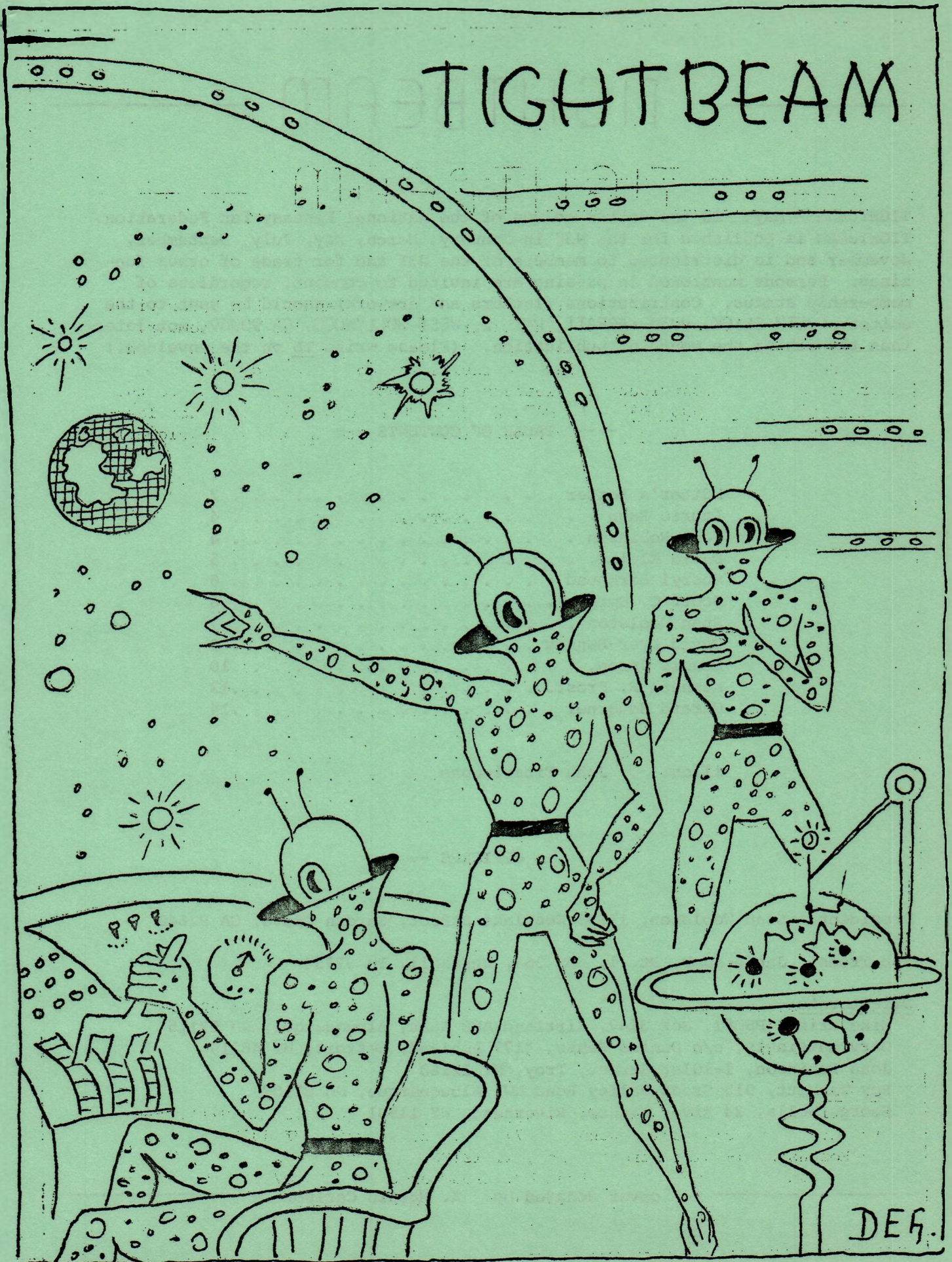


# TIGHT BEAM





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TIGHTBEAM - May: is the letter column of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. TIGHTBEAM is published for the N3F in January, March, May, July, September, November and is distributed to members of the N3F and for trade of other fan-zines. Persons mentioned in passing are invited to comment, regardless of membership status. Contributions (letters and artwork) should be sent to the editor: BETH SLICK, 9030 HARRATT, PAT. 2, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069, not later than the 5th of the month of publication. (Please write TB on the envelope.)

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## EDITOR'S LETTER

Is the modern SF world decadent? Should STAR TREK be taken seriously? Is Kingston Kane a booby?

Yes, dear reader, these questions (and more) will be raised (even answered) in this exciting issue of Tightbeam. But first, a word from your editor.....

\*

Howdy...

Thank you should be expressed to Kaymar for sending me a batch of cover artwork and C. John Fitzsimmons for spot illos and cartoons (both of your issues are SWAK!)

Ten Tuesdays Down A Rabbit Hole has been pretty successful (as far as I'm concerned). Harlan Ellison has been entertaining as our host--being typically caustic but never dull. The presentations have ranged from Zelazny and Leiber reading their own stories to movies to young writers coming out on stage and hitting each other with "socket boppers" to a panel of women in SF (with Joanna Russ, Dorothy Fantana, Kate Wilhelm and Leigh Brackett). Next week they are going to show a movie based on "More Than Human", which Harlan classifies as "dynamite". During one meeting Phil Farmer admitted to writing the Kilgore Trout book, "Venus On A Half Shell".

After one of the classes (I don't know if you can really call it a class as there were usually about 800 people there) we went to a local restaurant for coffee and talk, so I ended up sitting in varying degrees of awe with Ted & Weena Sturgeon, David Gerrold, Dorothy Fontana and William Rotsler (and other less well known). I'm afraid I mostly sat and listened rather than make brilliant comments, but it was still fun.

On the job front--my employment with Jack H. Harris remains a very exciting part of my life. Before the end of the year we'll probably start filming a movie. The script isn't finished and casting is far off, but it is fantastic to be in on the growth of a movie as it evolves from a 10-page synopsis.

A few weekends ago I went to a "mini party" Mr. Harris had at his house--at the Malibu Colony (!). The purpose of the gathering was to view a film he was thinking of buying. He invited me too and I really enjoyed seeing his house there because it is right on the beach. Also, Barbra Streisand was at the "party" and I got to meet her, too. Because of the timing of everyone's arrival, it was decided to get pizza for dinner--guess who got to go pick up the pizza. Mr. Harris' grandson was supposed to come with me because he knew where the pizza place was. Since he was going all the other kids wanted to go too. So Mr. Harris' grandson, Barbra's son and Jon Peter's son all climbed into my car. After getting in I realized that Barbra's stingray-looking car and Jon's Mercedes were parked to the right and left rear of my car and I had to maneuver out of my parking space (with about 6 inches to spare on either side) between these two expensive cars--I did it, but who needs that kind of driving slalom test (with such expensive pylons)?! As we headed down the Pacific Coast Highway I couldn't help but laugh; these rich kids reduced to riding in my dirty old '67 Dodge Dart! (Barbra's son was impressed by the "dudley Do-Right Emporium" catalog he found in the back seat of the car, though). Needless to say we got the pizza and arrived back in one piece and it was a fun evening!



Since a great deal of this issue is about STAR TREK, I might as well mention that the Equicon/Filmcon was recently held in San Diego which I attended (and had a good time, mostly). I don't plan to enter into the STAR TREK discussion. I am a STAR Trek fan, I enjoyed SF before TREK, and I'd like to say I liked the show for a myriad of logical and intellectual reasons, but I can't. Some of the reasons are intelligent, but then there are some other reasons that have nothing to do with anything except what I like or don't like. Most of my feelings are expressed in a couple of the letters herein, so I'll just let you people do the fighting (see how lazy I am?)

So, It was nice to get a lot of letters this time--if I had known STAR TREK would stir up all this excitement, I would have said something about the show before!





1  
AURIE

2  
AWN

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10 APRIL, 1975

Greetings:

These few things crawled out of my head as I read Kingston Kane's letter. I am a great admirer of STAR TREK, but I cast a dubious glance towards the statement STAR TREK is the best in filmed Science Fiction. STAR TREK was good, very good - but some of its episodes pale next to some of OUTER LIMITS' best ones. And I think it would be fairer to say that it was, generally speaking, the best sci fi series on TV. But on film?? That's rather much! Considering: 2001 A Space Odyssey, War of the Worlds, Time Machine and Invasion of the Body Snatchers to name a few! Compare STAR TREK to that bunch and you'll come down a bit from the statement mentioned above. Maybe when they come out with the movie, it'll take the place of two or three other movies, but I doubt it, (we'll just have to wait and see...)

Secondly! Saying STARTREK haters aren't real sci fi fans is not only stupid, but pretty silly as well! I myself don't like a lot of sci fi, for many reasons, mainly for one! I prefer what fantasy does. But I'd still call myself a sci fi fan, on the single basis that I like a lot of what sci fi has done. But just because I admire The Moon is a Harsh Mistress and the person next to me doesn't, that doesn't mean I'm going to say 'Because of your dislike of this book, you cannot truly be a sci fi fan!' I realize that some anti-STAR TREK people are on their own, 'it was on TV therefore it cannot be very good at all' trip, but that's their problem and it doesn't mean they can't or don't have the right to call themselves sci fi fans as well! For tho I've only been in fandom for a year and only been reading sci fi since my tenth birthday (for about 8 years), I get the impression fandom is a hobby. But fandom of sci fi and fantasy should ideally encompass a wide range of interest - other people's ideal of being in fandom may not be your own - but don't begrudge them this difference! And that applies to the anti-STAR TREK people and the snobs that look down their noses (oh! they only smell the smoke of intellectual ray guns, of course!) at trekkers, trekkies and faanish people! Remember IDIC, friends. Stay well and joy to you all - fans are great people, despite their attempts sometimes to dispute that fact!!!!

1  
JOHN

2  
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12 APRIL 1975


Nathan Gavarin suggests some kind of SF book services be set up. I've already a member of something I think is both better and cheaper -- an sf paperback swapping group! The group is an outgrowth of Darline Haney's SF Correspondence Club. The idea is to package 5 paperbacks each month and mail them off to a specified member of the group. That person mails 5 books on to another member, etc. So far a cost of 26¢ postage a month (book rate) and you can get rid of five paperbacks you don't want or are no longer interested in a pick up five different books.

Oho! You say. Doesn't that mean that everybody gets rid of the real bombs and no one receives anything good?

No! is my answer. I generally find that at least two of the books I receive each month are good and at least one of the remaining three is fair entertainment. Where can you pick up two good books and one fair one for 26¢? Used books are hard to come by. Ask any bookstore operator.



So I wrote to Darline Maney and asked her to join the N3F and start up the Bookswap Bureau. She answered that she's interested and is already making organization plans. Watch these pages for more news soon.

 DAVID

 LEIST

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13 APRIL 1975

The N3F, Fandom, and neo-fandom; As I enter the SF world I'm a little disappointed with the entity called "fandom". I had thought that SF fandom would be interested in the literature of SF, mainly, but now know that this isn't so. Instead, fandom seems involved with its own matters and doesn't care too much about the rest of the SF world; neo-fandom, perhaps you'd say, Fanzines and conventions are a part of SF, ture, but I think they are far from being the most important aspects of my definition of "fandom".

The N3F, too, has good intentions and carries them through more than any other organization of fandom I've seen. But still, I've been a little disappointed with what I've seen of N3F so far. Friendship with other fans is acheived, true, but the other areas are...I don't know. It seems that fandom has been this way since the beginning of the N3F and fandom will remain the same as long as I'm involved with it. This, I think is strange and very disappointing. Sf is concerned with change, new ideas, mind-expanding thoughts!

But TNFF hasn't changed! Why not? I don't know. But I say it is time for a change. Get things rolling! The FUTURE is science fiction, not the past. TNFF was filled with listings, addresses, etc. All very well and good. This too is part of fandom. But that was it! It seemed somehow, that the best part was missing. You have bureaus, awards, rooms at the Con etc. All the stuff is there! But it doesn't come through, some how. Most definitely, the N3F and TNFF need to be modernized.

I wouldn't be in such an uproar if it weren't for the state of SF today. It is AWFUL! (well most of the time). The pulps are slowly beginning to fade --- when the depression hits, I am going to hold my breath. Already IF has died, FANTASTIC has gone to fantasy, and VORTEX is going into newspaper form. Anthologies are just no match for the zines. No feedback. The pulps are vital to the SF world. If they vanish, then slowly, but surely, SF will too.

How does this tie in with fandom? Note: because SF today is generally poor, fans that would normally become active in the true SF side of science fiction and fandom also are turning away. While fandom looks into the past and the Golden Age, the modern SF world is becoming decadent. We must do something about it!! Fandom must help, not hinder, SFdom. Why do authors detest fandom to such a great degree? I don't know, I haven't been active enough to discover the TRUE reason. But fanzines have a bad name as do fans and neos. We must destroy this barrier between the pros and meet on the same grounds. SF and SF fandom should be one and the same thing! However, fandom has gone another direction. We have to get fans back to the mainstream SF, show the pros that fans are respectable members of the SF world, and get rid of those who are involved with SF for other reasons. We need a major overhaul! A revolution! But the change had better come soon, before it's too late.

What can we do? I don't have the answer. But this problem must be presented to the rest of fandom and the SF world and a sloution must be found.

(I am very fond of the N3F, think that it has the best organization ideas and element



of friendliness than any SF club today. Some modernization should be done for the better. NO organization is perfect, but make it more exciting and interesting than it is. I hope that every member expresses an opinion on the subject. Finally perhaps some one could come up with ideas as to HOW the N3F could be improved. This is for the membership of the N3F to decide.)

((I think I'll be the first to invite you, David, to be the official organizer and spearhead of this revolution. I don't think too many people will object to making the N3F more exciting or interesting or "respectable". Any ideas any one?))

SHERYL

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BIRKHEAD

18 APRIL 1975

I'd like to say thanks to any and all concerned for this year's Kaymar Award. To say I was surprised is a mild understatement! Pleased, too. Just wish there were enough hours in the day to do all I'd like to do, instead of only all I can.

((Typical of Sheryl, her thank you note arrived here before I received the announcement in the TNFF. Sheryl, you certainly deserve it!))

SCOTT C.

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SMITH

24 APRIL 1975

This little gem is in response to Kingston Kane's vehement display of ingornance last Tightbeam.

First, I think I ought to clear up some things so that you will know just how seriously to take this letter. I guess that I am a younger fan than Kingston Kane, but that does not mean that I am also less knowledgeable in fannish matters. I am not a Star Trek hater, just a Star Trek criticizer who enjoys watching the various episodes but does not take them seriously.

I do not like Star Trek as an sf show for several reasons. I don't think it is realistic, for one thing. Would the captain of an aircraft carrier in world war II grab a hold of his sexy yeoman just before an attack? No. Therefore, it is unbelievable that a starship captain (superior to the normal human in the first place) will snare his secretary in a sensual clench just before the Klingons attack. Because of this, it made it unbelievable as a television show. I admit that Star Trek was the best sf show on tv. I admit that it had had one of the largest groups of fans of any tv show. I will go even further to admit that if it is the best sf show on tv, I would truly hate to see the worst.

As to the matter of the starship, the bridge is alright, feasible, pedantic, but hardly probable. And the exterior? Extreme, pulpy trash. A starship would look like an enlarged model of 2001's Discovery or Fleet Planetarium's (San Diego) Delta V. Not a streamlined, keen-looking rocket ship. That is just what the Enterprise was.



The engine pod bulbs glowing ferociously, lights blinking from copious portholes, and stars moving below it as it picks up speed. Bad special effects? Yes. But let's trace it even farther than that. How about bad information in the first place? Roddenberrry wanted it that way in the first place. Another stroke of incredulous fantasy.

The writing for the show was good. Because people like Hippy Marlan and Dave Gerrold contributed. Ted Sturgeon didn't hurt matters any. I admit that the storyline makes you seem a part of the crew. But then, the Day of the Dolphin made you view life from the perspective of the porpise, big deal.


As to another condemning fact about the stories, try comparing them. Comparing them, that is, to things like Stranger in a Strange Land, the Note in God's Eye, and Rendezvous with Rama. They don't hold up much in the simile, do they. Unfair, you say, comparing them to great works. But just a minute ago you were saying Star Trek scripts were great works.

You have not heard the last anti-Star Trek remark, Kingston. Just because people are Science Fiction Fans does not mean that they have to like everything that has a label saying "Science Fiction" on it! I have written many stories, as you no doubt have, as all fans no doubt have, that are science fiction. Yet they smell, they bring up such unbearable stench that we don't even like to read them a second time. But they are science fiction.

Sure I belived Star Trek. I belived in a man with funny ears and green blood (as a matter of fact, in "Amok Time" Spock almost turned into a frenzied BEM), I belived in a bunch of races and professions walking around in light blue velour costumes and 1960 haircuts, on board a starship with two engine pods, a Scottish engineer called Scotty, a Russian helmsman by the name of Chekov, a Japanese helmsman by the name of Sulu. I belived in a lot of men and women aboard a coeducational starship, with no cases of acne, no ugliness, only beautiful people, where the large majority of the crew was a bunch of WASPS. Of course, expectadly, there were cases of exotic diseases like the Vulcan mating call, an alien with an artificial horn which enclosed a tiny radio transmitter that could cross interstellar space in seconds, I belived in a creature of living rock which laid silicon eggs, in a man named Harry Mudd who ruled a planet full of androids which looked like each other, in a planet which evolved alongside Earth to have an exact replica of a modern-day Roman Empire. Believeability? Sure.

Star Trek is coming back? Good, and it will be improved. I'm not groaning in the Peanut Gallery, although I'm not too excited. After all, it couldn't get any worse!

 TAN

 OOLSTON

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25 APRIL 1975

Thinking of N'APA, I asked those interested in writing so their ideas could be presented to the N'APAns via a letterzine. It is my assumption that the club letterzine, Tightbeam, would be used to release emotional pressure and get in touch with all the membership in letters, so having a letterzine to present ideas and tell about things planned or done seems logical. But in practice it seems many people will only act when pressed either by a friend or an emotional need--and writing the full membership is where one letter would bring the most response, or at least the most readership. Wouldn't it?



Anyway, if response is not the reason most members are in this group, what is it? I am a "fan" because my interest is wide, as many fan't interest are wide. I am curious about people (and fans are in that category--people who are curious--too). We couldn't twist arms to insure response--or involvement--in a club...but we can encourage it.

In my own mind I think of every letter I write as a personal letter mean to appeal to individual interest. However, so many who write seem to need to respond (and often negatively) to what others write that I wonder what the main drive of many fans are.

Some would rather argue about the use of words than anything else. For instance, I've received letters that suggest "fans" is a poor choice of a word to describe what members are, collectively. Some may say "I'm no fanatic and that is the base word from which "fans" is derived." Maybe so. It's true that some who are called fans are quite fanatic about it, perhaps desiring to live in a community of strong SF or fantasy enthusiasts. (There are those who do so live, either by growing their own by getting married to either a fan or one willing to go along with fanzine production, "fannish" talk, etc., or by converting their place into a little fanworld where fans meet and maybe live.) Some fans in college have roommates who are SF readers and maybe fulltime active fans. Some fans have lived in apartments close to other fans. It can be a fine way to share a common interest--or actually a series of common interests.

Discussing common interests is possible with a club, but also in person (at home) if fans are near--or by writing others. Tv is a very good way to speak up and get response or to listen in on what others are thinking.

But it is not always one of spontaneous response. Some fans are shy. Maybe most fans are shy--most enthusiasts may find it easier to get pressures out of their system by discussing things as if a bit aggressive to others, by mail, too. Can it be that the correspondence fan who seems always to have something to cuss (if not discuss) is really, possibly, a shy guy who wants to be involved but who may have a need also to be heard--and so feels an aggressive response may be the best way to do all he wants? Maybe--

But such letters can be helpful and informative. Still, a fan with these approaches can go farther. He can even get involved in fanactivities if shy. Without standing up before a group (which can be alarming to someone who hasn't don it, shy or not) a person can not only use his own initiative but become an elected and active officer in N3F.

He can run for office. Or he can become active in a Bureau.

And when I say "he" I am hoping the ladies who may read this are bristling. I hope they'll write in to claim their own rights--for of course they are as important as any member and have the right to become active in any way. If a little competition develops it will be because they are willing to tell someone about their own activities and interests, and maybe volunteer of something they would like to do.

One thing's for sure--those who are involved are apt to be more interested in the group. I'm sure, from an acquaintance with many fans, that when they get involved in a bureau or activity (including correspondence or writing for zines) they will have their interests grow. Blossom. And we need more blossoms!

There is no "activity month" but if anyone wants to prod themselves a bit, I suggest they do something around their birthday. Giving a gift of themselves (whether a



letter or seeking office or whatever) writing during their birthday-month might be a good way to get in on this interest-curve. You can write Tb or a Bureau chief about what interests you--perhaps to the Welcomittee and help N3F grow by welcoming new members. You could write this guy Stan Woolston if you are interested in being a p- pointed to some activity, and I'd welcome any such letters.


I've a letter here from a person interested in the Collector's Bureau, and put it as- ide to answer. This person, after he moves, will be interested in involement. This is fane, and it may even result in him and Don D'Ammassa working together on this.

When I get a letter offering to take on a Bureau or wanting to become involved, I would like to know and have in that letter indications of past interests or activity-- so as to have an idea without prodding if that person has publishing experience and equipment, whether he or she corresponds, and other things that help any activity succeed. This does not mean that every Cureauperson needs to publish--for many ac- tivities can be done through the club organ and much more than simple "reports" are possible in The National Fantasy Fan.


And of course letters to Tb can help. It can present to all the membership a fact-- that a fan is interested actively in some specific phase of fanactivity. Letters can personalize any interest too--and I am sure many fans would rather write a person than a "bureau". (After all, we are all people--and are not yet in the habit of writing "Dear Computer" letters.)

At midyear it'll be time to ask members to consider running for N3F office. Every year we have an election for President and 5 Directors. There is no reason you should not consider trying to become either Director or President--and I'll be glad to write you about this. Just write me and I can give tips on what Directorate mem- bers or Presidents have done and can do--with, of course, a ccoperative attitude for the other and the membership.

Anyway, I'd like to see a new President, and if it takes a special "school" I'll start one. By letter.

 DAVID

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 YER-BENNET

30 APRIL 1975

Jar us out our apathy indeed! Some of us may, just perhaps you understand, be too busy to write for a minor publication such as TB. Ever think of that?

Don D'Ammassa managed to get under my skin in his letter. While I think he may be partially right about the innate conservatism of SF readers, I'm not at all sure of it, and I think he overstates it rather too much.

If there was a hysterical reaction to Herovit's World, I must have been looking the other way at the time. I vaguely remember reading one good review and one bad re- view, and have seen and heard no other discussion on the subject. Perhaps someone could point out where the hysterical reaction too place?

I would challange his assertion that the fanatical puritan letter in Analog are from fans, in the strict sense of the word. Looking at Analog's circulation, they can't all be Trufen, can they? I realize that I haven't proved they were not fans, but the question is still open.







most of the episodes and as far as tube SF is concerned it stands far above anything seen.

I detest the Trekkies and the hysteria generated by them as well as the belief of some that SF began and ended with Spock's ears.

More importantly the letter states in aprt that "he is at home in Star Trek's galaxy but not in some of the others." What he is saying he prefers a galaxy peopled by beings who owe allegiance to WASPrinciples. For what were most of the story plots but a summary of the problems of current American society. Carried to its logical extreme, SF loses its uniqueness as a form of literature. This is not to say that I don't like it here, I do. Nor am I saying that all of our current problems will be solved by them. Only a fool would believe that. What this reflects is the conservative nature of SF readers which in turn reflects the conservatism of the society.

Believability is indeed important if you are seeking security but SF to me is not an area where security is of paramount importance.

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((Following is Kingston Kane's letter to Dennis.))  
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Dear Dennis:

I just got your letter today and I thank you kindly for your comments. I have not received this month's tightbeam as yet, due no doubt to my location (a bit further east on the Galactic Plane). At any rate, he says--moving right along--I too detest trekkies. In fact--I think "loathe" is the better word for them. These mindless imbeciles think that only in Star Trek can you find superb Science Fiction. Not so. I maintain that Star Trek is the best filmed Science Fiction around--hardly the best Science Fiction. In my humble opinion read Ursula LeGuin, Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison, Arthur Clarke--my four favorite writers in that order. Oh a fifth I also like is Heinlein. Now--you state in your letter that I'm conservative in my reading, well, if I am its because the writers I read are conservative in their views. Take Heinlein. If any writer is conservative it's him. Not only is he conservative, but he is a militant to boot. Read "Starship Troopers" a perfect example of the glorification of war. However, you'll find if you read him right, that Heinlein is an anarchist! Don't believe it? Hell, all his characters are Rhysling, Jubal, V. Michael Smith -- Lazarus Long was the worlds greatest anarchist! Look at the way Heinlein portrays governments. Pett, Corupt, Decadent. By the same token Mrs. LeGuin, who in my opinion is the finest writer today, is just the opposite, conservative but she has no love for anarchists.

To tell you the truth, I'm sort of stuck in the middle. As for Ellison - shit - where the hell can you fit him? I've tried and failed. I've read him for years and still can't find out what his "leaning" is. Conservative, Liberal, Middle of the Road, what? Do you know? Do you like Ellison? As for Poul Anderson - a rank conservative if there ever was one. Now his stories fall into groups: Man's opening up of the Galaxy, The Polesatechnic (?) League Trader era the Flandry Stories of the decline and fall of the Galactic Empire and recently the Galaxy after the fall. If you want, I could go down the whole list, Simak, Zelazny, Fred Pohl, Issac Asimov - hell 90 per cent of them are conservatives. It's no wonder that the readers are. The writers taught them to be!

The women writers are far more liberal in their views than the men with a few exceptions. Ursula LeGuin is one. Now - oh by the way - the above info on Heinlein as an anarchist was supplied by Tom Walsh, N3F's resident genius. There are so far as



I know only two in our group. Want to know who the other one is? Surprise. It's me! Who else? Want to know why David Gerrold isn't listed above? 'Cause I consider him a non-writer, perhaps the best non-writer around. Great guy - but a great writer--no way, least ways not yet.

Now about the Star Trek Galaxy. What makes you think that by the 22nd Century everything's going to be Honk Dory? One big Utopia? All of our problems on earth will be solved - I hope - but as we move out into the Galaxy no doubt new problems will emerge. As for the Federation of Planets, this concept is sort of like what the U.N. should be but isn't. And earth seems to be the most powerful planet in the Federation. Sort of the N.A.T.O. S.E.A.T.O. etc. As Spock would say, it's a logical development along the lines of our history as depicted in Star Trek. The Eugenics Wars of the 1990's forcing us to unite at last. Man moving out in the solar system and eventually the galaxy. He encounters many races some friendly, some not. The Federation is formed then the Kzinti are encountered and there begins a series of four conflicts with them and eventually the Klingons. After all of this constant warfare a truce and then a somewhat uneasy peace arose with both sides having peacekeeping forces guarding their respective borders. Coming at last, to the galaxy as we see it on Star Trek. Along these lines the story could not have evolved any other way.


Okay, some episodes, most notably "The Mark of Gideon" and "Way to Eden" did deal with American Society and its current problems. But that's hardly Roddenberry's fault. He wasn't in charge of the third season. And the producer wanted Star Trek to have relevant scripts. To hell with that. As Fred Pohl once said, "...if Science Fiction was always relevant it's not Science Fiction." I agree, Science Fiction should not under any circumstances be relevant. And in the new Star Trek it won't be.

But as far as the human problems are concerned - we'll always have them as long as we're human.

One final note, as far as Trekkies are concerned the only positive thing you can say about them is that they have, through their constant vocalizing they got Star Trek back. I must admit I helped too. Also, when you finished with this please send this to Tightbeam. As I think the resulting fireworks will prove interesting. Another reason is I don't have the time to know what my other interests are, well they are the following; the occult arts, psionics, NASA UFO's. I like all authors including Clarke, LeGuin, Ellison, Anderson, Heinlein, etc.

 KENNETH R.

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 ROST

2 MAY 1975

Contrary to Stan Woolston's comment in thisish of Tightbeam, this missive is not ghostwritten by you. Howsomever, there is a possibility that a significant number of my Neffer friends may speculate on it being written by a ghost. I owe practically everyone, including my Mother. I never realized how far behind I am in my correspondence until I started to shift my home office to new quarters. I've been meaning to get at it, but tomorrow is unscheduled.

Rightbeam has consistently been a real joy under your firm hand. Style is right and content interesting. Your mailing dates appear consistent with publishing dates. The combined efforts of the US Postal Service and Her Majesty's Post are something else again. God help the West if the Pony express had operated this way. I suppose it's the price we pay for belonging to a democratic society.



On to the letters.

Gerard Hoarner's letter is interesting in a rather confused fashion. Although substantially correct in his observations about writers and writing, he seems to have fallen into precisely the error I associate in my mind with the essayists he disclaims. Fiction is story telling, plain and simple. The author may choose to superimpose a more, philosophy, or personal viewpoint, but that is purely secondary. Few works, if any, are remembered for their moral if they are not entertaining. Burroughs' stories are "great" as examples of the story-teller's art. They are popular and they survive. I will grant they are not "great" in the literary/academic sense, but I'll wager a significant number of works currently being foisted-off on undergraduates the world over will be long forgotten when Burroughs' heirs are still "laughing to the bank". The works of pro's that "stink" compared to the polished material they now produce can't be all that bad. It generated "some money to fall back on" because it was good story-telling, produced by the same natural talent that provides the base for the "great" works we see now.

Nathan Garvarin's suggestion for a "grill the Publisher" session is fascinating. Know any masochistic publishers?

Reed Andrus has set my head spinning with his comment on his Father's funding of his (Reed's) publishing venture through a spin-off corporation. I'm not sure how to swing it, but if I can find a way to tie a publishing venture in with my system's consulting, you'll hear more from me. Could you expand on the ground-rules for the NFAS? I've gone back into various Tightbeams and can't find a thing. My fanzine intake is reasonably large and I certainly do "appreciate" them.

Fan resistant to change cited by Don D'Amassa is so true, but not surprising. Public opinion notwithstanding, fans are people, and my experience in "marketing" changes is that 85 - 90% of any population will, consciously or otherwise, tend to favour the "status quo". But once the tide turns, stand back.

Star Trek is not, repeat not, bad science fiction. I may be dated in concept when compared to the current trend, but it is not bad. The rabid attacks directed at it are largely unwarranted, and K. Kane's observations are pretty good. I suspect that "get Star Trek became the fad as a result of the revulsion the antics of the Trekkies generated. My God, better they should scream at Sinatra or the Beatles and fall down fainting. I sure don't want people to think I'm one of (ugh) them. Personally, I'm a fan, still watch the reruns, and have enjoyed most of the background books turned-out. I would not, however, under no circumstances spend my hard-earned shekkels on the popularized series of paperback catering to the market.

Stan's comment on N'APA is a "needle" where I, and I assume other fans, need it. If Frank can provide the printing at "about a cent an impression", as stated, all the non-copier people just ran out of excuses. That makes the whole proposition very attractive for me, I know. It's much less than reproduction and mailing from Canada would cost.

I shall now exercise an author's prerogative and insert a "flash-back". Not very far. About ten minutes or six pages, to your editorial. You lucky dogs down there in "tinsel town". Ten Tuesdays Down A Rabbit Hole sounds great. The best I've been able to find around T.O. is Three Hours In A Rip-Off. Fifty bills to listen to an opportunistic academic spew "dreck" can't be anything else. Your filmex sounds pretty fair too, although it should be much of a surprise that the owners wanted you to be a captive market for their "plastic food Machine". I recall my amazement when I worked at a movie (when I was in school twenty years ago) and found that the "garbage bar" brought in more money than admissions. If it was true then, it's true now...



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Aha! Another Star Trek debate. Gee, I've never been in one--never had the guts to join in the Great Fantastic (or was it Amazing Stories debate, in which White took on all comers.)

Now I'm not saying Star Trek was the worst drek that ever hit the tube. Certainly not. "Gorgeously filmed", all right, I'll go along with that. The special effects were certainly far above the usual sf fare.

But logical? Hoho. Pardon me if I don't quote show titles, but do you remember when the Federation and the Klingons were ready to go to war over a planet, and the inhabitants (who were energy beings who just happened to be in human form) the superior beings, let all the rigamarole go on until the very end of the show. Why? Well, it made for some nice action, but the plot was somewhat hazy.

Maybe it's because they've been re-run so often, and thus I've gotten to know them inside out, but a lot of those plots were just not consistent. What they lacked most of all was motivation. If the writer couldn't get the viewer to ignore the lack of motivation with a lot of action, then he would stick in a line and dismiss the matter.

Logical? With everybody speaking English, from god-like universe spanning beings to natives of virgin planets. No black or oriental aliens either (hell, if you believe blond, blue-eyed aliens can walk up to Captain Kirk and say, "Hiya big boy", then why not a black?). There was not even lip-service to the alien problem (a tricord translator? Something?)

Beautifully acted? Come on, can you believe William Shatner was acting beautifully when he was running around in a Gestapo uniform on an alien planet, or in a Gladiator suit or even (I shudder at the memory) a Chicago mobster outfit? Can you believe anybody was trying to act seriously when Abe Lincoln beamed aboard, or when a giant hand came out of nowhere to grab the ship, claiming it was Apollo? Oh, that was seedy stuff. Straight out of the pulps. And all those super beings running around (a great many of them pure energy forms), then when you needed them the most (like during the giant amoeba invasion, or the giant horn invasion) they disappeared.

The Enterprise was certainly a nicely designed ship, but that doesn't mean it's the end all of all spaceship design. There are still modular designs, massive constructions hundreds of miles long with not particular shape, jeez, I've got a dozen of them (but they'd make for good stories, and I'm a miser with story ideas).

The bridge was nicely designed and did bring the viewer right in there where the action was. All right, that's one brownie point (but even then I yield it with regrets, 'cause I could never see why there was only one exit from the bridge or why there was so much room on it. I know, I know, Apollo command modules make lousy sets. But then, I hear there's a film called DARK STAR that makes excellent use of the cramped-quarters reality of space flight.) But why, with so many contingencies for "Intruders" (alerts, security, etc.), was the Enterprise taken over so many times? I can remember three: an energy being feeding on hate (those pesky little energy beings sure get around, don't they. Here's a plot for you, Mr. Kingston Kane, if you want to write a Star Trek episode: there's this intergalactic energy-being exterminator, ya see.....); a group of aliens from another galaxy who turned the whole crew into little cardboard boxes (oy); and a group of "hippie types" looking for Eden.



In fact, I just remembered a couple of more, but you get the general idea. Logical?

I just finished watching a show called "The Apple" and took a few notes. Kirk and a landing party go down to a beautiful planet that turns out to be full of booby traps (almost a la Deathworld) and it turns out that it is being run by a gigantic computer complex that, for some reason I never quite figured out, requires a handful of human be-on, excuse me, "natives" to pile some mango plants and wood at an access point that's shaped like a huge beastie head. There's a wealth of truly beautiful lines in this one: anti-matter pods losing potency (and I always thought the Enterprise was a she), Mr. Scott saying "It's too bad about Mr. so and so" (the crewmember died, folks, and gee ain't that too bad. The so-and-so is mine). Kirk punches some shmuck alien in the face (a hand phaser? Nay, that would ruin the dramatic potential of the following line) and, after seeing the alien break down and cry, says "I won't hurt you."

But the direction on this episode was something to behold. Poor Shatner is flailing around, shifting from one mood to the next with no rhyme or reason. Spock picks up a rock, throws a bit of it away and it explodes. He then says something about how the rock would be a great source of power if it were analyzed, but never analyzes it. The matter is completely forgotten....

But wait, wait. The best is yet to come. At the beginning of the show, Spock whispers to Kirk that the party is being watched. Then Chekov comes over and asks "what is it?" (an innane question--he has the tricorder, so he could know the situation). Then Chekov goes off to a corner of the truly cheap looking set and listens to a female crewmember tell him about how creepy she feels about being watched. How did she know? Solve the mystery, kiddies, and you get a free one-way trip into the giant amoeba in the shuttle ship Galileo.

Are you getting my drift yet? I could do a number like this on just about every show, even the ones I like (can't be more than half a dozen), but that would be wasting my time. Star Trek was all right, light entertainment at best. But certainly nothing to devote your life to (hell, you might as well be religious as become a Trekkie). Nothing to make James Blish hack out a dozen Star Trek books, or for thousands of fans to crowd hotels and riot for a glimpse of Leonard Nimoy (who looks terrible without make-up and funny ears). Groupies should be seen and heard by the people who inspired them. Let's put all the Trekkies in a huge oak crate and ship them off to Gene Roddenberry and David Gerrold. They'll know what to do with them. Star Trek should not be placed on some pedestal to be worshipped as the pinnacle of SF cinema achievement. That will only choke other efforts, perhaps better ones. Star Trek died in the late sixties, so let it rest in peace and let's move on to something else.

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