

O C T O B E R

HOCUS is edited and published monthly by Mike Deckinger, 85 Locust Avenue, Millburn, New Jersey, U.S.A. Available for sporadic letters of comment, 5¢ an issue, contributions, and trades are also welcomed.

L E S M O T S

Publishing a frequent, small-size fanzine is something which I've often wanted to do. In a sense, it is still an experiment for me, since I am not absolutely certain that I'll be able to maintain this schedule, though naturally I'm making every attempt to do so. HOCUS will be published near the end of each month, and dated the following month. Chances are it won't exceed 10 pages which will mean less work for me, and also keep it within the 3¢ limit. I'm not interested in putting out a thick, heavy fanzine every few months, but a smaller one every month. No doubt some copies will also be sent through the apas I'm in. I expect to send the next issue through the next NAPA mailing, and perhaps through OMPA as well, though I really don't need the credit yet.

Contributions of material are always welcome, provided they are not too long and have something to say. It's been said before in other fanzines and I may as well repeat it just the same, but fan-fiction is not appreciated, unless it's good fan-fiction. On the other hand, faan-fiction is desired, and other material, too.

The remainder of this zine will be made up of letters on #14 which were crowded out of last issue. I had several pages already on stencil, so there's no sense in letting them go to waste. So the letters here will be those of several issues ago. I don't know what will be in next-ish yet, but whatever it is, it will be there.

Now, as to how you go about getting this. HOCUS can be obtained through trades (all-for-all preferably), contributions, 5¢ an issue, or letters of comment, written at least every 3 issues. I'm not asking a letter for every issue I send out, but I would like a card or something else letting me know how you stand on the mailing list. I don't propose to keep deadwood on the list, and I do demand some notification from you. If there is none you'll be dropped, so don't ever permit yourself to fall into that predicament.

THIS ZINE SUPPORTS RON ELLIK FOR TAFF

Alan Dodd
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I guess from the letter column I didn't really expect most U.S. fans reading my remarks on "The Saviour of The Western World" would agree with me, after all, the U.S. State Department has had some 17 years in which to whitewash von Braun and it's only to be understood that even with their limited resources they should have finally succeeded to such a high degree. I'm sure that when the time comes, people like Ted White and Al Andrews--should they survive missile attack, will look upon the approaching clouds of radioactive dust and think to themselves about the Russia missile engineer who did the job--"Well, he was only working for his country. He was really a good chap, and we mustn't blame him." Oh yes, with everyone around them dead or dying I am certain such people can be philosophical about the whole thing, unlike my "emotional dislike" as Al Andrews refers to it I'm sure both he and Ted will review the missile attacks with complete complacency. I am sure that when they have seen their own people killed and mutilated around them they will not feel any invectives toward those responsible, they will feel no "emotional dislikes" towards the missile men, at the other end in Russia. After all, they will still be alive (for awhile) and in that time they should get several days in which to contemplate what a clever fellow the Russian is who is doing his job so well, and fancy him not being a member of the communist party either--why, after the war another country will be able to employ him, give him a nice job, and then when another enemy comes along use him against that. Yes, I am sure those who have never known what it is like can be magnanimous about it--but next time when the other fellow drops his rockets, they'll have to be a little quixker in praising him, or the radioactivity won't give them enough time.

Always the subject of the atom bombing seems to come up when I mention the good doctor's saintly missile operations and the only comments I have to make are these. The Japanese in the last war were fanatics, quite prepared to sacrifice their own lives, provided they could take the enemy with them--at the time of the bombing of Hiroshima the Japanese still held countless island strongholds, they had a depleted air force of several thousand planes held back for kamikaze operations, and, what is more important they had several hundred thousand prisoners of war--not only soldiers but civilians, and women and children as well. If "Operation Olympic", the invasion of the mainland of Japan had taken place, it is almost a guarantee they would have started killing everyone of their prisoners, they would have held out on their islands till everyone was dead--there would have been snipers, suicide squads, kamikaze planes, crash boats, and every other fanaticall weapon used against American invading troops. The final death total would have been a thousand times more than the comparatively few people killed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So the comparison between the bombers of the Enola Gay, and von Braun, is a poor one. Wernher Von Braun is the inventor of the V1--code letter "V" standing for "Vergeltungswaffe" meaning simply "reprisal weapon". Von Braun is not the glorified space engineer he makes out to be--he's just a dirty Nazi reprisal engineer and the only reason he holds the position he does today is because he is being used to develop reprisal weapons against the Russians. The space travel nonsense is secondary--it's the old game of "not losing face" if the Russians have one up there than the U.S. Senators want one up there or they lose face. Primarily von Braun is known for making weapons to kill.

Al Andrews asks whether there aren't some ex-Nazis being paid in British pounds for me to take care of first. Well Al, the British Government has many faults, but I'm proud to say they don't employ - any Nazi scum like von Braun--unlike the American Government, they seem to be a bit particular as to who THEY employ. At least we don't employ the men responsible for killing so many people in England, here, the victims would turn over in their graves if they knew what was going on.

Not that it's merely the individual, Von Braun himself--but I feel the same way towards any of the other Nazis employed by the American Government, even people like Major General Walter Dornberger now employed by Bell Aero Corporation of New York--yet no one sees them for what they are but the distant stranger who knows their products with great intimacy. But if it is divine to forgive--then I suggest the same people had better get out the hammer and sickle flags, the American citizenship papers and fat contract, because after this next war you're going to need them for the Russian equivalent of von Braun, who, I'm sure never belonged to any undesirable party, never did anything but what he was told. Yes--get the welcome mat and the bucket of white-wash out too, because you're going to need him to use against the Chinese or the Egyptians--or whoever the next enemy is. Or does the fact that HIS rockets could reach you make all the difference??? Surely not. He's a grand fellow this Russian, good at his job, he'll enjoy settling down among you, with his family--of course there might just be a few Americans who had people among those killed by his rockets but I'd not take too much notice of their "diatribes", "invectives", or "emotional dislikes", just because they saw a few thousand of their own people killed by his rockets. After all, he was only being paid in rubles to do his job, wasn't he?

Bill Conner

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Bob Silverberg's article ((Bill is commenting on #13)), while it is a reprint dating from a 1951 fanzine, is better than most of the stuff he's had published in prozines lately. And this is a sad commentary on Bob's writing. I know Bob enjoyed writing this fannish article; he would have had to enjoy writing it after all, what other motives than pure pleasure moves us to fanatic? But I wonder if he really enjoys writing that sh--, er crud he turns out for prozines. ((Maybe not, but I'll bet he enjoys receiving the checks from the editors)).

Your review of ON THE BEACH was a good one, but I disagree with you in regard to the over-all quality of the film. Nevil Schute was an outsider of the realm of sf and fantasy, and his novel was much less than some of the notable novels of atomic doom that sf writers have turned out.((Yes, but that was the big attraction, here Schute, a hitherto mainstream writer turns his talents to a theme usually relegated to sf writers. Naturally readers would be interested in how a writer--not acquainted with the field, would handle the theme. Why do you think Wouk's "The Lomokome Papers" received such a build-up from Collier's? Had he submitted it under a pen name to AMAZING or FANTASTIC it would probably have been rejected. It's a sad commentary on the current literary situation when it's the name, and not the content, that sell the book)). I agree with you that the streets of San Francisco seemed all too clean and free of bodies. And I can't help but believe that there would be all sorts of riots and disorders

in an end-of-the-world situation. Undoubtedly there would be some murder, rape, looting, and general orgies of sex and drinking among the let's-have-fun-while-we're-still-living crowd. And you can damn well bet there'd be all sorts and varieties of hysteria, religious and otherwise.

I would suggest that Alan Dodd read The Night Hamburg Died which tells of how the RAF cremated tens of thousands of German civilians alive, in their great air raid against this city. Yes, I grant that this was in retaliation, and I grant that Germany (Hitler and the Nazis) started it. But war is hell, and English hands were not without the blood of many thousands of German men, women and children in the second World War.

Undoubtedly there is much that I don't know about von Braun, but it seems to me that Alan's wish that he be the first to die a slow death from radiation poisoning puts him in the same class as the Nazi butchers like Himmler and Eichmann. Murder is murder, regardless of who is doing it and for what reasons; the line dividing murder and self-defence is an indeterminate one, and this is usually decided in the courts of law. Was it in self-defence that the English made a huge blast-furnace out of Hamburg? Was it in self-defence that the United States A-Bombed Japan? War is madness, and it may be one madness that man will have to outgrow--or else.

I've thought that von Braun should be pitied. Why? Well it is a fact that most Germans did not know what was going on in the concentration camps till after the war was over. The extermination camps were TOP SECRET; and they were so secret that Jews who were being exterminated were gullible enough to walk into the gas rooms of the camps, thinking they were being given showers---only gas would come hissing out of the shower heads. ((Systems of mechanized murder like this accurately point out how Germans were little above animals, and still are, though I tend to think more officers would have been aware of these operations during WW2)).

I'm afraid that Mr. Dodd is guilty of a common sin; that of making opinions and condemning his fellow man too hastily, and with too little thought!

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Bill Donaho
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To answer your question on the House Unamerican Activities Committee, I do believe that (unlike McCarthy who just found himself an issue) these men are sincere. However, in the first place they are not investigating communists, they are investigating all sorts of left-wingers and non-conformists and labeling them "communists". To strike somewhere near home, as far as they are concerned, if someone is an atheist, he is also a Communist, or at least a strongly potential communist and should not be allowed any sort of government or teaching job.

This committee, as well as McCarthy, has yet to uncover a genuine Communist and they have caused a lot of damage to innocent people. This is well documented.

o For that matter this is supposed to be a free country. ((Free is the last word I'd use to describe the U.S.)). I can see that it is necessary to keep communists out of war plants and other sensitive positions, but as far as I'm concerned they have as much right to jobs in the Post Office, National Parks, etc, as well as trying to

propagate their ideas as anyone else. ((This I don't see at all. I get the impression that the United States considers itself above the less ethical tactics of suppressing speakers for communism, and thus grants subversives free rein in what they have to say. Now on paper this may sound all fine and dandy, but it's about time the Government learned that every man, is not an honorable trustworthy man, walking the straight and narrow, and following the golden rule. It sickens me to see the way we try to uphold precedents and follow the constitution by permitting morons and potentially harmful persons like commies, Rockwell and his mad bunch, etc. to talk. Despite what people may think, there are enough ignorant persons of sub-standard intelligence who will believe what is said))

The cover of FOCUS #14 was hilarious, as was John Berry's book review. "The Lonely Gollate" was very well done. Don Franson was very amusing and nostalgic. The lettercol was good, Rog Ebert's reviews were ok. It was all top material and I enjoyed it. Repro was good, but you suffered from a lack of art work and layout. I'm still chortling over your line: "You'll wonder where the Yellow went...."

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Jhim Linwood
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((Jhim's address just has a fantastic internal rhyme-scheme, I've noticed)).

Now I really loved that cover, I'd say it was the best thing of its kind since VECTOR #6.

Franson's piece was really great, and makes me feel as if I've been missing something. The Brit. reprint of "Planet" contained no lettercol, if I remember, in fact, I didn't buy it; my father did, presumably for its sexy covers. The lettercols in "Authentic", "Nebula" and "New Worlds" were/are pretty square.

The zap-gun is well and truly O-U-T over here (by popular demand) so I'm continually searching Woolworth's toy counters for its successors. I am particularly chaffed ((?)) by a life-like machine gun, which, when triggered, emits sparks and gives off a realistic rat-tat-tat! Ron Bennett introduced a small hand-pistol which fires ping-pong balls at the London Eastercon, but this I fear is doomed, as the ammunition is rarely retrievable, and each ball costs 1/6. ((I used to have a long, slender blue rifle with a circular muzzle which could fire six red ping-pong balls in rapid succession. It was loaded by squeezing the balls in, and fired by pumping the handle, and springs released the ball. The velocity of the missiles was never very great, and they scarcely did and harm to their targets (excepts when coated with ink or perfume), Mattel puts out a machine-gun like you mentioned, also)).

The critics of "On the Beach" should take into account the political pressure Kramer was under; had he made OTB a la Linwood he would never have been allowed to make movies in Hollywood again, thereby deriving us of the even more devastating "Inherit the Wind", which his superiours and U.S. right wing politicians, seem moronic enough not to realize that it is a lovely kick at McCarthyism. Kramer was also shy of including Schute's history of WW3, spoken in the book by scientist Osborne. According to him, the war will begin in Albania started by small powers, who presumably gained access to the bomb by NATO. Have you noticed how Schute has the uncomfortable knack of making the uncanny but accurate predictions he does? In other books he forecast Dive-bombing, the Blitz, and metal fatigue in aircraft.

Deckinger here again---Sf films have invaded tv once again. At the moment my brothers are watching an atrocity called "Fire Maidens of Outer Space" which I've had the misfortune of seeing before, and which has the worst special effects I've ever seen (no I take that back; KING DINOSAUR had the worst). The invaders in this picture aren't even invaders, though I must say they seem stronger than the martians in INVADERS FROM MARS who couldn't even keep the zippers on their costumes up.

This does not mean however, that all tv sf films are cruddy. Tonight on The Late Show INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS is being shown. This is an adoption of the Jack Finney book, made about 4 years ago by Walter Wanger, concerning the "pods" from outer space who take over a town by imitating human beings. Despite the fact that I've seen it before, chances are I'll watch it again, because it is definitely one of the better films. And I like Dana Wynter too. Several days ago The Late Show had DR. CYCLOPS which was the fore-runner of THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN. Even though it was made 20 years ago, the effects were very well done. And finally, in several weeks MILLION DOLLAR MOVIE, which is a show originating from New York which has complete films every week, shown twice a day and three times on weekends, is showing RODAN, the Japanese thriller which is the best Toho film made. It will also be in color I'm told, and at times like this I wish I had a color set.

I'd be very interested in hearing what you think of the new format and regularity I'm using on HOCUS. Please write, if only to send money. Now that CRY has won the HUGO perhaps the era of FANAC is beginning to lessen. I don't see why others, except for Greg Benford in VOID, haven't advanced the theory that the only real focal point of the last year or so in fandom was FANAC. At the con Ron mentioned to me he was dropping from the staff, so can this mean that FANAC will become less influential with Terry solely in charge?

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