

OH, SAY, CAN YOU SUE?

For the third or fourth time in the history of fandom, some of its members are embroiled in legal proceedings as a result of fan activities. Things have been happening so fast around New York City that it's impossible to be sure how complex the situation may be, by the time this article sees print. But regardless of how well the lawyers may eat, as a result of their fees from the squabbles over conventions and airplane trips, I think it's high time that fandom realized what a potentially dangerous weapon is being brandished when words are published on fanzine pages.

I'm not a lawyer. It would be wonderful if some impartial and able member of the bar were to write a couple of dozen pages on libel as it applies to fandom and fanzines. However, I have been writing for newspapers for fifteen years, and over that period I have put perhaps fifteen million words into published news stories, and so far I haven't even been threatened with libel action. It occurred to me that the principles under which the average reporter operates to avoid court troubles might be outlined, insofar as they are applicable to fandom. Understand, above all, that reading this article won't make it possible for you to write anything you please that I haven't specifically forbidden. New ways of libeling people are found every week in this nation, and I don't pretend to know more than a few of those that have been invented up to now. However, I think I might be able to clear up some basic points about the libel laws, and keeping those things in mind could conceivably save someone a monstrous headache.

The worst misconception about the libel laws is one that is held, unfortunately, by most persons. It's the belief that you can't be libeled if what has been written is the truth. There are many angles to this situation, and they vary in various states. Basically, it's impossible to say that your printed words aren't libelous because they're true. First of all, there are many kinds of fractional truth, then there's the problem of proving it's the truth, and finally there's the question of whether publication of that truth was justified. Let's take them up, one at a time.

Suppose you publish an article that says that Joe Fann goes to a brothel every day. If you stop right there, you're wide open for libel action, if Joe happens to be a mailman who is required to deliver the day's mail to the sporting house or reads the water meters in the

town's large red light district. Joe's wife might see your fanzine article, and decide that here's a way to pay for next winter's coal, by getting some money out of a libel suit against the writer and the publisher of that statement. Even if all fandom knows that Joe is a mailman or meter reader, it would be up to the courts to decide whether that half-truth was damaging to his reputation or that of his family. I've seen lots of this kind of material in fanzines. It might be safe to publish if the fanzine circulation is restricted to a very small circle of people who know and like each other and can be counted upon not to cause trouble or give away copies indiscriminately. But there's a lot of difference between a privately circulated Kteic Magazine in which Bill Rotsler describes how his wife was stood up by a white slave ring leader and a subscription fanzine which says that Joe Fann goes to a brothel every day. (I don't think Joe could stand the strain, either. However, remember that we all like fantasy.)

Then there's the matter of proving the truth. You may know that Joe Fann is a ~~manic~~ because he tried to make you at the last convention after an all-night party. Or you may have seen things going on with your own eyes, in case you're feminine in sex and therefore ineligible for Joe's attentions. But to say in print that a person in a homo is potentially libelous material. Whatever gods watch over fans have been particularly kind in this respect: Half of the science fiction fans in California could be peddling pencils on street corners today, if various fanzines had reached the wrong eyes or if a handful of California fans had more vindictive natures. The same thing holds good for questions of honesty or accusations of adultery or charges of sedition or a wide variety of other potential libels. The libel law says that you can't deprive a person of his good reputation unless he has done something to deprive himself of that good name. Normally this consists of being found guilty of breaking a law. And you must be careful, even there. You'd better not keep writing that Joe Fann is a maniac because he once spent six months in an insane asylum. You may under normal circumstances be able to publish the fact that he spent six months in an insane asylum, just as you can say that he was found guilty of assault or is required to pay alimony to his former wife. But if you must muckrake, confine yourself to specific instances in which the man's misdoing became a matter of public record, such as conviction by the courts.

And even here, the truth may hurt the person who speaks it more than it harms the person about whom it is spoken, insofar as the painful area is confined to the pocketbook. In certain states of the nation, it can be libelous to publish truth, provable truth, if the motives behind that publication are not good. Such a situation might be Joe Fann's discovery that forty years ago, a highly respected author or prozine editor had broken a pawnshop window and stolen a typewriter with which he began his professional career in the literary field. The conviction for this theft might be in the records of the court, but in these states, publication of this old misdoing at such a late date, simply for smear purposes, could result in a conviction for libel. The latest available list of these states that I can find is Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, West Virginia, Illinois and Nebraska. Any additions or deletions which have occurred in recent years would be welcomed.

It might also be noted that a statement about a person may or may not be grounds for libel action, depending on the person involved. It

might be safe to say that Joe Fann is suffering from tuberculosis if he runs a shoeshine stand or hawks newspapers on the corner. But you are in tremendous danger of libel action if you say that he's tubercular and his place of employment is a restaurant or a dairy. In general, don't take chances with statements about dangerous communicable diseases. You should also be very careful with charging that a person has a non-contagious disease, particularly if it is one which might disqualify him for the kind of work he does or the sort of social life that he leads. To say that a bus driver is an epileptic is tantamount to saying that he's a menace to the safety of the public. Venereal diseases are particularly likely fuel for the flames of libel.

Another misconception is that you can avoid libel if you don't write anything that would appear libelous to the casual, man-on-the-street observer. A typical example would be the flat statement in a fanzine that Joe Fann on his tour of the nation stayed with three or four individuals who are generally known to be leading homosexuals. Even if you didn't mention their reputation in the item in question, you might be sued by Joe Fann for the unwritten implication that a man is known by the company he keeps.

At this point, you're ready to yank the cover off your typewriter and compose an answer to this article, showing how ridiculous it is to worry about libel, when you can find in almost any magazine or newspaper examples of statements which would be completely libelous under my definitions. Before you take a lot of your spare time for this purpose, there are several things you should know about the apparent carelessness to the libel laws that you find in the public prints.

For one thing, you'll find that much of these apparent floutings of the law derive from "privileged" matter. Unfortunately, fandom has virtually no connection with privileged material. Good examples of it are things that are said in the sessions of Congress, official statements of leading governmental officials, decisions of governmental bodies which are public in character, and official communiques from the armed services. If the grand jury in your county says that there are fire hazards in this or that building because open cans of paint are stored there in quantity or there aren't enough fire exits in the theaters, nobody can sue anybody for libel, whether it's a true or false statement; it's privileged as a part of the grand jury report. But if you say that Joe Fann's house is a fire trap because he has so many old prozines stored in the vicinity of a hot chimney, you're not using privileged material, because you aren't the grand jury, and if the fanzine in question were delivered to a neighbor by mistake and that neighbor called the fire department for action against Joe's prozine collection, you might find yourself in trouble.

And there is the matter of size. Some potentially libelous material finds its way into large newspapers and nationally circulated publications because the publications are so large and the objects of the smears are so small that the publishers are willing to take a chance on court action. Fans aren't in this fortunate position. You aren't going to pick up another fifty thousand readers for your fanzine by making a libelous statement for which you're willing to pay a thousand bucks' damages for the sake of bigger circulation.

On the other hand, you needn't be a Caspar Milquetoast in your fan writing, because of the fear of libel. Fortunately for fandom, much of

its raw material consists of stuff that is fairly safe from libel action. Most of it is criticism and comment on stories, movies, and other fanzines. You can go remarkably far in the things you say about a person's total inability to write a good English sentence or the first-grade character of his fiction or the resemblance of his drawing to a chicken's scratchings in the dust. This isn't the kind of reputation ruining that is normally the basis for libel suits. But it would most definitely be libelous to charge a fanzine contributor with plagiarism, or to say that a prozine's publishers are on the verge of bankruptcy because nobody reads the magazine.

A few other things to remember: Publication of a retraction of a libelous statement in your next issue won't free you from the danger of a suit, although that retraction might prove helpful in the action that follows it, if you were defending yourself on the basis of not really intending to have done what you did. Both the writer and the publisher of a libelous statement can be sued; I can't find a reference for this, but I suspect that this is true even if the publisher has changed the manuscript of the contributor and created the libel in so doing. Officers of an ayjay group like FAPA or SAPS could also be named defendants in a libel suit, if the actionable material was printed in fanzines distributed through their group. You can be sued by a person for libel even if he wasn't named in the item under question, as long as its context made it reasonably clear to the reading public who was meant. You can't be sued for libel by printing the fact that an individual has been arrested and charged with some crime, even if that individual is found later not guilty; however, you can run into libel trouble if you try to embellish the news of his arrest carelessly. (Newspapers get away with a lot of stuff that borders on libel in this respect, but you'd better not try to imitate them; their reporters have much more experience in walking the tightrope between reporting and interpreting than you have.) Being sued for libel is only a trifle less of a headache than losing a libel suit, so you'll be wise to bend over backward to avoid becoming a defendant, even if you're confident that the man bringing action against you has simply been encouraged to enter a useless suit by a shyster lawyer.

The best non-technical summary of the libel laws that I have found is the 22nd chapter of a journalism textbook, "News Gathering and News Writing" by Robert M. Neal, published by Prentice-Hall. I have used it to verify my instinct in preparing this article. Although intended for newly hatched journalists, you'll be able to adapt most of its statements for safety in fanzine writing and publishing.

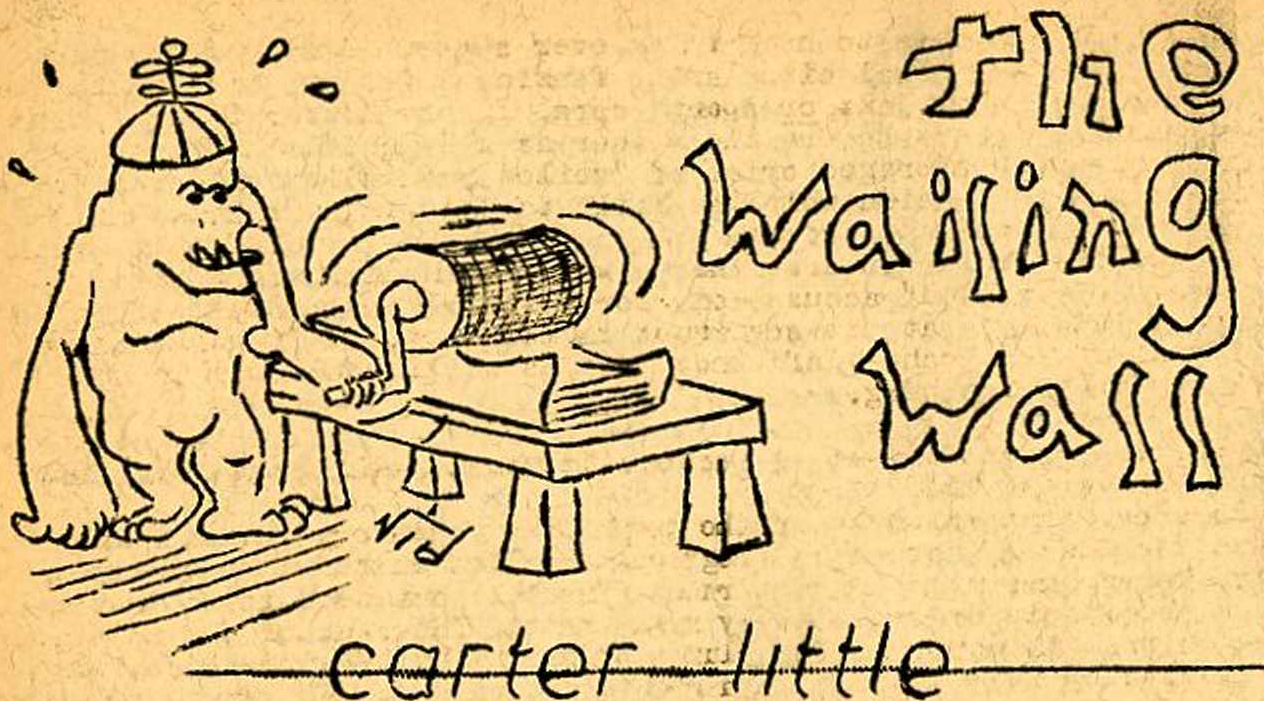
Neal

There he sat, reading Norman G. Wansborough to jazz.

With luck, a satire on Pete Graham's "Clayfeet Country", which appeared in INNUENDO 7, will be in this issue. I'd like to make it clear that in it I am not being disrespectful to F.T. Laney, but instead am simply showing that Graham's article should apparently be taken with a grain of salt. That's all. Any other "morals" you can dig out for yourself.

Greg





SATA ILLUSTRATED No. 9. Bill Pearson, 4516 East Glenrosa Ave., Phoenix, Arizona. 25¢.

Often crudzines are even more abominable in appearance than in content, but SATA is a quite handsome effort. The editor demonstrates that it is possible to get beautifully clear reproduction from the ditto process, a fact one would never guess from the appearance of many fanzines produced by this method. SATA is also notable for illustrations by Dan Adkins, whose work is often of a professional quality. But a pretty appearance means little without readable material, and SATA 9 provoked mostly yawns from this reader. It contains little worth reading, consisting mainly of a chunk of fiction, adequate fanzine reviews by Dan Adkins, and a long letter column containing mostly dull letters from dull people. The editorial tone is quite juvenile.

CRIFANAC No. 6. Tom Reamy, 4243 Buena Vista, Dallas 5, Texas. 25¢, 38 pp. This zine is printed, some of its illustrations are quite good, and although the layout tends to sloppiness, it is a fairly good-looking effort. But even more so than SATA, the time and probably considerable amount of money which went into its production strike me as a complete waste. Possibly Reamy is aiming his zine at the fringe-fans -- the type who each year vote SCIENCE FICTION TIMES the best fanzine -- for this mag has little to interest the fanan, whether his favorite zine be RETRIBUTION or SKYHOOK. From an interview with George Adamski we learn that old atomic bomb clouds never die; they just go wandering invisibly around the atmosphere destroying planes which happen to blunder into them. One Albert Jackson describes his troubles in firing Fourth of July rockets as a Serious Constructive project. Greg Benford in "A.B. Dick Forever" tries his hand at a He Was An Old Fan And Tired story which succeeds in matching the rest of the material in dullness. A quantity of space is taken up by five pieces of fiction of varying quality, and four "poems". One of these by Wayne Daniel, "A Song of Sixpense", is quite amusing, but being in CRIFANAC it may be intended to have Significance. Reamy provides the usual "SF" movie reviews, and an editorial in which he makes a plea for material, in the course of which he says: "I draw the line at articles on jazz and sports cars

and the like which seem to have taken over several fanzines." I defy Reamy to name ONE general circulation fanzine which has been taken over by articles on either jazz or sports cars. In the letter column, Kent Moomaw casually refers to Orville Mosher as a fugghead. Mosher roars back in reply with outraged cries of "veiled accusation", "moral coward to hide behind an opinion which he fails to discuss", "insidious character assassination" etc. and yet when Redd Boggs delicately equates him with Claude Degler it draws not a whimper. Moomaw, of course, was not making any "veiled" accusation, for it is obvious upon reading anything by Mosher that the sobriquet is most apt. Reamy was wise to rid himself of the Mosher influence, but is still entangled in the mantle of Warren Freiberg.

FOCUS No. 6. Mervyn Barrett, 6 Doctors Commons, Wellington C.4., New Zealand. 19 pages. 15¢.

This is a crudzine which looks the part. Six pages are devoted to a fannish version of The Rake's Progress, an idea which under the guidance of Terry Carr might have turned out well, but here it is thrown away on abominable drawings badly reproduced. The rest of the material is too trivial to mention. The blurry cover is by Lynette Mills, who, while hailed by Larry Bourne as a great new talent, has yet to show any evidence of it. Perhaps it is significant that editor Darrett considers CRIFANAC "the best fanzine being published today."

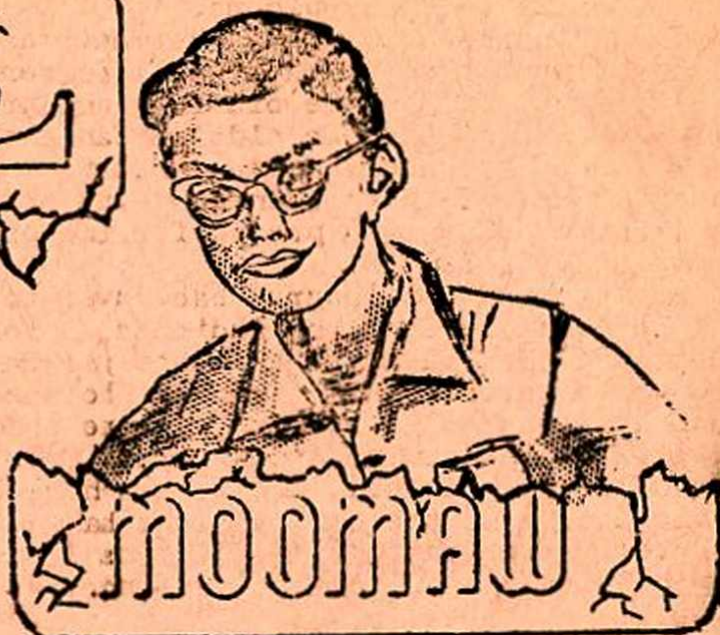
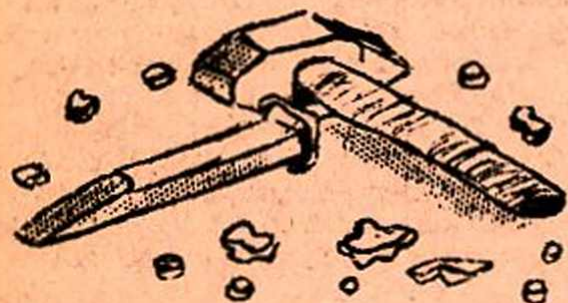
THE GREEN EXPRESSION. Mervyn Darrett (address above). 22 pages.

FOCUS being ostensibly a club zine, Darrett has produced THE GREEN EXPRESSION as a zine in which he can print anything he pleases. Admittedly it is a little less soporific than his other publication. Even the reproduction is mostly legible. Darrett chatters about films and fanzines, and devotes ten pages to the "art" of William Rotsler. Six pages of this "art" are aimed at breast and buttock fetishists. Perhaps the next issue will cater to the high heels and corsets crowd.

YANDRO No. 66. Bob Coulson, 105 Stitt St., Wabash, Ind. 10¢, 20 pages. After churning out faithfully month after month for 10 these many years. YANDRO has quietly developed into a very good zine. Once YANDRO could be relied on for regularity. Now, with editor Coulson growing more selective in his material, it seems that it can also be relied on for pretty good quality. This issue is a fine example of the new look from Indiana. The Coulsons always start off with a couple of pages of chatter, and while they rarely say anything of great import, they say it well. Juanita has even managed to provoke outraged howls from Ted White, although this is not too unexpected, the way Sweetness-And-Light White is being outraged all over the country these days. Joe Hensley and Bob Tucker contribute "How to Get Along With F-a-a-a-a-n-s", working over an old idea with a deft touch. Tucker demonstrates his prodigious memory for faaanish minutiae with a subtle reference to Vorzimer convention demeanor. Dan Adkins contributes more prozine gossip in his saga of Adkins in Pro Land. Bill Pearson has a story which is (surprise) readable and (surprise) not a space opera. Marion Bradley (the furious denouncer of furious denouncers of stf) talks some more of general books on science, this time astronomy. Don't let this scare you. MZB is a facile writer, and rarely dull. In the letter column Bob Tucker, displaying great patience, gives George W. Fields another gentle shove toward the Fugghead of the Year award, and Fields follows, filling his mouth with foot for a page and a half. Bob Leman with precision and erudition skillfully shreds the wispy thinking of Don Stuefloten. If this keeps up, the YANDRO letter column will be a field of jocular strife and dissension.

Cool but slightly random

TOWINGS



The sixth annual Southwestercon was held in Dallas this year over the weekend of July 4th. It was largely a flop. I know. I was there.

I arrived in Dallas early Wednesday evening after a trip taken half-way by Greyhound bus and halfway by the power of the good ol' thumb, and phoned the Benfords immediately. Greg and Jim gave me directions on how to reach their suburban area via Dallas Transit Company bus, but in spite of this I managed to make connections with them at a shopping center near 10521 Allegheny Drive.

I met Randy Brown at the twins' home that night, and listened to him relate old anecdotes on the Cult, plans for the convention, etc. I learned to my utter surprise that I had been booked to appear on the program Friday, in a panel discussion on an as-yet-unchosen subject with Greg, Randy, and a mystery guest. Before I could protest, Brown had scampered off into the night. Me on a panel! when the committee dug that deep, something was certainly wrong. It was an indication of things to come.

Friday we arrived at the Dallas hotel by ten. The time between registration and the beginning of the program at one was almost excruciatingly dull; the convention suite was filled with people I'd never heard of before, mostly Texas and Oklahoma fringe-fans. Greg and I got Brown, co-chairman, to type us up some fake identification badges listing me as Doyd Raeburn and Greg as Ron Kidder, and with these we ventured out to hoax unsuspecting neofans. We found many of the neos so damn unsuspecting that they didn't even recognize the name Raeburn, and one guy, Bill Conner, put us on in such a smooth, subtle way that I frankly wondered who was hoaxing who. We spoke for a while into a tape that Randy was doing for Albert Jackson, a Dallas fan. Mostly we were just bored to death.

Randy opened the official program a half-hour or so late, welcoming all of us to Southwestercon VI, telling us of the Futurians' plans to capture the Worldcon bid at South Gate, introduced visiting dignitaries (again showing how desperate he was by introducing Greg, Jim and myself) and generally performed his duties as a kick-off speaker well.

We learned that Fredric Brown, listed in all Dallas' pre-con propaganda as Guest of Honor, was not in attendance, and that Marion Zimmer

Bradley had been chosen to replace him. I felt disillusionment begin to pile heavily on my shoulders.

Brown introduced Forry Ackerman, toastmaster of the banquet, who promptly went into a deadly dull conversation with Dale Hart, another co-chairman, on obscure old fans and pros. I endured this painfully, and when MZD likened an oldtime fan she had known to me and the audience turned to sneer, I did my best to hold back a yawn. At any rate, the time wasted in this unscheduled trip down Memory Lane with Ackerman, Hart and Bradley proved far too precious to lose in light of what immediately followed.

Hart turned the program back over to Brown, who called the members of the panel up from the audience. I followed Greg up to the platform and found that the mystery guest was Harry Moore of New Orleans, one of the prime movers behind the 1951 Nolacon. No sooner had we begun, tho, than Hart had to go talk to someone and a ten-minute recess was called. Typical. Our faaanish clique spent this time in the room shared by Brown and Pat Edmonds, and it was here I was informed that Ron Parker would not be at the con, that he had joined the Army a couple of weeks before. Parker was one of the fans I had been most anxious to meet, and now he wasn't even going to attend. To paraphrase Vorzy: joining the Army...what an ass!

This was another pile of straw thrown upon the already groaning camel's back. In a few seconds, a couple of extra bales were cheerfully thrown on top of this. Hart told us simply that the man from the Navy with the films (one on jet planes, the other on satellites) had arrived and was ready to go. Our panel was expendable. We were off the program. I reflected grimly on the time he and Ackerman had so blatantly wasted earlier. I wondered just how many people there would prefer seeing a film on jet planes to hearing a reasonably interesting discussion of active fandom. I decided that with all the friggers in attendance, I might be in for a large surprise on that score. I shuddered.

The fannish clique, composed now of the twins, Randy, myself, Rich Koogle and Pat Edmonds ducked out as soon as the films were begun and drove out to Brown's pad. Edmonds had on his face makeup for the masquerade that night; he was going as Gully Foyle from Alfred Bester's "The Stars My Destination", and looked terrific, to say the least. He leaned out the window all the way out to Nokomis Avenue and back, and we broke up regularly at the many and varied expressions on the faces of people who saw him. Edmonds also proved "a well" (that phrase courtesy Gregory Albert Benford) of offbeat wit, and had us gasping at incredible dialogues all afternoon. Brown fed him straight lines, and Edmonds did the rest. It was great.

It was one of the highlights of the con for me, and it is significant to note that this occurred not because of the con committee... rather, in spite of it. This proved the tone of the entire convention: every time we really enjoyed ourselves, we did it completely on our own.

After an hour or so at Brown's, digging his fanzine collection and listening to jazz and all, we had another wild ride back to the hotel. People had left the convention suite to prepare for the masquerade; Edmonds did a fantastic job of reproducing the cover of HARK 7 directly on Brown's face, but Randy later removed this and came as nothing at all.

We spent a ho-hum evening trotting from room to room looking at costumes-in-progress: Bill Conner as a ghoul of some sort, Tom Reamy as an Egyptian god, etc. The masquerade itself proved an utter fiasco: people stood around talking, jumping at each other in juvenile attempts at humor, and such. Greg and I went downstairs to Brown's room and talked, later joined by Don Powell of Denton, Texas, editor of AMOK.

When we returned to the masquerade, we found that the lights had been extinguished, that music was being played, and that everyone was still just sitting around talking. In the dark. There were tables, long ones, down at the other end of the room, but the people there seemingly preferred to sit on metal folding chairs in the dark. Greg got our group together and we marched ostentatiously past the masqueraders to one of the tables, where we seated ourselves and counted the seconds until the whole party followed our lead and filed over to the tables. It was slightly incredible, all in all.

I had considered staying overnight in Brown's room, but there was absolutely nothing going on. Instead of alleviating the day's boredom, the masquerade had only heightened it. People sat around in costumes talking, drinking, craning their necks to see what other people were doing...Greg, Jim and I were appalled at the whole scene. We left for their place at about 9:30 and had a good night's sleep. When we got back the next morning, we learned that we hadn't missed a blessed thing.

The only official function on Saturday was the auction, handled (or mis-handled, as almost everyone I talked to seemed to agree) by Dale Hart. Greg and I were sitting with Don Powell and his Denton group, and we suffered through some of the most sickening corn I've ever heard. Hart would pick up a painting, focus on some insignificant part of it and inerringly go into a five minute spiel on whatever that part of the picture reminded him of. It was almost like an ink-blot test, with Hart the subject and the rest of us forced to listen. Don Powell later mimicked Hart in excellent fashion: "Well, here we have a picture of three aliens on Venus. They look like three old women, don't they? I remember the time I was in Japan and these three old women came up to me, and wanted to give me a bath. Well, I said to them..." This example is all too close to the truth.

Interiors went for an average price of 25¢, perhaps due to Hart's boring performance as auctioneer. Cover proofs brought about \$4 apiece. Many times Hart lost track of the bids and had to be updated by someone in the audience. Half a dozen times he didn't hear bids, and lost money as a result. Twice, Hart bid on paintings himself, which we all felt was highly irregular. The auction droned on and on, and Hart's stories got worse and worse as time passed.

The banquet was held at six that evening, and rather than pay the outlandish prices asked for the food just to hear Ackerman go into another memory dredging session, the twins and I didn't go. We stayed in the convention room and read fanzines, talked, and generally acted like Convention Insurgents. We met Don Powell coming out of the room after it was all over, and his capsule comment was something like: "Ghod, what a mess!"

We went to a first showing of "The Spaco Children" later, after considerable trouble with Brown's car. Considering the film, I think I had more fun talking about the car, and pushing it through downtown Dallas, than watching the second-rate actors cavort on the screen.

Back at the hotel, Ted Wagner of Houston found that someone had lifted \$35 worth of liquor from his room during his absence and we all gathered in his room while the house dick was called in and people offered their opinions and all. It was as disgusting as it could be. I sat there thinking, ghod, I came 1000 miles for this?? Rooms were searched, accusations were made, nothing was resolved. The house dick, who sounded like a character right out of one of Pat Edmonds' dialogues,



refused to admit that there was a possibility that one of the hotel employees had made the theft...it had to be one of the fans, according to him. We said nothing. The fans' rooms were searched, and nothing was found. I felt slightly ill.

Greg and Jim and I cut out from there again, and went home with fanzines we'd gotten at the con to talk and console each other over the lousiness of the con.

Sunday was the absolute clincher. There was a business meeting scheduled for one, deciding next year's Southwestercon site and all, and photographers from a couple of the local teevee stations had shown up. Hart had spent part of the previous day buttering up a reporter, sicking Ackerman and Bradley on him, and now he did likewise with the photographers. The man seemed desperately determined to get the convention as much publicity as possible. Why?? I asked.

The photographer posed people around the book table looking at magazines, and took lengthy footage of Dale Hart showing paintings to MZB. Hart held up the business meeting so that pictures could be taken of Hart calling on a show of hands for something, and Hart urged us all to raise our hands at his signal so that the films would turn out well. I toyed with the idea of raising both mine in some obscene gesture but lacked the courage to go through with it.

One photographer had sound equipment with him and took some sound films of Ackerman, Bradley and Hart talking "fannishly". The conversation went something like this:

Ackerman: Well, Dale, do you think Marion has gotten her share of egoboo at this convention?

Hart: I'd say her ego has been boosted tremendously.

Bradley: It's been boosted so much that my sensitive fannish face is blushing all over.

Ackerman: Heh heh heh. Well, do you think you'll gafiate after all this is over?

Bradley: Me gafiate? Not as long as my mimeo is still...

It seems incredible the way perfectly normal, intelligent people can make such asses of themselves as soon as they're placed in front of a camera. Greg, Jim and I endured this for a few seconds and finally left the convention room in utter disgust. These sickening films were shown on Dallas tv that night, and we were embarrassed to the point of extinction as the twins' mother watched them with us. I could visualize people all across Dallas saying to each other, "See, Fred, I told you these science fiction people are all idiots." On the basis of those films, I would have had to agree.

After this point the convention, which had been diffusing gradually since Friday morning, fell completely apart. We stayed around the hotel and said goodbye to various people until about seven, we being the twins, Rich Koogle and myself. Randy Brown didn't even bother to come Sunday. Edmonds was nowhere to be found. Bill Conner had gone. The convention was over.

I suspect that Dale Hart hoped to publicize the con as much as possible in order to boost, in some way, Dallas' chances for capturing the Worldcon. As far as I'm concerned, however, he would have been far better off to concentrate on putting on a good Southwestercon. A good regional convention would have been the best advertisement possible. As it was, anyone who attended this convention and still plans to vote for Dallas is either incredibly pre-biased or insane. If Dallas even goes through with its plans to bid for the con, I'll be very much surprised.



CLAYFEET COUNTRY

"Ghod! What a fabulous
fannish article this is!"

....REVISITED

A month or so ago I had occasion to visit lower California, particularly the Los Angeles region. Sandwiched into the three-day weekend I spent there, I visited the Los Angeles fans -- particularly the group which, in Los Angeles, is considered to be fannish. The contrast between this group of 'fans' and my local bunch of acquaintances and DNFs was striking.

I phoned Charles Burbee from the place where I was staying with definitely uncertain feelings. The LASFS, a sorcon organization, had been fouding off and on with the Burbee faction for some time, and the latter's propaganda had tended toward juvenile exhibitionism and humor. I supposed I could discount most of this, because the Day Area fans, including myself, had received some comment about the same thing. But I wondered what they were really like in person.

Burbee on the phone sounded like a reasonably nice guy. Armed with this favorable impression I went to his home that evening; during the following days I slowly became more and more disgusted. I was ushered into Burbee's study and was immediately confronted with nearly the sloppiest collection of miscellany I had ever seen. Only Dave Rike, a fellow Berkeley fan, had been known to keep his room in such a state of continual disorder. An array, not of records, ROAD & TRACKS and KLAYBOYS as I had expected, but FAPA mailings, piano rolls and old fanzines greeted my eye.

"This is Francis Towner Laney," said Chas. A thin, immature looking youth looked up from a typewriter and grinned at me. Laney said something in greeting and went back to his typewriter. I was left somewhat at a loss for words at this, as a visiting fan from the Day Area is considered quite an occasion among a good portion of fandom. Stunned for a moment at this apparent non-interest in a visiting DNF, I looked around for a place to sit, finally removing a few piano rolls from a chair.

Burbee was showing me his latest issue of DUBBINGS and some other FAPAZines. "Here's the one Towner's doing for this mailing; a new one called FAN-DANGO. Seems pretty good." He paged through the zino.

Quickly changing the subject, I looked around for something fannish. There was a mimeo in the corner, but of course I'm not interested enough in fandom to do any serious publishing. Burbee and Laney started talking about EEEvans, a local nonfan, and making jokes about his downward-slanting eyes.

"You know," Laney was saying, "I was stacking and filing away my fanzines last night in my new shelves and I must have come across six or eight pictures of Evans in various magazines. Do you know, by Ghod, he has got downward slanting eyes!"

Both of them laughed at this. I yawned and began looking through some fanzines to find my own mag, or at least some Bay Area material. We smalltalked for a while about fandom. I discovered that despite their contacts on the fringes of active fandom, they were appallingly disinterested in the fabulous fannish incidents which occurred in Berkeley fandom, and even professed ignorance of the reputation we had gained throughout fandom. As we were discussing this I found that Burbee had called up Bill Rotsler and he was due over soon. Chas. got up to put a roll in the piano just as Rotsler came through the front door.

"Hi," he said. "I guess you're Pete Graham." Rotsler had a beard, was middle-sized and carried a shelf of his own illustrations in his hand. Obviously he thought others would be impressed by this display of his artist-like appearance, but since the illustrations were of evident low quality this rather destroyed the effect.

It was also clear that Rotsler considered himself a humorist, although his recent entrance into FAPA had produced little except a childish fanzine called MASQUE in which he attributes the Los Angeles crowd with non-existent talents in the field of humor.

As Rotsler entered Burbee's home the cliqueishness of the local neo-FAPA members became apparent. Burbee and Laney were the oldest members of the organization present; Rotsler had not yet become an established FAPA publisher. The reason Rotsler had the illos with him became fairly obvious -- they were offered as first selections for Burbee's or Laney's fanzines before anyone else had a chance to see them. After his superiors were satisfied Rotsler offered me the leftovers, although he knows that I do not use amateur illustrations in my fanzines -- unless, of course, they are done by a fellow Berkeley fan or one of my nonfan friends. Naturally, I graciously declined.

During the conversation that followed I came to know the petty gossiping prevalent in the Southern California fan groups. Rotsler began by outlining a few anecdotes he intended to publish concerning his friend GF Fitzgerald. Burbee and Laney planned to display for all to see the personal faults of a few nonfans, namely Forrest J. Ackerman and Walter Daugherty (obviously figments of their imaginations). All of this was typical of the juvenile sniping and rumor-spreading done in the name of humor by the Los Angeles fans.

Since I had a date that evening and perhaps because I was a bit disgusted with their actions, I left. We were to meet again the next day to visit Bill Rotsler's walnut ranch. I showed up promptly at Burbee's. I found Rotsler, Burbee and Bruce Yerke busily mimeographing the latest issue of Burbee's FAPazine. Now, I had three days in Los Angeles. I had a number of dates but I also wanted to see a few of the LA fans, since I usually spend a good bit of time in college at bheerbusts, and I miss the fannish company even when I'm away for a short time. I didn't want to waste time mimeographing anyneofannish FAPA mag. At first I thought, The hell with this bit. But then I said to myself, Peto, you're not being a very gracious guest. Ask them to stop, but be polite. Burbee explained that he had a mailing to meet in two days, and they only had a few more sheets to run off. Irritated at this refusal to pick up an ob from me, I told them I couldn't mimeograph, although of course the Bay Area standard of high-quality reproduction is well known throughout the fan-publishing world. So for two hours I watched them mimeograph.

After this was over we went outside just as Laney pulled up in -- so help me -- a Ford. After some talk, in which I tried to obtain some performance figures for the Ford, we went to Rotsler's ranch, even though I politely hinted that I would rather travel in a sportscar. I was shown the extent of Rotsler's artistic talents -- a series of fan illustrations, some sculpture work for which he reportedly received payment and some amateurish greeting cards that were proofs from some publishing company. Admittedly some of the cards were rather humorous, but I have seen the same thing done better by some local Berkeley fans, especially Ron Ellik, who is noted for his layouts. We spent the afternoon doing some more work on Rotsler's PAPAazine, and in one brief flash of sanity, listening to Gerry Mulligan. That evening we went to a LASFS meeting. The club had managed to rent a few rooms on the second floor of a tacky building, and even though it was large the place was crowded with a lot of nonfans.

The following hour was about the dullest I spent during the entire three days. Even the mimeographing of fanzines is a bit more interesting than a deadly dull LASFS meeting. Durbee and his group kept to themselves for the most part, which was a blessing. I eventually got disgusted and went down to the coffee shop near the club. A few minutes later Durbee, Laney and Rotsler followed me down. While we were sitting around talking Rotsler started sketching cartoons to match just about anything said at the table. Most of the jokes were just bad, being in the usual Los Angeles sense of humor, but Durbee kept on telling his so-called 'funny' stories. At the time he knew one mediocre gag which he told complete with gestures and motions, and every time he finished it everyone around the table would laugh like hell. After he did this two or three times in a half hour, I was getting pretty sick of the whole thing and excused myself. I walked out of the coffee shop and the LA fans were still sitting there laughing like hell at Durbee. The next day I left for Berkeley.

Durbee and Rotsler and all the other neo-PAPAans in LA are going to take this article pretty personally. But I think they and others of their ilk deserve every word of it. They are examples of tendencies too highly prevalent in fandom these days. The devotion to some weird idea of fannishness by this group made me feel as though I was in the company of a group of children. Mature people are not nearly as enthusiastic about such things; ample evidence is given in my own group, which produces a great deal of outstanding material without this obsession. People like the neo-PAPAan faction are responsible for the great amount of low-class material in fandom today.

The problem can be put up with, of course. The disturbing element is that this seems to be a common attitude among fans these days. This is why my good friend and DNF Terry Carr declines to travel to other fan centers. It is why another Berkeley fan, Dave Rike, chose an out-of-the-way location for his apartment. It is why all the current DNFs dislike personal contact with these fans.

But there is no easy remedy for the situation. The best that can be done is to point out this problem and hope those who live by this code will see their faults and imitate other, mature fans -- I modestly point to my Bay Area group as an example. This, I suppose, is about the most we can expect.

I like music and even whistle "Death and Transfiguration" to myself
when I am in a particularly good mood. -- GC Fitzgerald.

Piss pour



scribblings

WALT WILLIS

comments..

I'm relieved to see that you haven't gone native in Texas: in fact you and VOID are just the same as you were, with perhaps an added air of sophisticated cosmopolitanism produced by your world travelling. As I was going to say, you've reached a new and very high standard. That editorial comment at the end of Jerry Demuth's letter ("quick quick, Moomaw..run! The mad dogs!") was absolutely wonderful. If the rest of 1958 doesn't produce a better editorial interjection I'll still be satisfied.

The poll results were interesting. Thank you for the reference to Irish Fandom, but in fairness to the people on the other side of the Irish Sea perhaps I should point out that John Derry is actually an Englishman by birth. You can see it from the fact that he doesn't have a fine old Irish name like White, Charters and Willis.

Moomaw was good, too, this the best column I've seen of his yet. The account of the Scortia hoax was fascinating and unlike most hoaxes does everybody credit. Kent for telling it so well against himself and Scortia for its cleverness and ...well, kindness. Too many hoaxes are crude and cruel and reflect no credit on anyone.

I don't remember Laney enthusing over ASF, but he used to be as keen a Lovecraftite as anyone -- witness the title of his fanzine ACOLYTE. I wouldn't like to go out on the same limb about Burbee, and Bill Danner

came into fandom through amateur journalism and not sf, but I think that practically everyone else in fandom was originally a pure sf fan and most of them, including myself, still think of sf as the essential background to fandom. Even if we don't feel that at the present time it is necessary to rave about it perpetually.

I suppose Julian Parr is right about the motivations of the average faned, but I don't think it's necessarily true in the case of the editor of the long established fanzine. After some years the power of egoboo wears off, along with the novelty of publishing, and what is left to make you carry on is partly the urge to keep fandom going and partly the same impulse that makes you want to lend books to people. Lending books is an unprofitable and unrewarding occupation, like fan publishing, but you always keep on doing it from some deep-seated urge to see good things appreciated. Some obscure sense of justice perhaps. You must have felt it yourself. Suppose you get a good letter or article from someone. You can hardly wait to publish it, but it's not for your own egoboo. You know that you'll get very little more credit for it than the mailman who delivers the fanzine. Really, the reason you want to go to all the trouble of publishing it is that you feel 'it's too good to go to waste'.

((Being rational about it, tho, you could say 'Well, if I don't publish it he's sure to send it to someone who will.' and save yourself a lot of trouble. Of course, this won't apply in all cases, particularly with letters...but man, look at the time you'd save!))

BOYD RAEBURN

is interested... Champion presents a viewpoint I haven't come across in print for a few years now-- not since Norman Browne dropped from sight. The idea that fandom is a struggle for position and you have to Work and Fight for Success and Struggle to the Top, and then when you're Up There you have to work and work and work and struggle and fight to stay up there, because other ambitious fans are Trying To Take Your Place. To Browne, fandom was a Way of Life. I hope this curious attitude is as rare as it seems to be.

Face Critturs would have had more effect if the repro were better. ((This whole fanzine would have more effect if the repro were better.)) Mercer started off slowly, but the article improved as it moved along, and all in all was an amusing and well done piece.

I wonder if Bennett means that he and Coulson consider that a zine must be a SF-fan mag to be a focal point of fandom. This I just don't dig. INNUENDO at the moment looks as though it has a good chance of becoming a "focal point" as far as any zine can be a "focal point". I'd like to see what people really think this phrase means. But then, Coulson doesn't seem to like fannish zines -- he certainly doesn't seem to appreciate them, judging by his comments on INNUENDO. Foop. No point in writing more on this until I know what these various people are really talking about.

((It seems to me that perhaps this "power" drive in some fans might be a Good Thing, if properly applied. Vorzy obviously thought fandom was a struggle...and you might say the same, to varying degrees, about Gols, or several other fans who've dropped out. But they were valuable contributors to fandom, while they lasted. And I've heard more than one person say fandom needs someone who'll publish a good, regular fanzine, for once. Focal points, perhaps...but just plain good fanzines, too.))

I have never trusted Canadians. -- Randy Brown.

HARRY WARNER

is stunned... I'm stunned by the excellence of Archie Mercer's article. His writing has never been poor or dull, by any means, but this is the first time that I remember looking back at the first page, when halfway through, to make sure that this isn't something written by Berry or even Burbee. It is a terrible thought, that every fan in the British Isles seems to have these talents which sometimes aren't evident at first but eventually come to light in such fine fashion.

I liked your answer to John Champion, about the desirability of fannish climbing. I would add only this: it seems to me that there is a great deal of value in striving to reach a goal, even if the goal is undesirable or worthless, and it is better to get that striving experience and find the rewards are worthless than it is to make no effort to reach any goal.

TERRY CARR

delves into Old Fandom.. Laney was an odd type. He never "turned on sercon activities," as far as I know. He blasted the N3F and the Cosmic Circle and the LASFS, but from a different viewpoint than the usual they're-too-sercon one. He blasted the N3F because it wasn't accomplishing anything, blasted the CC because it was giving fandom a bad name, and blasted the LASFS because it served as a haven of misfits instead of fulfilling its potentials. Laney was always to some extent sercon. He had a fine, biting sense of humor, but a familiarity with his writings indicates a basic sercon attitude. I mean sercon in the literal sense, not in the sense it has picked up in fandom: Laney was a serious and a constructive fellow. The underlying purpose of ASI is quite constructive. ("Why don't you quit fandom?")

Gould is definitely out of fandom now. Ellick was down south over Xmas holidays, and took a trip to San Diego. Didn't get to see Gould, who has been running around being a member of the Beat Generation and Wild One and all that, disrespectful to parents and drinking and wenching. ((Yes, but what does he do in his spare time?)) Courval too is definitely out of fandom. Thinking back on Gould, I do believe I think a lot more of Vorzimer than his imitation, Gould.

BOB COULSON

discussed.. On the Bennett discussion: he commented in a letter that YANDRO, as a monthly, ought to be better known and I replied that we didn't give a faint damn about becoming any more faanish, or more popular with faans, which was probably why we weren't. (More popular with faans, that is.) I said that there were two present possibilities for a "central" zine, the two being STELLAR and VOID, the big problem being that VOID isn't frequent enough and STELLAR, despite White's overwhelming devotion to faaandom, didn't publish good enough material. (Or enough of the right kind of material.) Bennett's reply to this was strictly DNU, though I got the impression that of the two zines mentioned, he favored VOID. I still think you have the best chance of becoming the next no. 1 zine, especially so since you've upped your publication schedule. Most of the present faanish zines don't come out often enough to keep discussions fresh -- nothing is duller than replying to a 6-month-old letter. And with the present state of mind of fandom, you needn't worry about competition from stf-centered zines.

Must say I enjoyed the bit about the Lawrence Welk fan -- this item

got wide circulation and considerable appreciation throughout Indifandom. (Of course, I don't like modern jazz or Lawrence Welk, but it was still funny.) Terry Carr's face critturs were much better than others I've seen recently. I had begun to suspect he'd run out of ideas, but maybe not -- this one looked more like the "good old days".

I've been wearing all black outfits to cons for some time, too. Somewhat to the discomfiture of Curran, I think -- he spent most of the Clevecon muttering about "buncha goddam Fascists" whenever he noticed Gene DeWeese and I.

((Hoog, like. I don't think VOID is a contender for any title, and STELLAR hasn't been seen for some time. I would pick AEby, myself...))

BOB PAVLAT is amazed.. Ghad, people changing all over the place. Moomaw and Terry Carr sounding off nicely indeed with mature discussion -- and why has Terry's metamorphosis been so sudden? For years and years I've retained the automatic association "Terry Carr -- Looking Backward" (that was the title of his first FAPazine); someday I'll get that prejudice unstuck and associate "Terry Carr-Terry Carr." These mental sets cause one to miss a lot. Maybe everyone should enter fandom under a penname; then, two years later when he's grown into fandom a little, he could assume his rightful name, and doddering oldsters such as I would start praising the saints that at last one fugghead had gone and by golly this youngster that came into fandom at the same time was sure a pleasant man to have around.

I wonder if there are fanzines in heaven? ((I passed this along to Terry, and he said "I guess I'm one of those fellows who work for years to become an overnight success." or something like that. INNUENDO has been a Good Thing for quite a while now.))

RICK SHEARY remembers... First let me say I'm sorry to see you ended up in Texas, rather than California. Not that I have anything against Texas, but I just love California more. And besides, we could use fans of your caliber.. It is strange to me, considering the number of fans here (There were 17 FAPA members the last time I counted) that we are so relatively inactive on the national scene. We don't have any of the mager zines, and few very-active-fans. Even though we are loaded with BNF. Of course, Warner is right. Fans that can see each other in groups don't seem to be interested in letter writing or fanzine publishing. This talk of remembering back when today's fake-fans were yesterday's sircons made me remember the Pacificon in 1946. The NFFF was still a VIP (very importen power) in fandom, and it's business took up one of the afternoon sessions. And there was R. T. Laney, one of the directors, arguing for all he was worth over the Federations's management with the other officers--who were all BNF. It was all very serious and importen too. Few fans today realize how importen the NFFF was, little over 10 years ago.

BILL MEYERS is impressionable, it seems... I get the distinct impression, by the way, as a result of outside influence more than anything else, that lots of trufans like you and Brandon don't seem to care for the n3f too much. (I'm not overly wild about it, but I see nothing really unfamish or fuggheaded about it overall.) Which reminds me of something devastatingly ludicrous that appeared in an n3f

0-0 several issues back. SAPS and MPA were denounced as being of lower quality than the n3f, while "It (the n3f) has always represented the 'cream of the crop' -- the elite of fandom. All of the 'greats' of fandom have been Neffers at some time. Many of them are still with us... the name is highly regarded in sf circles...not every fan can be a Neffer. Some of them just don't have what it takes." I could go on, too.

DESEMERY argues.. Terry Carr has a good point which he could have developed further than the few sentences he devoted to it. Sure today's fandom is wishywashy and cautiously polite--on the surface. That is, the published portions of fandom, after the DNQs are removed. But I suspect it's a kind of reaction to Wetzel and Hall, et al. No one would wish too strongly to be identified as a Wetzel-type, as he might like to be called a WAW-type, or a DAG-type. Consequently, no one wants any statement of his backfiring on him. So everything that might be rabble-rousing or condemned as scurrilous is DNQ.

Wit is necessarily caustic and often a bit bitter. Raeburn is probably the only extant fan who can touch nerves and get away with it. Until others learn the exacting technique of being witty without being fugged; there will remain an overly-polite published fandom. ((I don't quite agree with you on the definition of wit, Des. But a few others had something to say about the DNQ and all--perhaps they'll get in next time. I wish I had four more pages to include the letters I'd like. Riffing through them: Guy Terwilliger decided he didn't want to become a DNF (a Wise Decision), Terry Jeeves liked Archie Morcer (just about everyone did), Rodger Skidmore rebelled against the DNQ also, Bob Tucker said: "South Gato? Well, yes, if I've got the money. After one gets married, one just doesn't git up and go running all over the country, unless one has spare money. Mark that down." Wise words, indeed, and I'll write that in the margin of my "Neofan's Guide".... Jerry Demuth had a good letter I'd like to print, and wondered about Jim's method of cross-hatched shading (or something), Kent Moomaw disliked the cutting of the cover (me, too), Donald Franson had some interesting and unfannish remarks (there!), Lynn Hickman dropped me a postcard, Ethel Lindsay disagreed with Mr. K. Moomaw, Witty Whitmarsh wanted any Merritt books except Moon Pool, Metal Monster & Face in the ABYSS (that will teach me to argue physics while typing stencils with my second level mind) -- address is 60 Rickman Hill, Coulsdon, Surrey, England. Marty Fleischman flipped madly over Terry Carr, Mike Gates said a lot of things, but I can't find his letter, John Trimble signaled his return to fandom, Terry Carr, Publishing Giant, had some more comments I would like to publish (why you write two letters of comment?), Peter Hope sent a sub, Joan Young wrote a lovely letter I'd Like To Print, Bob Stewart also returned to fandom, Rogor Ebert started a correspondence which has proved quite interesting, John Konig misspelled my name, Ralph Watts proved himself a Good Man, John Berry sent a letter, Joe Sanders two postcards, Randy Brown said a few things, and Don Powell shoveled some dirt over Clod Hall. Whow. Hoy, Alan Dodd wrote too.

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Whatever happened to the monthly VOID?

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