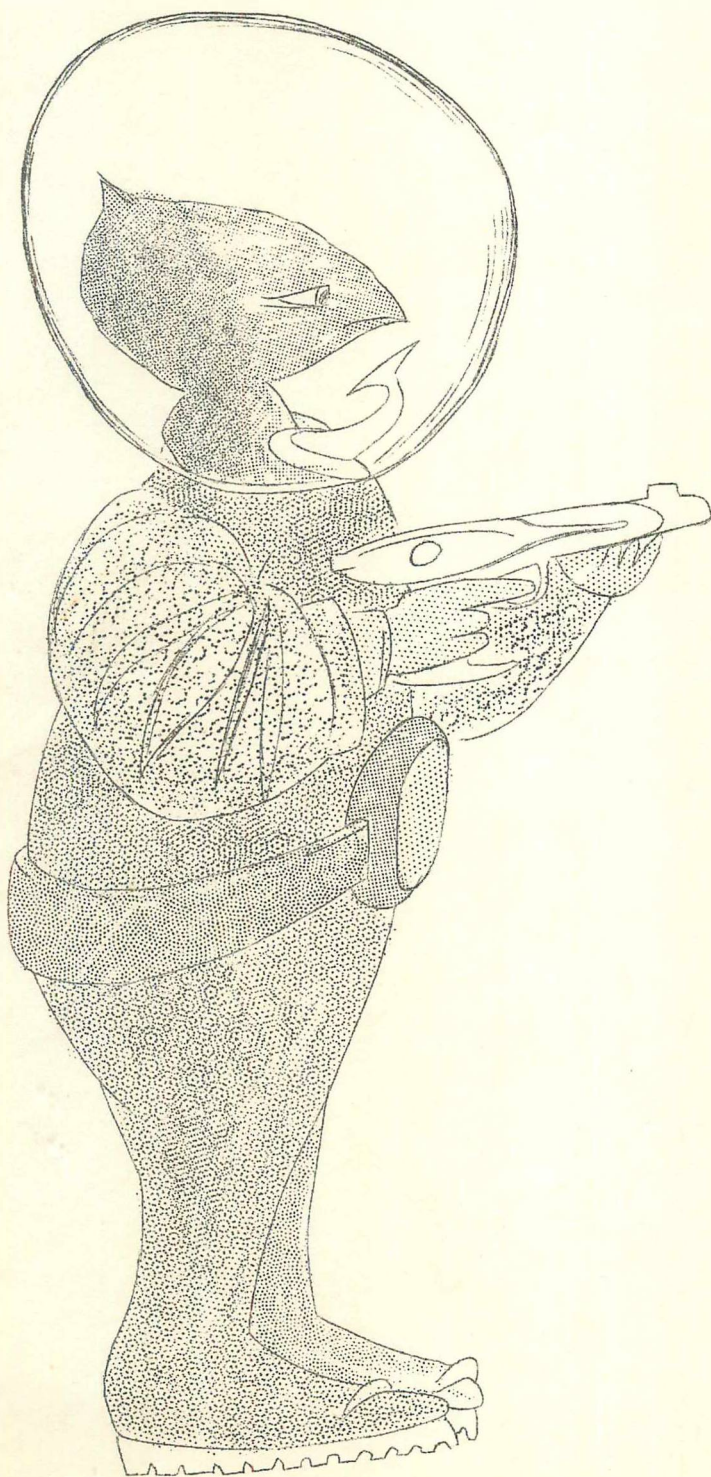


Harness



VIPER #7

June 1964

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to finish "A Requiem for ASTOUNDING" for book publication. Earl Kemp is bringing it out from Advent and it will be distributed come September at the Pacificon. The conclusion will of course appear in VIPER in either one or two installments.

In fact the only way I'm able to get this issue out is by missing the weekly convention committee meeting.

It's been almost two years since the last VIPER went wending its way through OMPA (And the non-OMPA foreign copies haven't been mailed out yet) so I should have plenty to write about. But I seem to have a cramp in my typing shoulder or something.

During this time I've moved bag and baggage and tons of books and records from Berkeley to El Cerrito to Oakland. I'm not living in a quite satisfactory place very near the Berkeley border and I hope to stay here awhile. I hate moving.

It's a large old house compete with a walk-in basement and tiny back yard. In fact the house is so old that it didn't have a shower. (I had one installed naturally.) The house is perched on top of a hill and has a steep flight of stairs leading up from the street. There's a fireplace, but unfortunately it's non-operative.

Al Halevy is staying with me at the present and Gordon Eklund who is stationed about 40 miles away at Travis A.F.B. is in almost every weekend. Former housemate Danny Curran is living with a girl friend in Berkeley and as we are both inert bastards we see each other only at club meetings and parties.

It's sad, but I'm not making the home brew scene any more. I haven't brewed anything since moving here. It's a certain amount of trouble and besides—all those calories... Danny however is more dedicated to Bacchus, so he took over the apparatus and is continuing the sacred rites.

CATS AND ALL THAT I've had a high animal mortality rate in the last two years. Of the pets I had then only Habakkuk remains. Muff Muff was run over even before the last VIPER was mailed out. To replace her I got one of her granddaughters, Genesis, and also John and Bjo gave me another calico, Lilith, as a housewarming present up in El Cerrito. Genesis died of an abscess. Lilith had kittens by Deuteronomy, so I kept one of them, a black and white tom, Jonah, to replace Genesis.

About this time I moved here to Oakland. I hadn't been here a

I was hoping to have a larger VIPER this mailing, but being on a convention committee leaves little time for other fanac. And two years in a row too. Boy, do I have rocks in my head! And VIPER art editor Alva Rogers is tied up in the same deal as well as laboring mightily

VENOM
bill donaho

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week when my dog, Frodo, disappeared. Lilith had another litter by Deuteronomy. I wasn't going to keep any of these kittens, but Lilith disappeared too, so I kept a solid orange queen, Deliah.

Deliah is a sweet little queen and she continues in the traditions of Trimble cats. She got pregnant when she was 5-1/2 months old. (Bjo says she sometimes wonders what the neighbors think when John comes home and greets their cat, "Hello, you old whore.") This was the parting salute from Deuteronomy as he then proceeded to disappear himself. By an odd coincidence his litter brother, Sanley Bowitz, disappeared from Jerry and Miriam Knight's--several miles away in Berkeley--on the same day.

So, at the moment five 6-weeks old orange kittens are gamboling around my typewriter. Actually, they're not much help.

But the bad luck doesn't stop there. Habakkuk, now eight years old, has cancer of the jaw. He's had surgery twice and the vet says he can't operate any more and gives him six months to a year. I'll miss the beast.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN My enthusiasm for G & S continues unabated. There is a theater group in San Francisco, the Lamplighters, who each quarter present a different G & S operetta. Ed Meskys has organized theater parties for the G.G.F.S. (group price \$1.25 a ticket) and attendance has swelled till now the parties number 40 to 50. And some fans come up from L.A. for the performance. After all, it's only 450 miles.

The Lamplighters are an extremely good group and use a great deal of imagination in their scenery and costumes. Unfortunately they don't have an orchestra and use music scored for two pianos, but this is a relatively minor drawback. So far I've seen five things by them: "Patience," "The Mikado," "Princess Ida," "H.M.S. Pinafore," and "Iolanthe." All of the productions were good. I've never seen another performance of "Patience," but I liked this one a great deal. I liked their "Mikado" too, but I've seen better. However, their version of "Princess Ida" is the best I've seen and I thought their "Pinafore" the best performance of G & S I've come across. Of them all I was most disappointed in "Iolanthe." (But "Iolanthe" is my favorite G & S and perhaps this makes me more critical.) I thought all the individual elements of this performance were quite good, but the production just never seemed to catch fire for some reason or other.

Next we'll get "Ruddigore" and then "The Gondoliers." I'm looking forward to them.

EGOBOO FOR ME At a recent party out at Terry Burns's in Canyon I met an artist, Jonathan Batcheler, and his wife, Sigurd. Jonathan is quite famous--at least locally--and is a good painter to boot. Anyhow the party went on and early in the A.M. Jonathan said that he had been observing me all evening, found me complex and fascinating, and wanted to paint me.

Naturally I said "Yes". So he made an appointment for me to come out to his place one Saturday. While sitting I could have all the wine I could drink--and it was very good wine--and I was to stay for dinner.

I liked Jonathan and Sigurd very much. They are intelligent and interesting and even their three children are nice and well behaved.

Jonathan works quite rapidly and he used quick-drying plastic paints instead of oils. He finished the painting that Saturday.

As for the painting itself I would like it very much even if it were not of me, and since it is of me, I'm flattered. I'm extremely flattered both by the painting and by what Jonathan and Sigurd said about it. Jonathan tried to think of a name for it. He said that if he showed it to some of his Jewish friends, they would want to call it "goliath," but that this wasn't appropriate as Goliath was eventually defeated. Sigurd said that both the painting and I seemed to her to typify Sibelius's Nordic Symphony (I've always identified with his second symphony myself) and she wanted to call the painting "Thor." Jonathan said that this was in the right area as to him the painting depicted "joyeous strength" even though the world my eyes were looking at was obviously not a pretty one.

Naturally I lapped it all up.

PICNICS What with one thing and another, the Westercon being in July and all, we didn't have any picnics last year. So early this year we resolved to straighten up and fly right. The G.G.F.S. planned a picnic for yesterday. Unfortunately we didn't remember when scheduling it that Saturday was Memorial Day. And on Memorial Day everyone seems to go on picnics. We drove up to Mt. Diablo. The place was mobbed. However we managed to find an unoccupied slope and settled down for the day. The weather couldn't have been better and a good time was had by all. The Giants lost to the Mets and A. J. Fox won the Indianapolis. Late in the afternoon we went up to the summit, but there was enough haze so that the usual panaroma was missing. We couldn't even see the Pacific, much less Mt. Shasta.

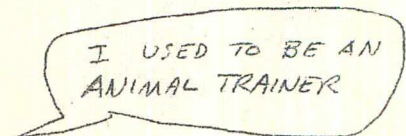
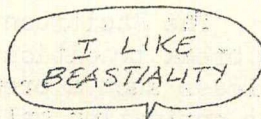
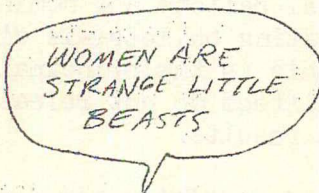
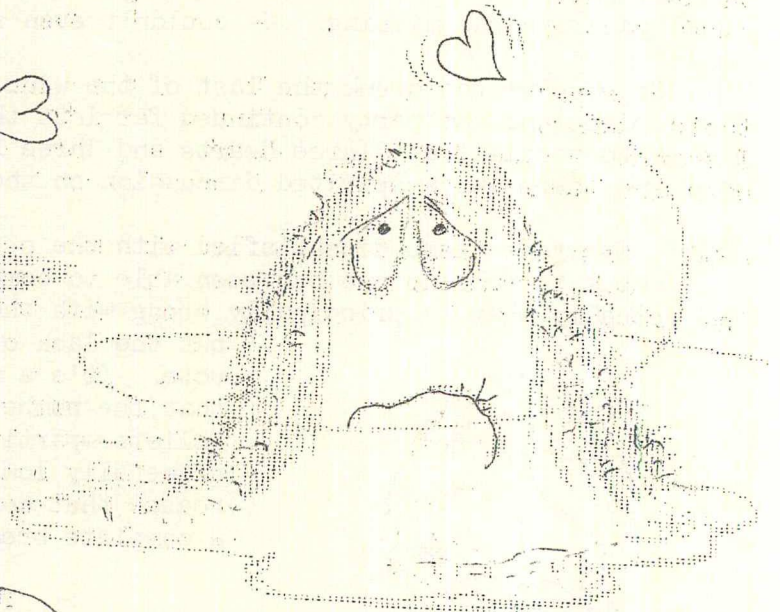
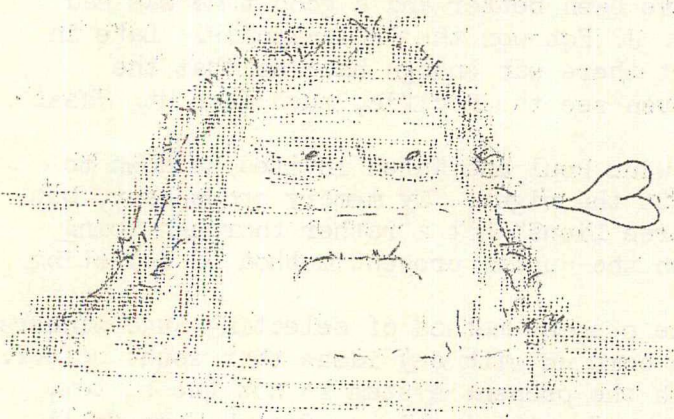
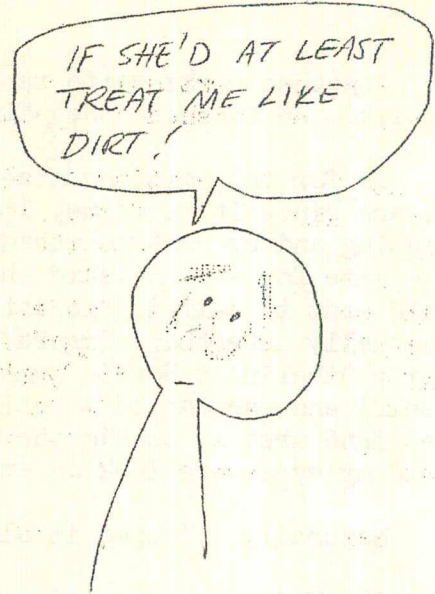
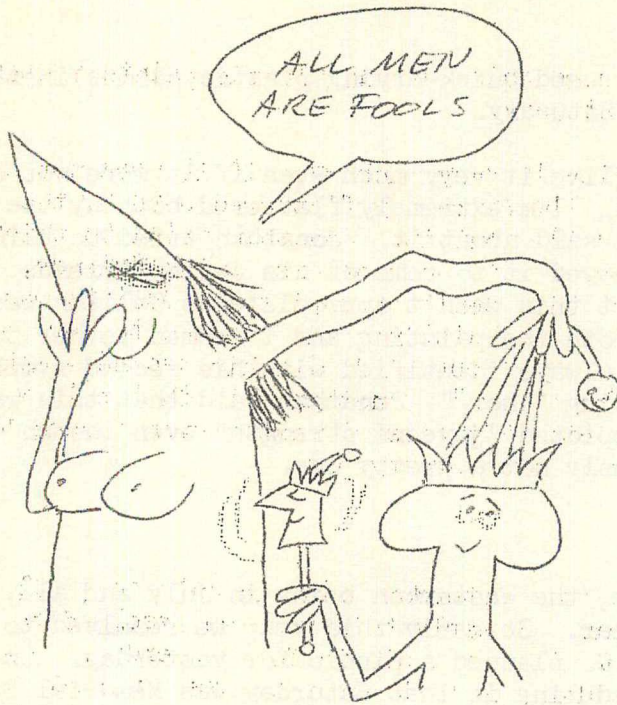
So when we had drunk the last of the wine Poul and Karen invited us down to their place and the party continued far into the night. My memory grows hazy, but I seem to recall that "Three Hearts and Three Lions" got a rather thorough going over and there was a spirited discussion on the Hugos, present method of selecting.

HUGOS Everyone seems dissatisfied with the present method of selecting Hugo winners but to date no one has been able to come up with any ideas that sound better. And actually what is principally wrong with the present system is not the system, but the lack of participation. Enough fans don't vote. It's a more or less open secret in fandom that the number of both final ballots and nominating ballots--particularly nominating ballots--is disgracefully low. And that this is the principal reason that convention committees do not release a complete breakdown of the results.

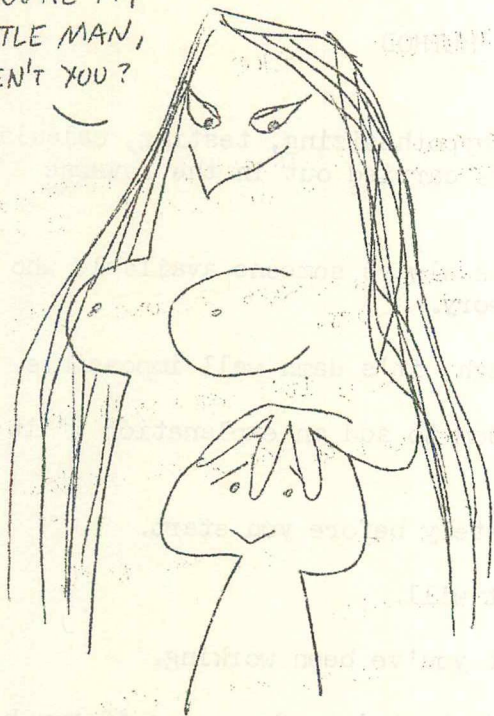


The Pacificon II Committee has decided to break tradition here. We are going to release such a breakdown. The breakdown of the nominating ballots will be in our Program Book (Giving such a breakdown now might conceivably influence the final ballot) and the breakdown of the final ballots will be in our Final Report.

As an indication though, we received 158 nominating ballots which I understand is the highest number to date. (One recent convention only got 75). In the Short Fiction category the highest item on the ballot got 13 votes, the lowest 10.



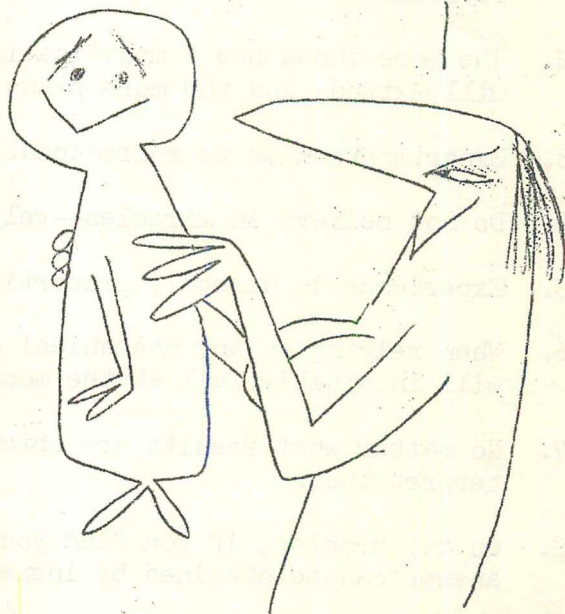
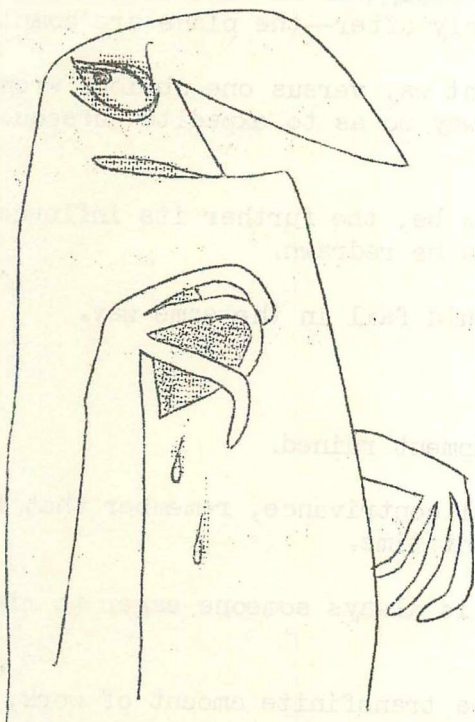
YOU'RE MY
LITTLE MAN,
AREN'T YOU?



HE'LL PAY,
HE'LL PAY!



I AM IN YOUR
POWER



RULES OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

1. The Scientific Method consists of 4 phases: hypothesizing, testing, calculating, and drawing conclusions; these are always carried out in the reverse order.
2. No matter what result is anticipated, there is always someone available who believes it happened according to his pet theory.
3. If it looks easy, it's tough; if it looks tough, it's damn well impossible.
4. After stating the hypothesis, always leave room to add an explanation if it doesn't work.
5. To study a subject best, understand it completely before you start.
6. If anything can go wrong in an experiment, it will.
7. A record of data is useful--it indicates that you've been working.
8. It is usually impractical to worry beforehand about interferences; if you have none, someone will make one for you.
9. When ordering special equipment, always omit the critical dimensions--they will be ignored anyway.
10. Information necessitating a change in one's design of an experiment will be discovered by the experimenter after--and only after--the plans are complete.
11. In simple cases, presenting one obvious right way versus one obvious wrong way, it is often wiser to choose the wrong way so as to expedite subsequent revisions.
12. The more innocuous a modification appears to be, the further its influence will extend, and the more plans will have to be redrawn.
13. Experiments must be reproduceable--they should fail in the same way.
14. Do not believe in miracles--rely on them.
15. Experience is directly proportional to equipment ruined.
16. When relying on any mechanical or electrical contrivance, remember that it will inevitably fail at the most inconvenient time.
17. No matter what results are obtained, there is always someone eager to misinterpret them.
18. On any problem, if you find yourself doing a transfinite amount of work, the answer can be obtained by inspection.
19. Any collection of data will, by suitable transformation, yield any conclusion.

20. When plotting data, first draw your curves, then plot the readings.
21. In any collection of data, the figure that is most obviously correct--beyond all need of checking--is the mistake. No one whom you ask for help will see it either. Everyone who stops by with unsought advice will see it immediately.
22. In interpreting data, remember to make liberal use of the following devices:
 - (A) FINAGLE'S CONSTANT: characterized by changing the universe to fit the equation.
 - (B) BUFFER FACTOR: characterized by changing the equation to fit the universe.
 - (C) DIDDLE COEFFICIENT: characterized by changing things so that the equation and the universe appear to fit, without requiring any real change in either.
23. In case of doubt, make it sound convincing.
24. Whenever a system becomes completely defined, some damn fool will discover something which either abolishes the system, or expands it beyond recognition.
25. Finally, and most important:



SCIENCE IS TRUTH - DON'T BE MISLED BY FACTS.

--Compiled and edited by Al Halevy

The inspiration for these rules and some of the rules themselves come from ANALOG discussion of Finagle's laws. However Al got other rules from various sources and thought of many of them himself.

Anyhow, they're fun. And even have a great deal of truth hidden within the barbs.

A KEY TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LITERATURE

What he said:

It has long been known that...

Of great theoretical and practical importance...

While it has not been possible to provide definite answers to these questions...

The operant conditioning technique was chosen to study the problem...

Three of the subjects were chosen for detailed study...

Typical results are shown...

Agreement with the predicted curve is:

Excellent
Good
Satisfactory
Fair

It is suggested that... It is believed that... It may be that...

It is generally believed that...

It is clear that much additional work will be required before a complete understanding...

Unfortunately, a quantitative theory to account for these results has not been formulated...

Correct within an order of magnitude...

Thanks are due to Joe Glotz for assistance with the experiments and to John Doe for valuable discussion.

What he meant:

I haven't bothered to look up the original references but...

Interesting to me.

The experiment didn't work out, but I figured I could at least get a publication out of it.

The fellow in the next lab already had the equipment set up.

The results on the others didn't make sense.

The best results are shown...

Agreement with the predicted curve is:

Fair
Poor
Doubtful
Imaginary

I think that...

A couple of other guys think so too.

I don't understand it.

I can't think of one and neither has anyone else.

Wrong.

Glotz did the work and Doe explained what it meant.

VITUPERATIONS

PROGRASTINATOR - Trimble Is this bit about children being restricted to the "children's section" of a library something of rather recent date? It certainly was not true when I was growing up. Or perhaps it varies in different parts of the country.

Yes, these wine tours are one of the nicest things about California. Which wines did you like the best?

AMBLE -- Mercer Ghad, you do have your troubles. Have you given up the theater entirely now? Or just G & S? *** But there must be some records you want which are available on "standard" labels."

One British word I've always liked is caravan. There's something so much more exotic about living in a caravan than there is living in a trailer.

The "time forgot" series appears in one volume under the general title "The Land that Time Forgot". It's always been one of my favorite Burroughs books and I think it's by far the best of his non series books. In the book Burroughs used enough ideas and plots to have developed into 20 or so ordinary novels...

WHATSIT - Cheslin ~~Does~~ "childhood nostalgia" is the funniest thing in the mailing. I liked it very much indeed. And the rest of his column is interesting. He has a valid point that many of the present housing projects are worse than the slums they replace.

Your cover was a fine bit and I enjoyed your mailing comments. I was glad to see your remarks on your handicap. You seem to have a very healthy attitude about it. I've always wondered if you cut your own stencils. How fast can you type and just what system do you use?

ERG - Jeeves Yes, your "Vacuum Beetle" was well-received here. It's quite a funny parody. I'm looking forward to seeing more of your reprints. And this one inspired me to reread the "Space Beagle".

SOUFFLE - Baxter I was very impressed by "The Other Side". Definitely, it's a professional quality vignette. Hope we get more of these. Your movie reviews make very good reading even though I seem to disagree with your taste quite a lot. We agree though about "The Seventh Seal". I just saw it for the 4th time and am still quite impressed. I even agree with you that Jons' actual line is much better than the subtitle. However, I thought that "The Magnificent Seven" while a reasonably good movie was far inferior to the original Japanese version "Seven Samurai."

MEIN OMP-F - Freeman I would imagine that the "official" explanation of the Mayalysian bit would be that Britain is again undermining the security of the West by supporting the federation.

BURP - Bennett I was very interested in your test survey. One thing that puzzled me though was why a standard marking key was not given to people administering the test. Aren't such usually provided?

And what do you think of the Beatles?

BLETHERINGS -- Lindsay Reading your account of Lawrence made me decide to do some further reading about him. I've never come much into contact with his own writing, although I've read some articles on him.

I don't think OMPA is in such bad shape as all that. Some method of seeing that OMPA has more British members seems highly desirable though.

Somehow or other an OMPA mailing just doesn't seem the same without SCOTTISHE.

LEFNUI -- Patten I thought your analysis and criticism of Len's article in your last issue was very good. Are you going to do the same next issue for Les's? I'm glad you are publishing all these articles on science fiction.

MORPH -- Roles I'm glad to see that someone else remembers "The Great Waltz" with affection. It's pure entertainment of course, but I enjoyed it immensely. *** This "Role's Rollings" was especially fascinating.

Almost thou persuadest me to read "The Mystries of Udolpho."

DETROIT IRON -- Schultz I disagree with you about "Dune World." Herbert was merely preparing us for the forthcoming sequel. He did leave things at a logical stopping place if you consider this is actually only the first book in a series. Also, I've heard that the manuscript for "Dune World" was some 120,000 words. If so, Campbell's cuts may have changed things just a trifle.



I didn't care much for the plot, acting or what have you for the movie on van Gogh's life (and I can't remember the name either) but I went to see it a couple of times just to look at it. It was beautiful.

BIG DEAL -- Hale While I've been out of direct contact with folk music circles for some time, I believe that one is still supposed to genuflect when mentioning Ewan MacColl's name. I like Woodby Guthrie too. My favorite song of his is "Jesus Christ" though.

You mean British tourists behave that way too? I thought only American tourists did.

BERSERK -- Cheslin It was sort of fun, Nek.

BINARY -- Patrizio Belated congratulations on the child and on your nex job.

The "Business Man's Diary" reads like a modern, naive "Poor Richard's Almanac." Surely they can do better than that.

OFF TRAILS -- Officialdom It's nice to see everything running so smoothly. You've been a good AE, Ethel. Now, who's going to get stuck this time?

But it does seem peculiar to have no waiting list.....