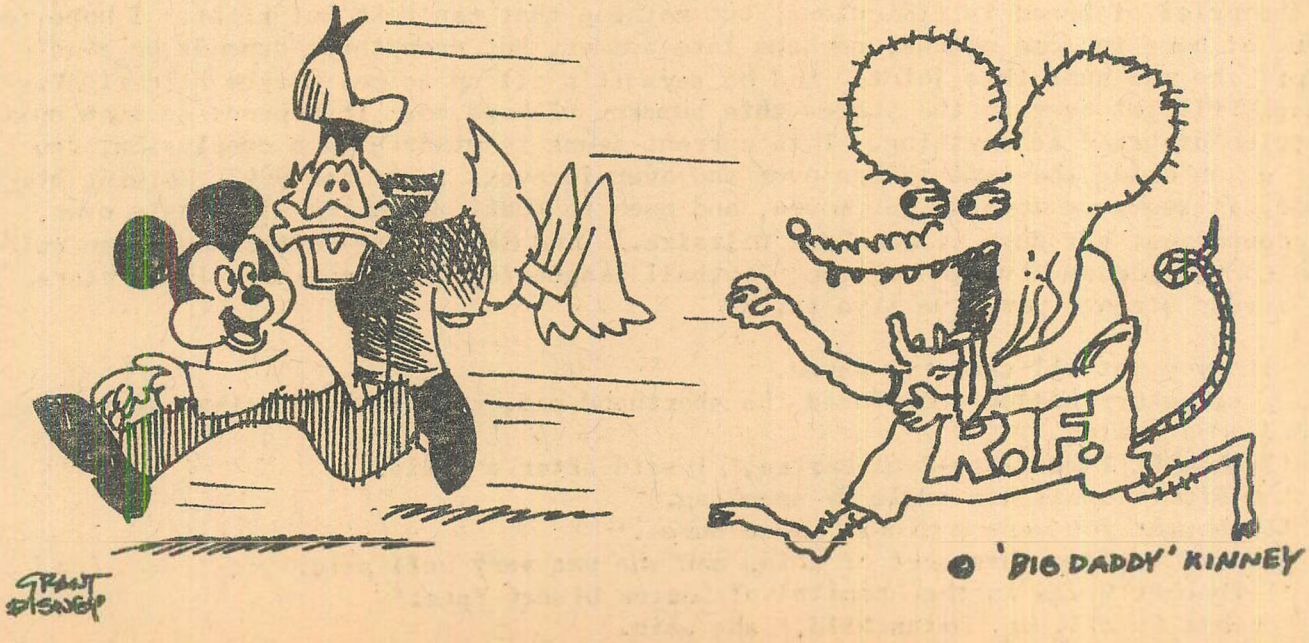
When we came out, there was a riot going on.

'There's too much confusion,' she said as we went home on the bus.

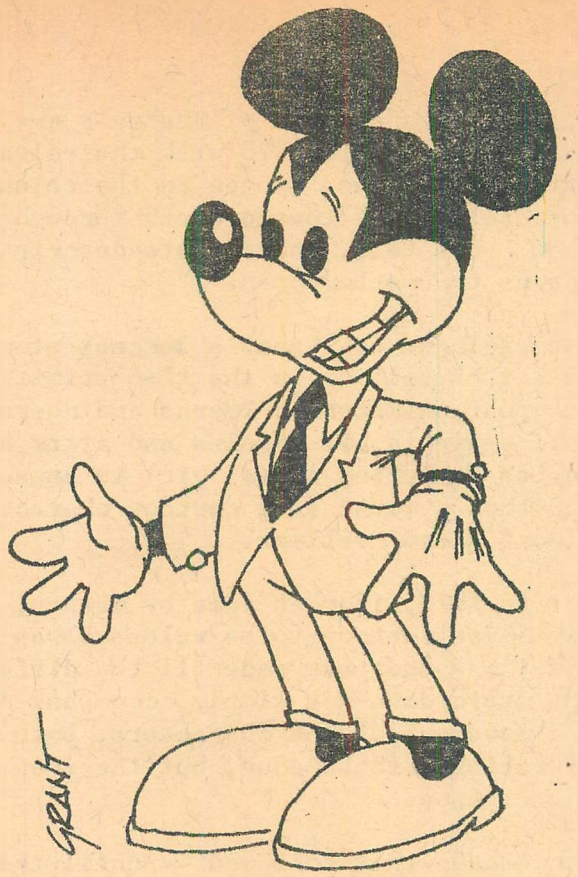
'Right,' I agreed, 'and we must find some relief.'

We looked at each other and burst out laughing and didn't stop until it was time to get off the bus.

Amen.



DISCOVERED: WALT DISNEY



+ Barry Gillam +

Walt Disney has been discovered! Who would have imagined it? Most visible and yet most widely ignored of filmmakers, Disney was the subject of a Fiftieth Anniversary Film Retrospective at Lincoln Center in July and August and is now being considered in three new books. "Discovered" may not seem the right word, Several generations have dreamed Disney dreams and millions still see his films every year. For Disney has been discovered as America was discovered; bustling with life, the seat of several cultures, a heedless new world. Walt Disney productions now grosses over $300 million a year. Criticism can neither help it nor hurt it.

The retrospective, which was the first and probably the only that the studio will allow, was treated in the New York Press as a vaguely humorous outgrowth of the world's largest kiddie show. Not that one is surprised. For Disney, like John Ford, has long been part of the "other underground" -- the filmmaker whose commercially successful, industry-approved and heartland-supported Oscar winners have been damned with faint praise in sophisticated New York City. Ford, greatest of American directors, has been "rediscovered" in recent years but his native audience is still that of men like Richard Nixon, who recently declared, with ludicrous sincerity (and a total disregard for the facts), that he had seen "virtually all of the 140 Ford movies."

Disney's work remains in a precritical limbo: rereleases of his early films make millions every year, but critics balk at evaluating such popular but unfashionable work. In 1968, Richard Schickel actually apologized for writing his book The Disney Version by claiming he was really concerned with the American public that Disney "represented and served." But the three current books feel no such taint of slumming. Leonard Maltin's The Disney Films and Christopher Finch's The Art of Walt Disney: From Mickey Mouse to the Magic Kingdoms have already appeared and yet to come is John Culhane's Magic Mirror: the First World History of the Animated Film. I have read none of them but if the critical introductions at the Retrospective by Culhane and Finch are any indication, we can anticipate two witty, very intelligent and vastly informative books.

Is Disney an animator's John Ford? No and yes. No first, because of the variable quality of the work his studio has produced -- extremely high in the thirties and early forties but merely expert, merely charming and entertaining after that. But yes. Yes, because Disney in the early days was the kind of intuitive, shrewd American artist that Ford was. Yes, because he created a new world out of old myths and personal style. Yes, because he had the energy and talent and the cunning to make it to his own specifications and then sell it for his own profit. And yes, because when he used the talents of other men, he chose the right men.

* * *

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The traditional view of Disney's art, of his animated films, that is, suggests a rocket that takes off in 1928 with the release of Steamboat Willie, that soars up through the thirties, reaches apogee in the release of Snow White (1937) and Pinocchio (1940) and then falls back toward earth through the forties and fifties. And this is, from all that I can tell, an accurate description, but the unavailability of so many films still leaves the matter open.

The prologue to Disney's success story takes place in Kansas City in the twenties, where he set himself up in the then primitive animation business, where he met the soon-to-be great animator Ub Iwerks and where, in 1923, he went bankrupt. He established himself again in Los Angeles and after a long and, from the remaining evidence, dreadful series featuring a real girl in an animated world, he hit on the idea of first a rabbit and then a mouse as a cartoon character. The rabbit was named Oswald and the mouse was almost named Mortimer.

For in 1927, from an idea by Disney, Ub Iwerks first drew Mickey Mouse, The first Mickey Mouse cartoon to be released was the third drawn but the first to have a soundtrack. And the soundtrack made all the difference. For in Steamboat Willie and its children, the music does not simply accompany action or suit a scene, it describes and defines the movement of the characters, both physically and dramatically. Oh, there was a lot of refining to be done, but the idea was there; the score was an integral dimension of the cartoon.

The decade that followed -- until the first feature in 1937 -- was the golden decade for the Disney Studios and is considered by some writers their greatest moment just as other critics prefer Chaplin's shorts to his features. For in both, we see a sensibility, a creative force in the process of discovering itself, of creating itself. And it is no accident that the Disney animators studied Chaplin's films (especially One A.M.) to better understand comedy and comic motion.

During the thirties, Disney had everything except financial security. Not only were his films wildly popular but intellectuals from Edmund Wilson to Sergei Eisenstein acclaimed him. The two series -- Mickey Mouse and The Silly Symphonies -- contain almost all the elements that are to be found in the great features, but compressed into less than ten minutes. The qualities that are now taken for granted in cartoons were largely, it seems, created by Disney in the thirties: the marriage of sound and motion, the creation of a sustained animated character, a story rising out of and illuminating character rather than a collection of gags, and the regularization of animated style.

The stories are often moral tales, especially the Silly Symphonies (The Three Little Pigs, The Tortoise and the Hare, The Grasshopper and the Ants, etc.) Like many another storyteller, Disney is always most satisfied with himself when the tasty delight of the cookie yields a pithy fortune. The message tends to be that of the farmer: hard work and proper planning will see you through.

The main characters, of course, are animals: Mickey, Donald, Goofy, et al. The reason is not only that animals are supposedly easier to animate and easier to caricature, but also, as Disney once wrote, that an animal, unlike a person, reacts with its whole body. Emotion is expressed physically. It can be drawn. Where a man smiles to express joy, Pluto runs and leaps and howls.

And contrary to Schickel, the mechanical quality that the animals are often endowed with is a wonder rather than a horror. A dachshund is used as a rubber band to power a plane, an owl as a siren, a caterpillar rolls itself up into a wedding ring. Just as Buster Keaton nonchalantly clips his cigar using the claw of his lobster dinner. Or, for that matter, just as Alice plays croquet using a flamingo as a mallet and a hedgehog as a ball. In all three cases there is a wonderful sense of the imagination at play, of the resourceful, inventive mind.

Again, as in Carroll's world, where Alice's leg of mutton bows to her before she can eat it, Disney animates the inanimate. Cars, planes and trains gather themselves up like animals before springing out onto the road or into the air. Doors respond physically to knocking by bellowing in and out.

Each of these correspondences is another step toward their logical conclusion: a kind of pathetic fallacy in which there is a broad general sympathy between the ambient and the sentient. In Disney's cartoons, nature is a mirror held up to his characters, even when the characters are already a part of the natural world. In Flowers and Trees (1932) the villain is a lecherous, stunted tree accompanied by two vultures, an objective, and visual correlative of his evil. After he is defeated, they swoop down on him as other vultures were later to do so memorably in Snow White. The unnatural Skeleton Dance (1929) is preceded by thunder and lightening and in a most magical instance, the music that Mickey conducts in The Band Concert (1935) seems to draw the cyclone which, like disruptive Donald, joins the band and accompanies the music in a process suggesting an innate harmony of means and purpose between nature -- the hurricane as well as the nightingale -- and the arts.

In 1937 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was released. Drawing on all the resources of the young, enthusiastic Disney studio, it is a unique film. Unlike the postwar films, every sequence is directed and drawn and written as if it had to stand on its own as a short. One is constantly amazed at the energy of the invention in Snow White and Pinocchio, at the wealth of detail that all, thanks to Disney's extraordinary story sense, contributes to the main tale. Snow White is a thirties fairy tale operetta, bursting with music and song (Whistle While You Work, Some Day My Prince Will Come, Heigh Ho, etc.) The heroine is a sweet anonymous girl, who looks vaguely like Loretta Young and sings distinctly like Jeanette MacDonald. (You can always tell the decade of a Disney film by the acting style of the heroine.) But around her is a rich, dramatic world: the splendidly realized, beautiful and evil Queen, all in red and black, the voice of the magic mirror, a chilly omniscient tragedian's mask, the timid, friendly forest animals who portray Snow White's emotions and, of course, the Seven Dwarfs, bumbling, child-like men who dig diamonds out of the raw earth for no clear purpose.

All of the characteristics of the shorts are expanded in Snow White. The wicked queen is punished, not only for her attempts on her step-daughter's life, but also fundamentally, for her vanity. The characterization of numerous animals and all the dwarfs is carried out almost effortlessly by means of the drawings, movement, color and voice of each. The forest animals cheerfully offer themselves as domestic tools: a squirrel's tail is a brush, a bird's beak is a knife to trim the crust on a pie. When the queen turned crone makes her final attempt on Snow White's life, the elemental forces themselves protest. She is defeated more by the thunderbolts thrown at her than by the dwarfs. But when the dwarfs return to find Snow White in the sleeping death, the lashing storm turns to soft, gentle, sad tears of rain.

Pinocchio (1940), the Disney Studio's second feature, benefits from the experience of Snow White and is, if possible, even better. Once again dealing with shrewd archetypes -- a son's need to prove himself to his father -- Pinocchio is not only an adventure story and the tale of a boy's growing up, but also a moral lexicon and a kind of Pilgrim's Progress. And what Pinocchio lacks in song compared to Snow White (even considering When You Wish Upon a Star, the most inspired of all Disney songs), it more than makes up for in assured full-bodied animation and a rousing story. If this were not enough, Ub Iwerks' multiplane camera (used in shorts as early as 1937), gives Pinocchio a surprising illusion of depth, making one feel that the night-blue, sleeping village of Geppetto was actually constructed on some Hollywood back lot.

Pinocchio is a dark, almost nightmarish reflection of Snow White. In the first feature,

a populous and benevolent natural world protects Snow White from the single personification of evil. But in Pinocchio the situation is reversed. Pinocchio, Jiminy Cricket and Geppetto are outnumbered, overpowered and all but outwitted by the rogue's gallery of con men and thugs: the fox J. Worthington Foulfellow and his accomplice, feline Gideon, the gross puppetteer, the jolly coachman, Lampwick, a junior Public Enemy, and finally Monstro, the whale whose purposeful evil seems a cruel, almost redundant joke in a creature that wrecks havoc with its smallest, most innocent motions.

The visual and narrative skills of the Disney Studio had become so accomplished that one short scene (Pinocchio's nose growing as he lies) is usually remembered as several. And the terror of Pleasure Island, on which hooky-playing boys pay for this tiniest, least criminal of crimes by being turned into donkeys destined for a life of labor, is so potent that I seem to have carried it around in the back of my memory for years without even associating it with the picture.

But Pinocchio was not the box office success that Snow White had been and coupled with Disney's artistic pretensions, this explains the features released in the following years: Fantasia (1940), a cold, lumpy cultural stew except for Mickey's Sorcerer's Apprentice; Dumbo (1941), with a couple of good song numbers and a couple of interesting characters in a lachrymose tale of mother love; Bambi (1942), a lovely pastorale which unfortunately attempts to recapture the joy of Snow White and takes on, at moments, a cloying coyness. That one generally likes sequences in these films rather than the films themselves indicates the fall from the achievement of the first two features.

The Studio was still producing shorts and two made during the war are as good as any of the thirties: The New Spirit (1942), in which stingy Donald is persuaded that it is patriotic to pay his income tax early; and Der Fuehrer's Face (1943) in which Donald has a nightmarish vision of what it means to be a Nazi. His Germany is constructed entirely out of swastikas and he is set impossible tasks making weapons. He finally wakes up in American flag pajamas, much to his relief -- only to see the shadow of a soldier giving the fascist salute, which turns out, grotesquely, to be cast by a miniature Statue of Liberty on the windowsill.

In the fifties, the animated shorts are discontinued and the animated features are subordinated to other aspects of Disney's world. The studio was still in the financial doldrums and it was only through a multiple coup of unbelievable foresight that intthe mid-fifties Disney Productions hit the road to unlimited success: in 1953, the establishment of their own distributing arm, Buena Vista; in 1954, the beginning of the television series; in 1955, the opening of Disneyland; and throughout these years, the advent of the mass produced live-action film.

With all this other activity, the thinness of the fifties features is understandable. Disney was no longer willing to pay for the rich, detailed animation of the thirties, he was no longer personally involved to the extent of shaping a film's story or taking enough care to redraw to perfection and after the hard feelings surrounding the 1941 strike, Disney's employees were no longer willing, as they had been in the thirties, to work overtime with only vague promises of future bonuses or, more importantly, to strive with a personal concern to create the best animation in the world.

Still, the virtues of these films should not be lost. Cinderella (1950) runs to an exciting climax, with the help of some wonderful mice. Disney's rereading of Alice in Wonderland (1951) is pleasant and rather beautiful if rather bland. Peter Pan (1953) is a nice if airless blending of children's adventure stories, but aimed at an oddly older age group (note the many nubile girls claiming Peter's attention.)

Disney's attempt to return to large scale animated features was Sleeping Beauty (1959), some six years and six million dollars in the making. It is lavishly, overpoweringly beautiful, in a wide screen 70mm process and breathtaking color. The studio even essayed a new departure in style, approximating a stylized illuminated manuscript. And at least one sequence -- the climactic battle between the Prince and Maleficent become a dragon -- is as good as anything Disney has done. But the story and the character animation are very weak. Half of the characters are pulled straight out of earlier Disney films and only a few of these succeed. The film bombed so badly at the box office that all of Disney Productions' new moneymakers could not keep it out of the red in 1959.

In Fritz the Cat, Ralph Bakshi bid a malicious goodbye to Disney by showing the silhouettes of Mickey, Minnie and Donald cheering on the bombers destroying Harlem. But his depiction of Disney's success as corporate overkill is belied by our knowledge of the young, vibrant and only precariously solvent studio of the thirties and also by the dull, self conscious movie that Bakshi offered in place of Disney. I have not seen any recent Disney films but Robin Hood has recently opened and I look forward to finding out what the studio is up to.

The Disney retrospective was a cultural event whose importance will only be seen in the coming years as those who were awakened to Disney's achievement begin to reevaluate his films. Like the first comprehensive Buster Keaton festival in 1970, this retrospective has made visible a body of art so much greater than the faded memories of childhood. It is time that the joys and the genius of Disney were experienced by adults -- for there is so much more to the films than children can ever appreciate.

THE McDUCK PAPERS

+ Steve Grant +

Among the few faults inherent in the Barks biography of Scrooge McDuck and his relatives is that Barks refuses to go into great detail about the specific relationships of the characters to one another. However, since the retirement of Scrooge McDuck in 1968, certain private papers have come to light, revealing the true relationships of the characters in the McDuck saga.

In the early 1900s, Scrooge's brother and sister immigrated to America, but Scrooge was left behind due to his youth, and stayed in Scotland until his mother died several years later. In America, Scrooge's siblings had fates common to many immigrants. His sister lived in the slums of New York with friends while his brother vanished, probably to the more enticing west coast. There in New York, his sister met and married a middle class working goose, who turned out to be the brother of Gladstone Gander's mother. The marriage did not last, however, as the goose died with a year after the wedding, leaving Scrooge's sister with a reasonable inheritance. Several years later, she met Donald's father, the son of Grandma Duck, and suffered for a number of years with him as he chased younger ducks and squandered her small amount of money on liquor. After Donald's birth he seems to have absconded, leaving Mrs. Duck to raise Donald by herself with some help from Grandma Duck. It was the ill that had befallen the rest of his family that gave Scrooge his obsession for success when he reached this country as a young duck.

Donald's mother died before Donald met Gladstone Gander, and it was not until years later that Scrooge revealed that Gladstone's aunt was Donald's mother. Unwittingly, Donald and Gladstone had become good friends during high school, until, with the appearance of Daisy Duck in their senior year, they became bitterest rivals. Each wooed Daisy for months. On graduation night, Donald finally seduced Daisy, followed shortly afterword by Gladstone Gander's similar success. Daisy was too intoxicated by that time to remember the incident with Gladstone, and so it was Donald whom she claimed was the father when she discovered she was pregnant. Donald had used contraceptives; Gladstone was the real father.

Donald arranged to have Daisy spend her pregnancy at Grandma Duck's farm. She secretly gave birth to triplets: Huey, Dewey and Louey. The experience of childbirth was especially traumatic for Daisy, and she spent several years thereafter in a mental institution, where she removed all memories of the incident from her mind.

Grandma Duck raised the triplets for eight years, and then sent them into the city to live with Donald, who had secured a reasonably well paying job, Donald, interestingly enough, tells the story that his sister, Della, sent them to him to be taken care of while their father was in the hospital. Their father seemingly, if the story had been true, never recovered from his illness. But there is no evidence that Donald ever had a sister, and he probably invented the story to cover the illegitmate birth, and to prevent Daisy from suffering a relapse of her mental condition.

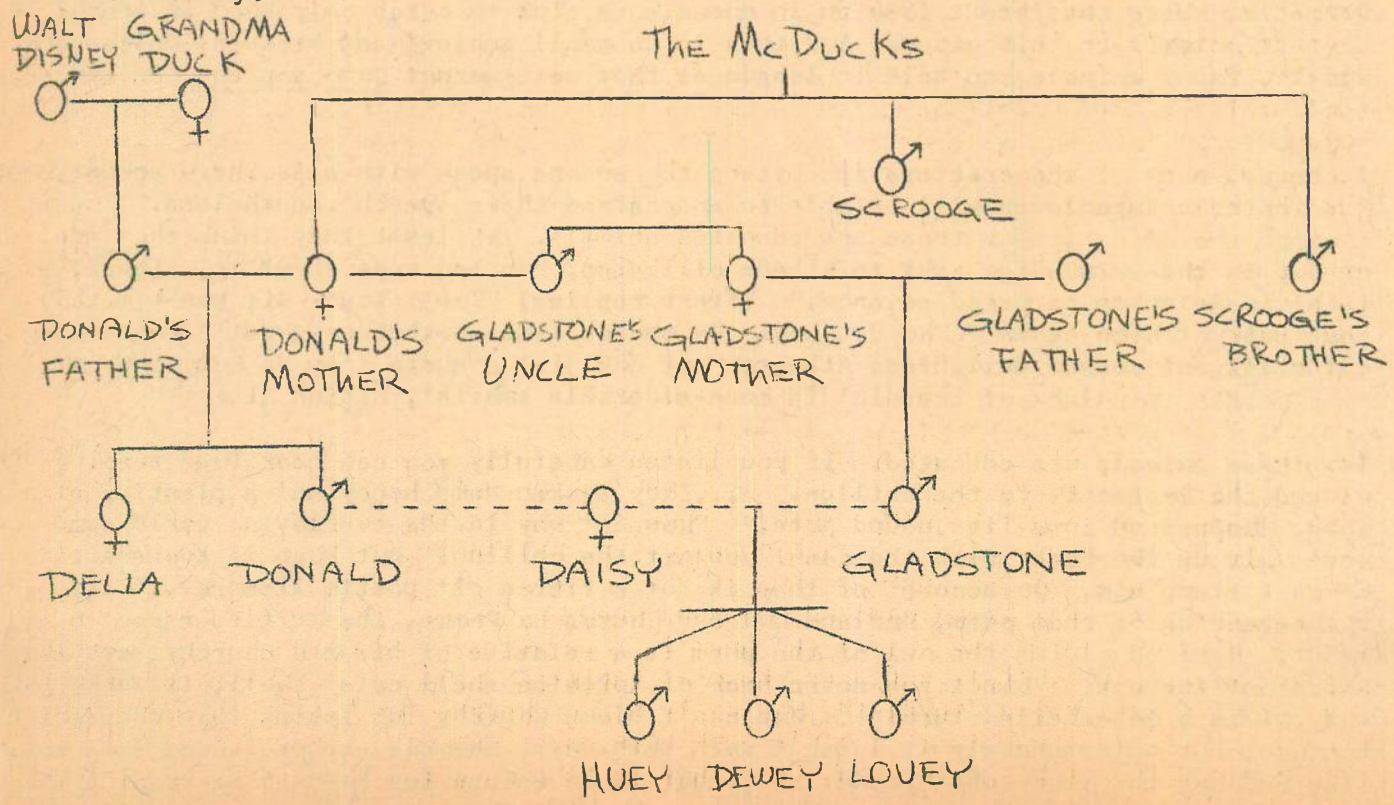
Daisy, coincidentally, reappeared in Donald's life in the same month that he took custody of Huey, Dewey, and Louey. Donald and Daisy started their romance again, although

Daisy, somewhat feeble minded, hardly ~~remembered~~ any details of the previous affair. The new romance was interrupted by, of all people, Gladstone Gander, who reappeared with the interesting and, for Donald, horrifying news that he was the sole heir to Scrooge McDuck's fortune. Gladstone used his newfound position to win Daisy's affections and lure her away from Donald.

It was true. Scrooge McDuck, now one of the richest ducks in the world and getting richer by the minute, had invested some money in finding traces of his family in America. The detectives that he had hired had traced his sister's marriage to Gladstone's uncle, but had not yet discovered that she had remarried Donald's father. A few months later, Donald was discovered to be the direct heir to the McDuck fortune. He then quit his job, thinking that he would be able to live off of his new found uncle. Donald has since gone from job to job, awaiting his inheritance.

Complications arose when Donald took Daisy to visit Grandma Duck on the farm. Faint memories restored themselves in Daisy's mind, and although she could not recall details. She remembered that she had seen some children that were related to her on the farm, and later visited Grandma Duck privately. Knowing what the truth would do to Daisy, Grandma told her that she and her sister's family had been in a car accident near the farm, and that only Daisy and her three nieces had survived. Daisy had temporarily gone crazy as a result of the accident, and the nieces had been placed in an orphanage. With the help of Donald and Scrooge, Grandma had all the evidence doctored before Daisy could investigate, and after months of searching, found three girls who could play the parts of the nieces, April, June and May. Daisy wanted the girls to come and live with her. The girls draw a salary from Scrooge for the impersonation and have actually grown fond of Daisy.

All this information correlates with the official Barks biography of the ducks. There are many incongruities with the non-Barks biographies, but it is well known that these are composed of many highly erroneous and sometimes completely fictitious accounts of the duck family.



FUNNY ANIMALS OF NORTH AMERICA

(A Guide to the Odd and Amusing Fauna of American comic books)

+ Lesleigh Luttrell +

Most people are unaware of many of the amazing wonders of nature which can be found on the North American continent. Flora and fauna of every description live here, and yet most people do not take the trouble to look around them and really see these creatures. The group of animals most commonly overlooked, even by nature lovers, is that odd collection known colloquially as 'funny animals'. These creatures can be found in every part of our country yet few people, except for children, take the time and trouble to observe these amazing animals. For those of our readers who wish to become acquainted with some of these native animals, we publish the following guide which should enable you to observe them in their native habitats.

Swamps: One of the oddest assortment of funny animals to be found in North America inhabit the swamps of the south, particularly the Okeefenokee and the pages of Animal Comics and Pogo Possum. Perhaps the most unusual thing about this group is the fact that one of its most prominent members is a marsupial, an opossum named Pogo. In fact this is perhaps the most all-encompassing group of funny animals, including as it does reptiles (alligators, turtles), birds (owls), a large assortment of mammals, and even fish and insects. In keeping with the North American possum's place on the evolutionary ladder, as the only marsupial ever to make a success of life in competition with placental mammals (other marsupials manage to eke out livings only in the boondocks, Australia, where the latest fashion in mammals is slow to catch on), Pogo is one of the smartest animals in this group. And this is no small achievement because, unlike most animals, funny animals can talk in languages that we ignorant Homo sapiens can understand.

Of course, many of the critturs inhabiting the swamps speak with a Southern accent, but a dedicated nature lover will be able to understand their speech nonetheless. And it is worth the effort. For these are educated animals. At least they think they are. One day in the swamp Pogo says to Albert alligator, "no two ways 'bout it, Albert, livin' in de swamp is paradise enow." Albert replies, "You! You - wif you big talk 'bout pair o' dice eenow - Who dat boy? He sounds like another no-good!" Pogo being an intelligent possum enlightens Albert, "Dat was jis' a quote f'um de Ruby-eyes of Homer Kayak! You lack of breedin' is conn-siderable amazin', Mistuh Albert!"

Yes, these animals are educated. If you listen carefully you can hear Pogo reading "The Owl and the Pussycat" to the chillun. "...They tooken some honey an' a plenties of money, Whopped up in a five pound note." "How an' why in the everlovin' world come they's mix up the honey with the cash!" object the chillun. But Pogo is too smart to let that stump him, "On account of they is got a fierce ol' poetic license..." To aid in the reading of the poem, Howland Owl and Churchy La Femme, the turtle, agree to act it out. Howland claims the owl of the poem is a relative of his and Churchy says the same about the cat. "Din't you never hear of tortoise shell cats? Well, it works both ways...I is a cat-shelled turkle!" One can't blame Churchy for taking this chauvinistic attitude, but unfortunately it doesn't work both ways; mammals are descended from reptiles and not the other way around. But that is no excuse for Pogo to be reading this

tale of miscegenation to impressionable chillun.

Despite their literacy, not all the animals are as intelligent as they think. Albert especially is prone to unfortunate accidents, like the time he got 'haunted'. What really happened was that a family of mice mistook Albert for a hollow log (a natural enough mistake) and moved in. Albert and Pogo mistook their voices for ghosts, although the bullfrog told Pogo, "Pogo, you knows de gov'ment kills off all de ghosts when dey spray de swamp wif oil fo' de skeeters." He and Pogo quickly discover Albert's real trouble, "Man! Man! De place is overrun wif mice down dere..." In the process of exterminating Albert, Pogo, the frog, Mistuh Rackety-Coon and the Porkypine themselves end up inside Albert. But they eventually get out.

Yes, it is well worth your while to keep an eye out for these swamp critturs. Unfortunately, like many animals, they are in a state of decline today and sometimes are hard to find, perhaps due partly to the insidious influence of the comic book publishers. As Pogo says, "Ol' publisher of this comic book say 'Cut down on them boats, they take up too much room'... . from cuttin' down on the boats, next us will cut down on the size of the critturs...Till someday us critturs will disappear entire an' the comic book industry will be reduced to a word game!!" Luckily, this state of affairs has not yet come to pass.

Jungles: Many people are unaware of the fact that there are jungles in North American comics (knowledgeable people claim they are located in the unexplored depths of Indiana.) These jungles are inhabited by some amusing and intriguing creatures. Among these are Dan Noonan's Egbert elephant and his friends who live in Raggedy Ann + Andy. The friends include a tiger, a penguin and a mallard duck (well, anything is possible in a comic book habitat.) This is a truly intelligent and educated group. Donot Inflate, the penguin, has had an especially long and distinguished career, to hear him tell it. Why, he once flew for the U.S. Navy, performing such amazing feats as flying upside down at 900 miles an hour. The newly arrived Scooter Bill Mallard doesn't believe this story, "Well, if that isn't something! Why penguins haven't flown for about a million years! Too fat!" But Donot proves him wrong by flying down a hill slope and landing upside down on his head.

Then there is the story Donot tells about his career on the stage, screen and medicine show of Doctor Scalpheart. One story the penguin has not told his friends is about the time he was the great detective Benjamin Holmes. "Well, Watson, here's a case! The king has asked me to seek out and capture none other than that notorious criminal, Professor Haggerty." "Great Scott, Benjamin Holmes, amazing!" But this is a story Egbert and Tuffy Tiger never hear for they wouldn't believe it; "Nothin nuttier than a penguin!" But what Donot possesses in tales of adventure, he makes up for with his lack of scientific knowledge. When Egbert tries to tell Donot about the relationship of the earth, moon and sun (knowledge he

had obtained from reading a comic book.) Donot says, "Now as anyone knows, the earth is quite flat and shaped like a pancake, sort of! Now, then, the sun is a large light maintained at great expense just to keep things sort of bright - you know." "At whose expense?" "Why-I-uh-oh, certain wealthy people get together and pay for it - shut it off every night to save expenses, too!" But perhaps Donot has been too busy adventuring to read informative comics.

Other inhabitants of the jungles, this time in Our Gang Comics, are Flip 'n Dip and their parents, a family of primates who appear to be large chimpanzees. Unlike most primates they live on a houseboat (of course, they have every right to be unlike other primates, since they are the only non-human primates native to North America.) They are actually a very prominent family in the jungle. As Flip 'n Dip's father comes home one day and tells his wife, "Your working days are over, Ma! It wouldn't do for the wife of Simple Simian, the future postmaster, to be seen doing her own wash." When Mrs. Simian is unimpressed, he tells her, "After all, it isn't every fool who can qualify for such a position." "Naturally! All they need is one," is her reply. "Very funny! You'll sing a different tune when you see my name up in lights over the post office!" But poor Mr. Simian doesn't get the job because he has no grade school diploma. Which is why you have such difficulty getting your mail delivered in Indianale.

Fields: The fields of North America are inhabited by a few strange creatures. Among these are Billy and Bonny Bee, and their insect friends. Billy is your typical do-gooder type of bug, organizing a house-building crew when Mrs. Ladybug's house is burned to the ground, and venturing out on a stormy night to fetch a sassafras leaf for the ailing queen bee. Being adventurous, Billy likes to find out how the other insects of the field live. Like the night he ventures out with Mr. Stag Beetle, wh works the night shift at the milkweed plant, to see what being nocturnal is like. Naturally Billy gets cold and scared and learns that bees are just not nocturnal.

Possibly some of the strangest creatures to be found in the whole world live in the fields and forest of North American comics. These are the Brownies, an odd group of insect-sized creatures who are very primate-like in appearance. They have been little studied so their affinities are not clear. What is known is that they are cute and helpful little creatures. As the book says, "Brownie - a cheerful little man supposed to help people in need. Brownies are very small and most people never see them." Unfortunately their good deeds are often thwarted by the ooglies, an even more mysterious type of creature, seemingly closely related to potatoes. For example, there was the time the Brownies tried to help the toy maker, but were 'helped' by an ooglie disguised as a Brownie. "The ooglies are always spoiling the Brownies good deeds." But when a coal pops out of the fireplace and sets fire to the rug, the ooglie joins the Brownies in calling for help. "Operator! Fire! Fire! At the toyshop!" "A mysterious call the operator said." "You saved my shop." "Give credit to whoever called us. The operator said it sounded like mice." Of course, the ooglie tries to get in the last word, "Haw, haw! You Brownies sounded like mice! Haw, haw!" But they reply, "Aw, you were pretty squeaky yourself." It is unfortunately true that as the book says, most people never see these creatures, but observant nature lovers may be able to catch occasional glimpses of them in long undisturbed piles of comics in their attics.

Prarie: To the casual observor, North American prariea and deserts seem to be quite deserted, but there is animal life there for those who take the trouble to look for it. Perhaps the most prominent citizen of this habitat is Wuff the prarie dog who inhabits the pages of Our Gang Comics. Although Wuff and his mother live in a burrow beneath the ground, they are easily observed on their frequent trips outside their home to gather food and to meet with their friends, such as Sammy Squirrel. Of course, there are occasional meetings with their enemies, the desert predators Butch Badger, Charlie Coyotte, Bobo Bear and others.

Wuff and Sammy are quite well adapted to their prarie home and easily elude their natural predators. However, like most animals, their knowledge of animals from other habitats is scarce. For example, neither knew what a cat was, although Wuff's mother explained to them,"A cat is a tame animal dear! Cats don't live on the prarie as we do! They don't know how to take care of themselves in the wild! Cats live with people and people take care of them!" Although this information is not quite correct (it is, of course, cats that take care of people), it does enable Wuff to recognize a cat the first time he encounters one. Although Wuff and his friends spend most of their time avoiding predators (it is not yet established what funny animal predators eat, except for ham sammittches), they are always willing to learn something new, like what a cat or a beaver is, or how to use a divining rod. The prospecting urge strikes even funny animals, you know.

The West: As with Homo sapiens, some of the most interesting and odd funny animals live on the West Coast of the U.S. One of the most interesting such groups, the various ducks, geese, etc., who live in Duckberg and environs have already been discussed in this series. Since this group has been one of the most visible and best known of the funny animals, the author does not feel it is necessary to include further information on their habitat and habits in this guide.

A lesser known group of animals are the inseperable friends who make their home in the pages of Our Gang comics, Barney Bear and Benny Burro. Barney is an ordinary brown bear, but he is related by marriage to Alaskan Kodiaks, as he learns when his nephew comes to visit. Unfortunately, he also learns how much kodiaks can eat as his nephew literally tries to eat him out of house and home ("At three-thirty Mom always fries me twelve hamburgers! I near starve if I don't get 'em!") Barney seems prone to bad luck of this sort, like the time he tried to learn to play golf (only in the West Coast habitat would funny animals be able to engage in this funny sport). Poor Barney keeps hitting his balls into the lake "...and they cost 50¢ apiece, secondhand wholesale!" When he and Benny discover the lake bottom is filled with golf balls they decide to gather them up and make a little money. Unfortunately the golf course manager doesn't allow this, and when Barny and Benny return to drain the water trap under cover of darkness, they find that they have pumped the golf balls into the manager's truck, labelled McDuff Used Golf Balls! Just their luck.

At least they aren't always quite that unlucky. For instance, there was the time their unpleasant neighbor, Mooseface McElk tricked them into buying his summer cottage by planting a gold 'nugget' on the property. Benny is very suspicious and decides to try to rectify Barney's mistake by persuading an old man who has been looking over the property to tell Mr. McElk that there are oil deposits under it. McElk decides it is all a trick, but is he surprised when it turns out the old fellow really is a geologist and Barney goes up in a geyser of oil.

Yes it is well worth a trip to the West Coast to see Barney and Benny in their natural surroundings. But don't expect to see them in the winter. Barney, like most bears, sleeps through most of the winter. Of course, there was the time that Benny persuaded him to get up and try a bit of skiiing, not understanding Barney's need for winter rest. Barney is at least awake enough to force Benny to take to the slopes first, despite his protest, "Burros aren't built for skiiing!" After some harrowing adventures and narrow escapes, Benny says "I'm beginning to wonder why skiing is called fun!" At last he learns a lesson that many humans have yet to learn; it's best to spend the cold months at home, preferably in bed, rather than outdoors competing with animals who are truly cold adapted.

Houses: It is not really necessary for the prospective observor of North American funny animals to leave their homes to see them. The native habitat of some of these creatures, particularly cats and mice, is the homes of Homo sapiens. Best known of these is that famous cat and mouse team, Tom and Jerry, who inhabit the homes of Our Gang comics.

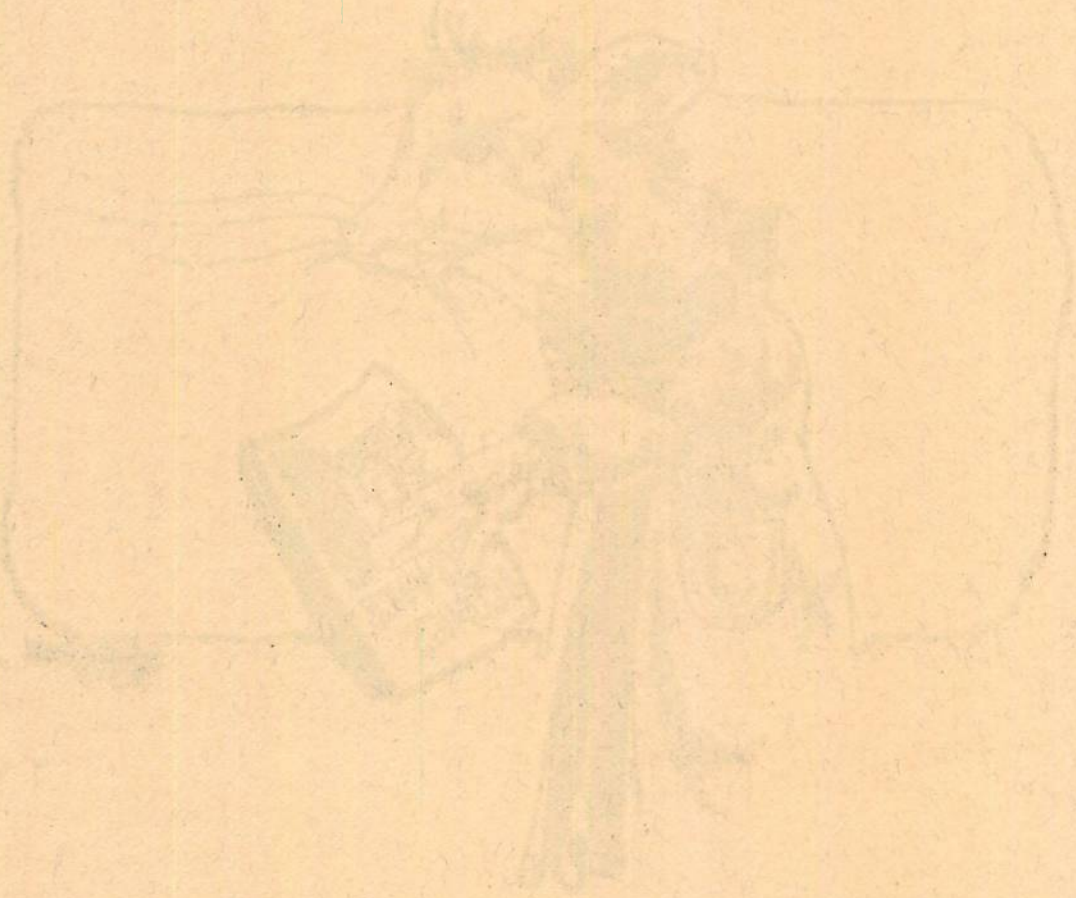
A typical day in their household consists of the mice, Tuffy and Jerry, outwitting and often severely injuring the tom cat, either physically or emotionally. But poor Tom is at a distinct disadvantage. He would love to catch and eat the mice, and is often urged to do so by the 'human' inhabitants of his home. When, after such severe provocation as being beaned with a vase, burned with a giant firecracker and chased out into the rain, he manages by dint of his great cunning to catch the mice and holds them helpless in his paws, he is stopped by none other than the cartoonist. "Wait a minute, Tom - You can't do away with Jerry and Tuffy!" "Sez you!! And why not?" is Tom's not unreasonable reply. "Well, if you do, I'll have nothing to draw or write about in the next issue. Then we'll all be out of a job. Better turn 'em loose!" Funny animals are subject to restrictions that most animals don't have to put up with, most of them imposed by the comics code.

Sheldon Mayer's The Three Mouseketeers don't exactly live in a house. They live in the yard just outside the Big Feet's house. The Mouseketeers consist of Minus, "He's the smart one - He's always working on his inventions", Fatsy "He's the Captain - He's always bossing people around - can't have a club without somebody like that in it!" and Patsy, the dumb one. The Mouseketeers have a secret clubhouse in a tomato can, although some of their friends don't think much of it, "Hey, reader! Isn't this the silliest thing you ever saw? ... a secret entrance to a secret clubhouse marked so anybody can see it! How can it be a secret?" But the Mouseketeers have more to worry about than the derision of their friends. There are many dangers in their habitat. For, like most animals who have learned to live around people, they are subject to predation by both domesticated and natural predators. They are in great danger from people and cats whenever they venture into the Big Feet's house, and from natural predators outside of it. These include Old Man Owl and Hamilton Hawk. The Mouseketeers have so far managed to evade them, and on occasion even get the best of Hamilton. When Minus was being harassed by some pigeons, he told them, half truthfully, that he had licked Hamilton Hawk. But the pigeons didn't really believe it. "Say, Pete - Do you really believe that story about Hamilton Hawk?" "Naw - but when he told it, I remembered how scared I was of that hawk myself! And I don't like anybody to fear me like that! Not even a mouse! So I helped him out..." "Softy."

As if people and natural predators weren't enough, the Mouseketeers have to put up with the vagaries of the comic book artists. Like the time their pages got a bit messed up: "Oh, oh! The opening panel is on the bottom!" "This is one crazy mixed up page!" "What a way to run a comic book!" "Where are we going?" "To take a look at the next page, and see if things got straightened out!" "Tilt!" "Do something, Cap'n! I'm falling out of the panel!" "Save us, Patsy! We're sliding off the page!!" "Note - This story will be continued after our printing press is repaired. Sincerely, The Editors."

We hope this short guide to funny animals and their habits will enable you to observe them in their native habitat wherever you are on the North American continent. As you can tell from the above, these are not ordinary animals. The fact that they can talk means they can tell us something about themselves and their life in the comics. Listen while Doodles Duck and his nephew Lemuel talke about comic books: "What are you doing?" "Nothing - I'm just reading a comic book!" "Reading a comic book? Give me that terrible thing this minute...Looking at pictures isn't reading!" "But Unc - I have to read the words to find out what the pictures are about!" "Yes, but what's in those words ? How much sense do they make?" "That depends on who wrote 'em! Same as any book! Some make sense and some are dopey!" "All comic books are dopey?" "How do you know?" "I read one once and I know!" "Then let's throw out the TV set!" "Hey! What kind of sense does that make??" "I saw one dopey program on it! That means they're all dopey!" "It does not! That depends on who wrote it!" "Exactly!"

Right, Doodles and Lemuel. And you know when your funny animals are scripted and drawn by people like Walt Kelly, Dan Noonan, Carl Barks, or Sheldon Mayer they won't be dopey. So look for them in their native habitats, the North American comic book.

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