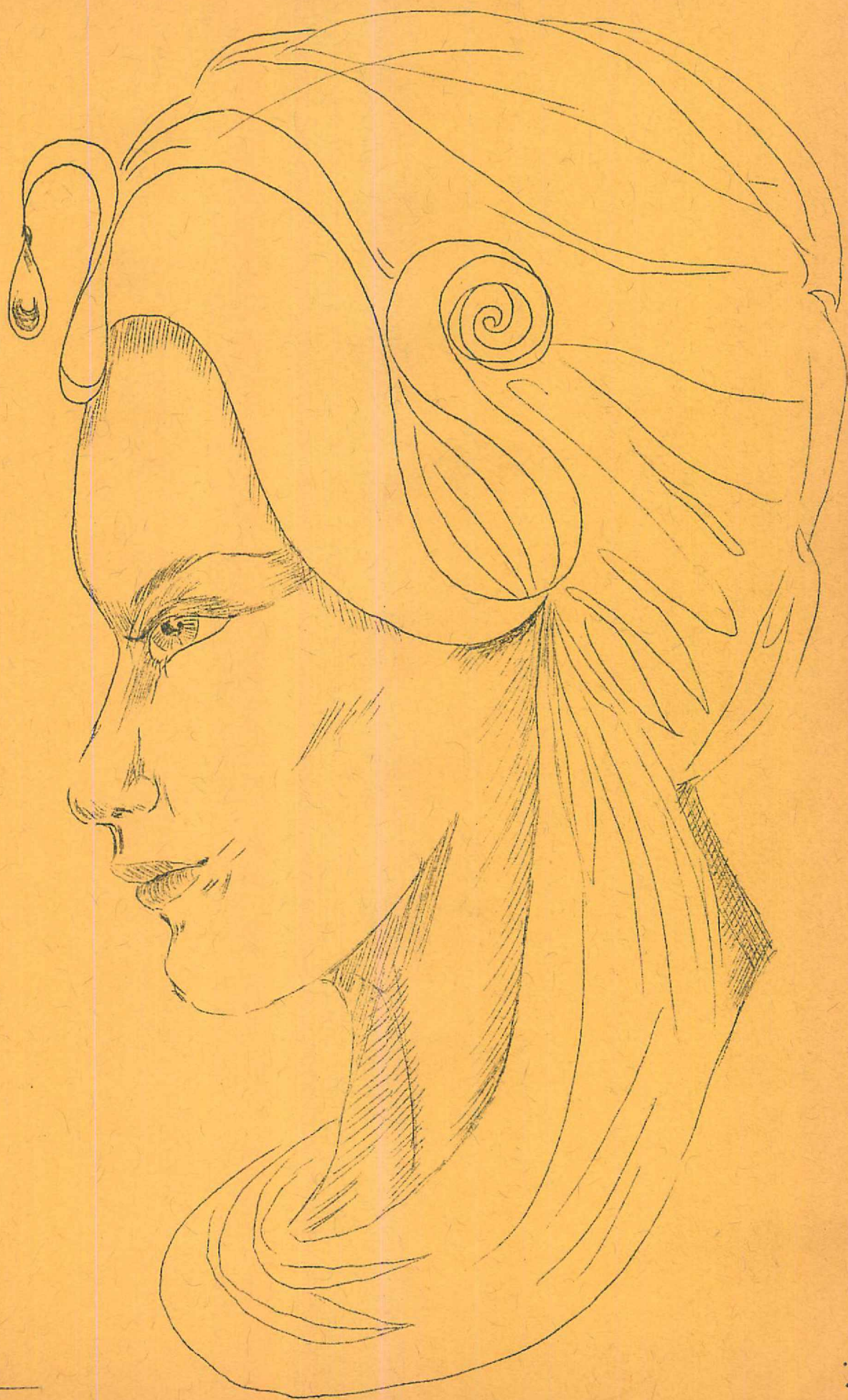
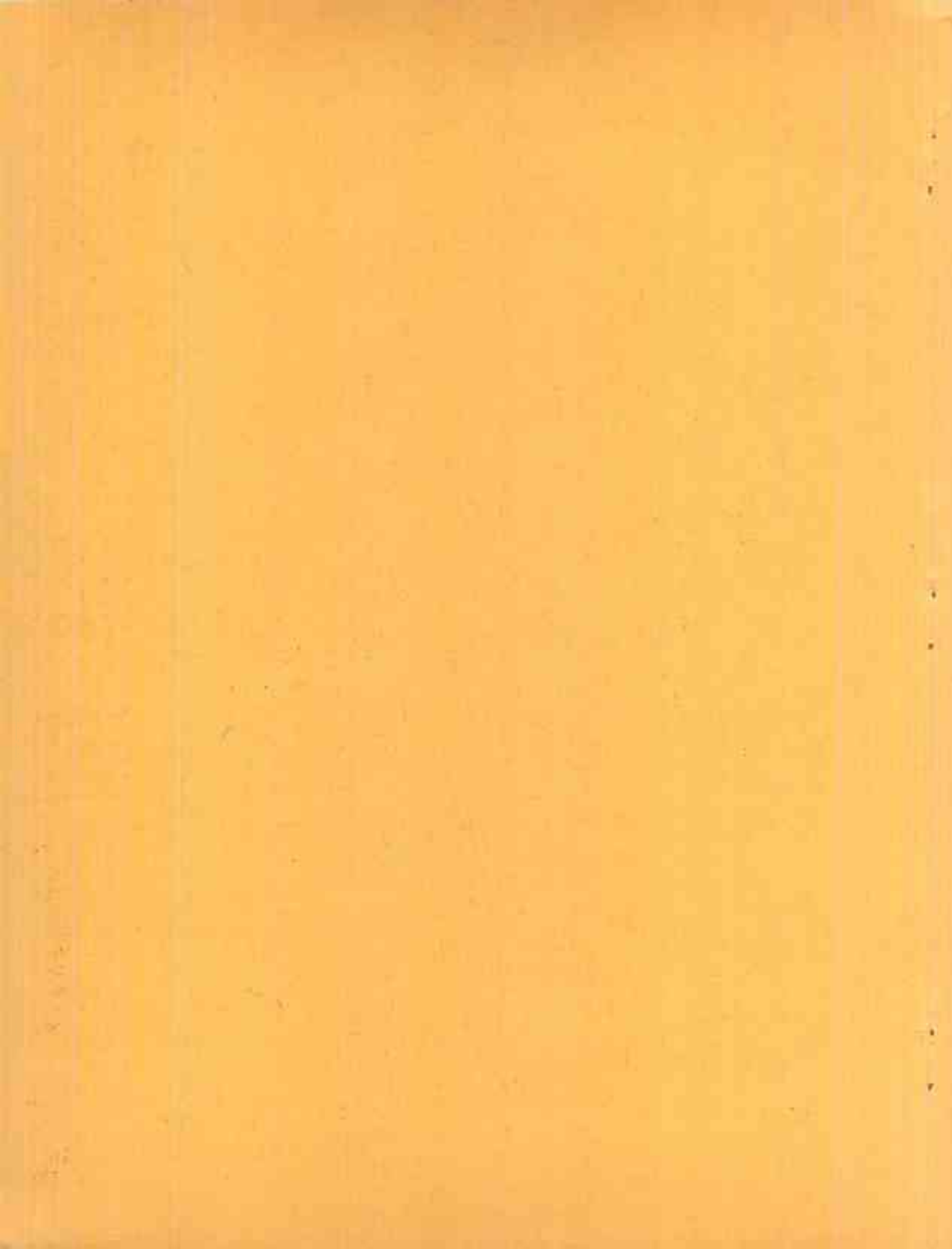


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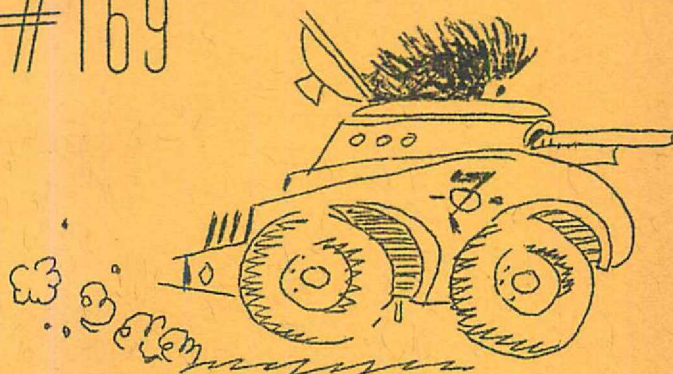
YANDRO #169

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TERRY CARR wishes to announce that, due to unprecedented demand, he has run out of copies of LIGHTHOUSE 14, and that those who have not yet received their copies will receive LIGHTHOUSE 15 when it is published "in a month or so". Be patient, people.

SUPPORT THE TRANS-OCEANIC FAN FUND

Ace's World's Best Science Fiction: 1967 is now out, in case you need some help in voting for the short story Hugo. (I did myself, after checking on the Roberts stories and discovering that both the ones I liked would fit in the novelet category.) I'll have a longer review of the book next issue, but that will reach you too late for the voting. RSC

Did you know that the halo was originally a designation of the sun god? Did you care?



Barring sudden flood, blizzard or tornado, this issue will be mailed either April 8 or 10... hinging on paper feeding problems and little domestic crises like Buck figuring out income tax and whatnot.

I'm telling you what date it is mailed not so much as an apology but as a warning. Part of the time slippage is indeed our fault; but part of it is due to Mr. O'Brien's ever unloving Post Office, which seems to be coming apart at the seams with increasing rapidity....

It makes our task somewhat discouraging, makes me feel like the ink and paper and labor are going out and disappearing, and makes me correspondingly less eager to tackle stencilling the next issue. (It'll just disappear like the last one, and pitiful inquiring letters will be trailing in for weeks asking what happened to the last issue of Yandro....and we never know if the issue is actually on its way, somewhere, by lame carrier pigeon...or if the issue really did get lost. It is equally frustrating to respond to a subscriber's plaint that the last issue never arrived, mail him a replacement, and next day receive a card announcing: "Cancel that -- the last issue came yesterday, right after I mailed my last letter.")

It makes you wonder if the Post Office isn't really a large computer practical joker.....with half its fuses missing, or something.

At any rate, assuming this issue reaches you in time, and you still can get in under the May 1 deadline, don't forget to mail your Hugo ballots. I presume the NyCon committee is making some allowances, too, for the Post Office. If I were in that position, I would be checking postmarks on ballots coming in after May 1.....and if it were 1st Class Mail and marked a week previous, I should think the mailer had at least tried.

Postal service has been the bane of the fan publishing industry for so long the complaints are like an old man's constant groaning about his corns or slipped disc or whatnot. But of late, it has progressed from excruciating to incredible. 'Way back in the dear dead days when Indiana fandom was active, we treasured the tidbit that one poor Indianapolis fan once waited six weeks for a Yandro to travel 60 miles. That is no longer a record; it's now par for the course, and maybe even fairly good service.

Thus it was that I read the recent newspaper account of O'Brien's radical (?) proposal for changing the postal service with a bit of a vacant stare. I am by this time somewhat numb with disbelief, and I must confess I'm beginning to recall with horror all these stf stories of a tremendous mechanized, technological culture that one day grinds to a terrifying stop from overload, apathy, or sheer cantankerousness.

Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD is leaving the field of science fiction. We may

not have reached the stage of making the sign of a T on our stomachs, but so many other aspects of that novel are now here that it's unnerving. We have soma, we are becoming such an urban civilization that people may well live and die never seeing open sky and farmlands, our mores are of course changing.1...

It isn't the people I object to, but the morlocky machinery that keeps the world running. I'm beginning to feel like Bradbury. My machinery usually behaves itself, because I keep my eyes on it. But I have an uncomfortable suspicion that there's a great deal of machinery running our culture that should be watched, and isn't being.

Or contrarily, as seems to be the problem with the post office, people are watching, but don't care. People who sit there and drink coffee while the automatic cancelling machine or whatever rips thousands of pieces of mail to shreds. Or the delivery truck which has a convenient two-days-to-repair flat tire right in front of the driver's girl friend's house.

O'Brien's idea of a corporation management might have some merit. Let's take over the post office and have it operated by fans.....principally active publishing fans, of course, assisted by active corresponding fans. Out of the goodness of our hearts, we will help along the way all the mail of the non-fans (properly addressed, of course, as the fans have always been forced to do....."Missent to Saudi Arabia", "Postage due on return third class mail 8¢", "Arrived at San Francisco post office torn in two pieces -- please advise disposal".....).

But because we have had to run the exact address, zip code route, we shall be very nasty with "Boxholder" mail, shall we not? We shall use the bales of this sort of material as crudsheets, or book marks, or quotecards.....they shall disappear.

How shall the fans handle mail delivery? Why just arrange a regional con once a week at all these new, ineffecient regional centers scattered throughout the country (we can personally testify to the Muncie, Indiana Regional Post Office as an absolute paragon in the elusive science of fouling-up mail distribution). Once a week, all the fans get together for a bash, sort the mail (weeding out the junk), use the postage money to pay an independent trucking firm....you know, it could be fun. And of course, we could have an all night party afterwards....wouldn't even charge for the job. They could save the salaries of the sorting employees and put them to local delivering.

And the fans could build bonfires out of the remaining junk mail and cook weiners and hamburgers.....just think of it: a real con in your own area, every week. Get to recruit new members (posters all over the post office and mail boxes).....it could mean lots of new blood for the whole field.

And it would solve Andy Porter's complaint that there are too many regional cons. These would be useful, maybe even profitable if we get people like Devore and a few N3F censors to help us weed out the chaff.

So it's ridiculous. Do you really think the present system is all that sane? Ben Franklin, where are you tonight?

JWC

RUMBLINGS



It would seem that Bitchy Old Ted White has done it again, in his own inimitable style. Give him credit for honesty; in his handling of the Hugo/Pong affair he scorned to use manipulation, propaganda, persuasion, or even tact; he just came out, open and aboveboard, with his coup. The fact that his method of handling the affair showed his open contempt for anyone else's opinion, and was calculated to antagonize the maximum number of fans, should be no surprise

to anyone who knows Ted. (It is also not really anything at which I can cavil, inasmuch as I have been known to operate that way myself, on occasion. In fact, I'm not caviling; I'm being amused at the latest example of New York fandom's idea of public relations.)

As for the name-changing itself, I realize that Bill Mallardi wants to win a Hugo so bad he can taste it, but I can't see that this has any more bearing on the situation than does Ted's lack of tact. Whatever it's called, the award will be for the Best Fanzine, and will be presented by the World Science Fiction Association. Nothing has changed but the name. Bill Veeck pointed out in his recent book, The Hustler's Handbook, that we as a nation have become label-conscious. His example was that of some tv show, which took a straw hat off a horse in central park, sewed a Bonwit-Teller (Bonwit & Teller? Something like that) label in it, and sold the result for a fabulous price to some schnook who knew and cared nothing about hat quality but wanted the label as a status symbol. Refusing to accept an award just because it doesn't have a name one approves of is equally asinine.

New York fandom must be fascinating to do business with, anyway. Awhile back, they were accusing Ben Jason in print of absconding with the profits from the Tricon, and then having to publish a retraction when it turned out that Ben hadn't passed on money because he'd been in the hospital. Give Andy Porter credit; he printed an apology. (I didn't see any apology from the New York fans who gave Andy his information, however.) Of course, when Boston fandom accused New York of libel during the course of the recent convention bidding, New York fans were righteously indignant. Certainly they'd printed a retraction -- the fact that this was in a fanzine handed out at the Worldcon itself (who reads fanzines they're handed in the middle of a convention?) was merely coincidence. (Of course, Boston helped them out enormously by passing up any legitimate chance to object ahead of time and then making a sour grapes announcement just prior to the voting, another masterly public relations ploy.)

New York has five months to go before the convention. I'm eagerly awaiting their next friendly overture to fandom.

There are no fanzine reviews in this issue because I've been too busy to read fanzines. Looking at the size of the stack, next issue may consist of nothing but fanzine reviews. (You win a few, you lose a few.)

I'm not sure that writing is all that it's cracked up to be. (Pro writing, that is.) During the course of knocking out the U.N.C.L.E. novel, I had asthma, sinus trouble, indigestion (to the point of getting sick at work and throwing up), and hives (I hadn't had hives for 10 years previously), in addition to which we had the flooding described in YANDRO 167, a power failure which forced us out of the house for a couple of days

(gas heat, but electric controls), and finally a half-assed kid driver who plowed through our mailbox one sleety night. (Having previously side-swiped another car while attempting to pass. More fun; wreckers, police making out reports in our living room, people tromping in to use the phone, etc. Nobody hurt, tho the kid's car was pretty well demolished.) I wonder if Ian Fleming had to put up with this sort of thing?

I keep getting farther behind in my reading. Latest recommended non-stf volume is Veeck's Hustler's Handbook, mentioned previously. I have an extremely mild interest in baseball -- I usually follow the standings in the paper, but I neither watch nor listen to games and the only players I can recognize are the ones everyone knows, like Willie Mays and...err... umm.... However, both of Veeck's books (his previous one, Veeck -- As In Wreck) are among my favorite volumes because they are f*u*n*n*y. Partly because Veeck has a talent for getting into -- or causing -- funny situations, and partly because of the writing ability of Ed Linn (whoever he is) who gets cover credit and presumably did the actual writing. This is the sort of book you read aloud to someone else.

Los Angeles fandom currently has two projects going. They are bidding for the 1968 Worldcon, and they are sponsoring a fund to bring Takumi Shibano, "foremost Japanese fan", to the convention, wherever it is held. Both seem fairly worthy endeavours. I'm willing to back Los Angeles in '68. If anyone else is, the LA fans are offering free fanzine covers (with Pan-Pacifcon or TOFF advertising on the reverse side) to any fan editor willing to run them. LA fandom boasts a lot of good artists; those currently supporting the project are Bjo Trimble, Don Simpson, Luise Petti and Cynthia Goldstone. If you want a free cover for your fanzine, write to Pan-Pacifcon Committee, P.O. Box 422, Tarzana, California 91356. Give your fanzine's circulation, type of cover wanted (fantasy, weird, stf, bem & fem, etc.), two color choices (pink, green, blue, yellow, goldenrod, white, gray, tan), your fanzine name, and your address including Zip Code. (The post office will not accept third class mail without Zip Codes.) To be fair, you should guarantee to use the cover before Sept. 1, 1967. According to the committee, it will take about \$1000 to bring Shibano to the con. Your donations of \$1 or more will get you a fanzine devoted to information about Japanese fandom and about the Pan-Pacifcon. (More about this next issue when I review the fanzine.) They also mention auctions and raffles; presumably further announcements of these will be carried in the fanzine you get for your donations. (It's a vicious circle.)

I'm not sure fandom is rich enough to support both TAFF and TOFF (Trans-Oceanic Fan Fund) on any regular basis, though it would be a good idea. (I'd like to see Bob Smith brought over from Australia some day.) But there have been special funds before; Walt Willis came over twice and John Berry once on "specials", and while Irish Fandom is unquestionably one of the most talented fandoms in the world there is no need to restrict special funds to its members alone. Shell out a few nickels for TOFF.

The short story poll hasn't been forgotten; like the fanzines, I was too busy to bother with it this month. And, like the fanzine reviews, it will appear in the next YANDRO. I plan on a short rest before doing any more pro writing (besides, it's Juanita's turn to make a sale now). During the "rest", I have hopes of cleaning off my desk, working out the short story ratings, and reading the last AMERICAN HERITAGE and a dozen or so books.

The Fort Wayne paper noted a sure sign of spring in Indiana; four arrests for streetwalking.

RSC

OF CATS & KINGS

magazine reviews by

rick norwood

FEBRUARY REVIEWS

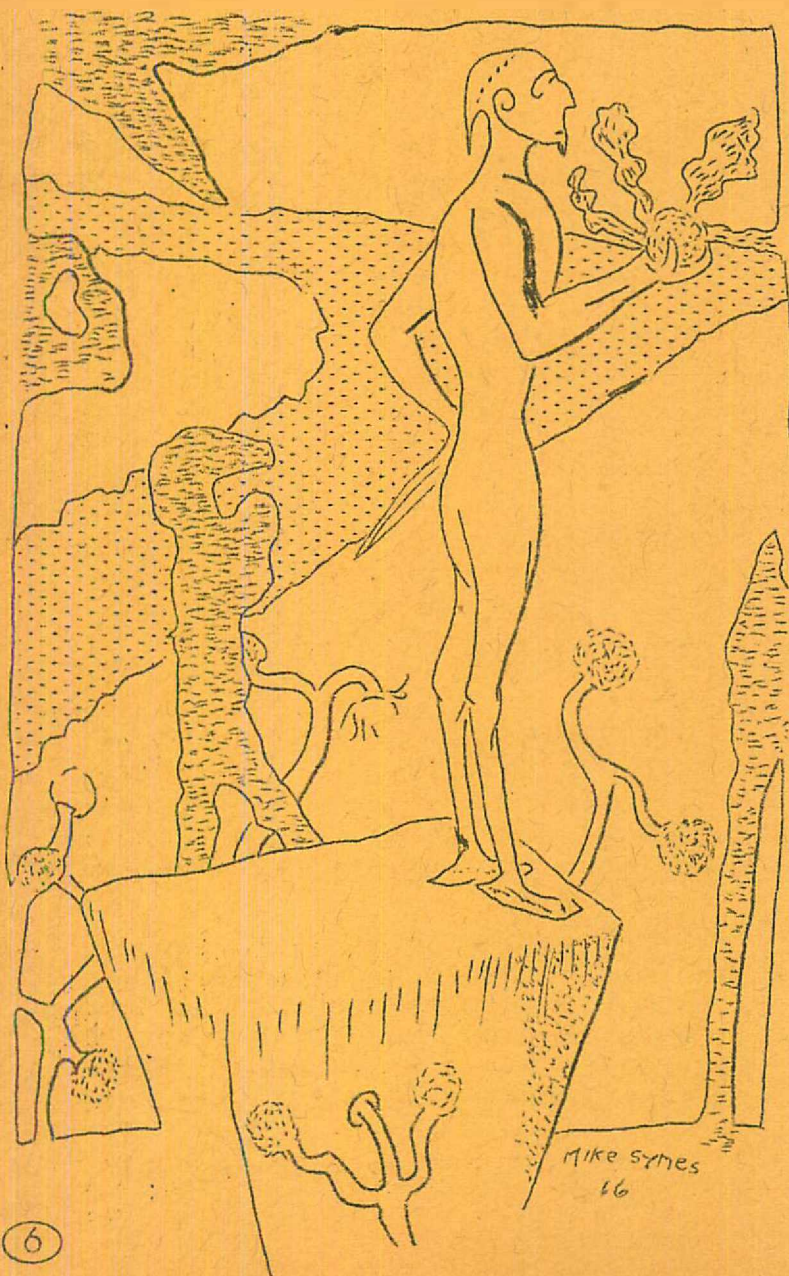
WORLDS OF TOMORROW, Frederik Pohl, Editor. 115 pages of new fiction.

This is a good month for magazine covers; never mind what's inside. Gray Morrow must have been thinking of Frank R. Paul when he drew the cover for Worlds, but Morrow can put action into his pictures, while Paul specialized in detailed tableaux.

The Ballard school of sf writing (it's not what you say, it's how you say it) is well established by now. Unfortunately, most of Ballard's followers can't write a tenth as well as Ballard. Samuel R. Delany seems to have something important to say, but he can't get it out without choking on the bones.

"The Star Pit" takes as its theme human limitations. The use of symbolism is effective. The characterization is excellent. The heroes' problems are real and moving. And the story never gets off the ground. The writing just isn't good enough to hypnotize the reader into forgetting the plot blunders. Ballard, in THE DROWNED WORLD, makes Kerans' deranged actions seem realistic. Delany fails to put across lesser absurdities. To give just one example, an expensive space ship is given away, free for nothing, no less than four times. These people need money, some of them desperately; yet they give the spaceship away like it was nothing. The story is paper-thin, and the jury-rigged background keeps poking through. Instead of cardboard characters in a vivid world, the typical sf cliché, we have a new cliché of real characters in a cardboard world. It is no better than the old one.

This issue of Worlds is loaded with articles. The one on the upcoming movie "A Space Odyssey - 2001" is interesting, but an article on Kubric in the



November 12, 1966 New Yorker is much more informative.

Keith Laumer's "The Planet Wreckers" is fast, funny, improbable, and entertaining.

THE MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Robert Lowndes, Editor, 24 pages of new fiction.

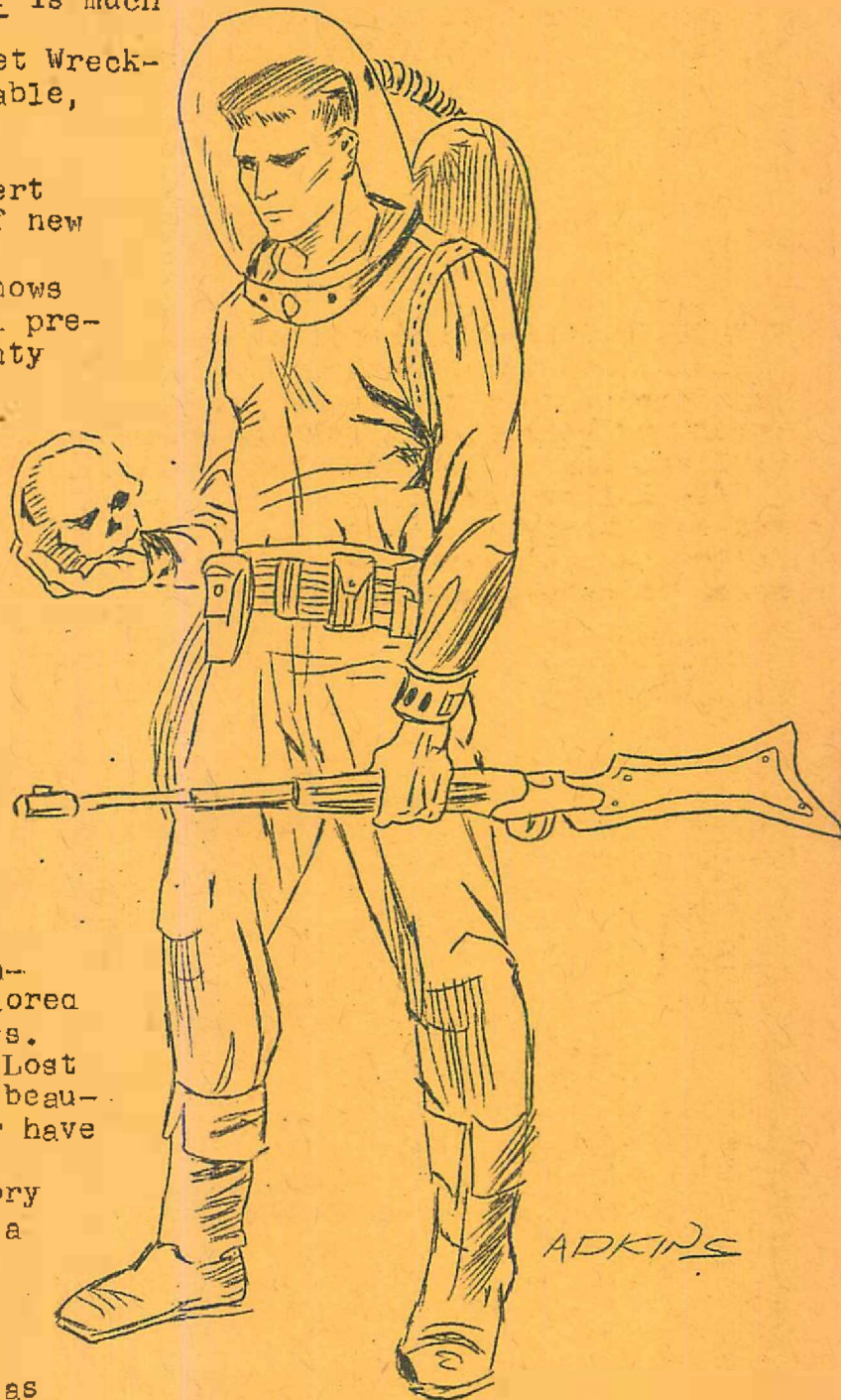
The Conan story in MoH shows its age by its casual racial prejudice. As recently as twenty years ago, everybody "knew" that the white race was superior, just as today everybody "knows" that all races are exactly equal. There is racism in Wells and Verne. Probably the first popular writer to portray Negro characters as human beings was Edgar Rice Burroughs. Even the current ERB paperbacks have been bowdlerized to remove any tinge of prejudice. I'm glad that sf magazines are still free of this tendency on the part of some liberals to use the same censorship techniques they have always deplored in the hands of conservatives. Otherwise, "The Vale of the Lost Women", with its racism and beautiful sexuality, could never have been published.

There is only one new story in this issue, but there is a long Lowndes novelette that has never before been published in the United States. I can see why. Lowndes does not handle sexual fantasies as well as Howard did.

One major difference between sf and fantasy is that while "sex and science fiction don't mix", sex and fantasy often do.

FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION, Rawl, Editor, 20 pages of new fiction

The world comes to an end so slowly that only a skeptical newsman realizes what is happening. He finds that no one will believe him, and so embarks on an unsatisfactorily motivated journey through civil disorder and natural upheaval. Stephen Vincent Benet did justice to this formula, and may have originated it. He knew where to stop. In this Famous S F, Wallace West does a workmanlike job with the formula, but in his hands it remains a formula and nothing more.



GALAXY, Frederik Pohl, Editor. 165 pages of new fiction.

If you don't mind guessing games, I'd like to make the outlandish guess that the Esk stories by "Hayden Howard" are really the results of a collaboration between Fred Pohl and A.E. van Vogt. They possess the qualities of exciting prose, original ideas and bad plotting that Pohl and Van Vogt have in common. It is too bad that the Esk stories will almost certainly be dated before there is time for a paperback collection. You just can't make predictions about China these days and expect them to stand the test of tomorrow's newspapers.

There is a sameness about the stories in this issue of Galaxy. They all mix fantasy and sf. They are all set on Earth in the near future and they all cross the borderline of the possible. "Our Man In Peking", "They Hilariated When I Hyperspaced to Earth", "The Trojan Bombardment", and "The Last Filibuster" are about political struggles a few years from now. They are listed in order of decreasing believability and decreasing entertainment value.

"Thus We Frustrate Charlemagne" is a standard time travel story that falls into its own paradox, but has a few funny moments.

By far the best story in this issue is "Return Match" by Philip K. Dick, which proceeds from the realistic to the absurd with the preposterous inevitability of pure logic.

This issue also concludes a Jack Vance serial, part of the "Star Kings" series.

ANALOG, John W. Campbell, Editor. 129 pages of new fiction.

The story of a commander who must choose between his mission and a human life has been told many times in fiction. I doubt there have been any parallel situations in real life. Certainly writers on this subject are not drawing on experience. "Pioneer Trip" is a standard story of the type, with the standard ending. The details of the story are superficially convincing, but don't hold up under analysis. The writing is good.

At the Tricon there was some noise about Analog being puritanical. Some fans were going out of their ways to misunderstand the dictum "sex and sf don't mix". They even blamed Kay Tarrant for censoring manuscripts. I don't know Analog's assistant editor personally, but I find that very hard to believe. Maybe it was all a bad joke. Lester del Rey spoke out in Campbell's behalf, saying that there were no taboos in Analog. "There Was a Crooked Man", in this issue, proves once and for all that Analog is no more inhibited than any other magazine in the field. This is not a good story, but it is occasionally very funny and it is sexy as all get out. Even the choppy writing is a relief from the typical readable but bland Analog prose.

Poul Anderson, writing under the name of Saunders, turns out the first really bad story I have ever seen of his. This is a shame, because he has a very clever idea that he has obviously spent a lot of time and ingenuity on. But the scientific puzzle in "Elemental Mistake" is all there is. After reading it, I couldn't even remember how many characters were in it, much less which was which. The attempt to add humor in the form of a drunken monolog is a complete flop.

IF, Frederik Pohl, Editor. 139 pages of new fiction.

Larry Niven is one of the best hard-science writers to enter the field since Poul Anderson. "The Soft Weapon" is not one of his better stories. The fascinating attention to detail is there, but the story breaks down in several places. The description of the soft weapon goes on for pages, but most of the weapon's powers are irrelevant. When the hero captures

the weapon he plays around with it but can't think of any real use for it, powerful as it is. In fact, the hero, while unrealistically heroic, is almost totally ineffectual. The most interesting character in the story, the mad puppeteer, remains on the sidelines. By rights, it should have been his story, with the human characters played down.

Also in this issue is a "Gree" story, with plenty of action, and a fine "Retief" story with some beautiful prose. The only trouble with stories by Laumer and McApp (who may well be the same man) is the total lack of characterization.

The second installment of Budrys's THE IRON THORN is so tantalizingly short that I can't be sure whether the story is going to degenerate into a mere adventure yarn or not. There were certainly a number of things in this chapter that did not seem to hold together. I don't mind four and five part serials when they are necessary, but THE IRON THORN could have been presented in two parts without crowding. The first installment was billed as "part one of three". Apparently Pohl is determined to preserve overlapping serials at all costs, because now THE IRON THORN is a four-parter. In any event, it is still a likely Hugo candidate, though I will probably vote for THE LITTLE PEOPLE unless something better comes along.

MARCH REVIEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, Edward L. Ferman, Editor.

"The Sea Change" by Jean Cox is a strange, message story. I didn't find it particularly interesting or moving, but it is obviously a very personal story and other readers might like it very much. In any case, it is not the kind of story that benefits from close analysis, so I will refrain from nit-picking. I do wonder why Shakespeare's "Full Fathom Five" is mis-quoted. Are there two versions?

Mack Reynolds is the author of a very fannish story about none other than Tarzan of the Apes. The remaining three shorts include a hospital satire, a story of capture by aliens reminiscent of Heinlein's "Fish-bowl", and yet another new twist on that seemingly inexhaustible theme, the deal with the devil. All are very well written, and highly entertaining, but they are all variations on old themes.

The conclusion of John Christopher's new novel, THE LITTLE PEOPLE, is jarring. The story has suffered by being broken into three parts, because it undergoes a sudden change a few pages into part three. The first installment concentrated on the human characters. Part two explained and speculated on the "little people". The conclusion returns to the humans, and is both bizarre and revealing. Even though it seems incongruous when taken apart from the rest of the story, it is a powerful ending to a powerful novel.

AMAZING STORIES, Sol Cohen, Editor.

The one new story in this issue is a rehash of a paranoid anti-utopia. It is a good example of why sex and sf usually don't mix. The sex is window dressing. It is used to attract attention to an otherwise dull story. But 1984 had sex and rats, so all anti-utopias must have sex and rats. The story is mildly entertaining, with good pulp plotting and a lady-and-the-tiger type ending. I find the idea of a future where psychiatrists destroy peoples' personalities to keep them happy just about as likely as a future where doctors amputate patients' limbs to keep them safe in bed.

ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION/SCIENCE FACT, John W. Campbell, Editor.

The new Harry Harrison serial is great fun.



Someone should tell Mack Reynolds that Southerners say "yaw!" only when they mean "you all", i.e. "everybody". You never hear "yaw!" used for the singular "you". Why do writers who have never lived in the South insist on using Southern dialect in their stories? They seldom have an ear for it.

"In the Shadow" by Michael Karageorge has some flaws as a story, but I wouldn't trade it for a dozen little literary gems. It revolves around the human reactions to an idea that, to my knowledge, is new to science fiction. And it offers a tricky bit of orbital maneuvering that I hadn't thought about. The society is sketched in lightly but realistically and at least the two major characters are more than stick figures.

By contrast, Christopher Anvil, who was once a good writer, turns his story on one trivial scientific fact, gleaned, I gather, from The Wall Street Journal. The characters are a crew of Campbellian stereotypes. There is such a wealth of story material in modern scientific

discoveries that it is a shame that of writers so often ration each pice-yune idea, one to a story.

IF, Frederik Pohl, Editor

I expected to be disappointed by this special Hugo winners issue of IF. The cover, which looks like a regular-sized cover stretched into a wrap-around, is a far cry from the promised Frazetta. The Frank Herbert story is delayed. And a mere sixteen pages of a major serial like THE IRON THORN is absurd. This brief chapter is nothing but transition, and taken by itself it is almost enough to kill the reader's interest. The tone is humorous; there is another gratuitous fist fight; what detail there is is interesting but not moving. It is hard to take the major changes in Honor Jackson seriously. We might as well be in a new story. The insight into Jackson's private thoughts that made the first parts so involving is gone. Jackson is becoming a puppet, just as Roen in EARTH-BLOOD devolved from a believable human being into a typical Laumer hero. By the end of this installment, Jackson is left uninvolved and dangling. So is the reader.

The three novelettes in this issue are so good that they clear away the bad taste left by the turn for the worse in the serial. Concentrating on what this issue has, rather than on what it lacks, I am almost ready to vote for IF on the Hugo ballot again next year. There is even a poem by L. Sprague de Camp, who is probably the best serious sf writer-poet.

What can you say about Asimov? He is not a brilliant writer, in that he produces few quotable passages. His technique is completely submerged. He has a talent for making the most abstruse and sophisticated concept seem commonplace. His prose is the most readable in the science fiction field. "The Billiard Ball" is a quiet, uncomplicated novelette that will stick in my memory for years, I'm sure, as the most convincing anti-gravity story I have read.

There is a Harlan Ellison story of endless torture by a sadistic computer that is spoiled by its excesses. I liked Ellison better when he

was writing for Science Fiction Adventures.

"This Mortal Mountain" by Roger Zelazny has the same feeling of vastness as "The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of His Mouth", but is it not quite as successful as the earlier story. It is as much a mountain-climbing story as it is science fiction, and as long as it sticks to the mountain, a forty-mile high whopper, the story is fine. Then we get giants, birds, snakes, and illusory girls in mini-skirts and the story loses its conviction. Zelazny's reason why men climb is not very impressive, but his mountain is very impressive indeed.

While most pro/fan writers are content to rehash sword and sorcery themes, Larry Niven has applied his considerable ingenuity to pure science fiction. He has found some startling ideas by turning over old familiar rocks. His "Flatlander" is the best story in this Hugo winners issue. It won't be many years before Larry Niven has his Hugo, too, if he continues to improve at his present rate. His writing is still too flippant and ingroupish at times, and he sometimes dwells too lovingly on detail. These faults, which experience will surely erase, are outweighed by his boundless inventiveness.

This was a good issue, and IF is still the best sf magazine on the stands.

NO REASONABLE OFFER REFUSED FOR THE FOLLOWING FANZINES

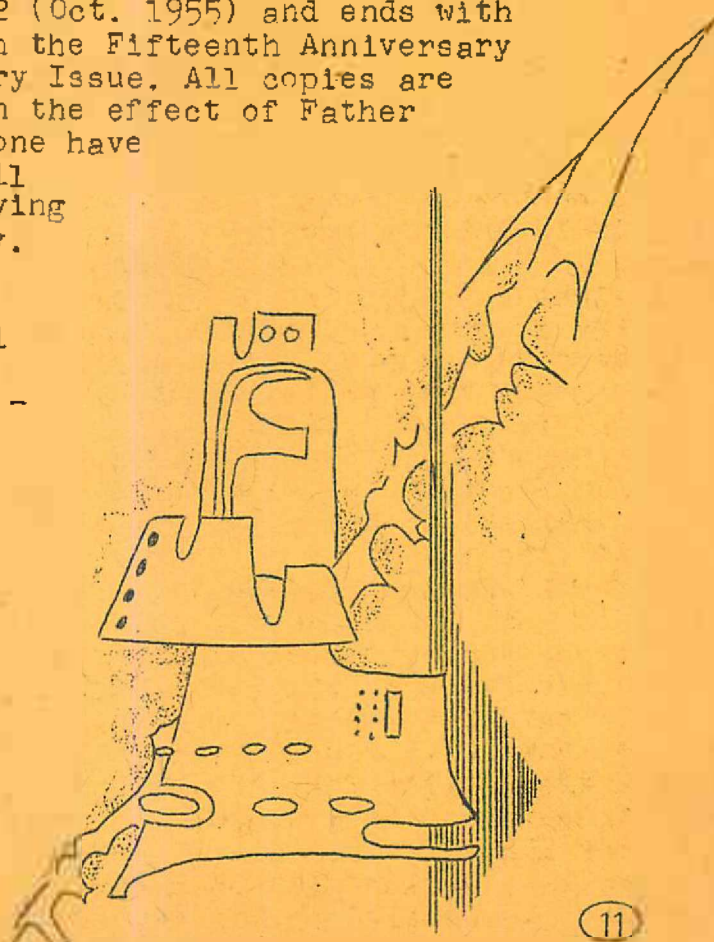
Ron and Cindy Smith's INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION. #51 (March, 57), #52 (October, 57), and #53 (September, 58). I assume that these were the final three issues. All are first-rate, a true labor of love, in the same adult category as "Yandro".

My complete collection of FANTASY TIMES and SCIENCE FICTION TIMES. Collection begins with #232 (Oct. 1955) and ends with #439 (Feb. 1967). Included are both the Fifteenth Anniversary Issue and the Twentieth Anniversary Issue. All copies are legible; condition is dependent on the effect of Father Time upon mimeograph paper, but none have suffered any mutilation. Note: Will donate entire collection to deserving individual, if no one offers money. Please Write!

IRV JACOBS, P.O. Box 574, National City, Calif. 92050

Ed. Note: I'm pleased, but Ron Smith will have apoplexy if he ever reads that. INSIDE was a thick, digest-sized offset fanzine. It was so good that if I didn't already have the issues mentioned, I might even offer Irv some cash for them myself. RSC

/The Mets/"are playing in the only ball park in the nation that can sink while its own scoreboard plays 'Nearer My God To Thee'." (Bill Veeck)



WITH JAUNDICED EYE

column by

TED WHITE

TV Guide for January 7-13 contains listings for two new half-hour programs which debuted on Monday, the 9th. And, on facing pages are ads for the two shows. The type in the logos is identical.

MR. TERRIFIC is the CBS edition, and goes on at 8:00. At 8:30, one has only to switch to NBC for CAPTAIN NICE, which continues the superhero resurgence.

You can hardly tell them apart from the advance publicity. Both are meek, mild-mannered types in their everyday indentities, and both take a drug for superpower. Mr. Terrific's pill lasts one hour (with "backup pills" good for another ten minutes apiece), while Captain Nice's secret formula lasts for about an hour. Each bumbles his way past canned laughter with amazing stupidity.

However, on the basis of the opening shows, I'd give the edge to CAPTAIN NICE. The difference does not seem to be simply in the fact that he wears a full costume, although that helps -- the program seems better oriented towards a knowing spoof of superheroes.

I was prejudiced, of course, to start out with. The advance publicity for CAPTAIN NICE made use of some lovely art by Jack Kirby, who is the present acknowledged master of the comic book superhero, and MR. TERRIFIC seemed at the outset a sort of swipe. "Mr. Terrific" was the name of a supporting superhero in Sensation Comics in the '40's, and his hourly pill is identical to Adventure Comics Hourman, during the same period. Whether National Comics, which produced both characters, is getting anything from CBS I couldn't say.

But there's the matter of conception -- a word I used in connection with STAR TREK. Conception is the single most important item in planning a series tv show. It will ultimately make or break a show, all other things being roughly equal. A program's conception will shape it from the beginning, and can limit it unmercifully (as STAR TREK's has), or open it wide for creative realization.

The conception of MR. TERRIFIC is pretty limited, although it has possibilities. Basically, a power pill exists which can transform a man into a superman for one hour. It doesn't work on most men, though. It works only on Stanley Beamish, who is about what his name implies. The US Gov't rations the pills out to Beamish when it has a mission for him. That's it.

It's limiting. There's very little in the basic situation which is funny, and it tends to produce a series of spy situations, since that's the level the Gov't is most likely to get involved in -- on tv, at any rate. The humor of the first show was based largely on slapstick visual comedy, and what you might call Idiot Humor -- situations funny largely because one or more of those involved in them are idiots. Needless to say, Beamish (Mr. Terrific) is an idiot.

While CAPTAIN NICE is not much different on the surface, it does have one immediate plus factor: it was created by Buck Henry, of the late TW3 and GET SMART. I would guess that Henry read a lot of comic books when he was a kid, and still remembers them with affection. He has created a more rounded conception, less stock tv situation comedy, and more a total

spoof of the superhero conception itself.

His hero, Carter Nash, is a police chemist, like the present-day The Flash, but he has the job largely because his uncle is mayor. He invents a chemical which gives him his powers. The opening show concerns the origin of Captain Nice, and develops a clutch of supporting characters, including his mother (a Nice Jewish Mamma type who says at one point, "Never say 'no' to your Mother, dear."), his father (face always obscured by the papers), a girlfriend (a policewoman, Sgt. Candy Kane), and villain, Omnes (a villain who can mimic anything, including articles of furniture; he was once a chair, and the police chief, who had sat in him, admits "he was comfortable.").

From the very name, Carter Nash, (Hawkman is Carter Hall), the show is brimming with little nods and doffed hats to various cliches and hallmarks of the comicbook superhero. Even the origin was presented as a comic book would give it (Mr. Terrific's is simply presented in cartoon form before the opening credits). The real world intrudes much less. (Mr. Terrific lives in Washington, D.C.; Captain Nice in Bigtown, a mid-western town of over 100,000.)

As I watched CAPTAIN NICE, I found myself enjoying it. It was like the early BATMAN show, only funnier and less embarrassing. BATMAN indirectly sneered at comicbook heroes; CAPTAIN NICE does not. It is simply the reducto ad absurdum of the superhero. Imagine every possible way in which super powers would mess a person up in real life, and you have the basis for CAPTAIN NICE.

The conception then, for MR. TERRIFIC, seems thin, and quite gimmicky. CAPTAIN NICE is more solid, more within the genre it spoofs. It's a bit early to tell how either will develop, but CAPTAIN NICE is the one to watch. Buck Henry may have another winner.

BILL McDERMIT (212 No. Werber, Hartford City, Ind.) comments on a point in The Diving Dames Affair that I missed in my review on page 16, probably because I didn't read it that close. Bill says "I suggest you compare the references to Waverly on pages 85 and 117 of The Diving Dames Affair. It may, if you haven't noticed it, prove interesting." Yes. For those of you too lazy to look it up, on page 85, Coralie Simon refers to "your Mr. Waverly", while on page 117 Illya refers to Mr. Waverly and Coralie says "Who is Waverly?" I guess Leslie's writing hasn't improved as much as I thought it had.

PLANET POEMS: V -- Jupiter
by Rick Norwood

My kingdom is the clean and airless void.
The planets, my people, are few and not worth mentioning.
My crown is just a circlet set with moons.
These do not weigh on me
As does that red, unsightly hump
Unhidden by my regal robes
Of gold, and green and phosphorus.
It is myself I carry on my back.

ADDRESS CHANGES

William L. Bowers, AF15721969, 604 Military Airlift Spt. Sq (MAC),
APO San Francisco, California 96274

Lon Atkins, c/o Dave Hulan, Box 1032, Canoga Park, Calif. 91304
(I know we had some others, but they seem to be lost in the wilds of my desk. While looking for them, I turned up a letter from John Kusske that we had definitely decided would be in this issue. Oh well; maybe by next issue I'll have things straightened out. RSC)

GOLDEN MINUTES ♦

THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, by Samuel R. Delany (Ace, 40¢) I'd have liked this better if Delany had refrained from including extracts from an alleged "author's journal", pointing out all the symbolism for the clods and telling cute little anecdotes about how he thought about the novel while strolling through the quaint alleys of Venice. It gives the impression that other people's opinions of Delaney will never be able to match his own. Nevertheless, this is a good novel; one of the best sf novels that I have read recently. It even survives having Billy the Kid and Jesus Christ as characters in the same novel, which is asking quite a lot of it. The characters are too symbolic to be real people, but they are memorable and, unlike so much modern sf, the story is interesting. Read it and you'll remember it; possibly at next year's Hugo balloting.

THE TIME TUNNEL, by Murray Leinster (Pyramid, 50¢) As Rick Norwood mentioned in a letter, future bibliographers are going to have fun distinguishing between TIME TUNNEL, written by Murray Leinster and published by Pyramid in 1964, and THE TIME TUNNEL, written by Murray Leinster and published by Pyramid in 1967. They are not the same book, even though Pyramid compounded the confusion by using the same cover illustration on both of them. (You have a sadistic sense of humor, Don Bensen.) The current TIME TUNNEL is a novelization of the show, and the kindest thing that can be said for it is that it's better than the show. Leinster's historical sections are good; what he writes about the Johnstown flood and the Adobe Wells Indian fight is accurate (which is far more than one can say about the "history" presented on the show). He avoids the science as much as possible, which is a good thing, but his attempts at love interest are painful and the overall plot doesn't make much more sense than the show does. If you have your choice of Time Tunnels, buy the 1964 book. That one wasn't half bad.

THE SHIP FROM ATLANTIS, by H. Warner Munn/THE STOLEN SUN, by Emil Petaja (Ace, 50¢) Sequels are seldom as good as originals, but they usually are not quite so painfully deficient as this one is. Munn's King Of The World's Edge was a beautifully wild and wooly adventure fantasy, with a surprisingly original background. The sequel lacks originality, imagination, and interest. Atlantis is the same super-scientific prehistoric world that we've read about in countless other fantasy novels, the Beautiful Princess is a stock character, the Sargasso Sea is still trapping ships, and the hero is strictly pulp-novel cardboard. Ventidius Varro may not have been exactly real, but he was enough of an individual to make the reader care what happened to him in King. His son Gwalchmai is just one more Conan-imitation. Petaja continues to convert the "Kalevala" to space opera. It's a beautiful idea, but the results are depressing. Petaja simply cannot describe action; he seems to think that an exclamation point is capable of transforming a rather dull description into a telling phrase. Also, he has failed to learn that no scientific explanation at all is better than one which sounds ridiculous. There could have been some beautiful description in here; there wasn't any.

SECRET OF THE MARAUDER SATELLITE, by Ted White (Westminster, \$3.75) This is a juvenile, for ages 12 to 15. I don't think that I would have liked it at that age; the hero spends far too much time in self-analysis and not enough in action. However, maybe kids are more introspective these

days. The plot is one favored for that age-level; events in the near future, with the hero on duty at our first space station. (Fan kids will need to be given this before age 12, presumably.) The writing itself is good for any age; the fairly straightforward plot is enhanced by a straightforward writing style that doesn't intrude. And for a change in juveniles, the Marauder Satellite itself is a believable menace, and an original one. I'd have liked the story better with fewer lines like "It forced me to realize that my life was too precious to throw away half used", but then, this is the story of the maturing of an adolescent, and I suppose today's psychological orientation is no worse than Frank Merriwell's purity. (I say it's no better, though.) Even so, it's a very good effort. And Ted finally got to put Tucker's name in a novel, along with various others we all recognize. Pick it up at your local library.

THE WORLD JONES MADE, by Philip K. Dick (Ace, 40¢) A reprint of an earlier Ace publication. This was written back when Dick was still writing stories, rather than Being Significant. There's a recognizable plot; it isn't too original, but it doesn't get lost halfway thru the book. The background world (which is why I read this crazy Buck Rogers stuff; to enjoy the fascinating worlds that good novelists can invent) is intriguing and original as Dick's usually are. I didn't much like the hero or the predictable overthrow-the-dictator plot, but the background and "atmosphere" pretty well made up for it.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE, by John Christopher (Science Fiction Book Club, \$1.20) The blurb quotes The Saturday Review as saying Christopher's characters are "human and engaging". I dunno; human they certainly are, and I suppose they may be engaging to the sort of person who reads mainstream novels and watches popular tv shows, but they sure as hell repel me. The only one I gave a damn about was the drunken Irishman, and I suspect that he was more stock-novel than human. The plot is about "little people" who turn out to be the results of a scientific experiment (I think I'd have preferred fairies; I'm a little tired of Secret Nazi Experiments), and of their effect on the human inhabitants of a mouldering Irish tourist trap. Bright, entertaining, and in two weeks I'll have forgotten that it ever appeared.

AGENT OF T.E.R.R.A. #2: THE GOLDEN GODDESS GAMBIT, by Larry Maddock (Ace, 50¢) Surprisingly, this one is better than the first book in the series. It isn't funny (unless the author thinks that a sea-god named Nodiesop - that's Poseidon backwards - is the height of hilarity; you never can tell). However, it has a lighthearted air that's appropriate to an U.N.C.L.E. imitation; the author doesn't seem to be taking the book any more seriously than the reader is expected to. It isn't good, but it isn't nauseatingly bad, either.

THE FAST THROUGH TOMORROW, by Robert A. Heinlein (Science Fiction Book Club, \$2.00 or something like that) The publisher implies -- but carefully does not state -- that this is Heinlein's complete "Future History" series. It isn't. Omitted is the short story "Let There Be Light", the novel "Revolt In 2100", and the novelettes "Universe" and "Common Sense", along with things like Heinlein's "Concerning Stories Never Written" in the Shasta edition of REVOLT IN 2100. Presumably to make up for this, the short story "The Menace From Earth" and the vignette "Searchlight". The chart -- located on page 530 for some ungodly reason -- has been doctored to remove the "stories-to-be-told". (This is logical, since those are the stories which were never written, but I used to read over those titles -- "Fire Down Below!", "The Sound Of His Wings", "The Stone Pillow", etc. --

and dream about what they'd be like when he finally wrote them.)
///Problems of composing on stencil; back there I meant to say that "The Menace From Earth" and "Searchlight" are included in this volume.///////

So, it isn't the complete Future History, but it's a great introduction to science fiction. After all, reading Heinlein was my introduction to the field, and look where it got me. (Hmm..yes...perhaps on second thought you'd better not look where it got me; just take my word for it that this is a great introduction to science fiction.) All of the stories are good; some of them are excellent, and one or two are the best things stf has ever produced. (Yes, even the much-maligned "Menace From Earth" is good. I've heard a lot of criticism of Heinlein's female characters, but as I recall, every bit of it has come from males. If a fem-fan wants to tell me that Holly Jones is unbelievable, I'll listen, but I fail to take the views of adolescent boys on the subject very seriously.)

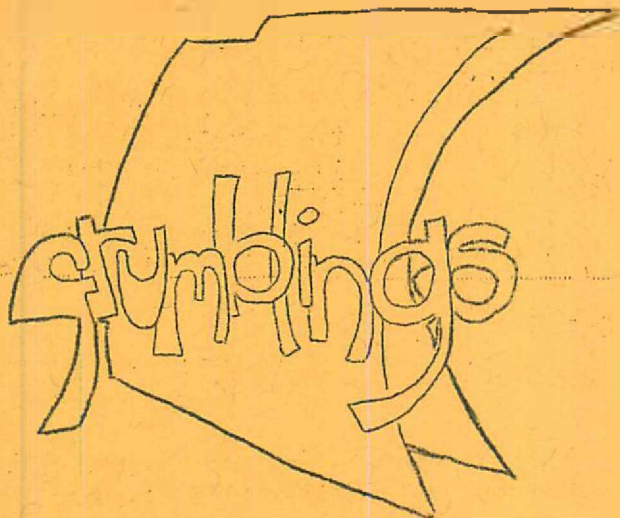
TREASURE HUNTING, by Brad Steiger (Ace, 50¢) A compendium of locations of buried -- or drowned -- treasure. His accounts seem authentic, although remarkably dull for a treasure-hunting book. It seems aimed at the individual who plans to actually go out with a spade or scuba outfit and actually look for the stuff, rather than the casual reader, though I suspect that anyone really interested would have to look farther in order to get more precise locations. A bibliography would have been helpful. Maybe the great mundane readership doesn't care if the writing is dull if it's about treasure.

THE CORRIDORS OF TIME, by Poul Anderson (Lancer, 60¢) I just recently got this (at half price). I didn't care a lot about it as a magazine serial, but the book version is a vast improvement; I get the impression that much of the background and atmosphere was cut out of the magazine version. Even some of the characters in the book I fail to remember. If you - like I - passed it up because you'd read it in AMAZING STORIES, pick up a copy. You might be pleasantly surprised.

BURN, BABY, BURN!, by Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy (Avon, 75¢) The Watts riots; keep up on your contemporary history. I naturally can't vouch for the accuracy, but it's an excellently written book.

THE DIVING DAMES AFFAIR (MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. #9) by Peter Leslie (Ace, 50¢) Leslie must have had help on this; he couldn't have improved that much since his last U.N.C.L.E. book. (A couple of passages sounded like he'd had help from Ted White, but that's unlikely; probably just Terry Carr making editorial insertions.) Of course, the Thrush scheme is pretty ridiculous even for this series, and Leslie still seems to have the idea that U.N.C.L.E. is a serious organization staffed by agents so professional that they can tell by the quirk of a finger whether or not another agent is equally professional, but the book is still much better than his previous one. Still not up to McDaniel's efforts, however. (And Terry, if U.N.C.L.E. books have to be so pure, how did you let that bit on page 65 get by?) I have heard from certain impeccable sources that the book is dull. Well, yes, it is. It's still much better than Leslie's first one.

CONAN THE WARRIOR, by Robert E. Howard (Lancer, 60¢) The second book in Lancer's projected complete Conan saga. This contains three reprints; "Red Nails", "Jewels of Gwahlur", and "Beyond The Black River", all originally from WEIRD TALES. I didn't find them as interesting as those in the first book, partly because of the incredible female pirate he puts in "Red Nails", who reads like a bad cross between the daydreams of a 12-year-old tomboy and Pussy Galore. For that matter, none of the characters, including Conan seems memorable. "Black River" is a poorly disguised stock story about pioneers and Indians, with the bloodthirsty redskins attacking the Fort.



L. Sprague de Camp, 278 Hothorpe Lane, Villanova, Penn., 19085

Many thanks for Yandro #168.

On the last page, I see that Briney tries to bring the readers up to date on the Conan paperbacks being published by Lancer. To bring them still more up to date, the present situation is as follows: CONAN THE ADVENTURER, containing one new story out of four, is published. CONAN THE WARRIOR, containing only three old stories, is published. CONAN THE CONQUEROR, the same previously published novel as before, is in press. CONAN THE USURPER, containing one new story out of four, is in press. This will be followed by KING KULL,

including several hitherto unpublished stories and also several unpublished fragments being finished by Lin Carter. The remaining Conan volumes, in-shallah, will follow when the litigation is cleared up.

Bob Tucker, Box 506, Heyworth, Illinois, 61745

Thank you for the golden opportunity of uttering the Last Word on a subject of vast fannish import: the LoC. The term did not appear in the first edition of NEO-FAN'S GUIDE (1955), nor was it present in either edition of the FANCYCLOPEDIA (1944 and 1959), so old Terry is nearly right. It probably fell into common usage in the year or two immediately preceding publication of Don Franson's KEY (1962).

Some bright fan with an extensive fanzine collection and a desire to make an everlasting mark in fandom can here begin an exhaustive research into the matter: search out the exact origin and write a scholarly article for publication in Yandro. It will improve the tone of your magazine. I don't care for the term myself, but it makes as much (or as little) sense as your fascia, lintel, soffit, and grout.

I do know what a soffit is. We have one in our kitchen, and a theater in Bloomington has another hanging under the marquee, although these two examples are put to widely different uses. The theater uses its soffit for advertising purposes, but I've never understood why the builder put one in our kitchen. It's useless, unless you care to admire it as vaguely ornamental; but I certainly would never hang a sign on it, or put up big red letters saying ALSO COLOR SHORTS.

I also have the distinct pleasure of correcting you for being wrong (this is my day!). "The Tucker Syndrome", that vile habit of using fannish names in novels, actually started with my first book in 1946. That book was a mystery and made use of the following characters: Ackerman, Ashley, Burben, Evans, Kennedy, Liebscher, Rothman, Sehnert, Saari, Swisher, Tanner, Thompson, Wiedenbeck, and Warth. (Warth: I'll bet you don't remember him -- he was the other fan from Savannah, Ga.)

But that wasn't all. Hell no, that wasn't all.-- I must have believed at the time that I'd never publish another book, so I tossed in the kitchen sink. Playing minor parts in the unravelling of the mystery were Le Zombie, Rosebud, fanzines in general, and a thinly-disguised FAPA. One of the minor characters, a faasn, told the hero-detective all about fans, fanzines, and the thinly-disguised FAPA because the victim had been a publishing member of that august body and a clue to the murder was found in his apazine. I don't know why I bothered to thinly-disguise FAPA, but a year

or so after the novel was published I received a letter from a nice librarian somewhere in New Jersey, wanting to know if such fantasy-oriented apas really existed. I gave her the information she wanted.

Meanwhile, back at the Yandro ranch house...

I like Rick Norwood's magazine reviews, and hope you and he continue to publish them. Like 101 other fans, I no longer make the pretense of keeping up with the prozines and a column like this one will send me out into the trackless snows to buy those few issues worth having.

I wonder if Ted White is really that cantankerous? I have a notion to vote for him as the best fan of the year, just to sweeten his disposition.

Felice Rolfe, 1360 Emerson, Palo Alto, California, 94301

The latest Yandro arrived yesterday. I haven't read it yet -- one of the Terrible Five has borrowed it already -- but the following sequence of events attended its arrival.

When I went home for lunch, Jerry Jacks (who is staying with us) said, "Hey, Felice, the latest Yandro came and it has an article about STAR TREK by Ted White."

"He didn't like it," I said.

"That's right," said Jerry, "but how did you know?"

"Well, most fans do like it," I said.

By this time Jerry was grinning. "That's not what he said," he told me. "Why do you think he says he doesn't like it?"

"Well..." I said, "the science in it isn't completely accurate; and it's badly written sf -- not up to PHOENIX PRIME, for example; and Harlan Ellison is plugging it; and they aren't buying Ted's scripts."

"He left out the last one," said Jerry.

Seque to dinnertime. I get home from work, and find Joe looking at Juanita's portraits of the STAR TREK characters! (She really did a fine job with those, by the way.) "Say Joe," I begin, "there's an article in there about STAR TREK by Ted White."

"He doesn't like it," says Joe. He met Ted briefly at Westercon last year. "I imagine he hasn't watched it very often."

By now Jerry and I were really curious, so we pursued the question much as at lunch-time, with the same results.

Seque to 8:30. Clint Bigglestone and Janet Dottery arrive to watch STAR TREK, which has been replaced this evening by the Ringling Circus.

"Say Clint," I said, "the latest Yandro came today..."

"...And it has an article by Ted White about STAR TREK," finished Jerry.

"He doesn't like it," Clint and Janet chorused. (I do not exaggerate.)

We continued the discussion as above, but I won't bore you with the details. What I want to know is this. So far Jerry is the only one



of us who has read Ted's article, and he's so interested in this guessing game that he's not talking. Clint took Yandro home with him. So I'm in the dark. Were we right?

Well, by now I presume you've finally retrieved the copy in question and found that your speculations were essentially correct; shall we just say that Ted has a very distinctive fan writing style and let it go at that...? JWC/

Bill Donaho, P.O. Box 1284, Berkeley, California, 94701

I got Yandro #168 today. For the most part I agreed with your Hugo choices. But I'm voting for "Manor of Roses" instead of "Be Merry". And I notice you didn't list that sterling fanzine Habakkuk amongst the possible Pong choices. Shame on you.

And unfortunately I can't go along with Juanita's choice of "The Corbomite Maneuver" as the choice for dramatic presentation. I though TCM was one of the worst of the STAR TREK episodes, Roman Soldiers stumbling around in German submarines. Ugh. So I voted for "The Naked Time". However, I must admit that if TCM makes it to the ballot I'll vote for it just because it's STAR TREK.

I think Ted is a little hard on STAR TREK. It isn't anywhere near that bad technically. I'll admit though that both I SPY and THE AVENGERS are better done. Nevertheless, I enjoy STAR TREK more. But those are the only series I watch regularly, though I do catch both of the UNCLE things occasionally.

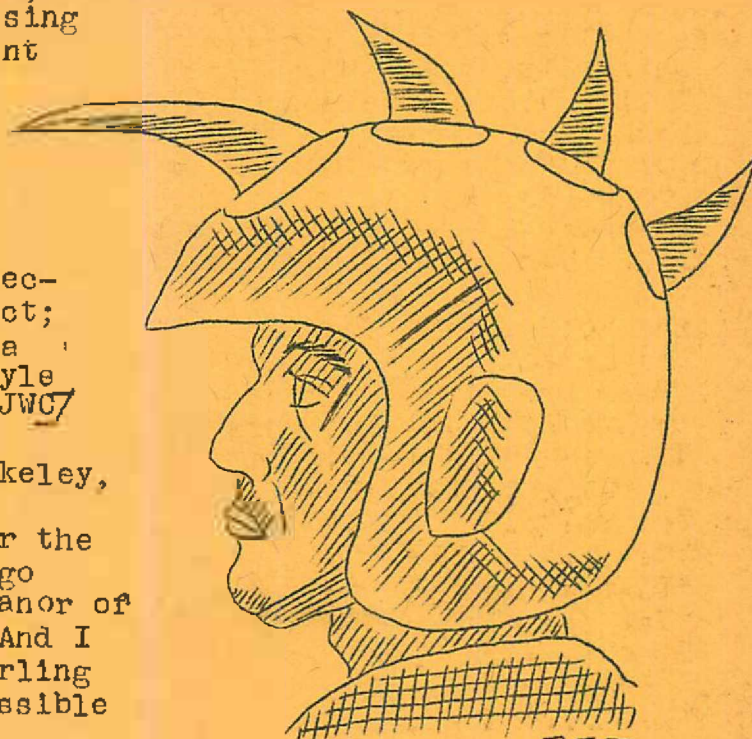
Rick Norwood was pretty good. Hope you can get him to keep it up.

I'm not so sure the Burroughs fans organized and got the Hugo for Erb-dom. For one thing there is a split in the Burroughs ranks and one faction doesn't care for Erb-dom. For another thing, John Carter didn't win the series award, and if there were bloc-voting I would think John Carter stood a better chance than Erb-dom. I also know several fans who voted for Erb-dom because of its outstanding layout and repro and all that. But when it comes to that, I rather expect Erb-dom to get the Pong

Terry Carr's letter was interesting. However, he seems to be saying that fans are entirely too intellectual and rational, not emotional enough. Strangely enough, this is one phenomena about fans that I have never noted. Fans in general are considerably more emotional and less rationalistic than my non-fan friends of equal intelligence. Fans cover all bases. My non-fan friends do not. On a similar level, most fans are omnivorous readers, reading all types of books and stories; things that appeal to the emotion and things that appeal to the intellect.

Terry also seems to be saying that all one can usefully say about Ballard is either "I dig him" or "I don't dig him." Perhaps so. If so, so much the worse for Ballard.

If the entire New Wave movement gets criticized for Ballard's failings and excesses, it is because Ballard has been highly touted by some as the



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prime example of the New Wave and its outstanding success. The reaction is inevitable.

Recently Lee Hoffman said she considered herself a heavy reader, but she she had only read 200 books in the past two years. That stopped me. I'm sure that's a hell of a lot more than the general populace, even on the college graduate level, but I wonder how it stacks up fanwise. Day in, day out I average about a book a day besides working 40 hours a week, leading a fairly active social life, being quite active fanishly, etc. (And this doesn't even count magazines, sf and otherwise, of which I read quite a few, too.) But I know that people like Denny Curran and Elinor Busby read more than I do. And I'll bet both of you do too. How much do you read?

✓ I counted up after getting your letter and I seem to have read somewhere between 50 and 60 books in the first 3 months of 1967. Of course, I've also been writing one during that time, which cut down my reading somewhat. I still wouldn't average a book a day, though; probably between 250-300 a year, the last couple of years. Plus a lot of magazines, of course. RSC

And fellow gimlet-eyed STAR TREK watchers may relax; I've already noted to Bill via postcard that the SF episode featuring Roman Soldiers and German submarine warfare was "Balance of Terror", not "The Corbomite Maneuver"....JWC

Rick Norwood, 640 Linden, Riverside, California, 92507

Rather than get emotional about the Star Trek issue, I'll just point out a few factual errors, mostly in the Ted White article.

1) Considerable thought has gone into making the technological background consistent. How often have you seen 20th Century tools, computers, radios, etc., in supposedly futuristic settings? In STAR TREK, the set is remarkably free of anachronisms. (I've only caught one: a modern flash-light in "The Devil in the Dark".) Think how often they avoid mistakes, considering their limited budget. They watch the clothing, architecture, furniture, recreation facilities, weapons, computers, courtroom equipment, ad infinitum.

2) The characters do not talk or think in 20th Century terms any more than is necessary to communicate with the audience. They don't even think about 20th Century problems. Integration is taken completely for granted, never even mentioned. Spock is occasionally maligned, but apparently a human-Vulcanian war is part of recent history. How many "real" s-f novels have you read that have been current problems (race relations, the Viet Nam War, overpopulation) pushed a thousand years into the future and thinly disguised? To the crew of the Enterprise the 20th Century is quaint and barbaric, and the burning issues of our time are of no interest in theirs.

3) Earth history has been alluded to. WWII has been discussed in some detail. Settlement of the planets and the secession of Mars have been mentioned in passing. Modern Earth is apparently mostly parkland, with people living in mile-high skyscraper-cities and the tourist and diplomatic industries of prime importance. Again, this is hinted at, suggested, since modern Earth is of little importance to the story.

4) Literary allusions always include things written between our time and theirs. In "Charlie X", when Spock quotes Poe, he also quotes some unknown future poet. It is assumed that the audience will catch this without help. In "Where No Man Has Gone Before" a modern erotic love poem is mentioned. In "Conscience of the King" Uhura sings a popular song of the future. In "Court-Martial" legal documents of past, present and future

are quoted in one breath.

5) "Every episode involves a menace"...not true, except in the sense that in all adventure stories the Hero is to some degree menaced. There was no "menace" in "Mudd's Women", "Dagger of the Mind", "The Conscience of the King", "Tomorrow is Yesterday", "Court-Martial", "A Taste of Armageddon", or "This Side of Paradise".

6) MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. gadgets look more authentic than STAR TREK equipment? Just compare the personal radios they use on each show.

STAR TREK is not without its faults, but Ted White did not bother to find out what the show's real faults were. The fact that he has disliked the show from the first episode, not bothered to get the facts straight, and written a completely one-sided article shows that his "opinions" are just snobbery and prejudice.

I enjoyed "The Roddenberry Maneuver" very much. A serious article of criticism would have balanced it nicely, but the White piece just left a bad taste in my mouth.

I read the STAR TREK credits a little differently from the way they run in the article: "The Man Trap" was by George Clayton Johnson. "The Naked Time" I have down as by John D.F. Black, but I too have a question mark after the name, and I don't remember why. "Mudd's Women"--the Kandel script was based on a story by Roddenberry. "Dagger of the Mind"--TVGuide said that the script was by Shimon Wincelberg, but at the end of the show the credits read "S. Bar-David".

You'll notice how Geen L. Coon has dominated the shows /in 1967/? He is listed as producer and is an extremely bad writer. He helps louse up other people's fine stories, is fond of monsters and fist-fights, and writes some of the worst dialogue on television. Has Desilu saddled Roddenberry with him? I'm convinced, though I have no way of knowing, that without his interference "A Taste of Armageddon" would have been a masterpiece. Even with him it was outstanding.

/Your letter graphically illustrates what I am beginning to think of as "The ST Syndrome". I disagree with you on your taste in which shows are the best....just as I have disagreed with other opinions in the fan press concerning which are the best and worst ST episodes; BUT....all of these fans are agreed in their devotion to ST, admiration for the consistency and execution. It is a bit like sitting down at a con with other fans and reminiscing on the mags...(take your pick...Standard mags, Lowndes' pubs, ASF)....and running into a constant stream of "Oh, I didn't like that one as well as the other one in the next issue". There is no disagreement that as a whole, both ST and mags are stf, and both vary and/or varied in quality -- and both contain, eventually, something to suit the tastes of the fans (with a few notable exceptions, represented by Ted White).....no matter how much those tastes may individually vary.

And as far as consistency goes -- the most consistent pseudo stf show on television is VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA: it is consistently awful. Gene DeWeese suggested that instead of having the same Menace posed each weekly (by pathetically similar monsters), perhaps they might spice the formula a bit by allowing the same monster pose a new menace -- instead of a retrimmed monster weekly possessing the crew.

Incidentally, we are in the market for information, subsidiary credits and any and all relevant material re STAR TREK, and will endeavor to keep the interested reader up to date via these pages.....and the interested readers do seem much in evidence, to gauge by the letters we receive.

JWC7

William Lee Linden, Solebury School, New Hope, Penn. 18938

As to Rick Norwood's puzzlement over Mack Reynolds' AMAZON PLANET (I suppose that by now he will have read the final installment with its surprise twists), he evidently did not read the conclusion of "Beehive" too closely. Although the Dawnmen turned out not really to be a threat, Commissioner Metaxa thought that they would constitute an "attractive nuisance"; men would still try to land on their planets with Baron Wyler's idea of pilfering. Section G was still needed to guard against that. Ronny Branston saw the logic of this and withdrew his resignation at once.

However, the chronology is still inconsistent. Bronston's work on Phrygia is mentioned in AMAZON PLANET, and he is a supervisor, a rank he received in the last sentence of BEEHIVE. But AMAZON PLANET's spaceliner is heading for Phrygia, whose atmosphere was converted to poison by the Dawnmen in their established procedure for dealing with offworld marauders.

Don Franson, 6543 Babcock Avenue, North Hollywood, California, 91606

LoC? Yes, I listed it in 1962, and it's much older than that, but notice that it's LoC, pronounced "ellosee", not "lock". But then I'm old-fashioned. I even pronounce (mentally) stf as "ess-tee-eff", and unflattering thing to do, according to Terry Carr in "My Fair Femmefan".

Good luck on your novel "Man From Youennseeellee."

Pete Weston, 81 Trescott Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31, United Kingdom

Thanks for Yandro 167. And I see that once again the Damn Yankees are expressing amusement at my address. What's so funny about "Porlock Crescent", anyway? Over here it is a perfectly ordinary road name, and either no one in Great Britain has read "Kublai Khan" or they are too polite to mention it.

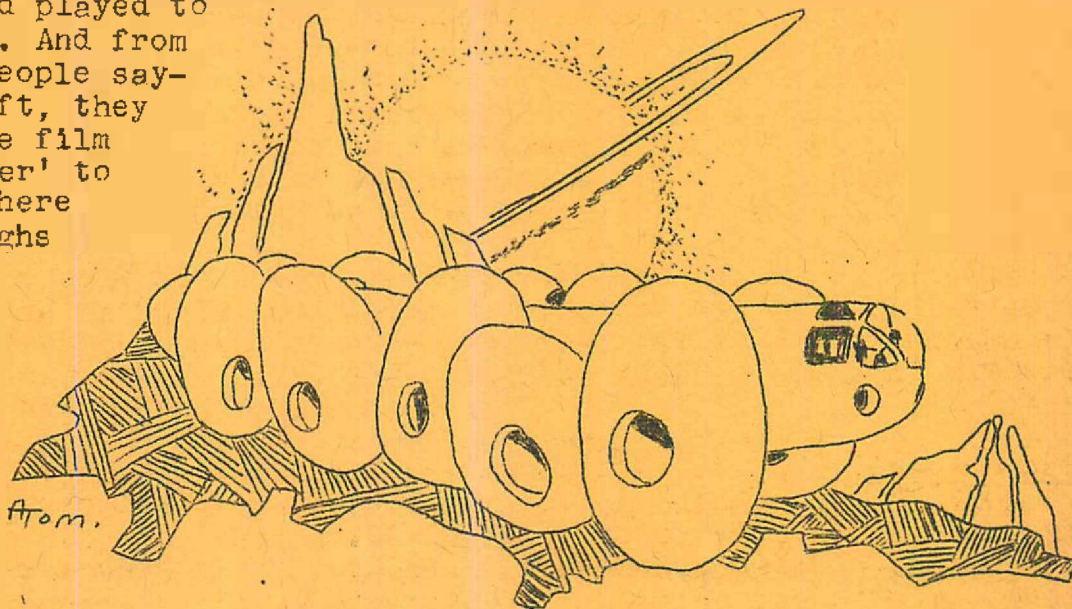
But I'm sick of being a Person from Porlock, and have moved my residence in disgust at Roy Tackett's cracks. Try and make something out of Trescott Road, now. (Seriously, please mention in your next issue that I have moved, effective immediately, and that records should be altered, etc.)

I recently saw FAHRENHEIT 451 and must confess that I was bored about half-way through. True that the depiction of a future world was well-done, but I did not think that the overall level of interest of the film was maintained. And, of course, as someone else has said, the ending was something of an anti-climax. I'm now waiting for SPACE ODYSSEY, although

I think the very first "true"SF" film is going to be thought of as FANTASTIC VOYAGE. So "microminiaturisation" is a misnomer alike to van Vogt calling androids "robots", and so it is a bit far out even for SF. Nevertheless, this was the first SF film I've wanted to see twice (and have) and which I'm not part-ashamed of. For the first time ever, I should think, an SF film was retained



second-week at Birmingham's best cinema and played to full audiences. And from what I heard people saying as they left, they had enjoyed the film and it 'got over' to most. True, there were a few laughs -- as when the radar antennae were shown twirling about the patient's head -- but I think these were very largely laughs of relief at being able to find something



amusing in an otherwise pretty strange film (to the layman). But what a superb opening - no dialogue, just sleek cars, underground H.Q. and engine noises.

Don & Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio, 44060

TARNSMAN OF GOR is no worse than Fox and better than Carter. High praise indeed. I think it goes on my "destroy before reading" list.

Who, practicing sf writing today, is not better than Lin Carter (as a novelist; some of his shorter work verges on the readable). Lin also holds the record for the worst fan column in a prozine, even beating out T.C.Beck.

We now have five magazines reprinting that great, old sense-of-wonder sf from Amazing. Sam Moskowitz must be very, very happy. Six, for Christ's sake!

Glad to hear you've at least read some Samuel Delany. I sat at the same table with him at the Tricon banquet and, at one point, everyone at the table, starting with Ted White, admitted we'd never read a one of his books.

Since then, he had a story -- "The Star Pit" -- in one of Pohl's mags (God knows which one; I can't tell them apart) and I tried it. I found it, like most of Pohl's novelets, totally unreadable. Gee, I don't like most of the stuff (and especially the longer stuff, novels included) in the Hugo-winning magazine. I don't like all those classic sf stories from antidiluvian Amazing Stories:.

I must be a fakefan.

On the other hand, one novel from 1966 which we both admired enormously was FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON -- which is even better as a novel than it was as a short story. How's about mentioning that as a neat candidate for a Hugo this year, eh?

We'd just as soon Norwood's column wasn't the first of many, come to think of it... While not badly written, particularly, it just doesn't strike us as necessary, inspiring, or helpful. He does nicely generalize from the specific discussion -- and he does not give away each and every story ending. But...But...Why such a series at all? It goes a step beyond the comic fanzines' habit of taking this month's comics, telling briefly some of the themes, and saying "I like this story/char-

acter/series" -- but not much beyond it. How's about, instead, a discussion of the current state of each sfzine? I know, it wouldn't make a very long-running column, but...

Pish tush to Ted White.

Yaay! Keep plugging K-a (no response from Y readers as yet, far's we can see, though --except for a request from Alex Eisenstein for the Gully Foyle stri). But we've gotta mention to our members that you're not act-ually getting all of the mailings. We've gotten a complaint or two along the lines of, "Why's nasty old Buck Coulson getting all those free mailings?" Ah...

Can you give us more background on "The Naked Time", Juanita? From the description you give, neither of us can recall it at all. And yet it was one of the two best ST shows? (Could have been preempted here, Lord knows. They do things like that in Cleveland.)

But we shall proolly vote for "The Menagerie" as best dramatic etc. How did it twist plot logic and already-established character (Mr. Spock's)? There was only one point (suspense inserted for commercial break--when the broadcast from the planet cut off without reason) at which the logic really fell apart... And, as I think you've mentioned, Spock's emotions/logic are not those of human beings, Earth-type. Once he settles on a logical act as such (what is more logical for the circumstance than returning his ex-captain to the one environment in which he can be useful, helpful, and happy--when he would otherwise be only a drain on a hospital and those about him?), it has been established that Spock is mighty difficult to turn aside. And his own life obviously matters little, if at all, to Spock. And Kirk never was in any danger--nor was anyone else on the Enterprise. And Spock doesn't ever act according to what Earth-types would consider strict logic (witness his behavior when Kirk was confronted by that silicon thing--he wouldn't have killed the critter, but he violently urged Kirk to kill it when he believed Kirk's life in danger from it)...

Sonofagun, LoC (or whatever capitalization you prefer) isn't in Fancy-clopedia II! How about that? At any rate, the reason why people use this sort of term would seem to me to be the reason why any abbreviation is used--it's shorter and quicker to type (who says, "El oh see"?)...

One of my principal games currently is reading Michael Innes mysteries. Have you tried them? I still dote on the name of a pub in one of them--The Mucky Duck.

/"The Naked Time" opened with the Enterprise arriving at a dying planet, due for natural "breaking up", on a mission to collect the scientists manning the observation post there; the scientists are dead, under conditions implying mass insanity. Spock and Young Guilt-Ridden officer (who stupidly exposed his hand while on the planet) report their findings, and Young Guilt-Ridden Officer promptly starts infecting the rest of the crew...the bound-water molecule turned Sulu into a bare-chested swashbuckler, Navigator Riley into a singing drunken Irish king, the nurse (later appearing in the Bloch script) into a nympho -- who grabbed Spock and made him temporarily lose control of his emotions and in effect become a crying drunk. The Drunken Irishman has locked himself in the Engineering Section and diverted power, the mass of the planet is pulling the ship down as the incipient breakup approaches...and all in all, characterization, editing, direction, and plot seemed (to my humble eyes) quite good.

"The Menagerie" contained several holes, although I don't blame Roddenberry a bit for recouping his investment in that first pilot. 1) If the Talosians could reach clear out to the shuttle ship to create the illusion the Commander was a passenger with Kirk, and later on the E., it

seems far-fetched such omnipotent beings would be content to play games of imagination with two cripples the rest of their lives....a rather large chunk of space is at their mental disposal. 2) Spock, as he acted in the flashback sequences, was not at all consistent with the Spock of the current period -- the series has shown Spock gradually loosening up and humanizing from a strait-laced beginning; yet the flashbacks show him grinning, expressing a great deal of emotion, overreacting and being very unSpocklike. 3) Well done with the first season, we have been shown Spock gradually learning a few human tricks, including the ability to lie.....which he had not done at the time "The Menagerie" was run...and yet the entire device for getting into the flashback involved Spock doing a lot of outright lying.

Make no mistake. I liked "The Menagerie", but I didn't think it was as consistent or quite the quality of "Naked Time" and "Corbomite Maneuver".....see earlier comments on the "STAR TREK syndrome". Feel free to nominate "The Menagerie".....but if you nominate an episode of TARZAN all bets are off.... JWC/

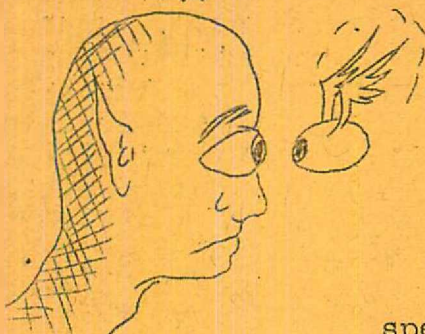
Mike Deckinger, Apartment 12-J, 25 Manor Drive, Newark, NJ. 07106

I have a few comments to make concerning your suggestions as best fan-writers of the past year. But first, I want to note that these past few years have not been particularly outstanding in fan output. With the exception of reliable old Y there have been no outstanding fanzines published regularly, nothing to replace the very noticeable losses of Shaggy and Cry. Similarly, the fanzine content has varied from inexcusably poor to good, with few items ascending above the line.

Back to the writers, though. Of the names given, Ted White is probably the most prolific in the fan field at present, and among the current active writers certainly the best. (He's not quite up to Walt Willis or Harry Warner but since they appear on so limited a basis they are not qualified for a nomination for writings restricted to 1966). Ted is an even, casual, extremely comfortable writer who says things properly and with the right sort of emphasis. He is not given to thick words overburdened with syllables that lend a taint of erudition to an otherwise shallow discourse. Stephen Pickering fits into this category, and by nature is a complete phony. He knows nothing about writing or suitable sentence construction and does nothing but advance the most minute observations, sheathed in unbreakable phrases that defy comprehension. If you dig up some pre-Boondoggle Breen articles, on non-fannish items, you can see the facility that Walter displays in taking these big words, and using them as they should be used. Pickering has a great deal to learn.

I'm glad to see you mentioned Dick Lupoff. Dick writes very little outside of FAPA, but everything he does write is handled with skill and an impeccable knowledge of slang and technical terms. He and Ted White have the same gift; they write comfortably. They read relaxed, at ease and in full command of the situation. They avoid clumsiness and straying thoughts. Alex Panshin's analyses have all been excellent, but provide too limited a scope to judge him. I do feel that his various portions of the unpublished Heinlein book offer the definitive word portrait of Heinlein as a writer and thinker, and represent an enviable expenditure of research and logic. His panning of the Moskowitz book is another good example; he doesn't say anything that hasn't really been said before, but he says it so well that no one is going to have to say anything further.

If ERB-Dom's Hugo was a result of bloc-voting why wasn't the Barsroom series victorious in the best series category? All the talk over the Pong award, and not the Hugo going for best fanzine at the Nycon doesn't worry me. Does any fanzine editor think the Hugo is worth anything, now



that ERE-Dom has one?

Have you seen TREASURE OF THE BLACK FALCON by John Coleman Burroughs? Ballantine believes this one is so bad they refuse to acknowledge anywhere that John Coleman Burroughs is the son of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Or take a look at the Macfadden reissue of THE CHANGELING by A.E. van Vogt. Ninety-six pages of van Vogt for 50¢. Can you remember when you got your money's worth by buying pbs?

All of Avallone's TALES OF THE FRIGHTENED were specifically written for transcription by Boris Karloff. When you hear them spoken in Karloff's best gravely tones they are not quite as bad. Agreed, Avallone's name is on the cover, but you can ascertain this fact only by squinting and rotating the book in proper light, until the name is barely visible, like the last clue in a puzzling mystery. The book's sales are built on Karloff's name, not Avallone's.

But Ted White's name wasn't given, primarily because as Convention Chairman he's ineligible for a Convention award. (Lupoff may also be ineligible, but I was assuming that he wasn't on the con committee. I don't know for certain.

JWC/

Jim Goodrich, 5 Brewster Drive, Middletown, NY, 10940.

Here is some info I hope is not old: Houghton bringing out the edition of LOTR in box for \$17.50; THE WARLOCK by Tucker being pubbed by D'day in Apr @ \$3.95; spy novel LAST CARD by your boy Kirt from Pyramid should be available now, & finally, to improve your vocab: FOUR*LETTER WORD GAME by Hartogs from Lippincott in July @ \$4.95. In Mar '66 ish of Men's Digest (neighbor gave it to me) is an illo that looks like the work of REG — can u confirm? Sept. '66 no. of Knight has fiction by Aldiss & Harlan Ellison, plus cartoons by Rotsler, with cover repping Harlan's story. For all the Ellison fans out there in Star Trek land, will sacrifice a good copy of the above for 75¢. Re free plugs, thanks muchly for Classic Film Collector blurb. And according to my Bible, Variety, ST is now skedded for Fri @ 8:30, not Tues as stated previous week. Next week may be changed again. The bloody bastards are slotting THE AVENGERS against DINO, which means Steed & Co. will be ignored by the masses & my fellow alcoholics. / Tho I've read about Sputnik Digest in lib journals, didn't even see a copy in Manhattan last week. Anderson may be anti-Negro (no Ebony), but it isn't anti-Commie like NY. / Alex's bit on Orphink Annie is worthy of Little Annie Fanny, my ideal. / Agree with u on SWORD OF RHIANNON — but when is Ace going to fire their spastic art director? / That Paris opera program for Carmen should be a collector's item. / To my surprise, SORCERESS OF Q lives up to its delightful cover. Thought pb sf was kept simon pure to protect the juves!

Oh, the Anderson news stand handles Ebony, but the Anderson newsstand is 40 miles away and we didn't happen to be there while that issue was on sale. Disparaging references to the "local" new stand are to the one here in Hartford City. (We might even have made a special trip to Anderson for the Ebony, but we didn't find out about it until too late.) RSC/

Norm Clarke, 9 Bancroft St., Aylmer E., PQ, Canada

Just a note to say thanks for Yandro 167, which arrived today: the "T" on the envelope indicates "Trade", I guess, and by now you must be wonder-

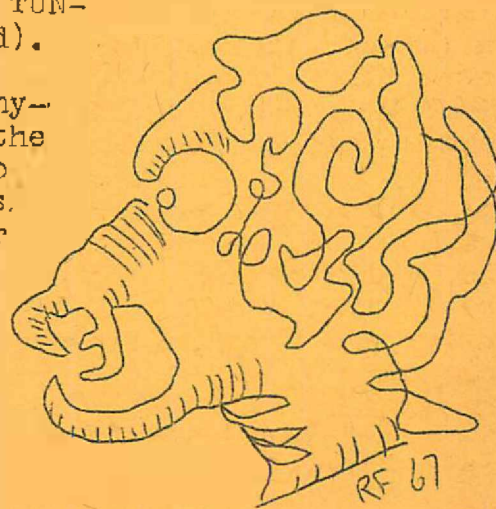
ing what in hell you are trading for anyway. Well, start holding your breath, for, in a mighty burst of energy (since fizzled out), I actually stencilled all of Honque #5, except for the letters and stuff by the Editorial Me. For a while I was almost expecting to get the thing out in February, but it now appears that sometime in March is the deadline, so maybe the thing will actually come out in April. However, I think it will be a pretty good issue ("Another Canadian Humor fanzine containing another goddam convention report"...RSC, Yandro 170). I was thinking of doing a parody of Pickering, but instead will follow your fine editorial example and forget all about him. In a way, though, I wish he hadn't been a thief, for he had so many other endearing qualities. He might even have inspired Boyd to publish another issue of A Bas in order to present a Derogation like those of old, featuring the incomparable "Nit" Pickering. In fact, I suggested that very thing to Boyd, not long ago, and he said, "Who? Stephen Who? Wha'? Hah?" Poor old Boyd is of course not very Hip and Aware these days.

About scandals in fandom: I understand Pelz is working on some sort of chart of fans' sexual activities; it may cause a few eyebrows to twitch, if not actually raise (if you'll pardon the symbolism, all very unintentional). On the other hand, perhaps everyone is already bored by Fannish Sex Stories From Old Berkeley, etc.

That was a good and informative letter from Roddenberry. I must admit that I have been, and am, creebing and nitpicking about much of STAR TREK; still, I don't miss an episode if I can help it, and I guess I'd be sorry if it went off the air. At least there don't seem to be as many Monsters on it as there were at the beginning of the series. One thing that bugs the hell out of me, though it has nothing to do with the program itself, is the obvious utter contempt for the program shown by the local station, which jams as many commercials as possible...no, they jam in more commercials than are possible, at arbitrary points throughout the hour, unconcernedly cutting out chunks of continuity. One evening, I checked the clock: a 8 o'clock -- the regular time for a commercial break -- on came four commercials; back to the program for a short time, and then on came four more commercials. The time when the first of these came on the screen was 8:05. Of course, they do the same thing with movies, but not, I think, with any other prime-time Action or Adventure shows (MAN FROM UNCLE, THE AVENGERS, etc.). In other words, the station obviously considers ST to be a pile of silly crap (like the movies they show) that nobody is really watching.

Anyway, STAR TREK is pretty good stuff, I suppose, considering the general level of tv, and particularly of stf on tv (it cheered me no end to hear that TIME TUNNEL and IT'S ABOUT TIME are to be cancelled). However, I have not yet been moved to be a Loyal Supporter: i.e., I haven't written anybody any letters. If I do, it will be to the local station to tell them what they can do with their commercials, and to the sponsors themselves to assure them that I will never buy any of their products.

Would you please ask all your readers to send cards and letters to Station CJOH-TV, 1500 Merivale Rd., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, saying how much they enjoy the talent show, "Take a Bow", and especially the bearded saxophone player in the band? Thank you.



Dick Lupoff, Merry Hill, Poughkeepsie, NY, 12603

Another duplication of names: Norm Clarke of Queebcon and FAPA fame, and Norm Clarke the New York fringe fan who wrote those nice "Greatest Show Unearthly" articles a few years ago. And our old friend and fan artists Joe (Lee) Sanders, and a neo fan artist who popped up a year or two back signing himself J. Sanders. Turned out, however, that this new fellow is Jim Sanders.

I thought that Dorr was mildly amusing, de Camp his usual sterling self, D'Amassa much too "catalogy" to be effective, and Gilliland very funny. I read almost no fan fiction, so Jay Gerst should not be offended. The Thompsons had the best letter from fans, but Roddenberry's was the most fascinating to read.

John Trimble, 243 Santa Rose Avenue, Oakland, California, 94610

Third thing is your copy of HUGO REPORT #1, and I hope that we're in time for the March Yan. If not the fmz reviews, hopefully in time for some mention of the thing (what it is, where to get it, etc.) in either or both of your editorials. This needs to have wide publicity, so that as many fans as are interested in the Hugos know of it. I couldn't care less what people think of the 'zine as a fanzine, but I want to get some discussion going on this Hugo thing...and the Pongs.

Thanx for any help in this line you can give.

/No fanzine reviews in this issue, and since I finished my editorial without mentioning your publication, I'll just mention here that John was appointed a member of a Hugo Study Committee by the TriCon, and has now published HUGO REPORT #1, which includes Hugo voting regulations, an article by Ted White justifying the Pongs, and other goodies. Available from the above address, for a letter of comment on the Hugo situation, in trade for a fanzine which discusses the Hugos, or for a stamp. RSC/

Ed Meskys, Belknap College, Center Harbor, N.H., 03226

I was surprised by Terry Carr's comments on fan disliking Freud. And I thought I was virtually alone in not being able to swallow the Freudian model of man, whole. And I realize that I know pitifully little about Freudian theory...only what I picked up in passing from reading articles about other matters, and fiction. The only book by Freud that I read was MOSES AND MONOTHEISM, which was fascinating. (So Moses was an Egyptian!) I was only bothered by the racial memory business.

Anyhow, I'll admit I might not be fair because of my limited knowledge, but I still object to what I know. FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON, it seems to me, is based very strongly on the Freudian model of Man. (I use "model" the same way a physicist would when speaking of the rutherford model of the atom or liquid drop model of the nucleus...a simplified, imperfect description which can be used to draw some valid conclusions.) I get the impression that Freudianism isn't regarded as a model, but as t*r*u*t*h, like Astrology. Everyone in this world born at 3:19:23.5 AM, Greenwich Mean Time, will be a...Everyone slapped at the age of three by his father will...

I am bothered by other aspects of Freudianism, too. Every kid at the age of one wanting to screw his mother and fearing castration, etc., sounds like just so much rubbish.

It does have its uses, such as providing a model for writers. I couldn't believe all of it, but the F'ism did provide a universally understood, if not believed, explanation for the hero's actions. Here at least it

makes sense, but I see no point whatsoever to the playing with symbols by Ballard and others. So "Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer" tells, symbolically, of frustrated intercourse. My only reaction is, "So what?" The story still stinks." Or at least it probably does. Since I haven't read it, I can't condemn it outright. But really, so what? Does it really give a story "literary merit" if the writer includes a deep symbolic meaning? *Sigh* I guess the reactions to FINNIGAN'S WAKE and the like show that it does, but I'll never understand that.

/My sentiments exactly....RSG/

WATCH THIS SPACE

article by

JOHN BERRY

In April 1966, a BBC TV programme called TOMORROW'S WORLD investigated a movie-film taken by a woman passenger in an aeroplane over England, which showed a UFO approaching and departing at fantastic speed. I believe this film was shown on US networks. The TOMORROW'S WORLD staff duplicated every facet of the original incident...same plane, same location, same camera and film...and their film also showed the identical phenomena, which, after examination, was shown to be a 'distorted image' of a portion of the aeroplane's tail-plane.

So I keenly watched the same programme on the 28th December 1966, because the blurb announced that TOMORROW'S WORLD would answer this problem: "If and when aliens do arrive here, how are we going to communicate with them?"

The Radio Times pre-announcement enthused over this sensational programme: "Together ((a zoologist, research engineer, and astronomer)) they have produced a sort of blueprint on planetary etiquette which could almost be published as a civil defense pamphlet."

Because of the world scoop over the aforementioned UFO affair, I concluded that this programme really would be sensational, so I prepared to watch it with much enthusiasm...

* * *

Each 'expert' in the field of alien-communication worked on the premise that a common interest should be utilized for breaking the communications barrier, i.e. - an object which would be familiar to us and the aliens. Two experts chose URSA MAJOR, otherwise known variously as the Plough, the Big Dipper or the Great Bear. They stated that aliens would probably only come from the nearest stars, and would therefore be conversant with the shape of the Plough.

On this basis, one expert then produced a square board of wood on which were nailed seven cheap watches with luminous dials. The watches were placed in the shape of the seven stars of the Plough. This motif, he explained, was for an alien who did not have eyes with the appreciation of our particular wavelength of light. In fact, it might not even have eyes at all, but would possibly be sensitive to radiation.

Perhaps, another expert opined, they would be blind, but have an extra

strong sense of smell. All you require, he said, is to hammer seven onions on the board, also in the shape of the Plough. These were serious suggestions.

The alien approaches you, and notes a board with seven watches ticking on it. For all the alien knows, it could be an infernal machine. Personally, if I met an alien in my garden one morning, I would feel rather an idiot waving my watchboard. Another thing -- I couldn't afford seven luminous watches...I could afford onions, though. But presuming the alien could sniff the onions, and with a dedicated sense of smell deduce they formed a pattern of the Plough...after it has performed this nostril-twitching feat, what does it prove? Remember, tears may be pouring down your face at the time.

If by some remote chance the watches or onions do the trick, and the Plough is recognized by these media, what is the next step?

This obvious question was quickly glossed over by the introduction of the zoologist, who displayed a picture of a monkey grinning like mad. The scientist explained that when a monkey grins, it is scared. Ergo, if an alien grins at you, it is petrified, and if you grin at it, showing a mouthful of gleaming molars, it will think you are scared.

Grinning like mad, the zoologist then gave his suggestions for explaining aliens that you are 'highly intelligent'. All the equipment was a piece of chalk and a blackboard. "You have to demonstrate that you are conversant with the two-times tables," he said, and did a couple of kindergarden sums on the blackboard. One dot and one dot make two dots...two dots together, and another two dots close by make four dots. I grew quite dizzy with the concentration required to show how highly intelligent I was.

I repeat that this was a serious programme, and yet they made no attempt to answer many obvious questions. For example, if an alien race land, and are met by a grinning horde bearing aloft boards with various devices depicting The Plough, will they consider people who are not similarly equipped as being enemies?

The presumption is that the Plough is all important, and will immediately be recognised by aliens. Suppose the aliens come from a distant point in the Galaxy (if the BBC can have onions nailed to a board, I can have faster-than-light travel), the Plough will be meaningless to them, won't it?

Most damning of all, though, is the presumption that the aliens will either have a sense of smell, normal vision, or geiger-counter-like antennae. Suppose the aliens communicate by colour, or by sprays of hydrochloric acid, or by turning double somersaults?

The truth is, I think, that most non-fans find themselves unable to grasp the extreme diversity of probable alien life. 'Little green men' is the usual description suggested by mundane people who deign to consider for a moment the question of alien life.

We sf fans are weaned on the exciting possibilities, and we know that onions and luminous watches hammered on a board to make the Plough will have no meaning to aliens. But non-fans to whom I spoke who saw this programme thought it to be fascinating and authentic.

Probably the sale of luminous watches and onions increased enormously after the programme. There are susceptible people about, you know.

Ed. Note: We keep getting these letters from fans saying they'll see us at the NyCon, or the Marcon, or some other convention. Sorry, but our convention-going this year will be restricted to the Midwestcon at the end of June. I never really had any intention of attending the Worldcon this year, ~~tho I did make~~ some joking references about going if Juanita sold enough novels. (Well, if she sells enough -- like enough to buy us a new car and have something left over.....) No, we'll see you at the Midwestcon. RSC