



HARK! HEAR THAT?  
IT'S JASS,  
Friends!

THAT'S CHARLIE MINGUS ON BASS  
AND JOHN HANDY ON SAX!

we're  
getting  
CLOSE!

Wonk  
Tower

REBLATT!!  
SAREE  
BOP!!

TAPP =

TAPPITY TAP TAP

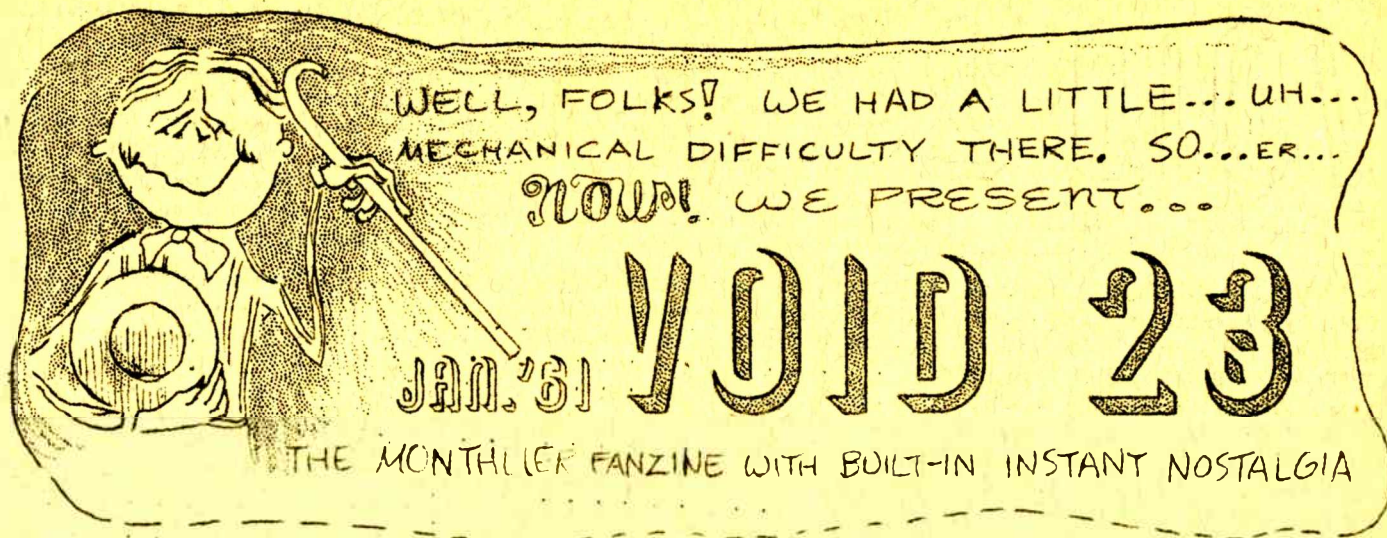
TAPP  
TAPP

PSST!  
CONFIDENTIALLY,  
THIS IS

IT!

WHATEVER  
YOU'RE SELLING-  
--- WE  
DONT WANT  
ANY.....

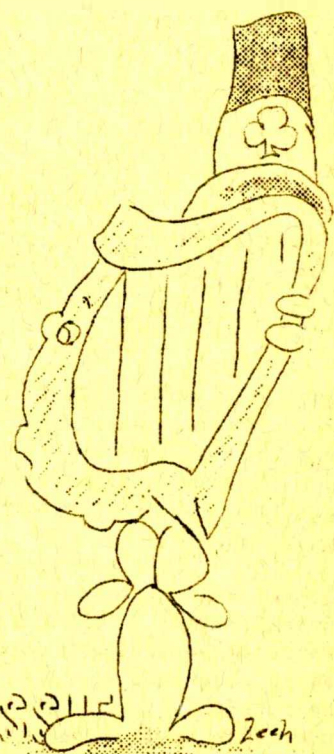




WELL, FOLKS! WE HAD A LITTLE... UH...  
MECHANICAL DIFFICULTY THERE. SO... ER...  
NOW! WE PRESENT...

JAN. '61 **VOID 23**

THE MONTHLY FANZINE WITH BUILT-IN INSTANT NOSTALGIA



SPECIAL WALT WILLIS APPRECIATION ISSUE

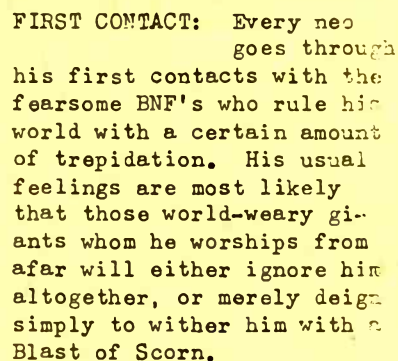


is edited by TED WHITE (107 Christopher St., New York 14, NY), GREG BENFORD (204 Foreman Ave., Norman, Okla.), and PETE GRAHAM (still c/o White); and is published by the aged and failing QWERTYUIOPress Gestetner 160. As usual, VOID is available for money (25¢ or 1/-), trade (all for all) contribution, or regular letters of comment. British agent is RON BENNETT (7 Southway, Arthurs Ave., Harrogate, Yorks., England). We're dickering for a German agent. Deadline for material for next issue: February 15th.

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In addition to the above, one copy of the FANAC Poll is being mailed out with every VOID thish. Use it.



All of this actually means that the BNF carries a great deal of unwanted responsibility along with his High Honors. In fact, the Higher the Honors, the greater that responsibility. For even though the BNF may disclaim it with "I'm just another fan, and as human as any neo," or say something of that sort

(you know which sort I mean), he simply is not. The BNF has it within his power to actually demolish a timid neo. His veriest off-the-cuff-of-chance remarks are weighed closely by the neos to whom they are addressed (whether by intent or if-the-shoe-fits circumstance), and are directly acted upon. BNF-dom has a kind of built-in leverage which automatically lends weight to any BNF's words. Because of all this, the real measure of a BNF's greatness may be found in the way in which he measures up to his position.

That's why, at any rate, the First Contact is so important. Say Ferdy Neofugg has just published the first issue of his fanzine, TOILET PAPER, and he sends it to Joe Bnfaaan, and Joe tells him candidly that TOILET PAPER is the most appropriately titled fanzine he has ever received, and that he found it rewardingly useful. Now it is fairly likely that Ferdy, if only with hindsight, will become aware somewhere along the line that TOILET PAPER was not a likely Hugo winner for the year. But still he resents hearing this from Joe, who is actually his idol, and from whom he maybe expected a multitude of helpful hints and all that. "After all," Ferdy laborously pecks out in his next letter to his



close friend, Rudy Neophaan, "the whole reason TP isn't the best fanzine going is that the BNF's, like Joe, won't even send me anything. It's all their fault!"

And thus we leave Ferdy Neofugg, slowly sinking, wailing deeply, into the mire of true fuggheadism. Enough of him.

The point I think I was trying to make was that the BNF has Responsibilities--responsibilities towards these First Contacts, and then, inevitably, towards all the Following Contacts, which unhappily are usually Touches, sometimes even the First.

On the other hand (which we musn't overlook--at this point I'm ambidextrous), there are Rewards. I mean, if Joe Bnfasaan does respond with kindness, and takes up the mantle of Mentor to the neofen, these fen are most likely going to remember him in later years with considerable kindness and a firmly established (if the BNF does not quickly uproot it) case of hero worship. (Sometimes hero worship can be as annoying to the BNF as its reverse. The hero-worshippers are inclined to take unkindly to the notion that their Hero is both human and fallible. In fact, one neofan is known to have actually banned all mention of a certain BNF in his fanzine when he heard that his idol once admitted to writing letters to Sarge Saturn in 1941.) But that's a Reward for you...never perfect, a gift horse with soggy teeth. You might as well hop onto its back anyway.

I don't know what any of this has to do with the proper topic of this piece, unless it forms a sort of preface to the telling of My First Contact With Walter A. Willis. (Walter A. Willis, as a matter of fact, is the proper topic for this issue. Maybe I'll get to him yet.) Anyway, this, Walter Alexander Willis, is YOUR life!

The year: 1954. The place: Fandom.

I had been publishing a fanzine for something less than a year and had somehow managed to put out six successively improving issues (you should have seen what I had to improve on!) of ZIP, The Fanzine that Moved Right Along. (It started out in a rather brief--that's a flattering word, actually--format. I chose to scale no large mountains in my neodom.)

I had sent no copies to Walt Willis, mostly because I was scared to. In fact, it was for this very reason that almost no BNF received the first three issues or thereabouts. I can't imagine how I slipped up and sent copies to Grennell and Tucker; I was too embarrassed for my ink\* product to think of sending it to fans of their stature. As a matter of fact, I should have taken some courage from the reactions of those two worthies; both sent encouraging and kindly letters which did much to cheer my struggling soul. But I regarded these two Kindly Souls as probable exceptions to the rule, and I didn't want to over-extend myself. Two favorable replies out of two BNF's sounded out seemed a remarkably good average, and I was content to sustain it for the time being.

Then one day one of my subscribers, Warren Link, sent me a letter in which he hysterically informed me that Walter Willis, None Other, had said some terrible things about ZIP, my fanzine, and in the same paragraph he'd admitted to never seeing a copy! This, Link insisted, was a most foul and heinous crime indeed, and I was going to Take Up The Cudgels, was I not, against this loathsomely overinflated BNF? Link assured me that he was rushing to my/ZIP's defense, postehaste!

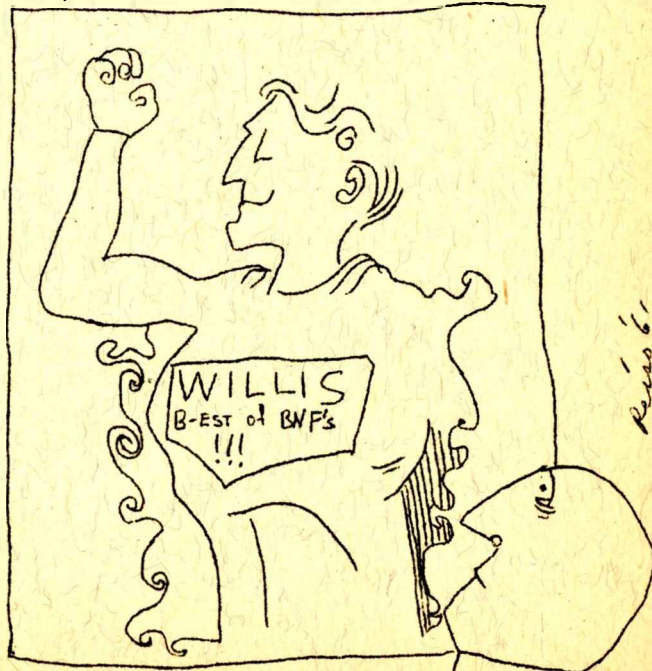
Well, like it or not, I was Up Against It. My First Contact with the fan I then (and still do, for that matter) considered the B-est of the BNF's was being forced upon me. And what was worse, things didn't look too good for an auspicious beginning. I'll have to admit it: I quavered at my typer. My keys shook.

Somehow I managed to type out haltingly a rather quietly toned letter in which I mostly quoted Link and asked what was going on. I sent along at the same time several recent issues of ZIP for Mr. Willis's first-hand appraisal.

This was his reply:

It looks as if our friend Link has been trying to be a bit mischievous. However tweaking the beards of us decrepit old fans is a recognized pastime in fandom, and I've no objection.

What happened is that as you probably know, Link has been running a column on Stateside fandoings for a minor British zine called SATELLITE /this was in 1954/. The first installment omitted all reference to the well known zines and reviewed minor ones as if they were the leaders of the field. It seemed to me misleading to the average British fan to pass this off as a representative survey and I commented





mildly as follows:

"Warren Link's column rather surprised me. I thot I was fairly well up in American fandom, yet I've never heard of him nor seen any of the fmz he reviews. I'm tempted to assume Link is still moving in a small circle of his own and that what you're getting is a review of a tiny segment of US fandom. No doubt the column will improve as he broodens out more. As it is, I'd hate to think of British subbers assuming that, say, ZIP (by all accounts a very inferior mag so far) is representative of what the US zines have to offer. The pro news is good though. I expect Link gets FANTASY TIMES..."

Re-read-  
ing this, I realize I was unfair to ZIP and I apologize. However this was written six months ago or more, and based on still earlier reviews and mentions of ZIP, when it cannot have reached the standard it has with these copies you've sent me. I certainly wouldn't say that about it now, and I'll try to make ammends in the next issue of SATELLITE. Link also takes me to task in the current issue, just received, for judging a fmz I hadn't seen--but I really was just passing on what I'd heard about it, not judging it myself. It was clear from what I said that I hadn't seen the mag. Anyway, I didn't imagine that SATELLITE would circulate among your potential subscribers or that what I said would affect ZIP adversely.

But after I've said all that I must still admit that I was in the wrong and I shouldn't have said what I did. Perhaps I was, subconsciously, slightly peeved that I hadn't been getting ZIP. I wasn't conscious of it, but it's hard to assess the reasons which lead one to do things, and even after seven years in fandom I can still make mistakes, when acting thoughtlessly. Anyway, I'll be happy to exchange HYPHEN with ZIP, or anything else you publish, and I'm sending you the current issue. Also a copy of The Enchanted Duplicator, for which I want no payment. I have a few back issues of HYPHEN...see list in the current issue...so let me know what you want.

And thanks for not flying off the handle about this.

I'm setting off tomorrow for the British Convention, and this letter is being written in time taken off from packing, so please excuse its incoherency and the fact that I haven't made any detailed comments about ZIP. I've just had time for a hurried run-through, but I liked what I saw very much. Special congratulations on the color work. Beautiful.

All the best,  
Walt

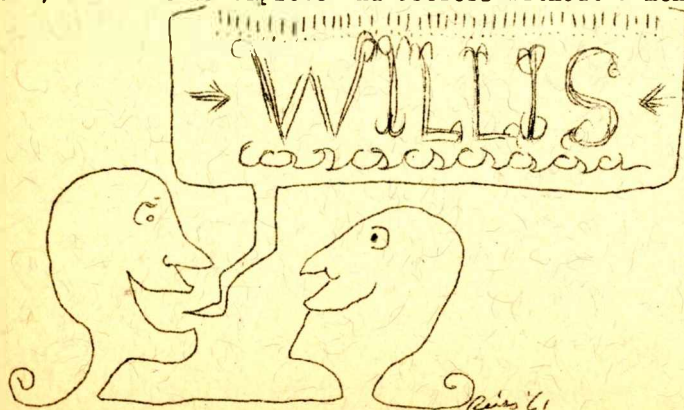
Looking back on this affair, I'm amazed at Willis's patience and humbleness in dealing with a fan (me) who was as yet unknown and totally undistinguished, and his likewise undistinguished (except for its color work) fanzine. (And--one other thing: it suddenly occurred to me when stencilling this that I never did see any of those SATELLITE's. Has anyone any of the pertinent issues they'd care to sell or loan?) But that First Contact has always seemed to me a rather typical example of the Willis kindness and thoughtfulness which I've since observed in all his activities and which I believe have always been ingrained in his personality. That letter stands as a model to every aspiring fan, Willis a model person in himself.

Walt has somehow managed to convey a gentle tone while nonetheless once in a while exhibiting or making use of a large stick, with which he is capable of fully and beautifully trouncing anyone who proves himself truly worthy of that particular honor. In this Walt is one of the few fans I can think of who is both outspoken and gentle and inoffensive. Perhaps it is his penchant for humor, and what BoSh labels further on thish as the Willis Creed which achieves this characteristic in him. Willis has taken stands which were far from universally popular, but with the exception of a few sore-heads of the sort one will always turn up, he's managed to retain all of fandom's respect in the process.

Any catalog of reasons for liking and admiring Walt Willis (and this is a far complete one) would be incomplete and useless without a mention of the Willis Generosity. The letter I quoted

gives a good example of this; a more recent one is his contribution to this special issue. Like his piece in V18 (which was written while he packed for a move which never occurred), "The Ten Year Hitch" was written under pressure. But Walt wrote it for us, simply because we asked for something. What it was we actually got (a damn-fine article, one of Walt's best in recent years) makes a good case for the Willis Talent. But that's yet another thing and if I were to go on like this, I could fill thish myself.

Actually, we tricked this article out of Walt. We told him that we wanted a piece about himself for part of a special section of the VANISH.





We took Bob Shaw into our confidence, and asked him to play along with the gag for Walt's benefit. This he did, and in addition he contributed a piece which was also written on borrowed time.

Naturally we couldn't tell Walt that we wanted his piece for an issue which was going to honor him. I mean, that would have spoiled things.

But anyway, Walt replied with his article, air-mail, so fast it took our breaths away, and apologized for its being first-draft and so late.

I think that's also typical of Walter Willis.

So, call it unarrested hero-worship or what you will, we all think a great deal of Walter Alexander Willis, and that is why this issue of VOID is dedicated to him. A repayment, if you will, for all of his many past kindnesses and generosity.

And...hullo, Walt. Are you surprised?

WHEN WE began plans for this special issue--back around last April, as a matter of fact--we hadn't thought of carrying things any further than simply dedicating this VOID to Walt.

Then in conversation with Les Gerber, I mentioned the idea of another Willis Fund. "You know, I was really sorry when Walt decided not to come in 1958," I said. "I've been thinking about that," said Les. "I think we ought to sound Walt out again. It's been a couple of years, GMCarr has had her comeuppance in the FANAC Fughead Poll, and...maybe now he'd reconsider."

"That would be great," I said. "I think I'll write him," said Les.

Walt replied that he was open to the idea, but that it would be best to ask again in 1961.

Well, right now, we--Greg Benford, Pete Graham, Les Gerber, the Fanoclasts of New York, most of the rest of NYC fandom, Sylvia and myself--are asking you, Walt Willis, to be the recipient of a special Fund to be gotten up specifically to bring you over here in 1962.

And, at the same time, we're asking all of you who are reading VOID to join with us in asking Walt to come over. (Your support can be monetary as well as vocal. See below.)

For those who like the idea of such things, there are a couple of special points in favor of such a Fund, aside from the obvious and basic one that all of us want to see Walt again, if not for the first time. And those are:

1. The year 1962, which will be the best target date for the Fund, marks the 10th Anniversary of the success of the first WAW With The Crew in '52 Fund, which directly inspired TAFF. (Needless to say, this Fund won't be in competition with TAFF.)
2. It looks like better than even chances are for Chicago being the host city of the 1962 Convention. Chicago, of course, was the site of the 1952 Con.

This kind of cements things up into a beautifully timed 10th Anniversary WAW With The Crew in '62 movement. I don't see how anyone can resist.

There are several considerations, however: Walt said in 1958 that if he ever came over again he wanted to bring his wife, Madeleine, along. I should imagine that this still holds true. This means we must plan for a larger Fund, and begin work on it as soon as possible.

Also, we all know (if only from reading Walt's own description in the great The Harp Stateside) that Walt's first American Con was a hectic thing which left him physically exhausted and much of which he was forced to miss. This time we should try to make provisions towards preventing this whenever possible. Part of this means a fair amount of leisure time before the Con, and smooth travel accommodations. Naturally, a good degree of this will depend on how Walt can arrange his own vacation plans.

Because we're dead certain this Fund will succeed (because we want it to so badly), we've set up a provisional committee to handle the Fund, with Larry and Noreen Shaw (16 Grant Place, Grant City, Staten Island 6, N.Y.) as Treasurers. The Shaws have both the necessary financial standing and experience to handle the Fund properly and see to its administration.

In the event that Willis cannot make it, all donations will be returned or donated to TAFF, at the donor's request. Other funds raised will be donated to TAFF.

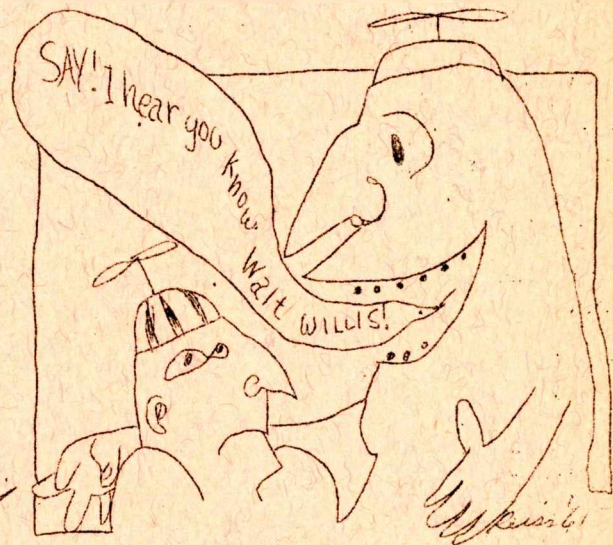
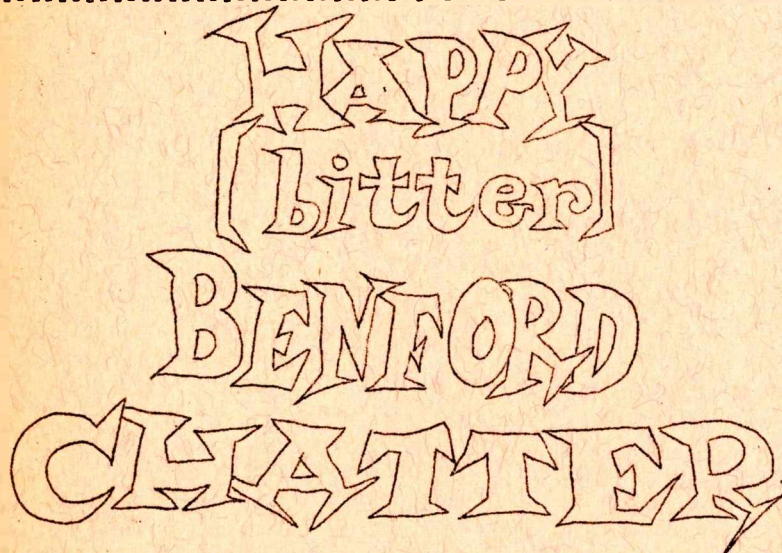




Join us?

IN PUTTING THIS ISSUE TOGETHER, we were aiming in several directions. First, we wanted to see represented as many as possible of the people who've been close to Walt during his career in fandom. For any number of practical reasons a number of such people are not here. Then we wanted to make this a special issue of VOID, not just a oneshot publication. So we've tried to carry as many of the regular departments as possible in one form or another. But the letter column was squeezed out. Finally, in making this a Special Willis Issue, we've allowed ourselves a few luxuries, like Extra Pages, Pica Type on main articles, and most especially Bob Stewart's wonderful 2-page introduction to the issue itself. It all adds up to what is probably the best issue there has ever been for VOID, and that, of course, is the finest way to honor Walt Willis.

--Ted White



I DON'T THINK OF Walter Alexander Willis the way most people do. I mean, he usually represents material of witty excellence, or eminence in fanpublishing, or something of that sort to most fans. But not to me. I have always enjoyed WAW's works, and consider him to be one of the foremost fans of the decade...but somehow, his has always been a, well...bothersome item in my file of fan names. Not because of him, or anything he did, but because of his existence. Because of the existence of Walter A. Willis (whom I suspect would have been invented if Mr. and Mrs. Willis hadn't done the job right), wherever I go in the fan world, I am always being hounded because I know Walt Willis.

I remember when I was a neofan, and tried to get material from all the BNF's for my small, insignificant fanzine (which was at that time the very same zine you are reading today). Why, I even wrote an indignant letter to Dick Geis when Bloch, Harris and Willis didn't respond; Boyd Raeburn even derogated me over that letter, too. So maybe I shouldn't write about neofans, considering my infamous background. But then, I know I have to write about something. (How do I know? Why, Ted White told me so.)

In the last issue of this monthly fanzine (you know, back last May), I wrote about Mike Gates, who flashed through fandom while Jim and I resided in Frankfurt. As a matter of fact, I received a request for VOID from this very same Mike Gates quite recently. He's now living in D.C. -tw/ Well, Gates was probably the first one who made me doubt the advisability of knowing Walt Willis. You see, he was going to Publish A Fanzine. But this was not to be an ordinary fanzine, mind you. (Oh, you've already heard that story?) Absolutely not. Gates was going to have the top writers, the top cartoonists, and all that. And who would really top off that great first issue? Why, Willis. And who knew Walt Willis? Why, Benford. It was all quite inevitably logical. When I politely refused to obtain Willis for him (actually I told him that he should Strike Out On His Own and Not Curry Favor, and inspirational things of that sort) he came over and ate all the crabapples off our tree. Such are the rewards of martyrdom. Later he offered to help me with VOID and lick stamps and other things, but I moved away before he could apply more pressure.

Moving away was probably a mistake, though, because I moved to Dallas. There, in the center of Fabulous Dallas Fandom, I was a naked target. In the very meeting I described last issue, Rich Koogle asked me to write Willis and request material. "After all," he said, "you know him and he'll do an article for you. Then you give the article to me."

what Walt would think of my giving some of his work to Koogle, after it had been sent for VOID. How



Well, just as I was writing this, I got

"...a few years back, I received my second fanzine; it was VOID. I dashed off a first impression piece of crud. If you had sent back a biting, sneering rejection, I might have left fandom altogether; however, your postcard set me on fandom, and, thanks to you, I continued...up thru CRYletterhacking...my first accepted contrib...my first fanzine, etc. ...first worldcon...and a month or so ago, Willis accepted a 'factual article' for HYPHEN..."

But I sure wish he would accept one of my articles.

[REDACTED]

Dear Walt.

But you're wrong. You have never been to the United States as it exists today--which is, after all, the one we propose to bring you to.

Alas, all entropy! Radioactivity decays, pages flutter from calendars in a million B movies, and Time lucheaves flip. In short, civilization has set in. And of course, all recognized science-fictional prophets have known and shown the inherent evils of progress.

TYRANNY! Everyone knows that Bjo rules the West, though few suspect the true extent of her power (they will...when "The Musquite Kid" wins an Academy Award). But who would dare guess that Leslie Gerber occupies a similar throne in the East? And who would even risk speculating on the identity of the hidden chess-player? You, Silverberg?

BRAIN-WASHING! Seattle in '61? Of course, no one ever said there was anything wrong with Seattle. But then, who ever heard of Seattle before 1960? And why can't we remember more about that Pittcon business session, Sprague?

But we can't go on. It sounds unbelievable, even to us. You'll just have to come and see it for yourself, Walt--see it and record it, so that all the world will know. It isn't so much that you need U.S. fandom, you see. U.S. fandom needs you.

PS. Campbell is still slipping, by the way. There is still hope...



BELFASTERS -  
WALT WILLIS,  
NEO-  
genius



BY JOHN BERRY  
& OCCASIONALLY GRENNELL

"Ghod said Let There Be Slant  
And there was Slant..."

--James (White) Version

Walter Alexander (for A.) Willis, or just plain Willis, as he is affectionately known throughout fandom, originated SLANT. He is the brains behind HYPHEN. He has travelled vast distances in the pursuit of fandom, a subject on which he is the recognised authority. He had a hand in The Enchanted Duplicator (it's healing well). Why, he is even referred to in fannish circles as Ghod...presumably the Ghod of Hyphen and Mirth.

The enormity of my self-appointed task has just struck me. How can I, a mere fan, have the utter audacity to write about this fabulous character? How can I, with my limited literary capacity, describe in detail a personage whose word is respected on six continents? My sole qualification is that I am in personal contact with him and therefore am in a position to note those important little idiosyncracies which spell out Willis the Whole Person.

#### THE MAN

Meeting Willis for the first time, one gets the impression of a razor sharp mind, in complete control of the situation; able to allow the conversation to glide along amiably but not get out of control. Physically, he is tall, sort of fair-haired (well, not dark anyway) with photogenic features (my wife says). I am pleased to report that he is an ideal family man, with a pretty daughter, Carol, whom I'm sure you have heard about, and a charming wife named Madeline.

Walt is a generous host, eager to be friendly and sociable, and bursting to guide innocent neo-fans like myself through the early trials and tribulations of fandom.

I feel that Walt's general appearance has been summed up remarkably well by that witty columnist, Bob Shaw. (His calumny appears in "-". (Excuse me...I meant to say 'column'--dag). I consider it impossible to improve



on this description. Even should I attempt the task, the result would be the same. So, to keep people from calling me a plagiarist, I will quote Bob's paragraph:

His favourite apparel consists of an old, well worn wind-cheater, and an old, well worn pair of trousers, and an old, well worn pair of carpet slippers. He also wears an old face, but hasn't a patch on it. The only other salient points about his appearance are that he stands very far from the razor when shaving, {That figures...Our Walt is no Shaver-Fan!} and his comb must have had pyhorrea {Could it have been trench-mouth or, to use the proper term, 'Vinç's Angina?}. As you may have noted, he is very careless about his dress, about his meals, about everything except books. He is even careless about money--careless about how he gets it.

Thanks, Bob. That I can endorse.

Pamela Bulmer, showing unusual perception for a female, states that in her opinion, 'Walt is a handsome man, in a delinquent sort of way,' and that he is an 'unasuming genius.'

So now you know.

#### THE PROVIDER

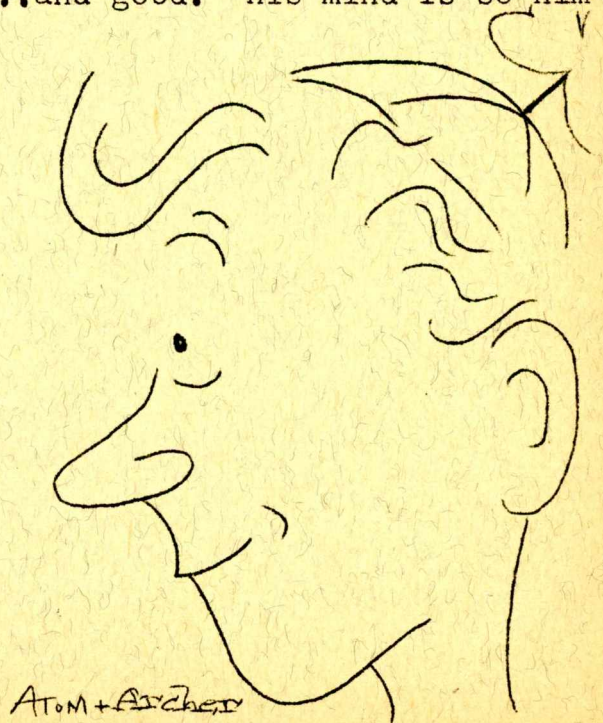
Oh yes, Willis suffers from that dreaded mundane disease of having to go to work for a living. Notice that I specify go to work, I didn't commit myself to saying that he actually works when he gets there. After all, he is employed by the Northern Ireland as a servile savant, which tells you immediately that if he follows the accepted Civil Service Charter, the only connection between Walt and work is the twenty-third letter of the alphabet. His chief occupational hazard at the Ministry concerns the twentieth letter of the alphabet.

#### THE WIT

As I said before, Walt has a razor-sharp mind {I'm told he attributes this to black-strop molasses}. Anyone can make puns--everyone does make puns--but not like Walt. Walt's puns are in a class by themselves...in fact, they are spontaneous...and good. His mind is so nimble, so quick, that it takes apart every sentence he hears, every word is carefully digested, every possible meaning and inflexion tried out, and an invariably clever pun is the result. But in a split second. I wish I could meet the genius who labelled them 'Lousy Willis-type Puns.' {Indeed a pundit worthy of punishment.}

Presuming that you haven't been tortured too much by them already, here are a few LW-T puns to cheer you on your way: To the statement, "Those houses are like rabbit hutches," Walt replied, "Naturally, weren't they built by the Borough Council?"

In a letter to the Editor of BEM, complaining of the bad typing, he wrote, "...unless you want 150 readers with ruptured eyeballs, and I truss you don't...". On





another occasion, George Charters wouldn't play Ghoodminton. His excuse was that he had a toothache, but I thought it was because I had criticized his service in an article. Walt refuted this. "George is conspicuous by his abcess," he said. (BoSh says this always was a good pun.)

Finally, it gives me great pleasure, as a final example of the LW-T Pun, to announce that the following specimen has never before appeared in print. {huh}

Walt states, "My grandfather was a printer, and I reverted to type." Sensational, isn't it? {Well, Rog Philips always thought so}

Besides puns (I'm beginning to hate that word), Walt is also an exponent of the 'witty retort.' Only the other day, for example, I was an innocent foil for his deadly art. I was telling the Irish group about a Holiday camp I had visited, where physical training early in the morning was compulsory. "...so, at about 6:30 in the morning," I said, "a big chap came in, grabbed me, dragged me out of bed, and flung me outside."

"Her husband, I presume," said Willis. The annoying thing was that I was totally innocent and blushed profusely, thus confirming everyone's suspicions that it was true.

#### THE WANDERER

WILLIS HAS BEEN TO AMERICA. This is the first thing he told me, five minutes after our initial meeting.

#### THE SPORTSMAN

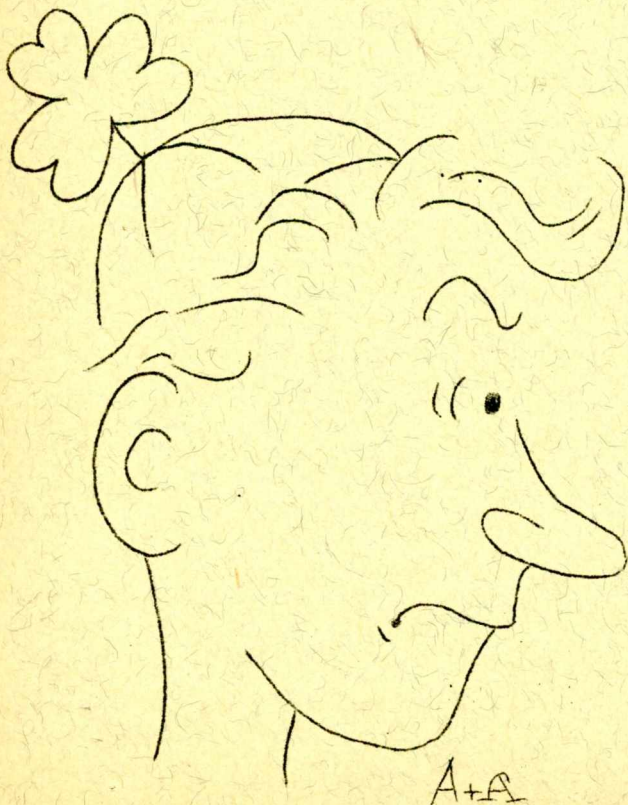
Willis also likes to play tennis, which is recognised (by me) as being symbolic of virtuous and unblemished manhood. I prefer poker.

But Willis also plays Ghoodminton. Better than this, however, HE INVENTED GHOODMINTON. This is my reason for applying the term 'neo-genius.' I think that this is one of the best things he has done for Irish fandom, even including buying a TV set.

You all know about Ghoodminton, of course. {For the benefit of anyone who doesn't know, the game called Ghoodminton is a skillful blend of the more interesting features of table-tennis, badminton (Bhadminton?), ping-pong and Assault With A Deadly Weapon.} Let me explain Walt's attitude toward it. White is quite capable of hacking your fingers off. Shaw will attempt assassination. Madeleine will frequently attempt to abstract your epiglottis. But Walt does none of this. He is a true sportsman, and distains brutality of any sort. He simply flings his bat the length of the room, sinks his fist into the wall, turns red, and says, with great feeling and eloquence:

-----  
"Bloody Hell."  
-----

Maybe a psychiatrist could make something out of this...the exclamation, this article.





## THE HUCKSTER

-11-

Walt has an extensive collection of S.F. Hundreds of ASTOUNDINGS are arranged in chronological order along the bookshelves, and piles of others, GALAXIES, IFs, etc., are also stacked in prominent positions. When a meeting at Oblique House is about to break up, Walt announces loudly, "Prozines, anyone?"

Everyone, rather naturally, takes no notice. Walt, not to be outdone, rattles a few halfpennies in a tin and assumes a pathetic expression.

On my first visit, this procedure was all new to me. Consequently, I was unaware of the dangerous position I had taken up near the doorway. As Walt croaked "Prozines for sale," I was trampled underfoot by the concerted rush. The last thing I remember, after the stampede had passed over my defenceless body, was Walt rattling the tin under my nose.

The secret, which I have discovered from careful observation, is not to relax vigilance for a second, otherwise all is lost. Well I remember the George Charters episode. The poor soul in an unguarded moment, actually picked up a prozine with Willis in the Same room. The rest of us gazed in silent pity as Walt tiptoed over to him, a savage gleam of triumph in his eyes. I'll never forget that despairing look in George's eyes as he dug his hand into his pocket.

Walt caught me once, too. But I really don't feel too badly about this. In fact, I'm quite proud of my collection of hundreds of ASTOUNDINGS, dating from the very first issue.

## THE EDITOR

This is Willis supreme. This is his avowed vocation. As the editor of HYPHEN, Walt brings to the fore his powerful organising abilities, without which the next issue of HYPHEN would undoubtedly be only a mere Number 28 or 29. It really is marvelous, the way he organises his staff.

When the HYPHEN issue date is imminent, Walt girds his loins. Under his masterful direction, everyone rushes about with stencils, reams of paper, etc., expertly dodging the showers of printing ink that emanate from a protesting duper that frequently becomes red hot through brutal usage.

Not until the last staple has been fixed, does Walt finally lay down his whip.

## THE WRITER

Oh, Walt is diabolically clever. I would be the next-to-last to deny it (Willis likes the last word in these matters). His writings prove his skill. I think his style is brilliant. It is unique...an opinion, I might add, with which Walt concurs.

Seriously, though, while Walt's articles are somewhat longer than most, I find that interest is maintained right up to the bitter end. His descriptive flair for putting his reader into the picture, as it were, is most effective. I have read most of his works avidly, and I feel I must include one or two paragraphs





of what I consider choice examples of his art. Not the funniest, by any means, but these two items clearly demonstrate what I mean by 'descriptive flair.' From QUANDRY 13:

Round about 6:30 that evening, I was sitting outside in my slippers--sometimes I wish I could afford a chair--when a telegram boy arrived carrying, of all things, a telegram. I opened it. It seemed the thing to do. ....Steady now, I said to myself, and clambered off the roof. I dashed through the front door to show the telegram to Madeleine. I think she suspected the moment she saw me that something was up. Female intuition, I suppose, or it may have been the fragments of wood and glass hanging around my neck. I really should have opened that door first. If you have ever seen a woman who has been told to expect an important visitor (in case you're wondering, it was Forry Ackerman. -dag) in less than an hour, you'll know what happened next. I stepped out of the blur of action, and through the back door. I lose more doors that way.

This next example is my favourite, so far. It comes from QUANDRY 27&28 /and The Harp Stateside/ and deals with Walt's experiences with the American Emigration Authorities:

...I had to call this a queue, because it was anything but a line. It was in the form of an enormous bulge, tapering to single file between two tables. When the pressure got beyond so many tons per square inch, a mangled body would be projected with great force down between two tables in front of the Customs Inspector, in no fit condition to tell lies about any dutiable goods he happened to have. Every now and then, the mass of angry people at the back would surge forward, pushing the queue, the tables, the customs officials and everything else before them several yards further down the shed. I calculated that, assuming we survived this heat, we'd push the bastards in the Pacific by December.

See what I mean?

--John Berry

\*In OOPSLA #12 (March-April, 1954), Willis wrote: "...did you ever wonder just how much Rog Phillips used to read of the fanzines he reviewed in 'The Clubhouse'? One thing I can tell you, he didn't read the QUANNISH very thoroughly. In fact I doubt if he really read it at all, because it's impossible to look at a page containing one's own name without it leaping to the eye, and I had a whole paragraph about Rog--

'Today's new subber kindly pastes on the back of his letter a copy of SLANT's latest review in AMAZING. I can hardly believe it, but Phillips has done it again. In the first issue I ever sent him there was a mild little pun about my grandfather having been a printer and I having merely reverted to type. An innocuous thing compared to some of the monsters I have created, but it must have left a lasting impression on Phillips. In every review but one in the last few years he has quoted it. Less and less verbatim each time, but there's no doubt he got the point all right. It registered. I can just imagine Rog that first time, reading solemnly through the heap, restapling tidily the last disintegrated mimeod crudzine, and going home to a quiet read and a smoke and then to bed. At about four o'clock in the morning it hits him. He awakes, screaming hysterically. "Reverted to type! Ha ha ha. Ho ho ho." Alarmed, the neighbors send for a doctor. He arrives, makes a quick diagnosis. "Nurse, the hypodermic!" At last Rog quiets down, save for an occasional tortured murmur. "Grandfather, printer, type." The neighbors go back to bed. But Rog is never the same again. I can tell you, I'm scared to make another pun in case it kills him.'

There is a sequel to this. After the Chicon, Forry Ackerman and I went to Palmer's place for some sleep and then back to Evanston to drive to Los Angeles with Rog and Miri Phillips. I hadn't met Rog at the convention so he spoke his first words to me as we moved off along Dempster Street. They were: 'You know, Walt, I still remember that first issue of yours. It had a darned good pun in it, something about your father being a printer and you having reverted to type.' I looked at him doubtfully, sure he was pulling my leg. But he wasn't, and he never knew the reason for my getting purple in the face at his innocent remark."

Berry was apparently pulling our legs (and Dean fell for it), inasmuch as the QUANNISH and Q#13 were one and the same issue. -tw, Researching Giant



# WAW:

## SOME SMALL

## & RAMBLIN

## REMINISCENCES

BY LEE HOFFMAN\*\*

ancient fanzines from which I'd gotten my indoctrination. But then neither were most of the fan-nish luminaries of that day.

My delight was in the mysterious and far away place from which it had come, and from the editor's having heard of my zine in that distant land. The fanzine bore a typical fannishly cryptic invitation to trade. I gleed.

Then I opened it, and began to read it. The delight remained and intensified, but the motivations changed. This half-size, letterpress product was scant, but refined down to pure and marvelous marrow. There was nothing superfluous. It was a thing of beauty, and is a joy to this day.

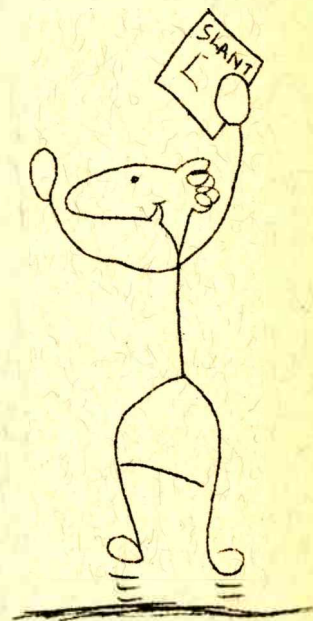
I wrote to the editor, and sent him my zine. In my letter I told him that SLANT was the kind of witty, intelligent fanzine I wisht I was publishing. He answered, telling me, "I like the magazine /Q/ very much indeed. I think it's very much the sort of magazine I would like to turn out myself, if I had been mimeographing, instead of printing, though I doubt if I should have done so well."

With a beginning like that, how could it fail? Shortly, we were exchanging rapid-fire letters. And then WAW asked if I would like a regular column from him for Q, just a one-pager, he explained. I returned a violently affirmative answer, and soon the one page column arrived. On stencil, it ran a full three pages--elite type. "The Harp That Once or Twice" it was titled, and it opened: "Romantic Ireland is covered with a soft mantle of slush and peace reigns over the whole land --except, of course, for the muffled sound of Nationalists knocking at the Partition--as I sit here wondering what I can say that would be suitable for a magazine published in Savannah, Ga. That 'Ga' had me fooled for a bit by the way--I always thought the name had been patented by Sid Gluck--but I quickly realised it meant Georgia and probably expressed your editor's astonishment at finding himself in such a state. Very lit-

I remember the day well. I was young and eager then, a starry-eyed neophan publishing the early issues of my first fanzine, and every mail delivery was a time of excitement and occasionally delight. As a matter of fact, all of them were delight, regardless. Even a letter of criticism is egoboo, when you're that neo a phan.

There was something pretty special about this particular mail delivery, although I didn't realize how special

at the time. I was awed to have received a fanzine from such a strange and faraway place as Northern Ireland. The editor's name was new to me: Walter A. Willis. He wasn't mentioned in FANCY I, or the



Lee H





Lesh '61

tle is known about Georgia. Hastily cashing a check on my memory bank I examined my vast store of inaccurate information. Georgia is, of course, in the Deep South, where for some reason they don't like to be called Yankees, and where they fry chicken and have a White Problem. It is supposed to be hard to get off your mind, probably because Josef Stalin was born there, and apart from that, everything is peaches. Now that I come to think of it, that's funny about Joe Stalin having been born there, but it's true enough because I read it in a book. Tiflis, Georgia, it said. I used to read books that weren't s-f, you know, and I picked up a lot of useless information like that, about things that have already happened and all that sort of junk. I suppose Joe's parents were some of those liberated Slavs there was all

that trouble about we heard of in GONE WITH THE WIND. I used to go about with Margaret Mitchell, but I don't think it was the one who wrote the book, or if she did, she never mentioned it. Come to think of it, I never asked her, but what I can't figure out is where she got the time. But this train of thought has left me up a siding. Perhaps I had better get on with the column..."

From there he went on to various subjects bearing such headings as "Naked fraud", "Rube Goldberg," "The Best Fanzine We Have Never Seen," "The Other Science Fiction," and such.

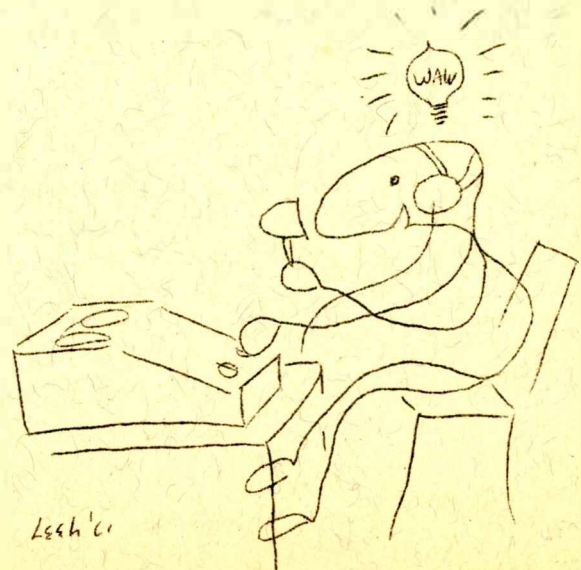
In the installments that followed, Walt wandered wordily and wonderfully about such sundry topics as Science Fiction Fortnightly, AMAZING, Redd Boggs, The Crusade to Clean Up Fandom, "Bob Tucker--Home Wrecker," Proxyboo, Ltd., and much much more.

Before long, WAW was sending me the column already on stencil, with illos by Bob Shaw. They were handsome white stencils, decorously ornamented with fuschia correction fluid. I eagerly awaited the arrival of each envelopeful. The Harp had become the core of Q. And the primary reason for Q's having managed to attract many a good fan writer and reader, I suspect, was the Harp.

I remember another momentous day, although at the time it seemed like an ordinary day, a day like any other day...except that I was there...

Shel-

by Vick and I were wiresponding in those days, and on one wire the Big Pond Fund that Forry Ackerman had been promoting a few years previously came up in conversation. And ShelVy was enthusiastic with perhaps the wildest idea of the decade. Import Willis for



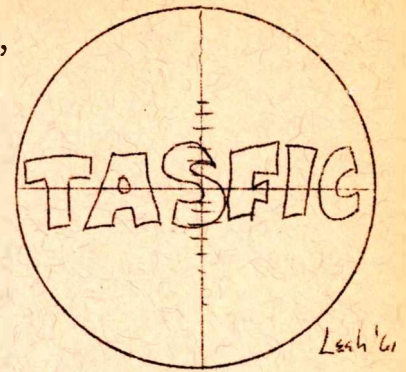
Lesh '61



the Nolacon!

The Nolacon was only a few months away, and I, personally, was dubious about it all. I was as eager as anyone to meet the fabulous Mr. Willis, but I was pretty sceptical about the possibility of importing even him in such a short period of time.

It did prove impossible, so Shel turned his sights on the Chicon II (or TASFIC, or whatever it was). His battlecry was "WAW with the crew in '52!" and he cried it far and wide.



Another day, in another place, and both the Chicon and WAW were rapidly approaching, or at least so we thought. We consisted of Bob Tucker and myself, who were in Chicago, waiting to meet WAW, who was scheduled to arrive there in a matter of minutes. On the next bus, to be precise.

But the next bus didn't arrive. Other busses arrived, but not the Next One. Hours passed. And we began to wonder if the legendary Walter A. Willis really existed at all, or if perhaps he was only a creation of Proxyboo, Ltd.?

We waited.

Was Willis, like his death, a hoax?

We waited.

Still no bus.

We decided to wait in the train station for a while--not because we suspected him of coming by train instead, but because it was more comfortable, and we were growing weary.

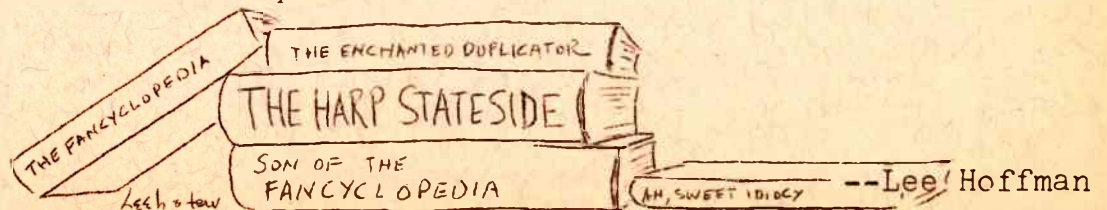
But still we kept our vigil. And finally, it was there. The Next Bus had arrived. And so had Willis!

He looked like a Walter A. Willis--tall and slim and somewhat harried. The harried look persisted throughout the convention, but I understand that a few years back in the quiet confines of Belfast finally cured it.

The story of his bus trip has been told in fannish pages and around the campfires of the Greyhound Bus Co., outings many a time.

In fact, the many and many a tale of Willis's trip to the Chicon, and around the States, has been counted and recounted in many a fanzine, the definitive work being by WAW himself. It is a fan classic.

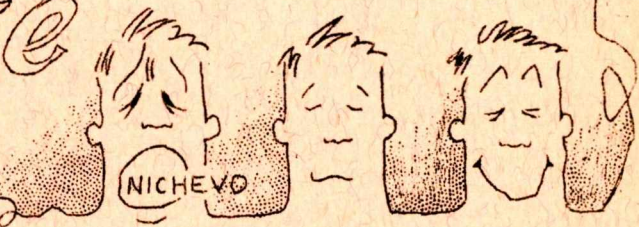
It seems to me that it's about time for him to start collecting material for a sequel.





# Where there's a Willis there's a Waysgoose

by Bob Shaw *feeling*



When I was a youth of but four summers my one ambition was to be a great tragedian. I was not as precocious as that opening sentence might lead you to believe, of course--due to the peculiar nature of our Irish climate, people of but four summers generally work out to be eighteen or nineteen years old. Anyway, it was my wont to go around writing grim, brooding pieces full of futility and people who murmured, "Nichevo," as they went down to needless deaths.

It was pretty powerful stuff, but I believed in it; as far as I was concerned, that was the way to write. Then I met Walt Willis.

Nowadays I wouldn't even dream of having a character say "Nichevo," unless there was another one standing by with a carefully thought out pun to slap in. As there aren't any puns on "Nichevo"\* I don't even write farcical tragedies any more. Such was the effect of Walt Willis upon my life.

One sometimes gets the impression when talking to him that there is a fellow who has developed a little religion of his own. The basic idea in this Code is that anything which makes people laugh is good. He goes around quietly being very religious; making up puns and jokes, devising or studying new forms of humor, issuing Scriptures in the form of articles or complete fanzines.

Walt began my conversion within a few minutes of our first meeting while proudly showing me a copy of SLANT. "One reviewer said it was a must," Walt said ruefully. "I looked 'must' up in a dictionary and it said 'a bad smell'."

You don't need to be subjected to that sort of thing for very long before you begin to think that way yourself. And once you think that way you cannot cease the process. You're hooked. If that's the case, somebody might object, it's a wonder that the Willis Creed didn't spread throughout the whole of fandom.

I think it did.

Personally,

The average fanzine of about 1948 or before was, if I remember it correctly, a fairly serious effort with much space devoted to discussions on the value and purpose of sf, science articles, promag reviews, potted biographies of sf artists, and, occasionally, a really hot item about rocketry in Germany during the Twenties.

With the coming of the tremendously popular SLANT and then HYPHEN, a gradual change took

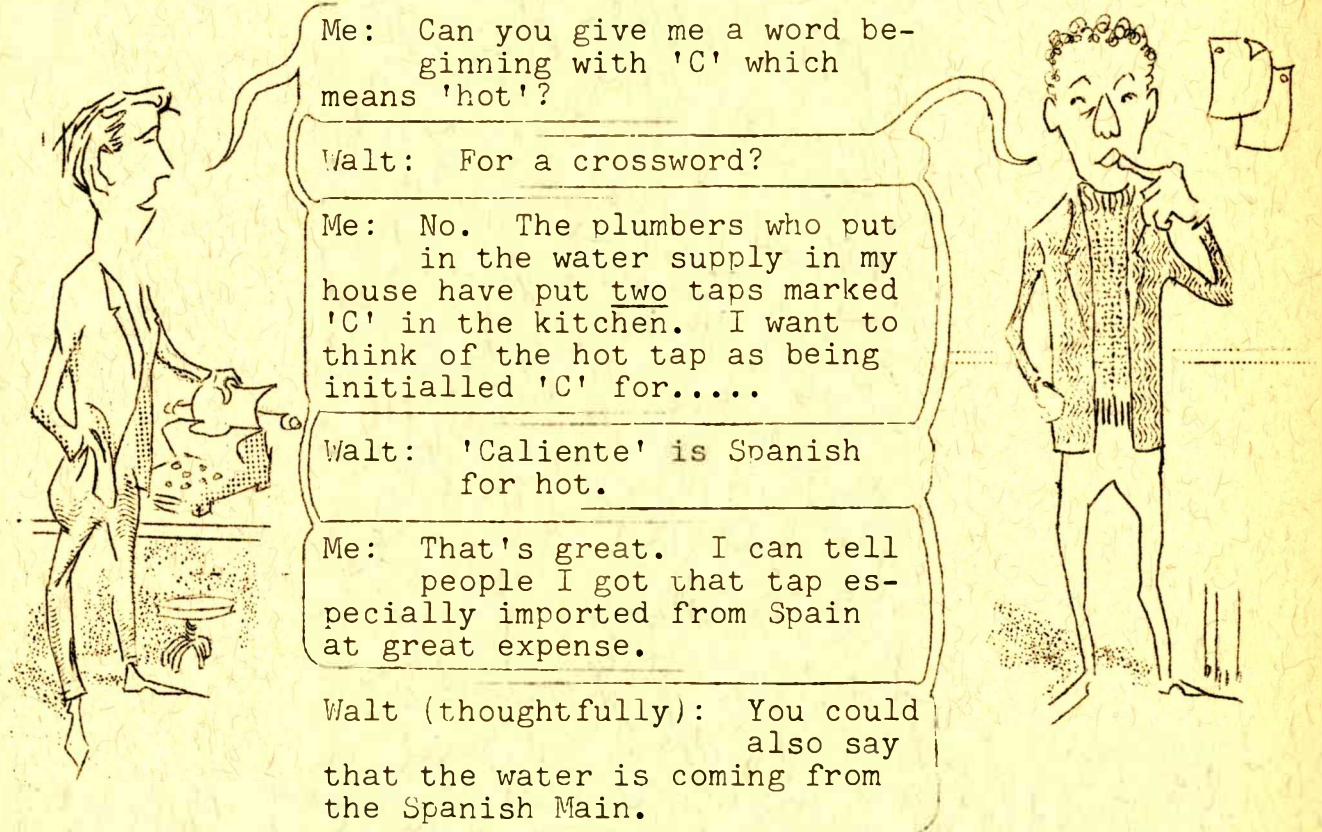
\* Bhub Stewart, while reading over this piece in order to illustrate it, came up with a pun on "Nichevo" too horrible to even set down on paper. -tw



place in fanzines. The humor zine became the norm for fan publications, and I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that this was almost entirely due to the influence of the Willis Creed. In 1952, while I was resident in London, none other than Vinç Clarke, who is probably fandom's most learned commentator, said somberly, concerning the New Look in fanzines, "Willis has a lot to answer for."

Years have gone by since then and many bridges have fallen into the water, and neofans note that the Willis typewriter has not been so active as of yore. But Walt still dispenses his personal Koran (in this case the 'a' is silent) quietly, at home with a few close friends.

I quoted from my very first conversation with him--here is a choice extract from the very latest, about three days ago:



Need I say any more?

--Bob Shaw


The SuperManCon: "The talk at tea-time was all about the startling news that the film show that evening was to be Things To Come--NOT Metropolis. Shocked murmurings were heard when the announcement was made. Small indignation meetings were held. Neofans staggered about, white and trembling, their world crashing to ruins about their ears. Old fans shook their heads forebodingly. No good would come from this mad craze for novelty. A Convention without Metropolis! It was unthinkable. As Rick Dalton was heard to complain, "It should at least appear on the programme!"

But there was worse to come. No one discovered that the show was illegal under a twenty-year-old statute, the films arrived safely, on time, and wound the right way, no one ran around asking the audience if anyone had a 35mm projector, the projector did not break down, the film was not put on backwards, or even upside down. In fact, the whole showing went off without a single hitch. It was terrifying, like the end of the world.

Unable to stand the strain, many people went upstairs to parties. The London Circle had one for which the admission charge was ten shillings, but the passports you got for this were the best thing about it. There was nothing that you couldn't see at the seaside for free with a pair of binoculars. I thought of making love to my own wife, but I was afraid the London Circle might be shocked, so we went upstairs to the Liverpool party. Someone there had taken to heart the maxim that the recipe for a successful party is too many people in too small a room. It was the Black Hole of Calcutta...with zap guns. It was a wonderful party though, especially after John Roles and others had run amok with soda syphons and schwepped half the people out." -Walt Willis, in HYPHEN #9



# THE TEN YOGURT HATCH BY WALT WILLIS



Always check your hat and coat before you go into a large theatre. Here I was in this huge theatre and I didn't know where my wife was, but I knew exactly where to find my hat and coat. Obviously I should have checked my wife too. But then I'd never lost her before: I'd taken her to hundreds of theatres and always come out with her or at least one so like her that I couldn't tell the difference. No, I felt I couldn't blame myself. Nevertheless, there it was. My hat and coat would be waiting for me when I came out, so I should be all right until I got home. But what of the night? What about my supper? .....

What indeed. And what about the rest of that article? That fragment was written many years



ago and was inspired by a remark of Redd Boggs'. In some fanzine he mentioned that he'd dreamt he was reading an article by me that started off with that first sentence. Naturally I felt that destiny and J. W. Dunne required me to write such an article, but after a few paragraphs it didn't seem to be going anywhere so I relegated it to the Project Folder, and there it lay until Ted asked me to write something about the various projects I've been connected with.

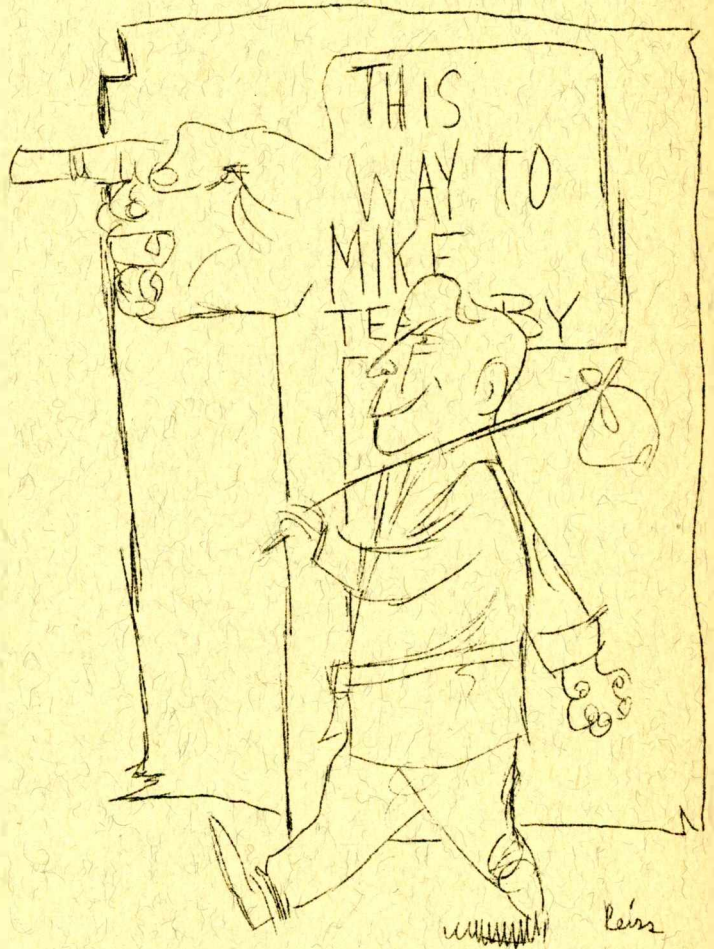
So here you are at last, Redd.

It's not quite so inapt an opening as it looks, because it reminds me of all sorts of things. That business about losing my wife, for instance, I was thinking about the time I lost Mike Tealby in a big cinema in Leicester. It was one of those

cinemas so huge that the people at the back on Thurs, Fri and Sat are still seeing the programme for Mon Tues and Wed. There were two isles but the walls were so far away that I thought there was only one, and coming out of the lavatory I wandered up and down the wrong one looking for Mike for what seemed like hours. I was getting quite worried because he was the only person I knew in England except for Eric Frank Russell, and Eric was a hundred miles away. That was way back in 1950, and Mike was the first fan I'd ever met. My daughter Carol had just been born and it was beginning to come over me that I was a settled married man and I'd never done anything at all adventurous. Why, I'd never even been to England! I'd never had any particular reason to, but now here was this fandom thing I'd just come in to, so I decided I would go to England and see some fans. I had no plans and very little money, but I bought a round-trip ticket to Liverpool, with the intention of hitchhiking to London. This

may not seem a particularly adventurous scheme to people like Ron Ellick and Bill Donaho, but to me at the time it was the moral equivalent of Gauguin throwing up his business and going to beachcomb in Tahiti.

The boat docked in Liverpool at six o'clock on a cold damp morning. Partly through diffidence and partly through pride I didn't ask anyone the way ...in fact I didn't even know where to ask the way to...and promptly lost myself in the dock area, trudging along endless cobbled streets, all corrugated iron fences and dirty brick warehouse walls, carrying my fibre suitcase. At last the shops opened and I bought a map of Liverpool and worked my way to the centre of the city where I waited for a cafe to open. Over breakfast I figured out how to get to the village of Hooton, where Eric Frank Russell lived, but that's another story, along with the following night in Chester Youth Hostel and my first and last attempt at





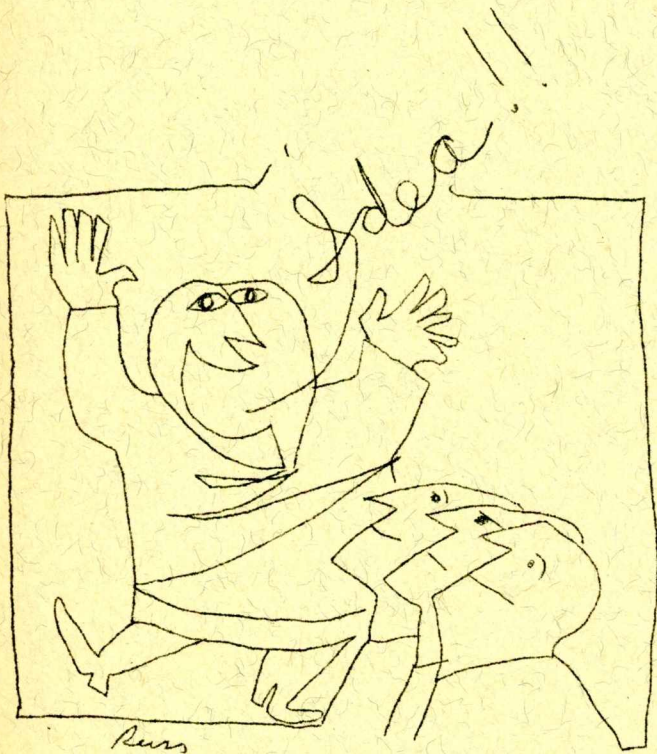
hitchhiking.

So, really, is Mike Tealby. The only reason I visited him was that there were less than half a dozen active fans in Britain at that time and he was the only one between me and London. He was pale and thin with bad teeth and a weak chest and a belief in the Shaver Mystery and he lived with his widowed mother and a flatbed duplicator in a tiny house near Leicester. We didn't have a single opinion in common but I rather liked him and he was hospitable to me, and for years afterwards I used to do multi-coloured covers for his fanzine on my printing press. He needed them, because his stencil-cutting was incredibly bad and he once had an entire issue rejected from an SFS mailing because of a tear in a very unfortunate place in a cover drawing of a naked woman. Some years ago I heard that his mother had died and left him some money and he and his friend Ron Deacon, like dedicated fans, decided to use it to start a prozine. Unfortunately they ran into an unexpected difficulty in that not one of the big printing firms to whom they wrote for estimates ever replied to their letters. My informant said it never occurred to them that they might have had better luck if they hadn't written on half sheets torn from a child's exercise book.

But as I say, Mike's another story. The important thing so far as we're concerned at the moment is that at the time Mike was acting as agent for Ken Slater's Operation Fantast, and while I was there he got an enquiry from an unknown in Belfast called Bob Shaw, and that really started Irish Fandom. James White and I had been a partnership, Bob made us a group. We had been a couple of dedicated fuggheads toiling away at hand printing SLANT three nights a week. Gradually, insidiously, Bob changed all that and we became the fannish fun-loving group we've remained ever since. We became less productive but more creative, like Bob himself. Bob is a sort of fan's fan: he's not one of the really prominent names in general fandom, but he's had more influence on those who are than a dozen noisier BNFs. He's the sort of person who's always throwing out brilliant ideas and losing interest in them when they reach the stage when something actually requires to be done.

Like The Enchanted Duplicator for instance. One evening it came out that we'd all been lis-

tening to a radio play by Louis McNeice called "The Dark Tower" and the whole idea of The Enchanted Duplicator sprang full-fledged from his mind there and then, including the famous ending. I fell for it like a ton of bricks and the evening passed in a whirl of ideas, Bob finally leaving with a solemn promise to start work on it rightaway. But days passed and then weeks and then months and he'd still only produced a couple of handwritten pages, so I started and wrote it all myself, incorporating Bob's MS as parts of Chapters 5 and 6. More ideas kept coming to me as I wrote it and it could have been twice as long except that I began to worry lest





it might be getting tedious--it was so easy to write, once I'd got the style, and writing has never been easy for me before or since. But it looks as if I needn't have worried, because it turned out to be a fantastic success. I don't think there can ever have been a fannish project which was received so exactly as the authors had hoped.

One extraordinary result of its success was that it took years to sell out. People reading the reviews

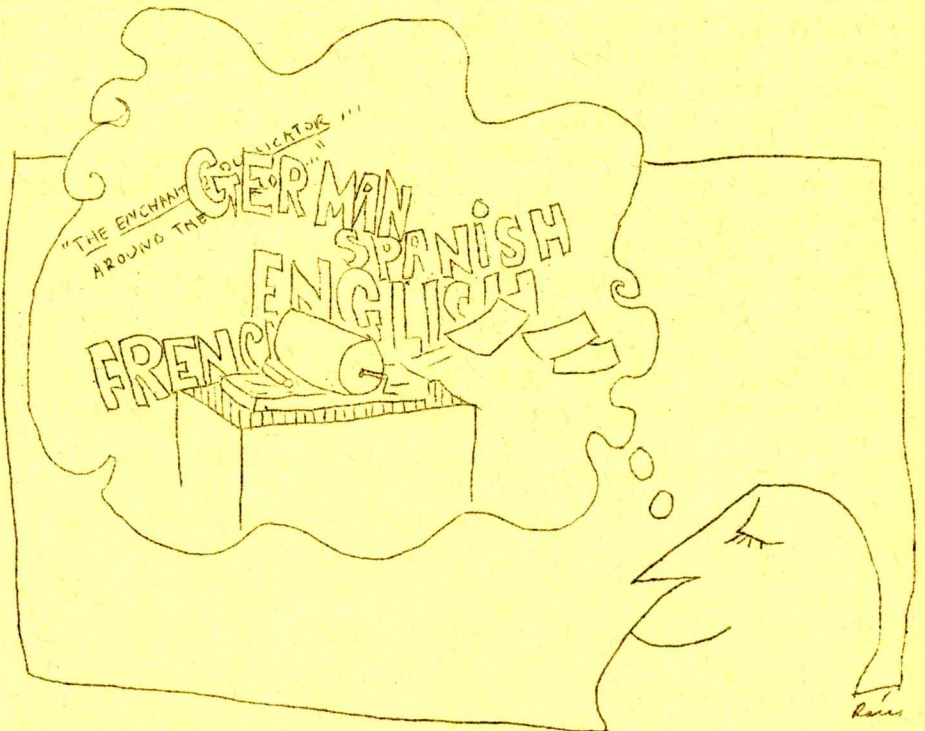
assumed there must be no copies left and some even advertised for it without bothering to ask us. We only printed 200 copies but we had a dozen or so left until somebody (Ted Johnstone I think) noticed that the copy I sent him was No.176 and publicised the fact. It's out of print now all right, but Ella Parker of London plans to republish it this year. Pierre Versins meant to publish a French translation, which I'd love to have seen, but at his request I sent him an explanation of all the

esoteric puns and allusions in it and I'm afraid he got discouraged. I don't see why: Willy Ley translated "Jabberwocky" into German and Valery Larbaud Finnegans Wake into French, so a little thing like The Enchanted Duplicator should have been a cinch.

In case you haven't read it, it's an allegory of a fan discovering fandom from the fan sections of second-rate prozines ('the cornfield') and determining to publish a fanzine himself. On his way all the things we disapproved of in fandom were pilloried, including our own former selves (The Letterpress Railroad), the London Circle (The Circle of Lassitude) and even actual fans like Ed Wood (Dedwood of the City of Serious Constructivism). Everybody said it was modelled after Pilgrim's Progress and I suppose it was, though in fact neither Bob nor I had ever read Bunyan's oneshot.

At the last moment I had the idea of printing a sort of colophon on the back, mainly for some place to number the copies without having to open them, and on the spur of the moment, composing on the stick, I added "This Is A Serious Constructive Insurgent Publication." As far as I know nobody mentioned those words from that day to this, until Eney featured "Serious Constructive Insurgentism" as a regular recognised fannish movement in his FANCYCLOPEDIA II. I was surprised, but on thinking it over I realised that he was right. Nobody may ever have used those actual words, but they expressed well enough the attitude of the group of fans which was the nucleus of Sixth Fandom. We didn't have any delusions about fandom being more than a ghoddam hobby, as Burbee put it, but we didn't have the sneering misanthropic Laney attitude either. If we'd had a slogan it would have been Ashworth's "Fandom is a damn good hobby."

When you come to think of





it, I suppose in a sense Sixth Fandom started during that trip to England too. I finally made my way down to London and met Vinç Clarke and Ken Bulmer at the White Horse and they took me home to that fabulous fannish garbage heap known as The Epicentre. That apartment of theirs made a profound impression on me and when I got home I did a piece about it for a fanzine called PHANTASMAGORIA which Derek Pickles of Yorkshire had just started. It wasn't much of a thing but what was significant about it was that it was the first thing I'd ever written in what came to be eventually thought of as my 'style'. I'd written fanzine material before, but it had either been very terse condensed stuff for SLANT--there's nothing like handsetting your own material for cultivating the virtue of brevity--or deadly serious stuff like school essays for other fanzines. This piece in the new casual discursive style went over so well I thought it would be nice to write a regular column on those lines for a more congenial editor than Pickles. But nobody asked me. Then months later I got an exchange copy of a new fanzine being published by an unknown newcomer in Savannah, Georgia. It wasn't much then but there was something about the editorial personality that I liked so I wrote an enthusiastic letter and when I got a reply saying don't hesitate to send material, I didn't. I wrote back rightaway volunteering to do an irregular column (hence the title) of about a page. I wasn't sure of my ability to do





anything more.

A long time later Lee, by then my closest friend in fandom--we were corresponding on three levels simultaneously...airmail, surface letters and pocsarcds--was nearing her 21st birthday. Reasoning that the best present for a fan was egoboo, I sent her 21 pieces of mail by various routes, all timed as far as possible to arrive on her birthday. One of them was an other-probability-world letter in which I apologised for not replying to that long-ago invitation of hers because I'd been too busy with SLANT. I sometimes wonder how different my life, and maybe even fandom, would have been if that had been what I'd really done. Certainly that column in QUANDRY was the most important project I ever started: for one thing it got me to America.

"The Harp That Once or Twice" didn't even start as a one-page column and it kept getting bigger, until in the first QUANNISH it took up more than 16 pages, eight of them being a sort of fan diary and the rest the continuation of a long report on the British Festival Convention of 1951. This was as far as I know the first time a British Convention had been reported in an American fanzine and I did it on purpose. At the time British and American fandom were quite separate and I was the only fan in the world who was an active member of both. I reasoned this was a bad thing for fandom, because each side was missing a lot, and for me because it was a hell of a lot of work to be two fans at once. I figured that maybe if I could report British fandom interestingly enough to Americans they'd get interested in it, and British fans would subscribe to QUANDRY to find out what was being said about them. It did work out that way: virtually all the actifans in Britain became readers and contributors of Q and it developed into the first really international fanzine. (SLANT had been international but it hadn't been a true fanzine like Q in the sense of being what was later to be known as a focal point, if you'll pardon the expression.) There was another result which I hadn't envisaged. Shelby Vick started a fund to bring me to the States and in September 1952 I was with him and Lee in a Chicago hotel, having written myself across the Atlantic with a dozen instalments of a mimeographed column. I still haven't quite recovered from the shock.

That September was the zenith of fandom for me and every major project I've done since has been nostalgic ...either an attempt to encapsulate the perfect fandom I knew then, as in The Enchanted Duplicator, or a straight re-creation of it as in The Harp Stateside or Willis Discovers America. The latter was a faaan-fiction serial I started when various fans were publishing special issues of their fanzines in aid of Shelby's fund and were looking to me for material. It gave me a chance to mention the names of all the people who were helping the fund, and I spread the instalments over different fanzines in hope that people would try and collect them. Anyway the plot didn't matter, each instalment being just an outrageous melange of puns and esoteric allusions. Years later I published it complete as a oneshot with footnotes, as a labour of love for me and a museum piece for fandom. It didn't attract much attention compared to the later The Harp Stateside, which had a reception which still awes me.

That of course was the straightforward report of my American trip. The conreport proper and a few thousand extra words had been published way back in early 1953, but the circumstances had been unhappy. For one thing, I had an uneasy idea that Shelby Vick had been hurt because I had sent the Chicon report proper to QUANDRY instead of to his own zine CONFUSION, and sometimes I have a horrible sinking feeling that this might have had something to do with his leaving fandom. Certainly if he felt there was any egoboo in publishing it, it was due to him because he had had far more to do with bring



ing me to America than Lee had. It had been his idea and he'd done all the work, and Lee had just climbed onto the bandwagon when it looked as if it was going somewhere. The fact was that she'd thought Shelby's project had no chance. So did I. We both knew it had been tried before, for Ted Carnell, and flopped dismally. Shelby didn't know enough about fandom to realise it was impossible: he just went and did it.

Of course I explained carefully to Shelby the reasons I'd sent the conreport to QUANDRY: that I'd publish the account of the rest of the trip in CONFUSION and it would be even longer; that previously I'd reported conventions in Q and trips in Cf and it was a sort of tradition; that Q had a bigger circulation among pros and convention fans; and that The Harp was what had really started everything in the first place. Unhappily I could never be sure that Shelby believed these reasons, because I didn't believe them myself. They just weren't true, or rather they weren't the basic reasons.

The fact was that QUANDRY was my spiritual home. I just couldn't visualize that report in which I'd put so much of myself appearing in any fanzine but QUANDRY. Practically everything I've ever written has been tailor-made for a particular fanzine and every word has been aimed at my little mental picture of its editor and readers. It was that way with the Chicon report from the very first sentence and I just couldn't do it any other way. It was written for Q and when I'd finished I just sent it off to Lee almost automatically, rationalising my behaviour to myself and Shelby in a way that seemed adequate to me at the time. I don't know if it was true modesty or just more rationalisation, but I told myself publishing the thing was just a chore that Shelby would be glad to be relieved of.

If I really did wound Shelby I was properly punished for it. Lee had published four issues of QUANDRY in the month after the Convention and was burning out, and some weeks after receiving my stencils--I'd cut them myself, as I usually did for The Harp--she wrote that she proposed to split them over two issues. For some reason I got quite worked up about this and wrote her quite an indignant letter saying I'd written the report as a unit and wanted it published as one. That was true enough, I suppose, but I can't figure out why I took it so seriously. I really think my mind must have been affected by the strain of the hectic fanac before the trip, and the trip itself, and the effort of writing the report while my reserves of energy were so depleted. Physically, I'd lost some 20 lbs. and was shortly to go down with pneumonia. Lee replied quickly that she'd do what I wanted, and she did, publishing the complete Chicon report as QUANDRY 27/28. That was the last I heard of it. She didn't publish letters of comment in either of the two subsequent QUANDRYs, nor send me any or even tell me about any. As far as I was concerned it was as if she hadn't sent out that issue at all, and indeed at times I darkly suspected that in fact she hadn't. You must try and make allowances for my state of mind at the time and the fact that I was suffering from an overwhelming sense of obligation to US fandom which I was hoping that report would do something to discharge. Not to mention natural disappointment at so little result for so much effort... I'd really sweated over that report...and that nagging subconscious guilt about Shelby. So what with pneumonia and its aftermath of enervation I made no attempt to follow Lee when she left fandom for horses and folk music. Anyway I had no interest in either--for me the epitome of boredom would be a horse playing a guitar. The result was that less than a year after we'd been so close to one another in the windowseat of that Chicon penthouse, Lee and I had completely lost touch.

The whole episode was typical of my relations with Lee, who has always been able to inspire



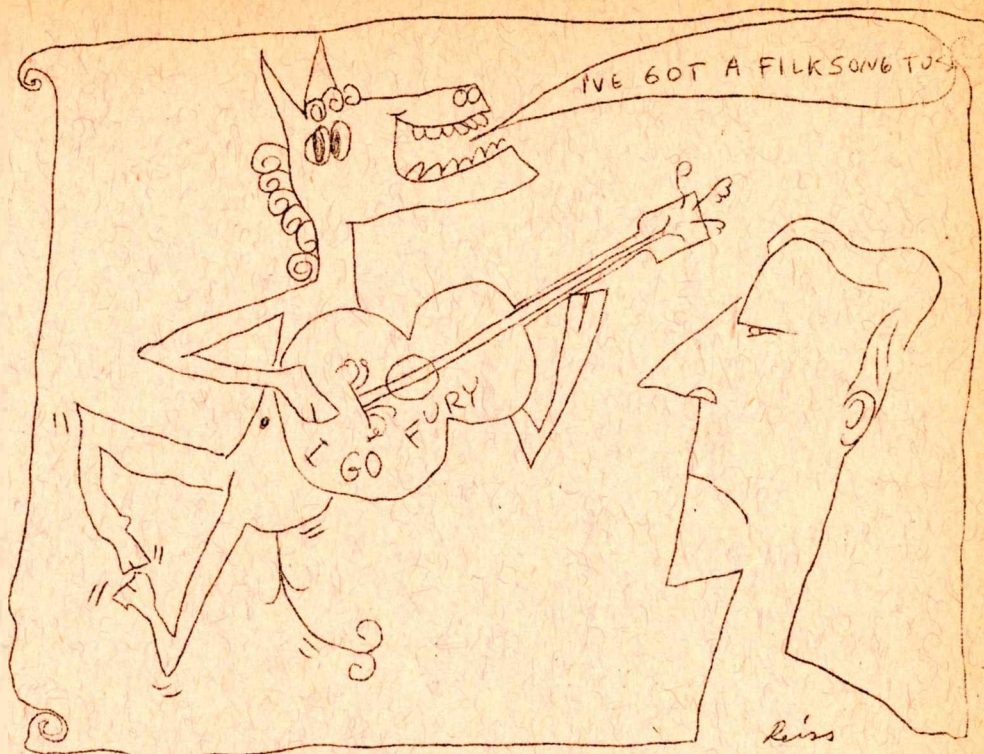
in me intense feelings of affection and irritation, often simultaneously. But this is no place to chart the ups and downs of our relationship. A lesser result of that particular down was a sense of unfinishedness about the US trip, and when Gregg Calkins revived OOP-SLA!, I continued the account there. After some instalments Gregg volunteered to publish the whole thing together and I welcomed this as an opportunity to wrap the whole thing up properly. There was

a little editing and revision I wanted to do to the previously published material so I volunteered to cut all the stencils. Madeleine was in the hospital at the time and I would come home from work, make my tea, cut a stencil, visit the hospital, cut another stencil and go to bed...a dedicated monastic existence that went on for weeks. Finally they were all finished, exquisitely illustrated by Arthur Thomson and sent off to Gregg. No doubt subconsciously appalled by this mountain of mimeography, Gregg went and got married and sometime later returned the stencils with apologies. Grimly determined I got some American size duplicating paper, bought two Gestetners at an auction for \$10 (one of which I passed on to John Berry at cost for RETRIBUTION) and with the assistance of Ken Bulmer who was staying with us at the time, started the fight with the stencils. We lost the first few battles because by this time the wax had perished and only gallons of correcting fluid saved the pages from looking like large mourning cards. Only a few had to be recut however and the later ones were OK, and finally the whole thing was finished and sent out.

By this time I was so fed up I just wanted to get rid of it, but determination had its reward because all that lost egoboo came pouring in. I've never done anything that was so enthusiastically received, not only by fans but by pros I hardly knew, like Kornbluth. I'd thought vaguely of quoting some comments here, but even at this late stage I can't: why some of them I wouldn't even show my friends.

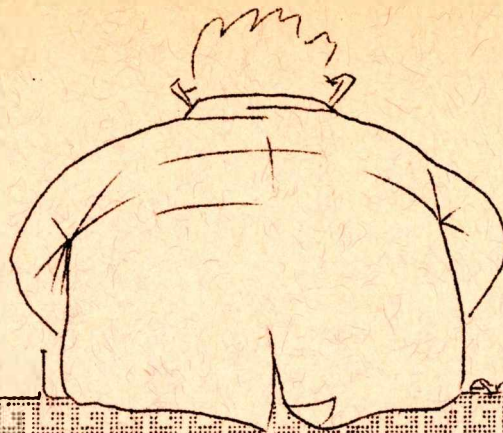
Besides this article is far too long already, and I've barely mentioned SLANT--which took up more time than all my other projects together--or HYPHEN, which Chuck Harris and I started when the American trip left me no time for hand printing; or TAFF, or any of the other things I've been connected with. I don't know what moral to draw from those ten years, except that fandom is a very worthwhile hobby, and the most worthwhile thing in it is doing as well as you can something that interests you and gives other people pleasure, no matter how much trouble it is. It'll reward you in the long run. Certainly if I'd known what was waiting for me that dismal morning in Liverpool in 1950 I'd have run down that gangplank.

--Walt Willis





BY PETE GRAHAM -



## THE WAILING WALL

ANOTHER  
LOOK AT

# the harp stateside

The argument that has presumably prevailed so long in fandom between the Fandom Is A Way of Life and the Fandom Is Just A Goddam Hobby partisans has actually long been settled in favor of FIJAGH; for one reason, damn few people are willing to actually articulate a FIWOL viewpoint. Virtually everyone says they agree that there is a real world around us, that to one extent or another fandom is a spare-time occupation of the nature that most people are accustomed to calling a hobby, and that to take fandom too seriously is to take oneself too seriously.

Naturally, there are extensive qualitative differences inside all this consensus. At one end of the spectrum can be found Pete Vorzimer or Sam Moskowitz; with totally different approaches each of these have for a period of time totally involved their lives around science-fiction, fandom or a job. Then there is the largest body of fans who live day-to-day lives of which fandom is a significant part; possibly, excluding their jobs or student lives, the most important part. Often it has had an impact on actually forming the personality of the fan in question--Berry, FanHill Mob, Whites, Hoffman, and most of the BNF's and near BNF's of the last decade.

Finally, there are a small number of fans for whom, it is clear, fandom is an important but not determining part of their lives. They have not been integrated into fandom, but, rather, they have integrated fandom into their lives. There is a range here, too; at one extreme are those who on casual observation look little different in practice from the second, largest, group--Carr, Grennell, Busbys, a number of Britifens--but at the other extreme is a group whose roster is significantly coincident with a list of many of fandom's all-time greats--Burbee, Laney, Rotsler, Tucker...Willis.

Taking this somewhat sociological classification as a group and looking at it we can see relatively few who have actually articulated FIJAGH to any extent, though all of them express this attitude in one way or another. Burbee seldom writes about fans or fannish events; and even when he did the reader was always aware, as with Laney, of their relationship to their job (there are almost as many machine-shop anecdotes as fannish ones in the Insurgent Mythos) and their primary relationships (each in their own way) to their families and personal lives. Laney, parenthetically, did a good deal of verbalizing on just what fandom is and should be to people, but always with the inescapable air of "protesting too much"; the importance of fandom to him was a contributory factor to his being so concerned with what others should think it was. Bloch and Tucker are interested in and concerned with fandom, and are certainly "fans", but simply by reading what they write one can see how little a part in their lives is the large mass of fandom most of us are accustomed to dealing with.

Of all fans who are not overweeningly immersed in fandom, yet who are well known, who do any writing about fans and fandom as such, Walt Willis stands out as one who virtually epitomizes what fandom ought to be. His THE HARP STATESIDE is the best example of this approach. Seven years ago, when THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR appeared, most fans justifiably gave it rave reviews. Also, however, most fans claimed that WAW and Shaw had finally pricked the bubble of the serconfan illusion, that Jophan and Trufandom were the once-for-all description of the ideal fan and fandom.



begins by being touched with the spirit of fandom (FANAC, I might add; "the inner essence of fandom"). In order to achieve the true spirit of fandom, in order to publish the Perfect Fanzine and to become a True Fan, Jophan traverses a series of obstacles that all fans encounter--the Mountains of Inertia, the Jungle of Inexperience, the Desert of Indifference, the Hucksters and the Serconfen, and the Canyon of Criticism. Finally reaching Trufandom, he discovers at the top of the Tower of Trufandom that the Magic Mimeograph--the Enchanted Duplicator he has been seeking in order to publish the Perfect Fanzine--"is the one with a True Fan at the handle"...that is, himself.

All allegories, being allegories and not reality, have a flaw in them. TED's flaw is perhaps its onesidedness. Jophan travels from Mundane to Trufandom; as far as this goes, the story is entirely satisfactory and excellent allegorically. But what is the real relation of Trufandom to Mundane? Is Trufandom now the be-all and end-all of Jophan's life, as implied in THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, or does he ever see Mundane again?

Then Jophan came to America, and THE HARP STATESIDE completed the allegory by adding the necessary touch of reality.

This article purports to be a review. Now, a review is a sercon sort of thing, and on first glance one might assume that HARP STATESIDE is not something to be treated in a sercon fashion. However, it is a monumental piece of work; some call it the greatest fannish piece ever written, and there's no question but that it's a contender for that title. Fandom has produced, it is true, some more simply monumental pieces: the Day Index, THE IMMORTAL STORM, possibly Who Killed Science Fiction; but it would be ludicrous to say that any of them could have had the label "fannish" applied to them. The only efforts that could possibly compare are the Fancyclopediae and Warner's future Foutline of History, but generally speaking it doesn't seem to be in the nature of fannish events that Monumental Works are anything but sercon. With some trepidation, however, I hope to tread the thin line of a genuinely sercon approach to THE HARP STATESIDE and hope not to fall into the faults of the more familiar fuggheaded variety.

At the very beginning and end Willis strongly affirms one point which is more subtly omnipresent through the entire article:

"...I tried desperately to put over the suggestion that it wasn't me personally that was important so much as the Idea itself. In Shelby's celebration issue of Confusion I ended a message of thanks with '...I happen to have been the accidental focus of the first concerted and successful effort of science fiction fandom. It shows that fandom today is more capable and greater in every way than it has ever been. If it can do so much for one ordinary member of it, what couldn't it do for something really worth while?'"

Throughout, the emphasis is seldom on Walt and seldom on fans as fans. Whenever WAW speaks of himself it is not the usual self-conscious natterings of the con-reporter of the anecdote writer who, for the sake of the article, must create a mood and a self-image to match that mood, but rather WAW continually gives an insight into his own character. The happy fate that gave him a humorous, affable and warm personality means that an insight into this character is a genuinely friendly experience. Too, this style of dealing with other fans as people and not images is counterbalanced by the totally personal style of writing; you have no doubt that you are reading an article by Willis. This is not some purportedly "objective" con report which excludes the author or makes him match the situational demands. Precisely as Warner said about Speer's and Eney's approach to the Fancyclopediae, "The finest thing that happened to the original Fancyclopedia was Speer's decision to make it a Johnsonian type of reference volume, one that frankly and deliberately sets out to reflect the writer's own outlook on life instead of pretending to be a publication that has just rolled down the mountain after being completed by some impartial deity with his head in the clouds." [INNUEENDO #11]

After all, to describe WAW's relations with fandom is, essentially, to describe his relations with people. This is true of most fans, naturally, but the question of emphasis in Walt's case is decisively resolved in favor of fandom as a group of individuals with whom he interacts rather than fandom as a collective entity toward which he might act. It's interesting to note a few of his individual personal relationships.

Lee Hoffman is clearly the single American fan most important to Willis. "Later, sitting in Lee's room at 101 Wagner, with evidences of Quandry all around, I heaved a mental sigh of relief and contentment. I was, in a sense, home." As you can find out in more detail in Walt's article in this issue of VOID, Leeh was the fan who got Willis involved in American fandom more than anyone else. Their correspondence, as he indicates, was more than the letter-of-comment, fannish variety, but one of friends conversing with each other; a type of correspondence that couldn't lead to that embarrassing situation so familiar to most fans, that of meeting a correspondent at a convention and having really nothing to say. In HARP STATESIDE, however, he doesn't talk about her much except to mention occasional events and things she did and said. Virtually everyone he mentions to any extent is described and evaluated in the report except Leeh; it is as if they were too close for him, a self-described introvert, to want to billboard his friendship for all to see.



Shelby Vick is a different matter to Willis. Here is an ordinary strong friendship, so to speak, though there is almost an air of overcompensation in spots where WAW is making clear his gratitude to Shelby for his founding role in the Crew Fund and Taff creations. Here, as with his descriptions of Max Keasler, Forry Ackerman, Bob Tucker and many others he lets himself go and lets you know in no uncertain terms that they are close and meaningful friends.

All is not rosy, however; there are those who are not quite that close. Take Jim Webbert, for example. He commented on Webbert in some of the more crushing terms I have ever seen used. What Webbert was doing at that convention, it seemed, was making a general pest of himself. He was everpresent with cigarette lighters and was generally an obsequious nuisance. Walt's descriptions of him--"It was curious that in one hotel there should be a bellhop with the soul of a fan, and a fan with the soul of a bellhop"--were critical, but they were critical because they were true, and thus all the more crushing.

Much has been made of Willis' ability to be a BNF while being outspoken about people; the essential ingredients of this quality are a perception which pulls out of a person or situation what is true, and then a structure of values which is generally similar to that of most fans or at least appealing to them; opposition to fuggheadedness or serconism, liking of real warmth, a taste for modesty and humility and appreciation of a sense of humor. When Willis measures the true substance of a personality against that scale, he generally comes up with a conclusion about a person that is quite acceptable because, after all, nothing else quite could be.

Webbert is still around fandom today; I doubt that he harbors any grudge against Willis, nor Willis any lasting ill feeling toward Jim. Both of them, and everyone else, know that the portrait of Webbert that Willis depicted was one of a young, immature guy; it was not a concept frozen forever and Willis is certainly the last one to look at images in that way.

One other of the important aspects of THE HARP STATESIDE is Willis' humor. In considering all the qualities that have made THS a classic piece of fan writing the humorous aspect comes close to being top on the list.

WAW is talented both with the single-line and anecdotal forms of humor, often both being wound around together as in the beginning of HARP STATESIDE where he recounts the tale of The Trip From Cork To Cobh on the first leg of his journey. Ever since I read this in Quandry seven years ago it has been for me one of fandom's pinnacles of written anecdotes.

I had to report to the shipping agents in Cobh at 6.30...I asked what time was the next train to Cobh. 6.30. ...I could get a bus to a place called Monkstown on the other side of the estuary and take the ferry to Cobh. Would get me to Cobh in half an hour... One hour later...I asked him where the ferry was and he pointed out to sea...a tiny rowing boat manned by two little boys. I looked at it for almost ten minutes..."Is it coming or going?" ... "A bit rough today", I said. "Yes", said the boy, "this will likely be their last trip." I thought so too, but I wouldn't have been so callous about it. "Is that Cobh?" I asked, pointing to the far shore. "No, Cobh is four miles further along. But you can get the train there." I saw it coming, but I let him read his punch line. "What time is the train?" I asked, as if I didn't know. "It leaves Cork at 6.30" he said innocently... It wasn't a very long journey, if you didn't count the distance we went up and down...I'd even managed to keep my head from dipping in the water when the boat rolled. ...I was quite pleased with myself for getting a lift from the very first car that passed, until it turned out to be a taxi.

And as a matter of fact, there wasn't a pun in the whole two pages. They are remarkably absent from the work as a whole, too; but they were there, from the chapter headings (The Route of All Evils; The Outsider, and Authors; Heads of Oak are Our Men) down to the individual lines: "The most unusual thing about Forry's house is a life-size figure of Marlene Dietrich in cardboard propped up in the porch. She was obviously cut out to be a receptionist." (About Ray Palmer's editorial relations with Bea Mahaffey) "The man who pays the paper calls the tune." "I got...my first inkling of the intrigue that was going on behind the scenes. I got a whole bottleful of inkling almost immediately afterwards..." "It's a wonder that the LASFS, the Insurgents and the Outlanders do not parade before this restaurant in shifts, or some other striking garment, bearing placards inscribed BEWARE THE HOT FUDGE SUNDAE!"

But his best talent, outside of his penchant for describing numerous anecdotes which he fits into the line of the narrative, is with the single-line bits: "I went up to the sharp end of the boat, as we sailors call it..." "This was one of those gadgets on the dashboard that you press in when you want a cigarette and it pops out again glowing eagerly when you've changed your mind." "The fact that this was no ordinary hot nut fudge sundae but a hot nut fudge sundae of transcendental malevolence was brought home to me when I realised it was making me feel ill even before I saw it. The miasmic aura of the thing (say, this is pretty high class writing, isn't it?



First transcendental malevolence and now miasmic aura)..."

There was his description of the first session of the Chicon:

Korshak got up to introduce the guests. In some ways this was the best turn of the convention. Korshak's eyesight is on a par with his knowledge of present-day fandom, and he spent more time apologizing for the first than displaying the second...he had announced first that he was going to "jump from table to table" which delighted those among us who felt that an acrobatic spectacle of this sort was just what the Convention needed and were looking forward to a review of it in the "Burroughs Bulletin." But before he even started beating on his breast and swinging on the chandelier, Korshak unaccountably turned vicious, threatening to "strike here and there at random" and to "hit as many people at the tables as I possibly can"...and revealed blackly that he was going to "shoot up and down the lists, picking out the highspots".

Or there is this bit of musing:

The question was whether fandom was a constructive force in science fiction, but nobody felt like a constructive force in anything that morning except maybe the people who were trying to prove we weren't. The most interesting part was the question period, when Jim Harmon got up and made a speech the purport of which was that Joe Gibson was an imbecile. As if this were a mere procedural error, Moskowitz told him he must ask a question, not make a speech. Whereupon Jim, logically enough, asked the panel whether or not it agreed that Joe Gibson was an imbecile. It seemed to me at the time that this was a much more interesting topic than the one we had and I'd have liked to ask Jim to state a case. Maybe Joe could have been found and asked to take the negative and we could have had a full dress debate on this controversial question. Unfortunately SaM ruled the matter out of order so I never found out what had made Jim so eager to divulge his revelation to the world.

So THE HARP STATESIDE is humor, too. But, again, that is not all it is. In terms of his style of writing, THS is once more one of the unique documents of fandom. It is well-written; it is clear, concise and fast-paced. Alternating with passages of his familiar with are paragraphs and pages of more serious intent, ranging from thoughts on the fans he has met to perceptive comments on the day-to-day aspects of Southern race relations. He discusses the "fan-pro cleavage" ("there seemed very little more of it than there was in England"), travelling ship-board ("just you, alone with the planet...it does something good to the soul"), the Grand Canyon ("It takes a while to realize how fantastic it is, because at first there's nothing to compare it to") and cities he visited en route: "Los Angeles had some fine streets and buildings, but seemed too diffuse to have an integrated personality...Hell is probably a place like Kansas City...standing in a square in Tallahassee at 2 am seemed a wonderful thing, because Tallahassee has always been to me one of those fabulous places like Samarkand or Mandalay". Near the end he tries to figure out where he might want to live in the US-- "What I seem to want turns out to be a small University town in the Rockies on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico, within easy reach of New York. I suspect it may be difficult to find", and mentions Americans: "The place is full of them. ...just ordinary nice people like everywhere else...friendly, unassuming and very nice to know...they didn't even look like the Americans we see over here."

To

harp on the main theme, it is in Willis' written style again that the sense of reality in his approach to his hobby comes forward. Too easily this pamphlet could have become a Fan-Baedeker, skipping from one confrontation of fans to another with pauses only for anecdotes on who said what in the car on the way. WAW isn't interested in doing that; a reader could get the impression that what he is writing is no more a mammoth article for fans than it is an impressionistic diary of his travel for his own use in recollection. In the latter way, of course, I suspect it succeeds as well as it does in the former. THE HARP STATESIDE reflects quite adequately that a fan's tour from one country to another is not delimited by the personalities he meets and the events he is involved in but it makes plain that, quite literally, the tour opens up a whole new world to the traveller. The art here is that WAW has fed back to his readers the opening of this new world to him. Besides the interest it holds for the many readers in America who have never really travelled far from home, there is a fascination in following Walt as he sorts out his impressions of this strange new land from his removed viewpoint. It is to his credit that he carries it off so well.

"The Idea itself" came off.

For over five years now TAFF delegates have been going back and forth between the United States and Great Britain, and there is no doubt in anyone's mind that this practice will continue for some time. Fandom can do "something really worth while" as a whole body. But without discounting that conception, it's certainly relevant and even necessary to say that Walt Willis played an important part in bringing the Idea to fruition. Without such a fan as he was when he came here, and without his contributions to fandom before and since then, the whole Taff conception would have had a much harder or even impossible time growing to completion. There's no reason why "the Idea itself" shouldn't turn full circle now, and go back on itself; the possibility of a HARP STATESIDE RETURNS is not the least of the reasons why fandom should send Walt Willis to America again.

-Pete Graham



# if

## WORLDS OF FANDOM

Speculation! Extrapolation! These are the very foundations of that form of fiction we all profess to love. "What if--?" "What would have happened if only--?" With these phrases--phrases to conjure with--we hereby conjure up a new serial feature in VOID: WILLIS DISCOVERS AMERICA. What If: Things had gone differently than as narrated in THE HARP STATESIDE? Postulated: That Willis had never visited these shores before. Problem: What would his first trip have been like?

Willis himself explains the details of how WDA came to be written, and then published in a complete and annotated volume, in his Preface, below. The complete booklet was published in 1955, only three years after its first appearance in various fanzines piecemeal, and it was circulated only to OMPA mlg 4 and FAPA mlg 72. This restriction on WDA's circulation, coupled with the towering shadow cast by the 1957 THE HARP STATESIDE, allowed it to slip back into quick obscurity. The VOID reprint serialization of WILLIS DISCOVERS AMERICA will include the entire text of the published volume, including all the footnotes (more valuable now even than in 1955). The entire story runs to ten short chapters, and the remaining nine chapters will be published in the following nine issues of VOID. Our purpose in this reprint is two-fold: First, the exhumation of valuable fanhistory and forgotten goodies; and Second, as an added bit of promotion for the Tenth Anniversary WAW With The Crew Fund. We firmly believe that Willis is his own best advertisement.

# WILLIS Discovers AMERICA — 1952 —

(dedicated to SHELBY VICK)



BY WALT WILLIS (originally A NOSTALGIC PUBLICATION)



# CHAPTER ONE

(originally from CONFUSION #8)

As the Queen Elizabeth edges the last few inches towards the quayside the excitement of the waiting crowd approaches hysteria. At last all the mooring cables are made fast and the gangway lowered. The crowd on deck parts and a tall distinguished figure appears at the top of the gangway, escorted by the Captain. He pauses dramatically before making his descent. The band strikes up, only to be drowned by the cheering crowd. ("They mustn't like music," says the third trombone, as he goes down for the third time.) Acknowledging the cheers with a courtly bow, the great man walks slowly down the gangway, to be swallowed up in a throng of admirers and reporters. Slowly, signing an occasional autograph book, he makes his way to the waiting car to begin his triumphal drive through the streets of New York.

Meanwhile, the raft on which Shelby Vick is rowing Walt Willis across the Atlantic is nearing the Statue of Liberty, some miles from the scene of General Eisenhower's arrival.<sup>1</sup> Willis looks up from the typewriter on which he has written his passage across the Atlantic and examines the huge stone figure with awe. "Begorra," he exclaims (he is practising saying 'Begorra' because he knows it is expected of him). "I knew stf had caught on over here, but I didn't realise it had gone so far that they were making statues of the ASF covers. February 1941,<sup>2</sup> isn't it? I know it's not April '43."<sup>3</sup>

"I think it's been there longer than that," says Shelby doubtfully. "Must be a Clayton issue."<sup>4</sup>

"I told you we should have brought James White," says Willis. "He could have told us rightaway."

"Roscoe forbid," replies ShelVy, "I've got a blister on my hands already."

"I don't think that's a very nice thing to say," replies Willis, hurt. "Don't forget all the money you're going to make from this book of ours, 'The Con-Take-Me Expedition'. And you have finally proved that it is possible for copies of The National Fantasy Fan to drift across the Atlantic by themselves. Think what a relief that will be to Bill Berger."<sup>5</sup>

"Don't look now," says Shelby, "But there's a launch coming."

"Good," says Willis, "I'm hungry. Haven't had a thing to eat for days except corn. Good thing I brought all these old articles of mine, but

## PREFACE

This is a fannish-fiction serial I wrote in the summer of 1952, while Shelby Vick was raising the Fund which brought me to the Chicon that autumn. I'm reprinting it now partly because I'm rather fond of it myself--it has happy associations and in some ways I think it's the best thing I've ever done..at least it's the ultimate in something or other--and partly as a sort of monument to the era which is now known as Sixth Fandom. Several faneds in the last three years have asked permission to reprint the thing as a whole but I've always asked them to hold off because so many of the dozens of allusions would be incomprehensible to current fandom. On the other hand it's struck me that it might be possible to convert this disadvantage into a virtue by explaining the references and publishing it as a sort of historical document or fannish curiosity. Hence the footnotes. Here, preserved like a fly in amber (or ointment) is fandom as it was in 1952.

To is survivors that has sometimes seemed a sort of Golden Age, when fandom was happier, brighter and more intimate than it is today. But now it looks to me as if the days of bitty fandom are over and that we're having a new dawn; which has, appropriately, risen in the East--in Britain. At any rate fandom at the moment seems more like its Quandam self: for one thing it's taking an interest in its past again. Well,--here's a part of it I enjoyed. I hope you like it too, but if the esotericisms of three years ago aren't even of historical interest please just make allowances for the tendency of old fans to be sentimental.

My thanks to Vin Clarke and Chuck Harris for well-remembered encouragement and suggestions during the writing of the thing, and to Bob Shaw for reproducing the original illustrations from Quandry and Confusion. /Walt Willis - 1955/



it's hard on me to have to live by eating my own words."

"Oh you are a silly columnist," says Shelby impatiently. "It's a launch not a lunch. I think it's the Immigration Officers."

The launch draws near and bumps into the raft, which promptly disintegrates and begins to sink. "There now," says Willis, "I told you we should have used three staples. It was a silly idea to make it out of old Amazings anyway."

"I couldn't get enough Fantastic Adventures," explains Shelby as he climbs aboard the launch. He looks back as the raft disappears beneath the waves. "Poor George," he says mournfully, "you played your part well."

"Never mind the raft," says the Immigration Officer. "Which one of you is Willis?"

"Shure and I am to be shure, begorra," says Willis. He consults his notebook. "Bedad, bejabbers and faith, ye spalpeen," he adds for good measure.

"Hmm," says the Immigration Officer. "Nationality?"

"Well," says Willis, "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, but as a native of Erin, that emerald gem set in a silver sea, I claim jewel nationality." 7

Willis is hastily overpowered and searched for further concealed puns.

"Allegations have been made," says the Immigration Officer sternly, "that you are a Fifth Columnist, and guilty of Un-American fan activities."

"It's a lie," shouts Willis. "I never had more than three columns going at once. I'll bet it was that dirty redd Boggs who put you up to this." He draws a copy of Spacewarp from his pocket, raises it in his right hand, and declaims passionately; "I swear by the Sacred Writings of Roscoe that I am not now and never have been a member of the Columnist Party. I swear that I have no intention of overthrowing the National Fantasy Fan Federation by force of arms. I--"

"A Roscoeite!" exclaims the Chief Immigration Officer in horror. "By Ghu, this is a purple-letter<sup>8</sup> day for us. We'll show you how we treat vile infidels here. Men! Seize Ellis and transport him to Willis Island. His confederate, too."

"The South Shall Rise!"<sup>9</sup> shouts Shelby defiantly as the Ghuist hordes close in on him. "Yeast is yeast and....." He continues to outline the cardinal points of his faith as he and Willis are carried below and chained in the hold.

(To Be Continued in VOID 24)

FOOTNOTES: 1. At this time General Eisenhower was preparing to return to the States to accept the Presidential nomination.

2. The Statue of Liberty appeared on the cover of the February 1941 ASF, illustrating Bond's "Magic City."

3. At one time I needed only the April 1943 ASF to complete my collection. Actually at the time this was written the April '43 issue was the only one I had, the rest having been sold to help the Fund.

4. Clayton were publishers of ASF from 1930 to 1932.

5. Berger was at that time mailer of the NFFF official organ and there had been many complaints about delays in sending it to British members.

6. George Raft, then still appearing in films. (At least in Belfast.)

7. Citizens of Ireland have dual Irish/British nationality.

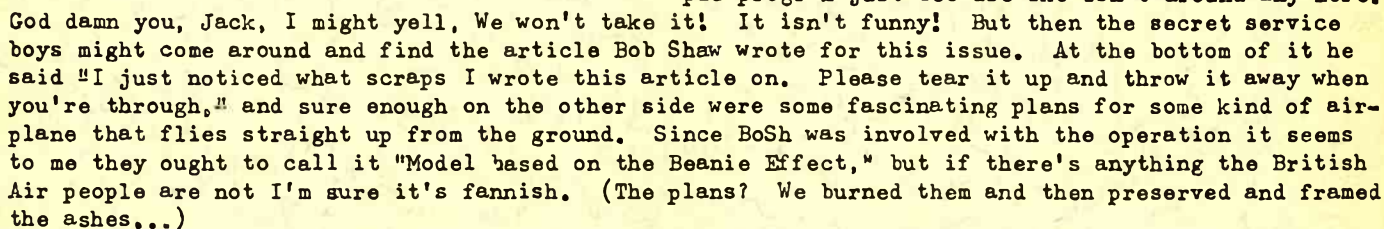
8. Purple is the official colour of the Ghuist religion. (From hecto ink.)

9. Slogan popular in Quandry, the only fmz sold for Confederate money. (Richard Eney sent Lee a Confederate \$100 bill, and was thereafter listed as "Financial Editor.")

--Walt Willis

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WE HAVE A PUBLISHING SCHEDULE TO MAINTAIN. We're a monthly fanzine as a matter of fact. You'll note that the last issue came out almost precisely one month ago. It also came out eight months ago, too. That was because the last issue was sent out in sections (actually it was all a big ploy). But, true to form, the next issue will be out in late February; it will contain the letters on the last issue and on this issue, as well as the usual material from the editors and contributors--and you. While we're pushing things, I will mention the FANAC poll which is being included with this issue; the deadline is February 15, so send it to the Carrs by then. The FANNISH III will be the last issue of FANAC before Terry goes into the service.

TAWF IS TAFF WITH AN IRISH ACCENT, which it really isn't, but it's one way of introducing again the Tenth Anniversary Willis Fund. I think the point has been pretty well made throughout this issue that we want WAW to come over again for the 1962 convention. The easiest job, I am sure, will be to convince you readers of this; in fact, I'm sure you are already convinced. The hardest job will be to convince Walt Willis; and one way of doing that is to let both him and us know of your approval. Send us letters so we can print them; and get ready for the only other job, that of raising the money for the trip. More details on that in coming issues.

--Pete Graham

from THE HARP STATESIDE:

Now I had something to remember for the rest of my life. I shouldn't have to grow old with the feeling that I'd done nothing exceptional with my life. I had been to America, seen the Pacific and the Grand Canyon and bathed in Florida, and I'd done it all through writing articles in fanzines. It might not be an awfully big thing, but it was exceptional, something that not everybody did; at least no one had ever done it before. And now, maybe, somebody could do it again, and fandom would become a more exciting place on account of that wildcat scheme of Shelby's. --Walt Willis

Fandom has been enriched and definitely become more exciting due to the ineffible presence of Walter A. Willis. This issue has been a tribute to him. We hope it provides a little of the enjoyment to Walt that he has provided for fandom. -Greg Benford, Ted White, Pete Graham



VOID 23

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"The sky is falling...! Here's another VOID after only one!"