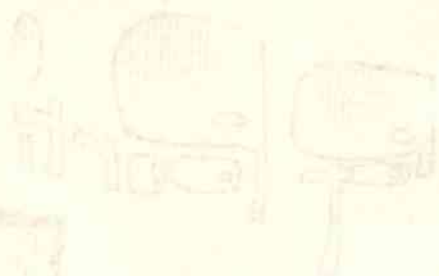


Fourti

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WHAT'S WITH BERRY?

I'm rather late starting this issue, I was jolted into SAPSac by the arrival of the #67th mailing today, and by the totally unexpected news that I topped the poll and have thus become president of this most august organisation. Although, over the years, I've been thrilled with some of my top-placings, you all know that I never vote, except for OEsShip. I've always felt sorry for the characters who come low in the polls, reasoning that being in SAPS isn't a sort of exam, having a yearly grading. Notwithstanding this, I'll say again how delighted I am, and for this coming year at least I'll have a bash at mailing comments. I don't think I can show my appreciation in a more desirable way.....

Main news to fellow-SAPSites is that Wally Weber stayed at my house a few weeks ago whilst on his TAFF trip to Britain. I've written a long humorous account of the 48 hours in CRY OF THE NAMELESS, but as I promised, even if I repeat myself in places, I'm also going to write a page or two about Weber in this. I didn't manage to get to the Con in England, so I can't write about what Weber did there, but I'll give you the lowdown on all that went on at MON DEBRIS. It's on a few pages thence....

I've just finished reading the latest JAMES BOND novel, YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE (Ian Fleming). The story is a sequel to HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE, published last year, and if you recall, James Bond got married to a gel, and four hours after the ceremony (if I remember correctly, their 'union' was consummated some days beforehand) the car gets shot up and the bride snuffs it. YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE starts with James Bond up the creek. He's on the booze, has made a mess of a coupla jobs, and is almost a security leak. The psychiatrist suggests the only way to rehabilitate him is to give him an impossible assignment, so that it takes up all his enthusiasm, and he hasn't got time to feel sorry for himself.

I've no intention of spoiling the story by giving away intimate plot details, save to tell you that everything hinges on Bond being acceptable as a Japanese. This is done with the aid of a walnut die and his eyebrows cunning shaved so as to slant upwards. Providing you accept this, and you strain your imagination to the limit, you might settle down to enjoy the whole fantastic story, which, as you'll have guessed, takes place in Japan.

Ian Fleming spent some time in Japan getting 'copy' for this story, and it features quite a travelogue deal. All sorts of insights into quaint Japanese customs, including feeding cows bottles of beer, a chore which Bond does, this seeming to be necessary for his final transition into a Nip.

Followers of James Bond's sex life will find, to their surprise, that towards the end of the story it becomes necessary for the gel to slip him an aphrodisiac.

This is a family magazine, and therefore I cannot actually quote some of the expressions used during general conversation between Bond and his male associates. The obvious four-letter word as used in Lady Chatterly's Lover is spelled out, the letters being emphasized by christian names. Another expression, the first time I've ever seen it in print, concerns a part of the male anatomy being utilized as neck-ware. (I think I put that rather well.)

Surely the climax to the story is exciting, but to be quite honest I'm getting a bit fed up with James Bond. He's become just a name, a facade, there's really no personality behind him now. Earlier Bond books, such as CASINO ROYALE, really made me pant, I saw him as a hero. I suppose I shall buy next years James Bond book, but only to maintain my complete file

Don't let me put you off, though.....

Six months ago, when I was working on POT POURRI #32, I casually mentioned the Beatles, never thinking that soon they would be as well known in the States as in Great Britain. In the same context I'd like to mention their latest rivals for top pop fame (someone mentioned them in the 67th mailing) the Rolling Stones. First of all, though, I'd better state my position regarding these pop artistes. Frankly, I get a kick out of listening to them. As you know, month by month I am gradually building up an extensive classical music collection. I've about 60 l.p's now (that's chicken feed with Toskey's collection, for example, but he only had 60 at one time, didn't he?) but I also buy a coupla pops for the children, showing them, in my way, that I'm not being selfish by playing Brahms all the time. I was a Beatle Faan, let's face it, and I think Little Richard is the greatest, especially when he gets in top gear. But I find now that almost everyone is a pop fiend. I even flew over to Birmingham a couple of weeks ago to see my old mother, and she even switched tv on to see the Rolling Stones. So, cleverly I've come back again to the Rolling Stones. There are five of them, and ostensibly they are R and B exponents. Their discs have a sort of darkest-Africa beat, which always succeeds in getting me to souff lumps out of the carpet as I perambulate around the room. But it isn't only their music which is interesting, they have even more blatant personalities than the Beatles. They are non-conformists (not the religion, stupid). My daughter gets a pop magazine, and the blurb photographs show this up well. Their hair is even longer than the Beatles, their attire is completely unsophisticated, one of them has different buttons on his jacket, and a couple of the others wear only pullovers (and pants, natch, I mean as opposed to jackets). The lead vocal, Mike Jagers, affects a slightly effeminate aura, he is slim, his physical activities on the stage being reminiscent of a ballet dancer. He is quoted in the newspapers as saying he gets his hair cut at a ladies hairdresser, and on the BBC wireless today it reports that they weren't allowed into a restaurant because they hadn't got ties on. (This happened to me in Detroit, so I mustn't make a big thing of it.) Trouble is that the people who are trying to find out what is wrong with the youth of today quote the massive teenage following of the Rolling Stones as proof that the country is going to the dogs.

I understand that the Rolling Stones are having discs issued in America, so take time out and listen to them if you can....what do you think of them, Elinor ?

There's a cartoon in today's SUNDAY MIRROR...it depicts a man and his wife walking along the pavement. The man is looking over his shoulder at a man who has just passed them. This second man has a bewildered expression on his face. He is naked except for a grass skirt. They've made him look as stupid as they can. The caption reads, "Good gracious, that's my psychiatrist." As I said, the impact depends on the utterly moronic spectacle of the psychiatrist. They've drawn a beanie on his head.....

Time for a joke, I don't put jokes in very often, but this is a classic, hope you haven't heard it before...

A little boy, saying his prayers, concludes..."God Bless Mommy and Daddy and Granny and Grandpa...especially Grandpa, as he's dying tomorrow."

Next morning, the old man was as stiff as a board in bed, and the father put it down as a coincidence.

Some months later, the child finished his prayers with "And God Bless Mommy and Daddy and Granny, and especially Granny, because she's dying tomorrow."

Next day, the father's worst fears were confirmed. He reckoned the child must be psychic. It was just too much to be a coincidence, wasn't it. He forgot about it gradually, until about two years later, the child concluded "And God Bless Mommy and Daddy, and especially Daddy, as he's dying tomorrow."

'Daddy' woke up next morning, flexed his fingers and toes, and discovered he was still alive. He refused to shave, either with a cut throat or electric razor, in case he cut his throat or electrocuted himself. He ate no breakfast, in case he was poisoned. He wouldn't drive to the office in case he crashed, he hired a taxi to do the job, and promised the driver a fiver tip if he took the back streets and drove slowly. The day dragged agonisingly on...he opened all the windows in case he suffocated...a large chandelier hung over his desk, and he moved the desk in case the thing fell on him. Came five o'clock, and he was still alive. He couldn't believe it. He hired the same taxi and driver, offered the same incentive, and reached his front gate. He negotiated the path with care, in case he tripped and broke his neck. He hammered the front door, and when his wife answered it, he almost collapsed in her arms.

"Hell, what a day I've had," he sobbed.

"What a day you've had," she said, " what a day I've had. The postman dropped dead on the doorstep this morning."

Space stamps...well, I've almost got a 100 per cent collection now. It's taken me quite a bit of time and money to trace them all down, but it became a sort of obsession with me. I've got several contacts in England, some of them charging three times the catalogue price, others just one third of it...showing how the demand for space stamps has flushed out the mercenary types. Trouble is, whilst I've been tracking down the old ones (and some rare overprints) I've ignored the latest 1964 issues. Yesterday I got a 1964 issue of ten astronauts...Roumania. Four of these are Americans, Messrs Glenn, Scott-Carpenter, Schirra and Cooper, the other six the Russian astronauts. There's also a 1964 Russian set of seven 'Journey to the Stars' which shows four Russian space scientists and three satellites. I note with pleasure the publishing of an American space stamp commemorating SYNCOM II. I'm still working hard on my notes before publishing lists of rocket flights and associated space stamps.

In case you miss the symbolism of the ATOM front cover, well, I just sort of mentioned casually to Arthur Thomson that I had just been elected president of SAPS, and, shucks, this is his way of commemorating the event. Admittedly I mentioned it twenty seven times.....

I have just finished the mss of the sequel to the last Goon storyprovisional title is HUBBLE, BUBBLE, TOIL AND ROUBLE. I'm hoping to get Arthur Thomson to extensively illo it, and hope to feature it in the next mailing.

Er, so that's it for another three months...and I do really intend to feature mailing comments.

A point just struck me, I was disappointed to see the Walter Breen Affair invade SAPS. One very prominent SAPSite has told me he's resigning because of it, and although I've written to get him to change his mind, I may not have been successful. I mean, fellahs, play the jolly old game and all that.....

John Berry
1964.

It's over a year since I wrote the last chapter of my army memoirs. To save you flogging the old grey matter in an effort to find out ' what has gone', I had just completed four months at an Officer Cadet Training Unit at Alton Towers, Staffordshire, early in 1945. I wanted to join my home regiment, the Warwickshire Regiment, (because I was born and lived in Birmingham.....)

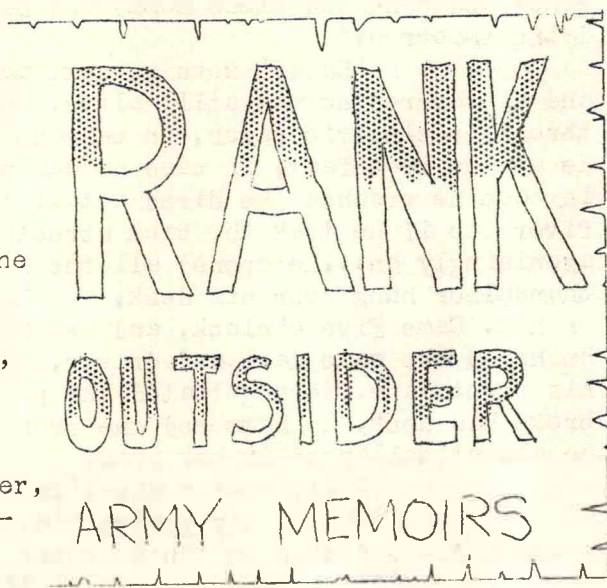
"We've got our regiments," someone shouted, "there's a list on the Company Office notice board."

I joined in the general stampede, it was like a crowd of schoolboys wanting to know the results of their end-of-term examinations.

The list was in alphabetical order, and I saw the statement that 2/Lieutenant J.E.Berry was posted to the Manchester Regiment.

The Manchester Regiment. ? I'd never even heard of it. What was even more revealing, no one else had ever heard of it either. I had no connections with Manchester at all, and I couldn't possibly understand how the hidden brains at the War Office had arrived at such a fantastic permutation. The only compensation was that tall Highlanders found themselves in the Devonshire Regiment, and proud Cornishmen started making frantic efforts to learn the bagpipes.

Although this was a shock to us, it was nothing to the chagrin displayed by that valiant needle and thread brigade, the itinerant Regimental tailors. As I've described in a previous chapter, they had their little huts scattered throughout the local village, and at the beginning of our four months course they had been prepared to accept that we would all pass out as officers, and had commenced to make service dress for the



regiments which we hoped we'd join. In those days the British Army believed in regimental tradition, in each regiment having its own personality...consequently, each regiment had its own variations on officer's service dress...the Scottish regiments, of course, featuring the kilt as their premier motif. There wasn't too much difference between the service dress of the Warwickshire Regiment and the Manchester Regiment (or so my tailor cunningly led me to believe), indeed, all the tailor did was to lop off the large brass buttons and substitute another set of slightly different size. There remained the problem of the English men going to Scottish outfits, and vice versa. Many were the harrowing scenes of mental torment I witnessed that last afternoon, as, inspired by the tailors, a multitude of brand new officers commenced a series of frantic uniform changes, and here and there, like mother hens, tailors would run pins and white thread dubiously to tighten or loosen trousers or kilts, telling each young gentleman ' it's a superb fit, sir.'

The Passing Out Parade, one of the necessary evils of being commissioned, came and went. There remained only the Dance, held in an hotel in a diminutive town called Hanley, a few miles to the north. This was an affair I prefer to forget. It was the ultimate in snobbery. We were all second lieutenants of but a few hours...but without exception we all swaggered about the dance hall like bantam cocks. The non-commissioned men, the keen sergeants and sergeant-majors, who had directed us to the dizzy heights, were not invited. We preened ourselves, frequently using the words 'actually' and 'I say, old boy'. No one got drunk, or behaved in any way unruly...all were anxious not to degrade the shiny single pip on each shoulder, which we had worked really hard for. The gals, who, in previous weeks, had been in real danger of being raped by these superbly fit physical specimens, were now subjected to cocktail-party type nonsensical prattle. Gone was the sexy body-jerking of the jive...now, we 'gentlemen' pranced decorously to the Sir Roger de Coverley, or the Military Two Step. It was all too sickening, this sudden abstract metamorphosis from 'man' to 'gentleman'...

I was given five days leave, and was told to report to The Dale, Chester, when the leave finished.

The Dale was an army barracks several miles due north of the ancient town of Chester, on the River Dee. It was shared by two regiments, the Manchester Regiment and the Cheshire Regiment. It wasn't until I arrived there that I discovered that those two regiments were heavy machine gun outfits. I had been trained as an infantry man, and after my service in the Parachute Regiment I naturally presumed that, being a super infantryman (as paratroops were,) I would be commissioned in a totally infantry regiment.

Anyway....

The Officer's Mess was quite a large old house, part of an estate in which, presumably, the fairly new barracks had been erected. Only the senior officers actually lived in the house, we junior officers lived in barrack-type brick-buildings about a hundred yards away. German prisoners-of-war were our batmen. Batmen? I shared a room with another second lieutenant, a month senior to me. He was tall, blond, well-built, his father was Norwegian, although he had been born in England. He was well-spoken (compared with my Birmingham accent) and rich, and confessed to me that he couldn't understand either why he had been 'dumped' in the Manchester Regiment.

A little about this regiment. It had been formed circa

the middle of the 18th century, er, 1758 to be exact...it was called the '63rd and 96th of foot'. and had fought all over the world in the following couple of centuries. Many of the senior officers at The Dale had been members of the 2nd battalion which had been captured almost entirely at Singapore in 1942...we juniors regarded them with awe as they told us terrible stories about being beaten up by the Japs.

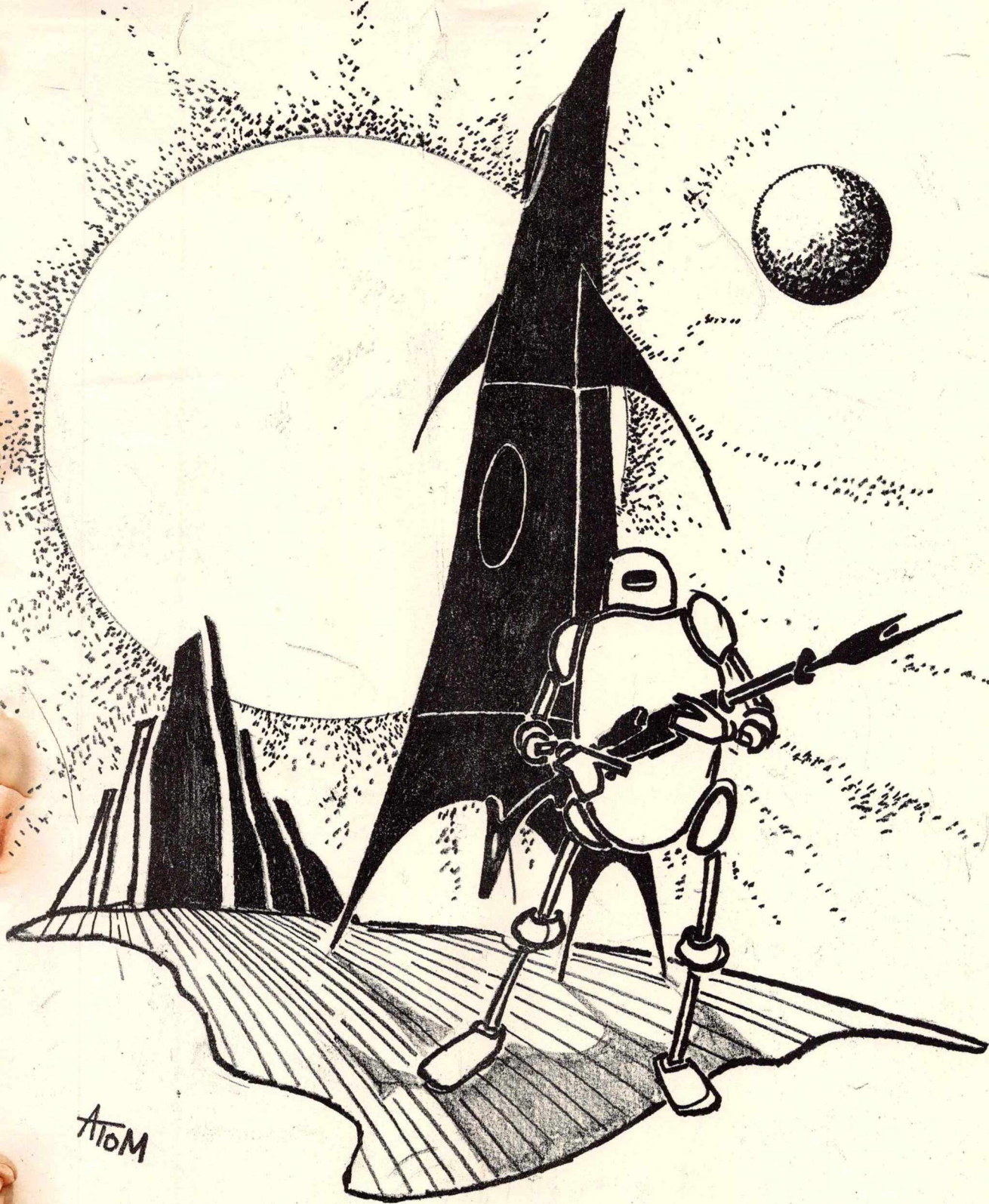
The Dale catered for training young soldiers the art of using the heavy machine gun. When they arrived they had but six weeks service in the army. I knew absolutely nothing about the heavy machine gun, and was immediately given a platoon of thirty men to train them for ten weeks.

My platoon sergeant had won the Military Medal in Sicily. So far I had been a non-combatant, and yet this strapping man saluted me every morning and told me proudly that the platoon was ready for my inspection. I didn't worry overly about the appearance of the men, so long as they weren't blatantly scruffy. I, personally, have always been an untidy dresser...

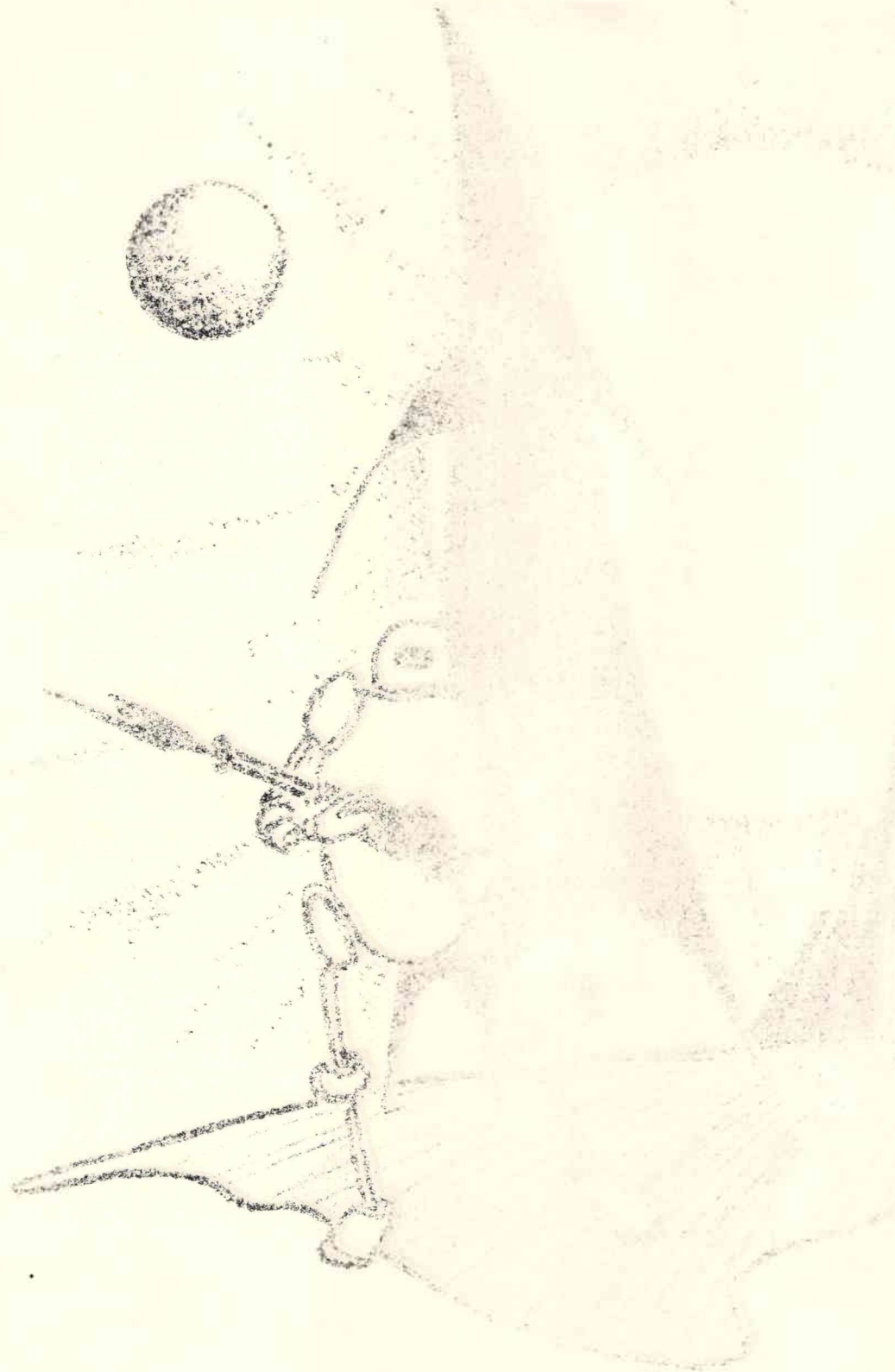
It must have got to the ear of the Company Commander that whenever heavy machine gun drill came round, I sloped off. He immediately organised a special course for my Norwegian friend and myself. A perky and somewhat cheeky young sergeant flogged us to death. Hell, it was very complicated. It took two men to handle the gun (perhaps more, I forget) and there were all sorts of knobs and levers, and a whole series of drills to go through when the gun stopped firing. Now the infantry machine gun, the Bren, was a snip, I could strip it and put it together again in about thirty seconds. But this blasted heavy gun was damned annoying. You could even use it tactically, like an artillery piece, you could fire it via a map...you plotted yourself on the map, plotted where the enemy was, elevated the thick barrel and let fly. I had no interest in it, and I'm very slow when it comes to things I'm not interested in. Eventually I got it taped, and shortly after this an order came round making the Manchester Regiment purely an infantry outfit.

All young officers took it in turns to be Duty Officer. Instead of being out with the boys, we sat in a little room all day, and sort of acted as liaison between the battalion and the outside world. You had to use your initiative quite a lot. Added to this, there was the old army chore of going round the merts tables in the cookhouse and asking them 'Any complaints?' I always felt the men considered this was the last infringement of their privacy. When I had been a private soldier, I know that the men at the tables looked upon the visiting officer as a necessary evil. If you did have a complaint, you were merely bringing yourself under notice. There was usually plenty of food, and it was also good food. The Duty Sergeant also accompanied you, and as a sign of his office he wore a wide red sash across his body. At night, instead of feasting at the Mess, and drinking all night, you had to stop in this same little room, and sleep there, and meals were brought to you by the German prisoners. In the middle of the night, you'd wake up and carry out a snap inspection of the Night Guard. I've always been a heavy sleeper, and more than once during the night the Guard Sergeant had to wake me up and remind me to inspect his guard. Once, I felt so tired I thought 'To hell with it,' so I told him to bring the Duty Book to me and I would sign it as though it had been a snap inspection. This was a bad mistake. Word got round amongst the men that I was 'easy-going'....

John Berry
1964



ATOM



HORIZONTAL

FANAC

I do not wish my fannish brethren any harm at all. In fact, long life and prosperity to you all, say I. But, however well-blessed you are with vibrant health, sometime, maybe tomorrow, maybe in ten years, a trifling illness will cause you to spend a few days in bed. Some BNF's, I am given to understand, annually spend a few days in their bed, to marshall their resources for

another giddy twelve months. They forget all about fandom on direct order from their psychiatrists.

Myself, a recent post-graduate neo-fan, and an apprentice fanned to boot, am merely on the bottom rung of the looong BNF ladder, and when I was told by my doctor to spend a few days in bed because of a bad attack of influenza, I said to myself, "My fanac will continue."

"My fanac will continue."

Those stirring words pounded on my brain as I feebly raised my head above the blanket, and, with difficulty, opened my bloodshot eyes. My head seemed unduly thick, all my bones ached and my wheezing breath was like the Pacific 510 (or whatever number it is) telling a tunnel it was coming. Otherwise, I told my unbelieving self, all was well. I moved into a twitching sitting position, fell back exhausted, and discovered a new series of stabbing pains. Whenever my posterior came into contact with the sheet-covered mattress, it hurt. I tried turning over on my side - both sides-but each hip radioed back the same urgent message... 'OUCH'.

Was this to finish my fanac before it started.?

No.

After some hours of meditation, I solved the problem by stuffing a couple of pillows under the small of my back. I felt rather like a drawn bow. I derived some physical satisfaction from this position, however, and whilst counting my blessings, I had a visit from my wife's maiden aunt. A look of incredulity crossed her face, and she fainted. She brought her own doctor back later for a second opinion, but I don't really know what diagnosis he arrived at, as I understand he has given up his practice and retired to the woods as a hermit.

After spending one day in this position, I began to suffer severe neck strain, so an altered position was indicated. Secretly, I was happy about this, as it did become monotonous looking at the ceiling for hours at a time.

My answer was simplicity itself. I made a search of the other

rooms, collected a few cushions and pillows, and made a sort of viaduct of them; pillars for my neck, the small of my back and my ankles. I was now four feet above bed level, but so happy. The sensation was most enjoyable.

Strange to say, I began to notice that I was receiving a frequently increasing number of visitors. At one time, my wife was forced to organise a queue. One of her brothers, an anti-medium of some repute, who exposed the notorious Monsieur Bert, went into a double shuffle of indignation when he saw my new position, and had to be led away, screaming something about 'accursed levitant' at the top of his voice.

Now that my personal comfort was assured, I was ready for fanac. A most difficult task confronted me; to get the dreaded Shaw-Berry typer into action. The roller worked by gravity, and when normally in use, I utilised two tins of beans suspended on a wire as a gravity feed.

Once again, my mechanical mind saved an otherwise unsurmountable problem. What could be simpler than fixing a wire from the platten to the pendulum of the cuckoo clock, hanging on the wall? It worked swell, and by simply dividing by 7.5, I could also tell the time, as if that was important.

Satisfied that everything was in position, I climbed onto my pillow structure, balanced the typer on my chest, and started on my first letter.

The theory about the shortest distance between two points being a straight line, is true. I nearly leapt out of my bed shouting 'Eureka' when I discovered it...although my mode of discovery somewhat dampened my enthusiasm. The wire attached to the platten had now pulled the pendulum to its fullest extent towards me, which meant that it was at an angle of 90 degrees from the wall. This, for some reason, also stopped the clock.

Did this daunt me?

Definitely not.

I fixed four small wheels at the corners of the bed. I stripped my bicycle down, and made an arrangement of cogs and wheels, and by a cycling movement which was both relaxing and smooth, the bed slowly moved towards the clock as I typed. I had eradicated all the snags.

When I started typing my third letter of comment, I had to pause and order my wife to control the spectators. Some of them appeared to be so absorbed in the technicality of my work that they totally disregarded the possibility of being run over.

I had completed six letters, and started on my telling article, The Psychology of the Budgerigar.

I was a martyr to fandom. I had made the grade. The ingrained tuition of Willis had borne fruit. Nothing could stop my fanac.

Then I made a miscalculation. I tried to be too clever. I own one of those clever utensils - an electric clock combined with a loudspeaker combined with a kettle. The instrument is in fairly common use, no doubt. A very fannish creation, if I may say so. I decided to have some tea in a few moments, so I set the clock and carried on with my feature. I became absorbed with it. I forgot all else.

A sudden racous shout of "WAKEY WAKEY RISE AND SHINE" roared through the room. The shock was so sudden that although I instinctively knew it was the combined tea thing, I had turned suddenly on my structure.

Now the Shaw-Berry typer is heavy, and it fell onto the bed

proper. The wire had been fixed firmly, and it dragged the cuckoo clock away from the wall with a 'boing'. This sudden release of pressure caused the wire and the attached pendulum to recoil forward like a spring, and it wrapped tightly around my body as I fell. Swathed like a mummy, I eventually finished up crosswise over the bed, with my ear about three inches from the loudspeaker. The kettle began to steam, and with no one to control the gadget, it burst onward with renewed vigour. The voice now thundered out at high decibel frequency, and the kettle began to get indignant. My face felt like the end of a piston.

I'm still swathed, but now its with bandages. I am getting treatment for ruptured eardrums, mottled complexion, suspected fractures of both forearms - and, of course, the original influenza.

My fanac....?

Listen.

Talk about something else, for Bloch's Sake.

I'm getting better, but I'm still susceptible to a sudden relapse.

Besides, they only have electric clocks at this hospital...

John Berry

1956.

THE BIRD OF PREY, by Colin Berry.

I was riding my bike in the month of May

On the Ballygowan Road.

The Sun shone bright, the sky was blue

With not a passing cloud.

A church bell chimed nine times and three

It was the time for lunch.

I lay against a grassy bank

My sandwiches to munch.

Amidst the sea of blue above

A sparrowhawk did glide

Watching the fields below its span

For dinner to provide.

A flock of starlings winged their way,

As one espied their foe

They banked and turned and flew at him

Their nonchalance to show.

The sparrowhawk ignored this threat

And unconcerned was he

Until they came at him again,

This was a sight to see.

The bird of prey dropped like a stone.

Then up again went he.

The startled starlings scattered, like

The dead leaves from a tree.

This fearful bird resumed his hunt

His dinner to procure.

But whether he did get his meal

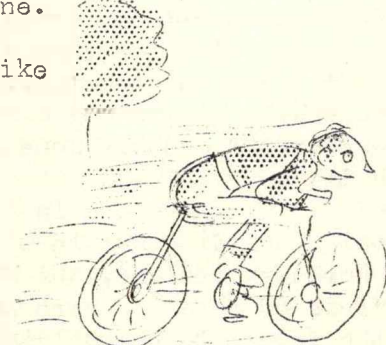
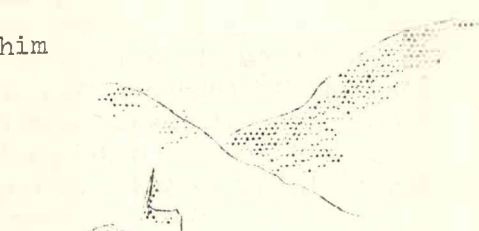
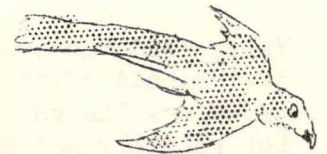
I'm really not too sure.

It may have been the heat of day

But I felt the urge to flee.

For as I left I thought he had,

His beady eyes on me.



WALLY WEBER AT MON DEBRIS.

As you all know by now, SAPS stalwart Wally Weber visited my house MON DEBRIS here in Belfast at the end of March 1964, before embarking on his extensive TAFF trip in England.

Walt Willis met him at the airport, and took him on a motor tour of Counties Down and Armagh before bringing him to my house late on the Sunday night.

Wally was anxious to go to bed, I'm sure, because I knew from my own experience that when you're on an extensive fan tour, it's essential that you kip down as often and as long as possible.

One little thing nagged here...we were giving Wally my daughter Kathleen's room. Only a few days before we had attached to the head of the bed a quilted plastic covering which featured a motif of roses. The really big clanger though, occurred during the afternoon before Wally had arrived. Kathleen, whilst moving some of her feminine articles from her room, had inadvertantly dropped and smashed a bottle of perfume under the bed. Now perfume, the sort sophisticated gals use, is usually fairly subtle...there is just sufficient whiff to it to cause masculine nostrils to twitch. Kathleen, though, being only ten years old, thought quantity was the big thing...and also she had manufactured the perfume herself from ingredients which were questionable, to say the least. I wouldn't go so far as to say it was a disgusting smell, but if you took more than two breaths of it you were a glutton. We worked feverishly throughout the afternoon to try and remove the smell, my gas mask got quite foggy. It wasn't feasible to open the windows wide, because here, in March, it's coocold. We fervently hoped that when Wally staggered into the room the pong had crept away. My one sincere wish^{was} that this combination of quilted roses and perfume didn't affect Wally's personality, or worse, I hope he didn't think we did it on purpose.

Next morning, I showed Wally the wonders of Belfast. Things became rather warped, though. When we went into the Tourist Board offices to get literature about Northern Ireland for Wally's memoirs, they thought I was the tourist...when we went to a dingy place called Smithfield (where Walt Willis met James White more than a decade ago) for Wally to browse around and buy some old sf books, it was me who came back loaded with them.

In the afternoon, we walked to Stormont, a vast imposing building set in a large estate. It is the parliament building for Northern Ireland, and Willis works there as a senior civil servant. Hundreds of cars were parked in the forecourt. Wally and myself stood at the front of the building, looking at the panoramic vista laid out before

us. Below us was the car park. Wally asked me if I could see Walt Willis's car.

"Heck, there's hundreds of flipping cars parked there, I certainly don't know which one it is," I replied testily.

"It's that one," said Wally with discernment.

I stood behind him, looked along the line his outstretched arm indicated. True, he pointed to a green car...it might even have been a Morris Minor. True also, Willis has a green Morris Minor. But I counted a dozen green Morris Minors amongst the multitude. As far as I was concerned, any one of them could have been Walt's. But Wally was positive the one he indicated was the right one.

Indignant, I walked to where Wally had pointed. I have to report that Wally was correct. I recognised the registration number, and even without it, I would have recognised those dents in the mudguards anywhere.

"Jeeze, you must have wonderful eyesight, Wally," I congratulated him. I'd seen Walt's car hundreds of times, and I was unable to spot it, whereas Wally, who'd only seen it once, identified it out of hundreds.

"It was the paw marks all over the roof," said Wally modestly.

Crumbs. It was true. There was a surrealistic pattern of muddy cat's paws all over the car. I don't pretend to know what goes on in the Willis garage in the dark hours of the night, but he must fairly put the wind up that cat. When we walked back again to our vantage point, the weak sun was just shafting delicately over the cars, and the cat's paws were quite blatant.

When we arrived home again (Stormont is only about half a mile from my house) I opened my fannish mail. There wasn't much, but I scrutinised it, and then announced to Wally that I was going to 'file it away'. So saying, I picked up the letters and fanzines and threw them over my shoulder, over the back of the settee, where they slithered down the wall. Now this was quite a normal thing for me. Behind the settee was a large cardboard box. Every weekend, I got this box out, and really sorted through the stuff to give it various priorities. But from the completely bewildered expression on Wally's face, I could see he really was beginning to believe I was a bit of an eccentric. To give him his due, he didn't know about the cardboard box. Really, it's a fine system, providing you've taken your wife into your confidence... I must stress this, it was an early mistake.

Tuesday, almost the whole of the day we spent at Carrickfergus Castle, an ancient building on which I gave you the lowdown in POT POURRI # 14.

We took my wife Diane along...it was a very dull day, with the suggestion of rain always in the air.

It was the first real castle that Wally had ever seen, and it was a good initiation, because Carrickfergus Castle is just about the most perfectly preserved castle in the British Isles...in fact as recently as 1920 it was still used by the military as an establishment.

The castle is sited on a huge hunk of rock which juts out into Belfast Lough. All along the seaward side of the castle, huge cannon are placed, looking hopefully out to sea. Some of them fired in anger at some obscure American seaman called Paul Jones who was on safari thereabouts when America was a British colony (or was trying hard not to be). I took several photographs of Wally examining these cannon with considerable academic interest, I did hope to have them ready for this, but that's the trouble with 35 mm film, it'll probably be another coupla months until I

have used all the rest of the film up. Next time, I hope.

The large keep in the centre of the castle precincts is made into a museum. Wally was considerably interested in this also, because it featured ancient swords and daggers and lances, the odd couple of rusty cannon balls and a brace of pistols with woodworm in the butts. Also framed against the wall was a full block of 2/6d British postage stamps, which feature a view of Carrickfergus Castle. As I told Wally, the collection of fossils they had on display was miserable when compared with mine. Wally didn't give me any egoboo, though, I don't think fossils are one of his strong lines.

The view from the top of the keep was magnificent. We hung over the walls, looking at the sea and the town of Carrickfergus far below. Wally was intrigued with the thin recesses in the wall, which he diagnosed as being 'thirteenth century zap slits'. One other interesting thing, whilst we were on top of the keep, we were actually at the base of the low clouds which had been hanging about all day.

(I am keenly waiting to read what Wally has to say in his TAFF memoirs about this castle.)

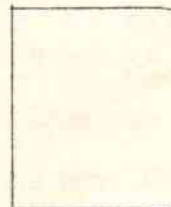
Back home again (I should have said that Carrickfergus is about a dozen miles from the centre of Belfast) came that unhappy time when goodbyes have to be said. Wally was going to stop at Walt's for a couple of days before going to England for the convention. Actually it was an anti-climax, because I did see Wally again a couple of times in the ensuing couple of days. But my family was sorry to see Wally leave. He had taken an interest in my children, and had allowed himself to be dragged into the front room by Kathleen to hear Beatle records, and he had played an enthusiastic game of snooker with son Colin. You really had to be an enthusiast, because Colin had made the snooker table himself, and had added a novel touch by substituting pennies for balls. Instead of trying to pot them with a cue, you had to shove them with a piece of wood. A couple of unplanned knot holes in the surface of the 'snooker' table added a little something to the competitive spirit.

The next visit to MON DEBRIS is scheduled for July when Burnett Toskey is due for a few days, unless Wally gets to him first.

John Berry

1964

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