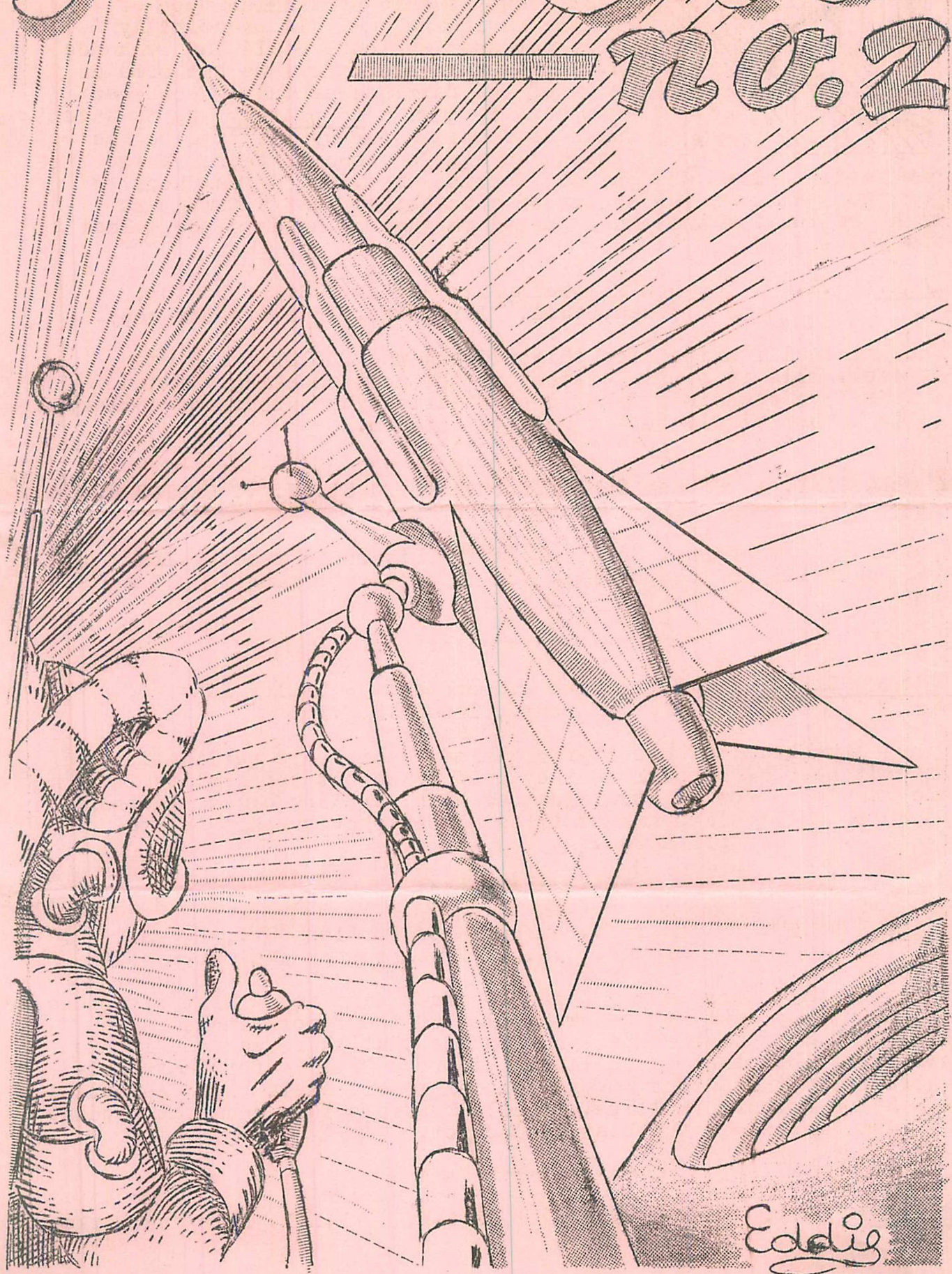
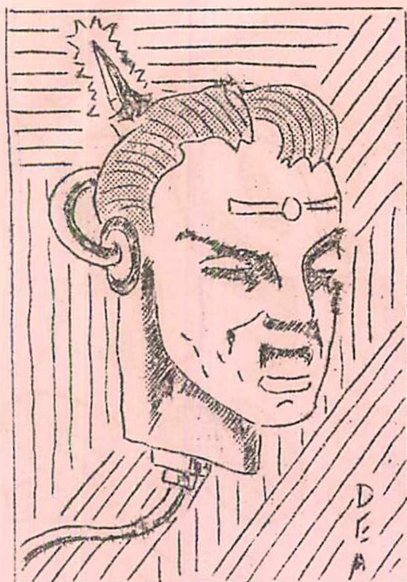


Take-Off

— no. 2





TAKED OFF

A short while ago I produced the first issue of this particular type of fanzine reviewing as I did practically every current fanzine I could lay my hands on. It was not merely reviews but more an index of the fanzines around. No one can ever hope to have a completely up to date index of fanzines for by the time he has finished a single stencil, there is one

new fanzine alive and one old fanzine dead. No one can hope to get them all on a few sheets of a magazine. Just a few. Here then are the few that have passed through my hands since I last saw you:-

AMOK. No.1.

Don R.Powell, Box 7311, N.T.S.C., Denton,
Texas, U.S.A. Irregular. 15 cents per copy.

The original fanzine from this address was BOLIDE which was mimeoed. This is purple dittoed in the most shockingly faded format I've seen in a long time. Material, humorous and collegy, reads rather slowly but it has its moments.

APOLLO PLAY.

Ray Schaffer, 4541 Third St. N.W., CANTON 8,
Ohio, U.S.A. An Ompazine.

Humour a la Schaffer. Schaffer having his bumps read, golfing and generally philosophising. You might try writing to get a copy.

BURROUGHSANIA. No.17.

Mike J.Moorcock, 36 Semley Road,
Norbury, London.S.W.16.

Since Mike became the editor of Tarzan Comics his publications haven't been as regular as they used to be but the quality in the remaining few is still just as high. Artwork by Jim Cawthorn is quite outstanding and at times almost photographic in its reality. Great art indeed.

BRILLIG.No.10.

Larry S.Bourne, 2436 $\frac{1}{2}$ Portland St., Eugene,
Oregon, U.S.A. Free, sub or what have you?

It seems that Larry asked a photo-offset firm for a list of prices and then they sent him a few samples of their work including a list of U.S. nudist camps, and finding that there was one in his own town...but there, you'll have to read Brillig for that. Art-work is by the editor in his own inimitable style plus Jenrette and Ralph Rayburn Phillips. Excellent Geis column and neat layout. Undoubtedly one of the best issues yet.

CATALYST No.1.

Ewan R.Hedger, 20 O.M.Q., R.A.F. Abingdon, Berks.
6d a copy.

Bill Harry told me about this as I recall but whatever happened to the editor of this or whether he's still around I couldn't say.

CRIFANAC. No.5. Tom Reamy, 4332 Avondale, Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.

Multilithed with a fine composite cover, Galaxy type interior work by Reamy, first class film reviews and some unusual fiction. Well worth getting.

COLONY. Lars Helander, Lohegatan 11, Eskilstuna 3, SWEDEN.

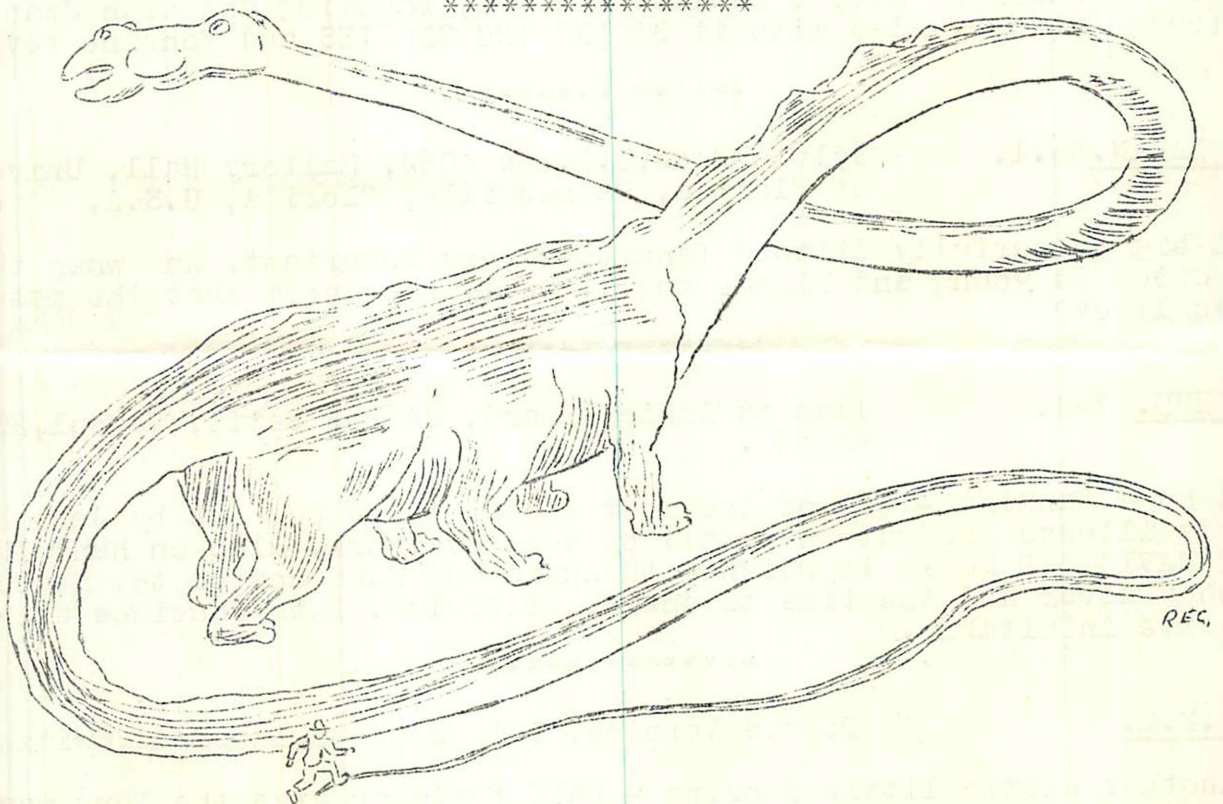
Lars is just another of the fans who disappeared after the world-con and nothing has been heard of him for ages. COLONY is a fool-scrap sized letterzine cum editorial with Rotsler and Bill Harry illos. Material in English and very readable.

CONTACT. No.9a. Jan Jansen, 229 Berchemlei, Borgerhout, Antwerp, Belgium. 7/- or 1 dollar a year.

Undoubtedly the biggest flop in years. An attempt to provide a fortnightly fanzine which would provide news for all. But the publication fell down as did the editor disappeared somewhere. Consider it to be almost defunct.

CRY OF THE NAMELESS. No.110. The Nameless Ones, Box 92,920 3rd Avenue, Seattle 4, Washington, U.S.A. 10¢ per issue.

I've been trying for years to get this fanzine by sending trade copies of CAMBER to every address ever given but no luck at all. How did I get this issue then? Wally Webber brought a copy back from London of all places!! CRY contains reviews of every current U.S. science fiction magazine and each story, letters and everything else the SF fan could want. The layout is cramped and the micro typing hard on the eyes and the artwork unworthy of the text but recommended nevertheless.



FOCUS: No.5. Mervyn Barrett,
6 Doctor's Commons,
Wellington C.4.,
New Zealand.

The brainchild of one of New Zealand's brightest fans, a trifle ragged at the edges so far as material goes but an important link with New Zealand fandom. Worth watching indeed. Mervyn is a good editor what he needs is a better selection of material from other people.

GEMZINE. G.M.Carr, 5319 Ballard
Avenue, Seattle, Washing-
-ton, U.S.A. Fapazine.

G.M.Carr in fine form again, including several remarks on the British 'Yellow' press. Cover is by Rich Bergeron.

GIRN.No.1. Robert E.Gilbert, 509 West Main Street, Jonesboro,
Tennessee, U.S.A.

Not a big circulation fanzine for the high pressure boys. Just a few lino cuts and some pleasant folksy writing from Tennessee's nicest fan who also writes professionally and is a top artist too. Quite a delightful little production.

KEEBIRD. Richard H.Eney, 417 Ft. Hunt Road, Alexandria,
Virginia, U.S.A.

Just another of Eney's faults. Dittoed, rambling and with Jean Young Artwork. Also with it STUPEFYING STORIES and fanzine reviews.

FLAFAN.No.1. Sylvia Dees, P.O.Box 4082, Mallory Hall, University
of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.

A big colourfully dittoed fanzine - very luxuriant. And when the editor is young and blonde and... well, who cares what the material is like??

MEUH. 2-3. Jean et Annie Linard, 24 rue Petit, Vesoul, HTE SNE,
France.

A huge fanzine - one of the most recent to be put out by Jean before his illness brought on partly by such overwork. Also on hand THE INNAVIGABLE MOUTH in which both Annie and Jean answer the letters they never had the time to answer otherwise. Both fanzines are quite inimitable.

F.F.M. Pierre Versins, Primerose 38, Lausanne, Switzerland.

Another exotic little fanzine - half foolscap size the long way - more ramblings, irregular and sometimes incoherent but a worthy piece of work indeed.



PHAN. No.2. George Sjoberg,
Dalagatan 31 NB.,
Stockholm Va, Sweden.

A magnificent photo-offset cover showing in black and white a gorgeous Bo Stenfors gal set in the starry heavens background in the manner of Virgil Finlay. The material is is Swedish but the artwork by Bo and Tage Valentin the best in any Swedish fanzine except SEXY VENUS of which more anon. Recommended - even though you can't read Swedish.

FRONTIER No.11. Dale R.Smith,
3001 Kyle Avenue, Minn-
neapolis 22, Minn., U.S.A.

The official bulletin of The Society for the Advancement of Space Travel. Detailed neat and recommended to the technically minded. Write Dale for details.

KIWIFAN No.7. Roger Horrocks, 18
Hazlemere Road, Mt. Albert,
Auckland S.W.1. New
Zealand. 3/- for 4.

An overlong article by Graham Stone reads rather superior to me as if Stone were sneering at anyone reading it. The rest of the material is a little on the light side through no fault of the editor. Like most New Zealand fanzines, the editors have talent but are handicapped by lack of material. Why not support them?

OOPSLA. No.22. Gregg Calkins, 1068 Third Avenue, Salt Lake
City 3, Utah, U.S.A.

Making its return after so long an absence OOPS is back. Thinner, with less art and a different Calkins but back nevertheless. Good.

OUTRE No.4. George Spencer, 8302
Donnybrook Lane, Chevy
Chase 15, Maryland, U.S.A.

Neat, spacious colourful duplicated f
fanzine with a rather "old guard"
letter column and an incredibly dated
Richard Elsberry column on FANTASIA.
How out of date can you get?

PARAFANALIA No.2. Bruce Burns, 12
Khyber Road,
Wellington E.5.,
New Zealand.

Probably the most talented of the New Zealand fanzines if only for the almost exclusive use of Lynette Mills that excellent artist - even comic strips in this one. Much better.



PERIHELION No.1.

Bryan Welham, 179 Old Road,
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.
1/- an issue.

You've doubtless heard of fakefans? Well, this will introduce you to England's first fishfan whose fanzine is produced over a fish shop. There are some very funny pieces in this (And I don't mean pieces of fish!) and for a first issue it looks pretty good. Watch out for the editor - he's going plaices -ahem.

QUIRK 3. Larry Ginn, Box 81, Route 2, Chou-
-arant, Louisiana, U.S.A. 10¢ per.

This is a wonderful improvement on the previous two issues. The reproduction is superb and the artwork dittoed in purples, reds and greens painstakingly done in great detail. It just shows the improvement a couple of fans can make when they do try. Better than ever.

PLOY No.10. Prof. R.M. Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthurs Avenue,
Harrogate, Yorks. 1/- or 15¢ a copy.

A learned treatise on the art of how to produce a fanzine the Bennett method. No fan with a sense of humour or a taste for nicely cut artwork should miss it. Write the prof eh?

THE REJECT BULLETIN. No.1. Peter Francis Skeberdis, 606 Crapo St.,
Flint 3, Michigan, U.S.A. Free for
letter.

A product of a letterzine cum editorial by Peter Francis Skeberdis one of the nicest fans in the Mid West. This doesn't pretend to be a big zine and it isn't but as a few reflections of a promising new fan it is heartily recommended. Well worth writing that letter.

RETRIBUTION.

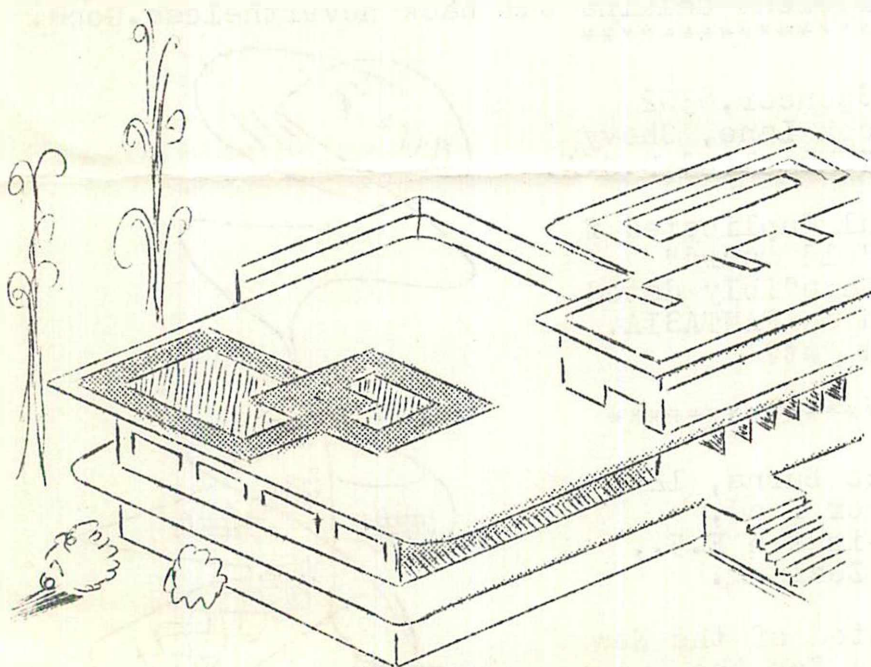
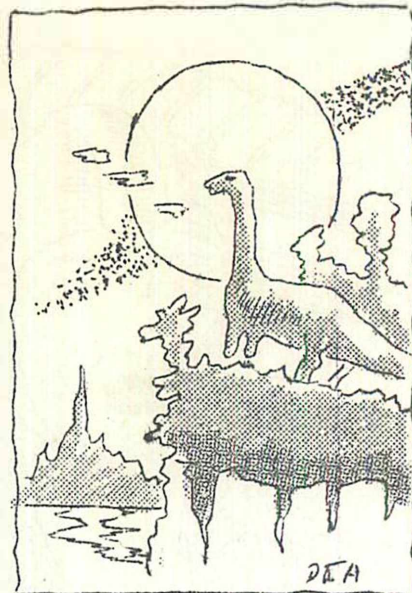
John Berry, 31
Campbell Park Ave.,
Belmont, Belfast,
Northern Ireland.
1/- or 15¢ a copy.

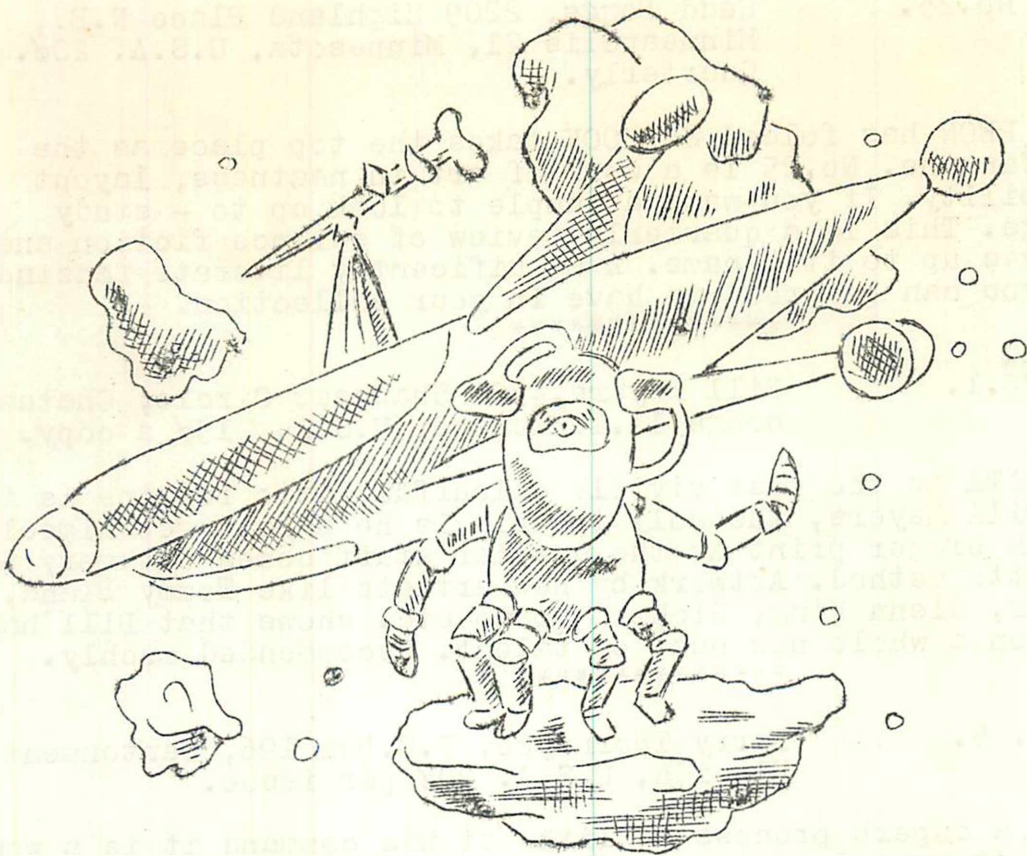
Berry humour all the way, Atom illos - everyone knows what you get with RET - do you get it? You should.

SATA ILLUSTRATED No.8.

Bill Pearson,
4516 East Glenrosa,
PHOENIX, Arizona, U.S.A.
25¢ a copy.

The best dittoed fan-
zine in the world.
The artwork in every
conceivable pattern
and type is a joy to
behold. A big MUST.





THE SAUCERIAN BULLETIN.

Gray Barker, Box 2228, Clarksburg,
West Virginia, U.S.A.

The official bulletin of those grim observers of the skies - the
Flying Saucer enthusiasts. If you are one - then this is for you.

SCIENCE FICTION PARADE.

Len J. Moffatt, 10202 Belcher,
Downey, California, U.S.A.

This has already more requests than can be supplied by the editor
which will give you an idea of just how popular it is. It was
the first fanzine too, that gave a report of the Worldcon. Imagine
that!

SEXY VENUS.

Bo Stenfors, Bylgjävagen 3, Djursholm,
SWEDEN.

"The science fiction pin-up fanzine - calculated to drive you
sexy - disapproved by everyone". Which is about all the English
there is in this fanzine but the pin-ups are universal. I recognised
one of Lili Christine- The Cat Girl - right away which will give
you a good idea of how expert Bo is on the stencil cutting. Great fun.

SIGBO.

Jerry DeMuth, 3223 Ernst Street,
Franklin Park, Illinois, U.S.A.

Dittoed, neat and with some interesting fiction and articles.
Nothing exceptional but a pleasing fanzine nonetheless.

SLANDER.

Jan Sadler Penny 51-B, McAlister Place,
NEW ORLEANS 18, LOUISIANA, U.S.A.

A fanzine from the past - this used to be produced about two years
ago, folded when the editor got married and now that she's back in
college it has revived. Mostly there are college references
throughout but it'll be interesting to see what becomes of this
fanzine after all this time, if anything.

SKYHOOK. No.25.

Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland Place N.E.,
Minneapolis 21, Minnesota, U.S.A. 20¢.
Quarterly.

Now that PEON has folded SKYHOOK takes the top place as the neatest fanzine. No.25 is a work of art in neatness, layout and legibility. If you want a sample to look up to - study Redd Boggs. This is a quarterly review of science fiction and fully lives up to it's name. A magnificently literate fanzine and one you can be proud to have in your collection.

SPECTRE No.1.

Bill Meyers, 4301 Shawnee Circle, Chataanooga 11, Tennessee, U.S.A. 15¢ a copy.

Nudging SATA as the most vividly colourful ditto fanzine is this work of Bill Meyers, the only trouble is he should get himself a typer with bigger print as the smaller stuff comes out very poorly by the ditto method. Artwork by new artists like Tommy Bland, Gary Elder, Glenn King, Richard Mosso etc. shows that Bill has stumbled on a whole new nest of talent. Recommended muchly.

SPHERE. No. 5.

Larry Thorndyke, P.O.Box 196, Cantonment, Florida, U.S.A. 20¢ per issue.

With such a superb process as litho at his command it is a wonder Larry didn't expand on the artwork in this issue. Almost anything can be captured by that method it seems. Articles, news and reviews are all well done, only Larry Kents OUR DEAR DEPARTED on the leaving of the females by lizard men seems overlong. The rest of the issue is both neat and legible. Worth getting - but more art pliz.

SUPER SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE.

Sture Sedolin, Box 403,
Vallingby 4, Stockholm, Sweden.
7/- for 10 issues to me.

A product of one of Swedish fandom's youngest and most talented fanods -- and the only one with a daschund -almost entirely in Swedish save a small English section but worth getting. New inovations are planned for future issues including photopages.

TWICE IN A BLUE MOON.

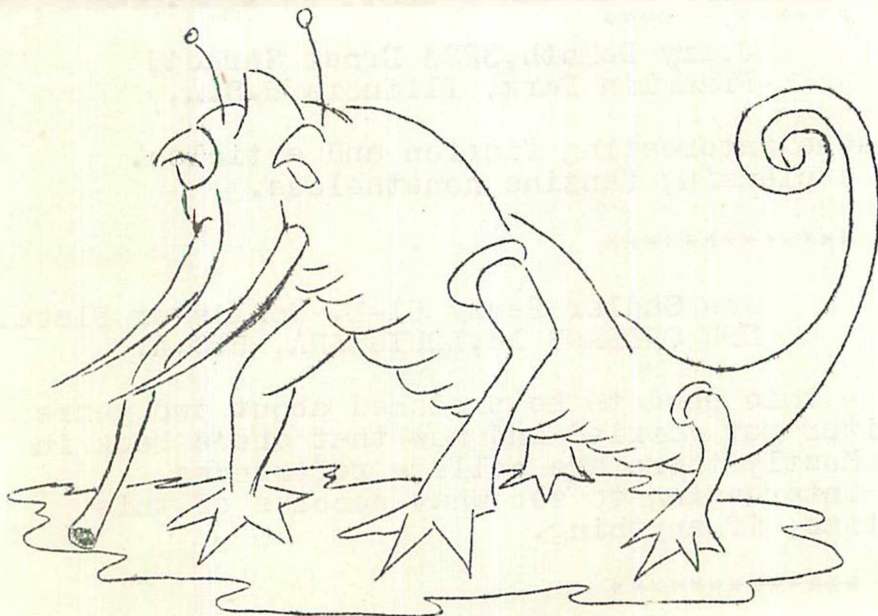
Dave Cohen, 32 Larch Street, Hightown, Manchester 8, Lancs.

Material weak and lacking but artwork, layout and neatness first class. But they'll have to get better material tp present in future.

TWIG No.6.

Guy Terwilliger, 1412 Albright St., Boise, Idaho, U.S.A.

The Annish, with over fifty pages all immaculately duplicated - surely a back-breaking job this but magnificent results. Get it.



URVOAT. Class Otto Wene, Finjavagen 26, TYRINGE, SWEDEN.

Dittoed, Swedish and and engaging new editor who can write English both amusingly and lightly.

YANDRO. Robert Coulson, 105 Stitt St., Wabash, Indiana, U.S.A.

The most reliable fanzine in the world. You ought to have it.

And that's the lot! G'bye. from Dodderingly

DODDNOTES.

Further Doddering by Alan Dodd.

Naturally there are always fanzines that come in when the final product is finished so to cover just a few more, let me include:-

A BAS No.10. Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Drive, Toronto 9, Ontario, Canada.

"Astounding Raeburnisms" is the subtitle and consists primarily of Boyd Raeburn's report of his visit to the Worldcon and Europe. Most amusing to British fans will surely be his reference to small boys at London airport going around saying "Daddeh, Daddeh" - it makes one wonder what Boyd actually expected them to say. Not, "Aw gee parp" surely?

THE DIRECTORY OF 1957. S-F FANDOM. Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthurs Avenue, Harrogate, Yorks.

A complete list of all addresses of fans in the world - invaluable. A service that Ron performs to fandom each year. Definitely to be got.

ERBANIA. D. Peter Ogden, 3 Belgrave Road, Blackpool, Lancs.

This like Burroughsania is devoted to Tarzan fans but whereas it is more technical to read it doesn't have the technical resources available to Mike Moorcock and his artists. Nevertheless Tarzan fans will like it.

FANTASI No.11. Roar Ringdahl, Skogervn 52, Drammen, Norway.

Norway's No.1. fan (Well - there's only two of 'em) in his own production which will in future be combined with Sture Sedolin's SUPER. Roar has had many cartoons published professionally and the artwork is of the usual high comic quality. Roar's work is quite inimitable - write him.

THE VINEGAR WORM. Bob Leman, 2701 So. Vine Street, Denver 10, Colorado, U.S.A. Free. (Yes!)

The original one-man humourzine. No one seems to know much about Bob Leman although this is his second fanzine. He just upped out of Denver a while ago with a humour fanzine a la MAD. It's difficult to pinpoint his humour - you never know when he's being serious - and he never is. Perhaps I can best illustrate the type of humour by quoting an old TIFH joke which goes:-

FRENCH RABBLE: "A bas les aristots. A bas les aristots
A bas les aristots."

1st ENGLISHMAN: "Why do they say that?"

2nd ENGLISHMAN: "They can't speak English."

And since he's so generous in giving away his fanzines for nothing, why not try writing him - he seems such a lonely fan - all by hisself in Denver. I'm sure he'd appreciate letters.

VOID. (They never put no number on it!) Greg Benford and Jim, 10521 Allegheny Drive (I wouldn't care to walk down a street that long!), Dallas 29, TEXAS, U.S.A.

"The eyes of Texas are upon yew..

"All the live long day, the eyes of Texas are upon yew, yew cannot get away,
Do not think you can escape them....."

So goes the song (Words courtesy Claude Raye Hall)

and so goes the Benfords - dumped in a Dallas suburb where everybody drives Fords. Such a fate to befall both fans after all those fanzines

produced in Europe. Has the change affected them?

Yes, the materials - paper etc are strictly

Texas and much like the other Dallas zines -

SPECTRE, EPITOME etc. The format then is

rather a forced copy. John Berry has another

story - a relic saved up from Europe -

but the rest is more letters and letting folks

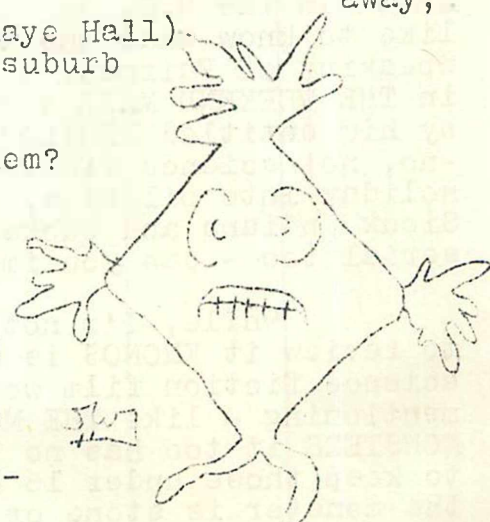
know where the boys are. I hope the same

disease doesn't befall the Benfords as befalls

all other Dalzines - folding and not replying

to mail. We'll see. So they ended up in Dallas-

well who'd thought it?



TRIODE. No.12. Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe. Subs to Eric at 47 Alldis St., Great Moor, Stockport, Cheshire. This is the issue in which Jeeves and Eric report their doings on the continent before the convention. The same trip seen differently from each other's eyes. The artwork, scroll-like by Eddie Jones, detailed by him in the extreme, Soggies by Jeeves and a map of Europe carefully pointing North to "Icebergs" and To Sweden - "Ekbergs". Real olde Englishe humour - you don't see so much of it now so Triode is well worth its 1/- and issue or 7 for 1 dollar to Dale Smith whose address appears elsewhere here.

Which brings me to the other issues of fanzines that have been already mentioned. Bill Harry has issue No.1 of BIPED out long after number 2 has already been seen. Artwork is of course impeccable. SEXY VENUS sees issue No.2. with a cover of Anita Ekberg which parodies the last edition of CAMBER. A reversed mirror effect. The interior gals are stencilled with breathtaking accuracy Sherry Britton, Lili Christine, Sophia Loren etc. A collector's item. Len Moffatt has yet another SCIENCE FICTION PARADE out, No.7. Len vociferously supports Dixieland fans against The Sheriff of Amador City's enemy Robin Wood and calls for support. Include me in Len!

There are doubtless other odds and ends that I don't recall very well including Eric Erickson's RAPIER and I hope he'll forgive me when I say that he reads a little like a confused George Wetzel and a fanzine MOTLEY I think, from Mike Gates. Sorry Mike, your duplicating was so terrible I couldn't read your address and fear it might have changed by now. You must be an illegible bachelor.

What else came in then? There are dozens of memories. Finding out that B.W. Lex is really a girl, discovering George Metzger and his envelopes - you were right John Berry about everything you said in RETRIBUTION about George, knowing him is an experience in itself, the funniest envelope came undoubtedly from John W. Thiel and still has me in convulsions as to its unexpectedness. It shows on the rear of the envelope the hairy faced man of THE WEREWOLF leaping with his hairy hands outstretched. Thiel's caption reads - almost impossibly "HOW ARE YOU FIXED FOR BLADES"? The funniest photos coming from Hans Siden - Sweden's answer to Wee Willie Harris - one photo reads, "Here I am in a scene from my latest film - I WAS A TEENAGE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON OF THE PLANET X IN OUTER SPACE. (Also entitled SPACE BUM). The second photo shows him sitting in a green and red blazer before an extra-terrestrial phone while caption reads, "Here I am working. Keep it very carefully for pictures of me working is as rare as USA rockets lifting more than 10 feet from the ground.....) Hans is also the artist for the cartoon you see on next page. And didn't I read some travel book about the Swedish not having any sense of humour?? There's fiction for you if you like.

Now there were a couple of science fiction films I thought interesting enough to mention so I will. They aren't great films but worthy of mention and not completely ignoring like so many are. A point to note is that INVASION OF THE HELL CREATURES is possibly known in the U.S. as INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN - though I'd still like to know what was wrong with Paul W. Fairman's original title? Speaking of Fairman, I noticed in THE WEEKEND MAIL here a story by him entitled PERILOUS JOURNEY - no, not science fiction - short holiday into pilgrims, gunmen, Sioux Indians and buckskin. A serial too - can you imagine that?

While, I'm not planning to review it KRONOS is another science fiction film worth mentioning - like THE MONOLITH MONSTERS it too has no "X" cert to keep those under 16 out. If the monster is stone or metal it's okay it seems - but not animal.

THE INVASION OF THE HELL CREATURES.

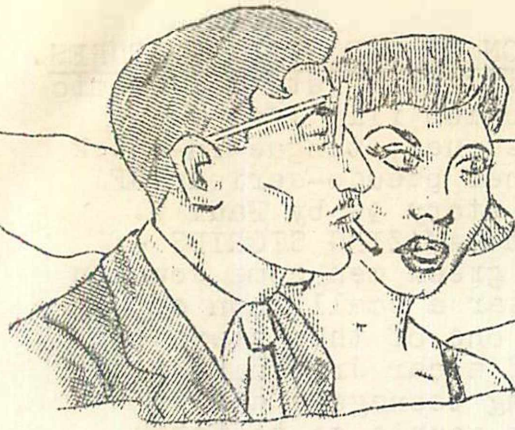
This is the first truly comic science fiction film I've seen which burlesques, tongue-in-cheek all the other pseudo-serious SF films. The story is by Paul W. Fairman from AMAZING STORIES - the little green men come down in a saucer near a small town of Hicksburg, one of them steps out in front of a car driven by a pair of careening teenagers and is killed. The couple go to fetch the police, fail, return to find the other aliens have removed their dead friend, have killed a man and battered the car in to make it look like a car killing. An extra terrestrial frame-up de luxe. You should know the plot. The ingredients of Fairman's story are all here and more besides. It is the world where teenagers drive barge sized cars and drink beer out of cans and seem as alien to me as the extra-terrestrials do to them. Here's Raymond Hatton as a shotgun totin' farmer with a drunken bull, a Flying Saucer Detail of the U.S. Army who covers up everything ("But don't you realise Colonel - we

may not be the only detail 'covering up'?"), a buzzing, flying saucer which blows itself up like a fizzing dynamite charge, and little Green Men whose disembodied hands crawl like crabs with fingernails of hypo needles dripping alcohol sufficient to kill drunks. Even the credit titles are a combination of Eddie Jones and H.W. MacCauley - designed as pages of a book they close with THE END. Book's last page closes with an alien hand on the cover and UNTIL THE NEXT TIME printed on it - and an unearthly shriek pierces the soundtrack to finish. Producers have the last laugh! THE MONOLITH MONSTERS. presents the non "X" monsters which are pieces of rock from a meteor which multiplies when rain and water are found. The pieces of rocks grow and sizzle in water until they tower hundreds of feet into the air, their pointed tops glittering like upthrust Roman swords. And then they topple..... And so they grow again - the process is repetitive and the more pieces they shatter into the more the monoliths grow with rumbling horror. The humans in the story are nothing - ignore them, ignore the dialogue - but watch those stone monsters - they're great.

TAKE-OFF is a Doddering publication edited, produced and directed by:----- Alan Dodd,
77 Stanstead Rd., 9d (15p) a copy or by
Hoddesdon, Trade or contribution.
Herts., England.

The artwork was patiently stencilled without by Terry Jeeves. The last three pages by Dodd who thought it wasn't easy - it wasn't. Covers designed and stencilled by Eddie Jones. Art credits:- Robert E. Gilbert: 2,4,6. Dave Rike: 7. Joe Lee Sanders: 4. Brian Lumley: 5. Dea: 5. Larry S. Bourne: 3. Roger Horrocks: 8. Stuart Wheeler: 8. William Rotsler 9. Hans Siden 10. "Thames Out of Mind" was written by Ron Bennett and illustrated by Bill Harry.

And that's that. See.



THAMES OUT OF MIND

by Prof. Ron Bennett.

Joan and I moved in with Sandy Sanderson and Joy and Vinç Clarke for a month recently, and the moment we landed in London we were warned. Vinç dragged at his vivid red beard and thoughtfully scratched his brow.

"Things are always happening around here," he said. "Only last week Brian Burgess came around for an evening, and Ghod! what an evening that was."

Sandy looked up from his seat by his hi-fi equipment and put down his foolscap sheets of accounts. He meticulously screwed his fountain-pen top into place and clipped the pen in his pocket. "You're going about this the wrong way, Vinç," he said. "What happened to your finer sense of fansmanship? You should have had Ron's eyes bulging out - even more than usual - by a little casual name-dropping....."

"Well," said Vinç, "Ken Bulmer has been over here a few times lately, and Chuck came only last week, and there was Ted Tubb over the other....."

"Oh, you should have been here when Ted was over, Ron," said Joy, as I wiped the drool from my chin. "He was talking about writing styles. How to pad out for a novel. He spent three-quarters of an hour talking about how to light a cigarette.....'He lit a cigarette....what kind of a cigarette?....he took the cigarette from his pocket....his favourite brand....he lit the small white cylinder carefully, inhaling the blue hazy smoke'...Like that for ages and ages. No wonder he's a writer."

"What about the way he described his heroes?" asked Sandy. "Have you ever noticed the way all Tubb heroes are....."

And at that moment the doorbell rang. "Probably Ted Carnell or Arthur C. Clarke," remarked Vinç nonchalantly, as I bit deeper into the rug. Joan patted me absently on the head and murmured something about "Good dog," and Sandy went out to answer the door.

He returned a moment later with a weird alien-looking creature who might well have stepped out of a Tubb yarn. A Martian? Enclosed in an oily black leathery skin it peered through thick encased lenses into the haze of tobacco smoke and lifted off the upper part of its head.

When I came round I found Joan, Vinç, Joy, Sandy and Arthur Thomson looking down at me.

I got to my feet and brushed myself down. "So that's how the G.D.A. wins through on the few cases it solves," I remarked with what I hoped was just the right amount of biting sarcasm.

"You scare everyone to death and then wring confessions out of them."

"That's not really logical, darling," said Joan.

Arthur saved another broken marriage. "Well, Ron, how're you getting on? I haven't seen you since I was at Kettering in 1956.."

"And were you wearing that rig-out then?" I asked. "Is that why the fancy dress parade was thrown out of the Royal? Honestly, Arthur, you should give people warning of this sort of thing. Can't you ring up or...."

"He did ring," said Sandy, brightly. "We just didn't tell you, that's all."

A real friend.

"Well, even you must admit, Arthur, that you look a deal less gruesome without all that motorbike leather. I mean you look gruesome enough as it is, without adding to a natural disadvantage. I never wear the stuff myself when I'm on my bike."

"No wonder you're always catching colds," said Joan. "Honestly, the feed lines I give that girl. I could kick myself."

"But, Ron," said Arthur, offering around cigarettes, a kind hearted and foolish gesture, "Wearing all that leather isn't a disadvantage. It's a necessity that a G.D.A. man should not be recognised. What's the use of following people around if they know they're being followed?"

"Ghod, they know they're being followed, all right," I said. "Fancy running around after people looking like a cross between The Thing From Outer Space and Marlon Brando in THE WILD ONE. No wonder they banned that picture."

"Well, I'm sorry you feel this way, Ron," said Arthur, taking out a sinister little black notebook, "I'll just have to send the details to John and we can sort something out on the matter."

"Go ahead." I flicked my cigarette ash at the fireplace in my best Douglas Fairbanks fashion and missed. "What have you on me?"

"And who sent James White a prospectus on short story writing? The Trufan of Leeds?"

"Well, I didn't!"

"Prove it. Here, sit down. Joy, that flashlight please. Shine it in his face."

"Hey, just a minute. This is going too far, Arthur. I

didn't...."

"Quiet! Now, where were you on the evening of July 17th?"

"I'm innocent I tellya! Water, someone. A glass of water, please..."

Arthur snatched up a half-empty tea-cup and flung the contents in my face. "Here, make do with that."



Joy, Joan, Vinç and Sandy collapsed laughing.

I wiped my face and combed the tea-leaves out of my moustache. "Ha, ha, very funny," I remonstrated. "All right, Thomson! Just wait. I'll get my revenge. I'll remember this; Bennett doesn't forget....."

"Well, you've Cecil to help you,? put in Vinç.

"One evening I'll come round to Brockham House and....."

Arthur laughed. "You'd be heard a mile away, Ron. If you found the place, that is. Norman Wansborough says it doesn't exist, but when the lift doors clang - like this --- KKKKLLLLLAAANNNGGG! --it can be heard all over the building, and strangers always press the wrong button for our floor, and the only visitors we get are fans, so we'd have plenty of time to be out. Why only the other evening, I was sitting there typing away like mad, watching television and drawing....."

"All right, all right." I tried to get back in my depth. "I could challenge you to a duel. I've been working at the Royal College of Surgeons and Lincoln's Inn Fields there is a famous duelling ground. Let's see, pistols at dawn, or.....?"

"Reminds me of that joke of Mal Ashworth's," said Arthur, as my face changed colour across the outer edges of the spectrum. "My seconds will be there at dawn. I shall be in bed --- but my seconds will be there at dawn."

"That's the last straw, Thomson," I raved, doing a Rumpelstiltskin. "Name your weapon!"

"Surely," said Joy, "The thing to do would be to decide the issue by trial by ordeal. Can't we see if Ron would float on the Thames?"

"Better still," said Arthur, "just his head...."

"You could always use it as a rugby ball afterwards," said Sandy.

"No, no," I protested. "It mustn't be lethal."

"A race would suffice," Arthur went on. "I'm not going to race you on my bike; I'd prefer to give you a sporting chance. Besides I let the air out of your tyres on my way up. We G.D.A. men have to take care of all possibilities!"

"Well, perhaps we could race a couple of toy motor cars or paper boats or something," I suggested brightly.

"Toy motor cars! Paper boats!!" Sneered Arthur. "Oh, come now.....Wait a minute though! I've got it! Wooden boats. That would be better. Yes, that's it, wooden boats. What we want now is something to make the boats out of." He stormed out of the room and mere seconds later the silence which was such a lovely contrast was again shattered.

It was the sound of sawing.

Joy stifled a scream and ran from the room. "Arthur, what are you doing?" and comforting words seeped through into the living room....."Won't take a minute.....don't worry....but it's my only ironing board....Bennett will buy you a new one..." until Arthur came back with two flat pieces of wood with matchboxes glued on top.



"Ships!" He proclaimed proudly. "Which are you having, Ron?" he asked, tossing me the flimsier of the two. He spilt some pineapple juice over his piece of wood, and said, "I hereby christen thee 'Retribution,' and long may you sail the seven seas."

Not to be outdone, I broke a bottle of correctine over mine and stated, "I hereby name thee 'The Good Ship Ashworth,' and may you suffer a quick, clean death."

"Come on then," said Arthur, buttoning up his leather casing. He ran out and I followed. He jumped on his bike and roared away, returning a moment later to find out why I wasn't following.

I was pumping up my bike's tyres.

Then we were away, neck and neck. Through Rushey Green, through Forest Hill and on to...

"Where are we going?" I yelled to Arthur.

"Can't hear what you're saying," he yelled back, but I didn't hear what he said. (I asked him later!)

Eventually, we pulled up on Waterloo Bridge.

"Yes, I'm right, as usual," said Arthur. "The tide is going out. You'll notice that I've marked my boat with red paint. We'll drop the two boats in the River here, and then ride around to Blackfriars Bridge. Whichever boat reaches that Bridge first is the winner. How does that does sound to you?"

"Wonderful," I breathed, giving thanks that there was to be no loss of blood, and particularly my blood.

And so, at the count of three, we dropped our boats into the River below and got back on bikes and sped around to Blackfriars Bridge, where we propped the bikes against the pavement edge and leant over the side of the bridge to wait for the winning boat, whichever it would be be.....

But in the end we had to call it a draw. We forgot something..

It got dark.

*****the end*****

