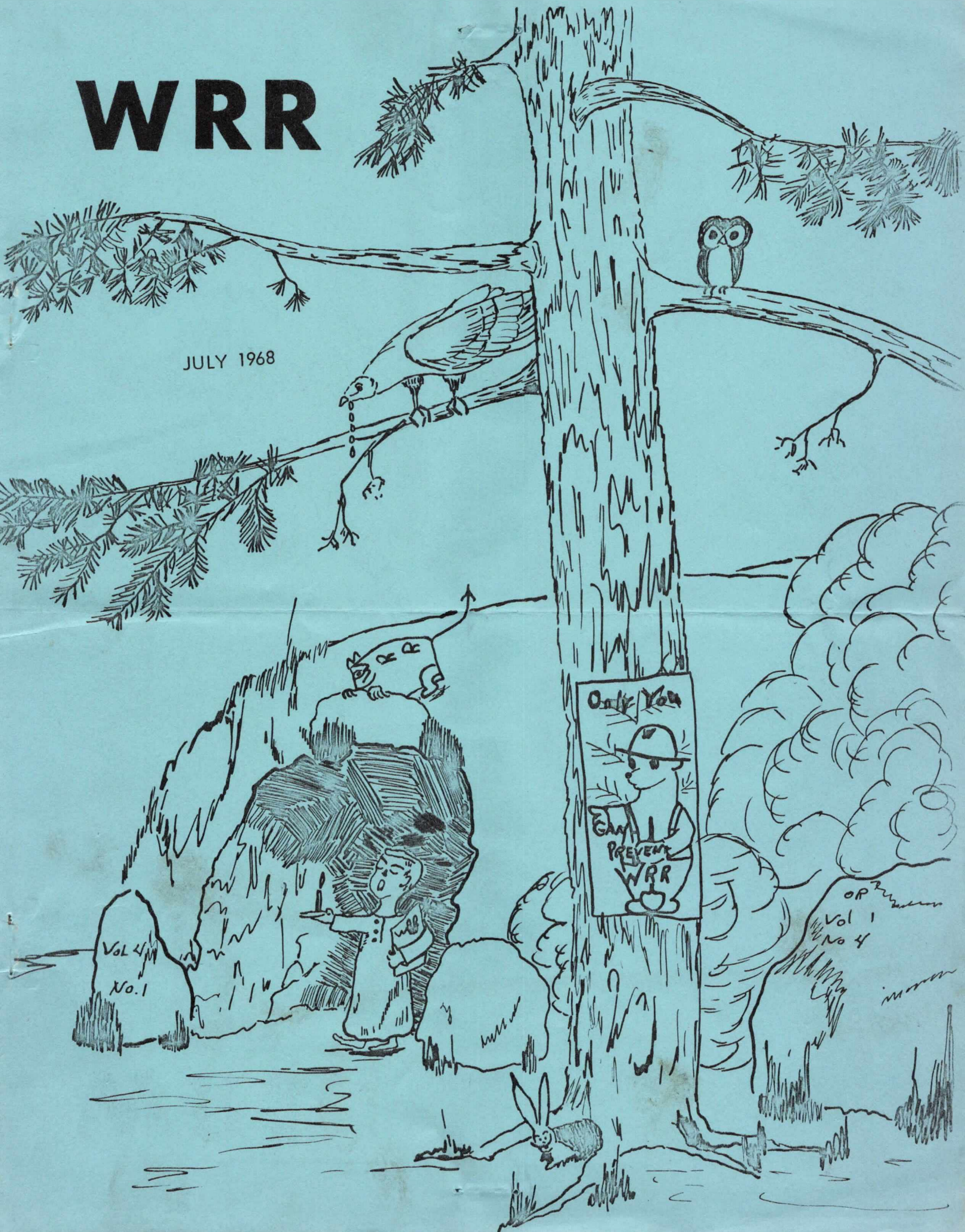


WRR

JULY 1968



 * WRR Bol. 4, No. 1 is being brought to you through the fiendish and unscrupulous en- *
 * deavors of Wallace Wastebasket Weber, a publisher of sorts, not to mention fanzines, *
 * and Blotto Otto Pfeifer, a somewhat always confused editor. WRR is expensive, too *
 * expensive to buy so we send it out free to contributors of artwork, fiction material of *
 * types provided that it is in the WRR vein (very similar to a jugular vein), and letters *
 * of earth-shaking importance, such as how you like WRR. Mailing address is Box 267, *
 * 507 3rd Ave., Seattle, Washington 98104. *
 * *****

And now for our fabulously famous TABLE OF CONTENTS. Wait a minute... WRR very sel-
 dom uses a table of contents.....Hell, we never even knew what we had. After all, it's
 bad enough to publish WRR; surely you don't expect us to read it, too. Oh well, I'll try.

Front Cover.....by Pat Pfeifer.....Front cover

Aha, already there is an improvement, but you see, I already knew that our front cover wou
 would be on the front, but then, with WRR you can never really tell.

Table of Contents..by Blotto Otto...This page
 Editorial.....by Blotto Otto...Next page
 Totally Eclipsed... by John Berry... Somewhere after the editorial
 but before the lettercol
 Mountain Greenery..by John Berry..Either before or after Totally
 Eclipsed
 The Waiting Game..by John Berry..Could be either before the
 other two stories or after....
 maybe even in between
 Banana Split.....by W. W. Weber..Somewhere in between two
 Berry stories. You might
 say that he was Berry'd in
 LetterCol.....by Blotto Otto.... Next issue
 Last Page..... by Blotto Otto....Last page

How is that for a real first-rate informative Table of Contents?

As you can see from the above, we have a wealth of Berry material, so you might call this
 our Berry'd treasure issue.

Be sure that you get your material into the issue so you too can be listed in our Fabulously
 Famous TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The little-known fact that this issue was multilithed by WebeGon Printers is being withheld
 from public knowledge at the request of WebeGon Printers.

REVOLVING THOUGHTS FROM A SOMEWHAT BEFUDDLED EDITOR

Zzzz...ummmm...zzz...yummmm...ughzzzz...yyyaaawwnn...sigh...you said something???? MMM, let me sleeepppp. Zzzzzz...go 'way I said. Whazzat? Time for WRR? Man you must be kidding. We just put out an issue not too long ago. Why it was just..ah...hmmm...well ah...it seems like it was just a short while ago. Six years ago, you say? SIX YEARS! ... There I told you, it isn't time for another WRR. Fandom isn't ready for another issue. I'm not ready for another issue. Oh what the hell, you've got me awake, so I'll put out another issue. That should teach you. In fact there may be a few issues of WRR. I'll sneak over and shoot some NO-DOZ into that dormant form and revive ... do you hear me? REVIVE WRR. HEEEEHHHAAHAHAHA.

Six years...hmmm...it really doesn't seem that long. Let's see, has anything happened in that time? Well, on the personal side, the Pfeifer family has grown, and I'm not referring to the bulge around my middle. At the last issue of WRR, we consisted of 1 Blotto Otto, 1 wife of same, 1 baby daughter, and 1 sex crazed dog (female). We have enlarged into 1 slightly older Blotto Otto, 1 same ole wife of same, 2 daughters, 1 different and not so sex crazed dog (female), 1 goldfish (?) and 1 classic-loving canary (male). Add 1 Wally Weber to this and you have the pubbing staff of WRR. So much for personalities.

WRR. Vol. 3 No. 4 that was the last issue. Ah yes, I remember it well. The Willis Appreciation Issue. All 56 pages of the monster. Hmmm, after browsing through the lettercol and checking the lettercols of the zines being pubbed now, I don't notice many changes. The names are the same. It isn't that we gafiated or became disenchanted with fandom, but that last issue of WRR just seemed to say, "Alright, knock it off, you might try to top it and your fingers will never stand for it." Even though I had never heard of fingers standing for anything, I took its advice and knocked it off. Time just seemed to fly by and gee, here it is six years already.

So much for our past peccadilloes, let's look forward to our future (future?) deleriums. Fust off, our schedule. Well, we are going to be coming out ~~at the same~~ regularly... Regularly irregular, that is. Sub rates... Free. Free, that is, for letters of comment, contributions and or trades. In regards to contributions; WRR always was, is now and always will be a humor zine, meaning anything goes as long as it is in the field of satire, slapstick and things like that there. This applies to artwork, fiction, non-fiction, gripes, colds, underwear and sundry items. In the field of sundries, we prefer banana splits or sometimes chocolate. We frown, nay, we fie upon serconism. If this be not your meat, then pretend it is your potatoes because you are stuck with it. Gafia won't save you -- after all it didn't save us.

In case you didn't know it, the foregoing was a statement of our policies, life, accidental or otherwise. That is all. Eat, drink and be merry, for next you read WRR.

---Blotto Otto---

TOTALLY ECLIPSED by John Berry

The first meeting of the Belmont Astronomical Society took place in my house on Friday last, 12th April 1968. The membership of the club is small but select, containing as it does a few of the more intellectual personalities to be found in the Belmont area of Belfast... i.e me, my son Colin, a schoolboy David Lyttle and Alfie Sugden, chicken sexer extraordinaire and author of "1,001 USES OF THE CARROT" (his actual total originally being 1,000 until he dropped the focussing lens of my x21 telescope.)

In order to assess the potentialities of the club for future observations I had asked that the members bring 'round their astronomical equipment for examination. I proudly displayed my ex-Naval 16" gunsight, purchased last year for thirty shillings. It enlarges from x5 to x21, and once in focus has a zoom mechanism manipulated by the left hand which takes you up, up and away. The 60 mm lens and in fact the entire telescope, being ex-Naval, is strong and sturdy and gives complete satisfaction.

Colin owns a x15 to x60 Japanese telescope, fairly cheap and perhaps even crude, but sufficiently capable of showing the moons of Jupiter and, if circumstances are just right, the bands of Jupiter can be noted.

David Lyttle owns a six inch reflector, for which he has two eyepieces, one x60 and the other x100. It is huge, and awkward to handle. The wide barrel is about five feet long, and having seen him wrestling with it I have made the serious suggestion to him to fit a saddle and bridle halfway down the barrel so that, after focussing with the starfinder, he can actually mount the apparatus and view in comfort.

Alfie Sugden, always unconventional in everything he does, whipped out of his trouser-pocket a small pair of binoculars, plated with blue-tinted mother-of-pearl, with PROPERTY OF THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE, BELFAST engraved on the central spindle.

"That's no use for looking at stars, Alf," I hissed.

"I know," he said. "But it's ideal for looking into bedroom windows."

"This club is going to be run on serious lines," I said bluntly. "I am trying to show these young lads the great joys to be found in scanning the stars and planets. Kindly try and obtain more suitable equipment, and pray do not bring the binoculars to any of our field trips."

His leer showed he had intercepted my subtle wink.

"Members," I announced standing up and giving them one of my keen expressions, "I have arranged a trip on the 'bus to Armagh to see the new planetarium, and I would like you all to signify your intent to accompany me."

They all nodded.

"Now I think we'll close the meeting, and one night next week, when the sky is clear, we'll all meet here again, with equipment, and we'll observe Jupiter, to see if we can spot any eclipses of its moons."

"Are you going to see the total eclipse of the moon tomorrow, Mr. Berry?" asked David.

"Dhuuur?" I gasped. "There isn't an eclipse tomorrow, is there?"

"Oh yes," he said. He handed me a small 1968 diary. For April 13th it clearly said, "Total eclipse of the Moon at 3.10 a.m. 13th April. Visible in Northern Ireland."

"We must see this, boys," I said. "I'll bring my 35 mm camera with fast Tri-X film, and if it's OK with Davie" ... he nodded "we'll all meet in his back-garden at exactly 3.10 a.m. that's in a few hours time. Bring some hot soup in flasks.... see you."

I have always told people that I have an uncanny ability to will myself to awake at any preset hour. And my record would tend to support this. The truth is that I am a very heavy sleeper, and have in fact altered the alarm clock to cause ultra-decibel clanging in order to bring me round. On the occasions I have been forced to arise at some unearthly hour a.m., I have made the deadline by keeping myself awake until the appointed hour by reliving the climax of PSYCHO, and, gibbering with fear, and sweating like mad, have eventually crept furtively out of bed.

Just before midnight on 12th April I wound up the alarm clock. Actually it's a present I brought for my wife, and is in the form of a globe of the Earth, which opens in half to reveal the luminous clock face.

My wife thought I was mad when I told her Colin and I were getting up at 3.10 a.m. to see the eclipse, and she said she didn't want the alarm clock to waken her. So I put it under my pillow, figuring that the muffled ringing wouldn't waken her.

There is nothing more utterly terrifying than the scream of a demented woman in the middle of the night... especially when she is racing 'round the room in darkness, nightdress flailing in the slip-stream. Bathed in sweat, I switched on the bed-side lamp. I'll never forget my wife's eyes. Like organ stops they were. In her right hand was the alarm clock. She calmed down when she saw what it was. Apparently due to normal movement whilst sleeping, the alarm clock had rolled down the bed from under my pillow and had slipped down the front of her nightdress. The violent ringing had made her think she was suffering a heart attack.

I soothed her into bed, quickly got dressed, and looked out of the bedroom window at the moon. All down the street windows were open and bleary eyes were looking not at the moon but at my windows. But the important thing was that it was 3.10 a.m. and the moon did not show any sign of being eclipsed.

Colin joined me downstairs, we collected our equipment and flasks of soup and walked quietly 'round to David's house.

We stood in a circle, looking at the moon. The sky was cloudless, the moon couldn't have been brighter, but it was still not being covered by the Earth's shadow - and it was twenty minutes behind schedule.

"Boys," I whispered, because of the nearness of the surrounding houses, "something is terribly wrong. However, now that we're here, we may as well study Jupiter, and see how clear the belts are."

They agreed except for Alfie Sugden. He climbed a small sycamore tree into the darkness, but I did note a bedroom window across the gardens, a gap of light showing between the curtains. His body up the tree leaned in that direction.

"Any chance of passing the six inch reflector up the tree?" he panted. "Never saw anything like this before."

"The belts of Jupiter?" asked David naively.

"Er, I think I should check up, Alfie," I coughed, "do you think the tree would bear my weight?"

I was about to shin up the tree after Alfie, purely in the interests of science, when another window opened, and a raucous voice told us to keep quiet.

"I think we'd better finish, boys," I said. "It's five past four, and obviously there has been a mistake."

David went into his own house, and Colin and I went home, merely a few yards away. I didn't see what happened to Alfie.

Sugden called next morning. He wore a pair of dark glasses. He came in the house, and took them off. His eyes were screwed up tightly, and they were bloodshot.

"So help me, Alfie," I said severely. "I'm trying to get these boys keen on astronomy, and you're spending all your time trying to peek into bedroom windows. What happened last night?"

"I saw the eclipse," he panted. "Honest. At exactly ten past four they rested for a moment, and I happened to look up, and this black bite appeared across the face of the moon. I tried to look at it with my opera glasses, but it's a hell of a strain. When I looked back into the bedroom, they'd drawn the curtains. My eyes are ruined, you and your blasted eclipse."

I wasn't listening to him though.... the eclipse was exactly one hour late.... I should have remembered, the blasted British Labour Government added an extra hour on the clocks a few weeks ago to make our time the same as for the rest of Europe... the diary had been published during 1967, before the British Summer Time had been officially amended. What's worse, I understand I shall be 83 years old before there is another total eclipse of the moon over Northern Ireland.....

John Berry 1968

BANANA SPLIT

a column of utmost
significance

written, edited and proofread by
Wally Weber

Before going into the more profound portion of this issue's installment of Banana Split, I am taking a few paragraphs to thank you loyal and enthusiastic readers for your letters, telephone calls, and in-person conversations in which you have described to me how much my modest little articles have meant to you and how you look forward to the next issue of WRR in anticipation of the next installment. Certainly your response has been overwhelming, and your pleas concerning the length and frequency of future columns deserve to be answered.

My answer is No, I Will Not Discontinue Banana Split! If you ungrateful wretches haven't the intellect and cultural background to appreciate a column of this nature, go back to your cages and grunt at your fellow cretins for entertainment.

Now that the crude element has been dealt with, it is time to once again turn to fan-nish vistas. And it is time to be solemn. True, in the past Banana Split has tended to be, well, somewhat frivolous in its observations and reporting. That must change. Since those cheerful, carefree early issues of WRR, an insidious alteration has befallen the character of fandom which, if allowed to continue unchecked, will surely bring the fandom we knew and loved to a degrading and untimely end. We must fight this terrible menace, you and I. The cheerful, fun-loving fandom we joined as innocent neos searching for our cosmic destinies is degenerating into the dismal, polluted mire that glooms before us. If we are to prevent this foul erosion of our happy way of life, we are going to have to stop frittering away our time being happy and become grim and purposeful. If need be, we must fight to the death to preserve our life.

First we must find the evil cause of fandom's grave condition. To save you the trouble of doing the job yourself and probably botching it and coming up with the wrong conclusion, I will tell you the evil cause. It is Creeping Criticisms. Yes, Creeping Criticisms, that's the evil cause. I can prove it.

Ask any old fan when the great stories of science fiction were written and he will always name the first years when he started reading science fiction. Ask a new fan and he will be able to pin the date down to the first few months when he started reading science fiction. Ask a Star Trek fan which season had the best episodes. Ask a fanzine fan when the great fanzines were published. Ask a convention fan for his favorite convention year or a club fan about when the best meetings were held. Ignoring the exceptions, you will find that 100% of the answers will favor the earlier stories, episodes, fanzines, conventions, meetings, art, filk songs, apa mailings, you name it. ONE-HUNDRED-PERCENT! You just can't argue away odds like that.

You might of course fall into the trap of believing all these things really are degrading in quality. Nonsense! Most recent fans read more reprints than original science fiction, and the order in which they read the reprints are seldom the order in which the stories were originally written or published. And I defy you to show me a single fan who attended, let's say for example, NyCon II prior to NyCon I and didn't prefer NyCon II.

Obviously, fans become more critical of science fiction as time passes until nothing pleases them any more. Creeping Criticisms infect the individual until he can no longer enjoy a story. He reads science fiction only to discover flaws which he can then point out to other readers and thus ruin their enjoyment. Soon nobody is enjoying anything, and they become bitter and mean and strike out blindly criticizing even ~~Bonanza/Spliff~~ the masterworks of science fiction. Although it may seem impossible to even imagine, the time might come when even the great classics that were published in Planet Stories in 1943 (by coincidence, the year I first became really interested in science fiction) such as, "Crypt City of the Deathless One," yes, even those flawless examples of science fiction at its greatest may eventually be criticized by those poor diseased fans as they succumb to Creeping Criticisms.

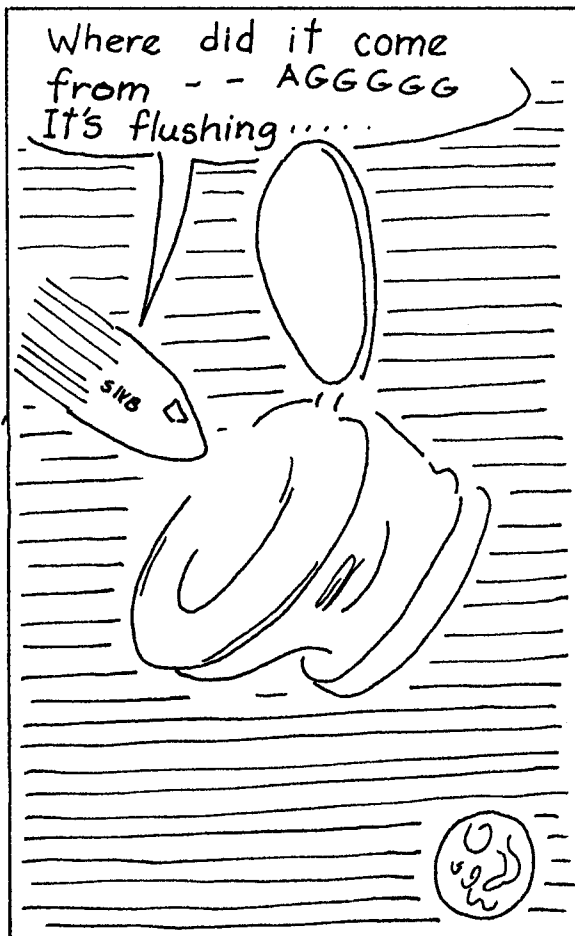
Before that ridiculous point is reached, the blight of Creeping Criticisms must be stopped. It will require sacrifices beyond anything previously experienced, but it must be done. I will do my part by describing how you must do it.

The basic cure is quite simple in theory. You must simply cease to criticize anything. This does not mean that you should ignore points which you feel merit criticism. That merely drives the evil underground into the subconscious where it will thrive; eventually it would burst forth with new force and be impossible to subdue. No, when one of these points comes to your attention, you must give it special attention. You must think about it until you discover how it does fit into the framework of the story rather than how it does not.

As a matter of fact, this examination of so-called flaws in a science fiction story will probably result in startling discoveries, revealing facets of the story that even its author did not know about. There are parallels in the world of science. If Albert Einstein had dismissed the Michelson-Morley experiments as being in error, our current knowledge of physics would probably be a lot less ~~far~~ ~~used~~ advanced than it is today.

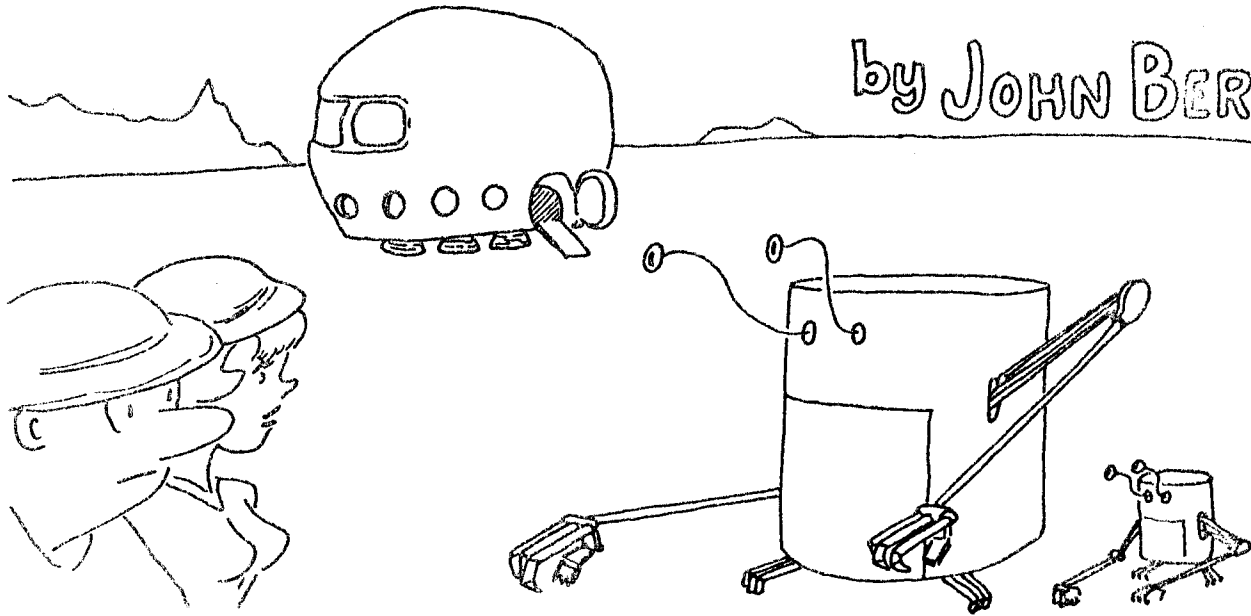
The most important thing to develop is Faith. Once you accept the fact that science fiction consists of accurate reports on events that are actually happening somewhere along our space-time continuum, not just the product of a hack attempting to make a buck, the search is easier. You are more apt to keep looking for an explanation if you have faith that an explanation exists. A Tru-fan with Tru-faith will have no trouble at all in successfully working typographical errors into the plot.

Of course the criticism habit is difficult to break. That is why WRR is preparing a special service for fans who want to break the habit of finding fault. The next time you are bothered by what you consider to be an error in a story, movie or whatever, write to us here at WRR. Our committee of experts will then explain to you what's wrong with your criticism.



THE WAITING GAME

by JOHN BERRY



Gaymar swooped low over the valley, the questing radar sought and found a level area amongst the scarlet rocks, and, automatically, its reverse-thrust jets lowered it gently downwards and to rest.

Various antennae poked out, some sniffing, others probing, and the data they delivered to the computer informed the captain of the ship, Lieutenant Algenon Perkins, that the atmosphere was suitable for him and his staff.

They clambered out, dressed in white tunics, trousers and pith helmets. Perkins, as officer in charge, merely carried a cine-camera. 2nd Lieutenant Smithers, tall, broad, bronzed, carried gear necessary for planning the locality and sampling the strata. Sergeant Diane DeMuth, the botanist, held her equipment in dainty fingers.

"We could be finished in a couple of days," commented Perkins. "Seems a nice enough place. What shall we call it?"

Sergeant DeMuth consulted a leather-bound book. "Officially, it'll be SSXB-223-7C ... I've always fancied Vermont, it's a lovely word... how about New Vermont, Sir?"

"I like it, Sergeant," sniffed Perkins, glancing at Smithers for confirmation, and accepting the subtle nod. "I'll go on a recce, you can do your own jobs."

He wandered off towards the surrounding pink scrub, whirring the cine-camera, trying to get artistic angles.

The ear-phone jangled. "To your right, sir." It was the Sergeant's voice. "We're being observed by several tins of baked beans."

Perkins, looking unconcerned, moved the camera, scanning innocently to his right. He saw through the view-finder, she was right, they did look like baked-bean tins.... except for the long, gangling metal arms, and the clutching claws at the extremities.

He pressed a switch on his cronometer, this activated the computer, which in turn prepared itself for the complicated job of translating from English to whatever language, tune or guttural chant the locals conversed in.

Perkins approached the tin cans, bowed low, took a quick squint at the sun and uttered a pleasant "Evenin'".

Their language was like a woodwind ensemble.... he could hear the computer blowing a couple of valves as it worked through its memory cells.

"Welcome, strangers," he heard. He looked behind him, his crew stood by his side. He faced the tin cans again. For one horrible second he almost found himself saying, "Take me to your leader." It definitely wasn't protocol, and he knew that Diane would have hysterics... she was probably holding her breath waiting for him to say it. All the same, it seemed the thing to say.

"We have just dropped in for a few hours," he said slowly, giving the computer time to work out the score and transmit it to their auras. "Mind if we look around?"

"No, no, please do. Come to our village."

It was like a gigantic beehive... the houses were six-sided, and small, larger, and big tin cans clattered around, screwing things up, and, so it seemed to the explorers, unscrewing them again.

A really large tin can strutted forth.

"Glad to make this cultural exchange," he piped, handing over a large screw-driver type instrument. He grabbed Diane around the waist.

"nunno," shouted Perkins... and quick as a flash he pulled out a gold dollar, and spun it in the air, and called, "Heads or tails."

The chief tin can dropped Diane and shouted, "Heads." Shouted isn't the right word, it was more like the one o'clock siren.

Perkins handed over the dollar and reclaimed Diane. He tried not to look as she blushinglly tried to re-assemble her ripped shirt. He handed over more dollars, Smithers did the same, and the situation was saved.

"I'd like to look 'round your place," asked Perkins, and flipping the golden dollar like a humming bird, the chief can led the way.

"One thing I can't understand, sir," said Perkins some hours later, after he and his staff had concluded exhaustive records of their unique existence, "and I do hope you won't take offence at my question, but how, er, how exactly do you reproduce?"

There was a noise like the midnight haunting by a group of defunct flautists, and the chief can seemed to acquiese.

He led the way to a much larger honeycomb-type room, and pressed a switch on the wall. Mechanical grabs appeared out of the walls, and the chief can threw into the centre of the room an ingot of metal. The grabs picked it up, pummelled it, shaped here and there, did a bit of advanced soldering, there was a cloud of steam, and a little tin can staggered forth... it was like a newly-born calf, it was unsteady on its legs, then it shook itself and scuttled away sideways, like a hermit crab hurrying away to preserve its solitude.

"Most amazing," said Perkins, very pleased that he'd filmed the performance, wondering if he'd get the Nobel Prize, "and now, sir, we must depart. There are other worlds for us to see. But you may rest assured that we will always remember with gratitude your most gracious..."

"One thing mystifies me," tootled the chief can. "In order to complete my records of your visit, I would like to see how you reproduce?"

Perkins heard Diane give an involuntary gasp. He looked at her, her eyes were wide ... she was obviously thinking of the Virginity Clause in her contract.

"As much as we would like to give a demonstration such as you have so kindly done," panted Smithers, "there are certain private rites which we from Earth have, for thousands of centuries, performed in the sanctity of the, er, boudoir. Pray do not think that I am being obstructive, and please refrain from even thinking that I do not wish to reciprocate your kindness, but I must state quite firmly that what you ask is out of the question. I am quite prepared to give a written precis, but insofar as an actual demonstration....."

The can suddenly glowed a bright blue. A couple of rivets popped out.

"This is not what I thought you meant by co-operation," he rapped out... it was like an oboe player suddenly getting an attack of St. Vitus's Dance. "I can only say that failure to provide us with this technical data can only result in disaster for you... it has been suggested to me that your space ship would provide material for our expanding population."

Perkins was bewildered.... he turned to his crew... "Look," he said, "in the interests of science and self preservation, how would you two like to, er...." He tried to ignore the leer on Smithers' face, and he explained hurriedly to the Sergeant, "Look, dear, the computer will have all the details of our predicament. The Virginity Clause couldn't hold up to this dire situation. You'll still get your salary.... it seems to me that if we want to get back to Earth again, you'll have to comply...."

They waved goodbye to the assembled cannery.

Perkins addressed the chief can.

"Sir," he said, he knew the speech word perfect, he'd said it so many times to alien populations, "I shall return to Earth and explain to my superiors your wonderful way of life, and the earnest co-operation with which you have so kindly afforded us. I have travelled all over the galaxy, and never have I met with such a perfectly coordinated...."

"There's a thing I wanted to ask you," piped up the chief. "Where's the offspring?"

"The offspring?" muttered Perkins, heading into the airlock, "oh, that takes nine, er ... that takes as long as three hundred suns on your world... "

The can turned blue again....

"You're joking?"

Perkins slid the locks into place. He peered through the porthole.

"No, that's quite true. It takes three hundred suns...." He slammed the porthole into place, and they blasted off.

Smithers walked down the corridor, and heard a raucous belly laugh from Perkins' cabin. He knocked and walked in.

"What's the big joke?" he asked, grinning himself at the infectious laughter.

"I've just played back the computer tape, and guess what, you know when that big tin of baked beans asked me about the offspring, and I said it took three hundred suns?"

"Yes... yes....?"

"And remember that at that point I blasted off...?"

"Yes....yes...yes...?"

"Well, the computer was still tuned into their translation frequency, and do you know what the big can said to his advisers...?"

"No, tell me, quick."

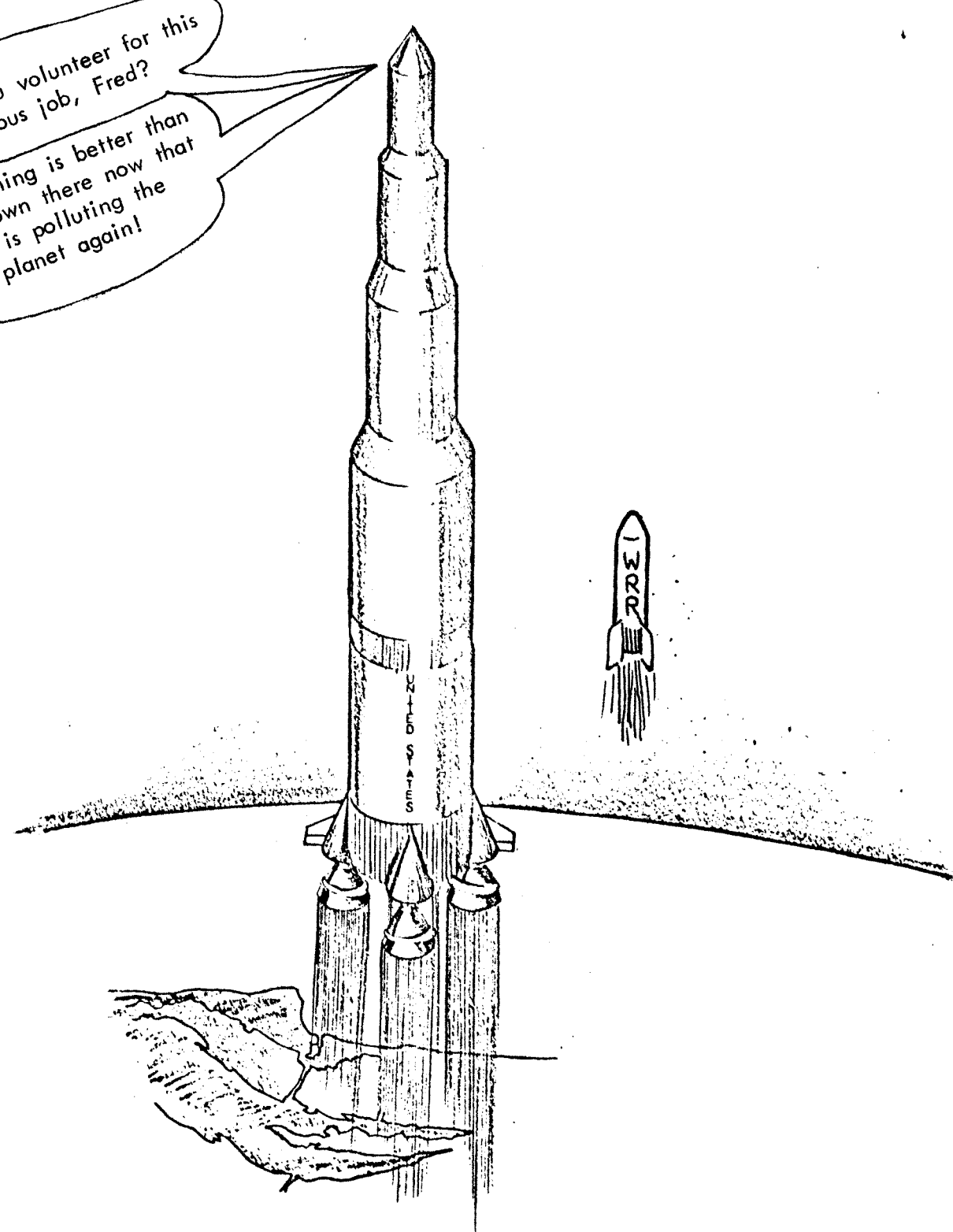
"He said... this'll kill you, Smithers....he said... 'If it takes three hundred suns, why were they in such a hurry at the end?'"

John Berry 1967

-13-

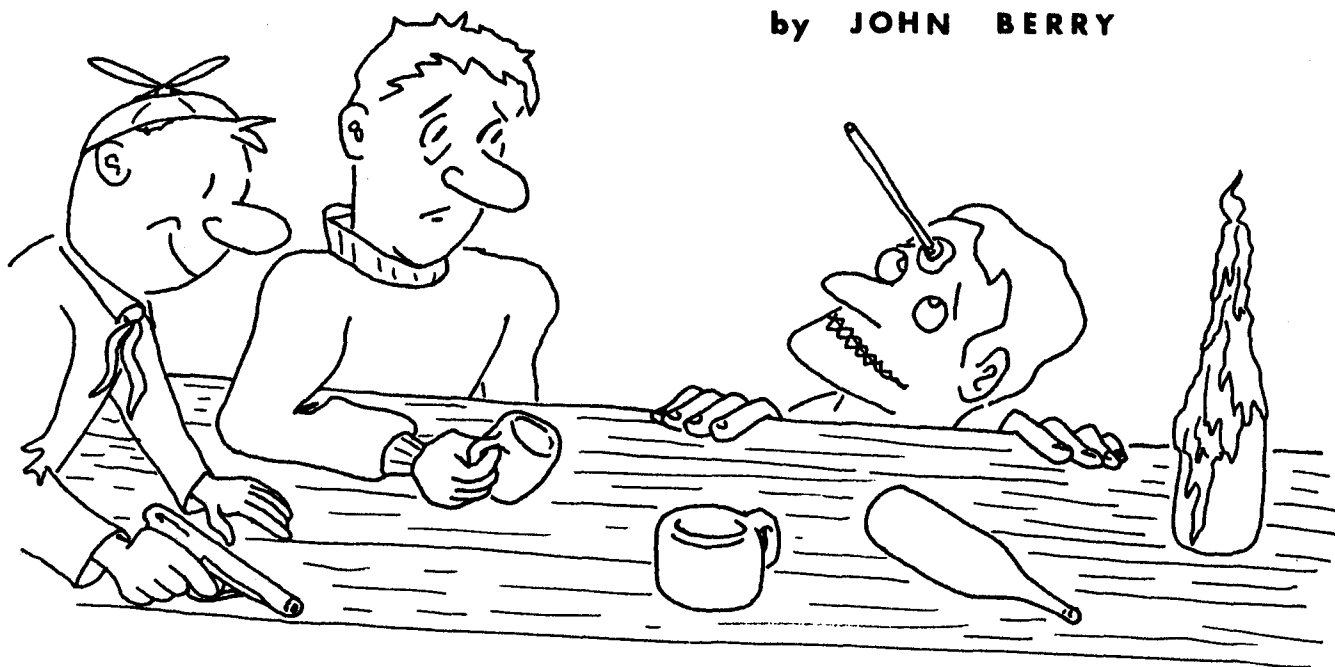
Why did you volunteer for this dangerous job, Fred?

Anything is better than being down there now that WRR is polluting the planet again!



Mountain Greenery

by JOHN BERRY



Although it has been quite a number of years since I have carried out what could be termed an international correspondence, when I was the proud recipient of over twenty letters per day, I never received one from Ballycuddymarlin, in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

The envelope was grubby, and I had to pay one penny postage due. It would be wrong to say the letter was written by an illiterate hand, nevertheless a de-coding course I took in the army twenty-five years ago stood me in good stead. I finally concluded that I was invited to be Guest of Honour at the First Anniversary of the Ballycuddymarlin Science Fiction Circle. A postal order for two pounds was enclosed to pay the 'bus fare to the county town of Omagh, where I would be met by a contact wearing a cloth cap, a scarf, big boots and carrying a copy of the Financial Times. At the time I pondered a little over the complications of the meeting, because, given an address and a time, I was quite capable of finding my way to the place and catching the deadline.

It was egoboo, anyway, so I decided to go.

My contact was about as inconspicuous as the Queen Mary shooting Niagara Falls. He stood across the street as I got off the 'bus. It wasn't so much his appearance... the Financial Times looked somewhat out of place in his left hand, and he did indeed wear cloth cap, scarf and boots. No, what worried me somewhat was that in his right hand he held a set of reins which led directly to a Clydesdale horse behind which was a cart loaded with manure. The latest Ford Escorts, Jaguars and Minis tooted their horns at my contact, and the whole

town looked at me as I crossed to him. I mean, in order to look the part, I was wearing my beanie.

I introduced myself, and feeling rather embarrassed, I climbed up beside him in the cart and we trundled smelly westwards. At a crossroads outside the town, he told me to get off the cart and wait for a motor car registration number AZX 234. In a couple of moments it arrived, I sat in the back seat next to a rough-looking man, who immediately blindfolded me. The car engine was gasping for breath, and the way gravity was forcing me backwards into the seat led me to believe that we were steadily climbing in the mountainous region of western Tyrone.

After an hour or so I heard hens clucking, and the blindfold was removed. We were on high ground, the whole countryside was barren. We stopped at a thatched-roofed room, where a young girl gave me tea and scones.

"I was at the WorldCon in Detroit in 1959," I said rather haughtily, "and this sort of thing never happened to me. I'm a BNF."

She didn't seem to understand.

"Where's the rest of the faans?" I asked.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she confirmed.

"I want to meet some of the Ballycuddymarlin science fiction faans," I hissed.

She went into another room, and I heard a muffled conversation between her and a male voice. She returned with a smile.

"A meeting is being held here tonight," she smiled, "and all the fans will be here to hear you speak."

She didn't know anything else about fandom, things which she should have known, like whether or not Ted White had won the Pulitzer Prize for Literature, or if HYPHEN had folded, or who'd won TAFF... things I didn't know myself but which I thought a properly-run science fiction circle should have known about.

I waited impatiently for the coming evening.

Electric light hadn't yet reached this part of County Tyrone. I had had some experience of being Fan Guest of Honour at various American Science Fiction societies, and recollected a certain protocol, a brief blast of egoboo for me from the President of the club before being introduced to the members, to whom I attempted to give a humorous resume of the most recent fannish incident which had happened to me.

But never had I been... well, let me put the scene in front of you...

A dozen of us sat 'round a long table. Half a dozen empty whisky bottles in line bisected the table.... in each bottle was a candle flickering briefly, and fingers of candle

grease fingered their way down the bottles. Most of the men, very scruffily dressed, took frequent swigs from bottles containing a clear white liquid which looked like vodka. No one wore a beanie, or cracked a pun, or discussed Ballard. Their shadows flickered on the bare white-washed walls, there was an air of conspiracy about the place which frightened me. They muttered to themselves about everyday country affairs, and save for looking at me out of the corner of narrowed eyes, ignored me completely. I felt it was up to me, a fan of long standing, to assert myself.

I drew the zap in a swift flashing action. I'll never forget those eyes as the first candle spluttered out, and the second. I missed the last four, but the swish of water wet the dirty shirts of the pseudo fans across the table from me. I waited for the congratulatory pats on the back. They duly came, although some of the more enthusiastic members, in order to voice their own particular feelings of hero-worship, used their fists in the excitement of the moment. One fan, a rather large man with broad shoulders and an unrelaxed expression, attempted to present me with the accolade... a tap on each shoulder with a heavy blackthorn stick, rather like a Sovereign bestowing a knighthood. I appreciated his gesture, although unfortunately, due to the throng around me, he missed his aim and caught me rather heavily on the back of my head.

When they'd settled down again, breathing heavily, I crawled from under the table and took my seat.

"Have a drink, Berry?" said the man next to me.

"Er, I'll have a lime juice and water, not too much lime juice."

The man bit his lip until it was white, and then poured me some of the clear liquid into a handle-less mug. It would be an exaggeration to say the liquid loosened my teeth, but it definitely took off the first three layers of enamel. The man opened a paper bag, producing thick ham sandwiches. He crossed himself, and then handed them 'round.

"I know another holy meal," I hissed.

"What?" they said in unison.

"The Lunchpack of Notre Dame," I gurgled.

There were cries of "Clabby, clabby," at this superb pun, and I bowed my head modestly.

"Mr. Berry," said the quiet one I had noticed at the other end of the table, "the main reason we asked you here is to address our small science fiction gathering on its first anniversary. You are the first outside fan we have met."

"Charmed," I said. "Although, for a fan group of one year's standing, I thought you'd have been publishing your own fanzine by now."

"No," said the quiet one, enunciating carefully, as if speaking to a child, "the first meeting of our group was last week.... seven days ago.... this is the first anniversary of that date."

I uncrossed my eyes with difficulty. There was a strange ethereal atmosphere in that room, as though they all shared a secret regarding myself, and I didn't know what it was. I decided to use psychology in order to attempt to penetrate this shield of mystery. "I shall address the Ballycuddymarlin Science Fiction Circle, if I may, on the current thoughts of modern cosmology," I began.....

"Mr. Berry," said the same man, who appeared to be their intellectual leader, "pray do so by all means, but I should point out that our assembly here tonight have been brought up on strictly religious grounds, and I would not like any references which would tend to imply either directly or indirectly that the biblical statements they have lived with for many years are under any sort of criticism. This modern mystique of ridiculing the Old Testament is not for us."

"Oh, please," I said, my brows furrowed, "many scientists today, who have been reared on the bible, and in fact are still strictly religious, do tend to agree that the allusions in the bible to the formation of the Universe are purely symbolic."

"Perhaps you would care to discuss theology," he said darkly, "although maybe you would be more at home giving a lecture on the tactical use of the water pistol."

"No thank you," I hissed. "I like to think I'm versatile."

Blind with rage, I drew and fired. The splattht echoed in the silence. Never before had I seen so many mouths opened wide.... and staying that way. My aim was good, but please don't think I'm immodest.... I've always been adept with the plonker. My verbal opponent sank back in his chair, hands waving in front of his face, eyes meeting 'on the dip'.... trying to focus on the sucker-tipped missile which had adhered to his forehead. The man next to him pulled it off with a 'ploppp'. More cries of "clabby, clabby" this time, although muted somewhat. I bowed again, smiling, reasoning that their evident self-control was engendered by deference to their leader's embarrassment.

"Any more questions?" I hissed in triumph.

"Yes, sor," said a man opposite, the one who wielded a potent blackthorn stick. "I had a letter from a nephew of mine in America... he told us about you... and he has hundreds of these fanzines with stories and things in them, and he told us one story you'd written about the members of Irish Fandom making rockets on Hallowe'en Night."

"Er, yes," I said. "That was a story I titled myself, 'Braun'd Off', I called it... get it, 'Braun'd Off'... after von Braun, the German rocket scientist.... brilliant pun, isn't it."

"Clabby, clabby," they hooted.

"Yes," said the man. "We would like to have a collection of different sorts of these rockets. Could you make some for us?"

"Delighted," I smiled. "All I do is to purchase Hallowe'en firework rockets from the shops, and then with block balsa wood I carve out the shapes of the rockets, Titans, Blue Streak, Saturn Vb if you wish, it's pretty easy. Then I make a propellant from the rockets, and push this tube up the centre of the balsa. I have to make the fins larger, which spoils

the scale somewhat, but if you'd read my story 'Braun'd Off', you would understand how well they really do blast upwards. It looks very realistic. We made a lot of them in Irish Fandom."

Another man, with a ruddy wrinkled face, passed me a five pound note.

"I'm the club treasurer, sor," he said. "Would you make us some rockets.... is that enough?"

"Oh surely, gentlemen," I said. "I'll make you, say, copies of each of the major designs. I've got the book about it written by my friend Willy Ley."

"Will they fly to a great height?" asked another member.

"I would say that they would easily reach about three hundred feet," I explained. "For another fiver I could make a three stage one which might get up to five hundred feet."

I was passed another fiver.

"It's getting late, men," said the quiet man, his jaw muscles clenching, "and the candle-light is getting low. Mr. Berry has to get his last 'bus to Belfast."

They nodded, and drank deeply of their exotic brew.

I left them... I looked back at them, raw neo's, admittedly, but with the right ideas. Next time I came I'd bring 'em a few thousand fanzines and some prozines.

The young girl led me outside.

"Tread carefully in the darkness," she said, gripping my arm, leading me across the farmyard towards the car, "otherwise you'll get clabby all over your shoes."

That is just about the end of the account of my brief contact with this obscure fan group, unknown by anyone else. Sometimes I don't even believe it myself. I duly manufactured half a dozen scale models of US, British and French rockets, and painted them accurately. They were so good I would have liked to have kept them for myself. A few days after the visit to Ballycuddymarlin I received a 'phone call stating that a car would call at my house and collect the rockets, and this was duly done when I wasn't at home. Because of the blindfold, I have no idea of the location of the group, although I like to think that somewhere in the wilds of Tyrone they are still holding their intimate little meetings, and perhaps, in their own way, having a heck of a time.

Just one little thing worries me. Enquiries I have made since suggest that the vodka-like liquid they were drinking was 'poteen' (pronounced pocheen).... which is an illicit brew and a little thing I read in the newspapers the other day has caused me to ponder a mite..... it was a story about the police war against the illicit distillation of poteen in County Tyrone, and how the brewers have adopted a system of signal rockets to warn of the approach of search parties.....

HACKING THE LETTERHACKS

Hmmm, seems that after all that hacking, I don't seem to have anything left. Well, we can end this issue at this point then. No, there is too much space left; we had better end it somewhere down the page.

Next issue...oh yes...there will be a next issue...The next issue will be out in a few months. So get your letters and material in as soon as you can.

This issue as all those in the past has been fun and it feels real good to get back in the fanzine pubbing field again.

Many thanks to John Berry for sending us all the material to start us off again. We have material of our own in the works, but at the moment not enough time to finish it. Maybe for next issue.

So this is all for now. Watch for the sign of the raving Postman; WRR will strike again.

-- Blotto Otto --

WRR
Box 267
507 Third Ave.
Seattle, Wash.
98104

PRINTED MATTER ONLY

Return Requested

This copy of WRR belongs to:

Ed Meskys
c/o Physics Department
Bellmap College
~~State of New Hampshire~~
Center Harbor, New Hampshire
03226

