



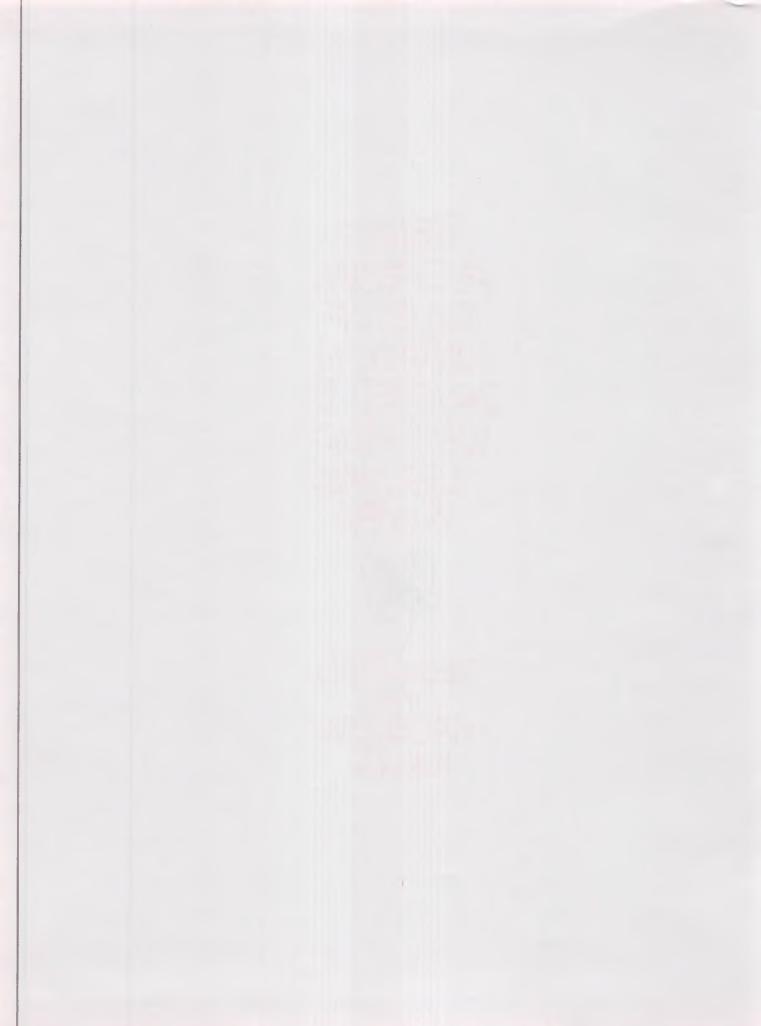




BEING ASPECIAL ISSUE OF WARHOON DEVOTED TO WALT WILLIS' LIPE, TIMES & WORK.



DEDICATED TO MADELEINE WILLIS

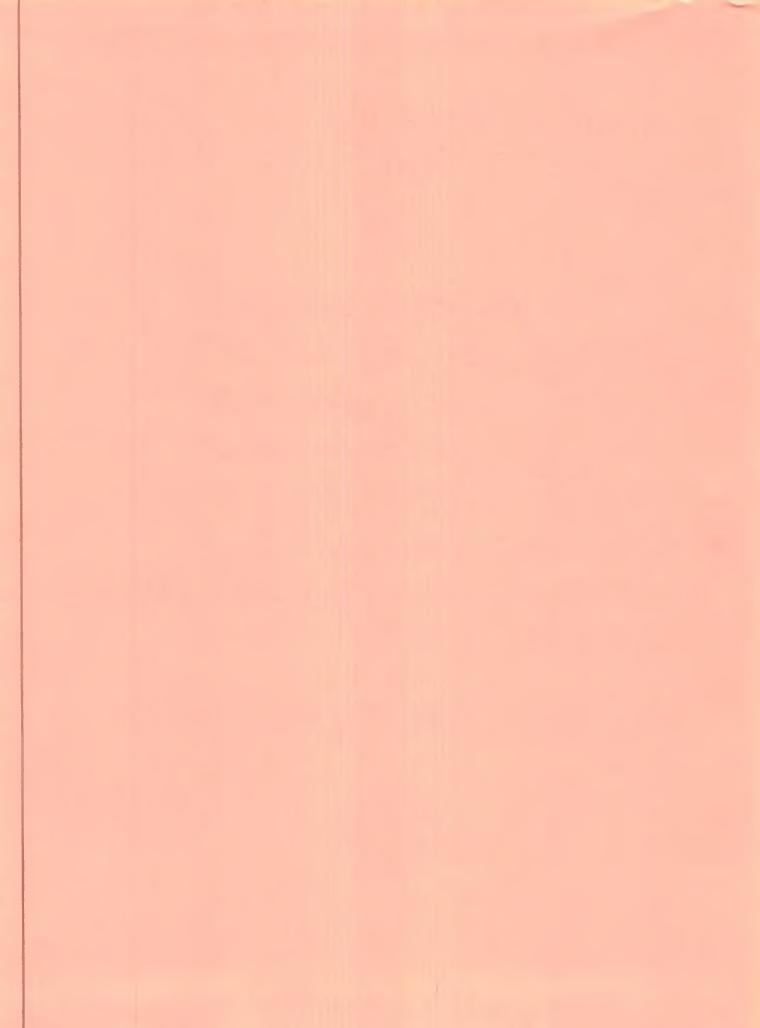




"Only the harp. Lovely gold glowering light. Girl touched it.
Poop of a lovely. Gravy's rather good fit for a. Golden ship.
Erin. The harp that once or twice.
Cool hands. Ben Howth, the rhododendrons. We are their harps.
I. He. Old. Young."

- James Joyce, "Ulysses", 1922.





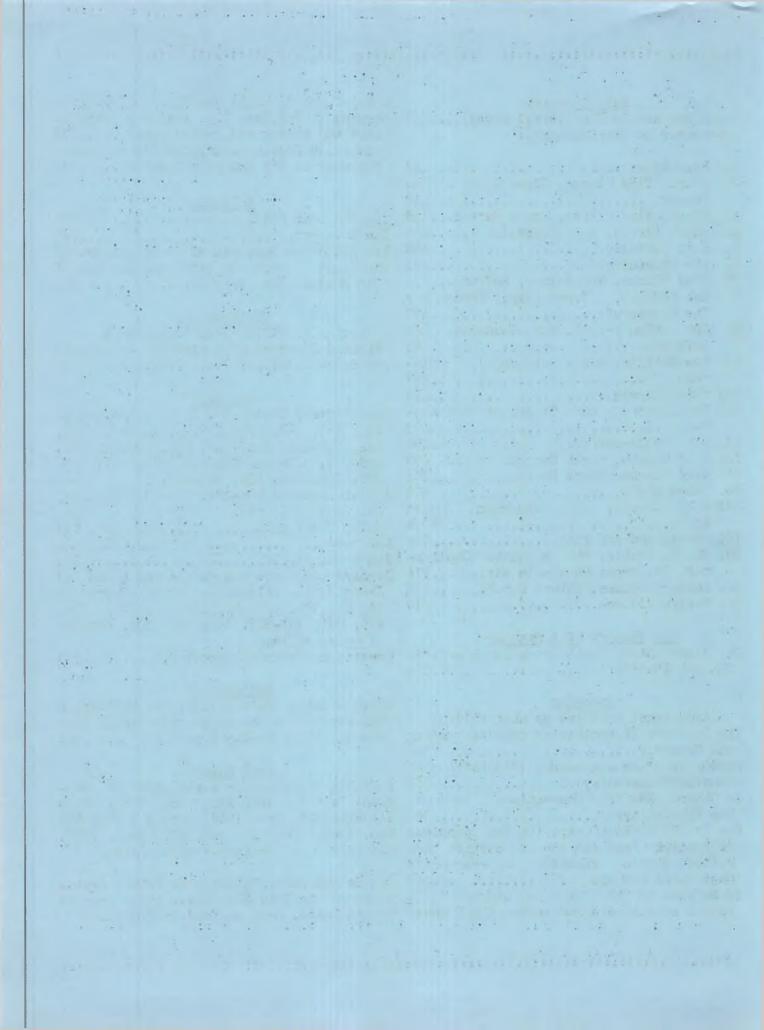
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# WARHOON

Warhoon, "the bible of fandom" -Redd Boggs1970, is edited and published on an irregular schedule by Richard Bergeron at 11 East 68th St., New York City, New York, 10021. This is issue number 28, dated May, 1978. Like the editor, it is devoted to the work of Walter Alexander Willis of Belfast, Northern Ireland, who has been an inspiration and joy to science fiction fandom for over twenty-five years. The contents of this issue will explain why. Go, Thou, and do likewise. This issue is priced at \$20.00. Letters of comment are appreciated and will be considered for publication unless the writer specifies otherwise. Offset color pages were printed by, of all people, the John Swift Planograph Co., whose offices, bearing the contradictory motto "To A True Fan Anything Is Possible", can be found at the foothills of the Mountains of Inertia. Copyright 1978 by Richard Bergeron. All rights hereby assigned to the contributors.

## ODYSSEY

There is a farm. Isolated. The nearest neighbor a mile or two away. A breeze stirs a row of sturdy maple trees lining one side of a broad lawn bounded by a dirt road which arrives from Newport some five miles distant in the northern Vermont hills and departs into mystery. On another side is a field used in alternate years for gardening or a crop of hay and facing the lawn a rambling, many-windowed house containing a secret room devoted to dreams. The road will be a pathway into the future but now it functions principally as an adjunct to the mailbox which stands at the edge of the road. This tin box on a wooden post provides the Rural Free Delivery event of the day making bearable the barreness of the Vermont incubation. One summer it rains for 15 days and then a sullen dark day of reprieve is followed by another 30 of rain -- one might as well be in Northern Ireland. The mail box preserves a shred of sanity, oddly enough, in the form of The National Fantasy Fan Federation but later it will bring to this edge of nowhere intelligence which is rarely presented here in a manner which would interest anyone. Glorious Betelgeuse blazes near Orion. Fantastic creatures lurk in dim and dusty recesses of the vaguely medieval public library. John Carter of Mars leads me to Amazing Stories and Rog Phillips' "Club House" delivers me to Eva Firestone. Son of John Carter out of Eva Firestone. An identity is created by the shock of seeing my name in a membership listing in The National Fantasy Fan.

### A fan is born.

The mailbox waits. It will lure me into a life and world my father and mother never imagined. The solar system is on the ceiling of my room. It clings there in the form of colored disks of paper each glued in proper orbit with their proper moons in an improper scale; satillites of a white dwarf sun represented by the light bulb in the center of the ceiling. The wallpaper, portent of bizarre tastes, which somehow I chose myself, is a black chinoiserie more suited to an antercom to Ming the Merciless. I dream and wait with John Carter in the warrior city Warhoon lost somewhere on the vastness of a globe of red dust.

Leaves stir in the bucolic wasteland. It is 1950 and I am 15 years old. The mailbox has brought me fandom and I begin to learn the uses of logic from James Blish and Redd Boggs who debate the presentation of Dianetics in Astounding in the Insurgent issue of Spacewarp. I awaken to the acrid uncommon sense of F. Towner Laney and the callous wit of Burbee's"Half-Length Article" which turns a fan into a pillar of gin. Norman Stanley, and Milton Rothman, and Harry Warner tell me a little about a lot and begin to provide a liberal education which teaches the value of skepticism and rescues me from the parochialism of Sacred Heart High School. I am presented with title to a crater on the Moon and discover the enduring example of Walter Willis.

Walt Willis looked at me in a curiously disinterested manner that sweltering August afternoon in 1952.

We were in the auditorium of the Hotel Morrison trying to make sense out of Max Keasler who was talking rings around Lee Hoffman, Walt, and myself while the official program of the 10th Annual World Science Fiction Convention droned on like a bee movie in the background. I felt most definitely out of place as though I'd wandered into a time machine and been deposited on the windy steppes of the Convention Hall especially for the purpose of writing this editorial. But it wasn't a time machine that had brought me to this remarkable confrontation -- it was a whirl-wind named Max Keasler who had discovered me at the end of the balcony overlooking the stage idly chatting with W. Paul Ganley. W. Max had come by to discuss something to do with Opus and Paul had introduced us. I'd written Max a couple letters of comment on his fanzines and he'd been aware of the few pieces of fanart I'd had published. Keasler, if anything, was even more irrepressible than you might have supposed from reading Fanvariety and Opus and I've never been able to understand why his character is sketched in such restrained understatement in "The Harp Stateside". At any rate, Max grabbed me by the hand, insisted I must meet Lee and Walt and there I was wondering what I was doing in the center of a three headed symbiotic relationship and, doubtless, Lee and Walt were wondering the very same thing.

I was 3 days out of Newport, it was the first time I'd been in a city of more than 5000 inhabitants, and had just spent 48 hours on a Greyhound bus that hadn't broken down even once. Willis and I had little in common and obviously I was confused.

Bob Tucker leaned across the table and whispered a wicked remark to LeeH about "bringing up the rear". She put him down with insouciance worthy of Lauren Bacall and sent Bob roaring back to his chair. Richard Elsberry laconically made a little scribble in a notebook but not before Max had seized the opportunity to introduce me to both. Tucker seemed pleased to meet one of his staff artists, but then, Bob always has a lot to be pleased about, doesn't he? An emerald harp broach twinkled. Ellison dropped by to tell us the news about GMCarr and Max made the immortal crack you will find enshrined elsewhere in this issue. Harlan I had met the previous evening (to Max's dismay) in some congested hallway and he placed my entire output for the next twenty years under contract to Science Fantasy Bulletin -- for a moment I feared he'd brought the papers along for me to sign with Lee, Walt, and Max as witnesses...

Here I was, through some warp in the spacewoof, sitting with the magnetic forces that had drawn me to the convention and wondering why and how I had got there. Walt was quietly working on this issue of Wrhn and his eyes revealed a measure of sad wisdom. He seemed filled with an even greater measure of mixed contentment and the same Greyhound dogged exhaustion I was suffering from. Perceptive Max was doing his best to make me and the rest of the convention feel at home — he was clearly acting on the assumption that the hall was his own living room — but the outsider (editor of one of the most unpromising crudzines ever to embarrass a SAPS mailing) faced with the opportunity of a lifetime hadn't the faintest notion what to do with it. The pros were doing their thing all around us but I wasn't much interested in that: the only pro who could have impressed me was John Carter himself. I was there because the pre-con publicity had said Walt Willis was going to give a speech! The fan from Vermont looked at the fan from Ireland and asked if he had managed, finally, to find that April '43 ASF he was looking for. Beyond that, I recall nothing. Except, possibly, Lemuria.

Clearly there wasn't much to be done about my predicament: An embryo in Sixth Fandom was about to be still-born into Seventh by Bob Silverberg in less than two months. Incomprehensible forces were beyond my control.

Unassimilable impressions accelerated: One of the peculiarities of Walt's fannish career is that he has never been a neofan -- it was as though he sprang full grown from Minerva's brow -- but the fact was that he had spent his salad days in Sauce Bottle Fandom. At 33 in 1952 he had a 15 year lead over most of the denizens of Sixth Fandom. At my age he was a student of Heinz's 57 Varieties and now was mature, married, happy, tremendously talented and after 15 years on the sauce ready for anything -even fandom. Before the evening was over, I witnessed Ray Nelson pouring cartoons onto paper with a fluid pen while Max scooped them up for his classic Opus omnibus covers and much later Ed Wood told me Skyhook was "too fannish". After being shown out of the N3F hospitality room nothing could convince me I was in the right time at the right place and I headed for my room and a sleep that would take me out of this nightmare. Those elevators had a mind of their own but I pressed the magic button and waited. The doors opened and standing in the one which arrived were Lee, Walt, and Max. They hadn't really been expecting to emerge in the deserted lobby, of all places, and didn't get out of the car. I nodded and, not wanting to intrude on their time capsule, waited for another elevator. The doors closed and they assended to heaven -- or at least to a window seat in the Penthouse where my soul would symbolically join them in 1978.

Harry Warner, a wise man, once said happiness consisted in fulfilling one's boy-hood dreams, but all that was far in the future. I was marooned in 1952 and the only way Walt and I were going to make it to 1978 was via the prosaic route: one second at a time.

::

"You are the best editor I have ever had and if I wouldn't write for you I wouldn't write for anyone" the letter from Walt Willis seemed to be saying to my incredulous eyes in response to an invitation to revive "The Harp That Once Or Twice" in February, 1968. This was the second time Walt had agreed to do the Harp for Wrhn and it occurred during an interregnum between fandoms when a few cryptic old-timers were once again walking the land trying to remember what neo-fannish enthusiasm had been. The first time the Harp appeared in Wrhn was when Oopsla started decomposing and, vulture like, I wrote Walt promising to be a more lively host than that tired old Gregg Calkins. All's fair in love and fandom. Actually I had a pretty good idea that Oopsla was not long for this world and all it would take is one little shove... No, what I mean is if I didn't speak up Walt would probably be writing the Harp for some fanzine I would less prefer it to appear in than Wrhn. Much the same thing would happen to me later when Tom Perry would perform a Bergeron to my Calkins but that is neither here nor there and the Borgias have long been forgotten too.

Walt was <u>usually</u> startling me so I just assumed it was another of those flights of fancy he'd been catching me offguard with for so long. I recalled he'd done something similar the first time he agreed to write for Wrhn: 28 December 1960 he thought "...I feel I'll be at home in Wrhn, and I hope you won't regret inviting me." Regret was the furthermost possibility I could conceive because as Tom Perry once said being able to publish Willis regularly was "to me the next best thing to <u>being</u> Willis."

My own opinion on the matter of editorial abilities was somewhat different: I answered listing sins of commission and omission and asked for an explanation thinking if I didn't find out how to publish the perfect fanzine I might, at least, learn among other things what I was doing right... Walt replied: "My respect for you as an Editor derives from your general competence in every field, and in particular your sympathetic understanding of the importance of feedback. As for typoes, you make less then most people. The only editor who has ever printed a piece of mine entirely without typoes was, curiously enough, Max Keasler. I had pulled his leg so often about it that when I finally did write an article for him, he had it stenciled by Marie Louise Share. It stood out in his fanzine like a healthy thumb." Max considered typoes his best friends as readers of "The Enchanted Duplicator" will discover...

I realized contributors were a magazine's life's blood and handled them with virtually intravenous care. I made a habit of photocopying the response on an issue and forwarding sheaves of letters with the next issue to each contributor. Often it made an impressive load of egoboo and with an issue at hand containing their latest writing an enfeebled author was catapulted into a marvelous frame of mind for writing something for the next issue. The effect of this was such that at one point I had three long quotable letters and an installment of a column before I was able to publish all this material by James Blish! It's shocking to find contemporary editors giving serious consideration to sending unpublished comments to their contributors as though there was a question involved. What is involved, of course, in neglect of this healthy practice, is slow starvation of authors and attrophy for the fanzine.

An editor interested in attracting the best writers to his fanzine might consider these words from another Willis letter: "The influence of the editor/publisher on the writer is stronger in fandom than in any other field, if only because the writer/reader relationship is so much more intimate and the editor/publisher is the link. With some editors I have felt I was communicating with the readers on the same level as a convict with a visitor under the warden's eye... almost by code. With others the editor/publisher closely represents the readership but by inefficiency destroys communication, like an engaging but inefficient telephone operator, so that you have to avoid subtleties which might be distorted in transmission."

The problem is communication and efficiency with, as a given corollary, the absolute necessity to entertain: writing that doesn't entertain will have to surmount the obstacle of boredom before it can communicate (a point I tend to belabor every decade). So aside from trying to be fandom's telephone operator I also studied exemplars like Boggs and Willis who, I wrote in Wrhn 23, May 1968: "struck me as possessing a perfect balance between seriousness and fun-loving; between a desire to produce a beautiful job in whatever they were undertaking and the ability to lighten it with inspiration and humor." Redd Boggs, "in his many years in fandom set an example of quality few fans have ever matched and demonstrated the opposite side of Walt Willis' coin of serious-constructive insurgentism — the side which was serious but which you were always aware was being played for the fun of it" I noted in Wrhn 25, November, 1968. Boggs is one of the finest writers and editors in fandom and the single most important influence on Wrhn and perhaps, by further extension, on my life as well. I hope this doesn't make Redd feel too guilty. Wrhn doesn't especially resemble either Skyhook or Hyphen but, in attitude, I've tryed to make it a relative to both.

This issue then, by implication, is an attempt to communicate back to fandom the best it has given me in a form that will reveal its significance. The chronology of Willis' impact on fandom is traced by Harry Warner in comprehensive style and a penetrating analysis of Walt's writing is rendered with poetic justice by Peter Graham leaving little to do except relate myself to the corpus of the work. An initial inspiration ("Coming: All installments of The Harp in a single issue of Wrhn. Over 200 pages." - Wrhn 26, February, 1969) was transformed by the length between conception and execution into an almost mandatory full historical retrospective of Willis! work and an affectionate memento of appreciation to you. With rationalization I can even shift responsibility for the long delay in publication from my laziness to Walt by claiming that it's partly his fault. I was impressed by the credo exemplified throughout his work and explicitly articulated in "The Ten Year Hitch" in Void: "I don't know what moral to draw...except that fandom is a very worthwhile hobby, and the most worthwhile thing in it is doing as well as you can something that interests you and gives other people pleasure, no matter how much trouble it is. It'll reward you in the long run." After being persuaded by that way of life I could hardly have presented this collection in a manner that didn't reflect the attitude by which it was inspired.

::

I have never been home this way before. The usual route involves a flight to Burlington where my father picks me up for the hour long drive back into the hills over the green Mountains to Newport. But this time I am coming in July and the airline operates a summer schedule out of Newport.

When you take the fannish route to Kennedy airport the propellor beanied vehicle shudders briefly in dread anticipation over the heliport at the top of the 100 story PanAm building and then slowly slips sideways and suddenly one is a speck of protoplasm over one of the most awesome chasms known to man. Even the hypnotic electric blue light of the full moon in Mykonos does not overwhelm like the mercilessly cold and aggressive ruthless commercial empire beneath me. Spears of commerce and religion point up from a network swarming with what appear to be beetles and ants scurrying in frantic tireless activity misguided by invisible sensory mechanisms which keep them from smashing into each other. And, yet, this insignificant accident of energy and matter, myself, floating under whirling blades of steel, has found beauty and fascination in this sick and dangerous monster of a city. I am swept like dangeling crucified Christ in the opening sequence of Fellini's "La Dolce Vita" over battlegrounds of financial wars where motivational manipulation creates millionaires whose lives echo with phantom pain from forgotten childhood screams and over the offices of my psychiatrist where I try to interpret some rhyme in this unreason. The helicopter whisks me away and on another occasion I visit the incredibly still standing one room country school house where I received my first 6 years of education and the scale is reversed. A window sill I once could not peek over is inexplicably a comfortable ledge for sitting and I see the Freudian implication in Dick chasing Jane across an old blackboard once covered with hieroglyphics.

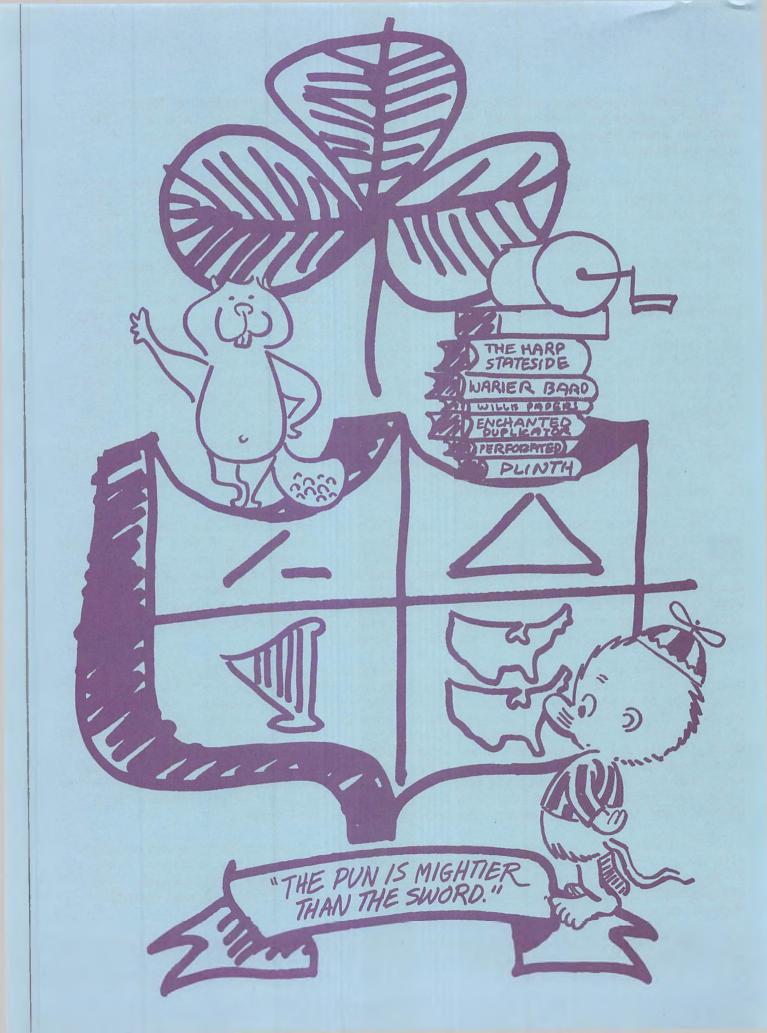
Later as the plane circles lazily over Newport I recall a village built from miniature models cut from the backs of cereal packages and arranged on a topographical rendering of a Western landscape sent for with the box tops. This fantasy world, no more improbable than the close up photographing and mapping of my favorite red planet, was kept in an extra room from which I ventured into fandom. Now Newport is its echo with school, church, library all neatly and painstakingly laid out beneath me like little cardboard structures but showing neon signs of looking for its place in the creeping commercial ugliness of contemporary America.

The plane swings in a long arc taking me further back, into the very beginnings, over our first farm, five miles from the outskirts of Newport, where I was born, next to a patch of woods once so large I was lost in them, over my parent's next farm, where in strange accidents I escaped death three times, and over the farm I left for an art school in Boston to begin an exploration of the remaining pieces of the puzzle. Surely it was all a dream that I had existed down there and now existed up here in this unexpected vantage point. I saw where I had walked as a child and projected myself back to that unknowing time when I never imagined looking down on the space where I then was and knowing that the person looking down had never existed before in all eternity and that the one being contemplated had vanished forever.

The plane lands and its doors open. Behind a wire fence my parents are waiting with deep love, Bob, a brother one year younger than myself, Jimmy, another brother 17 years my junior, Marilyn, Bob's wife and their lovely little girl Caroline. All are waving frantically and excitedly at the sight emerging from a 12 seat aeroplane and out of my alien world.

I walk toward them across the space of twenty-five years...years which have grown into the words you are now reading.

-- Richard Bergeron, April, 1978.



in Belfast. It is a fragment of 170 Upper Newtownards Road, in the spiritual sense. The fascinating things which took place there were the evanescent, human, unpredictable manifestations of the mind and the spirit of an individual, phenomena which transformed into a real never-never structure the building that became known as Oblique House. There might be a moral in this twin aspect, or a duality which a Korzybski could utilize for a revised volume on general semantics. There is mundanity and there is fannishness, perfectly distinct but regrettably unseparable, until such time as some fan of the future manages to utilize the twonk dimension to break completely free from the demands of environment and corporeal body. Until he comes along, Walter A Willis should serve as the ultimate example of how an individual can transform fandom, transmute stodgy surroundings, and transcend the dreary realities that snatch most fans away from their possible achievements. The first thing to remember about anything Willis made tion and significance waiting to be uncovered by anyone

famous is the probability that there are layers of associawith knowledge of fandom and persistence. Willis possesses legendary skill and rapidity in the creation of puns and less obvious forms of word manipulation. Accordingly, words associated with him take on a special magnetism in this particular employment, drawing to themselves all sorts of complex secondary and tertiary symbolisms. Oblique House was the place where Slant was published, and the title of the fanzine that helped to create the name of the house has itself associations with a celebrated story by A E vanVogt for people who seek too deeply in their hunt for submerged meanings. The fanzine title did not derive from a story about supermen but rather from a pin, wielded by Willis blindly at a random spot on a dictionary opened by chance, when it was hard to think of a title for his first fanzine, But the Willis home seemed to acquire through fannish episodes some of the properties of a building made famous by a Heinlein story, "And He Built a Crooked House", in obedience to the non-upright nature of its adjective. And the improbable circumstances narrated in the Heinlein short story might have come from the world of if; and instantly we remember that IF was another magical word for it signified Irish Fandom, for whose members 170 Upper Newtownards Road was a combination of Upper Room, Venusberg, utopia, and a Bleak House that had changed like the Dickens.

"The facts were only a fragment of the fascinating things which took place," the first John Berry once wrote. As a fact, 170 Upper Newtownards Road continues to exist

The house at 170 Upper Newtownards Road was built in 1910, had been purchased by Willis in 1945 at the time of his marriage. After its three stories of red brick, perched on a terrace above a major road, had sat calmly nearly a half-century, it began in 1947 to fill with the lares and penates of fandom. The visitor of the 1950's found in it real things to confound his previous theory that descriptions

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Walt
Willis

by Harry Warner of Oblique House life were entirely things of the imagination. The attic was the most spectacular part of the building, from the fan's viewpoint. There really was a huge mirror on one wall on which was painted a rocket ship, with a long exhaust trail, whose gaseous depiction was cunningly contrived to camouflage a crack in the glass. The visitor who looked into the other mirror over the desk could see at the bottom of his reflection the legend: "Fan-Face No. One." The edge of the large mirror was one boundary of the playing area for ghoodminton, the fannish equivalent of badminton. The belly button on the large nude picture of Marilyn Monroe formed the other boundary line for this sport, which took up in fanzines of the era much more space than criticisms of Campbell. It was played with a moulting shuttlecock and heavy cardboard squares over a table tennis net stretched between the printing press and a chair. A table was found necessary beneath this net, to keep players from reaching one another, but for added protection, it was necessary to create a ghoodminton rule: heavy objects may not be thrown at the opponent. A marble-topped washstand that Madeleine Willis had bought for two pounds at public auction served as Willis' writing desk.

But other parts of the house were also of importance. The attic itself was a comparatively late development in the Willis story, for his fandom centered in a back room during its early stages, moving to this attic only around 1954, and after a couple of years, it began to engulf other parts of Oblique House as fannish materials began to pile up. The American press on which later Willis fanzines were published had come in a crate that first served as a base for the press, then as a workbench. Once, at a war surplus sale, Willis bought a cavity resonator. It became a conversation piece even in the midst of all that competition for attraction. There was a blackboard, on which Carol, the Willises' small daughter, used to write permission for fans to play with her toys, if she felt they measured up to it. Another important exhibit in the house was a bucket, about whose history we know only the fact that Mr. Ziff had kicked it.

If Willis the fan was the attraction that drew Irish fandom to Oblique House, Mrs. Willis the other fan was a force that made it almost impossible to leave, for her cooking and tea-brewing abilities. Madeleine is the only known wife of a fan who bought a 22-cup teapot. The only thing that any fan ever said or wrote in criticism of her is that she flatly refused to put a pound of tea each week in the hot water tank. Her presence helped to keep the tea-drinking bouts within civilized limits, and for some of these even her teapot proved inadequate; on October 18, 1959, Berry drank 25 cups of tea, a record which apparently still stands. Berry himself once claimed that the teapot contained 15 gallons, but he was probably prejudiced by the memory of his big afternoon. As a cook, Madeleine was most celebrated for her cakes.

How did it all begin in a fannish sense? Fortunately, we know beyond doubt one of the decisive moments, a rainy afternoon during the later stages of World War Two. Walter and Madeleine had been going together for nearly a year. Neither was a fan. Nor did they know an important fact about one another until they took shelter from the showers under an awning in front of a news agent's shop and wandered inside to wait for the rain to slacken. In one of the crucial moments of fan history, both reached simultaneously for the same copy of a British reprint edition of Astounding. A fraction of a second had revealed what a year had concealed: each, unknown to the other, read science fiction. "I think I first realized his intentions were honorable, when he started to let me read the novelette first," Madeleine remarked much later about that crucial day in their courtship.

Like medieval man, who was unaware of his prehistoric ancestry, most Irish readers of science fiction in this era were unaware of the primeval source of these

British reprint editions. Long before, during the 1930's, pulp magazines that failed to sell in the United States were shoveled into east-bound ships, to serve as ballast until the vessels reached the British Isles, whereupon they were unloaded and put on sale at thruppence apiece in jumbled mountains on counters in Woolworths and similar shops. The war had brought an end to this. The absence of letter sections from these truncated reprint editions made it hard for potential new fans to find one another, and the British Isles fandom of the 1930's and early 1940's had been confined to England and Scotland, for the most part. So, despite the marriage of Walter and Madeleine, there was no real founding of Irish fandom just yet. Irish fandom's equivalent of the discovery of fossils occurred in the summer of 1947. In a second-hand bookshop in Austin Street, a slum area washed by the waves of lower Newtownards Road, Walter found the January, 1947, Astounding in the United States edition. Walter stared at it, unbelievingly, reasoned that a new species is not apt to exist in vacuo, and went on the hunt for relatives. He scoured Belfast on foot and rode his bicycle to surrounding towns, seeking United States editions of prozines. He found none, but Madeleine spotted something just as important. It was a copy of Walter Gillings' old prozine, Fantasy. In it was a letter section, in the letter section was a communication from James White, and in the White letter was an address ending with the word "Belfast". Walter wrote a letter to this James White and Irish fandom was born. Trapped by Walter's cunning lure (a statement that he owned old British reprint editions), James replied to the letter on August 26. This was later reckoned by common consent as Irish Fandom Day, although White himself later claimed that his first personal meeting with the Willises had occurred on August 25.

The James White who came calling on the Willises that fateful August had from the nose downward a perpetually happy face, topped by eyes and forehead that looked with worried expression toward some disaster that never came. Walter discovered that James had played an important part in his life, even before they met, because James did not work on Wednesday afternoons. James had been making a scientifically clean sweep of prozines from the back issue stores on Wednesdays, accounting for the Willises' inability to find them when they did their magazine-hunting on Saturdays. The encounter enabled Walter to read large quantities of magazines he had been unable to find.

Circumstances smiled on Irish fandom at this point: if James' collection had been really vast, both might still be silent readers who failed to make the transition to fan. But Walter wanted to read even more of stories. On New Year's Day in 1948, Walter achieved his first contact with fan civilization outside Belfast. It came in the form of a letter from Liverpudlian Ron Holmes, who was struggling to keep alive the British Fantasy Library, a lending service for the few fans who remained active in the British Isles. The same envelope contained the first duplicated material issued by fans which Willis had seen; this BFL Handbook might with charity be considered a specialized kind of fanzine. Walter also discovered around this time Operation Fantast, which Ken Slater was directing. This was a merchandising, communications, and correspondence project which may have done more than anything else to revive interest in fandom over there after its wartime decimation. There was a fanzine called Operation Fantast, once again sharply different from the kind of fanzines for which the British Isles became famous a few years later.

But it must be remembered that before Willis, fan publications were utterly different on the eastern bank of the Atlantic. Before the war, there had been superbly literate little fanzines, more civilized and much more sanely concieved than the American fanzines of the era. Wartime shortages of paper and conscription of fans had cut British fanzines to a scattering of paper-thin publications, increasinly sober in tone. The return of peace did not create anything spectacular in British fanzine publishing. Much later, Vincent Clarke thought back to the pre-Willis fanzines and

to those that came in the 1950's and summed it up: "Willis has a lot to answer for." The best fanzine that Willis saw in his earliest stages as a fan must have been Manly Bannister's Nekromantikon, an American publication of great quality but extreme serconnish nature. Further, Willis himself was not yet in 1948 the personality who was soon to influence fans on two continents. Walter pin-points the start of his real emergence as a person at a trip to England in 1950. When he went to London that autumn, Clarke and Ken Chapman invited him to stay at their apertment, the Epicentre. Walter describes the episode like this: "It may have changed my whole life, and it certainly changed my writing style. Hitherto everything I'd written had been either serious and solemn or terse and turgid. I had spent a night in the Epicentre and I had become a fan."

So the impulse toward fanzine publishing that caused Walter twinges in 1948 came not from a desire to find an outlet for puns nor from an intention to show how much delight can be found in fandom. The fanzine urge derived mostly from Walter's desire for more contacts that would bring him a better chance to collect more prozines. While Walter was making his first contacts with American fans who are now long forgotten, like Paul Doerr and Dave MacInnes, he drafted the first issue of a fanzine in early 1948. This draft progressed no further, for a time. Madeleine thinks that an issue of Norman Ashfield's Alembic was an important factor in the transformation of Walter into a fanzine publisher. She asked him one day, "Why don't we publish a fanzine? I'm sure we could do better than that." Then, one day, Walter was visiting a non-fan friend who worked in a drug store and was tidying up the establishment's attic. They ran across a small press which the proprietor had used at one time to print billheads. Walter hastened the tidying up process by removing from the clutter the contraption, which was small enough to fit neatly beneath his coat. Proving that even Walter has goofed on occasions, he took along only enough type to set two and one-half lines,

Walter found someone to repair the defective roller on the little press, and invested in a half-font of type from a printer's supply house. A friendly printer down the street lent him five pieces from a font of larger-sized type, so there could be an imposing title: SLANT. It must be understood that this printing press was not the complex and large hand press which you see in operation in movies about struggling young publishers of weekly village newspapers. It was basically a metal bex into which you put the type. You put paper into the lid, closed the lid, and pressed with a handle, inking by hand, and feeding one sheet at a time. When he ran out of i's partway down a page, Walter kept going by altering the text, disposing of words that contained the short-supply letter. When this resource had reached its limit, James wielded a razor-blade on plywood to create a line cut that filled the remainder of the page. After an estimated hundred hours of work, that first issue of Slant was completed. It was dated November, 1948, it was ready to be mailed out on October 11 -- and Walter suddenly found himself possessed of a fanzine that had nowhere to go. A Nottingham fan named John Gunn had taken over charge of the British Fantasy League, and had promised to distribute Slant for Walter, who knew few fans' names and addresses. But he apparently got caught under Max Smart's cone of silence, ignored letters, and it was not until Christmas Day that Walter acquired a list of British fandom. Two days later, 150 copies of Slant were mailed out.

It was a 12-page issue, consisting of three folded foolscap sheets with saddle-stitching, no price was asked, and virtually nobody in the United States received a copy direct from the publisher, except Forrest J Ackerman, who was more fan than pro at that time. It produced about a dozen letters of comment, one of which even contained some stamps to be used on future issues. A second issue again encountered distribution problems. It was intended to be mailed with Vincent Clarke's Science Fantasy News. But by July, Walter again decided to mail it independently, and this

time, the Willis fame began to spread to the United States, because the NFFF roster was put into service as a source of recipients. Ackerman, who has been a fairy godfather in more ways to more fanzines than anyone is likely to realize, cheered and encourged Walter enormously in two ways. He asked for 25 copies of Slant, in return for which he sent prozines. Even more remarkable was the fact that Ackerman sold for \$19 to Avon Fantasy Reader an item from that second Slant, a story by Clive ackson, "Swordsmen of Varnis". Prodigies became innumerable. Ted Carnell asked Slant authors to submit to his prozine, New Worlds. Manly Bannister, publisher of Nekromantikon, shipped a font of type to Walter. By working three nights weekly plus weekends, James and Walter were achieving such quality that they felt justified in charging a price for Slant, starting with its fourth issue, and Walter decided to purchase the typewriter which he'd previously borrowed, after having survived two years of fanac with nothing except a ballpoint pen for writing purposes. This was a 1912 model typewriter which he and James carried home through a downpour, slung across a broomstick; on it, James later began to write fiction, when Walter gave it to him. Halfway through the fourth issue -- 42 pages, some containing James's finest linocuts -- a terrible thing happened. The handle of the press exploded. The neighborhood blacksmith made unsatisfactory repairs, and it became necessary to have the final page of this issue mimeographed by Ken Bulmer and Clarke. And just as Walter was beginning work on a fifth issue, something without precedent in fandom occurred. It served as a magnificent symbol of how an individual who had been unknown in 1948 had grown in esteem by 1950. Bannister sent him the Nekromantikon press.

#### II

The press came floating across the Atlantic, Upper Newtownards Roadward, toward a personality whose earliest years had contained little to hint at the characteristics and abilities suddenly emerging in fandom, Let's backtrack to examine the pre-fandom Walter Willis and to study briefly his first major fannish product, Slant.

Willis was born in Belfast on a date that should have impelled him toward weird fiction instead of science fiction, October 30. The year was 1919, the first full year of peace after World War One, the last year before the British Parliament created Northern Ireland as a separate entity. His father was a post office employee, descended from a Protestant family that had left Weford when Ireland seemed on the verge of gaining independence. Walter's mother grew up in a family that had lived near Killinchy in County Down. But the splendid sound of those Irish place names fades rapidly from the fannish ear, when succeeded by a more exciting revelation about the Willis ancestry. One of his grandfathers was a printer. It will be another decade or two before we shall know if this is biologically significant. If impulses to duplicate the written word frequently skip a generation, we have at last an explanation for the comparative scarcity of second-generation fans. Moreover, we can look forward to some monumental achievements by youngsters around the turn of the century, whose grandfathers were the achievers in Seventh Fandom or were kept in the balcony by Dave Kyle.

Walter's education began in a state primary school. At considerable sacrifice, his parents sent him next to a public school, the equivalent of the private school in the United States. Lacking the funds to go to college in a land and a time where there was little free university opportunity, Walter took an examination for Northern Ireland's civil service. He scored first places in four subjects, and went to work as a clerk.

"As a boy, my favorite book was 'The Coral Island' by R M Ballantine," Willis recalls. "I also liked school stories, fantasies -- myths, legends and fairy stories -- and any science fiction which appeared in the boys' magazines. I need

hardly point out the relationships with fandom and science fiction -- the school stories I liked best were those by Frank Richards who wrote millions of words about the same school, every boy and mentor identified in this microcosm (Greyfriars)." American equivalents might have been the several series of boys' books published by Grosset and Dunlap with school settings during the 1920's and 1930's, or the sportsoriented but even longer-lived sets of novels in the Frank Merriwell and Frank Merriwell, Jr., series.

Later, Willis says, Wells and Joyce became his main literary influences. His style is not normally reminiscent of the latter, and his fanac demonstraated only in the first few years the emphasis on fundamentalist science fiction typified by the former's reputation. But Willis created so many fannish legends, wrote so entertaininly about fans, was prominent in so many fannish activities unrelated to science fiction stories, that it's often forgotten how science fiction-centered were those first fanzines from Oblique House.

In a guessing game, you wouldn't be apt to link this quotation with Willis: "We intend this to be mainly a fiction magazine. We want to be neither a half-baked imitation of a sceond-rate prozine, nor a mere testing ground for new ideas, a sort of s.f. avant-garde." But it's taken from the editorial of the second Slant. That issue contained one story that was later bought by Wollheim for Avon Fantasy Reader, James White's "The Still, Small Voice". It also presented a clear intimation of different things to come: the first appearance of The Prying Fan, symbolic for the multi-level pun and as the first fruits of a generous later harvest of Willis columns. The third issue also offered something deemed good enough for the prozines: "Swordsmen of Varnis" which Palmer chose for Other Worlds. Credited to Geoffrey Cobbe in Slant, it was written by Clive Jackson. Slant indirectly hit the prozines again, when Other Worlds also used Ackerman's "Atomic Error", which Willis had reprinted from Shangri-La.

The majority of stories in Slant were short, out of respect to the labor involved in handsetting type. Most of them were quite well-written, but most were not remarkable for experimental aspects. If there was a distinctive trend running through Slant's fiction, it might have been the tendency for these stories not to take themselves or their futuristic subject matter with complete seriousness.

The first four issues had been distributed over a two-year period from late 1948 to the fall of 1950. Then the fifth issue, dated Spring, 1951, was published on the press Bannister had used for the first two issues of Nekromanticon. Simultaneously, fannishness was creeping into the fanzine, making itself more felt in the three final issues. The newly discovered Bob Shaw wrote the first of his Farmanship Lectures for this issue. Reprinted several times, the Shaw series sought to enable the fan to advance more rapidly up the ladder to BNF status by showing him its rungs and even labeling each with such uplifting topics as feuds and ploys; this general theme could have been a dim foreshadowing of the later Enchanted Duplicator. Willis had by now unveiled to an expectant fandom Proxyboo, Ltd., a service which wrote letters of comment, published fanzines, and provided all manner of other types of egoboo, to save fans the trouble of working their "brain to the bone". Willis quickly began to do things with the new press that haven't been achieved since in fandom on similar mechanism. There was the dramatic innovation of striped ink, for example. It was accomplished by discouraging the inking plate from rolling in its accustomed manner. Lee Hoffman, remembering her backstage duties at amateur theatricals, insisted that it was done with lights. Walter replied that the ink indeed came from the internal organs of animals. The sixth issue of Slant contained an amazing five-color front cover, sixty pages inside, some interior illustrations in color, even some professionally made engravings.

Each of those pages had up to 50 lines of type. For each line as many as 75 pieces of type needed to be taken from the case, placed one by one into the form, spaced properly, and after the edition of the page containing that line was run, each of the up to 75 pieces of type in up to 50 lines on that page needed to be removed from the form, one by one, and returned to the proper pigeonholes in the case for later use. The time and effort involved in this procedure eventually caused Mr. Mergenthaler to invent the lino-type. James' eyes were giving him trouble and preventing him from doing more linocuts. Walter had found that he liked to write for other people's fanzines. "Nothing lasts forever and it was in the nature of things that we should eventually tire of the drudgery of typesetting," he summed up. So the seventh Slant, dated Winter, 1952-3, contained another impressive printed cover, looked like previous issues before it was opened, but inside the only printed material was a few illustrations. The remainder was mimeographed. Walter had invented a way to run mimeograph stencils on the press, then decided to get a mimeo of his own.

The editorial of this seventh Slant contains an editorial which symbolizes superbly the change in intention that Willis, like many another fan, found himself experiencing after a few issues of fanzine publishing, a change that he accomplished so magnificently that many later fans were inspired to begin their fanac with the new outlook, skipping altogether the more sercon preliminary stage. The editorial said:

"Some time ago we got wind of this stern comment from the White Horse. 'Slant', said some anonymous critic, 'is too promaggy.' We were aghast. Could this vile accusation possibly be true? Whitelipped and trembling, we stole a guilty look at the last issue...and reeled away, sick with self-disgust. It was true! No use to conceal the fact from ourselves any longer; the mag was tainted with pseudo-professionalism. It wasn't just the vile prose we were printing -- the very physical form of the mag was contaminated. Its condition was critical. Not only had it contracted symptoms of chronic legibility, but neatness was breaking out all over it."

That's a splendid example of how far Willis had come to achieving the kind of prose that made him famous. He spoke true words under the veneer of lightheartedness, to prevent them from sounding trite and to soften the impact on anyone whom they might assault. Only the underlinings, exclamation point, and a trace of hyperbole remain as symptoms of the earlier style which Willis was so completely renovating.

The same trip to the Epicentre that Willis found decisive in his outlook and style served another function. It formed the subject matter for one of the first results of his new form of fanac. He told about his impressions of the fabled spot in an issue of Derek Pickles' Phantasmagoria. One of Willis' earliest spectacular and significant contributions to someone else's fanzines was his 15-page report on the first convention he attended, the British Festival Convention of 1951. A dozen years later, he still thought it the best of his conreports. On that visit to London, he didn't know the fans very well, and he tore into the pros without restraint, "I disrupted the London Circle, brought the 15-year-old feud between Gillings and Carnell to a head so that Gillings retired from publishing, and incurred Carnell's eternal distrust." Vincent Clarke assumed, as soon as he read it, that Madeleine was now a widow at the hand of Ted Carnell. Willis estimated that he would have undergone life imprisonment if he'd written that way about an American worldcon. It helped to make international fame for both Willis and for the fanzine in which it appeared: Quandry.

Willis had had some words left over from that monumental sixth issue of Slant. While recuperating from the typesetting effort, he had sent them to a new fanzine which had been sent him by a new fan in Savannah, Ga. That impulse started a train of events that ended in another trip across the Atlantic. The second trip was

east-west, however, and the traveler was not an American press, but an Irish fan.

Lee Hoffman had been a fan since 10:30 a.m. on June 9, 1950, when she saw a copy of Speeds Fancyclopedia. She was 17 at the time. It was just 44 days later when her first fanzine was issued. Quandry made Willis famous throughout the US as a writer, after several years in which scattered US fans had been receiving Slant and failing to realize fully his literary achievements under the impact of such publishing accomplishments. With the eighth issue, early in 1951, came the first appearance in Quandry of "The Harp That Once Or Twice", Willis' most famous column. He thinks that he got the title from Joyce, but has never been able to find the right line on the correct page of "Ulysses" again. Quandry's editor also created the only celebrated instance in which Willis was slow on the uptake. Lee met few fans in person for a while, and her given name was assumed to be that of a young man by those who knew her through correspondence. Vernon McCain even continued that assumption after he received a wire recording from her; he thought her voice hadn't changed yet. In early 1951, she asked Walter if he could keep a secret for a while, and enclosed a valentine. He had "such a clear picture of Lee as a tubby brown-eyed young fellow" that he considered the valentine another fannish eccentricity. Then she told him that she sat crosslegged on the bed to type. Finally, in a last supreme effort, Lee sent Walter her photograph. Walter rushed to a telephone, rang up Bob Shaw, and shouted at him: "Lee Hoffman is a girl!"

A year later, Walter was famous enough in the United States to be the topic of an activity that is bestowed on only the finest fans. He was reported dead. A batch of fans received early in June of 1952 a badly mimeographed postcard, mailed from San Francisco. "We regret to inform you that the well-known Irish fan, Walter A Willis, is dead," it began. "He passed away at his home in Northern Ireland, at the hour of 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 15. The doctor said he died of diphtheria, a disease from which he had been suffering for some time." The only information about the identity of the informant was a line at the bottom: "An Interested Fan Who Is Willing To Pay Postage For These Cds." The announcement did not cause the consternation that Bob Tucker's multiple obituaries have created through the years. Lee summed up the impression it made in most places: "The only people taken in by this so-called hoar were a few neophytes and a few people whose contact with Walt was so slight that they could reasonably believe that news of this nature might reach them in such a trivial manner. I found a dirty file card mimeoed sloppily and mailed in the manner of a post card in my mail. I glanced at it and tossed it aside." Some recipients were particularly unimpressed because they had received letters Willis had written after May 15.

The episode seems to have resulted from no deep-seated motivations or devious intentions. A 13-year-old neofan in San Francisco, Peter Graham, had just acquired his first mimeograph. He wanted to see what kind of publishing it could do and, apparently on impulse, ran off this postcard.

But that impulse could have had a serious effect on fandom's history. It could conceivably have fouled up completely a project that had great consequences for fannish lore and letters. This was WAW With the Crew in 52. If the death hoax had disrupted this project, TAFF might never have come into being; there would have been no The Harp Stateside to inspire a long line of monster-size fannish trip reports; the Second Coming of Willis would have automatically retreated into a world of if instead of becoming part of the history of IF; and it's hard to imagine the effect on fanzines, if Willis had been soured sufficiently by the event to cut back on fanac for the remainder of the 1950's.

Shelby Vick, a member of the Quandry editorial staff, created WAW With the Crew in '52, as a project and as a slogan. ("Crew" seems to have meant loosely the fans with whom he would meet if the project succeeded, and has no fannish significance

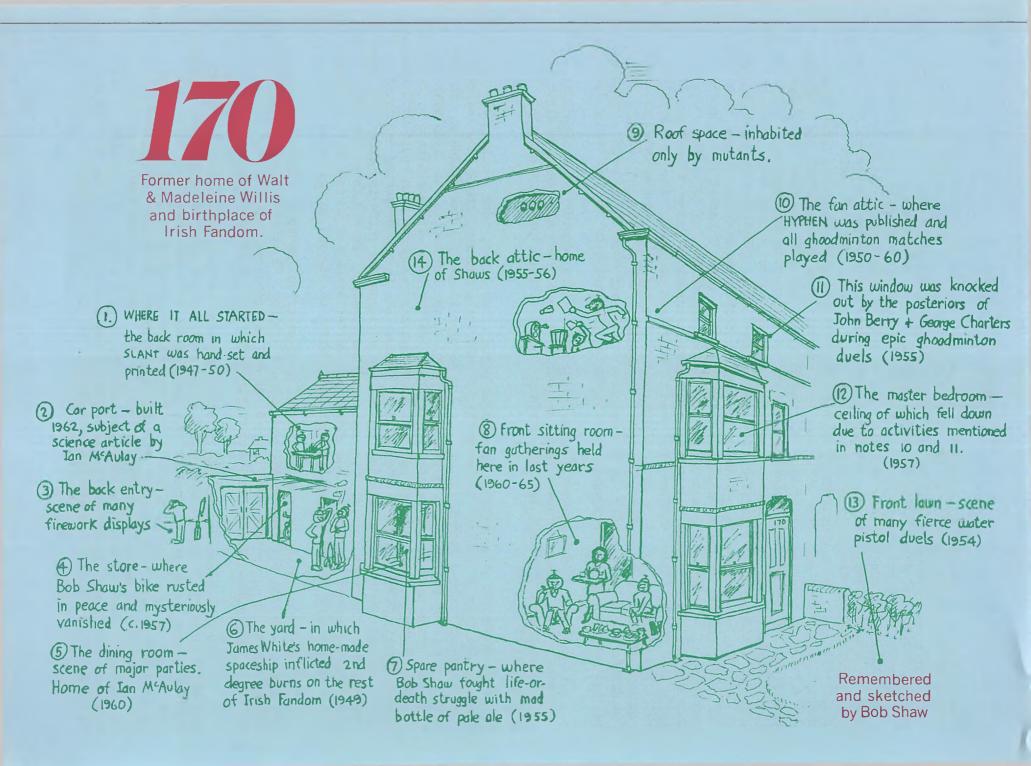
other than its usefulness as a rhyme.) The project was to bring Walter A. Willis to the worldcon in Chicago in 1952. The only previous effort to import a fan from overseas for a worldcon had succeeded only after the most strenuous efforts spread over several years. That was Ackerman's drive to bring across Ted Carnell, the Very Same Ted Carnell who turned out to have not been too implacably angered by the conreport after all. Willis was far less famous as a fan in 1952 than Carnell had been when Ackerman started those efforts, and there was no reasonable hope for success. Neither Willis nor Hoffman thought that the campaign would be won. The round trip ticket would cost \$340, and a couple hundred additional dollars were needed for land travel, meals, hotel bills, and other expenses. That postcard from San Francisco had complicated matters by ordering: "Fans who contributed to the WAW with the Crew in '52 fund, send your name and address to Shelby Vick, and he will return your money. All fanzine publishers are asked not to treat this announcement as a hoax." But the money came in. A mimeograph was raffled off. Some of the leading fanzines published Willishes, special issues that plugged the trip, usually containing material by and about the subject of the campaign. Willis himself stirred up extra interest by the novel procedure of writing an account of his trip before anyone knew if it would occur. This was "Willis Discovers America", a stupendously ingenious piece of writing. It was a hard act to follow when he sat down to write the account of the journey itself. The author called it "a sort of monument to the era which is now known as Sixth Fandom." It was published first piecemeal in Quandry, Vick's Confusion, Oopsla, Mad, and Fantasias, then reprinted by the author for FAPA and OMPA in 1955 with footnotes, and later reprinted serially again in Void during the publicity for the Second Coming.

Sixth Fandom did it, and the trip became what Willis considers the highlight of his career in fandom. "Every major project I've done since has been nostalgic, either an attempt to encapsulate the perfect fandom I knew then or a straight recreation of it."

The adventure began with a mad rush to catch up on fanac, then a quiet talk with James on the lawn of Oblique House the night before the journey, about "how far we'd come since we entered fandom and how far I was going to go." Walter sailed on the Neptunia. The first US fan to greet him was Dave Kyle, who had beaten the field with the help of a press pass during customs formalities. Walter rode with Joe Gibson by bus to Chicago, where he fell into the habit of answering his telephone with these words: "Peter Graham speaking". His formal introduction to fandom came in an unexpected manner. The Chicagoan who was handling introductions at the worldcon was suffering from both ignorance about the present generation of fans and bad eyesight. He had to be prompted about the existence of Willis, then didn't see Walter stand and proceeded to introduce him a second time on the assumption that he'd failed to respond to the first one.

Willis spoke at the banquet as part of an impressive lineup of orators: Gernsback, de Camp, Dr. Smith, Clifford Simak, and Anthony Boucher. "I spoke for a few minutes, making three bad jokes that were laughed at and one good one that wasn't," Willis related. The worldcon ended in a manner made famous by Willis' description:

"As the dawn broke we were all quietly happy and talked about how wonderful it had all been and how much we were going to miss each other and how we must get together again sometime somehow. As for me, I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life. All the tension of the last few days was over and to look forward to I had the prospect of four weeks of seeing America and after that a return to fandom without the worry and embarrassment that had spoiled it for so long. I had now been just seven days in America without even having had time to think about it, but now a feeling of utter exalation swept over me to realize that there I was sitting between Lee Hoffman and Max Keasler at the top of a skyscraper watching the sun rise over Chicago. Life can



be wonderful. It was one of those moments that has to be broken while it's still perfect, and when the sun was fully up we went down to have breakfast."

#### III

After Chicon II, Willis began a protracted journey across the continent. He began, improbably enough, by witnessing the first visit of Ackerman, the most violently anti-Lemuria fan, to Ray Palmer's farm home, where Richard Shaver was a guest. He was driven to Los Angeles, where he suddenly found himself discussing westerns with Ray Bradbury. Willis thought that he had attained the westernmost point in his travels when he strode symbolically into the Pacific, then was forced to wade somewhat beyond this ultima thule when the only pair of shoes he'd brought along washed out to sea. Next came an air flight to Kansas City, and a series of bus adventures that brought him to the Lynn Haven, Florida, home of Shelby Vick, and to Lee Hoffman country around Savannah. Then another Greyhound swallowed him up, and Willis was back in New York, where he collapsed into the Neptunia which he'd first seen five weeks earlier.

"Now I had something to remember for the rest of my life," Willis wrote. "I shouldn't have to grow old with the feeling that I'd done nothing exceptional with my life. I had been to America, seen the Pacific and the Grand Canyon and bathed in Florida, and I'd done it all through writing articles in fanzines. It might not be an awfully big thing, but it was exceptional, something that not everybody did: at least no one had ever done it before. And now, maybe, somebody could do it again, and fandom would become a more exciting place on account of that wildcat scheme of Shelby's."

The conreport tradition was firmly established in fandom even in 1952, and fanzines published vast quantities of narratives about the manner in which one fan had visited other fans. However, nobody had ever produced anything which combined elements of the two at such length and in such ingratiating manner as The Harp Stateside. There is a complicated history behind this 71-page volume whose effortless grace of writing and perfect matching of word and pictures cause the modern fan to imagine that it sprang up overnight like some perfectly formed mushroom out of sheer instinctive growth impulses. Willis first wrote about the con itself, and sent the manuscript to Lee. It was so long that she intended to split it between two issues of Quandry, and Walter feared two things: that its unity was harmed and that he'd mortally offended Shelby by not giving him the conreport for publication. Lee followed Walter's wishes, Shelby gafiated, and Willis came down with pneumonia. The trip and its after-effects on his nervous system had cost him 20 pounds.

Willis continued writing about his trip for Gregg Calkins' Oopsla!, then cut all the stencils for the full-scale narrative. Just as Calkins was scheduled to publish the volume, a mundane matter came up -- he got married. He returned the stencils to Willis, who somehow ferreted out duplicating paper that would fit the United States size stencils. In the next of a series of miracles, Walter acquired two Gestetners at an auction for a few dollars. With Ken Bulmer's first aid for deteriorated stencils, and with Carol Willis' slipsheeting assistance, the volume was finally published in February, 1957.

"Fandom is a very worthwhile hobby, and the most worthwhile thing in it is doing as well as you can something that interests you and gives other people pleasure, no matter how much trouble it is." That's Willis' summation of the philosophy that led to the creation of The Harp Stateside, which won the most enthusiastic reception of all his writings up to then. He was particularly awed when he heard that Cyril Kornbluth liked it. Fans began immediately to quote to one another its most famous passages, like: "It was a curious that in one hotel there should be a bellhop with

the soul of a fan, and a fan with the soul of a bellhop." Some fifty thousand words of text were illuminated with tiny Arthur Thomson sketches which got amazing detail and atmosphere into a couple of square inches. In its way, it contained as devastating descriptions of fandom's worst aspects as anything Laney had written, but its pages simultaneously provided affectionate recreations of the finest attributes of the hobby. Willis' ability to put into words the spirit and atmosphere of fandom's fine moments saved him from the sort of resentment that Laney's almost unrelieved muckraking had created. There is no positive evidence that any better travelogue has been published professionally for the past quarter-century or longer. Mark Twain's "The Innocents Abroad" and Dickens in his American Notes had done something similar, but they used up a lot more words in the process. It is still hard to find anything in fanzines that characterizes more succintly and vividly most of the fans and pros whom Willis describes. EE Smith, he wrote about a speech, "is held in such affection that I think he would have got nearly as much applause if he'd merely read the Stock Exchange quotations in a Swahili dialect." Van Vogt was "tall, quiet, gentle, dark, and wore glasses, and altogether reminded me very strongly of James White." Walter attributed to Max Keasler a characterizing remark about the time Mrs. GM Carr got her head caught in a closing elevator at the Chicon: "I hope the hotel doesn't sue." Willis suspected nature of specially designing the Grand Canyon for a national park. A bonus in The Harp Stateside are its puns, not as frequent as in some of his shorter writings, but devastating when they occur. like some of the chapter headings: "Male, Female an'Utah." "The Outsider, and Authors." "And So To Bedlam." Bill Temple once said of Willis: "He almost becomes destiny itself, unobtrusively manipulating events and laying powder trains of association to lead up to the big bang" of the pun.

But before The Harp Stateside was fully written and long before it was published, Willis was associated with another special publication. The Enchanted Duplicator is the exact complement of the later, larger volume. It is allegorical where the trip report is historical, but the two creations reflect in similar manner all the mystery and delight of fandom. Everyone who read it assumed that it was a parody on "Pilgrim's Progress". But neither of its authors, Willis and Bob Shaw, had read Bunyan's allegory when they wrote The Enchanted Duplicator.

Willis credits Shaw with the inspiration for this fannish classic. Irish fandom had listened to a BBC radio play by Louis McNeice called "The Dark Tower". Willis wrote most of the text, and BoSh created the Map of Jophan's Quest. George Charters dummied the pages, which have justified right margins, and cut the stencils. Fans assumed an allusion to Laney in the formof the concluding statement that "This is a Serious Constructive Insurgent Publication." But that was just a spur of the moment addition to the colophon. Two hundred copies were mimeographed, with printed front and back covers, and years passed before they were all sold, despite the later fame of the work.

The Enchanted Duplicator is the narration of Jophan's quest to find the Magic Mimeograph and publish the Perfect Fanzine. No matter how jaded with science fiction and disillusioned by fandom its readers may have been, they couldn't have failed to be stirred by old memories as they read in the first paragraph that Jophan was unhappy, because in all the length and breadth of Mundane there was no other person with whom he could talk as he would like, or who shared the strange longings that from time to time perplexed his mind and which none of the pleasures offered by Mundane could wholly satisfy." Jophan (whose name was borrowed in a different spelling from Tucker's Joe Fann) has more adventures than Frodo, and they are described in some what better English. There is magic, in the sudden acquisition of a bottle of liquid called Correcting Fluid; evil, personified in such seductively luring forms as the Kolektinbug; and puns, of course, like the elixir which comes from the egg of bu-birds. The Enchanted Duplicator is redolent of the language of fairy tales, the

humor of Lewis Carroll, and the unique traditions of fandom. Its culmination, when Jophan climbs the Tower of Trufandom, finds an "obscene eyesore" where The Enchanted Duplicator should be, and discovers how to transform it into the Magic Mimeograph that will produce the Perfect Fanzine, had such an impact on fandom that nobody even tried to analyze the quest in Freudian terms.

Meanwhile, all during the 1950's, the mystique of Irish Fandom was building. Willis' reputation had been principally built in the United States from his own writings, his fanzines, and his visit to the United States, until another Irish fan saw his name in a prozine's fanzine reviews. John Berry made his first visit to Oblique House in 1954, quickly met the rest of Irish Fandom, and soon began to build legends as a supplement to the realities that centered around Upper Newtownards Road. A stupendous outpouring of articles and stories by Berry described people and events in Irish Fandom, some of them only slightly colored true stories, others fanciful imaginings based on some small actual event. Willis figured large in many of them. It was a risk, viewed from hindsight: Willis might have ruined his own writings by trying to outdo his activities in Berry manuscripts, or any slight decline in Willis' creativity might have caused fandom to neglect the real man for the Berry version. But either the strength of Willis' personality or the genius of Berry as a writer prevented any such disaster. No foreigner who visited Oblique House expressed the slightest disappointment with ghoodminton, when he saw the real game that had provided the action in so many Berry tales. Real things continued to outshine Berry's wildest flights of fancy, such as James White's use of water he'd scooped from the Seine to zap Chuch Harris with, when he introduced the zapgun to British fandom in 1953. As a publisher, Willis produced on an irregular schedule during the 1950's two successors to Slant. Hyphen was a general-purpose fanzine. Willis joined Fapa as the decade began, remained active in it for eight years, and published from time to time for the apa issues of Pamphrey, which bore the name he'd first picked at random for Slant but chickened out of using.

By now it was evident that Willis would win any poll to select the best writer in fandom that was conducted on anything approaching an honest basis. Why?

Because, for one thing, he worked much harder at it than most fans, widening the margin of superiority that his abilities had already created. "I don't get brilliant ideas and dash to my typer in a fury of inspiration," he once explained. "I don't find complete articles and stories writing themelves in my head." He insisted on the importance of the writer imposing form on the raw material to create an essay, rewriting unsatisfactory preliminary drafts, jotting down in a notebook any matters which might be molded into fanzine articles. "Your subconscious will create but your conscious mind must select, and both are equally important. You must have a clear idea of the way the piece you're trying to write should be constructed." Walter holds similar principles for creating fiction: "the technique of free association channeled by logic."

A second factor must have been the light touch which Willis was able to impart to whatever he wrote, whether he was patting another fan on the head in approval for some benevolent deed or blowing to smithereens some fakefan's pretentious idiocy. The Harp That Once Or Twice was the epitome of the Willis approach to people and events, becoming the aspect of his creativity that would come in third in any word-association test in fandom, after the subject that been keyed by Willis to The Harp-Stateside and The Enchanted Duplicator. The Harp That Once Or Twice began in Quandry, moved to Oopsla!, then to Warhoon, appeared for a time in Quark and continued, once again, in Warhoon. The second instalment of the column was credited by Willis with being the last that was "serious", and he is correct in one sense, but wrong in another, for some very serious undertone or moral is usually hidden within his

frothiest word-swirling, striking the reader with its logic and importance minutes or days after he has finished the column and has allowed the verbal foam to dissipate through his memory.

Then there's the technique of creating vivid images of reality with words which Willis utilizes whenever appropriate to his subject matter. Between camp and nostalgia, we've heard quite a bit about the golden era of radio. But where has anyone written more realistically than Willis? "The cabinet is polished walnut, the screw terminals on all the components are fashioned like jewels, and the tuning condensers... Ah, those tuning condensers. A symphony in black and yellow, a glory of polished ebonite and brass, with precision air-spaced trimmers consisting of polished brass disks, operated by knurled wheels like golden sovereigns, all so beautifully made as to almost make you weep with the sadness of it. For all that loving craftsmanship is now just junk." That's the same writing mechanishm which when applied to a world con was equally capable of concretizing intangible thoughts and attitudes: "There was just some desultory conversation. I think everyone was subconsciously expecting Burbee and Laney to appear in their midst in a pillar of fire." "The argument petered out in this morass, it being difficult to say who had won. In a sense Browne did, because he brought everyone else down to his level."

It's difficult to think of any mundame writers whose prose Willis could be accused of parroting. Willis sentences have the qualities of all good writing, in their freedom from cliche, waste matter, and truism. They break some of the rules that we were taught in the third grade. The first person singular pronoun is extremely frequent in some of his essays, but you don't notice it unless you make a conscious effort to count its appearances, and you don't get the sense of egotism that this procedure is supposed to impart to writing. Willis normally writes short sentences, but many of these brief ones are quite complex in syntax, yet are instantly comprehended by the eye, and the reader gets the impression that it wouldn't have been possible to put this thought into a form less burdened with prepositional phrases and conjunctions. This is part of the mystery of the Willis style: despite the tight logic of the organization which runs from the first to the last line of any article, giving it an overall form, no fannish writing is so full of single sentences that are brilliant and comprehensible when ripped out of context. Willis used to fill the back page of each Hyphen with just such remarkable sentences, which he collected from writings and conversations in his circle over a period of months, as if he assessed particular value to the knack in others which he specializes in himself.

There has 'nt been much obvious change in the Willis style for more than a decade. Willis wrote during his first years in fandom in a way that was not particulary different from standard fanzine English; the true style began to emerge about the time The Harp That Once Or Twice came into the world. It might be possible to find in it elements from the styles of two fellow-countrymen who made somewhat greater reputations in the general literary world: Wilde for the epigrammatic quality of many pithy and funny sentences, GBShaw for the close-packed content which always proves to be related to some kernel of purpose, no matter how it may seem to ramble astray halfway through an essay. But it's impossible to imagine Willis writing like A. E vanVogt, for instance, whom he has frequently praised as a favorite science fiction pro. The impact of Berry's writing, which had a major effect on many fanzine contributors in the late 1950s and early 1960s, seems to have left not the slightest mark on Willis' style. Laney could be considered an influence only from the sense of attitude, a willingness to be iconoclastic and to take a fresh look at things which aren't really what fandom has long assumed them to be. But where, in or out of fandom, would you find anyone who can improvise as brilliantly as this, on the simple topic of falling behind in correspondence, in a letter?:

"I do seem to have gotten out of the habit of answering letters just for the fun of correspondence. Sometimes weeks go by without me writing a letter at all. All incoming mail is scanned subconsciously from the point of view of whether I can possibly deal with it any other way. Even interesting ones...with them I appease my conscience by as it were giving the writers additional points on a sort of vast ranking system I seem to carry in my head. Good letters are accounted to them for righteouness and I have a nebulous idea -- occasionally put into effect, as for instance when sending out Christmas cards -- that I will do something in return sometime. So, please, when you write again and if you don't get an immediate reply, don't think I wasn't very pleased to get your letter. What's happened is that in 1952 I took on far more commitments in fandom than I could ever continue to carry out indefinitely. The usual thing when this happens is for the fan to abandon everything at one swell foop, but I didn't want to do that. Even though I've met more fans than anyone except Forry Ackerman, I'm still not disenchanted with them. So I just drew in my horns a bit and one of the first things to go was answering letters. But I know I must somehow find time to stick that horn out again a little, now that I'm going into the columnising racket again. ... I've just got to get letters...to keep me in touch with what's going on behind the scenes -- apart from the sheer pleasure of getting interesting letters. This has been and will be one of my bigger problems, to know whether my not getting fanzines from various fans is due to my decline or theirs."

One curious thing about Willis' prose is the manner in which it tells a great deal about his opinions on the specific subject, but reveals little about his fundamental philosophy and preferences. Even the ardent collector of Willisiana would find difficulty in assembling Willis' thoughts about Irish politics, the best way to settle the problem of war, how we should get along with religion, or the ten best authors of science fiction. The Willis articles are somewhat like the art of certain Dutch painters in this respect: they transmit more clearly than a photograph a section of reality, perfectly framed, beautifully composed as a fragment, but yielding no clues to the reminder of the universe outside the frame or the margins. This could represent one of the secrets of Willis' popularity. There is never any suspicion that he is writing about a huckster in order to propagandise his prejudices about the virtues of capitalism.

Two fan conventions were in the planning stage at the same time, partway through the 1950s. Both had slogans. "South Gate in '58" was the motto on this side of the ocean, and "Snog in the Fog" was the less official catchphrase for one in the British Isles. You wouldn't guess, offhand, that the non-competing events could have their destinies entangled by such differing mottos.

Long, long before, some forgotten San Francisco fan had felt the urge to get the worldcon for the old home town. A small amount of plugging had been done with the slogan, "Golden Gate in '48", but San Francisco made no real effort to become host. Rex Ward lamented to Rick Sneary that it was a shame to waste a slogan, and suggested remodeling it to "South Gate in '58". Sneary considered it a fine jest, since his home town had only 30,000 residents or so, hardly the population that had drawn worldcons in the past. But by 1949, Sneary acknowledged that "the whole thing started as a joke," but "it is no longer one. I am seriously going to try and get the nod in 1957, to have the convention here." The new slogan appeared on a sign at the 1948 Westercon, and a new fan group formed in the same year, the Outlanders, made the dream part of its raison d'etre. In the years that followed, the slogan bobbed up intermittently in fanzines. The Outlanders came upon dark days, Sneary suffered an attack of gafiation followed by pneumonia, and eventually the mid'50s were at hand and it was either time to shut up or put up. Suddenly Sneary found the impossible dream something very probable. John Trimble suggested that it was time to break the

metropolitan stranglehold on conventions. Willis pointed out that "The life of the South Gate tradition has coincided almost exactly with mine in fandom and I think of it as one of the eternal verities." Suddenly Sneary began to want not only the world-con in 1958 but also every event that he had imagined as part of that inconceivable worldcon. "One of our dreams is to bring you and Madeleine over for the convention," he told Willis. "It is a crazy fannish type idea, just as South Gate in '58 was, and yet one means almost as much as the other."

The campaign to bring both Willises to the con was announced by Sneary in mid-1957. Meanwhile, Britisher Ron Bennett had been criticizing the other slogan, fearing that younger fans might be adversely affected by its suggestion. Walter was inclined to agree with Bennett's viewpoint, but also wondered if the criticism wasn't confusing mountain and molehill. "Consider me nodding wisely at the suggestion we play down the fogsnog angle," Willis wrote in the ninth issue of Ploy. "Apart from the point you make, if we're not careful some of these sex-starved Americans will ask for their money back if we don't run the con like a brothel."

One reader either objected or pretended to object to those two sentences. As a result, the Second Coming of Willis was disrupted, the impossible dream wasn't completely fulfilled, Fapa lost its best writer, and Walter's baggage vanished into the maw of a renegade Greyhound.

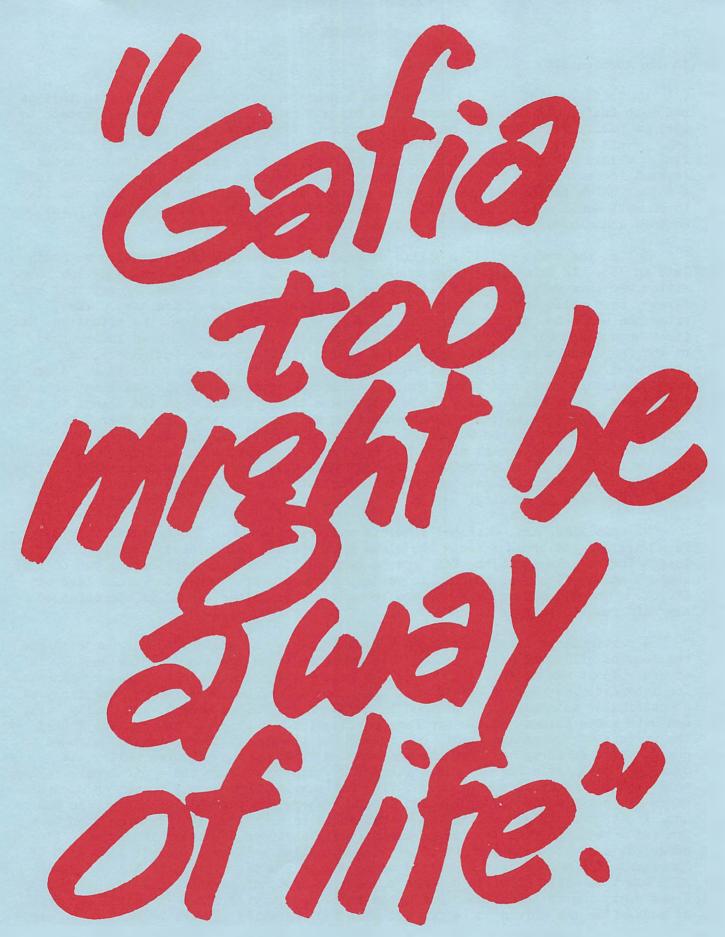
IV

Mrs. G.M. Carr was a Seattle fan better known in the city's fan club and as a member of Saps and Fapa than as an all-out participant in general fandom. She had twice or thrice the age of many fans, and offered as a fanzine writer a weird mixture of ultra-conservative housewife and decidedly unconventional opinionator. Her anti-Willis period was brief, violent, and variously explained.

While the campaign to bring Willis to South Gate was developing, Mrs. Carr struck, principally in her Fapa publication, Gemzine. Her springboard was made of two hinged portions that seem today even shakier than the normal platform for any political purpose. Mrs. Carr expressed outrage because Willis had written lightly about the "snog in the fog" motto and because, she claimed, he was angry over Bob Madle's victory in a Taff campaign. A contributing factor may have been even more incredible: someone in the United Kingdom had sent Mrs. Carr a copy or two of The Reporter, a publication which she had apparently never seen before. She blamed Willis, calling the publication "a shocking revelation to me" and a disgrace to our nation."

Mrs. Carr appeared to take seriously the Willis statement in Ploy which had been intended to show through hyperbole the absurdity of making a big thing of objections to a lighthearted slogan, then further extracted "sex-starved Americans" from context to bolster her theory that Willis was anti-American.

There had been some bitterness and rumors had sprung up in some sections of fandom about the Taff campaign which Madle won. Willis denied that he had passed on stories or added to the clamour. In the fall, 1957, Fapa mailing, Mrs. Carr took it for granted that he had done so, in such heated terms as: "Ever since your attempt to dictate to US fandom how it should conduct our end of the campaign was opposed, you have displayed an increasing bitterness. I can understand that this problem of establishing a caste system in fandom impinges on a very real and basic difference in social attitude between Europe and America. The unsportsmanlike way you have acted in expressing your disappointment that your favored candidate did not win has been a disgrace not only to yourself but to all of the United Kingdom. Don't you think it is time you apologized for your unfounded accusations and your lack of confidence



in the Americans?"

Up to this point, Willis had enjoyed a near-perfect press. Differences that he had with individual fans had occurred in private manner, and the nearest approach to serious public criticism had been of an indirect type: some grumbling that his company on his first trip to the United States had been monopolized by a small group of fans. Willis was hurt and spoke plainly in reply to Mrs. Carr. "A vivious streak several inches wide is hanging down beneath your flowered cotton," he announced in a letter which denied the anti-American charges and the role she would have him play in an anti-Madle whispering campaign. He stood up for the right to express opinions on Taff and claimed no attempt to dictate to fandom about Taff.

But at the start of 1958, Willis decided not to accept the invitation to South Gate in '58. In February, he announced to fandom that his wife's pregnancy and babysitter problems were among the reasons he was declining with thanks. Money that had already been collected was divided between Taff and the Solacon treasury. Then, after the worldcon, Willis said publicly some plainer things about the situation. His first enthusiasm for the trip to South Gate, Willis recalled, had been interrupted by the fear that this special fund would damage Taff. Then the Outlanders, who originated the special fund idea, insisted on telling fandom about the idea, fandom urged Willis to come, and Willis decided to accept without a public statement of such acceptance. Then, Willis said, "With consummate timing GMCarr took the chance to publish her allegations that I was anti-American and an embittered loser over Taff, coupled with sneers at the Outlanders for having invited me. It was obviously impossible for me to accept money from Americans when many fans believed I despised them or to appear to be competing with Taff when they thought me a frustrated dictator. The other reasons I gave at the time for not coming were real enough, but this one was the most depressing."

By this time, Mrs. Carr had issued a semi-recantation. In the summer, 1958, Fapa mailing, she brought forth the claim that she had deliberately chosen him as target for remarks about the Taff rumors because "I considered (Willis) a fan of such stature and so firmly entrenched in fandom, that nothing I could say would have any effect." She did not explain why she brought up the matter at all if she intended her Taff remarks to have no effect.

A particularly unfortunate side effect of the whole wretched smear campaign was the loss of Willis to Fapa. He had been a member since the start of the decade, in an era when it was so simple to enter the organization that Walter joined by expressing interest. He was not Fapa's most prolific member, but he turned up regularly as a contributor to magazines published by Lee Hoffman, Vernon McCain, and Shelby Vick, and with a few issues of his own Fapa publication, Pamphrey. The magazine lacked the stature of Hyphen and Slant, but it had the title that theoretically belonged to one of them: Pamphrey had been the word chosen first by the pin when Walter was deciding on a title for his first fanzine by thehelp of luck and a dictionary. Walter told Fapa in his final contribution: "I'm not leaving Fapa merely to put as much distance as possible between myself and GMCarr. There are two main incentives in fandom, ambition and pleasure. By 1952 I had achieved pretty well everything open to a fan and I began to find that achievement itself destroys the other incentive. I've never got used to being thought of as what is called a BNF and I don't like what it involves. The main reason I carried on so doggedly after my trip to the States in 1952 was that felt it would be mean to cash in my winnings and quit. By early 1957 I was beginning to think that gafia too might be a way of life. I felt I had done as much after the Chicon as before and that in some weird way the books were square."

Willis wasn't forgotten at the Solacon. Dottie Faulkner and Rick Sneary climbed

the steps of South Gate's City Hall and dipped a banner to symbolize the absence of the person who had planned to join them in that reunion. (Meanwhile, Mrs. Carr never recovered the favor she lost in most of fandom: Fanac, the leading news publication of the time, even announced in 1959 a movement to cut her from fanzine mailing lists and ignore her because she "has carried her promulgation of warped effusions in the form of personal attacks just too damned far." She never again ran for Taff, after losing in 1955, and had begun to concentrate her fan activity in the NFFF as the 1960s arrived.

Walter had kept talking about the United States after his first coming. Usually his statements were as anti-American as this one: "What really did impress me was the American small town, which seemed to me the nearest thing to the ideal place to live in that has appeared so far on this planet. Pleasant houses, tree-lined streets, young people in summer clothes, and warm evenings filled with the crepitation of crickets and of neon signs -- symbolically indistinguishable in sound." In return, the notion of a second discovery by Willis of America refused to die over here. As soon after the Carr attack as April, 1960, Ted White and Les Gerber talked over a new fund but when Gerber sent out feelers toward Belfast, Walter sugested waiting a year before a formal invitation. The Second Coming was officially proclaimed as soon as 1961 arrived, by means of a special issue of Void, White's fanzine. This issue took the form of a plea to Walter to come back, voiced by the editor, Gerber, Greg Benford, Pete Graham, the Fanoclasts, the most fannish group in the city, and most of the rest of New York fandom. The trip was proposed for 1962 for significant reasons: it would represent the tenth anniversay of WAW with the Crew in '52, and once again the worldcon would be in Chicago. The appeal to Willis included this time Madeleine, who hadn't come over the first time and had by now become a fannish legend of almost Walterian proportions, for her frequent key roles in the stupendous quantity of halftrue, half-fictional accounts of Irish fandom written by Berry, White, and Willis himself. That issue of Void was a special Willis appreciation issue that had been in the planning stages for eight months. Since a large proportion of 1961's fandem had been learning how to blow noses in 1952, much of the issue contained material about Willis that acquainted him with the new fannish generation. Berry, for instance: "His mind is so nimble, so quick, that it takes apart every sentence he hears, every word is carefully digested, every possible meaning and inflection tried out, and an invariably clever pun is the result." Meanwhile, veteran fans were learning from other sources the newest aspects of the Willis legend. Scrabble, for instance, had begun to assume part of the proportions that ghoodminton had once possessed in Oblique House. Berry accused Willis of using a three-month leave of absence from work to publish his own dictionary for this purpose. There were those who wanted to hear from Walter's own lips how a newcomer to Irish fandom, Ian McAuley, had done graduate work in atomic physics, then proceeded to take a job in a fertilizer factory. Fans were still whispering about how Willis could have forestalled the awful moment at the Solacon when one of the tea-drinking contest participants had produced teabags.

The campaign succeeded in the wildest possible completeness. The final figure raised by donations, lotteries, and other means was \$1,784.66, more than the total income of some early worldcons, and that figure doesn't include some 22 pounds raised in England. Some fanzines published special issues at special prices, like the \$1 per copy issue of Xero which sold out quickly its edition of 118 copies and immediately became a collector's item. By the end of 1961, Willis could say: "Everything has been done so gracefully and apparently painlessly that I'm determined to accept the same way. I shall even try not to feel inadequate."

The Willises arrived in the United States on August 28, 1962. The wisdom of importing both fans became apparent immediately, because they found not one but two welcoming parties, offering rival greetings to the nation and New York City. Walter

went in the car driven by Dick Eney, and Madeleine became a passenger of the delegation driven by Ted White. Both vehicles rendezvoused at the home of Don Wollheim. The Larry Shaws provided overnight accommodations for the Willises during their stay in New York, where the Dick Lupoffs hosted an imposing welcoming party on August 29. Sixth Fandom was officially declared resurrected at this festivity.

The Willises and Ethel Lindsay, Taff winner of the year, had decided to invest in special Greyhound tickets which provided 99 days of unlimited travel for \$99, a decision that was later to have unfortunate consequences for the peace of mind of Walter and the Greyhound administration. Walter kept his 99-day ticket in his official Chicon coat, a garment created by James White with interior pockets of trememdous proportions for better transportation of fanzines, program booklets, and similar necessities for fannish survival. One pocket was fashioned into a quick-draw holster for a notebook, and the Willis pantaloons were provided with a billfold hideaway in a remote area.

"It was the best convention ever, pitted against the worst hotel ever," Willis said in summary of the Chicon. He had a strange sense of returning to a previous decade, when he found a Catholic girls' con again in progress in the hotel, and saw on Lee Hoffman's dress the Harp brooch that he had bought her at Chicon II. Jim Webbert was again there, but Jim helped to prove the existence of 1962 by behaving maturely this time. One of the scheduled side effects of Willis' Second Coming did not occur, however, because the world was not destroyed. It was generally conceded that the first confrontation among Willis, Dean Grennell, and Ackerman would result in an earth-shattering ultimate pun. The official explanation for this sole blot on the Willis trip was that Ackerman was forced to leave before anything extreme occurred, and a small earthquake in Iran was the only effect noted by the national press.

Curiously, this worldcon was conspicuous for its lack of fan-slanted program items, despite the special visitors. The Willises were given a reception at the con, where Ethel was also honored. Wrai Ballard found it so crowded that he was afraid of getting bitten if anyone talked near him. The Tenth Anniversary Willis Fund, Taff, and Washington fandom formally sponsored the reception where some 250 enjoyed the Willises, Pepsi-Cola, and potato chips, nearly half as many as showed up for the Chicon itself. Walter also served as a member of a fan panel which Grennell moderated. Not everyone heard him explain that history and astronomy were capable of stimulating his sense of wonder, because the microphones were hooked into someone's tape recorder, rather than the public address system.

No Harp Stateside emerged from the Second Coming, but both Willises wrote in various places about thier adventures. He was impressed when Larry Shaw, introduced among the pros, stood up and said, "I'm a fan." People trying to get out of the circle in which fans had been formed for the masquerade reminded Walter of pips in an orange, when they eventually squirted free. Heinlein's white suit impressed Walter as too spotless for the titanic struggles in which Heinlein said he had indulged to get to Chicago to receive a Hugo. Walter considered Bloch's talk the accomplishment of the impossible: both regular fans and monster fans were satisfied with it.

After the Con, the Willises saw their first drive-in movie, and headed West. In mid-September, Bill Donaho threw a party in the Bay Area honoring them. It was a good thing that he'd been saving up home-brew for the preceding two months, because about sixty turned out, including virtually all of the Little Men and Golden Gate Futurian Society. The Willises bussed eastward across the country on a virtually non-stop basis, failing to find the place where Walter longed to live, "a small university town in the Rocky Mountains just outside New York with the climate of

Florida." In turn, Greyhound failed to find something both the Willises longed to possess, their luggage. They took off without it for Ireland on September 29. From his own ample literary resources, and with assistance from a lot of native fans, Walter guided a campaign of harassment against the Greyhound people whose equal hadn't been seen in fandom since the last time a Fapa official editor gafiated with a mailing undistributed.

V

The afterglow of Walter's fan career might technically be pinpointed as beginning with the Willises' return to Ireland. But nobody in fandom realized at the time that his activity would begin to wind down from this point. In fact, the afterglow was so strong at the outset that Greyhound Corporation found itself in the fannish spotlight, its every fault clear and distinct in the awful glare resulting from fanzine publicity over that lost baggage.

On their way back from the West Coast, the couple had checked their baggage through to St. Louis but interrupted their own trip to sightsee for a day at the Grand Canyon. Flagstaff, Ariz., was the spot where Walter and Madeleine last saw the luggage. It was nowhere to be found when they reached St. Louis, so they proceeded on to New York, after leaving instructions for it to be forwarded to that city when it turned up. Repeated inquiries to the New York offices of Greyhound failed to materialize the luggage, which contained virtually all the clothing they had brought on the trip, their con souvenirs, some of the film they had exposed, and similarly irreplaceable things.

The strain of the trip had numbed Walter so severely that, he told one correspondent, "When Greyhound lost our baggage I accepted it almost like a character in Kafka." He spring into literary action once he had recovered back in Ireland. Irish International Airlines, the Belfast terminal of BEA, and Ron Ellik's fanzine, Starspinkle, were among those who spring to his assistance. Ron prodded fans all over the nation to visit their nearest Greyhound depot and ask for a blue fibre suitcase and a brown dufflebag. If you are willing to take a lady at her word, Lee Hoffman is continuing this quest; an article in a recent issue of Mota tells of her serendipitous discovery of Bob Tucker during her most recent bushwhacking of a bus at a Florida terminal.

There were two weird sequels, back in 1963. On May 23, a Cleveland Greyhound official notified Walter that the suitcase had been found. Months later, Greyhound had more news: the recovered suitcase had been stolen, the bus company claimed, before it could be shipped to Ireland. Meanwhile, a Disneyland submarine produced another fannish mystery. A Chicago fan, Bob Greenberg, sent a batch of slides to Walter. He had found a roll of 35mm film on the floor of the sub while he was riding it during a December visit to California, he said, had it developed in the thought that he might acquire in this way some good Disneyland pictures, and found familiar people on the slides when the processor returned them: Walter and Ackerman.

Walter seems to have detected signs of the oncoming gafiation. "I was flaked out for quite a while, and then I roused myself and wrote a few letters to people we'd stayed with and a couple of trip report installments for Axe, and then somehow I seemed to do nothing, and fanzines and letters started piling up and I just got guiltier and guiltier," he confessed early in 1963. But he managed to resume most forms of fanac, if at a reduced pace. There was one major disappointment for him and a serious tragedy for fandom, when a plan to turn his two trips to America into a book for mundane readers fell through. The project encountered a sudden crisis in the affairs of the publishing firm which was interested in it, and for one reason or another, it never found another home.

But both Willises continued to bob up in fanzines here and there with columns and an occasional special article, in the course of 1963 and 1964. Hyphen appeared, at increasingly long intervals. A complicated remodeling of the bath room at Oblique House was blamed for the delay in the publication of one issue. But Walter's job was the real reason why 1964 saw further decline in his fanac. He recieved a promotion in March which involved new responsibilities and "led to my being paid for very much the same sort of activity I had been engaging in as a hobby." Further promotions followed as the years passed. He managed to attend that year's Eastercon in England, did some fanzine reviewing for Pete Weston's Zenith, transferred The Harp That Once Or Twice to Tom Perry's fanzine, and carried on limited correspondence.

But symbolically, two epochal events occurred early in 1965, one of them unidentified as such until much later. The obvious upheaval was the removal of the Willis family from Oblique House in May of that year, around the time of the couple's 20th wedding anniversary. Nobdy realized it at the time, but the 36th issue of Hyphen which was dated three months earlier had been the final issue of that fabled publication, which had been born in the middle of 1952.

It's a shame that fandom wasn't big enough or enterprising enough in 1965 to try to preserve the Upper Newtownards Road structure as a shrine to Irish Fandom in general and the Willises in particular. "There was a wealth of fable," as John Berry wrote, referring to his own semi-fictional articles about Irish fans but epitomizing the whole gestalt of the time and place. A mundane elderly lady purchased the property, moving into it a tremendous quantity of furnishings. By the most remarkable of coincidences, she gave a place of honor in the living room to nothing other than a huge harp. At last reports, she had done nothing to spoil the appearance of the structure, in the event that fandom should establish its own travel agency and want to organize journeys to historic sites.

"This move used up a lot of time and energy," Walter remembers today from his Warren Road residence in Donaghadee (and think what Irish Fandom in its prime would have done with his new address as a source of puns!). "It took so long and was at times so problematic that James White used to ask us tactfully when he called on us at Oblique House, 'Have you sold this old barracks or have you still got your lovely home?!"

After the final Hyphen, there were no fannish publications from Walter, unless you count the Christmas cards which he continued to prepare, recounting the year's principal events in near-fanzine fashion. But there was one major piece of professional writing, which for some mysterious reason seems barely remembered by most fans today, and didn't create the excitement in fandom when published in the late 1960s that its importance demanded. Perhaps there had been too much turnover in fandom for Willis to retain the news value he had once possessed, or the mundane nature of the book may have diluted the reaction to it in fandom. To my eternal regret, I didn't purchase a copy when it was available on the newsstands, and on several occasions when I've hunted it in hucksters' rooms at worldcons, I've found myself trying to convince a skeptical dealer of its very existence. "The Improbable Irish" was Walter's Ace Books description of his non-fannish fellow countrymen and surroundings. Published under the name of Walter Bryan, it dealt with Irish traditions and history, the nature of the countryside and of its people. "Two decades of fanfare usher in a pro entry which amply illustrates how a lengthy apprenticeship serves to create a master craftsman," Robert Bloch wrote in his review of the book. "And Willis is a master indeed; here is wit and wisdom and warmth and all the other alliterative adjuncts of literacy -- which is merely a roundabout way of saying that he's written one hell of a good book".

There were other factors contributing to the near-total silence that Walter has

maintained in fandom in recent years, ranging from a congenital hypertension condition which was one reason why he first slowed down in fandom to the problems created by Ireland's increased strife and tension. This year, in fact, has produced the first hints of the decade that fandom's Merlin of the written word may be stirring from the slumber of gafiation.

But, during the recent years when Walter has been so inactive in fandom, something remarkable has been happening. His reputation and importance in the field have begun to increase again. There was a fan and a pro reprint of "The Enchanted Duplicator", fanzine editors began to reprint either complete Willis articles or selected paragraphs from them, and the reactivation of several other fans of the Willis generation in Ireland and England resulted in more frequent references to him in new material. Most significant of all, perhaps, is the way Willis fanzines have become red hot collectibles. Almost any fanzine brings today much more in second-hand condition than it did just a few years ago. But copies of Slant or Hyphen and the important one-shot Willis items are threatening to escalate in value beyond the buying power of the average fan, and anything approaching a complete run of the two more famous Willis fanzines almost never comes on the open market.

There are several possible explanations for the way the Willis fame has continued with so little help from its creator. Fandom's time scale is vastly more accelerated than that of the mundane world, so the nostalgia craze which now covers the 1920s and 1930s in mundania may be centering on the late 1950s and early 1960s in fandom, the period when Walter flourished. The return to activity of many fans from that period in the US, as well as in the United Kingdom, must be a contributing factor. There may be a backlash of sorts created by the alarm so many of us feel over the trend toward semi-pro fanzines, pro-dominated worldcons, and high school courses in sf, an urge to think about the era when fandom was more insular, a self-sufficient world for so many of us, when an individual fan could rise to fame solely on the strength of his writing and publishing abilities. But I feel it's still an unsolved puzzle, after all. What causes a Mike Gorra, who wasn't born yet when Willis was at the peak of his fan career, to publish a commemorative issue of his successful fanzine for Hyphen? For that matter, what makes Hyphen so famous and what tempts some veteran fans to think of it as the finest fanzine of all time?

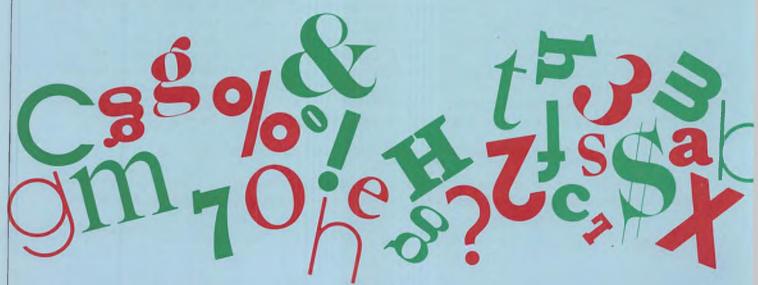
Hyphen wasn't much to look at, physically: it never was extremely fat, it didn't attain the plusperfect Gestetnering of some British fanzines of the time, and its contents didn't include as much Willis material as some of us might have wished. If it left one particular kind of impression, if it had one quality that might explain its success and perhaps might also provide a clue to the reason for the Willis mystique: Hyphen was civilized. Not everyone who wrote for it was a genius, but somehow, the people who turned up in it seemed to rise above themselves as intelligent and strong personalities. It was something like a George Bernard Shaw, play wherein every character is interesting and memorable, no matter how menial his function, no matter if the character is there only to serve as a target for Shavian invective or ridicule. There weren't an enormous quantity of words in an issue of Hyphen, but there was a wonderfully high proportion of ideas to the total wordcount, just as there is in conversation among a compatible group of civilized men and women. Humor was presented with dignity and the most serious matters were treated with a leavening of humor.

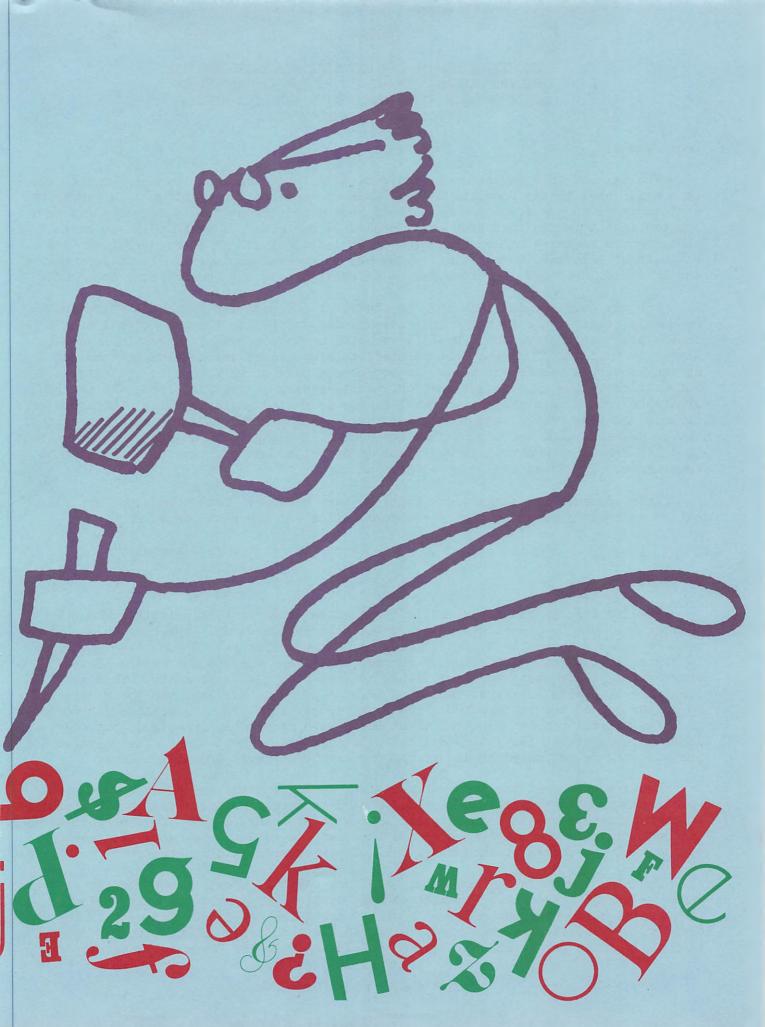
Like editor, like fanzine. Walter was that way in fandom too.

I hope the course of events causes me to realize soon that I should have used the present instead of the past tense when I chose a verb for the preceding sentence.

WILLIS IN SLANT The EoFannish Fra

4This section is, in part, a look into the pre-Harp days of Walt Willis! fannish development. In this period we find Walt rather seriously and constructively editing one of the most lighthearted fanzines devoted to fiction ever produced. And doing it under conditions described by Manly Banister, a perfectionist dedicated to painstaking standards of excellence in every aspect of fanpublishing, as "a monumental effort of herculean difficulty" beside which "The Augean Stables were a swoop of the shovel in comparison". After Willis journeyed to Chicago in 1952, the transformation was complete and the final Slant, which was mostly mimeographed, is very nearly interchangeable with Hyphen #1, a magazine intended "to beguile subscribers to Slant during the fleeting interval between issues." Except for an advertisement for prozines the entire text of Slant #1, November 1948, is published on the following pages. Of the 150 copies of the first issue only one was mailed to the United States. Of those which have survived few are known to have been sold to American fans in the years since -usually at incredible prices. The set in my hands was acquired in the auction conducted for the BoSh Fund in 1970 and was donated by Shaw himself. (A singular rarity of the set is that the back cover of issue #3 is printed rather than mimeographed and is one of the copies completed before the handle of the press exploded and the rest of the edition was mimeographed -- see "I Remember Me" and "The Slant Story" elsewhere in these pages for a stirring description of this catastrophic occurrence.) All of the first issue was written by Walt, unwittingly heeding Francis Towner Laney's advice in "Syllabus For A Fanzine" in the Insurgent edited issue of Spacewarp that an editor should write the contents of the first issue of his fanzine himself, and is an uncanny capsule of the mental mechanisms and talents he has developed and beguiled us with. The embrionic Harp can be discerned as well as his engaging grasp of paradox. The rare piece of serious fiction demonstrates what happens when an unorthodox creative intelligence (Willis') considers the problem of communication with extra-terrestrial beings and foreshadows inspirations in the fannish realm which have delighted and bemused fandom for 25 years. rb





LAUNCHING A NEW SF FAN MAGAZINE, PRODUCED FOR THE BRITISH FANTASY LIBRARY BY WALTER A. WILLIS, IN COLLABORATION WITH JAMES WHITE AND DICK MERRITT WOODCUTS BY JAMES WHITE

Dear Reader:

The name of this magazine was decided, after much argument, by more or less the same means used by the founders of the "Dadaist" movement in painting -- a dagger and a dictionary; though of course we authors have more respect for books, I admit we cheated in not taking the first word impaled on our pin, but what would you have thought of a magazine called "Pamphrey"? At least "Slant" is short, original, and not without relevance to our aims, which are to present an individual out-look on the SF world. Besides ,for some reason I feel there is a vague SF sound about it.

You may have noticed that this is the first of Operation Fantast's followers to appear in print. This is not vulgar ostentation -- it just happened that I hadn't access to a duplicator, and I was able to pick up an old printing press. I see Ken Slater is thinking of having O.F. printed: to him, and to anyone else interested, I may say that the equipment needed to produced a page of this size is not expensive, but satting up the type is quite a job. Another snag is illustrations. My paternal gradfather was a printer, but all he left for me was an engraving of a photograph of himself, glaring over a huge moustache. Not very helpful to an SF magazine editor, but in desperation I was toying with the idea of running it as a lesser-known portrait of Jules Verne. You may thank my friend James White that you have been spared that experience. The looks are on my mothers side.

Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome. Send them along and I'll but on my green eyeshade and pick the more polite for the next issue.

Yours sincerely, Walter A. Willis

SF TRENDS

Reading through old copies of ASF one often finds nostalgic letters about a 'Golden Age' of SF, placed at various dates from 1928 onwards. The only thing these readers have in common is a firm conviction that whenever the 'Golden Age' was, it is certainly not now. Actually, of course, it is when they began reading SF, and if they retrace their steps they are liable to meet with disillusionment. This is specially true with the first decade of SF, the pre-Campbell era. In those days all an author needed was an improbable idea, preferably involving the spectacular demise of a few million people. Some of these ideas were remarkably ingenious, but they lost whatever plausibility they had by their juvenile presentation. The universe is just too big to be pushed around by Bulldog Drummonds, even one with a lens.

Later authors met the difficulty of introducing a plausible human interest into cosmic plots by the 'worms-eye' technique used in Hersey's "Hiroshima", the appraisal of extra-ordinary events through their impact on ordinary people. The approach has its own dangers. The characters became the pawns instead of the masters of circumstance, and the stories tended to be full of bewilderment and frustration.

The atom war cycle has now ended, and from Campbell's experiments lately it seems we are in for another 'thought-variant' era. I hope he's not satisfied with the crop of corn which has resulted so far; surely the end is not Lafayette? The serials have been better, but paraphysics, the latest fashion among authors, dates back at least as far as Campbell's "Forgetfulness". As for "Dreadful Sanctuary",

### 41 WARHOON 41

Russell's only new angle is the import to SF of the Dashiel Hammett detective story technique. Very readable, when done as well as Russell does it, but the interest of the story is extraneous to the science, and we may be in as much danger from space 'whodunits' as we were from space operas.

#### CORN EXCHANGE

Would anyone like this completely original plot? Our space is closed because it is warped by the mass of our universe, which was presumably wandering in hyper-space until it acquired an extra atom from somewhere, reached critical mass, and became a hyper-sphere. There it sticks until one of George O. Smith's bright technicians gets tired of squaring the speed of light and invents a time machine. The moment he sends one atom back into time critical mass ceases to exist, and we are precipitated into hyperspace. If you like you can work inthe inevitable paradox by postulating that the atom sent back into time was the one which brought about the initial formation of the hypersphere.

Or this? One of the truly two-dimensional objects in our world is a moving picture on a screen. Suppose our universe is a kind of film projection in a four-dimensional space and the projector breaks down, or the three-dimensional screen develops a hole, or tilts so as to elongate our matter in two dimensions?

Here's one for "Probability Zero". Ardent young musician wanting to surpass Toscanini and Beecham, takes a bath in liquid helium, and becomes a super-conductor!

::

I'm rather fogged
about van Vogt
Some have talked
of van Vaukt
But maybe it ought
to be van Vought
And surely it's not
van Vott?

#### ::

### CONTACT WITH EARTH

Massen paused on the coir doormat and examined his conscience. It was not unduly clouded, and he knocked softly. Too softly, he thought, and knocked more firmly. Simultaneously there was a peremptory order to come in and, hot with embarrassment, he pushed open the door. The Foreign Secretary continued writing for exactly the time necessary to show that he was an extremely busy man, but equally courteous. Then he looked up and switched on his smile.

"Ah, Mason," he said, with the odious affability of the public figure, "Sit down". Thank God for that, thought Massen, it's not trouble anyway, but what can the old boy want. The old boy came to the point with unusual speed.

"Briefly," he said, "I have just been informed that the B.B.C. research engineers at Malvern claim to have received wireless messages from the direction of the moon. I am advised that we can dismiss the possibility of intelligence indigenous to our satellite, and assume that we are being approached by a race which has evolved space travel and is using the moon as a 'pied-a-terre'".

Massen said nothing, and he went on pompously: "I need hardly emphasise the necessity of treating this infomation as highly confidential. The negotiations have, of course, been put in the hands of my Department. I know there is no precedent, but it was generally realized that the most suitable Ministry to deal with these alien beings was the Foreign Office: first however we have to find some means of mutual understanding. That will be your job."

Massen swallowed. "But Sir," he stammered, "My knowledge of terrestrial languages won't be of much use in dealing with one that probably belongs to none of the phonetic or ideographical classes known to us."

"Er, quite, quite," said the Foreign Secretary, "but actually I have chosen you less because of your ability as a diplomat, though your experience should have given you the necessary resilience of mind, than on account of your work with cyphers, and your knowledge of mathematics." He coughed almost apploatically. "I must explain that the signals so far received apparently consist entirely of groups of morse dots."

"But," said Massen, "if radio communication is possible, why not television?"

"One might have thought so, but the Chief Engineer tells me that is impossible for the present. I do not understand," he said, almost proudly, "the technical jargon used by these fellows, but he said something about synchronization, and I gather that any alien system of transmission is extremely unlikely to be suited to our present types of receiver. "However," he concluded hastily, "I have every confidence in your ability, my dear Mason, and do not hesitate to call on any assistance you may require."

....

"All bloody well," thought Massen, as he climbed into the car, "but how could you learn a language by sound alone? That's expecting too much of oncmatopoeia." By the time he reached Malvern the problem seemed no nearer a solution and he could only hope that the aliens would think of one for him.

It was obviously a matter of urgency to acknowledge the message as soon as possible, and when he reached the room which was being hurriedly prepared for him he asked to hear the recordings. While he waited he asked the Engineer for a report.

"Well, Mr. Mason--"

"Massen."

"Sorry, Well, the signals started, or at least were first heard, at 10-30 this morning. They consist of an amplitude modulated transmission on about 75 megacycles, carrying a pure audio-frequency note of 2,400 cycles. Since there is only one A.F. we have been able to use considerable amplification, with audio filters and negative feedback."

"Thanks," said Massen, but--" At that instant the recording came on. The message consisted of 'pips' like those of the Greenwich time signals, but transmitted very rapidly and divided into groups by almost imperceptible pauses. Massen noted each dot on his pad and counted them carefully:

"Hm", he muttered, "arithmetical progression? No... Yes." He turned to the Engineer.

"And this message is still being transmitted, without change?"

"Yes. At intervals of about 13 minutes. The next is due in a few moments. You will hear it through this speaker. And here is the key of our transmitter, for your reply."

"Good," said Massen, "then would you please answer with a group of 41 dots. They have sent us the first 12 prime numbers, and by replying with the thirteenth we tell them that they are in touch with someone possessing a knowledge of mathematics."

As the last dot sped on its journey a tense silence fell on the room. The wait seemed endless, but after only two minutes the alien transmission began again, with what seemed a new eagerness. Massen could hardly control his fingers as he noted the dots. The first human to communicate with extra-terrestrial beings! The message was long and very fast, and he was unable to examine it as he wrote. But when it had ceased he looked at the mass of dots in dismay. He counted them hurriedly:

He searched desperately for some relationship among these heterogenous numbers. He was still searching after they had been repeated a dozen times. Sick with failure he walked to the window and gazed despondently at the cloudy sky.

All at once he was attacked by an overwhelming sense of catastrophe. He whirled round, but there was nothing unusual, except that the Engineer had left the room. He stared vacantly at his desk, and the realization struck him like a blow that the signals had stopped. The implications stunned him. The aliens had abandoned their project in disgust at human, at his obtuseness. The message would prove to be absurdly simple and humanity would revile him for having bungled their greatest opportunity.

The phone rang, and he lifted the receiver clumsily. It was the Engineer. "It's all right, the receiver's OK. The moon has set, and we needn't expect anything more until 7-50 tomorrow morning."

Massen felt better after sandwiches and coffee in the Cafeteria. "I wonder," the Engineer was saying, "why they don't just land on Earth? I suppose they're short of fuel?"

"More likely they want to make sure of a friendly reception."

"Yes," said the Engineer, "I suppose they might easily land in some barbarous place and be attacked." He eyed Massen sympathetically. "What are you going to do next?"

"God knows," said Massen, "play the recordings again, I suppose."

At 1 a.m. the recordings were still being played, and the Engineer had gone to bed. Massen was lying back in his chair and resting his eyes. His brain was tired too, but he could not afford to sleep. There was no time to waste, he thought, staring at his watch.

The chair skittered against the wall as he burst into the ante-room, where a weary technician was lifting another disc.

"Can you slow down that turn-table?"

"Sure. How's that?"

"More. Yes, that'll do."

The dots began to resemble fog-horn blasts. Massen took off his watch and set it down before him.

Half an hour passed, and the technician looked up again as Massen flung open the door.

"You can pack up now. Everything's all right."

...

"The clue," he said, gulping his breakfast coffee, "was something that did not appear in my transcription of the message. Actually, the pauses between the groups of dots vary in length, but so slightly as to be imperceptible to our ears until the recording was slowed down. Evidently these beings have a much more highly developed sense of duration than us. More rapid metabolism, I suppose. Anyway the message actually reads like this." He wrote:

9,17 5,16 2,13 1,9 2,5 5,2 9,1 13,2 16,5 17,9 16,13 13,16 9,17 9,1 3, dash, 1, 8, 5.

"So what?"

"Don't you see," Massen exclaimed, "The co-ordinates of a graph! Plot those points, connect them, and you will find you have drawn a circle and a diameter. They have sent us a picture! With patience they could draw anything the same way."

"And the numbers at the end?"

"The value of Pi expressed in the 12 scale of notation. Presumably they want to know our scale so they can send larger numbers, and thus more complicated pictures. It will be enough to reply "3, dash, 1, 4, 1, 7."

As they waited beside the transmitter key the Engineer asked, "What do you think they'll send us next?"

"I don't know," said Massen, "Theoretically we could learn one another's language this way, but it would be a slow job. I expect they'll just arrange a landing or a television contact."

"Well, I think the world owes you a vote of thanks, Mr. Mason," said the Engineer.

Earth's first diplomatic representative was much too happy to protest.

#### TELEKINESIS AND BUTTERED TOAST

Dr. Rhine's study of parapsychology has now been published in England, and those of you who read Williamson's "And Searching Mind" will notice with interest that the experiments in telekinesis were performed with a pair of dice. These the subject had to will to come up 'sevens', i.e., 6&1, 5&2, or 4&3, and the results were such as to

rule out chance as an explanation.

There seems accordingly to be no doubt that telekinesis (the control of inanimate objects by thought) does frequently occur. But how are we to reconcile this conclusion with centuries of human experience of the obdurate intractability of certain material objects, in particular buttered toast. As the old poet says:

I never had a piece of toast, Particularly long and wide, But fell upon the sanded floor, And always on the buttered side.

The explanation undoubtedly lies in Dr, Rhine's apparatus. It will not have escaped the incisive intelligence of my readers that the total of the numbers on the opposite sides of the two dice is also 7. It is now clear that the apparent success of the subject's will is really an abject failure: The sides on which he was concentrating are actually underneath.

It is not however necessary to conclude that material objects are activated by a malign intelligence. Indeed the apparent anomaly we had discovered provides us with a valuable clue to the mode of operation of the telekinetic faculty. Its effect is apparently to increase the gravitational inertia, or weight of the object concentrated upon. Thus, the butter on the toast, which has, for the entire period of its fall, been assailed by the whole power of the human mind, in agonized concentration, acquires enough extra weight to turn the piece completely round in mid-air. I need hardly add that the same force acting on molecules of water easily explains the delay in the boiling of a watched pot.

::

Dr. E.E.Smith
was something of a myth.
Disillusionment impends
After "Children Of The Lens".

::

#### OFF COURSE

I wonder how often reader speculation makes authors change their plans? It's possible that the future history of the Galaxy was changed by one Robert Griffin, who in the April 1946 ASF may have shaken Azimov to his Foundations by guessing that Stars' End was imaginary, a Seldon device to encourage Terminus; the next in the series was inconclusive, very much delayed, and should perhaps have been called "Now You've Seen It." Then in August 1947 Warren Rayle suggested that in the hands of a less capable author Lord Clane would turn out to be normal man, the others being the mutants. Perhaps van Vogt was not so very bright after all: anyhow he has since left the twilight of the 'Gods.' Thank you, Warren.

### TWO SUGGESTIONS

I do wish Mr. Campbell would stop giving away the plots of the stories in ASF by those clever little introductions. (Personally I much prefer to be not quite sure what a story is about after reading it; which is why I like van Vogt.) In the time saved maybe he could find the paper for the 16 pages which disappeared in March, 1947, or even for Unknown. This famous paper famine, I must say, seems slightly incredible to anybody who tries to lift one of those technicolour catalogues the

Americans call 'slick' magazines.

#### WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

Talking of Unknown, does anyone know when the stories in the current British reprints first appeared? Are we still ploughing on to October, 1943, or are we on the second trip through, living on rejects from the first? Sometimes I've thought we must be on the third or fourth lap.

#### CUR NEXT ISSUE

Won't be any bigger, but it will we hope be better, especially if we can get more equipment. When you consider that, for example, all the illustrations were produced on plywood with a razor blade, perhaps you'll agree we haven't done too badly. We have plans for improvements in the reading material, too.

Incidentally, we could run an article on book-binding for magazine collectors, and we thought it might be interesting to publish a questionaire to find out what sort of psychological types SF readers are. What do you think?

THE EDITCR.

## Slant #2, Summer, 1949

#### EDITORIAL

In our last issue, which was our first, (a lot of people thought the first issue would be our last) we promised that #2 wouldn't be any bigger though we hoped it would be better. Well, here it is, twice the size and containing about thrice as many words. Whether it's any better we leave you to judge.

This time we are not going to make any prophecies about the next issue, except that there will be one. Incidentally, our thanks to all the other fanzine editors who have been so sympathetic about the arduous toil involved in producing a printed mag., but it's really not as bad as all that. Personally, I find it quite a congenial hobby; of course, printing runs in our family, and I have merely reverted to type. But taking our time and with the assistance of our cat Bem, the nearest thing we have to a copyboy, the three of us (our co-founder Dick Merritt has gone to England and can give only mail assistance, but my wife is a fan too) don't find it too much trouble.

One good reason we don't say what will be in the next issue is that we don't know yet. That largely depends on you, the readers. Please write and tell us what you liked in this issue, if anything; and send a contribution if you can. We are looking for good material of any kind, but there are fanzines purveying news and articles much better than we could, and we have neither the abilty nor the desire to compete with them. So, and here is Slant's slant, we intend this to be mainly a fiction magazine. But we do want originality. We want to be neither a half-baked imitation of a second-rate prozine, nor a mere expression of editorial egoboo, like some American productions, but a testing-ground for new ideas, a sort of sf avant-gard. A lofty ambition, but I have just enough faith in the resources of European fandom to think we might succeed. Even if you have only an idea for a story, pass it along and I'll send it to some author who's stuck for a plot. Contributors will, if they like, be supplied with 12 separately printed copies of their story. (A very rare limited edition!) Our present circulation is about 250.

### BRESS REPORT: SERGEANT SATURN RIDES AGAIN

The new British Reprint Edition of Startling Stories is no threat to Atlas so far, however much it may have made the publishers of the 'Hotspur' shake in their shoes. The only items of interest in the first issue are some of the misprints. Like this fascinating example of symbiosis: "...gigantic flowers towered on massive storks to a height of a hundred feet..." Even the printers couldn't read it. The presence of Captain Future, hideous skeleton from Startling's past is, of course, enough to warn the discerning reader. For this stuff the publishers didn't really need to invent a new word, "SCIENTIFICATION". There was no danger of our confusing it with science fiction. Why did they have to go back to the horrors of wartime for material? Startling has published enough good of in the last few years to keep the BRE going for an Unknown time. But no HoF (Hall of Fame -rb) please: they only put those in to make the other stories look better.

## Slant #3, Spring, 1950

Some readers have asked for information on amateur printing. We use what is known as a flat-bed quarto machine. Ours was junk, but a new one costs about 46:10:0. The bed, where the type is placed, is about the size of this page. Two people can run off about 100 copies her hour.

Type consists of little rectangular sticks of metal. Size is measured in points, and there are various shapes of letters in all sizes. It is sold in 'founts' containing all the letters in the proportion they are used in English. Naturally the bigger the letters the more a fount costs, but a fount of this type, which is 10pt Gloucester Bold Condensed, is about \$\frac{1}{2}\$. It contains one hell of a lot of letters but you really need another half fount for a page of this size because about a third of your type is always left over.

The type is set up in a little adjustable tray called a 'composing stick', and tightened up by adjusting the spaces, which come in 5 sizes. This is known as 'justifying' the line. When several lines have been set up you grasp the unstable mass firmly and lift it into the bed. (This is a nerve-wracking operation.) You can set up type about as fast as one-finger type-writing.

As for illustrations, I can only tell you what we do, which we're sure is all wrong. James does the woodcuts with a razor blade on plywood. You can use lino but James would rather have plywood. That's all I can tell you so far but we hope to develop as we learn. Photo-engraving for example.

## The Prying Fan

#### DUMB-BELLS & DUMB BELLES

The golf-ball on the December 1949 ASF is the first spherical spaceship on an ASF cover since February 1944, according to my encyclopaedic partner James White. (The two rugby balls seem to be quite without precedent). I think it is very nice indeed (atta Zboyan!) but James says it is all spheroids and very hard to draw. He hopes it doesn't represent a Trend. The next development, he fears, is a Clarke type dumb-bell spaceship, but I tell him he's lucky I don't ask him for BEMs or Beautiful Unclad Maidens. Incidentally, the Ladies' Home Journal in an article on Sex Education carried a photo of a sexy bookstall where, among all the 'dirty books,' was the Avon Fantasy Reader. Oh, the shame of it!

# Slant #4, Autumn 1950

THE AMATEUR EDITOR (Come in, The Water's Lovely!)

We like it here on the lunatic fringe of the lunatic fringe, but think well before you start a printed zine unless like us you have no choice. People not only expect more from print, they think you must be a bit upstage, and you can't be controversial because you publish seldom enough to be attacked with impunity. Besides, handsetting is hard work, and reviewers tend to voice this profound thought instead of casting about for something nice to say: the implication is that of Johnston's remark about the woman preaching, "Sir, it is like a dog walking on its hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to see it done at all." Another thing is that handsetting tends to make your style terse and cryptic. This is bad, because the only people who read fanzines carefully are rival editors and BNFs looking for their own names.

Well, whether your zine is mimeoed, printed, handwritten, or carved on lumps of stone, you'd better have some stories or something to keep the cover from getting torn in the mails. You could ask people who write for other zines I suppose. (Being unsure of the ethics of this I have never done it myself, except for European authors in American zines whom I consider fair game.) But it's long odds they will come up with something rejected by another fanzine. Fanzine rejects can be pretty bad; and if you return material, however nicely, it is a law of nature that the author will never speak to you again. So better write the entire first issue yourself. This is customary, but don't make it too blatant. And don't worry if it's not all good. Every zine may contain one really bad item to encourage the authors. This can be overdone, but bear in mind the immortal words of "The American Courier." "The Courier is forced to admit that it prints in each issue poems that should never see print, yet they do serve a purpose in that they made readers appreciate the really good poems with which each issue is sprinkled." Poignant, isn't it, Mr. M?

After your first issues you will probably be delighted with letters like this: "Dear Sir thank you for your fanzine I thought it was very good, much better than X, all the stories were very good especially Y, Z was good too but I think I read somethink like it before, the illustrations were very good I dont know how he does it with just a razor blade I'm sure I'd never have the patience." In time even this heady stuff begins to pall, and the law of diminishing returns applies strictly to fanmags: so unless you improve you will attract less and less attention until you fold your mag and silently steal away. Tamam Shud.

### The Prying Fan

### THE OTHER FANDOM

In this town of 400,000 odd inhabitants there are apparently only three who are odd enough to admit to an interest in sf. Yet every month great heaps of sf magazines come into the shops, and vanish instantaneously, like cream. No one ever sees who buys them. The few times I have surprised persons in the act they seemed to flee in terror at my approach as if I had three heads instead of only two. My spies tell me that this state of affairs exists all over Sol III. Who are these mysterious people? Shocking though it may be to our self este m, there is only one ans er. Behind fandom as we know it, using it as a screen, lurks the Other Fandom. To this vast organization of super intellects we are but morons, fit only to be used as unwilling catspaws in their machinations. It is through us that they press their views on editors

and publishers, most of whom have learned by bitter experience the peril of ignoring them. How else explain the powerful influence of the apparently impotent minority of actifans? These mysterious intelligences, whom I refer to as the Tendrilless Fans, have their own secret conventions and fanzines, and for all I know, prozines too. Their number constantly increases. You have wondered why it is that actifans often retire at the very peak of their powers, why fanzines no sooner get really good than they fold? Obviously, they have been accepted!

### SLANT TELLS ALL!

Some time ago we began secretly to circularize new fans, getting their names from the prozine letter columns. "You too can be a BNF!" we said. "You want egoboo? We can supply it. For modest fees we will do your fanning for you. We undertake all the duties of an actifan, letters in your name to prozines, fanzines and fellowfans, and publication on your behalf of any type of fanzine. Why work your brain to the bone when you can make use of our specialized services? Write at once to <a href="Proxyboo">Proxyboo</a> Ltd..."

The project was an immediate success, and the time has come for us to make a startling disclosure. We are fandom! Daily for some ten years fleets of vans have brought us sacks of letters to be answered on our battery of typewriters, and taken away great stacks of Fanscients, Gorgons, Operations Fantast, Slants, Spearheads, etc, etc, for distribution by our customers, with countless letters, articles, columns, stories, poems, artwork, editorials, etc, carrying the names of Ackerman, Boggs, Laney, Grossman, Sneary, Riddle and dozens of others, each of whom thinks he is our only client.

But all this must stop. After today we regret to announce that there will be no more fandom, except for some poor wretches who were unable to keep up with their payments. We are sorry not to be able to finish off our various 'controversies,' like Laney-Metchette and Banister-Boggs (especially when the bidding was getting so high) but pressure of work has forced us to close the fandom department. Our prozine commitments are getting far too heavy.

### QUAINT AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS

They don't care for Thrilling Wonder Down under.
And when they see a Planet
They ban it.

### PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF!

Judging him by his works, I wouldn't have thought Hubbard fit to treat anyone's mind. Sympathy, kindness and understanding are some of the qualities needed, and there was no sign that Hubbard had them. Quite the reverse. His stories, disregarding the juveniles of 'Rene Lafayette,' showed such an unhealthy worship of sadistic power and preoccupation with violence and cruelty as to make me feel that if he was 'clear' I'd rather stay opaque. That brutish callousness is an heroic quality and the mass murder of people with different pigmentation is an heroic action are ideas only too easily acquired without Hubbard's help. Reader Robb in 'Brass Tacks' said of dianetics: "None but the meanest, most callous, and least worthy of men could offer such a blessing to mankind without assuring himself of its validity." It could have been such a man who wrote "Greed".

But if Hubbard is so far no advertisement for diametics, Campbell is, and if only

out of respect to him we must take it as more than just another 'mystery.' And first impressions of the book are that although it is emotionally and unscientifically overwritten, Hubbard, is, to give him his due, absolutely sincere. You should read it for yourself, and decide.

# Slant #5, Spring, 1951

### The Prying Fan

Since we keep getting subscriptions from what you might call the same fringe of sf, a short note on technical terms might not be out of place. If my memory serves me right -- if it does, what a horrible punishment -- the name 'fan' was foisted on his readers by Hugo Gernsback some twenty years ago. We have been stuck with it ever since because 'articulate readers of imaginative fiction' is long and life is short. For some reason fans are born amateur journalists and produce large numbers of 'fanzines' -- henceforth called 'fanmags' here for the very good reason that this one often runs out of 'i's. They vary in size from the minute 'Fanscient' to mimeograph ed mountains, and in quality from 'Nekromantikon' through good to ordinary. There no such thing as a bad fanmag, because what's worth doing is worth doing badly. A 'BEM' is the bug-eyed monster you see on certain promags if you don't rip the cover off in time, not to be confused with a 'BNF' or Big Name Fan, however close the resemblance. Finally, 'egoboo' is a word invented by Forrest J. Ackerman (who else?) for the inflation of the ego which results from praise or seeing one's work in print. It is the motive for other people's activity as opposed to the creative impulse which inspires one's own.

#### THE GOLD STANDARD

I have nothing against diametics but its author, in fact I only wish I had thought of it myself, but if Hubbard must have advertisements in ASF let them all be proper paid advertisements. He can afford it. As it is, the mag is becoming a sort of Diametics Digest, or Hubbard Mystery Magazine, and what with ham radio and psychology Mr. Campbell seems to have been too busy to watch out for competition. Now, with Gold in there pitching while Campbell is out there preaching, ASF has lost its long unchallenged leadership, so that even us staunch followers of Campbell are inclined after seeing Galaxy to believe rumours of a little note discovered on his desk: "You will have to be as good as Gold or there will be a clear out -- yours truly, Street and (if you'll pardon the expression) Smith."

#### SALE

Proxyboo Ltd. are pleased to announce that it has been found possible to carry on with fandom after the suspension of only three major fanmags. This has involved however some curtailment in our promag commitments, and we are in a position to offer the following item of surplus equipment. One reconditioned plot-twister, Mark VV III. The plot is inserted at one end and emerges at the other in any desired degree of complexity, highly polished and all loose ends neatly tied up. With tins of interest (sex, human, etc.), cylinders of atmosphere, and assorted thrills and punches machined to a crucial point for easy insertion. For those who prefer to work their own plots we suggest our robot long distance plotfinders, for farfetched plots, and our patent plot-thumper which when screwed to laggard, slow moving plots produces a strong kick at The End.

Proxyboo Services. 1. Clippings Bureau, for rejected authors and calumnised

### 51 WARHOOM 51

fans. Nail and hair clippings of prominent editors and calumnists available. We regret that stocks of F.C. (Incinerations) Davis are momentarily exhausted.

- 2. 'BMF' Egobooextractor Service. This machine sucks every drop of egoboo from fanmags, letters, etc. The useless husks many then be thrown away and the dried egoboo preserved in doubtproof containers.
- 3. Central Engram Bank, for victims of Mr. Hubbard's insidious attempt at the removal of competition. We carry an enormous stock of assorted engrams, guaranteed to restore inspiration to the most hopelessly cleared author.

# Slant #6, Winter, 1951/52

### THE AMATEUR EDITOR

Since we learned our printing by doing things before we found they were impossible we acquired a few unusual wrinkles, not to mention some grey hairs.

Since I need 20 lines here I may as well pass some on: Real printers indulge in a rite called 'make-ready' -- necessary, they whimper, because all type is not exactly type high. We think this rite is wrong, a pusillanimous concession to the incompetence of typefounders. A cork backing means that nearly all the letters come out. True, some of them may go so far as to come out in relief on the back of the page, but so what? People PAY for embossing. (Will someone please carry out the body of that printer?)

Compositors, compose yourselves. Never argue while holding a stickful of type. It is not considered lucky to throw type over your left shoulder.

The unit of ink is the smidgin. The table is: 3 nyimfs -- 1 smidgin, 5 smidgins -- 1 dirty great dollop. The British Standard Smidgin can be inspected at Slant House. Printers ink has most of the qualities of vV's perfect paint. It is impossible to go within five feet of a tin without getting covered with the stuff. As we say, 'I was inking my hands and got some on the press.' There are solvents, of course, but the only real solution is to wear black clothes. No need to buy them specially.

# The Prying Fan

### I AM A STONE QUARRY

Graham Stone, of Sydney, classes my editorial in S5 among the 'duds'. "You do tend to run on," he says. Sorry, but setting up 10pt type is so exciting I sometimes get quite carried away. To add insult to insult he says he doesn't like my face. "Too condensed and heavy" he calls it. I can't help my face: no one can help my face. My only comfort is that Mr. Stone's rating of the rest of the issue is the exact opposite of everyone else's. And I used to think there was nothing in that story about everything in Australia being upside down.

However, there may be something in what he says... There's no point in my telling you the mag is so good you won't be able to put it down, like Mr. Gold, since you're stuck with it already. Nor in giving my writers plots for stories, like Mr. Campbell, since they'd only sell them to Galaxy, like his do. So, and to save space on the contents page, I've let my editorial go West. Any resemblance between this an an editorial is purely occidental.

# Slant #7. Winter, 1952/53. Final issue.

## The Prying Fan

### MIGHTY LIKE A ROSICRUCIAN

Slant will never be just the same without an attack on L.Ron Hubbard, but it looks as if the last one was only too well founded; far be it from me to kick a man when he's not only down but out of his mind.

But maybe English readers haven't heard about "Excalibur"? Well, it seems that during the war Elron died. Awakening in the Hereafter, he found himself surrounded by all the knowledge of the Universe. He had been browsing in this stuff for a mere ten minutes when he felt the call of the Flesh and was drawn back to the operating theatre, where he had just given the doctor quite a turn. He left again as soon as he decently could and typed out carefully all he could remember of the Eternal Wisdom he had acquired. This was "Excalibur". He hauled it round various publishing houses, but none of them could take it. In fact their Readers kept committing suicide, their minds giving way under the impact of these transcendental ideas. On the last occasion, according to Elron, he was present in the publishing office when the Reader entered, laid the MS on the desk, and left the room again by way of the window. Since the window was on the 40th Floor neither the Reader nor Elron ever recovered from this experience. Kindly Ol' Hubbard decided that the World was Not Ready for "Excalibur" and confined himself to publishing a teensy-weensy little bit of it, which he called Dianetics. Lately, however, Elron has become disenchanted with humanity on account of the vile attacks on him by unsympathetic people like sheriffs, reporters, judges, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue. He has given us up, and he's just jolly well going to let us have "Excalibur". So, now, if you'll just send him a measly \$1000 and sign a waiver for damages when you jump out of the window, you can have a specially typed copy of "Excalibur" -- now reposing in a sealed vault -- for your vewt, vewy own. The New Yorker called this the Biggest Little Book Bargain of the Month.

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I came home from my US trip to find that half of you good people didn't know I'd been away, and the rest had written anyway. I'm sorry I haven't replied to your letter or acknowledged your subscription or appeared in answer to your writ, or whatever it was, but for the last six months I've either been getting ready to go over to America, been over in America, or been getting over America. And believe me it's a hard place to get over. People keep asking me what I thought of it. Well, that's a good question: I wish someone would hurry up and tell me a good answer. There were some things I liked a lot. Malted milk, the Okefenokee Swamp, orange juice, the Gulf of Mexico, hamburgers, the Rocky Mountains, pastrami, the Grand Canyon, fried chicken, the New York skyline -- subtle nuances like that in the American scene which the less perceptive tourist might pass unnoticed. And of course Americans. The place is full of them. Why, do you realize there are more Americans in America than there are in Britain? (Nicer ones, too.) One especially nice thing about Americans is that they understand English, a feat which the English themselves have never been able to master yet in my experience of them.

And to the other question that people ask, yes I would like to live there, just as soon as I can find a small university town in the Rocky Mountains just outside New York with the climate of Florida. I am now inclined to believe, however, that there

may be some difficulty about this. I don't want to jump to any hasty conclusions about the place after a mere 8000 miles of travelling about in it, but towards the end I was really coming to suspect that it's a lot bigger than it looks in the atlas. You drive for two whole days at 60mph, and on the third find yourself still in the same state — that of bewilderment. The place has got out of hand and something should be done about it. If the United Nations won't take action America should contract out of it.

The only other really damning thung I noticed about the country is that they have a chain of grocery stores called the 'Piggly Wiggly'. There are a few other faults — you can't smoke anywhere... the Statue of Liberty offers you a light as you go in, because it may be your last chance... and they look under the bed every night for the Politburo — but nothing else with the stark horror of that 'Piggly Wiggly'. The people are just like people everywhere else, except that they're not terrified of American foreign policy, which is to say they're pretty nice. What really did impress me was the American small town, which seemed to me the nearest thing to the ideal place to live in that has appeared so far on this planet. Pleasant houses, tree-lined streets, young people in summer clothes, and warm evenings filled with the crepitation of crickets and of neon signs — symbolically indistinguishable in sound.

## The End of Oblique House - IF Press Release, 7 May 1965

On 6th May 1965, the old red brick house at 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, which has been the headquarters of Irish Fandom for nearly 20 years, finally reverted to the mundane plane of existence. In the fan attic the last ghoodminton service was solemnly performed by Bob Shaw. Symbolically, it was not returned. Instead the last shuttlecock was picked up by John Berry and reverently removed to its final resting-place, a time capsule donated by Sadie Shaw. Also in the glass cylindrical 21b capsule were deposited a copy of "The Enchanted Duplicator" (first edition), some hyphens in printing-type used for Slant, a dollop of duplicating ink, James White's first bow tie (symbolizing the professional element in Irish Fandom) and signatures of the great fans and good friends who had stayed at Oblique House during the years, including Forry Ackerman, Chuck Harris, Lee Hoffman, Mal Ashworth, Ron Ellik, Larry Shaw, Vince Clarke, Boyd Raeburn, Andy Young, Ken and Irene Potter, Ken and Pamela Bulmer, John Roles, Bea Mahaffey, Rory Faulkner, Evelyn Smith, Sid Birchby, Harry Turner, Sid Coleman, Steve Schultheis, and many others. The time capsule was then buried in the front lawn, underneath the cheery tree, in earth with which had been mingled the sacred soil of South Gate, donated by Rick Sneary. A fannish era had Oblique House was at one with Ninevah, Tyre and 101 Wagner St., Savannah....

From Focal Point #9, May 19, 1965, edited by Mike McInerney and Rich Brown.

### ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES: SIXTH FANDOM

(A number of amusing events occured in the time span bounded by Madeleine Willis' observation on the first fanzine received by the Willises, "Surely you could do better than that!", and the fall of the house of Willis (a mere 17 years). Many of them were precipitated by a young girl named Lee Hoffman, who, as a young man, offered Willis a home for some words he had left over from the confines of Slant and thereby inspired "The Harp That Once Or Twice". Her magazine, Quandry, was the pivot of what came to be known as Sixth Fandom and Walt Willis was the reporter who observed its peculiarities with style and eclat. Onward, reader: rb.





# Installment 1, Quandry 0, March 1951.

Romantic Ireland is covered with a soft mantle of slush. and peace reigns over the whole land -- except, of course, for the muffled sound of Nationalists knocking the Partition -as I sit here wondering what I can say that would be suitable for a magazine published in Savannah. Ga. That "Ga." had me fooled for a bit by the way--I always thought the name had been patented by Sid Gluck -but I quickly realized it meant Georgia and probably expressed your editor's astonishment at finding himself in such a state. Very little is known about Georgia. Hastily cashing a check on my memory bank I examined my vast store of inaccurate information. Georgia is, of course, in the Deep South, where for some reason they don't like to be called Yankees and where they fry chicken and have a White Froblem. It is supposed to be hard to get off your mind, probably because Josef Stalin was born there, and apart from that everything is peaches. I used to read books that weren't sf you know, and I picked up a lot of useless information like that, about things that have already happened and all that sort of junk, I suppose Joe's parents were some of those liberated Slavs there was all that trouble about we heard of in "Gone With The Wind". I used to go about with Margaret Mitchell, but I don't think it was the one who wrote the book. or if she did she never mentioned it. Come to think of it. I never asked her, but what I can't figure out is where she could have got the time. But this train of thought has left me up a siding. Perhaps I had better get on with the column ...

### NAKED FRAUD

All fanzine editors must be grateful for one thing in Mr. Brown's attack on us in the February Amazing: he didn't mention any of us by name, so we can all say, "Ah, now if only he had seen MY zine..." But in spite of Mr.Browne's kindness, there is one point I would like to take him up on. He is righteously indignant because some fanzines which have criticized his magazines for having half-naked women on the covers have naked women on their own covers. Apart from the fact that on his own admission the fanzines obviously give better value Mr. Browne's attitude is unreasonable. Fanzines have naked women on their covers for two very good reasons:

- 1. Fans being human -- or at least humanoid -- like looking at naked women and, being broadminded, are willing to admit it.
  - 2. Fans like drawing maked women, mainly because they are pretty easy to draw.

Now far be it from me to say anything about Mr. Browne's personal approach to naked women, but the reason his magazines have, or had, them on the covers is very different from either of the above. Their bodies appear on sf magazines for the same reason that George Washington's head figures on the counterfeit dollar bills, and they are just as much of an unprincipled fraud. The sex starved adolescent, the publishers think, will snap up their magazines if they make them look like High Heel, and once he has put down his 25 cents he is not very likely to say he wants it back. This may be good business though I doubt it, but it is also rank dishonesty. I admit that some prozines have made some effort to make their stories live up to the covers, but any pornography I have ever seen in any of them wouldn't graph even the timest porn. Cornography is the word. The publishers would probably retort to this charge with the immortal Goldwynism, "It rolls off my back like a duck" but they should ask themselves if their magazines might not make better sales in the long run if people stopped being ashamed to be seen reading them. Sexy covers give sf a bad name, and that's why fans resent them. Their own fanzine covers are not seen by the public, so they can be obscene for all the difference it makes. The fan editors can put what they like on their covers, and if what they like is naked women, well, so much the better for the future of the race.

### RUBE GOLDBERG, Esq.

Among the attractions at the Festival of Britain will be an "Eccentrics! Corner" where fans will find some of the few inventions which have not been anticipated by any sf author. If you are in London for the Festival (and the World Science Fiction Convention, May 10th to 13th, 1951) it might be worth your while to have a look at the collapsible windmill, the rainbow generator, the bottled circus, and the wave machine. This last is just what it's name implies. It doesn't wave hair, or goodbye, or rules, or aside, or anything crude like that. It is an elaborate apparatus of curtain rods, sawn-off hatpins, cotton reels, door stops, and other components which does nothing but wave, and this it does to perfection -- langorously, beautifully, unmistakeably. As a smoke-grinding machine grinds smoke, so this machine waves. If you have never seen a smoke-grinding machine there will be one there too. It grinds smoke in coarse, medium, and fine. What else? But even more important than any of these useful inventions and filling an even longer felt want, is a Morale Raiser or Ego Booster, a machine which might have been designed for fanzine editors. Worn on the back, it emits through a phonographic arrangement a constant commentary of "Well done!" and "Bravo!" and loud clapping. I predict that this will take the place of the old-fashioned "Clubhouse". Every man his own Rog Phillips.

#### THE BEST FANZINE WE HAVE NEVER SEEN

Almost every evening two silent figures can be seen, and probably are, cycling to an old dark house in the suburbs of Belfast. They ring their bells outside and

a door opens silently. They make their way upstairs and lift their eyes hopefully, plaintively, at their host. "Has it come?" they ask in mute entreaty. The haggard figure gestures despairingly at the days mail on the table, surrounded by torn pieces of frantically opened envelopes, wet with tears of disappointment. The newest and sexiest Galaxy, seven fan letters, six subscriptions including an 1879 issue of Horrible Adventures with mustard on page 95, another unacceptable mss from Robert Heinlein with an accompanying letter threatening to commit suicide, and 137 fanzines marked "Exchange?" They gaze at the pile, broken fen. Then, pulling themselves together, they start to work. For hours they toil, burning the midnight megawatts. In each mind burns the Thought: we must make our fanzine good enough to exchange with IT, we must get on Johnson's mailing list. A bouillabaisse, Mr. Merwin calls Orb. How they long to see a fanzine that looks like a fish stew.

## THE OTHER SCIENCE FICTION (I)

Twenty years ago of was a much more international thing than it is now. The old quarterlies used to be full of translations of long novels by French and German writers, and even reprints from Jules Verne. Very dull they were, of course, and used only because the translation rights could be bought for a song, but they did have their influence. So did European of films, until the advent of the talkies killed the international cinema. Small though it may have been, this influence had its effects, if only to make readers realize that there was always the possibility that the Earth as seen from space might possibly show something else besides the continents of North and South America and that some other flag might be the first to be planted on the moon. These ideas gave us the same healthy shock as we get when we realize that the French think God said, "Que la lumiere soit" and not "Let there be light."

But for many years now sf has evolved by itself in America and I want to show that it has developed some of the faults as well as the virtues that might be expected from inbreeding. In future columns I will, at the slightest provocation, say what I think has been happening to American sf, and compare it with the sf of other countries, principally England, France, and Russia. An indigenous sf exists in all of these countries, and shows very interesting divergencies both in style and content from what we subconsciously accept as the norm. There I go: I mean it's not the same as what we're used to.

#### LUCKY DIP

If Lee doesn't mind, I'd like to review here each month the last fanzine to have plopped through the door of 170 Upper Newtownards Rd, Belfast, N. Ireland. This time it happens to be Nekromantikon 4 (Manly Banister) which is lucky because I would have wanted to mention it anyway. This is another remarkable issue of a remarkable magazine but it's especially noteworthy for two revelations. The first is that Banister can make with the column commentary with the best of the "individzine" people, and the other is that John Blyer is, as I have occasionally suspected, a genius. His "Poetic Vendetta" is nothing less than a masterpiece, and leaves Stanton Coblentz's story in the same issue standing at the post. In fact it's better than anything in Nekro yet except maybe Marjorie Houston's "Humling" and that is saying something. I might also mention that there is a very funny cartoon by the Rev. R.R.Phillips, which took a great weight off my mind. I'd always been worried about my failure to appreciate the Rev. Phillips' drawings: if only I had known they were meant to be funny all along.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

So it's war to the knife between Gold and Campbell. Seems Gold got the needle over not getting the "Needle"... I hear Merwin is to be allowed to throw off the

cloak of nominal anonymity (say that quickly) he wears over one shoulder in TWS and SS. Well, he'll just have to print his good stories in his own magazine now and peddle the crud elsewhere. He did write a good story, you know -- "Judas Ram" in Galaxy... What's all this indignation about Incinerations? Fandom getting stuffy or something? People who get indignant about Davis's opinions should admit that theirs might be just as irritating to him. Only they're not usually just so pungently expressed, unfortunately... As far as I can see, people who subscribe to TWS or SS are mugs. The mags are on sale on the newsstands weeks before the subscription copies are posted. Do subscribers get the unsold ones or what?... Campbell had an article out the other month explaining why it was impossible to send out sub copies of ASF in envelopes and then Gold goes and does it. How tactless... Has Marvel got no best friends who might tell them?... Don't look now but Super Science is breathing down the top two's necks... More Hubbard in ASF, still plugging dianetics. Wish someone would plug Hubbard. Dianetics is either science or fiction but not both.

# Installment 2, Quandry 9, April 1951.

Somebody in N3F finally got around to sending me some literature the other day. About time too, and me a member for more than two years. And don't anybody say it was because I didn't renew my subscription; I've got an answer to that only I don't want to be unpleasant.

There were six of these leaphlets. (I use this spelling as a mild protest against the 'pamflet' in Fanspeak.) One telling new members about all the benefits they get from N3F, most of which I had never heard of but which seem very sound, and five more ambitious jobs. There's a pretty comprehensive pro-author pen name list about which the only comment I have to make is that I'm pretty sure that Arthur C. Clarke is NOT Hal Clement. For one thing I can't imagine Arthur "Ego" Clarke keeping quiet about it if he had written so many other excellent stories, and for another Hal Clement was, according to Campbell in a wartime aSF, piloting a B24 while Clarke was working in British Radar research. Then there's the N3F Library, which has the most extraordinary assortment of books I ever saw. Some of them are pretty good however, and there's even some science fiction. Fanspeak is very good, an efficient selection, with additions from the great Fancyclopedia. There's a prozine checklist which shows us European fans exactly how many magazines we'll never have the chance of reading and, finally, a list of fanclubs. This last reminds me that it's about time there was an Irish fan organization, so here goes.

As leader of the most active fan group in the world, outside of America, I hereby announce the formation of Irish Fandom, or IF. The Big Wheels of IF are myself as Chief Spokesman, Bob Shaw as vice-president because he knows so much about vice, and James White as Treasurer because he's working on a linocut of the Bank of England notes. All we need now is some members. There's George Charters of Bankor, Co. Down, of course, but since we've been quite unable to get any money out of him we've had to make him an honorary member. The OO of IF is Slant and we're willing to affiliate with any organization that doesn't have Claude Degler as a member.

SOS

One thing you might notice about these benefits of N3F is that many of them are not much use to European fans, and yet we pay a great deal more to subscribe than Americans do. Ikmow all about the rate of exchange, but will a dollar buy you three good meals, as 7/6 will? (As soon as a European representative was appointed the sub for some reason more than tripled.) However what I was going to say is now is N3F's chance to show what it can do for fan solidarity. Pritish fandon needs help in the biggest blow it has had since the dollar famine. Briefly, Street & Smith have

raised the British sub rate for ASF to TEN DOLLARS. It has always for some reason been 75 cents more to us, but this increase will mean that no one will be able to subscribe to the magazine. No doubt the dealers will be overjoyed, but the fans have started as a first step to organize a protest to S&S. A circular has been sent to all members of the old British Science Fantasy Society and readers of Slant suggesting that they write and ask Street & Smith for an explanation. If and when this is forthcoming we can decide what to do next — send the mag to Coventry, circularize Brass Tackers, try to get the writers on our side — but in the meantime we need all the support American fandom can give. Publicize this protest, and let S&S know that you resent on our behalf this mean discrimination. After all, apart from being fellow-fans, you have had a lot of profit from the goodwill ASF has built up over here — many of its best stories have been from British authors.

## THE OTHER SCIENCE FICTION (II)

In the last issue I was talking about how America has drifted away from the European current and how, as deCamp or somebody once said, "finds itself up a well known tributary without adequate means of propulsion." If you think there's nothing wrong with modern sf, have another look at recent issues of ASF and the pulps. I a cause most of their stories of being both anti-science and anti-human. of those dealing with the future science and humanity are made out to be dispicable failures, for either there is a war somewhere about, or where there isn't the people are no better, happier, or more hopeful than 20th century Americans. Science is not shown as helping mankind, only as creating new weapons of terror and destruction, and the heros are usually not scientists at all but All-American halfbacks using those weapons for personal aggrandizement. In the exceptional stories where the future is better, the improvement has usually been brought about by some escapist device like superman or galactic fairy godmothers. ASF itself may not be so bad as some other mags in fouling sf's own nest, but from the humanist point of view it is much worse. The stories far too often not only insult the readers' intelligence with crude political propaganda, but peddle unhealthy glorifications of war, hatred, violence, cruelty, and naked power. Leader in this prostitution of talent has been paranoiac L. Ron Hubbard, but Heinlein came down to his level in "Gulf" and even the lesser fry have been joining him in the gutter. Take for instance "The Mercenaries", by H. Beam Piper. In this story the "heroes" are a group of bought scientists, selling their murderous capabilities to the highest bidder, in this case the United States. They find that a piece of their equipment is, quite accidentally, likely to wipe out the city of Smolensk and all its people. They are not at all worried about this, in fact they are pleased and amused. In face of such terrifying lack of imagination it is almost irrelevant to point out that Smolensk is in Poland, and that in any case the USA is not at war with anyone, now or then.

If ASF is really read by as many scientists as Campbell claims insidious propaganda like this is all the more dangerous, but it is typical of the war-happy madness that seems to be current among some of the men who claim to represent us. Their false claim is denied by a few far-sighted people -- Banister, for instance in his "You Who Have Slain Me" (in Nekro 4), and Professor Toynbee in his already famous slogan "NO ANNIHILATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION" -- and it is up to us to halp in our small way by insisting that pulp fiction shall observe the minimum standards of human decency. It can be done, and in the next article in this series I hope to show that in some places it has.

#### LUCKY DIP

Fanzines have been leaving 170 Upper Newtownards Rd., Belfast in sheaves the last few days, but only one has struggled in against the stream so there's no

difficulty in picking out the last arrival. It is an object called Dziggitia, produced by Sid Gluck for FAPA and SAPS. It is a hidious purple thing, with one of the sloppiest covers I have ever seen. I don't know what the reproductive process is, hekto or ditto, but if I was the manufacturer I would think it good business to buy up the whole issue and hide it. Nevertheless I read the mag. I read all the fanzines I get from cover to bacover anyway but since this was by Gluck I read it rightaway. I have a very strong weakness for Gluck. I have loved him like a brother ever since I read a passage in one of his stories called "Second Wednesday of Last Week" (The story, not the passage: passages only have names like Northwest.). You must understand that this story was about a guy who wakes up one morning to find he is someone else again and so on through the morning. Very confusing. To steady his nerves and help him ruminate on his plight he decides to have some gum:

"William Johnson dropped a penny in the gum machine, and held his hand under the slot.

"No gum came out.

"The whole world was against him. First all that trouble about his name and then -- this.

"No gum!"

There is no stroke of wild genius like this in Dziggitia (with great moral courage I admit that I haven't a clue as to what that title means. Wish he'd never changed from Gaaa, I knew what that meant all right.) but there is a very competent story by Jack Drosdick called "Once In A Lifetime" and a very short short by Gluck. Even in this fellow-admirers of Gluck will find some of that completely uninhibited imagination which makes him one of the most original writers in fandom. Take his horror stories for instance. These are all about ten times as horrible as anyone else's, in fact he lays it on with a bulldozer where most people are content to use a trowel, but behind all the over-writing -- which in anyone else would be merely ridiculous -- there is such enthusiasm, such gusto, and such genuine if uncontrolled talent as to compel one's respect. I feel that Gluck will go far some day, but I find it hard to say in what direction. His trouble, it seems to me, will be to sober down his style for general consuption without losing that sort of primative drive which gives him his individuality.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

According to the grapevine vanVogt hasn't been able to write a good story since he was cleared. That's one snag Hubbard couldn't have known about... F.J. Ackerman reveals that dianetics has cured him of a life long fear of dogs. I shouldn't have worried about them if I were you, Forest. What's in a name?.. Edwin Sigler is reported to have disappered since the slating he got from readers of SS for his racial propaganda. Search parties are advised to leave no stone unturned... Ackerman reported to be coming to the World Convention in London in May... Gillings (Science Fantasy) retired from sf owing to ill health... New British fanzine coming called (of all things) Sludge.

# Installment 3, Quandry 10, May 1951.

The title of this column comes from the Irish song:

"The harp that once through Tara's halls
The soul of music shed..."

I mention this because I'm afraid the allusion wouldn't be too well understood in the States. A lot of Americans come over here in the summer -- we know it's the

summer because the rain is distinctly warmer -- and we put on our thickest brogues and be as Irish as anything, which pleases them no end. But maybe the ones who stay at home have never heard of the place. Let's hope that from now on it will be a little better known, in sf circles anyway. There have been Irish sf authors of course, from Swift to Belfast's own C.S. Levis, but now I am proud to announce the first Irish prozine. To be quite honest it's not exactly a prozine, but a pocket-book. Its cover is a nice little affair in blue and silver, simple but attractive, and depicting a spaceship called Grigme (the atom). What makes the book quite unique is that it is written and printed in Gaelic, the first sf ever to appear in the language. This type-writer has no Erse characters, and I wouldn't be surprised if Lee's hasn't either, but the title can be transliterated as "Reics Carlo Ar An Ngealaig", by Cahal O'Sandar. The intrepid space heroes are called Eamon O'Neill and Brian O'Ruairc, which makes a nice change. It's published in Baile atha Cliath-Dublin to you -- and I can supply copies to completionist collectors (if there are any these days outside the nuthouse) for two current prozines.

### FILTH COLUMN

One of Howard Browne's accusations against fanzines was that their gossip columns are full of lies. So I now offer a new type of gossip column, every item in which is guaranteed to be as thoroughly truthful and reliable as Mr. Browne's forecast of a slick Amazing.

The Dianetics Foundation will be holding a Convention this summer. In gratitude to the organizers of the Nolacon the entire proceedings will be given over to science fiction, except for a few addresses by prominent speakers on such subjects as "How to be a clear and not let your wife see through you", "The Discontent of our Winter", "Dianetics' rich field for developement and how to make it poorer", "Can Dianetics survive L. Ron Hubbard?", "The Law of Supertax", and "Auditers and Auditors".

The proprietors of Flair have their Eye on a Certain Magazine, but have been advised that they cannot take proceedings against a minor.

Beginning with the October 1951 issue, Amazing will be published on tissue paper, with a hole punched right through the top left-hand corner. This will enable passers-by to glance quickly through the magazine without even lifting it up, but it is of course designed for the convenience of readers.

The Bernard Shaw Foundation, established to revise the spelling of the English Language, has received a claim from a Mr. Douglas Fisher.

### WAS MY BOGGS REDD

The February issue of Quandry has just wandered in as I am writing this column for the April issue. A pity about this time lag, but there doesn't seem to be anything to be done about it. The column can go by airmail but the mag is Quandry, not Squandry, and till the introduction of a special airmail rate for fanzines—there's something for N3F to get their gums into—they'll just have to struggle across on the back of that ocean-going tortoise the Post Office are using these days for Third-class mail.

But what I was going to say was that I was very pleased to notice that Redd Boggs is joining Lee's chain gang of columnists. I've been feeling a bit guilty where Redd is concerned, because I published in Slant 4 a column in which Clive Jackson devoted some of the best jeers of his life to "File 13". And since Redd had never done me any harm I felt a bit uneasy when the release of that issue coincided with

the collapse from under him of Redd's platform Spacewarp, and with the publication of Banister's Egoboo. It seemed a bit too much like organized Redd-baiting -- "kick him again, he's still breathing" -- and what Redd thought of the barrage I never found out. I sent him an "uncomplimentary" copy of Slant and offered him space to reply, but all I got was an unbaited copy of Skyhook, with no mention of the matter at all. Whether he was perfecting an atomic bomb to fit inside an ordinary envelope, or whether he had reacted to all these kicks in true Christian fashion, by turning the other cheek. I had no way of knowing. Eventually however I emptied out the barrel of oil that had stood ready beside the front door and started to sleep again.

Recently the bookshelf where I keep the mimeoed fanzines began to overflow and since I find it much harder to borrow bookcases than books I had to do something about it. Of course I can't find it in my heart to throw any of them away so I took the trouble to bind the best of them, like Quandry and Spacewarp. Naturally I finished up by reading them all over again, and something in the first Warp of my collection rather startled me. It was in Tucker's reasoned refutation of the hoax report of his death. He convinced me all right, of course, but apparently in the fake obituary there was reference to something called "Fandom Inc." Does anybody know what this was? It sounds horribly like my own firm of "Proxyboo Ltd", which runs fandom for BNFs on an agency business and supplies all the prozine material provided by its chief rival, Vernon McCain Incorporated (better known as Henry Kuttner.) It makes me wonder, did I really invent Proxyboo, Ltd. all by myself, or had that hardly noticed reference to Fandom Inc. been festering in my subconscious. Perhaps it's as well that the turnover in fandom is so rapid that newcomers can do everything over again and get away with it. Maybe one of those days the Society for the Prevention of Wire Staples in SF Magazines will be founded anew by some innocent neofan. The idea is bound to have a fundamental appeal to readers of the new Amazing.

The last thing I noticed in Warp brings me back to Boggs again. It was that famous piece of his "Banister Gets It In The Nek." There can't ever have been a column that caused such an uproar. A whole string of replies in the next Warp, Jackson's "Chewing The Crud" in Slant (Jackson had never heard of 'crud' before and thought it was peculiar to Boggs) and finally Egoboo. It was a great pity Warp folded at that point, for it was going to be wonderfully interesting. However for all I know Redd has already written a "Slant Gets It In The Pants." If so, this is where you came in.

### LUCKY DIP

"Sludge" #1 (Bob Foster) Four issues for one prozine. This modestly named effort is probably the most extraordinary fanzine I have ever encountered. Of course, I was in at the birth of it, and I know that the editor is a bricklayer, that he entered fandom only a few months ago, that he knows nothing of the ins and outs of fan publishing and that he hasn't got a typewriter or a mimeograph and that he in fact started with nothing but guts and enthusiasm; but even so! He wrote to me some while ago for advice on linocuts and when I saw his first effort I feared for him. It was a thin and brittle piece of inlaid lino -- already fallen to pieces in the mails -- and this he had rolled with water paint and a wooden roller and tried to print by hand. (I expect that Lee has some fellow feeling for him!) But the ones in his first issue show what can be done with determination. They are printed by foot pressure, of course, but nevertheless they are amazingly good. The zine's contents, too, are better than most first issues, but the editor with a modesty unusual in faneds has only distributed copies to the five fen he knows, so you'll have to ask him for a copy. Do that: this zine has promise.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

Does anyone else suspect that James H. Schmitz, of the Vega stories in ASF, is

really Old Doc Smith making a comeback?... After probably the shortest and most successful fan agitation in history, by British and Irish fans, Street and Smith have apologized all round them and reduced their foreign sub rates from \$10 to \$4; from the ridiculous to the merely exorbitant... Further articles in the series "The Other SF" in this column will be delayed till after the World Convention in London in May, at which several French fans will be present... British SF Book Club being formed.

# Installment 4, Quandry 11, June 1951.

Whipped up by ceaseless propaganda in books, magazines, films and radio, the interest of the great British public in sf has mounted almost to the point of indifference. No longer does the man in the street say, "But what do you want to go to the moon for?" No, he has now progressed to the what-does-the-rocket-push-against-if-there's-no-air-up-there stage. From hostility to ignorance is a big step, and it will be dreadful when any of the morons studying to be halfwits who read the popular press are liable to start and try to tell US all about sf. They will probably refuse to believe us when we say we practically invented the stuff. Ah well, such is the fate of pioneers, but did you ever think that one of the basic appeals of fandom is that it is a very exclusive and almost persecuted minority? When everybody is a fan we shall just have to start producing nonfanzines.

In Britain the number of new magazines is very much less than in America, but there has been one development which is quite unique — the first fortnightly prozine. Some months ago there appeared among the mess of juvenile sf which currently infests the newstands a sequence of pocketbooks with a connected series of stories. Suddenly the pocketbook began to call themselves Science Fiction Fortnightly, and soon developed into a regular prozine with editorial, reader's letters and finally fan news. The editor says he wants to help fandom in any way he can, if in return fandom will help him with their honest criticism. This is a very fair offer indeed, and the symbiosis can certainly do fandom a lot of good. Science Fiction Fortnightly is edited by L.G. Holmes and JH.J. Campbell and published at 1 & 2 Melvelle Court Goldhawk Rd., London W12. The sub rate is \$1.50 for six issues. The mag publishes one book-length novel each issue by new British authors. Some of them are remarkably good, and the standard is constantly improving.

### CAME THE IMAGINATIVE COLLECTOR

I see that in Dawn & The Imaginative Collector that well known litterateur, Russell K. Watkins, has something to say about my remarks on fanzine nudes. (Unfortunately he doesn't mention just who made the remarks, thereby reducing the egoboo content by about 80%.) He says it's ridiculous to say that nudes are easy to draw. Speak for yourself, Russell. Even I who cannot draw an egg can draw a recognizable nude. I admit that I'm not particularly interested in eggs. Mr Watkins goes on to say that the squalid material of some fanzines is bringing fandom a "disreputable name". I say, that's bad, isn't it? We could have stood any sort of a name but a disreputable one. He then calls on all "high-minded fans" to help him form a "censor bureau." This is what I resent. The world is already cluttered up with pompous busybodies who think they are fit to decide what everyone else should read. Usually their minds are so high that they smell. If Mr. Watkins wants to improve the standard of fanzines let him start nearer to home on zines that print things like this about "Destination Moon":

"In the outer space scene when one of the crewmen floated off into space why didn't the ship leave him behind with all its speed? It was going thousands of miles an hour."

This, in a science fiction fanzine! Though the rest of the zine is pretty .

good I mannot forgive this. Mr Watkins: the earth itself is hurtling through space at thousands of miles an hour, yet if you jump off it won't leave you behind. Unfortunately.

### PAGENT OF PAGE ENDS

Fanzines may lag behind the prozines in format, legibility, artwork, and even sometimes material, but there is one department in which they reign supreme. Their fillers. Take the fillers in Amazing, for instance, which through some miracle of editorial don't-know-how contrive to be even worse than the stories. Maybe this is being hard on Howard: it could be that these fillers are a cunning ruse to force the readers to realize that the stories could after all be worse -- like the restaurant in the old joke which employed midget waiters to make the portions look bigger -- but I doubt it. I don't believe Howard Browne even knows what goes on. I think that when the printers find they have a blank space left over they just measure it carefully and tear off at their convenience a strip of filler of the correct length. It is not generally known that rolls of this filler material are supplied at so much a mile by Messrs. Endpapers Ltd. ("We serve your ends"), a firm originally founded by an eminent doctor to brighten the lonely hours of sufferers from constipation. The material itself is written in a basement factory by a few miserable wrecks of humanity who have been driven to madness through having been rejected by every fanzine in existance.

Fanzine fillers, on the other hand, are sometimes so good that I suspect that whole zines have been published just to work one of them in. Or maybe it's just that the harassed editor is in such a frenzy to get the stencil finished that the genius which lurks in the subconscious of every true fan takes over. Anyhow there are scores of fanzines which are memorable only for their filler material. I suppose that it's too much to hope for that fanzines should consist entirely of fillers but I would like to see an anthology of them.

Here's one that I would nominate for a start. It's from a prewar British mimeced fanzine called Novae Terrae, whose title, translated into English as New Worlds, became that of Ted Carnell's excellent prozine. Ted Carnell was associate editor of the fanzine, along with somebody called Arthur C. Clarke. Among the fan contributors, and later to become another associate editor, was William F. Temple. In the June 1938 issue the following appeared at the foot of page ten.

# Letter to the Editor from William F. Tumple

Dear Sore,

I am ½sorry to see th%t amother of my artikles in the %last issue of NovFa Terrae has been spoilt by by carless typing. How can a writer put hisn work in to his heart when foonstant mifprintf mike it appear ridiculousy? Please try to do@ butter in future.

William F. Simple

#### BAD SPELL

It occurs to me that at the moment there are precious few faneds who could have been trusted to reproduce that last piece without adding a few errors of their own. It's all very well to mis-spell for effect, as Sneary does. His missibilings are inspired. Some of them like "rockous voice" are better than the original. But nowadays we are getting a lot of faneds who are just plain careless. Even if they really can't spell themselves they should be able to copy someone else's stuff accurately. But look what happens to a contributor in one of these zines:

"the shirking universe theory." (I'll bet the theory doesn't work either.)

### 65 WARHOON 65

"The only way to discrible Bradbury's writing in this piece is poignate." (Go on, you can't really have been trying.)
"What a scared cow stf is becoming." (This editor deserved the Scared Order of the Brass Neck.)

#### LUCKY DIP

The Rhodomagnetic Digest: Recently I thought I detected from Berkeley a strong smell of folding fanmag. But no, it was something cooking, and on the front burner too. Here is the Digest back again on the upswing, with a new editorship that has already lifted the magazine straight from the grave into the groove. This is the most adult and intelligent of all non-fiction fanzines, and is one of the very few you can show your non-fan friends with confidence. Blumenson, Murr, Willis (oops: did I say they need material?), Silverberg, and Fabun write in this issue. Artwork by Beetem and Goulart. Production mainly by Don Fabun and a good job too.

### ODD ENDS

Seems to me from Wilkie Conner's column in Q9 that his neighbors in Gastonia have about the same degree of understanding of science fiction as he has of political realities. I don't want to spoil Lee's zine by arguing politics, so I'll just say that someone seems to have been feeding Wilkie a lot of lies about conditions in Britain. I saw "Destination Moon" in London, and extraordinarily enough, the wretched slaves there seemed to be able to take a more intelligent interest in the film than the really civilized people of North Carolina. No jeers or vacant laughs, though I did hear a few technical arguments going on here and there in tense whispers, one in front of me about escape velocity and one in the back row about zip fasteners. It was pathetic to see these poor English people looking so healthy and contented, ignorant of the fact that their country was staggering under red dictatorship to bankruptcy. I can hardly wait for Wilkie and his friends to "Whip the whole red earth" and introduce the remnants, if any, to the North Carolina Way of Life... I apologize to everyone for the lack of eyeballs in my picture on page 6 of the last issue of Quandry. Guess it's my own fault for having female eyes ... By the time you read this Irish fandom will have invaded England en masse, for the World Convention in London. The organizers asked me to do my best to help the Con, but I refused to stay away.

(rb: Later in the issue of Quandry containing the above installment we find Leeh exclaiming: "Stop the presses! A special dispatch received at the last minute from:

## THE HARP IN ENGLAND"

which was serially revealed to the world in Quandrys 11, 12, and 13 along with regular chapters of the column. You can begin "The Harp in England" on the next page. The column continues below.

# Installment 5, Quandry 12, July 1951.

There is going to be no Harp in this issue of Quandry. I'm sorry, but if you could see this mountain of post-Convention correspondence you'd understand why.

First, look at this long letter from Manly Banister, which certainly deserves a reply. It is a very long letter. To be exact, it measures ll inches by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet. Banister has recently taken up oil painting and this stuff is called layout paper. Banister says you lay the letter out on the floor and walk and read and by the

THE HARP IN ENGLAND (1)

The First International Convention.

May, 1951



On the 8th of May the entire fan population of Ireland migrated to England for the First International Convention. One fifth of it flew over, but the other four-James White, Bob Shaw, my wife and myself -- all of whom suffer rather badly from hand-to-mouth disease, went steerage on the boat. When we had found our berths and got over our relief to find that this part of the ship wasn't called 'steerage' because of the cattle kept there, we all gathered on the poop deck, keeping an eye open for poops and making puns absentmindedly as the lights of Belfast faded in the distance. Bob said the Captain must have found out he was a science fiction fan, because he had given him a wide berth. James said his theory was all bunk. There was a short silence while I vainly tried to work in a rather clever one about berth and confinement and mal de mere. It's a terrible thing to work with people so uncultured as not to understand puns in French. We behave like this all the time at home, you know. Stray visitors have been known to go quietly outside and shoot themselves after half an hour of it.

By this time we were almost sure we were not going to be sick, even with the puns, though we all had plans worked out to deal with the problem if it came up. I favoured spinning around rapidly on my heel, using the principal of the gyroscope, while Bob planned to compensate for the movement of the ship by holding two spirit levels in his teeth and balancing himself so as to keep the bubbles centered. However I was shortly able to announce that according to my reckoning we had already passed the point at which we should have been sick, and though my reckoning must have been dead at the time, we all agreed it was probably accurate enough. We decided we must be a viable mutation designed for sea and space travel, or that sea sickness was a mere affectation. And so to bunk. We slept well, too, although there was a gale blowing. The engine kept knocking, but no one let it in.

On the day before the Convention we went to the Festival Exhibition on the South Bank of the Thames. About this I'll just say that of all the works of man on this planet, this is probably the most worth seeing. Incidently I saw the egoboo machine I mentioned a few months ago in Q. It was working, too. They had it slung on the back of a big statue of the White Knight from Alice and there it was, patting and praising at a tremendous rate.

In the evening we made our way to the White Horse, a tavern where the informal pre-convention meeting was to be held. As we walking toward it from Fleet Street, I thought to myself that this was the first London building I had seen with concave walls. The walls returned to normal when I opened the door, but 17 fans flew out and lay gasping on the sidewalk. Trampling them underfoot -- they were only letterhacks -- I plunged into the throng. It absorbed me greedily, like an amoeba, but since my feet left the ground almost immediately, I could make no independent progress. I carried on a series of short conversations with everyone whose ear I happened to find in my mouth -- Ted Carnell, Peter Ridley, Arthur C. Clarke, Derek Picles -- and eventually a sort of Brownian movement swept me to the far side of the room. There I was ejected into a little backwater inhabited by a suntanned young American soldier. Remembering that there was only one GI fan at the Convention, I made a masterly deduction. "Lee Jacobs?" I gasped, "Fan Mathematics, Spacewarp?" He was very pleased, and when I told him his article had been immortalized in Fanspeak -- it's amazing the amount of egoboo that lies around uncollected -- he was so delighted that he swore he had heard of Slant. I promised to lend him my copy of Fanspeak --he hadn't received one himself so he must have been a member of N3F -- and we sat on the stairs leading to the 'Gents' and talked about FAPA. It was an interesting discussion, though interrupted by the necessity of remembering whether to stand up to let people pass or not. There was only one lavatory in the place and because of our strategic position we got the job of preventing it being a 'Ladies' and a 'Gents' simultaneously.

had a fine view of the top layer of fans. Through breaks in the clouds of smoke, we could see as far as Alan Hunter of New Worlds and Phantasmagoria. On the outer fringes of his beard was Ben Abas from Holland. Both were strenuously praising each other's artwork, and though Ben was at somewhat of a disadvantage because Alan had only one sketch with him against his own 20, he did such a good job on that one sketch that it blushed visibly. Just beneath us Bob Shaw and James White were carrying on an extraordinary conversation with Sigward Ostlund from Sweden. James was doing a magnificent job of interpreting, considering the fact that he didn't know a single word of Swedish. It was pathetic to see poor Sigward. All his life he had been learning standard English to be able to talk with the people he was going to meet in England, and the first one he comes up against is Bob Shaw. However, every time Bob said something in that armour-plated brogue of his, James would repeat it very loudly and clearly and some vestige of the meaning would seep across. In the middle distance, Derek Pickles was telling people what he thought of the London Circle. Not far away the London Circle was saying what it thought of Derek Pickles. Weird electrical discharges leapt between the two clouds of blue haze.

It was a wonderful evening, at least for the ones on top. Finally, however, all were shovelled out into the street. I wondered for a moment what the funny smell was. It was fresh air.

Next morning at the crack of 10 am I went down to The Epicentre. This is the name of the apartment where Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer camp among the debris of 15 years of fanactivity. They call it the Epicentre because it is supposed to be the centre around which English fan activity revolves. I have been unkind enough once to refer to it as the dead centre, but I must admit that when anything is done by London fandom, it is done here. I had never really believed that fandom could be a way of life until I saw this place. It is a fan's paradise and a housewife's nightmare. Books, prozines, fanzines, letters, typewriters, mimeographs, stencils, artwork are heaped about in great mountain ranges. Behind them are presumably walls, but rumors that a floor has been seen once or twice must be discounted. Archaeological expeditions have definitely established that the Epicentre is built on a solid foundation of old fanzines, stretching from strata to strata down to the eternal fires of Vom.

On this morning I followed the dangerous trail into the inner fastness of the Epicentre with the idea of helping Vince Clarke to finish the Official Programme. I found the Official Programme had nearly finished Vince. On the kitchen table was the big rotary duplicator (mimeograph, to you). It had stopped working. On the floor was a smaller rotary duplicator. It had never started working. In the next room was a flatbed mimeograph. It had never worked. It was like The Revolt of the Machines. On the left of the door a gas cooker was going full blast with the oven door open. Apparently none of the duplicators can be even expected to work unless the temperature of the room approaches that of the centre of the sun. On the right of the door, half way down a dangerous slope of fanzines, were a few battered stencils. That was the Official Programme. Amid this chaos crouched Vince Clarke, trying to intimidate one of the mimeographs with a screwdriver. Knowing nothing of mimeography I could do nothing for some time but hover about making encouraging noises. This I did to the best of my ability until I saw what Vince was trying to do and offered to take one of the machines into the other room and grapple with it.

At this point in walked two stalwart Liverpool fans, masters of mimeography. Subduing the great rotary machine with one terrible look, one of them made a few mystic passes over it, and turned the handle. Paper began to pass through it and emerge on the other side bearing decipherable marks. I hastily revived Vince by waving a copy of Amazing under his nose, and we all went into production. Although the Convention had already started, we had 200 copies of the 12 page Programme run off, collated and stapled by lunch time.

Meanwhile Ted Carnell had declared the Convention open. He began by introducing the more distinguished guests, keeping the most distinguished 'till last. Finally, after some unintelligible remarks about ointment and flies, he introduced me. Of course I wasn't there. Anyone who says that the round of applause came after that fact was noticed is a dirty liar, and probably in the pay of Ken Slater. I hope to have signed statements to prove it when my friends get the bandages off their fingernails.

Walter Gillings, ex-editor of Fantasy Review and Science Fantasy, then started off the proceeding with a whimper. He was billed to speak on the growth of British sf, but apparently he could only think of a malignant growth. Change and decay in all he saw around. Science fiction ran in cycles, and we were now freewheeling into the seven lean years. Only apparently this lot was caused by a surplus of corn. The British market was being swamped with trashy pocketbooks. America could afford to maintain honourable magazines like aSF and Galaxy, but evidently Gillings thought that honour was without profits in his own country.

Having thrown the convention into a fine state of dejection, he brightened everyone up again with the assurance that Bill Temple was bound to disagree with him. Just to make sure, he insulted him two or three times, and then sat down, amid loud applause for a brilliant if depressing speech. The English love to take their pleasure sadly.

However, it was the last depressing note in a convention which in retrospect seems to be the most heartening event in the history of British stf, and possibly the most important Convention ever held. Certainly it was brilliantly successful, and a large part of the credit for this goes to the next speaker, Forrest J.Ackerman.

The Convention Hall turned out to be in a long wide street in a rather pleasant area of London. There was a large square nearby, the centre of which was laid out in a little public park. Here during the intervals the Convention delegates would sit in the sunshine, recovering from the shock of finding out what their correspondents looked like. From the side of this park an enormous Hotel stretched into the infinite distance, like a building in a vanVogt novel. About two hundred yards along was the main entrance, which the Convention Committee warned us we were not to use. Here among the potted palms and plate glass there stood a resplendent commissionaire, provided with a forty foot pole for not touching science fiction fans with. The further along from the park you went, the lower the tone of the place sank, until in the sordid distance you find a non-descript door, evidently disowned by the hotel, which was the entrance to the Convention Hall. There was a notice "International Science Fiction Convention", an entrance foyer, and then the Hall itself. This was a long low room with a speaker's dias along one side facing about a hundred chairs grouped in a semi-circle. Round the walls were paintings and drawings and tables filled with books and magazines.

I arrived on the scene during the Lunch interval. The Convention carried on as if nothing had happened -- it was almost as if nothing had. I had come by subway, escorting the two Liverpool fans with all the savoir faire, and sore feet of a subway traveller of two days standing. And I do mean standing. Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer brought up the rear in a van, an extraordinary vehicle which the automobile industry has begged me to refer to as a horseless carriage. Personally I think it was a last model sedan chair with the arms broken off and a hole cut in the floorboards. We handed out the Programmes to those fen who had already arrived back from lunch, or who just didn't eat. They were all very pleased to find out what they had been doing all morning.

When we arrived back from our own lunch, Forry Ackerman was just about to start

speaking. Most of us had already met him at the preliminary sessions, but this was his first public appearance, and here seems to be the time to say what we thought of him. Briefly, we were impressed. I remember reading somewhere a criticism of Ackerman by Laney or someone, the gist of which was that although FJA had produced some very fine fanzines, in fact some of the finest in fan history, he was still a man who had failed to realize his potentialities. His zines lacked personality, that indefinable character that a good fanzine has, which makes it not just another amateur magazine, but a sort of reader-editor symbiosis. Something that makes you feel not only that you want to continue reading the zine, but that you would very much like to meet the editor. Something that Quandry, for instance, has to the nth degree. Not that Ackerman's zines didn't have personality of a sort. The point was that the personality wasn't the interesting and agreeable one of Ackerman himself, but some synthetic and comparatively unsympathetic one which Ackerman had invented for the occasion. His idea of what an editor should sound like, much in the same way that some people have a special voice for the telepone or public occasions.

I never realised how just these criticisms were until I met Ackerman myself. From his articles and letters I had formed quite a clear mental picture of a thin dark and neurotic type, eccentric and egocentric in his ways, quick and impatient in his speech. Recently I had come to know him better through his letters. He had, for instance, taken the trouble to write to Manly Banister, thanking him, as it were, on behalf of fandom for donating the printing press to Slant. It was a sincere and thoughtful gesture which both Banister and I appreciated a great deal. And then recently I was quite moved by Ackerman's defense of his fan record in FAPA. He had just resigned from the organization, and apparently Harry Warner had started running obituaries of all the old fans who do this, summarizing their fan record and appraising their acheivements. Apparently his reasoning is that since FAPA is a Home for Retired Fans, fans who retire from FAPA must be considered to have finally died. His obituary of Ackerman questioned his right to be known as No.1 Fan. This evidently hurt Ackerman, because he replied with a long letter about his fan life which is just about the most sincere and moving document I have ever read. I realized almost with a shock that FJA is a true fan in a way that most of us don't come within a mile of being. He really believes in fandom, and he has maintained his faith thru twenty years of frustration and disappointment. He still insures his life for \$5000 every time he sets out for a Convention, in favour of the Convention Committee, so that if he is killed by some travelling accident on the way, he will be worth more to the Convention dead than alive. (From what I saw of what Ackerman did for our Convention, \$5000 wouldn't be nearly enough.) His will still provides for his priceless library to go to fandom. It will be inadequate compensation. There are two things that every neofan learns even before the Eva Firestone Stage. One is that Campbell is the editor of aSF and the other is that Forrest J. Ackerman is No.1 Fan. For my money, Ackerman's position is infinitely stronger. I am sold on Ackerman.

Though I had recently revised my estimate of him, his appearance came as a great surprise. I found a big easy-going giant of a fan, quiet spoken and gentle mannered, very different (if I may dare to say so) from some Americans abroad. There was no loudness or ostentation about him at all, and he was very easy to talk to, once you got used to a disconcerting habit he had of going "Mannemmemm?" with a rising inflection whenever you paused for his reactions to what you were saying. Maybe everyone does this in California, but it certainly derailed my train of thought the first couple of times. I did, however, have several interesting conversations with him, though, as is usual at times like these, you only remembered what you had really wanted to say when it was too late, and someone else had snatched him away. Though Ackerman was first there every day and last away, as enthusiastic as a neofan from a small town, there never seemed to be time for a proper conversation. This Convention was not like an American one, of course, Everyone went home or to their various hotels each night, and there were none of those all night sessions which seem to be the main thing in American Conventions.

I think Forry came as a pleasant surprise to everyone. Certainly you could feel the moment he started to speak that the audience found him easy to listen to: you felt they would have listened with pleasure if he had been talking about seaweed. Actually he didn't talk about seaweed, but about American sf publishing. However, he began his remarks with the usual ones about how glad he was to be here. (He was nearly not going to be able to come on account of some peculiar mix-up in the arrangements for his passage, over which there were some wild recriminations among the London Circle.) He mentioned that he was sorry that his severest critic in England, D.R. Smith wasn't among those present, and in his absence he called upon Severest Critic No.2, a Mr. Youd, whose name was a very big one in prewar fandom. Whether Mr. Youd was annoyed at being relegated to the position of second severest critic, or whether he was taken aback at being called so suddenly out of his retirement, I don't know, but he dashed redfaced to the microphone and bit out something about how he noticed that Mr. Ackerman was still murdering the English language. I hadn't noticed any corpses laying around, except the walking dead of extinct fans, but everyone laughed tactfully so that Mr. Youd wouldn't retire hurt. Forry then went into his commentary on American sf, delivered in a pleasant California drawl. He gave a lot of news which was interesting at the time, but which is common knowledge now, and he also read a cable-gram from Anthony Boucher hotly denying a rumor that F&SF was going to fold. Since no one in the audience had yet heard the rumor, their feeling at this point was rather mixed. They looked a bit like an audience of Catholics who had suddenly been informed by the Pope that he was now pretty certain that God did exist after all.

Next William F. Temple was billed to speak on the technique of writing serial sf. Fortunately he did nothing of the sort, at which no one who knew him was in the least surprised. He seized the opportunity to strike a joyous blow in the Temple-Clarke feud which has been amusing British fandom for some 20 years. Arthur C. Clarke, incidently, is a thin fair-haired nervous sort of chap, with a dashing manner. At least, everytime I saw him he was dashing somewhere. I expect one of these days when he is particularly excited he'll reach escape velocity and that's the last we will see of him. He is nicknamed "Ego." Temple, on the other hand, is a small dark plumpish chap, very quiet spoken, and with a dead pan style of humor. The only flashes in the pan were when he looked up over his heavy glasses to see how some of themore subtle witticisms were going. Usually they went very well, especially when he touched on dianetics with a mention of "a womb with a view". I assure Rory Faulkner, who as far as I know first used this crack in Vernon McCain's Wastebasket, that Temple undoubtedly arrived at it independently. In his day the man was the most brilliant of fan journalists, and he could be so again today if he wanted to.

Temple's contribution took the form of a synopsis of a serial about the first space flight. The Government, having been badgered and chivvied by Clarke for years, had finally built a spaceship in a desperate attempt to keep him quiet. The crew consisted of two men, one of whom was Temple for the sole reason that even Arthur C. Clarke couldn't be both of them. Besides, someone had to do the housework. After a beautiful parody of the Arthur C. Clarke first-step-on-man's-journey-to-the-stars style, Temple described how when the rocket cleared the earth's atmosphere it came to a dead stop. Apparently Clarke was wrong after all -- in spite of all his arguments and proofs rockets do not work in a vacuum. There's nothing for them to push against you see. The two intrepid astronauts are never seen again. The story carries on with their descendants. Clarke 2 is an even bigger bore about space flight than was his ancestor, but no one will listen to him since the rocketship fiasco. At last, however, he happens upon the lesser known scientific fact that mitogen rays emitted by certain growing plants have a small but definite pushing power. From this it is but a matter of time 'till he breeds a plant in which the rays are so powerful that they can be used as a space drive. The second space ship is therefore an enormous onion, with a small hole scooped in the middle for the crew. This consists of a Temple and a Clarke again, for the same reasons, and again there is something wrong with Clarke's calculations. In accordance with a well-known precedent, they miss the moon and hurtle on to Mars. Since they haven't enough food for such a long trip they are in a terrible plight. Finally they are reduced to eating the ship.

There was lots more of this -- how they are saved from a hideous death by the discovery of some breath cachous, how they fall on Mars amid a colony of vegetarian monsters, etc, etc -- but some of you will be able to read it yourselves before long. I was onto Temple for first fanzine rights as soon as I could get to him. But Lee Jacobs (curse him) got there first and it will appear in his FAPA zine.

Next came a "radio play" by Milt Rothman -- that is, a play road over the PA system. This has already been done at an American Convention, so I won't say anything about it except that I thought some of the commercials were quite good. Like: "Why smell like a human being? Use Armpitto and smell like nothing on earth."

After the afternoon tea break the organisers put on a recording of a discussion on stf between some authors and journalists. I don't think anyone listened to this except a fan called Terry Overton, who asked Clarke why he had said "The Moon is Hell" was such a lousy book. There is a great disagreement among the Irish contingent as to what actually was said at this point, but I could have sworn that Clarke was so annoyed with Campbell he said he wasn't going to send him any more stories. But I must have been wrong, because nobody else remembers anything of the sort. Maybe Clarke said that Campbell would now be so annoyed with him that he wouldn't accept any of his stories.

After that came the auction and then the buffet, which was a bit of a sell, too. According to the dictionary a "buffet" means a slap in the face, and that's just what this one was to us poor Irish immigrants who had been relying on it to help us live in London. Last time I was in London I lived on spagetti because I found you could get more of it for your money than anything else. I ate so much spagetti I came home with an Italian accent. Unfortunately I couldn't find any spagetti dives near the convention hall, but in a way the buffet did save us money -- after one look at it you never wanted to touch food again. Mind you I'm not saying a word against the catering arrangements at this hotel. It's just that it's the first one I've seen where they have a fifth place on the cruet stand for a stomach pump.

After the buffet, all the fans who were still alive were propped up on chairs to listen to John Keir Cross talking about his troubles in trying to put sf over on the British Broadcasting Corporation. It was so complicated it sounded like the World of Null-BBC. Mr. Cross was so eloquent, and the spirits of the fans were so cowed by the buffet, that no one asked how come that Mr. Cross had made such a lousy job of the sf serial he was allowed to produce on the air. "The Other Side Of The Sun", this was, and the author, Paul Capon, was down to speak as well as Cross. Evidently he didn't think he could ,for he mumbled some words the only one of which was distinguishable was 'laryngitis' and sat down again. I was furious about this, since this was the only way I could think of getting out of making a speech myself, and now Capon had spoiled it.

I left at the end of this, and missed a talk by Arthur C. Clarke on television and sf. I'm told he was very good, and I can well believe it. The man is a genius. In fact, he has been heard to admit as much himself.

When I got back, feeling a little better (I think the trouble may have been something I didn't eat), there was a film show going on. There was supposed to have

been a guest author's session at 8:30, but things were running so late everyone had forgotten there ever was such a thing as 8:30. Besides, there were no guest authors, which would have made things a little difficult. The show was of a silent version of "The Lost World", a film about prehistoric monsters. It was a bit of a prehistoric monster itself. However, parts of it were quite good. For instance, there was a terrific battle between two great monsters who must have been all of 18 inches high. It was awe-inspiring. At one moment I thought one of them was actually going to knock a piece of plaster off the other. In the corner Arthur C. Clarke was busy jockying discs for incidental music. Occasionally the reins slipped and the music sounded more accidental than incidental. A wild elephant stampede loses something of its effect when accompanied by a Viennese waltz.

Nothing more of interest happened that night, except that on the subway home my wife, Madeleine, was left behind in the crush and got carried on to Shepherd's Bush. I went over to the down platform and hardly had I got there when she got off a train. It was like a matter duplicator. In fact, I still have an uneasy idea that there is another Madeleine roaming helplessly around Shepherd's Bush.

At about 11 the next morning, Convention Time (this is about half an hour behind ordinary time and gets progressively later) Ted Carnell got up to speak about New Worlds and its future. Perhaps it was not his fault if he had to begin by talking about Walter Gillings and his past, but certainly the ghost of Gillings haunted the proceedings like an absent fiend. Gillings, as you know, was the editor of the other British prozine Science Fantasy until he recently resigned for what were supposed to be reasons of health. There has always been, it seems a certain amount of what we might call rivalry between Gillings and Carnell, even before the disagreement as to which of them should have gone to America under the Big Pond Fund as representative of British Fandom.

Ted started by saying how sorry he was that Gillings wasn't there, and you got the impression that his grief was mainly due to the fact that there were a lot of things he wanted to say to his face that he didn't like to say behind his back. However he managed to overcome this handicap pretty well. All that was missing was a little wax image of Gillings. First he contrived to make it quite clear that Gillings' resignation was not due to illness, unless you think bad blood is an illness. Then he announced that he himself was taking over the editorship of Science Fantasy. The magazine had apparently been losing money like a fanzine, but nevertheless he paid a glowing tribute to Gillings' work on it. Obviously Gillings had every quality of the ideal editor except ability. There was absolutely nothing wrong with SFY that a complete abolition of all traces of him wouldn't cure. The format was to be changed to conform with that of New Worlds, not one of Gillings' backlog of stories was to be used, and the vestigal remains of the old FTS Review were to be purged.

This last fiat brought a gentle reminder from Fred Brown, the well-known collector and reviewer, that the mag was after all a co-operative fan enterprise, and not Carnell's exclusive property. He deplored the abolition of book reviews and pointed out that American mags like aSF and Galaxy, miserable rags as they were compared with NW and SFY, managed to run book reviews and keep their heads above water. Carnell was charmingly generous in his reply, offering no less than three mutually contradictory explanations. Blinded with science, Fred Brown remained silent. The audience sat entranced with this exhibition of multi-valued logic, and Carnell took the opportunity to sound off at some British authors who in their unholy greed for dollars sold their stories to American zines instead of to him. Since it seemed to be the fashion to jump on Arthur C. Clarke, he did so. Apparently after Carnell had been pestering Clarke for several months for a story, Arthur would dig something out of an old trunk that had been written in capitals on a child's exercise

book and send it off magnanimously to Carnell. When it was returned he went around telling everyone that he had been rejected by New Worlds again! I can see that this must be very annoying, especially the last part. The implication is that being rejected by NW is the sort of thing a big name author can afford to laugh about, as if it were Botwinnik telling with relish the story of how a schoolboy caught him with Fools' Mate; or that being rejected from NW is a sign that a story is good, as for instance when Peon gives a "Rejected from Marvel" certificate of Merit to one of its stories. Curiously, Carnell laid himself wide open for a crack like this, by mentioning innocently that the stories he liked best always finished at the bottom of his Anlab and vice versa. I half wished Gillings had been there to point the obvious conclusion. Incidently, it was a curious thing about this part of the convention that although there were a great number of very controversial points raised, there was no acrimony at all. The reason was of course that Carnell has great personal charm and tact, and his conduct of the Convention was so competent and friendly as to disarm all criticism.

Towards the end of his speech he revealed that as an experiment in crass commercialism the next NW was going to feature a Beautiful Unclad Maiden on the cover. This threw the audience into a state of excitement bordering on torpor. Clarke got up and made a short and pungent speech to the effect that all this trying to pass sf off under a phony sexy front was all wrong. Were we or were we not trying to sell sf as sf. The time had come for us to stop apologizing for sf and take it to the people. This speech of Clarkes', while silently applauded by all true fans present, was the signal for a counterattack by the dealers and business men. One after another they got up and said that sexy covers sold magazines and that we would never get anywhere without them. It was fascinating to see a hundred fans who had probably spent the better part of their fan life pasting Earle Bergey, gradually come around to accepting the idea of having that hated type of cover on their own magazine. The final note was struck, and held some twenty minutes, by an elderly gentleman called Hill whom no one had ever heard of before. With a strong Austrian accent and a wealth of gesture he told the audience that the only thing an editor had to go by was his net sales, that the audience was not representative readers, and that their opinions weren't worth a damn, The audience applauded him vigorously to show how well they could take criticism, and then filed out for lunch, picking their way carefully among the fragments of Gillings' shattered reputation.

After lunch came the International Discussion. "Our overseas guests tell us of the state of sf in their countries." While the guests were being called to the rostrum I cowered in the shade of Derek Pickles, making a noise like an old overcoat, but Carnell mercilessly penetrated my disguise and summoned me to join the row on the dias. To give the man his due, he had warned me about this a couple of days ago. The prospect had been weighing on my mind ever since and I had been hoping it would fall through. I had pleaded with Carnell that I was terrified of public speaking, but he was quite adamant about it. (Incidently, I wish he would use tastier boot polish.)

Reflecting that there was always the hope that an atomic war would start within the next hour, I sat and listened to the other speakers, mentally discarding every note I had made as I saw the way the discussion was going. The symposium was opened by Iyell Crane, whose interest in international fandom is so intense that it might almost be called vested. He began by informing the audience that he had an absolutely open mind and was willing to change it at any time. With this reassurance, he went on to tell the audience how important they were. Fandom, he said, had built up the prozines of America to their present standard and kept them there. Fandom was directly responsible for aSF and Galaxy, and for the prozines in other countries. But for fandom, etc, etc. Fandom, in the person of one fifth of it gathered in the Convention Hall, received this accolade in pleased if incredulous

silence after the cold douche administered by Mr. Hill. Crane then produced copies of each issue of Interim Newsletter, one for each hand, and semaphored them at the audience. Still fanning furiously, he told all out-lying fans who were pure fans and not pros, to get in touch with him. With a final flourish of Interim Newsletter he sat down, having almost accidently revealed one item of interest, that his coeditor, Julian May, was a girl.

The next speaker was Ackerman, who delivered another of his pleasant and intimate talks. Like everything Forry said, it was listened to with pleasure and interest.

To my relief, Carnell then jumped right across the Atlantic and called on Georges Gallet from Paris. Georges brought a sheaf of notes to the microphone, and apologised for reading from them; he couldn't speak English very well. He talked about the French reprints of various American of books and about his own projected French prozine.

Next, Ben Abas brought a sheaf of notes to the microphone and apologized for reading from them, but he couldn't speak English very well. He talked about a Dutch prozine.

Next, Sigward Ostlund brought a sheaf of notes to the microphone and apologized for reading from them, but he couldn't speak English very well. He talked about a Swedish prozine.

Carnell then called on me. Having falled to similarise myself through the floor, I toyed desperately with the idea of bringing a sheaf of notes to the microphone and apologizing for not reading from them because I couldn't read. But in this probability-world I tottered to the microphone and told the Convention about the recent pocket-book in Gaelic. It didn't take very long, but I salved my conscience with the thought that the proceedings were already behind schedule. No doubt the audience would think I could have made a brilliant oration lasting some hours if it hadn't been for my thoughtfulness and unselfishness. I sat down mid applause, some of which I'm afraid was left over from Carnell's introduction. My best friends tell me the speech was very good, but too short (bless their loyal hearts) and that it came over the PA system with a strong Irish accent. Since I have no trace of any accent at all I find this very difficult to understand, but my English friends (all of whom have atrocious English accents) say I always sound that way to them.

The convention rallied, and survived. Speeches by Wendayne Ackerman, Ken Paynter, Lee Jacobs, and Frank Edward Arnold, were listened to attentively by everyone except the last speaker who was still swimming around dazedly in a pool of his own sweat. A discussion followed, centering mainly around two points, one as to how many fans were scientific workers or vice versa, and the other as to how many of them were women. On the first, Clarke said that he used to send copies of aSF for circulation among the people at Harwell Atomic Laboratory, and he never got any of them back. Since this is the normal experience of lending magazines, the point seemed rather inconclusive. It was finally decided that some scientific workers were fans and some were not. On the second point, Forry thought that the number of fem-fans was increasing. He instanced the proposed Star Science Fiction, a mag that would have been aimed at women if someone hadn't dropped it. Derek Pickles stood up and deftly inserted a neat little plug for N3F, giving statistics of how many members had been found on superficial investigation to be female. Incidently, this seems a good place to mention that not only were there quite a crown of fem-fans there, but that the standard of looks was very high. Apart from my own wife and Alan Hunter's, there was a chap called Robert Conquest (a well-known poet who recently managed to get into The Listener, the BBC's literary review, a really excellent poem plugging

sf) who had a really stunning wife with him. Not only was she extremely attractive, but she was a Bulgarian, which Alan and I thought wasn't quite fair. And of course there was Audrey Lovall. She is attached to the London Circle, and they are crazy about her, too.

Lyell Crane then closed the discussion. He got up and solemnly announced that he had changed his mind. The audience silently approved this decision, but didn't notice any appreciable difference. He also said he learned a lot from the proceedings, but he didn't say just what. Finally he gave his name and address very slowly and clearly for the benefit of the wire recording, which happened ungratefully to be out of action at that point. It was an interesting tableau: the recording engineer desperately trying to insert a new spool, and Lyell speaking very deliberately and obviously wondering what the audience was gesturing about. Eventually Lyell tumbled to what was going on, and contented himself with hanging up a notice. I'm sorry, by the way, if I have seemed a bit sarcastic about Crane. He is a worthy chap, but just a little inclined to take himself and fandom a bit too seriously.

There followed one of the most important events of the Convention, the presentation of the International Fantasy Award for the best work in the field during 1950. This is the first of a series of annual awards sponsored by the London Circle, and consists of a desk ornament in the form of a silvered spaceship on an inscribed plinth with a globular cigarette lighter. The lighter works, too, though through some slip up or other it is not atomic. The awards for 1950 went to George Stewart for "Earth Abides" and to Ley and Bonestell for "Conquest of Space". The actual presentation was made to Forry Ackerman on their behalf. He made a short and graceful speech of acceptance, and mentioned that he felt very jealous. American fandom had been talking about this sort of thing for years, and British fandom had gone ahead and done it.

After a break for afternoon tea, Wendayne Ackerman gave her talk about dianetics. It was listened to quietly, almost sommolently. This was mainly because Carnell when introducing her had explained very clearly and firmly that no discussion whatever would be allowed. The principal anti-dianeticians had already been warned about this and I suspect that some of them had had to be bound and gagged. Carnell gave one final glare around the Hall and then sat down on a box of tear gas bombs.

Mrs. Ackerman, an attractive creature, began by reading a letter from Ray Bradbury to the Ackermans which if it is ever published, will ruin his reputation. I happen to know the truth about Ray Bradbury. In the course of negotiations between Proxy-Boo Ltd and Vernon McCain Incorporated, McCain revealed: "I do a bit of work for a chap named Bradbury who lives down in California and wants oh so badly to be a writer. He just hasn't what it takes, but I haven't the heart to tell him so. So I have him send me each story he writes, do a complete re-write and polish job on it, and then for 10% commission I allow him to sell it under his own name. Not exactly ethical perhaps, but I like the boy. However, I do have trouble, since he has a remarkable lack of ingenuity in devising plots for his stories. He's always coming up with the same old thing. I've burned much midnite oil trying to put a new slant, some original viewpoint on that old 'deserted on Mars' plot he keeps sending me."

Wendayne then started on dianetics. This part of her speech went over most people's heads, mainly because their heads were practically on the floor. These were the anti-dianeticians who had to be silent but believed that sleep was a form of criticism. Wendayne paid a tribute first to Elron Hubbard, whom she described as a "masterful personality." I had little difficulty in equating this description with Laney's of him as a "loud mouth braggert." Mrs. Ackerman compared him with Louis Pasteur, on the grounds that both were described as quacks. Reports from France.

later spoke of a strange whirring noise from one of the Paris cemetaries. After the Convention, the Ackerman's went to France: they haven't been heard of since. As a sort of "before-and-after" advert for dianetics Wendayne instanced the case of AE van Vogt. Before dianetics, she said,he was a quiet shy sort of chap whom no one ever noticed in a crowded room. Since dianetics it appears he has come right out of his shell and is a "masterful personality" like Elron, the sort of person who can make a room crowded all by himself. Of course I know I'm queer, but I can't help thinking I would rather have liked the old van Vogt.

Immediately Wendayne had finished, Carnell stood up with almost indecent haste and announced the second auction. This was the part of the Convention which left gaping wounds in the hearts of collectors who had no money and in the bank balances of those who had. Forry Ackerman donated to the Convention many priceless books and magazines, and despite warnings from everyone who knew just what an impoverished lot English fandom was, put them all into the auction without reserve. The result was ghastly. If I were to give only two of the prices that were fetched there would be a wave of mass suicide among the readers of Fantasy Advertiser. I will cut Roy Squires' circulation only by half, and reveal that van Vogt; sown copy of "The Weapon Makers", containing copious revision notes in vV's own handwriting went for \$13.00. My heart bled for Forry Ackerman and for the artists whose original paintings and drawings were going for less than a dollar each, sold in lots. Pausing only to notice with interest that Arthur C. Clarke's autograph was apparently worth 75¢ I stumbled off to the bar. There I found Walter Gillings, a very small man with a very large beer. He had a sombre look on his face as if he was thinking about Ted Carnell and had decided to jump in and end it all. I wondered had Gillings been there all the time, having been driven to drink by his own speech. But no, this was more or less his normal expression. He stood me a drink on the strength of an article I wrote attacking Ken Slater for attacking him. We had a long conversation about this and that, principally that. We discussed a former of publisher and writer who had gone into the pornographic literature business in a big way. I must say I liked Gillings a lot. We got on very well, but after a while I thought of all you people and the Report I had to write, so I went back to the Convention.

There was a second radio play going on by that time, which was rather better than the first if only because the entire original cast was too drunk to go on. After that, the last item was another film show. The first one was on experimental recket ships with a running commentary by Arthur C. Clarke. Both were very good indeed, though I recognized one of his gags as having been lifted from a New Yorker cartoon. The rest of the films were Forry Ackerman's own. They were good, too, but I gather they've been shown at American conventions, so I don't suppose I need bother describing them.

When everything was over and everyone was saying goodbye to everyone else and trying to remember who they were, Ackerman invited some of us to his hotel room. I was thrilled. I felt that I was now really at a convention. Not only had I talked to Forrest J. Ackerman, actually and literally, but I was going to a fangab in a hotel room! On top of that I had just had the ultimate piece of egoboo. I was asked for my autograph! I don't know who it was, but it was probably someone who could trade ten of mine for one of Redd Boggs.

The group that finally set out for Forry's hotel room consisted of Forry, Bill Temple, John Benyon Harris, Lee Jacobs, James White, Bob Shaw, myself, and some unidentified stranger whom no one seemed to know and who never said a word the whole time. We refer to him as Yehudi because Bob can't remember him being there at all. But he must have been, because when we were going into the hotel Forry asked the waiter to bring up eight cups of tea.

Lee Jacobs, ignorant of the London licensing laws, paled visibly. You could see

he didn't believe his ears. "Beer," he said quietly, just so there would be no silly mistake. The waiter explained that beer was not available. Lee seemed to regard this as a joke in the worst possible taste. With the air of a minister of religion reproving levity on some sacred subject he said again, firmly, "Beer." The waiter mumbled something about it being against the law to serve beer at this hour. Iee seemed unable to take this terrible news. A hideous jest, of course. Ha ha. "Beer." he repeated again with determination, holding fast to his one sheet-anchor of sanity in this suddenly crazy world. He said it in such utterly reasonable tones that it seemed that the waiter must now surely come to his senses. But the nightmare continued. Beer could not be served. Lee aged before our eyes. A Convention and no beer. Could such things be? He decided to compromise. "Seven teas, one beer," he suggested, as one reasonable man to another. "No beer." said the waiter, a man of inflexible will. Lee was suddenly a broken fan. Obviously THEY had struck. "Seven teas," he muttered, and started to reel up the stairs. He had the look of an aristocrat climbing into tumbril, his world crashed into fragments around him. The waiter, like Mrs. O'Leary's cow in the Great Fire of Chicago, obviously felt dimly that some terrible catastrophe had occurred for which he bore some responsibility. In the only way he knew, the wretched man tried to make amends. "Do you not want tea, sir?" he asked. This was too much for Lee. This was the last ton of straw. His mind snapped under the strain. "Tea!" he screamed hysterically. "Tea. Ha ha ha," he laughed maniacally. "No! I'm a tea-totaller. I'm a tea-totaller!" And so on up the stairs. Poor Lee. We shall not look upon his like again. Until the end he was faithful to the great Ghod Bheer. May we adherents of another faith be capable of such devotion to Roscoe.

In Forry's hotel room we made Lee as comfortable as we could and distributed ourselves about the chairs and beds. I don't remember much of what we talked about and indeed there wasn't much time because Bill Temple and us three had to leave very soon to catch the last subway train. We were perfectly willing to walk the 5 or 6 miles to where we were staying, but we hadn't the slightest idea of how to get there. In London we would go underground at one subway station and come up at another, and then we were all right, but we hadn't the slightest idea what direction we had come from, nor what lay between.

I do remember all the same discussing with John Benyon Harris the retitling job done by Wollheim on his story, "No Place Like Earth." Wollheim had changed this to "Tyrant and Slavegirl On Planet Venus." I'd wondered what on planet earth Harris had thought about this, and apparently it wasn't much. I remember, too, that Forry nearly disrupt the Slant staff by throwing on the bed between James White and Bob Shaw a Dollens Portfolio, "for the Slant artist." Since they were both artists an ugly scene was only averted by my generously taking custody of the portfolio myself and promising that they could both look at it as often as they liked. Such is my selfless devotion to my staff. I want Slant to be a happy magazine.

Far too soon we had to make a wild rush for the subway station. It was unlit when we arrived, the ticket booths were closed, and the elevators weren't working. However, the stairs were, and we dashed down them faster than light, hoping to go backwards in time. All that happened was that my suitcase acquired infinite mass, but finally we arrived at a dim platform in the bowels of the earth. Not a motion was to be seen, only a dark figure pacing up and down in the distance. After ten minutes James decided to ask him if there was another train tonight. We saw him approach the stranger and engage him in animated conversation. After about twenty minutes he came back and told us that he didn't know. Apparently however, he had told James the story of his life -- people have a habit of doing this with James -- and it turned out he came from Iceland. Bob said it was no wonder he was so familiar with James -- he must be the one who has been getting all our mail. We once had a letter redirected from Iceland, you know. It was stamped "Try Ireland". Stamped, you notice; it must be happening all the time.

Eventually a train came along. It must have been the last train very late or the first train very early.

The next night there was supposed to be a sort of hangover session at a pub in Holborn, but most people had already gone home and very few turned up. Forry Ackerman was there of course, and us three, and Derek Pickles and Alan Hunter of Phantasmagoria, and Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer and J.M.Rosenblum. All the chronic fans. I got some material from Rosenblum for my forthcoming history of British Fandom, "The Immortal Teacup", and I had a long talk with Pickles about faneds' problems.

Just before closing time we bought some bottles of Guinness and beer and soda water and took them up to the Epicentre. The soda water was for James, who made a beast of himself with the stuff in London. Glass after glass of the raw liquid he would toss down with wild abandon. I pointed out to him what dangerous stuff it was -- after all, carbon monoxide will do for you in five minutes, and it's only CO. Soda water is CO, twice as bad.

When we got in we had a job at first to pry Bob away from a book he had found-"Of Worlds Beyond", "The science of science fiction writing." However he was forcibly
restrained from dashing off a 100,000 word novel in van Vogt's recommended 800
word episodes, and we talked well into the morning. It's funny, but of all that I
can only remember one piece of dialogue.

James: "Have you got your article for Phantas ready to see yet? Bob: "Only in crude and unintelligible form".

James: "Well, they printed it that way last time."

For some reason this seemed very funny at the time partly because Bob didn't get the point at all, and partly because it was so unlike James. He is usually the straight man in the trio, a big quiet chap, though occasionally he does come off with some devastating remark. The three of us seem to have acquired somewhat of a reputation for wit at the Epicentre, though when we did say something we thought clever it never seemed to go down as well as the ordinary give and take of a Slant editorial conference. The truth is that we are not clever at all, but that this Irish accent we are supposed to have gives us a flying start. Actually Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke are about the two most intelligent fans we have met yet, as well as two of the nicest. They make a wonderful combination. Ken (editor of Nirvana) is dark and impetuous of manner, with a wonderfully wacky sense of humor. I remember the time he invented the steam engine. We were all sitting in the kitchen before supper when the kettle started to boil. The lid jumped up and down at a tremendous rate. Ken looked at it for a while and then said thoughtfully, "You know, there must be a way to harness all that energy... " But probably that would only sound funny if you had been there. Vince Clarke is tall and fairly thin, with a very round head. He looks like a rather distinguished toffee apple. He talks with a slow drawl but on paper he is pungent and brilliant. His fanzine (SF News) contains some of the cleverest writing in fandom, very subtle and elusive, rather like my own stuff at times, only better.

But I'm getting nostalgic, as I usually do when I think about the times we had at the Epicentre, and anyhow Ken and Vince will be over here later in the summer. There will be quite a lot of activity in Belfast this year -- Forry Ackerman and Poul Anderson are also expected -- and probably you'll hear some thing about all that later. In the meantime I've now come to the end of the Convention Report. We all had a grand time. Sometime it might happen, though I don't see how, that I might attend an American Convention and see how it should be done, but even if yours are only half as much fun as ours you'll find it very worth while. Go to the NOLACON and see. I only wish I could be there, too.

### (Continued from page 65)

time you've paced the length of it you're in the bathroom -- then you know what to do with it. There are great advantages in this paper. No trouble with changing sheets, you just tuck one end into the machine and type until exhaustion sets in. I suppose you could even give the end a twist and join it to the beginning and type on both sides without taking it out of the machine. But then this has already been done by Ken BeAle who published a zine called Mobius. I'll bet he called it "The One-Sided Fanzine".

Talking of being one-sided, here's a letter from Eva Firestone which is worrying me a bit. She is sore at the flippant way I talk about the N3F. She is very sore.

Among the indignant things she says is that "the few of us who have been trying our damnedest to give our best service deserve something else besides ridicule by inactive members." She called me an armchair critic. (I have the highest possible opinion of armchairs.) Seriously, I agree that N3F is a very worthy organization, and I respect the people who work hard for it. (My own interests don't run to organizing people but I do give Slant free to all N3F members in Europe, which is more than some of their own fan-eds do.) But I don't for the life of me see any harm in poking a little amiable fun at it occasionally. In fact it's good for the organization that inefficiency should be publicly criticised, since the ordinary members mightn't bother to complain or might even be ignored. (Are you going to jump on Redd Boggs too, Eva, because he said he didn't get FanSpeak either?) Besides, it's all publicity.

No, I don't feel at all guilty about pulling N3F's leg, but something else Eva says has me covered with confusion. She quotes something I wrote about "all the old women of fandom". Is my face red? I ask you all, isn't it obvious I just meant stuffy fans, not actual elderly ladies! Gorsh, I hope it is. I never thought of anything different.

Then here's a letter from Pat Eaton, who pulls me up for making "dirty digs" at Amazing. (Who would be a columnist? I thought there couldn't have been a safer target.) Pat says, "Amazing may not be the best promag on the market (I'll bet that's a weight off Mr. Gold's mind.) but it certainly isn't the worst, not by a long shot." Wait a minute, Pat. Let me guess. Is the long shot called Fantastic Adventures? Since Browne has admitted he intends to run "cowboy-action" stories, and we all think they are trash, I don't see any harm in saying so. And even if Browne were trying to turn out a good of mag I'm not conceited as to think that this column would make a difference of even one copy in his net sales. Pat also defends Browne over the "slick" forcast business. Well, Pat, Browne started this by bringing his big guns to bear on little fan columnists who print inaccurate information. How does he know they didn't think it was just as true at the time as Browne thought his was? And another thing. Everyone knows that hundreds of trusting fans took out longterm subs to Amazing on the strength of Browne's promises. Have they ever been offered their money back? And, incidently, what happened to all those stories by top authors he was supposed to have ready?

Then there's a heap of other unanswered letters from people like Eric Frank Russell, Henry Kuttner, Poul Anderson, Bertram Chandler and Max Keasler (see how casually I throw all these big names about? I hope you're impressed all to hell) but they're hidden under a pile of unread mags. Here's SF Quarterly for instance, with a most extraordinary advertisement on the back. A picture of a young man leering at a girl in a nightdress, with the caption, "Want the thrill of imposing your will in another? Try Hypnotism. This amazing technique gives full personal satisfaction." Well, well. I wonder do they know that, legally speaking, this amounts to incitement to rape?

And here's the latest National Fantasy Fan. I see they voted Hoffman best faned

of 1950. My opinion of N3F goes up with a bound. This is the most sensible thing they've ever done. If I had got a ballot paper (I'm sorry, Eva, I just didn't) there'd have been another vote for Iee.

Finally, here's a gleaming Kromekote-plate Wastebasket, from Vernon McCain. It was no surprise to me that when McCain settled down in the West his zine went printed. They are wonderful printers out there. I never used to like western movies until I started printing, and now you can't tear me away from them. Some day I hope to find out how they do it. The other night for instance I saw one solitary compositor at the point of a gun, set up a whole issue of the Arizona Globe and run it off in less time than it took to rob a stagecoach. Unfortunately they didn't show you him actually at work, but it must have been quite a sight to see him pick up that type. I suppose the knack comes from having to be quick on the draw. {Mebbe he used a bit of boiler plate. -Leeh} Anyhow, Wastebasket is a beautifully printed job, and well worth reading too. There's too pieces by Hoffman, for instance, though one of them is not quite up to his usual standard:almost any genius could have written it; and lots of other good material. Ask Vernon for your free copy.

Well, I seem to have written a sort of column after all, which is all for the best. It's like the mimeoed edition the London Times published during the General Strike — not worth much but it keeps up the tradition. I'll be able to say," Yes, of course I've been writing the Harp every month since March 1951. Don't trip over my beard as you go out."

### <u>Installment</u> 6, Quandry 13, August-September 1951.

I had a letter the other day from Chuch Harris, after he got the Q with the first few chords of "The Harp In England". "I got Quandry," he says, "Decent of you to let Lee get a word in edgeways." Hummmm. I wonder what he'll say when he sees the next issue, especially if Lee has wedged all the rest of the Convertion Report into it. How did it happen that I, the laziest fan writer that ever panned a prozine, took up such an indecent amount of space in what had been your favourite fanzine? I'll tell you, Way back in the mists of antiquity Lee started muttering about this annish of his. He even took to putting the deadline on the flaps of his envelopes as if he had tripped over it on the way to the mailbox. At that time it was so far ahead I viewed it with the same courageous equanimity as I do the dissolution of the universe, but as the months went by I began to get nervous. I mean, this was important. This annish was going to be a big thing, the sort of thing you tell your grandchildren about, providing they haven't already learned it at school. Here was the great event looming near and I hadn't a wise cracked. I was as worried as a sheep in a wolf-pen.

Then the solution came to me in a flash. It had been a long time coming, but I still thought it was pretty hot. (It must have been a thermos flash.) Why not do a Convention report? Through some slip up on the part of the authorities the Convention was taking place in the lull between issues of Slant, there wasn't another British zine with the space to devote to it, and surely if I liked to read about American Conventions they might like to read about ours. It was difficult, because you can't make a convention sound as interesting to strangers as you can to people who had been there or knew people who had, but I done my best. I covered the Convention as thoroughly as scum covers a pond, and sank back with relief.

But one day I came to my senses with a jerk. Bob Shaw was the jerk's name, the fiend whose cartoon of me in QlO was part of an odious plot to oust me from my position as Ireland's No.1 Fan and drive Ralph Rayburn Phillips out of business. "Bob," I says, "I am a silly columnist. What number is the annish of Quandry?"

"Thirteen. Of course," said Bob, "Any fool knows that." Obviously, he was right. A catastrophe! I had done my annish piece for No. 12 instead of No. 13, and left myself completely in the lurch. Well, in a warm summer like this a lurch is not a thing you want to stay in too long, so I climbed out and began racking my brains with an old luggage rack I happened to have. It used to belong to an Uncle of Bob's who worked in the Tramway Depot and had a habit of taking things home with him. One night someone rang a bell in the street and the whole house moved off, with Bob's uncle leaning despairingly out of the first floor window. But that's another story. It seems a bit unfair that I should have to do two annish pieces in succession -- you'd think this was some zine like Talisman where every issue is an annish -- but it had to be done.

Now I didn't know, in fact I still don't, whether Lee has saved some of the Con report for this issue. If he has, I only hope it keeps in this hot weather. Anyhow I figured the best thing to write would be something that could be cut down to size without impairing its artistic unity (Haw!). But I'm damned if I can think of a lot of little self-contained pieces like those in "File 13". It's a mystery to me how Redd does it, selecting one topic, polishing it off with a few well-chosen and sensible words, and stepping over the body on to the next. I could start with a topic all right, like John W. Campbell or something, but I'd be liable to finish up seventeen pages later burbling about something that has no connection with him at all, like Mrs. G.O. Smith. The trouble is I keep being reminded of things.

Finally I cast my mind back to a parcel of old fmz I got recently from oldtime BNF, Mike Rosenblum. And incidently I want to sound a word of warning here. Never cast your mind about recklessly like that, especially where there are old fmz lying around. I got mine simply covered in dust, and for some reason that I don't like to think about, the only thing that will clean it is a vacuum cleaner. However I came up with a dusty answer to my problem. It was part of an editorial in the second annish of Novae Terrae, about what the readers liked most.

"Some liked the news and interviews and articles; they liked the articles about magazines, about philosophy, but most of all they liked the articles about fans. They liked to read about fans: about fans in London, fans in Leeds, in Liverpool, in New York, in Los Angeles."

Now this seems to me to be very true. I like reading about Conventions, I go there mainly to find out what other fans are like, and if I can't meet fans personally the next best thing is to read about the day to day fan life of Sneary or Boggs or Hof man -- what letters they get, whom they write to, what fanzines they read and so on why not do a survey of one week of my own activity? I could call it "Mess-Observation Report", or "A Week in the Life of an Actifan". So for two weeks I made notes of all the letters I got, all the replies I sent, and everything I read. Now, looking at all that information I hardly know what to do with it. I see, for implance, that I got 32 letters and 13 fmz. but I only wrote half a dozen letters. And What's one of the snags. What with a couple of tennis tournaments my fanning is even feebler than the usual summer level. Another snag is that the American mail ampires in batches and some days nothing happens at all. So I think the best thing to do is pick a few specimen days and tell you about them. If I know anything about myself I will digress all over the place so it won't be so different from an ordinary column, but I will still like to see someone do a proper detailed analysis of a week's fulltime fan activity.

Saturday, 23rd June, 1951. Letters from Henry Burwell, Battell Loomis, and the July ASF. I might have realized this was no ordinary day. In the first place this was the day of our tennis club's annual garden fete, and it wasn't raining. Definitely, THEY had slipped up. In the second place the July ASF arrived only

three days after publication date. Not only that, but it had some good stories. It's lucky I didn't read them all at once. I would never have got over the shock of finding that they were all good. What happened? No cheap political propaganda, no dianetics, no Sprague de Camp potboilers, no third rate imitations of second rate George O. Smith -- just good science fiction. On top of that, one of the letters in "Brass Tacks" actually looked as if it hadn't been written by Campbell. Can such things be?

Henry Burwell wanted permission to reprint from Slant in his Science Fiction Digest and since he said he had written before without a reply (I never got it) I answered him immediately after lunch and gave him the go ahead. Then I put Batell's letter regretfully on the file to wait another day and went around to help with the garden fete, the organizers of which were completely demoralized by the sunshine. I remember noticing that Batell wanted to know where I sold (what egoboo!) and whether I had any pen names. Well, no, not really. I have an old steel pen I call "His Nibs" but the fountain pens have no names at all. When I want one I just shout and they come running.

Round about half past six that evening I was sitting outside in my slippers -- sometimes I wish I could afford a chair -- when a telegram boy arrived carrying, of all things, a telegram. I opened it. It seemed the only thing to do,

MEET ME GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY STATION GLENGALL STREET 7:40 THIS EVENING BRITISH EUROPEAN AIRWAYS TERMINAL FORRY

"Steady now", I said to myself and clambered down off the roof. I dashed through the front door to show the telegram to Madeleine. I think she suspected the moment she saw me that something was up. Feminine intuition I suppose, or it may have been the fragments of wood and glass hanging around my neck. I really should have remembered to open that door first. If you have ever seen a woman who has just been told to expect an important visitor in less than two hours you'll know what happened next. I stepped hastily out of the path of the blur of motion and through the back door. (I lose more doors that way!) Then I leaped onto my bicycle and tore off to borrow some morey from my father and order a taxi. Don't think I spend my life ordering taxis -- there was a strike of public transport at the time. Don't ask me how they knew Forry Ackerman was coming. Then I went back to the house: it was vibrating rapidly like a power station. There were all sorts of things to be done, apart from moving all the pigs out of the living room. I won't bore you with the complications -- I haven't decided yet just what else I will bore you with -but at the time it seemed to me that I had spent the greater part of my life knocking beds to pieces, carrying them up and down stairs, and putting them together again. It was a scene of utter chaos and indescribable confusion, something like the subscription Department of Galaxy.

Finally the taxi came and at exactly 7:41 I found the World's No.1 Fan standing quietly in the middle of the railroad station, like a petrified Forrest. I brought him home in triumph and left him with a copy of Quandry 11 while I mounted my rusty steed once more to send telegrams to James and Bob. I thought of telephoning them, but it would have been rather difficult since none of us happens to have a telephone. I found they couldn't be reached that night so I told them to come early the next morning and went back to Forry. Yes, Iee, I got a distinct impression that he liked Quandry. At any rate the first thing he asked me when I got back was whether he could get his suit cleaned and pressed. I looked blank, and he explained that he had got it all dusty from rolling about on the floor. And the Irish are supposed to have a reputation for making extravagant compliments. As far as I can see the Americans are way ahead of us. For instance Forry told us later about one Dr. Keller paid to his wife. They were both seeing the Grand Canyon for the first

time. It was a romantic and impressive sight. "You know" said Keller, "when God had made the world he thought it needed something like the Grand Canyon: so he just scored his thumbnail across it and made all this." He paused and looked at his wife. "But," he said, "when God made you, dear, he had to use both hands." I thought that was perfectly charming, and I should imagine the Kellers are very happily married. It will take more than diametics to break up that home.

James and Bob arrived about ten o'clock the next morning and stayed for lunch and tea. Whether through delayed airsickness from his first flight or some mutated virus, Forry wasn't feeling too well, for which we all felt unreasonably guilty, but he didn't let it get him down. He revealed an unexpected talent for mimicy and his impersonations of various fans were delicious. He also passed on a lot of interesting gossip, parts of which will probably be popping up in this column eventually. Incidently I found the reason for that habit I mentioned he had of going "Mmmmmm?". Apparently he had great difficulty in understanding what people were saying and didn't want to be asking them all the time to repeat themselves. We were a bit surprised at this: after all, we only talk about four times as fast as he does and of course as I told you we have no accent at all.

In the afternoon I showed him my magnificent collection of books and magazines, which covers the whole field of science-fiction from A to B. It must have taken all of two minutes. Then, showing a laudable freedom from envy, Forry wrote a couple of little commemorative pieces for the next Slant, and we set up one of them and ran off a proof. The other was an unbelievably complicated pun which we didn't feel strong enough to tackle just then. Doubtless after time has exercised its healing influence we will be able to face it again. It was a real punster's pun, as methylalcohol is a drinker's drink. We thought it was wonderful, but then we are funny that way, or at least try to be. It was built up for about 150 words and then crashed about your ears with horrifying uninevitability.

Not quite 24 hours after he arrived Forry had to fly back to Edinburgh. It seemed an awfully long way to come for such a short visit, but we thought it was worth every penny of Forry's money. I only hope he thought so too.

Monday, 25th June, 1951. Letters from Eva Firestone, Russell Watkins, Max Keasler, Alfred Babcock, and four new subbers. Also Fan Variety, Committeeman, Adozine and a review copy of F.G. Rayer's new book. Also two back numbers of Sinisterra from G.M.Carr and a copy of the Life article from Eva.

After the mere trickle of mail last week all this is very pleasant. A dam must have broken somewhere. Sometimes I suspect the Post Office of deliberately holding up my mail, but I must admit they're not nearly as bad as they used to be. Last year for instance they had a habit of not giving me anything for days, and then ostentatiously sending up their parcels van with an enormous bundle, tied up with rope in a very pointed manner, and containing an extraordinary collection of stuff: letters and fanzines and prozines, and parcels and postcards and circulars and books — everything but a medical certificate from the mailman. However I refused to take the hint and they stopped this childish game.

I was rather pleased to get the Life article. Thousands of people had written to tell me about it, but everyone of them said that since thousands of people would be sending me the article itself themselves weren't going to bother. Everyone, that is, except Eva Firestone and Manly Banister, bless them. I see that there is right enough a plug for Slant, not to mention an oblique reference to one of our articles, but if Life thinks I'm going to return the plug they've got another think coming. Their review of fandom is far too slipshod. It's friendly, I agree, but they've got half their facts and most of their terms wrong, as journalists always

seem to do. When you see the botch newspapers and magazines make of reporting something you know about, you wonder how much reliance can be placed in their reports of things you can't check. However, James is pleased enough with Life. They have reproduced part of one of his linocuts, so he can now say that his work has appeared in Life.

Russell Watkins' letter is in reply to one of mine and to the "Let's Clean Up Watkins" piece I had in Q ll. He is so amiable about it that I feel quite a heel, especially since I'm just now finding out that Merwin had jumped on him at the same time in "The Frying Pan". Everybody wants to get into the act! I'm afraid I'm not cut out to be one of those fearless vicious columnists, relentlessly exposing this and abusing that, It's a pity, because insulting people is an awfully easy way to write an interesting column, but I just haven't got what it takes to be violently rude to well-meaning people. In fact I don't think I even want it. I hand the banner back to Laney.

Scraping some coals of fire off my head, I notice that Watkins gently suggests I should have said in Q what I said in my letter, that I can see his point of view. Very well, Russell, I can. I can see everyone's point of view, but I disagree with yours. I can see that some people are obviously mortally offended by sex in fmz, just as some are allergic to butter, but I would be very much annoyed to see anyone getting up an agitation to ban butter altogether -- even though some of it isn't the very best butter. No one is forcing the stuff on them, so let them keep their dietetic peculiarities to themselves. I think sex is just as wholesome an invention as butter, and a lot more fun. It does no harm to anyone, which is more than you can say for most human activities. The fear these pornography-haters seem to have is that some young fan might get all steamed up after reading Fanvariety and dash out and rape somebody. You might as well suggest that whodunits encourage people to murder.

Talking about filty fanzines, I see that an even deadlier blow has just been struck by Adozine. It runs an advertisement from a Monsieur Ziegler of Paris offering sexy magazines like Paris Cocktail, Paris Sex Appeal, La Vie Parisienne, Paris Hollywood etc direct to fandom. Most of these I know, and as part of my service to my readers I might warn them that there is nothing worth reading in any of them, except of course, La Vie Parisienne, which has some amusing articles, in French of course, in the same vein of innocent naughtiness as the Folies Bergere. Gay, pleasant light-hearted stuff, with none of the grim seriousness of purpose which extinguishes most pornography in English. But the other magazines are very dull to read. The pictures aren't bad, though they're all what is known in the trade as 'retouched', a custom which probably causes more nervous breakdowns among innocent young bridegrooms than anything else in contemporary civilization. However I have written to M. Ziegler to see just what he has -- purely in my capacity as a conscientious columnist of course -- and I'll let you know how I make cut. If this stuff ever gets a wide circulation in fandom, however, I'm afraid it will ruin Rotsler. People will begin to make comparisons and Rotsler's women are, frankly, impossible. I'm not sure whether I'm sorry or not about that, but there it is.

If there's one development in fandom these days that should be encouraged it's this new habit of authors sending free review copies of their books to fanzines. I suppose it's a symptom of the growing importance of fandom. I didn't realize how big the growth was till I read Harry Warner's article in Fanvariety and learned that the biggest circulation of those famous prewar fmz was only about 40. It's a very unfortunate fanzine these days that has a circulation like that. Even in my fan lifetime I've seen the influence of fanzines growing. For instance as far as I know Quandry has a circulation of nearly twice that of Spacewarp. However, I was saying that this new practice of authors should be encouraged, and so if Lee doesn't

mind I'll review Rayer's book here as well as in Slant: I'd like to anyway since I'm glad to be able to recommend it.

"Tomorrow Sometimes Comes", by F.G.Rayer. Published by Home and Van Thal. His publishers have done well by Mr. Rayer; nice binding, good typography and an excellent dust-jacket by Clothier of New Worlds. Evidently for your first novel there's no place like Home and Van Thal. The story itself owes something to van Vogt, but pays it back with interest -- plenty of interest. The principal is one Mantley Rawson who happens to be under one of the new type anaesthetics when atomic war starts and lies in suspended animation under the hospital ruins while our civilization breaks up and a new one starts to form. The first person he meets greets him with a phrase which is obviously an accepted ritual, "Cursed be the name of Mantley Rawson." Even without this fist-hook, Mr. Rayer would have no difficulty in drawing you into his plot of the relationship between the men of the new civilization and the vast electronic brain known as the Mens Magna. This may seem strongly reminiscent of vanVogt's Game Machine, but Rayer brings an original approach to the theme and his treatment is very different from that of the master of obfuscation. Not only is his style cursive as opposed to van Vogt's 800 word flashes, but he introduces no complications not essential to the narrative. The standard of writing is high, and some of the scenes are quite moving. At no place does the plot stand still either. Altogether a very good buy, especially at the low price the devaluation of the pound makes available to American readers.

Thursday, 28th June, 1951. No mail at all the last two days, except Postmor tem on Fanscient from Don Day. Well, that's one way to get rid of your old back numbers. Today there was a postcard from Charles Lee Riddle, letters from Chuck Harris and another new subber, and a circular from Alan Hunter about the new Fantasy Artists Group. Also the poetry mag La Petite and my own copy of Q ll. Just in case there is some suspicious person suspecting that everything in this column isn't one hundred percent accurate, the copy of Q ll I showed to Forry Ackerman belonged to Bob Shaw. I must say I don't like the look of this. If Shaw has got control over the Post Office I fear for my position as Ireland's No.1 Fan.

Riddle's postcard had on the front a picture of a beautiful Hawaiian girl in the traditional lack of costume. I expect there's a message from Riddle or something on the back.

The new sub was one of those beautiful 25 cent pieces. Just fancy, real hard currency. I have \$2.75 now which I keep in a little box. Every now and then I take it out and gloat over it. Not only is it so precious that I'll probably never be able to make up my mind exactly what to do with it, but it has the charm of forbidden fruit. Apparently you're not supposed to get dollars through the mails, and every now and then the Post Office opens one of my letters -- Shaw's agents again, I suppose -- and seal it again with a label marked "Customs and Currency Control". But they've never found anything yet.

Is Petite is a curious little mag, edited by Genevieve Stephens and mimeographed in white ink on black paper. Ordinarily I don't care much for amateur poetry but then I get this mag for nothing, and I have no objection at all to free verse. Here's an intriguing little thing by one Clayton Hoff.

Evening Is A Lot Of Work

The night is shovelled slowly on the world and patted down very carefully into all

the little crevices
and then the workmen
stand back
to light cigarettes
and chew the fat
while the man in charge
looks on and puffs
on a big black cigar
we call the moon.

### Another new cosmology!

Chuck Harris's letter was the one that started off this column, but don't hold that against him. Chuck is an English fan who writes some of the best letters in fandom: they have to be or no one would go through the soul searing experience of trying to read them. Though I keep telling him his writing wouldn't be so bad if he would only remember to move his pen instead of pulling the paper to and fro underneath it. But, as if to show that there is some unseen power working for righteousness, Chuck has recently acquired a typewriter: obviously the National Health Service has decided it is a more economical proposition to buy him one than to supply all his correspondents with free spectacles. No longer will Chuck's friends wonder who has been mailing them maps.

Monday, 3rd July, 1951. A most amiable and pleasant letter from Rick Sneary, from whom I hadn't heard for some time. Rick usually writes a good letter but this is a masterpiece in its quiet way, so casual-seeming does he make his introduction of the subject of N3F. No wonder he is President: Truman himself could take a lesson or two from him. He doesn't even threaten to come over and punch my nose. Instead he merely suggests gently that I might have turned over my criticisms to him instead of airing them in public. Well, of course he's quite right. All I can say is that I did mention them to two other people who seemed at the time to be mixed up in N3F. Maybe they were just mixed up. period. At any rate they immediately burst forth into a fury of inactivity, The trouble with N3F, as Rick more or less admits, is that it is in danger of becoming a sort of bureaucracy, with no one bureaucrat fully aware of what the other is not doing. Rick makes the point that it is a good thing to have a lot of officers because the loss of one no longer causes a complete collapse even in the highest places. Well, he's probably right, but more organizations die away slowly from lack of public interest than collapse suddenly in mid-stride.

One Louise Undershot writes from California to say that she will be in Ireland and at the suggestion of Fabun is going to look me up. That's nice. If any others of you are going to be in Ireland this year, turn left over the bridge where the boat docks and I'm the First Fan on your left. Don't whatever you do turn right: that will only take you to Bob Shaw. Ignore all those signposts — he put them up himself.

Bill Venable airmails the glad news that I have been voted by readers as the columnist they would most like to see in Fanvariety. Not the readers of Quandry, I hope and trust. I also hope he doesn't say this to everyone he wants a column from, or I'll get into trouble again for quoting people's letters. All these misgivings date back from my early struggles, and now that I am where I am today, where ever that is, at the cost of so much blood and tears and sweat and  $75\phi$  in bribes to the readers of Fv, I look back on them and resolve not to let my success go to my head. It was way back last fall when I wrote my first article for another fanzine. I wrote three of them and airmailed them off to three representative fanzines. I didn't expect any cablegrams but I did hope for a reply. But no. Weeks

dragged into months without even a rejection slip. Eventually it turned out that two of them had immediately suspended publication. Over-sensitive, obviously. The third was made of sterner stuff, and struggled on. Evidently its noble ed was trying to forgive and forget. After six months I wrote humble letters all round. The new editors of one of the zines apologized for the old one and ran the article. Another faned apologized too and assured me he had folded from purely natural causes. The third apologized for having mislaid the article and ran it. Altogether the experience was almost pure ooboge -- egoboo in reverse.

However, from things I've read here and there I gather that this sort of unhappy experience isn't as uncommon as it should be. In fact, speaking now as an editor, sometimes it seems to me that most faneds are far too inclined to think they are doing authors a favor by printing their stuff. But why on earth should anyone write something for nothing? Especially, how can a faned expect to get material of professional standards unless he offers his writers something in place of the hard cash they might get from prozines? The only thing a fanzine can offer is helpful readers' comments and criticisms, or if you like to be crude about it, egoboo. The more of this a faned can provide, the more anxious authors will be to write for him, and the better material they will turn out. The better material they turn out the more subbers the zine will get and the more egoboo the faned will be able to provide, and so on. A good zine will automatically tend to get better and a bad zine worse. The direction they go largely turns on what I might call the egoboo factor. I know I'm trespassing on the field of Master Fan-Mathematician, Lee Jacobs here, but I would define the egoboo factor as the proportion by which the faned can increase the apparent circulation of his zine in the eyes of his authors. Other things being equal an author will prefer to write for the zine with the larger circulation, but the faned can made his circulation loom larger in the eyes of his authors by extracting the maximum of egoboo from it. One way to do it is to have a large letter section, but it's not essential. For instance, Slant won't have a proper letter section until the next issue, when we're going to run a mimeoed suppliment, but we had a large egoboo factor even with a circulation of less than 200. This was because I did everything I could think of to persuade readers to write in -- competitions, short-term sub rates, offering things for sale, sending out questionnaire forms, being obscure, being controversial, writing letters with the mailing -- and when the readers had written in I would copy out all of their comments on each story and send them to the authors. I've been told I was the first faned to do this, and I can hardly believe it. It may be a lot of trouble, but surely it's worth it to get good material, and it seems to work. At any rate, I've seen not only Slant stories appearing in prozines, but Slant rejects. And a good many stories in other fmz look strangely familiar. Pardon the ostentation -- I only wanted to prove my point.

Today's new subber kindly pastes on the back of his letter a copy of our last review in Amazing. I can hardly believe it, but Phillips has done it again. In the first issue I ever sent him there was a mild little pun about my grandfather having been a printer and I having merely reverted to type. An innocuous little thing, compared to some of the monsters I have created, but it must have left a lasting impression on Phillips. In every review but one in the last two years he has quoted it. Less and less verbatim each time, but there's no doubt he got the point all right. It registered. I can just imagine Rog that first time, reading solemnly through the heap, restapling tidily the last disintegrating mimeoed crudzine, and going home to a quiet read and a smoke and then to bed. About half past four he wakes up screaming hysterically, "Reverted to type! Ha Ha Ha. Ho Ho Ho." Alarmed the neighbors send for a doctor. "Nurse, the hypodermic." At last he quiets down, save for an occasional tortured murmur, "Grandfather, printer, type." The neighbors go back to bed. But Rog is never the same again. I can tell you, I'm dead scared to made another pun in case it kills him.

held this up till today in the hope of getting an interesting late fmz to review. No fmz in the morning mail, but another interesting letter from Chuch Harris, "....Herewith Incinerations. The most disgusting fanzine I have ever read. Be sure to let me see any future issues ... Never again will I send you a 'personalized' epistle. At least I did write in ink. One day when I feel really mean I'll use my ballpoint on you. Even Bruce Lane found fault with my penmanship. Elsberry, being nicely brought up, only asked why I didn't type it. His letter was addressed to Frank Horres 90 Moxey Rd. This really hurt -- I'd written the return address in capitals... Had a letter from Derek Pickles with a N3F membership roster. Unless Willis is a pseudonym for K.F. Slater you are not a member. (I am) I will still write to you, solely because you publish Slant... my "Tomorrow Sometimes Comes" came yesterday. Wasn't bad at all (no charge for patronage.) A lot of it sounded reminiscent of vanVogt, especially the Mens Magna. This all sounds very lukewarm (Why lukewarm? Why not Matthewwarm? Is there a reason?) and actually I'm most enthusiastic about it. It's far better than "Three Sided Triangle" and "Purple Twilight", which makes it the best postwar English fantasy. Can't remember anything else I preferred to it. Galaxy should be interested in it.

Monday afternoon. Well, there's no doubt about it this time at all. Sailing along in its mimeographed majesty through the broken pane in our front door comes the third issue of Phantasmagoria. I would have preferred for the readers of Quandry to know nothing at all about this zine and vice versa because I do a column for both and I might be able to use the same jokes twice and save the wear and tear on my grey matter. Ah well. This is a special Convention Issue of Phantas (known to its deadly enemies, the London Circle, as 'Pht":') which makes it the second fanzine after Q to cover the Convention. (Though Newsscope did have a muffled report.) What are things coming to when American zines scoop British conventions? There are articles about the Con by Pickles, Bob Shaw and myself (I'm afraid Bob's is very good indeed) with excellent cartoons by Alan Hunter and Shaw., Also stories by Clive Jackson and Peter Ridley. Also attacks on me from Slater, Clarke, and Tealby to which I have replied so trenchantly that I'm beginning to have qualms. In spite of yhos this is a very good issue.

# Installment 7, Quandry 16, December 1951.

Somehow I feel I should be writing a Convention Report on the Nolacon. It's difficult when you haven't been there ('tho Newsscope did a pretty good job on the London Convention with only a copy of the official programme and a talent for extrapolation) and yet I feel that you are all snatching up your Q's with eager little cries, "Ah, more con stuff!" and then casting the magazine from you in disgust at finding that fellow Willis harping again.

So I have got to say something about the Nolacon. I could discourse about conventions generally and how it is a proof of the fundamental strength of fandom that it survives them. I mean one of the main interests of fandom is wondering what your correspondents are like and when you've found out, well that's that, even if you're not disappointed. Or I could review the Official Programme, in which I love the Outlander's advertisement. I salute the genius who wrote it, whether it's ty Moffatt or Sneary. Or I could talk about some of the things I've learned about from the first reports, like people's reactions when they found out Lee Hoffman is La Hoffman. (I'm sorry the Nolacon is over. For a few glorious months I knew something about fandom that Tucker didn't.)

But those won't help me to realize my life's ambition. I used to aim at some job that wasn't too arduous and left time for fanning, like head taster in a distillery or a manufacturer of smoked glasses for eclipses of the sun, but these are small ambitions now. What I intend to do is work so hard for the next twenty years

at my convention reports that finally I will get a job as a PROFESSIONAL CONVENTION REPORTER. No convention will be complete without a report from Willis. Even before the Convention Committee books the Hall, they will say, "First here's \$1000 for Willis's retainer." Since our family paid off our retainer long ago I shall keep the money myself and live in idle luxury for 51 weeks in the year, with nothing to do but watch the mail for bombs. I shall be the first Fulltime Fan. The only snag is that some people will probably make the same sort of nasty crack they seem to like to make at another fan who loves fandom so much he devotes his life to sf instead of coining money at some mundame occupation.

The only thing I can do here is quote a passage from an imaginary broadcast from the Nolacon I started to write for Q 14 until I found (sniff') that my presence wasn't required. It is a round table discussion on the question that what fan publishers need is a new means of reproduction. (Rotsler: 'Why, what's wrong with sex?') Banister had just announced that he had invented one when he is assassinated by two members of the studio audience who strike him on the head with an enormous weight.

Chairman (Tucker): A QUANNISH! Oh dear, his neck must be broken. Yes, his nek is

definitely folded. Who has done this dreadful deed?

Audience: Vermillion Swampwater! First Murderer: No, my name is Dick....

Tucker: Ah, A.B.Dick!

Dick: No, Private Dick of the U.S. Army Training Corps. Had a bunch

of new recruits recently and I wouldn't take the Rapp. So I deserted and set up business as a Private Eye. This is my favor-

ite pupil, Iris. Say a few words, Iris.

Tris: A few words. Tucker: Is that all?

Iris: Sure. Only reason I'm here at all is to let Willis work in that

crack about the Private Eye and his pupil.

Vince Clarke: How cornea can you get?

J.T.Oliver: Very poor taste.

Voice: Me thirds will call on you. (Me seconds are on their way to

Australia.)

Clarke: It came from that corner over there. I recognize the corn. It's

the Slant trio, Willis, White and Shaw, the Maniacal Minds.

Oliver: Let us sell our lives dearly. Don't shoot until you see the

eyes of their White.

And so on. Peace is only restored by James saying "A feather." I thought you deserved an explanation of that very recondite allusion in Fannius McCainius. James has a way of saying 'a feather' that is really out of this world. Anyone want the rest of this stirring drama?

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

A few days ago I retired from fandom. No celebrations, please, it was only for a few days while I read through a pile of old fanzines Ackerman sent me. Now I feel I'm beginning to know something about fandom. Twelve months ago I was as ignorant of fandom as a child -- hardly even knew Ed Noble was getting married -- but I am learning fast. And one of the things I'm learning is that everything I ever thought of has already been thought of by some fan in the dawn era. Latest example is an article I wrote for Vermon McCain's Wastebasket proving that the ideal title for a fanzine is a certain word I didn't thinkanyone else would have even heard of. And now I find that Joe Kennedy had a zine of that name. Death, where IS thy sting... Well, where did you see it last?

### SUSTAINING FMZ

A lot of things seem to be happening in fandom these days, and most of them to Fanvariety. Apparently N3F have decided to wash their dirty linen (no offence, Max) in public and Keasler is righteously indignant about it, especially since evidently he had already told the N3F what they could do with their sponsorship. I can see that in theory the N3F have the right of it. As an organization that's supposed to be for all fandom they can hardly sponsor a zine which some of their members, however few, object to. But did they need to make such a fuss about it? Surely, all that was necessary was quietly to drop the N3F sponsorship, especially since all it seems to involve is free plugs in TNFF. (I often wondered.) And it does no good either to suggest as G.M.Carr does in her CRY (probably in all innocence) that Fv wasn't much good anyway until Bill Venable "took it over". Fv was always an interesting zine, and for me personally...and without saying a word against Bill Venable's undoubted ability, the most interesting part of it was always Max's own wacky editorial yak-yak, I never found anything objectionable in the old-style Fv except the carelessness with which the material was stencilled and if it's to be cleaned up out of all recognition it might as well be washed up, as far as I'm concerned. Fandom needs the true Fv in all its spiciness. There should always be at least one zine in fandom that's not afraid of stamping on people's toes.

It also seems that Browne has told Rog Phillips to take one of the clubs out of the Clubhouse and beat Max's ears into his head with it. If this is true I'm disappointed in Phillips for allowing his independence to be undermined, and I think everyone in fandom whether they like Fv or not should support Max against this dictation by pro-editors. It's in our interests to do so as a matter of fact, for if Rog even mentions the name of the zine Max will be a millionaire.

#### REPERCUSSIONS

Truly it has been said, "Cast your bread on the waters and it will return after many days....soaking wet." The reverberations of that Conreport of mine have been wringing in my ears for weeks. (I mean the International Convention in London of course, not that provincial affair in New Orleans.)

The first sign I had that the Quish had hit England was a letter from Vince Clarke to my wife. "Dear Madeleine" he says (nerve!) "Just a few lines to congratulate you on your recent loss. Walt was a great guy but we always thought that one day he'd go too far. Belfast was hardly far enough... Of course, I shall bring out an issue of SF News with black borders and try to find someone to say something nice about him. This may delay publication a bit. If you'd give me some details of exactly what happened I'd be much obliged. At the moment I can see several possibilities. It might have been radio-active dust in a aSF, poisoned needles in a Galaxy, a radio controlled bomb from Mr. & Mrs. George O. Smith, a letter from Interim Newsletter with a live tarantula enclosed, a death wish from Wendayne Ackerman or an intricate curse from Bradbury. Directly I finish this note I must hurry round to stop Ted Carnell leaving for Belfast. I suppose the police have already got hold of Bob Shaw, but tell him the fans are behind him and will do all they can to engage a good lawyer. There's an American called Perry Mason who's supposed to be pretty good.

"I suppose you'll miss Walt -- one notices the absence of even the most objectionable things -- but at least you'll be able to invite your friends to the house again. Do please remember that we have a warm spot for you here -- on top of the stove. When you come, or even before, you might like to pack up the Slant press and send it here, as it seems such a waste not to make proper use of it for once...

"All the best, and don't forget the printing press.

Vincent - ('ole Toffee apple' to my friends)"

Judging by these remarks, comparing Vince to a toffee-apple seems to have cut him to the core. But no matter how candied he is, he never gives me the pip...

I did get a letter from Lyell Crane, but there was no tarantula in it. There was just a note: "Have read your article in Q 13. Sir: daggers at 50 paces." This was quite a relief, and Lyell went up considerably in my estimation.

I hear through the grapevine however that other parts of the Conreport caused "discord" among the London Circle. I'm sorry about this, but the report was accurate enough in its "cartoonlike" way, as Eric F. Russell put it. Lee quoted me a very perceptive and intelligent comment by J.T.Oliver: "I wonder how much he had to dramatize things." Well wondered, J.T.:

I hope you don't mind me letting that hack, Clarke, write part of my column. This is a very busy time here on account of we're finishing off an issue of a certain magazine whose name I daren't Say Lest A Note Talking about advertising rates is inserted by your editor.

#### FANZINE REVIEW

Journal of Science Fiction, Charles Freudenthal, Lester Fried and Ed Wood. This is the first issue of a new photo-offset mag which looks like being very interesting, if you are not too far gone in the stages of fandom to be still reading sf. Martin Gardner does a sort of literary biography of H.L.Gold, Bradbury explains where he gets his ideas and Ed Wood criticizes what he does with them. Wood's piece is much better than Bradbury's which won't surprise anyone who knows how well Wood can write or how bad Bradbury can be when he's talking about himself. But the best thing in the issue is a piece by Robert Bloch. I am beginning to be quite sure that Mr. Bloch is a genius. His only flaw is a habit of making atrocious puns. "Am I my brother's kipper" indeed! As the French say, "One man's mate is another man's poisson."

# Installment 8, Quandry 17, January 1952.

#### BOB TUCKER -- HOME WRECKER

Seemingly anyone who dares to enter fandom these days takes his wife in his hands. Think twice before you bring your wife or best girl into the field, because it is reamed by ravening wolves, and by one in particular who ravens more than anyone since Edgar Allen Poe. I refer of course to that fiend in more or less human guise — Bob Tucker, the Bluebeard of Bloomington. But let my terrible story be a warning to all innocent girls and their fenfolk.

The first human being to see every Harp is Madeleine Willis. At first I hesitated to show them to her, because after all she is only a girl and they might have been too much for her. But to my relief she did not collapse on the floor in perilous paroxysms of mirth, nor did her sides seem in any real danger of splitting. In fact my relief soon turned to dismay for she read Harp after Harp without more than an occasional grimace, just as if they were ordinary fan writings. After a hideous period of self-doubt, which should never happen to an actifan, I realized from the opinions of such highly intelligent and discriminating critics as Silverberg, Moffatt and Alpaugh, that the trouble was merely that My Wife Didn't Really Understand Me, having no sense of humor, A pity, but she has other qualities which make up for this sad defect. I forgave her.

Then one evening after I had written a Harp I noticed that she was laughing her pretty head off. "Ahah," I thought, "She has learned to appreciate the Finer Things In Life at last." I went over to see just which of the countless brilliant witticisms

which illuminate each Harp had particularly pleased her. Judge of my horror when I found it was not a Harp she was laughing at, but that by some terrible catastrophe she had stumbled on an issue of Le Zombie by the infamous Tucker!

I don't know whether any of you have heard of this Tucker. Many years ago this warped mind, who is more to be despised than pitied, stole from the Bloomington Public Library an astronomical textbook called "Studies of Heavenly Bodies" under some misapprehension as to its contents. While he was spelling out the words to himself and wondering why the Figures were so different from the ones he had expected. he chanced upon the Milne-Dirac formula for the prediction of novas. With typical low cunning he immediately applied this formula to fandom and predicted my appearance on the fannish scene. Realizing that his reputation as "No.1 Fan Humorist After Burbee" would be in danger he applied himself to a careful study of all the timetravel stories in aSF and with diabolical ingenuity and his No.2 Erector set, built himself a simple time machine. With this device he journeyed forward into time and stole copies of every fanzine published in the period 1950 to 1960, most of which consisted of course of brilliant articles by me. Returning to the squalor of Box 260 the fiend then devoted the next fifteen years of his life to copying out my articles laboriously and publishing them under his own name. The result is of course that every issue of Le Zombie and many other fanzines are replete with articles by "Tucker" which I dare not write now for fear of being accused of plagarism, though I would give my right arm to be able to write them. Obviously there was only one course open to me, and that was to buy up every copy of every issue of every fanzine in which a "Tucker" article appeared and hide them until they were forgotten. (I couldn't build a time machine myself because my collection of aSF is not complete, being still short the issue for April 1943 -- advt.)

Accordingly the attic in our house contains mountains of old fanzines and it was one of these which had fallen into Madeleine's trusting hands while she was about her simple household tasks. I dashed upstairs and verified that the sixteen bolts, 24 locks and 37 padlocks were still performing their functions. The seals were also performing. Obviously the fateful issue of Le Zombie had seeped under the door, propelled by the terrible pressure from inside. I plugged the hole so thoroughly that not even a copy of Operation Fantast could have slipped through, and went downstairs to see if our happy home could not be saved. I told Madeleine that Le Zombie was a one-shot I had turned out one evening while listening to the radio, just for practice. She looked at me with a new respect.

All seemed well until by another stroke of fate Madeleine happened to see a photograph of Tucker and realized that he was an actual person. (I use the term loosely of course.) She seemed to be impressed. I should explain that this Tucker Thing, although indescribably hideous — his hands brush the ground when he walks — has some knowledge of photography and is able to distort his photographs so as to make him assume some semblance of humanity and even to appear handsome in a deprayed sort of way.

The situation was fraught with danger and every day it got fraughter and fraughter. Madeleine took to pouncing on every fanzine that came into the house looking for Tuckerstuff. All wifely loyalty was forgotten in her insatiable craving for Tuckeriana. If a poll had been held in our house for No. 1 Fan Writer, I tremble to think what the result would be, because I would have to vote for Vince Clarke. Her condition deteriorated from day to day. Her pupils twitched, her hands were dilated. She showed all the symptoms of becoming one of those pitiful wrecks of humanity, another J.T. Oliver, one of the living dead — a Tucker addict!

At last I realized there was only one way to save her. I went upstairs and locked myself in the front attic. Hour after hour I toiled, in perpetual danger from overhanging slopes of fanzines, expecting every moment to be my next. After several days

I staggered out with a small handful of Le Zombies which I buried in the front garden. Then I told Madeleine to prepare herself for a shock and brought her into the front attic. She threw herself on the masses of fanzines with pitiful little cries of "Tucker; Tucker;" Then....

It was heart-rending, but it had been the only way. Every one of those thousands upon thousands of fanzines left in the attic contained news or gossip about one of Tucker's alleged deaths, every report of which had been devoutly believed as if to illustrate the triumph of hope over experience. The sheer weight of evidence convinced her. Tucker was dead. She never took any interest in the front attic again, after she was dissuaded from making a great funeral pyre of the fanzines and throwing herself on top of it. It was this thought of hers that inspired Francis Ashton's novel "Alas That Great Suttee".

Things returned to normal in our home, until recently an even more horrible menace has reared its head. I was standing at the window looking at the luxuriant crop of corn which had so unaccountably appeared in our front garden when I heard Madeleine snigger. I thought nothing of it: I knew she was reading Fanvariety and if you can't snigger over Fv what can you snigger over: besides she is after all a married woman. Little did I know what was going to happen before that night was out. That very evening she wrote a fan letter to Max Keasler! I am at my wits end. To fall under the spell of Max Keasler, what a terrible fate. And what a terrible spell. And I simply cannot convince her that Keasler is dead, even with the help of GMCarr. All I can do is warn Keasler that if he replies to Madeleine's letter I will sue for divorce and cite him as correspondent.

#### DEPARTMENT OF LOFTY AMBITIONS

"I am working night and day to line up a competent staff of reviewers who will READ each issue of the magazine they are to review... I'll get to the mags that are a couple of months old, and gradually to the older ones until every issue of every stf and fantasy magazine ever published has been reviewed." --R.J.Banks in Utopian.

#### ATTA CAMPBELL!

To a non-fan there won't seem anything so very extraordinary about the issue of the British prozine Authentic SF published on Dec. 15th. The full length novel by editor H.J. Campbell, is a simple story about how a great scientist and leader of men -- a sort of cross between Einstein and Amundsen -- fights for years in behalf of the dream of space flight with the support of a loyal band of disciples, finally succeeds in getting a space ship built, invites the disciples to Ecuador to see him off, making a successful flight to the moon and after some complications necessitatedby the conduct of a member of the crew and the exigencies of plot makes a successful flight back. It's a pleasant sort of story, very competently written. Actually it was dashed off in 7 days, but it certainly doesn't look it. But then Campbell is a sort of nova in British sf publishing and looks like being as important here as his namesake in America. He's certainly a remarkable man, and to produce a novel of this class in that time is quite a tour de force. On the technical end, even, I noticed only one flaw and that was when the crew, preparing to decelerate towards the moon, decide that "This time the mattresses will have to be on the ceiling, because the rocket will come down tail first." I'm afraid the crew will come down tail first long before the rocket does, and the flaw will strike them very suddenly. Another departure from the standard space ship practice is that there positively no girl stow-away. Nothing so juvenile as that. There is a girl, of course, but this warmhearted creature has volunteered to go with the party in case they are stranded on the moon without enough fuel to go back but capable of existing for some months until the food runs out. The fuel may be exhausted, but

she feels that the crew won't, and that she may be able to help them while away the lonely hours -- presumably not by making a fourth at bridge. A very laudable thought, this honeymoon idea, though she wouldn't be the first girl to experience the consequences of not being able to walk back when her boy friend ran out of petrol.

But to the non-fan this novel is merely one of the better efforts of Authentic which has been presenting — at least in Campbell's own novels — a series of honest and well-written novels aimed primarily at the newcomer to sf. To British fandom it is much more. In fact there has never been anything quite like it in the history of fandom. Joe Gibson used fan names in one of his recent prozine stories, but Campbell uses fans. The great scientist is our own Arthur Clarke, thinly disguised as "Atah Cark", and the devoted band of followers are the London Circle appearing as themselves under the leadership of Sed Linell (Ted Carnell). Once all this dawns on you the book becomes a joy to read, an utter treasure house of fan mythology. It's fascinating enough to see contemporary events in fandom like the Clarke-Morley controversy in the Picture Post dealt with like this...

"But Atah had faith. Maybe that's what kept him going over all the years of frustration and ridicule. Like when that other 'scientist' back in '51 reckoned that Atah didn't know as much as he said he did. Reckoned in print too. But when the world's experts in astronomy and astronautics mildly pointed out that Atah knew much more than he said he did, the other man climbed down -- and Atah climbed up. It happened every now and then."

... but when our sophisticated London Circle romps onto the launching site like a troop of Boy Scouts ("They're good boys" says Atah Cark) it becomes excruciatingly funny to anyone who knows that hardbitten bunch of charming loafers. Campbell is, seriously, probably more right in this estimation of Arthur Clarke than British fandom will admit after pulling his leg good humoredly for so many years, and the same applies to the London Circle as far as the Belfast Triangle is concerned. But for heavens sake don't tell them I said that. As self-appointed scourge of the Circle it fills me with fiendish glee to read of them in Ecuador with this deified Ego Clarke. How this Beaver Patrol sets to with a will under Scoutmaster Sed Linell and are awfully helpful ("Thirty happy faces, sixty willing hands...Great lads, they were") and how they have a moving little ceremony where they present Atah with a simply lovely chronometer which they had all clubbed together to buy out of their pocket money and how that must have been Just What Atah Wanted (the BIS seem to have forgotten to put one in the ship, or maybe they had seen the subscription list going round) and how he hadn't just known what to say and had just stood there and how they all carried him back to the refectory and "made him drink ten glasses of orangeade in quick succession" and how Atah takes care of the chronometer as if it were the most precious thing on earth -- or rather moon -- all through the excitement when the whole outing is nearly spoiled by a horrid cynical bespectacled fellow who hates Atah Cark and doesn't really believe in space flight and has to be done away with in the end. And who I like to think is really William F. Temple carrying his 'feud' with Clarke to the bitter end.

I got a review copy of this Authentic as early as the middle of November, and had the unspeakable joy of telling William F. Temple all about it. He wrote: "I shocked Bert Campbell at the pub by hissing 'The Moon may be Heaven, but there'll be Hell to pay when it comes out.' His jaw dropped and his beard with it. He'd been keeping it all dark -- he thought. I tried to shock Atah Cark too, but that, of course, was impossible. He'd read the book. In fact, I rather suspect he wrote it. I have a theory that H.J. Campbell is just one of Arthur's pseudonyms, and if one suddenly yanked Bert's beard off...I'll try it next Thursday, and let you know. Perhaps through a luminous trumpet."

Naturally the Belfast Triangle presented its compliments to the London Circle

and asked if it started to contribute towards Mr. Clarke's chronometer now could it come to Ecuador too, please. No reply has yet been received to this demarche, but a little Bert tells me that we haven't seen the last of this immortalization of fans in the pages of Authentic.

#### PAGING VERNON McCAIN

I've just received the following letter from Ted Tubb of the London Circle: "I was reading the big issue of Quandry the other day and...something rocked me to my toenails. From "The Harp In England" you mention a certain Mr. McCain as having vetted Bradbury's stuff, and allowed him to sell it for a mere ten percent. Now what is the truth about Bradbury? I may be dumb, but I can't imagine anyone doing all the work on a story, getting no credit and being satisfied with a lousy ten percent. Me thinks that someone is pulling someone's leg."

Now on behalf of Proxyboo Ltd. I'd like to make it clear that the agreement recently signed between Proxyboo Ltd and Vernon McCain Inc allows Mr. McCain a free hand in dealing with the Ray Bradbury account. Proxyboo Ltd is far too big a firm to worry about being undercut in this way and has no intention of interfering with Mr. McCain's thriving little business.

On the other hand a different situation exists with regard to those accounts which Mr McCain is handling for us on an agency basis, and about which there seems to be some confusion among our clients. This is evident from Mr. Elsberry's recent allegation that Redd Boggs pays us 3 cents a month for his position as #1 Fan Writer. The fact of the matter is that when Proxyboo Ltd surrendered its claim to the Ray Bradbury account it was decided that merely as a matter of convenience in office administration and filing, all accounts for clients with the initials RB should be dealt with through Vernon McCain Inc. The financial details of the Redd Boggs account are therefore handled by Mr. McCain, to whom all enquiries should be addressed. However while it is not in the public interest to divulge the details of the Proxyboo scale of charges, I am at liberty to say that the alleged fee of  $3\phi$  a month for being No.1 Fan Writer is laughable inaccurate. The truth is that this  $3\phi$  a month is merely Mr. Boggs' payment for his Fapa activity, including the appointment as Official Editor. Mr. Boggs has not yet made up his mind whether he can afford to be No.1 Fan Writer for another year and prefers to wait until nearer the date of the fan polls. I should like to warn Mr. Boggs that the fee will have to be increased if he postpones his decision much longer. Our various stocks of File #13 have begun to deteriorate in storage and will have to be reconditioned before issue.

# Installment 9, Quandry 18, March 1952.

Apparently Hugo Gernsback solves the Christmas Card problem the same way I did -- issues a special Christmas zine. I suppose you could even call it a fanzine. It's ½pg size and personal in tone. This year it's devoted to Hugo's ideas of what the next few years are likely to bring in the way of new inventions -- like heat conditioned furniture (literally hot seats), multiple-screen tv sets, automobiles fitted with radar which throws the brakes on automatically when within two feet of another car (awkward if the other car was coming up behind you), portable corridor shelters for aeroplanes in wet weather, dust eliminators, etc. It's all dead serious but the bit about "Telebiovision" fascinates me. Listen:

"It is scientifically possible for the distant television transmitter to emit special signals which will operate the future bio-effects in such a manner that the receiver will respond to all of them.

"Let us now view a future bio-presentation on our receiver. We are witnessing an actual distant city conflagration. We see and hear the fire, the buildings

aflame, masonery falling, smoke pouring skyward. All this is reproduced faithfully by cur receiver. Smoke pours from special openings above the picture screen. The odor-organ meanwhile puffs out an acrid but non-toxic odor to simulate the burning building. A small fan (recruited through the N3F I suppose) in the receiver wafts the odor throughout the living room to heighten the illusion.

"Now the roof of the building collapses with a roar. At the same instant your floor shakes too! This effect is created by releasing heavy iron weights which drop two feet to a rubber mat. Chains will later hoist them up into the set again until

required for another action."

There's a diagram of this remarkable set showing the weights, 'acrid odor machine', 'electronic taster' (which looks like a fork on the end of a piece of flex), infra red heaters for producing blasts of hot air (they'll never take the place of pro-editors), and perfume machine, but it seems to me that an even more realistic effect could be obtained by simply arranging for the machine to fling a couple of incendiary bombs into your room.

With all this trouble being taken to have you actually feel a mere burning building I am rather disappointed at the tame way Hugo continues his article. "At a wedding we can give you a close-up of the bride and waft a whiff of her prefume towards you.

Is that all?

::

It is with Francis Towner Laney a Species of mania That the sex life of the fan bachelor Should be naturaler.

11

I remember one day a long time ago my mother mentioned casually that she had read scmething in the local paper about a group of people in Belfast who met regularly to talk about science-fiction. Just like that. She didn't think it was important. She couldn't even remember when she had read it, but under cross examination -- well, wouldn't you have been cross? --she thought it was in a column by someone called The Roamer. I couldn't find the item in any of the issues in the house so I rang up the editor and got into a furious argument because he wouldn't tell me The Roamer's real name. Finally I was forced to cough up the inspection fee and look through the paper's files. I went pretty far back but after a while I had to give up. I got tired lifting those stone slabs. I decided my mother must have been thinking of something else. She usually is.

But that sort of thing could easily happen you know. I fully expect one of these days to be buttonholed in a bookshop by some character who will ask me do I read much of this science fiction, and there's a few of them have a sort of club and would I like to join and maybe they'd let me help with their magazine and do I know there's people all over the world called fans who are interested in science fiction and they write to one another and everything. Fandom being a funny compartmentalized thing it is, you can fan furiously for months without ever hearing of other fans who are fanning equally hard in another corner. (Like when Bob Silverberg called me a nova, and me more or less active since the middle of 1948. It's just that he never happened to lift the particular stone I happened to be under.) Take the sad case of Vince Clarke who, after toiling 24 hours a year to keep the British Science Fantasy Society alive and finally giving it up, finds a letter from some unknown warrior in a national magazine styling himself the Organizing Secretary of the British Science Fiction League.

Now it's happening again. A new and strange generation of British Fandom is

springing up. We old stagers have been letting the corn grow under our feet. I never thought I'd see the day when a new British fanzine would reach its second issue before I heard about it. And yet here it is, the second issue of Beyond, published by one Kenneth Potter of 5 Furness St., Marsh, Iancaster. Worse, there's another new fan in the same town and he publishes a zine I haven't even seen yet. Worse still, Beyond wasn't sent to me, but to Bob Shaw! (With a request for material.) And both fen belong to a new British teenage fan club I only heard of recently. What are things coming to? True, both these fmz are handwritten jobs (with pen and ink all in capital letters), with a total circulation of one at a time, but they are fanzines in the genuine tradition. Look for instance at the editorial of "BEYOND, A Fanzine, formerly BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF EARTH."

"I HOPE YOU THINK THIS ISSUE IS AN IMPROVEMENT ON NO. 1. I DO. NEW FORMAT, NEW TITLE, NEW SERIAL. (Improvement? Why, it's like a different magazine!) I ALREADY HAVE IDEAS FOR AN EVEN CLASSIER FORMAT TO NO. 3. IT WILL BE CALLED BEYOND. MY FOURTH IS LIABLE TO BE CALLED ANYTHING HOWEVER. (Now, there's an unusual name.) I MIGHT HAVE A LETTERS COLUMN IN THIS ISSUE, IF I GET A REPLY FROM MIKE ROSENBLUM, WHO IS NOW READING NO. 1, IN TIME."

True, enough, later on there is a page impressively headed "REACTION -- READERS LETTERS" but I'm sorry to report that there are no readers' letters and I always think a Readers' Letters Section is never just the same without them. There is, however, an explanation.

"MIKE HASN'T GOT MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THE ZINE, BUT HE LIKES IT. 'TRAINING FOR PUB-LISHED MATTER AT LATER DATES' HE SAYS. HOPE SO."

Well, I suppose you could count that quote as one letter. Let us just say that it's the most singular letter column I have ever come across.

After the editorial comes the second installment of the first serial, in which the population of the Earth is apparently being wiped out by alien invaders. Next, the first installment of the second serial, in which the population of the Earth has been wiped out by alien invaders. There are two different lots of alien invaders of course. No one can accuse this lad of being stingy when it comes to alien invaders. This is the bit I like:

"THE SHIP LANDED, ABOUT A MILE FROM NEW YORK. THE BRAVE ADVENTURERS STEPPED OUT, AND WENT TO THE GREAT CITY. WHEN THEY HAD BEEN IN NEW YORK FOR ABOUT AN HOUR, BLOGGS NOTICED SOMETHING WAS WRONG. HE COULDN'T QUITE DEFINE WHAT. THEN SUDDENLY HE HAD IT. THEY HADN'T SEEN A LIVE PERSON OR A MOVING VEHICLE SINCE THEIR LANDING. THEY HAD SEEN ONE OR TWO PEOPLE LAYING (sic) ON THE SIDEWALK, BUT THEY HAD DISMISSED THEM AS DRUNK. THEY KNEW, BY SOME INNER INSTINCT, THAT THEY WERE THE LAST LIVING THINGS LEFT ON EARTH!!!!"

You can't keep much from that lad Bloggs. There's no use in Mr. Impelliteri complaining about this insult because Kenneth has the following disarming note at the beginning of the serial:

"I DO NOT WANT LETTERS ABOUT SCIENTIFIC INACCURACIES, OR QUESTIONS. THEY WILL NOT BE ANSWERED AS I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWERS."

Fair enough. If only Amazing would say as much! After the serials we have BOOK REVIEWS where as you might expect from the letter section, there are no books reviewed. The editor reviews the latest New Worlds and Science Fantasy and passes on to the FANMAG REVIEWS, where is reviewed, of all things, a fanmag. The last Slant to be exact, which seems to be the only fanmag he gets. He, Lee, comments on

your "Willis Visits Savanneh" that "LIKE NEW YORK LETTER IT'S NOT VERY COMPLIMENTARY TO WILLIS. WILLIS IS EVIDENTLY NOT A LADIES MAN." (I must tell Potter that Lee once sent me a Valentine! So there.) Then we have a review of WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE and a back cover showing a short oblique line captioned as follows: "BEAUTIFULLY SIMPLE BACK COVER DEPICTING FLYING SAUCER, EDGE ON VIEW. BY THE GREATEST ARTIST IN THE WORLD KENTLEY POTTESTELL. NOTE BEAUTIFUL SIMPLICITY."

Yes, this is a genuine fanzine all right, and unsophisticated though he may be, this lad Potter has possibilities. After all, Spacewarp wasn't much more when it started. Flash! I wrote him a long encouraging letter of comment, trying very hard not be be condescending and evidently succeeding because here's his reply by return of post. "I'd like you to write me a column, regular if possible...I have asked Clothier (of New Worlds) to paint me a cover...BEYOND is extinct and STELLER is the current. I consider BEYOND so much waste paper compared to my latest STELLER..."

Looks as if he is going to try to put us mass-produced fanzines to shame.

#### VICIOUS CIRCLE

After pulling the legs of the London Circle about their immortalization in the Dec. ish of Authentic SF I learn that the central figure in the February number is somebody called Wallis. It was originally Willy Wallis but seemingly the publishers thought this was too like the name of some fan or other so they changed it to Bob Wallis. They hadn't heard of Bob Shaw and Campbell didn't break the news of his existence to them, confining himself to silently wishing they had managed to drag in James White too. The name of this novel is "Miniature Chaos". I don't know what the plot is about except that I'm bound to be saying begorrah and shure all the time (what other way is there to pronounce 'sure'?) but I can imagine the London Circle will be able to get their own back. That's life for you — one minute you're handing out knockout punches and the next minute your k.o's have come home to roost, like so many fowl blows.

#### ICHABOD!

While fandom is still reeling under the shock of the news about Box 260 there comes another dreadful blow. The Epicentre, 84 Drayton Part, London, residence of Vince Clarke & Ken Bulmer for many peaceful years, has followed the great addresses of the past into silence. Gettysburg, Bixel St., Grays Inn Rd., Box 260...the Roll of Honour grows. Let us all be thankful that Oblique House and 101 Wagner St (The Hovel), remain as beacon lights in the shifting sands of latterday fandom.

So we must say farewell to The Epicentre. I have spent many happy hours there with the Epicentrnarians, and I have always thought of it in my simple way as a fan heaven. I believed that when good fans died they went to The Epicentre, and two of them were already there.

It may have been the weight of the unanswered letters, or the decomposing deadlines but I think they were foolish to let Bob Shaw sleep there. Anyhow, the premises have been condemned. This has happened to the occupants often enough, but I can assure fandom that they will not have to be pulled down. Vince Clarke has escaped to 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, from which address his Science Fantasy News (sub rate 3 ishs for 1 promag and well worth it to anyone who wants to read the brightest and wittiest newszine ever published) will continue to be turned out until he is, with no less regularity than before.

This news comes to me in a postscript to a letter from Clarke himself, commenting on the appearance of a rival newszine in Britain. Maybe I should explain that

Occasionally in the past SFN may not have always appeared just as frequently as its subscribers would like -- not that it ever could -- and now Fred Robinson of Wales has come forward with a new rewszine which talks very pointedly of coming out monthly and regularly, with the sort of averted glances that Gold and Campbell throw at one another. (Fred's new mag is called Straight Up for some obscure reason and his address is 37 Willows Ave. Tremora, Cardiff, Wales. Send him a prozine too, and watch the fireworks as these two wild characters get at one another's throats.) Fred's zine looks like being a good one, and a worthy rival to Clarke's, who writes:

Dear old pal Walt, (trying to enlist allies in the struggle, you note)

'Straight Up' arrived yesterday, and our little, gay world has crashed in ruins about our feet. The typewriter blurs before my trembling eyes as I think of the care, the patience and the loving kindness with which we built up a little magazine of our own...to have it taken from us with a gesture of a duplicator.

"It wasn't much we asked. Just a simple six-pence in return for hours of toiling, back-breaking labor. We were upheld by thoughts that were perhaps presumptuous, perhaps filled with worldly pride, but we did think we had something that was our own, to care for and to see grow into a sturdy magazine before our eyes.

"We will still keep in touch with fandom, the fandom that has thrown our humble offering back in our faces, but we see no reason for keeping up what is now a useless monument to our infant aspirations. We are returning herewith the SF Five Yearly and the Fanzine Editor which you lent us in the days of our hollow triumph. We need them no more.

"Thank you for allowing us to correspond with you. In the next SFN we were

going to quote you extensively, but alas!

Farewell, A.V.Clarke

"PS. On second thought, we can't see how 'Straight Up' would get its news if SFN stopped. so we may continue..."

#### REVIEWS

Science Fiction Digest & Cosmag (Henry Burwell and Ian Macauley): The only fanzine with two front covers and no back. Thish of SFD staggers off the mark with the second installment of my "Immortal Teacup" which is, fortunately, soon taken over by William F. Temple -- a reprint of a defence of fandom that has impressed me so much that I felt like just presenting it quietly without any fuss. I think it's wonderful, and I hope you agree. Next a very notable article by William Young reviewing the first year of the Gold-ampbell war, followed by one of those unsurpassed (but I'm working at it) Tucker-LeZombie articles that reofans are always being told about -- and no wonder. The last three pages are devoted to a survey of the first six issues of Slant by Henry Burwell, one of the only two fen in America who has a complete file. (Ackerman is the other.) It's very entertaining -- better than the original magazines -- and apart from some egregious flattery the only faults I have to find with it are that he has diabolically quoted a particularly fuggheaded editorial I wrote, that it was ME, not Lee Hoffman, who invented multi-colored ink, and that I still need ASF for April 1943.

The obverse of the joint zine, Cosmag, contains an adequate story by Tom Covington, interesting articles about pro-writing and fan-dealing by Roger Dee and Ken Slater respectively, a fanzine review section by Jerry Burge (who also does some very fine artwork), a column by Peter Ridley, and a lively letter section. With this ish the joint zine goes Fantasy Advertiser size and becomes one of the most attractive-looking mags in fandom. Highly recommended.

Eusifanso (Roscoe Wright): This and Vernon McCain's Wasterasket are the most

elegant fanzines in the world. Beautifully printed, good typography, and excellent artwork. Thish has a titillating time travel story by Marje Blood, book reviews, a scarifying analysis of the average fan. A preview of Wright's new art magazine, Concept, an article by Marion Bradley about Merwin and an extremely controversial article by Iemuel Craig (I think this is McCain again) about sf films. He infuriates me by calling "Things To Come" one of Korda's mistakes. Listen Craig, come out from behind that pseudonym and I'll knock you down for saying that. TTC was a wonderful film. Not only that, it still is. I saw it the other day again and no matter what addlepated numbskulls who can review films without seeing them may think I say that it is not only the best sf film ever made, it is the only sf film ever made. It is a true fan's film. And don't say it can't be any good because it doesn't make money. Look who's talking:

Ch, don't let the ravings of Craig stop you from asking Wright for a copy of Eusifanso. It's really very very good. And again, one of the best things in it are the editor's odd remarks. Like: "It takes six months to get out an issue of this magazine, which is one third faster than people."

#### ODDENDA

The saga of the Flying Enterprise was eagerly followed by British fans, who anxiously watched the fortunes of that gallant ship and her brave captain and those five tons of US mail. Commenting on the release of a film called "The Carlsen Story", Bob suggests the sequel will be called "Carlsen Sinks Again"... "Dimension X" is now being heard by British fans over AFN stations in Germany. Some of them are beginning to feel better about missing 2000plus... Derek Pickles plans an issue of Phantasmagoria for 1952, with margins!... Seems from December TNFF that election date was postponed to enable British members to get their votes in. Would have been a great idea, if someone had told the British members about it.

# Installment 10, Quandry 19, April 1952.

I don't suppose anyone noticed, but The Harp is a year old this month. Since March 1951 there has been one lurking somewhere in every Q except the two Nolacon hangover issues, and my absence from those wasn't entirely due to my retiring disposition. Lee evidently didn't think her readers were strong enough to face a Harp so soon after Room 770, and the Post Office threw all its lack of resources into keeping me out of the next one.

Against those there were the three instalments of The Harp in England, probably the longest Convention Report that was ever garbled. (Except of course for James White's "Work In Progress" whose 40 pages now take the reader right up to 8:30pm on the first day of the Preliminary Sessions, and which would set some enterprising faned up for life.) I got a shock when I saw how long mine was --- I thought I was just transcribing a few notes off the back of an envelope. I do tend to run on, don't I? I got the same shock when I saw the last Harp. Honestly I'm sorry for hogging all that space. What happened was that Lee called for that Harp in a hurry so that she could go off to Cuba and start a revolution or something, so I dashed it off in installments on three air mail forms. I wondered if I had sent enough. Now those three little airletters seem to have expanded into five pages of Q. Lee must have injected them with some of that rebel yeast of hers. I can sing the praises of her product. "I was meant for you: you ferment for me."

But it won't happen this time, if only because I'm stencilling this myself. Which explains why these pages are disfigured by the obscene scrawls of that fellow Shaw, the Irish Harry Schmarje and Sole Member of the breakaway movement known as the Heels of IF. He has evidently run out of lavatory walls and is making a convenience out of my column. But what an opportunity this is for me too! I can have one Harp without

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typos for Bloch to point the finger of corn at. I can expose Lee Hoffman in her own magazine for suppressing all my egoboo and writing me fiendish notes about how people have said nice things about The Harp but she can't find the letters. I can make the most brilliant puns without fear of their being jealously sabotaged. The only trouble is that I can't think of anything to say. I know this has never stopped me before, but then a terrible thing has happened.

"If you have read this far, you are now caught in the most intricate trap ever designed for one individual." I wish I had remembered that quotation when I got that letter from Redd Boggs. But it started so innocently. "I enjoyed your film notes in Pendulum", he began disarmingly. Egoboo, you notice, cunningly designed to make me drop my mental screens for the insidious attack which followed. "A fanzine came the other day without a Willis manuscript sloppily reproduced in it...What's the matter? Are you all burned out?"

Of course, I thought little of it at first. I laughed infectiously. (I had a cold at the time.) But my laughter had a hollow sound. I tapped it with a hammer just to make sure and made a few cracks. They weren't funny. What if it were true? Little doubts kept nibbling at my brain. It was a gnawed sensation.

Then one night the blow fell. I had just dashed off a moving article, without looking both ways to see if there was anything coming. (I know it's a dangerous thing to do, but I thought the paper was stationery.) Suddenly my eyes lit up like Gort's in one of the stills from "The Day The Earth Stood. Flames came shooting out of my mouth, smoke out of my ears, and there was a smell of burning insulation. It was ohm cooking. Boggs' diabolical ruse had weakened my resistance. I was burned out.

And now here I am a mindless hulk, living on synthetic egoboo and growing weaker every day. Even the medicine Keasler so kindly sent Madeleine for me seems to be doing more harm than good, though to make sure there are no impurities in it the dear girl washes the glass after every dose. I fear I am not long for this world -- that my doom is sealed. But before I start playing a harp I must try to write one more. Is there no one's sex life I can supervise, no racket I can expose?

Well, there's this fellow Venable, a beardless youth who is guilty of the most barefaced robbery. Look at the contents pages of his mag, published "bi-monthly." He starts to give the sub rates as follows: " $15\phi$  a copy. 2 issues for  $25\phi$ . 4 for  $50\phi$ ." So far so good, but he is using subtle psychology. Having lulled his victims into a false sense of security he goes on: "One dollar for a year's subscription." Feeding this data into my electronic brain (it lives on data sandwiches) and assuming that even in America there are only six bi-months in a year, I find that dollar subbers are paying almost  $17\phi$  per issue, or a full  $25\phi$  a year more than two half dollar subbers. This is the sweetest racket I have come across since Banister told me about the bloke who earned the easiest of livings by merely inserting the following advertisement in magazines.

ACT NOW:

DON't DELAY:
Send one dollar immediately to....
Hurry: Tomorrow may be too late.

This genius escaped the clutches of the law because since he didn't promise anything he couldn't be prosecuted for fraud. But of course he had no fearless crusading columnists to expose him. Down with venal Bill:

#### HAPPY RETURNS

The Harp is nearly as fit as a fiddle now, thanks to that nice birthday present

from all you nice people. Returns in the Q Poll which have been smuggled over by my spies show that the Harp leads all the other columns by a nose. A rather long nose. Too kind, too kind! Have I any words of encouragement for aspiring columnists? Yes. This just goes to show what can be accomplished through hard work, sheer brilliance, and the fact that Boggs hasn't written a "File 13" since May 51. Much the same applies in the case of Nekro, which was a better fmz than / is. But I seem to remember that Nekro got a first place in a poll for 1949 despite the fact the first issue wasn't published until early 1950. The balance has been redressed. Newsmags. I'd like to have seen how Vince Clarke's SFN was placed. No. 1 Fan. This is the first time the No. 1 Face has been pretty. Congratulations, Lee. It's also the first time a foreigner has taken the No. 2 position or anything near it in an American Poll. I hope in time to work my way up to No. 12 Face. It says a lot for Ackerman that he is still figuring prominently in fan polls so long after he stopped intensive fanning. I'd like to have seen Burwell and Boggs placed too. Humorist. Burbee and Keasler should have been at the top. Depts. This was a confusing question. Both of those here who filled up the form (by some mischance only two copies of that Q arrived instead of the usual three) thought this meant editorial departments only, in which case the Harp shouldn't have counted.

#### GRANT'S TOME

I suppose I had better review that "Choas In Miniature" thing after talking about it last issue. You remember, it's the book that was supposed to be about me. It still is, but H.J. Campbell has sneaked behind my back and changed the hero's name again, this time to Willy Grant. I am beside myself with rage (Hiya Walt!) over this, especially after me thinking up all sorts of merry quips about Cornwallis and whatnot, I do think Campbell might have had the grace to drop me a note about it and save me making a lyre out of The Harp. It's not as if he had to worry about libel actions — the book is disgustingly inoffensive. In fact it's as dull as John Foster. (This joke is my contribution to the Democratic Party. I know they're boring too, but Truman seems the lesser of two weevils. Have at thee, Burwell!)

I come into the story when the Belfast Parliament Buildings vanish into thin air. For some reason I am annoyed about this -- maybe I was hoping against hope that some day something would vanish into thick air -- and I comb the Press reports' for an explanation. This seems lots better than just reading them because I uncover the plot behind the affair quite soon. I'd have found it even sooner if I'd taken my comb to the February 42 ASF, where it was first used. (Not to be confused with the April 1943 issue WHICH IS STILL NOT IN MY COLLECTION! Cries of 'Shame!') Anyhow off I go to the site where Parliment used to stand and scrabble round for a miniature Parliament Buildings only one inch high which I promptly pick up and pop into my pocket. This I can do quite easily, for fortunately it's not until much later that Campbell mentions that the reducing process doesn't affect the mass of the object reduced.

With 100,000 tons of New Model Parliament in my pocket I track down the person responsible for belittling our Government. It is a girl, the heroin of the book. And I mean 'heroin' -- she's a dope. She tries vainly to do away with me by turning the reducing ray on me and giving me a quick run over with a vacuum cleaner. Like a criminal hunted by the FBI, I am a fugitive from Hoover. However, I beat it as she sweeps as she cleans all around me, and take refuge on her shoes. From this point of vantage I hopefully survey my prospects. Unfortunately, no matter how hard I stare all I can get an eyeful of is "two glittering columns" -- no, not the next two installments of The Harp, but the girl's legs -- which end in nothing more interesting than an "incredible haziness." (The things girls wear nowadays!) There isn't even a ladder in her stocking up which I could escape from instep to stepins and attack her in the rear.

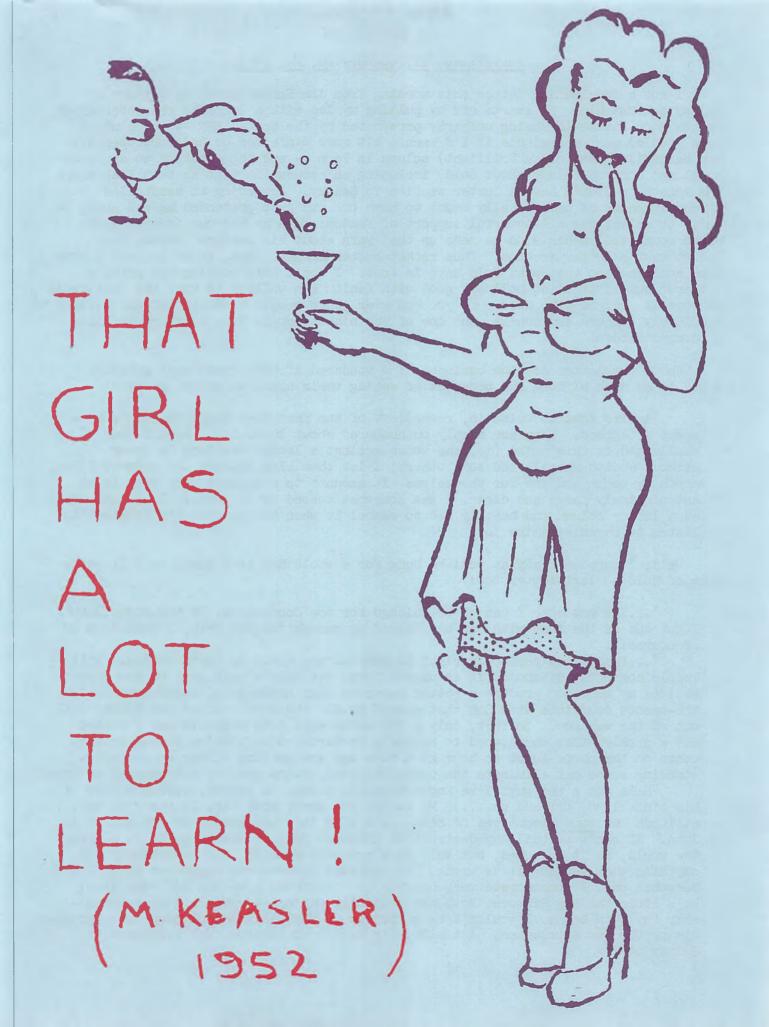
This is the most exciting bit in the book, but some of the dialogue is remarkable. For instance, in describing the conversation at London fan headquarters Campbell mentions that "An argument was going on about whether it could rain on Venus." This fascinating subject keeps popping up throughout the book as the sort of thing fans are supposed to talk about. On page 76 Willy Grant is in Canada telling the heroine about the fan they are going to call on (I wonder is it Bill 'Purple Blooming Ree' Morse?)"'I told you he was a science fiction fan,' Willy smiled. 'You just drop in any time and you're welcome as long as you talk about rain on Venus or something like that.'" And again at the end, as civilization itself is crumbling, "Still there were (in the 'Black Mare') fragments of conversation about the possibility of rain on Venus." All I can say is that the old'Black Mare' ain't what it used to be, or else Campbell is knocking about with some very peculiar fans. I'd like to assure American fandom that no self respecting British fan would be heard dead talking about rain on Venus, apart from an occasional drip.

#### REVIEWS

The Outlander #9 (Rick Sneary): Thish has another of those beautifully designed covers and the usual genius-type Outlandish nonsense. What more could anyone want? :: Oopsla #2 (Gregg Calkins): Big improvement on the first issue, and that was enjoyable. Calkins has a policy of publishing his deadlines and sticking to them. If he carries this out it will revolutionize fan publishing. I hear he has already snared Tucker, the man himself, for the next issue out 25th March. McCain, Vick and Banks feature in No. 2.

#### ODDENDA

Dave Ish thinks my review of Beyond in the last Harp might have hurt Ken Potter's feelings. A kind thought, Dave, but Potter is no shirinking violet, believe me.... Authentic SF is now featuring a regular news column by Forrest J. Ackerman, whom Bert Campbell describes as "a big gliding fellow with a voice like Chopin's music." He also ascribes to him the incredibly appropriate nickname of '4SF.' It wouldn't have been Campbell if he'hadn't got it wrong. It should of course have been 'piano4e'.... In Burwell's SFD letterzine Harmon accuses HL Gold of imitating ASF by using pocket size, three part serials, small scattered illos, etc. Well, of course. Horrible Horace should have used a nonstandard size to get him in good with the newstands, grouped all his illos together in a supplement, and split his serials into 17 parts. Such an unscrupulous fellow! Furthermore, I believe he actually has the nerve to print his magazine on paper with ink! Can plagiarism go further?.... I wonder what ever happened to that long cablegram I sent to the Nolacon on behalf of Irish fandom? I don't like to ask poor old Harry B. Mends. He's got enough to worry about, or I'm a Dutchman. Hasn't he, Hannes? .... Could anyone sell me a copy of Laney's "Ah! Sweet Idiocy"?.... The inimitable Keasler writes: "Nancy Gerding typed your article. I didn't notice it had know type error. That girl has a lot to learn. Will have to speak to her about this. What's she trying to do, sabotage me? Imagine a whole article in my magazine without any error. I tell you fandom is going to the gods."... F.C. ('Incinerations') Davis is wintering in Florida, a climate where, he says, it is possible to live out of a suitcase -- provided the suitcase is full of money. He says he was threatened with a \$5000 dollar fine or five years in prison. Reason for the banning of his mag was of course the notorious Christmas Card.... Dave Ish of Sol (most upandcoming of the young faneds) has big plans for the next few issues.... Latest Operation Fantast is just chock full of interesting news and reviews. It has also an article by Vernon Leroy McCain about dianetics. Seems that Hubbard himself is aberrated all to hell and that he discovered diametics more or less by accident, and that his original technique is useless and that McCain and his friends have discovered the right way to go about it. This makes everyone look very foolish, doesn't it? But everyone ....



# Installment 11, Quandry 20, May 1952.

I got a fascinating letter this morning from Jim Harmon about my defence of Galaxy against him. He starts off by pulling my leg with a lifelike character study of the poor little LNF being unfairly persecuted by the brutal BNF -- which might have fooled me for a minute if I'd been a bit more conceited or had forgotten his own hardboiled (and often brilliant) column in Peon -- and then goes on to say more cruel and hurtful things about Gold, including an accusation that he told lies about the reason he didn't have a letter section in Galaxy. According to hardboiled Harmon it seems he never really meant to have one and just pretended he was going to so as to enlist the all-powerful support of fandom; once he had our irresistable might committed to his side he made up that yarn about his readers saying they didn't want a letter section. Thus racket-buster Harmon. Now, it so happens I have some confirmation that what Gold says is true. I don't like quoting his private letters, but if it'll do Gold any good with fandom I'm willing to take the risk he'll be sore at me. I like Gold. If you can ever judge people by their letters he is absolutely sincere and honest, and one of the nicest people I've come across since I entered fandom.

About the letter section business, I'd wondered if he'd found that actifans wrote in as much without the prospect of seeing their names in print. He said:

"Active fans do write in, regardless of the fact that there is little prospect of egoboo. They are simply outnumbered about 10 to 1.... When I was challenged on this point (ie, the votes against a letter section) by Isaac Asimov, Judith Merrill and some others, I let them slog through the crammed files, month by month, and see for themselves. It amounts to a mandate, the vote is so astonishingly large and clear. I was somewhat tossed by it too.... I had announced a letter column and hastily had to cancel it when the protest I'd promised to listen to began steaming in."

Well, I suppose I may as well be hung for a whole hog as a lamb, so I'll quote some of Gold's last letter too:

"...I'm not sure I can go to Chicago for the Convention. If the disability I got out of the Army with can be cleared up enough for the trip, I intend to go, of course...

"...Fandom was perfectly right in complaining about my horn-tooting. Bill Temple correctly diagnosed it as uncertainty, but that's only part of the answer. Besides my need to produce a better magazine than Astounding, I had some behind-the-scenes conflicts with S&S that goaded me all the more. Those are pretty well out of the way now. In fact, only a few weeks ago, John Campbell and I worked out a problem that threatened to become a festering ulcer. We've talked to each other on the phone about an hour at a time and are getting closer to an understanding so we can eliminate the unhealthy competition that is endangering us both.

"He's not a bad guy. I've known that all along, of course, having worked with him since 1938, off and on.... My battle was never with him. It was with the... attitude of some executives of S&S....I'm glad it's all behind us now and so is John. SF can't be built by destructive internal wars. It isn't quite us against the world, as it once was, but this is a critical time in its development and anything that weakens it is wrong. The contrast between our magazines is a personal one. I concentrate very heavily on individual problems and conflicts; he's after the Big Picture. Both are evidently needed -- readers almost invariably buy both books. I wouldn't be surprised if the ultimate solution is a synthesis of the two approaches. Actually, I'm trying to achieve that synthesis in Galaxy now."

#### MACHIAVELLI IN MARYLAND

Some warped genius must have been working on that fiendish scheme for months. Even now I'm damned if I can see where I made the fatal mistake that landed me into this mess. It all started with a letter no bigger than a man's hand. It was from George Wetzel, asking for a sample copy of Slant. Well, I'd already started returning subs and besides I'd already sent a free copy to the Enoch Pratt Library where the Baltimorons met, so I just sent him a contents page. Next thing was a copy of the Club's new fanmag with a comment that I must be of Scottish descent. Well, this was a fmz, and I'd promised to exchange with fmz, so I sent them an exchange copy of Slant, "with the compliments of W. Angus MacWillis." Then came the cleverest move in this diabolical plot -- a postcard from Allen Newton saying among other things that he was surprised to hear I was of Scottish descent; he'd been thinking of asking me to write an article on sf in Israel. Of course, I took the bait: I never could resist a joke. Falling into the spirit of the thing with a horrible splash, I suggested jocularly, "Why not a series of articles -- a sort of Jew's Harp?"

When this fateful postcard arrived in Baltimore, Newton must have toured the town with a loudspeaker van. The whole city was alerted. Action stations were taken up. Envelopes full of sealed orders were opened. The well-oiled machinery swung into action. Within six hours yesterday I received (1) a long effusive letter from Allen Newton giving me full details of deadlines and wordage requirements, (2) a gift of a new pocketbook ("Beyond The End Of Time") from the editor of their fmz, and (3) a very sincere-sounding letter of thanks from their President about how he'd heard from Newton of my offer to contribute to their fanzine and how nice of me it was to give up my time and what a big help it would be to them. And I'll bet that's only the start. I tremble to think of what's to come. For one thing, a copy of the club fmz announcing me as a regular contributor. What am I going to say to all those editors (including one minor pro) to whom I've pleaded shortage of time? Look, Baltimore, I'm a heal. I admit it. I also admit I've been outmanouevred and outwitted and that you deserve to win. But I'm not going to take on another column, not for anything. Except maybe Allen Newton's head on a charger.

#### ODDENDA

Ken Potter, whose one-copy mag was reviewed here two months ago, reports that New Worlds artist Clothier is painting him a cover. L'audace, toujours l'audace! (Anyone know Bonestell's address?) Also that his future issues may be printed. He is going into collaboration with rising London Circle-ite (and first second-generation fan) Tony Cooper .... Voting now under weigh for second International Fantasy Award. Judges include Boucher, MacComas, Eleiler, Davenport, Derleth, Merrill, Willis, Carnell, Gillings, Walsh and Gallet. Prizewinners to be announced at London Convention May/June. The prize is again to be a table lighter, though why pro authors should have this urge to light tables is beyond me.... "Intergalatic (sic) Publications -- high calibar -- 628 subscribers -- recipricants -- 1100 copies --International Scientifictional Council." Are you there, Claude? .... Hey, Bob Silverberg, Manly Banister used that Gaelic-garlic joke. Write out 500 times 'I must read my Q more carefully' .... FANS! Good old Bob Tucker has asked for bricks for his Fan Hotel and Hucksters' Hostel, and Taurasi's favourite fan Rich Elsberry has urged fandom to send him straw so that he can make his own. But what use are bricks by themselves? Tucker needs mortar too! He can dig sand and make water by himself. but he still needs lime! Forry Ackerman will lend him a Fantasy Foundation if we do our part. Rally round, fandom! The London Circle is sending him lime juice. but that won't do. I urge all fans to mail Tucker some lime! Don't wait to put stamps on it -- send it collect. The need is urgent. Hurry! Send it by airmail! Mark it Special Delivery! For the good of fandom, Box 702 must be filled with quick lime:

Fannouncement:

At last!

PROXYBOO PRESENTS

BOOFUL

The Egoboosting Crudzine

No fiction! No poetry! No articles! No artwork!

JUST EGOBOO!!

Fans! Do you keep getting fanzines which are just so much wasted paper? Are you tired ploughing through dull stuff about science fiction looking vainly for your own name? Subscribe to BOOFUL and be sure of finding it!

The Directors of Proxyboo Ltd. have carried out extensive surveys among their clients. Preliminary results show that fans prefer egoboo to any other kind of reading matter! Exhaustive tests revealed that 98% of neofen carry around with them any fanzine in which their name is mentioned for an average of 3 5/8ths days. 68% take it to bed with them. Among BNFs, 85% were observed to fling petulantly to the floor a fanzine in which they were not referred to. 53% burst into tears. 1% committed suicide. Proxyboo Ltd., ever eager to serve their public's slightest wish, have terefore decided to publish a fanzine devoted entirely to egoboo. BOOFUL will consist entirely of enthusiastic and unrestrained praise of its subscribers, written by experts trained under the personal supervision of Rog Phillips. Write immediately for our scale of charges, ranging from a lone line mention to an entire 'appreciation' issue. (Pro author clients apply to our San Diego Branch.)

# Installment 12, Quandry 21, June 1952.

These are grave days for us contributors to Quandry. It seems just the other day -- in fact it was just the other day -- that we were happily engaged in exchanging fannish nonsense, elaborating fan lore, making fun of Bob Tucker, and generally having fun in what we thought was a fairly mature, if wacky, kind of way. We were wrong -- terribly terribly wrong. All that was Not Good Enough. We were juvenile, immature, irresponsible. We should have been discussing science fiction, reading and writing reviews, making with the learned literary criticism -- even perhaps analysing the odd Trend. In our childish ignorance we thought the reason we didn't do this was that most of us knew enough about of to choose our own reading. We didn't think we needed to be spoon-fed by reviews and literary criticism telling us what we should like and why we should like it. We might even have thought it was better to use our own creative imagination than to discuss that of other people. What we didn't realize was that:

"....There is a gap widening between...the more 'mature' element among sf readers and the vociferous, but usually adolescent, 'true fans' who seldom, it seems to me, even read science fiction and even less often comment intelligently on it.

In many respects, the 'true fan' groups represent a cult. ... They have invented an esoteric vocabulary that prevents 'outsiders' from knowing what they are talking about and helps to conceal the fact that the 'fans' frequently don't know what they are talking about either."

Thus the Rhodomagnetic Digest, organ of the Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Chowder, Science Fiction and Marching Society.

These are hard words, fellow fans, but we must take them to heart. Redd Boggs,

Fran Laney, Charles Burbee, Rick Sneary, Forry Ackerman, Lee Hoffman, Vince Clarke, Chuck Harris, Henry Burwell, Bob Tucker, Jay Oliver, Len Moffatt, Rich Elsberry, Bobert Bloch, Ken Slater, Rory Faulkner and all you other adolescents, you must throw away your zapp guns and stratosphere beanies. I am already taking steps to put my own house in order. Leaning them against the shed where I keep all the old installments of "The Harp That Once Or Twice" (I call it the 'Soul of Music' Shed) I climb up and find to my horror that lamentably few of those Harps contain serious literary criticism or long appreciations of pulp authors or thoughtful dissertations on the Future of Science Fiction. This will never do. I must awaken to my responsibilities as a serious constructive fan. Enter Willis the Thinker. From now on each Harp will be at least partly given over to serious intellectual discussions of a high order. (I tried this racket once before in an early Harp but everyone concealed their burning interest so effectively that I thought it didn't exist. A pity -that serious stuff was awful easy to write.) I will begin by listing all the books in my personal collection. This listing will be a continuing feature of Quandry. (A list of all my books is bound to be of feverish interest to the readers of Quandry and since I have about 2500 books, not counting another half million or so I lent to people and never got back, this will keep Q going for years and years.) The books mentioned are all part of my personal collection, which is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of junk in the world. I will list everything that has any conceivable relationship to fantasy but I see no reason to put them in any particular order so I will just start with the oak bookcase opposite the window in the living room.

Schillers Werke, in 12 volumes. These are the complete works of Schiller, in German, published in Stuttgart in 1867 and bought by me in Nicholl's Auction Mart in Belfast in 1947. Ghod knows where they were for those eighty years. They're in Gothic script and my German is a bit rusty (I left him out in the rain) and anyway from what I know of Schiller I can live without him, so I haven't read any of these. Nevertheless for all I know they may contain some sensational fantasy and if Mary Gnaedinger would like to browse through them she can have the whole lot for a song. In large denomination notes, preferably.

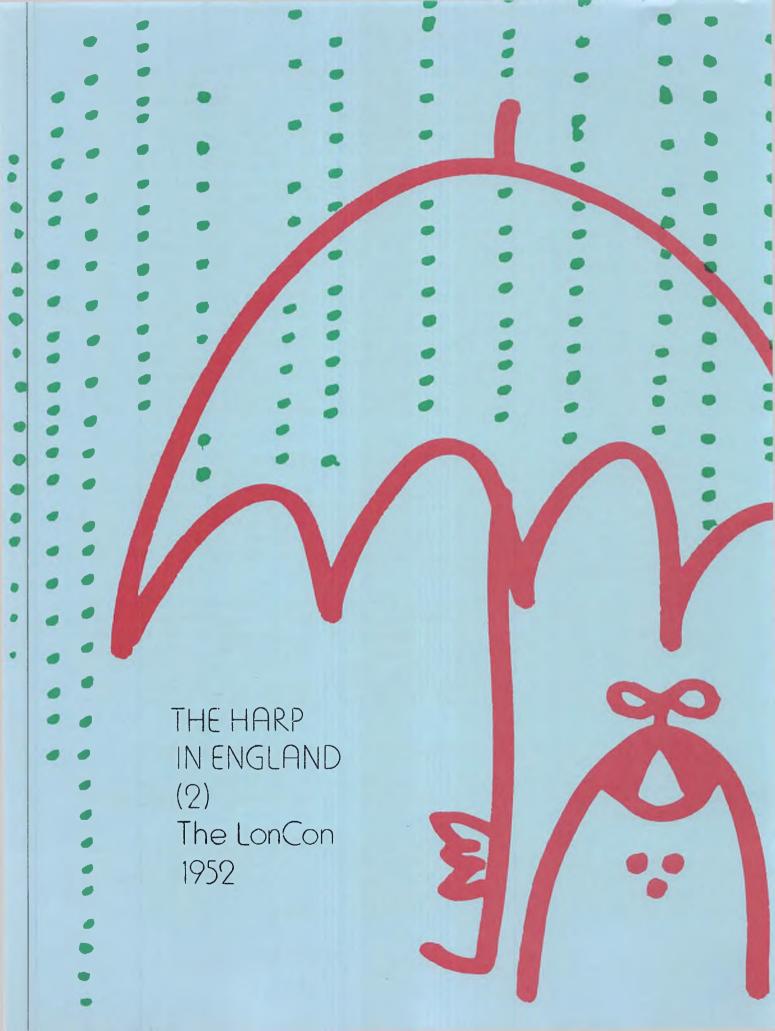
Le Livre Des Mille Nuits Et Une Nuit, in 16 volumes, in French. This is Mardrus's excellent translation of the Arabian Nights, and it's also the part of that lot I did want. And of course this is some of the best fantasy ever written. Much of it needs only some scientific gobbledegook to be published in a modern prozine. There's also one short story which is the funniest thing I've ever read. Every now and then I try to read it to someone but between stumbling over the translation and laughing my head off I seldom get it finished. Some day I will publish it in a fanzine.

The Voyage of HMS Beagle, by Charles Darwin. Not a bit like Van Vogt's.

Graziella, by Lamartine. This is another one I haven't read and indeed I can't even remember buying it. Do you suppose people are now borrowing my bookcases as well as my books?

Well, I see that's 30 books already, and maybe that's enough culture for one month. Anyway I really haven't the time to raise the intellectual level of Quandry very far this month since I'm off to the Loncon in a few days and I've got an issue of a new mimeoed fanzine to get out before then. (The urgency is because it contains, through the courtesy of Vince Clark, Bill Temple's report on the last Loncon.)

#### ODDENDA



Just to be awkward, my bus doesn't pull in where it's supposed to, but sneaks guiltily round the corner and deposits me in a side street, as if it was ashamed to let the other busses see what it was reduced to carrying. So I have to drag my suitcases along to the proper arrival platform, where Vince Clarke is patiently waiting. I catch sight of his head across a couple of acres of traffic and wave madly. He sees me and embarks on the perilous journey across. Every now and then I catch glimpses of him defying death under the wheels of some car, keeping his eyes averted from me in the way people do when they don't want to wear a fixed grin for several minutes. At last contact is established and we make for Victoria Station where I deposit the suitcase I won't be needing until the Convention. Just as we're moving away from the Left Luggage Office we notice the porter lift a woman's suitcase off the counter with the contempuous ease of an Earthman on the moon and swing it stylishly onto the rack behind him all in one practised movement. The technique is graceful, but just a little ostentatious, so we pause for a moment to see how he gets on with my case, which is stuffed full of fanzines and prozines and is really pretty heavy. Tidal waves flooded three Irish coastal towns when I took it aboard the ship. The porter approaches it innocently, expecting just another few pounds of pyjamas and toothbrushes. He picks a spot on the shelf behind him, casually grabs the handle of the case. and goes into his act. The case grinds forward over the counter for about four inches, balances for one dreadful moment on the brink, and then plunges relentlessly downwards to embed the porter's foot in the floor. Satisfied, we resume our journey to Earls Court to meet James White who should have got in from Paris about half an hour ago.

True enough, he is waiting for us at the Tube exit, sunburned and with a sort of travelled, worldly look about him, which on James you notice. Maybe it's the open-necked shirt and the white shoes. He throws his arms around Vince and kisses him on both cheeks. I glance round nervously to make sure Laney wasn't looking and then pin an imaginary Legion of Honour ribbon on his chest and he starts to tell us about his adventures in Paris. I don't know where they're going to be published now that Incinerations has folded. We go and have something to eat at an Italian cafe, where I give James his water pistol which he had had me bring to London for him. He didn't want to have to take it with him to Paris because he thought he might have difficulty explaining it to the Customs Officials, who mightn't have heard of the feud between James and Chuck Harris.

year the place is as lively as New Orleans fandom after the Nolacon. Nearly everyone has been to see a preview of "The Thing". After a while they begin to drift back. Bill Temple is showing everyone a newspaper clipping about the filming of his "Four Sided Triangle" and looking for sympathy because the book, which took Bill several years to write (it's the one he mentions in that letter I quoted in Burwell's . SFDigest as having been twice destroyed in the war) has been rewritten for the screen in nine days -- and by somebody else for a fat fee. With consumate tact, I seize the opportunity to tell him about a mistake I found in the book, where on one page the heroine didn't know who her parents were and on the next she was worrying about her grandmother having committed suicide. He ponders for a moment and then announces gravely "Racial memory." I am satisfied. We turn our attention to one Dennis Gifford whose ceaseless effort to sell his production Space Patrol Handbook was quite a feature of the Convention. He even persuaded the redoubtable 'Ted Tubb, prince of auctioneers, to accept a copy as part payment for a magazine he had bid for. But this night, flushed apparently with the success of having sold two copies in as many hours, he rashly tries Bill and me. We have him go through the whole thing on the grounds that we don't want to buy a pig in a poke, and after some twenty minutes of wisecracks about the contents gravely explain that we don't need to buy one now cos we've read it. However we do, because Gifford turns out to be a Pogo fan from way back and we Pogo fans must stick together -- especially when there's a chance of borrowing some old issues of "Pogo and Albert".

Meanwhile other important personages have begun to appear, including Bert Campbell, looking as if someone had run a lawn-mower over him since last year, Fred Robinson, taking compromising flashlight photos of everyone including one of James White holding a pair of glasses and making a spectacle of himself, Dave Cohen lobbying for the Manchester Con, Alan Hunter, Peter Ridley, Norman Ashfield, Ron Buckmaster, Jim Rattigan and many others. But the most distinguished of them all is the great Ken Bulmer himself, editor of the almost legendary Nirvana. He is accompanied by the remarkably attractive young lady with whom he has been sublimating his fan instincts, but my audience with him has not progressed far before I realise that this great brain has been far from idle. Besides his work on Nirvana, which proceeds with undiminished force, he has been giving serious thought to the epochmaking concept which he advanced last year in our presence. You will remember from the last Quannish (I hope) how while waiting for our tea in the Epicentre Bulmer's keen brain was inspired by the homely sight of the kettle boiling on the stove to speculate as to whether some use might not be made of this potent force. As if to show that he is no idle visionary, but a man whose peircing intelligence can penetrate the veil of the future and discern the practical aspects of these flashes of intuitive genius, Bulmer then and there confided in me his latest theories, which are so imaginative in concept, so breathtaking in scope, that I scarcely dare to divulge them here for fear of ridicule. Suffice it to say that Bulmer is convinced that it is possible to devise a simple means whereby the vast hidden power of this steam may yet be harnessed for the benefit of all mankind! He actually went on to suggest in all seriousness that by some system of wheels and pistons this mysterious energy could be used as a means of propulsion for land vehicles!! Fantastic, you may well say, but at the time Bulmer was so plausible that he convinced us that he was on the right lines. We told him so and at our words his mighty brain leaped on ahead of ours to yet another development connected with the surface on which this vehicle would move a development so incredible that I hesitate to describe it. Our imaginations boggled at the immensity of Bulmer's conceptions, with their vast potentialities for mankind, whether for good or ill, and James was so carried away as to make the foolish suggestion that one of these 'steam machines' -- as we agreed tentatively to call them -- might be attached to a floating mobile base and used to move ships across the sea. It should have been obvious to him that, as Bulmer tolerantly pointed out, the 'steam machine' would have to be fitted to an iron frame and that iron could not possibly float. But that is the trouble with these world-shaking conceptions -- they attract a lunatic fringe of crackpots and unpractical dreamers. We

rashly took Derek Pickles into our confidence later during the convention and with typical extravagance he made some ridiculous suggestion about using those fireworks children set off on Guy Fawkes Day as a means of propulsion, proposing that several of them could be fitted into some sort of container like a thermos flask and ignited at once. We coldly pointed out that they would never work in a vacuum, but we adopted his suggested name, "The Rocket", for our first 'locomotive', -- for no logical reason.

At about half ten the party broke up and I set off with Vince on the long and complicated journey to his home. Everyone sympathised me as if I were going to Devils Island. No wonder -- we probably passed it on the way. What a journey! At one time I reflected that at least my descendants would probably get to our destination, provided there was no mutiny among the mutants. It started off like a pageant of transport through the ages. First a tube train, then an ordinary train, then a bus -- after that there were probably ferries, dog sleighs, sedan chairs and and mule trains, but I was too bewildered to notice. But after a few years subjective time we arrive, and to my amazement the people are still speaking English. After supper Vince shows me up to my room. Actually it was really his room. I don't know where he slept while I was there, and I never liked to ask in case it was on the mat outside the door: this room, you see, houses The Collection. It consists of a bed entirely surrounded by science fiction. The walls are concealed by shelves containing virtually complete files of several prozines -- though not of aSF, the April 1943 issue being absent. I verified this carefully before I untied Vince and allowed him to show me the rest of the Collection. About 3am the more interesting items were exhausted and we went to bed likewise.

The Convention proper was supposed to start at llam the next morning with "Informal Sessions and General Introductions". I collected my suitcase and a dirty look at Victoria Station and hurried to the Convention Hall to find that this was the Convention Committee's way of saying that us fans could come in the morning if we liked but as far as they were concerned the Convention wouldn't start until the afternoon. I took the opportunity to arrange my exhibit, which consisted mainly of current issues of virtually every worthwhile fanzine in the world including (in no particular order) SFN, SFNL, Newscope, Straight Up, Quandry, Confusion, Utopian, Rhodigest, Stop Gap, Operation Fantast, Spaceship, Wastebasket, Opus, Journal of SF, Shadowland, Fantasias, Mad, Oopsla, TLMA, Phantasmagoria, Sludge, C/SFD, Fantasy Advertiser, Shangri La, The Cutlander, Hyphen, Peon, STF Trader, Nirvana, Ghuvna, Asmodeus, TNFF, Fanfare, Sol, Explorer, and, just because I thought it was such a credit to fandom, Redd Boggs' beautiful ASF Story Key. I had all these bound in a huge folder and it collected quite a lot of aftention. Some people were seen to sit down for several hours and read the whole thing, staggering away afterwards with a glazed look. I ought to say that more enquiries were made about The Ray Bradbury Review than anything else. I forgot to list it above.

After lunch James was showing me the false beard and dark glasses he had brought for his encounter with Chuck Harris but I hadn't time to slip them on before Ted Carnell spotted me. He took a load off my mind -- my last Conreport had been on my conscience a little -- by being as friendly and as pleasant as could be, and then put another one on by asking me if I'd mind saying a few words about sf activity in Ireland. I couldn't very well refuse but I wished to ghod I could have come to the Convention as an ordinary fan, which is all I want to be and all I would be if I hadn't happened to be born in a separate country and have to make like a delegate. Besides I didn't know what to say. We don't have organizations or publicity drives or do any of the exciting things that the Manchester group does such as going on conducted tours of gasworks and biscuit factories -- all we do is fan. And I can't very well stand up and tell everyone how many pages of / or - we've done or how many articles we've written. Besides, here in Ireland we belong to American fandom

more than English, and there were probably more people there that hadn't heard of me than at the Westercon. While I was racking my brains various people were making speeches about the site for next year's convention, the Northeners arguing that London was too expensive to get to and the Londoners pointing out how many other attractions London had to offer. I was listening vaguely to all this when Ted unexpectedly called on me. Since I couldn't care less where the next con was held as long as it wasn't in Belfast I couldn't think of anything but make a short speech on behalf of James suggesting that the next con be held in Paris, with the slogan 'Gay Paree in 53'. It is not true that this speech was delivered in French.

Quite demoralized by the fact that my little jokes had been received by resounding silence I returned to my seat and listened to all the old arguments being repeated. after which it was decided to have some more of them tomorrow and then hold a vote. Then Ted called for the reports from the regional centres and I said my little piece about sf activities in Ireland. It is not true that this speech was delivered in Irish. I sat down again and for the rest of the Convention imagined miserably that Ted Carnell was glaring at me. Where he sat on the dais the light caught his glasses and they seemed to gleam at me fiercely like Gort's, or maybe Groucho Marx's, as if to say that here I go to all the trouble to arrange this brilliant meeting of minds and you stupid foreigners have to come and spoil it with unintelligible speeches. I was deeply sorry, but I had done my best. Seemingly whenever I get near a microphone I trip over the threshold of inaudibility and into a timewarp wherein my actions are speeded up beyond human comprehension. Worthy contributions to the symposium were however made by Dave Cohen, Fred Robinson, Tony Thorne, Les Johnson, Ken Potter, Frank Edward Arnold and others, and the convention adjourned for tea very little the worse.

After tea there was a recording of a speech by Arthur Clarke made for the Convention before he left for the US. It was very good indeed, and they'd have been better to let it go at that and perhaps have asked Bill Temple to do a series of footnotes — or even interruptions — rather than anti the climax with a recording of a talk Arthur had given on the radio about sf films. It was all very sensible but we'd heard it all before, and from Arthur. There followed a discussion on the subject "That science fiction is true to the facts of human experience", whatever that means. Contributions of great merit were no doubt made to this burning topic, but I didn't hear them because I'd been called out into the lobby to interview a reporter about fandom and brief him on fan jargon. The usual incredibly distorted version appeared in one of the London papers the next day.

The Convention had been pretty dull up to now, and it began to look as if the absence (enforced) of Forry Ackerman and Arthur Clarke and the non-participation (voluntary) of Bill Temple and Walter Gillings were going to kill it. I don't know why Bill Temple didn't speak, but at least he was there, whereas Gillings didn't appear at all. Evidently he had been dealt so many grievous blows by the god of sf that he had given it up as a bad Job. Someone suggested that two minutes silence should be observed in his memory. He was missed, though, and we all hoped he'd be back next year to make his usual forecast of the death of science fiction and be chief mourner over the beer.

But the pessimists had reckoned without the ability of Ted Tubb to make the lowly auction the high spot of the Convention. He was utterly magnificent. An auction conducted by Ted Tubb is more than an auction — it is an artistic experience. Vince Clarke and I spent ecstatic hours on the fringes of the crowd nudging each other and trying to jot down the richest of his remarks before they were followed by others. The result of course is that I can't read half the scrawls I have here. I'll try to reconstruct some of his patter but of course it'll suffer by the absence of Tubb's terrific delivery and the disarming enthusiasm which he would

lavish on some incredibly undistinguished paperback, like for instance the BRE of Farley's "Immortals".... "A FIRST EDITION! THE PLATES HAVE BEEN SMASHED! ... REMEM-BER, THIS BOOK WAS BANNED IN BOSTON. (At this point he would open the book at random and pretend to read a lascivious passage -- he has a wonderful talent for improvising whole paragraphs in any particular style.) AN HOUR OF EROTIC ENTERTAINMENT. THIS SORT OF STUFF WILL MAKE YOU INDEPENDENT OF YOUR GIRL FRIEND. DID I HEAR A SHILLING? COME OUT FROM BELOW THAT CHAIR AND SAY 1/3. WE SOLD ONE OF THESE FOR TEN BOB AND IT WAS STOLEN FROM THE FURCHASER BY AN OUTRAGED FAN. THIS BOOK WAS BURNED IN EFFIGY IN FRANCE, SMUGGLED INTO THIS COUNTRY UNDER THE GUISE OF NYLONS. WHAT, ONLY 1/3 FOR THIS HIDEOUS TRAVESTY OF HUMAN DRAMA? (Tragically) THIS IS THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS. ALL RIGHT THEN, 1/3. I'LL TAKE YOUR TROUSERS FOR DEPOSIT. AND NOW... (He pauses dramatically, holding up a copy of AUTHENTIC with his own first novel, "Alien Impact", in it. He waits statuesquely for utter silence. Then, solemnly...) THE GREATEST PIECE OF LITERATURE EVER WRITTEN...I HEARD THAT!!! COME ON NOW. DO YOU WANT ME TO COMMIT SUICIDE RIGHT HERE ON THE FLOCR? I DIDN'T HEAR THAT BID. WHAT? VERY WELL THEN, SOLD CURSE YOU. (Now, holding up some issues of FA and Amazing and waiting for the jeers to die down...) NCW NCW, DON'T DERIDE THE LITERATURE YOU LIVE ON. WHAT AM I BID FOR THIS THICK WAD OF READING MATERIAL GUARANTEED TO LAST AT LEAST THREE NIGHTS. IN PERFECT CONDITION. THEY'VE ONLY BEEN READ ONCE I ASSURE YOU. OLD COPIES OF THE BIBLE FETCH THOUSANDS OF POUNDS AND THIS IS A RELIGION. ALL RIGHT THEN, SOLD FOR 3 SHILLINGS....NOW, WHAT AM I BID FOR THIS BEAUTIFUL PAINTING? PEOPLE HAVE OFFERED POUNDS FOR IT BUT WE JUST WOULDN'T SELL. WHY, THERE MUST BE FIVE SHILL-INGS WORTH OF POSTER COLOUR ON IT. PUT IT BEHIND THE AQUARIUM OR OVER THAT SPOT ON THE WALL WHERE BABY FORGOT HIMSELF. HANG IT IN YOUR DEN IF YOU'VE GOT ONE. (MY DEN HAS A CHAIN HANGING DOWN THE SIDE.) ... WHAT OFFERS FOR THIS BOOK BY OLAF STAPLEDON? THERE'LL NEVER BE ANOTHER OLAF STAPLEDON YOU KNOW --- THERE WAS ONLY A LIMITED SUPPLY. LOOK AT IT. BEAUTIFULLY BOUND IN GUN METAL GREY, SHOWING UP FINGERFRINTS TO ADVANTAGE. OBSERVE THE NARROW MARGINS -- NO HUNTING ALL OVER THE PAGE FOR THE PRINT. FOR ANOTHER SIXPENCE I'LL SIGN IT FOR YOU... " And so on, inexhaustibly. It was a tour de force. Audience participation at the beginning was on the level of those humourous bids of 'one penny', or even more wittily, one halfpenny -- on which incidentally George Charters comments in his reprot that 'Although I have heard this hundreds of times, having worked as an auctioneers clerk for two years, I still do not think it is funny." -- but it soon began to improve and for the first time the convention became a corporate entity, a happy state symbolized by the presence in the air of deltawing paper darts.

There is nothing like a common affliction for drawing people even nearer together, and this was provided by the film show which followed. A member of the Committee was at pains to tell me it was all the fault of the fellow that owned the projector insisting on showing his own films, so they must have felt guilty about it. They should have. It was awful. First we sat through an interminable "interst" film about sheep dogs and snake bites and fencing and ghod knows what -- all the worst afflictions of the supporting programme except talking animals and the royal family -just to see a few rocket shots that we'd seen before and didn't want to see again. Then there were more instructional films about aeroplanes and "How Talkies are Made" and "How Television Works" and so on and on. As yet another of these oozed its way on the screen Ken Potter shouted sarcastically "How To Talk On The Telephone" and there were ugly murmurs of "Call this a Convention?" But with a tenacity worthy of a better cause the wretched projectionist stuck to his guns and the dreary parade continued. The only item that had any interest at all was a French film about astronomical phenomena, and that was only because some rash fan --not me, thank Roscoe -had undertaken to translate the captions as they were thrown on the screen. Since they were very long and full of technical terms he got into serious difficulties, which were greeted by snide comments by the frustrated audience. The commentary soon developed into a cross talk exchange between the commentator and the fans. After all this the main fllm, "The Man Who Could Work Miracles," seemed almost worth seeing. It wasn't though.

For some inadequate reason the Convention was to start next day with a repeat of the Arthur Clarke recording, so Vince and I dawdled over breakfast... I've seldom seen a meal more thoroughly dawdled over...and ambled down to the station at the crack of llam. On the platform I opened my wallet to put away my ticket and noticed with a sinking feeling that yesterday's return half was still there, though I distinctly remembered having given up some ticket last night. This could mean only one thing: I had surrendered the return half of my ticket to Belfast. I shamefacedly explained the situation to Vince and we traced the ticket collector to his lair. For what seemed like hours we waded knee deep in tickets, looking for one which I vaguely remembered having been green, but we finally had to give up. (In case you're worried the ticket collector found it himself a couple of days later and brought it round to Vince's house. I wish he had given it to me outside, because it turned out to be blue and Vince saw it and made some caustic comments about colorblind Irishmen.)

By the time we arrived at the Con we'd missed the pro-editors' session, which James tells me was the best thing at the Con. Ted Carnell and Bert Campbell were the speakers and someone had had the brilliant idea of getting them to answer questions on behalf of each others' magazines. It must have been rich. During the lunch interval, and later, members of the Con Committee kept coming to me one after another and saying they'd heard of me losing my return ticket and that the Committee would gladly advance me my fare home if I was stuck. I thought this was very nice of them — unless it was just that they wanted to make sure I did go home — and in fact everyone at the Con this year was very nice to everyone else. I'm not sure how much if anything I had to do with this — last year I wasn't above exaggerating some signs of dissension which, quite unexpectedly to me, caused some discord in the London Circle — but it makes it very difficult to write an interesting report. Apparently impossible, you will say.

After lunch there was another forum by various authors and artists, including Ted Tubb, Brian Berry, Dave McIlwain (author of an excellent of play recently broadcast by the BBC), Dan Morgan, Bert Campbell, Alan Hunter, Sid Bounds, fluent Frank Edward Arnold, and other vile pros. I thought Bert Campbell made the best speech, but Bounds read a thoughtful and intelligent paper about where he thought the future of of lay, throwing in a plot synopsis of "The Green Hills of Earth" only slightly longer than the story itself. After the invited pros had said their pieces John Brunner got up and came to the dais where, as Britain's most up and coming young author, he made a competent and interesting little speech. I envy him his self assurance: also the 600 cdd dollars he's just got for a 21,000 word novelette sold to Astounding.

Next Les Flood introduced the International Fantasy Award, including among his descriptions of the judges one of me as the leader of 'articulate fandem.' This was the best joke of the Con, but nobody laughed. The elegant little table lighters cum space-ship ornaments were then presented to Ted Carnell on behalf of John Collier for "Fancies and Goodnights" and to Arthur Clarke's brother for "The Exploration of Space." This was followed by the second auction. Ably assisted by Fred Brown, Ted Tubb was again incomparable, but the real star this time was a stray cat that kept wandering over the glass roof and peering down at the auction through a missing pane. We onlookers at the back were vastly amused, but we never really hoped that anything would come of it, just as telephone linesmen never fall off their poles no matter how long you wait. But this was the day of days. Oh joy! To our incredulous delight the cat could finally contain himself no longer and, pausing over the broken pain, expressed his considered opinion of the Fantastic Adventures than being auctioned. He passed on it from a height. Ted Tubb uttered a terrible roar and leapt dramatically backwards as if to say "Apres moi, le deluge" but some of the fans who were clustered round him poring over the books weren't so lucky. They got poured over themselves. It was a glorious moment. I would like to nominate this cat for a

a special award for the most fluidly expressed contribution to the Convention.

As a matter of fact there was a special award later, to Ted Tubb for his "Alien Impact". Maybe I should explain that though Ted is, on the evidence of his really superb stories in recent New Worlds, the best talent to appear in Britain since Arthur Clarke, his novel in Authentic was little more then a competent potboiler. Tony Thorne of Gillingham, one of the very brightest of the newer fans, had prepared a special International Fantasy Award for him, and this was now presented in a lovely parody of the official ceremony. The Award consisted of a whisky bottle, symbolically emptied, to which had been glued a toy spaceship and a box of matches. This was received by Ted enthusiastically, and this little unrehearsed joke was one of the funniest things at the Con. Thanks Tony.

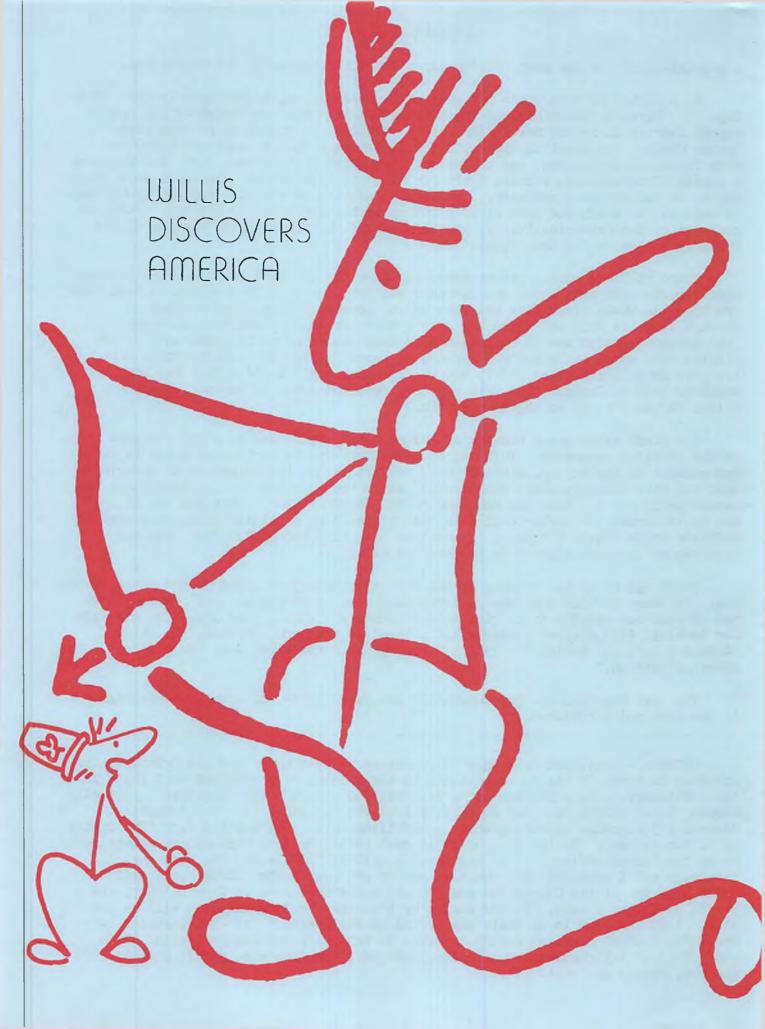
There followed more speeches about the site for the next Con, in which various rude remarks were made about Manchester's weather, where it is supposed to pour cats and dogs the whole time. This was most unfair because I knew a man who passed through there in 1923 and there was only a thin drizzle -- besides after what had just happened London was in no position to make cracks about rain and cats -- but dispite this and a drily humorous speech by Derek Pickles about White Horse beer (we knew he couldn't stand it) it was almost unanimously decided that the next Con would be held in London. The vote had been declared about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  seconds when Ken Bulmer referred to it as the Coronvention.

The final event was a showing of "Metropolis", which was in a way the best part of the official programme. This was because there was no incidental music to drown fan comment on the action, some of which was brilliant. Dan Morgan shone especially. When the hero suddenly mimed exaggerated alarm the way they do in silent films and dashed madly for the door Dan remarked "FIRST ON THE RIGHT". That started it and the whole worthy but rather dull film was enlivened by a ruining commentary from the audience which I wish I'd space to quote -- like "THE MANCHESTER CON" when the underground city was flooded by torrents of water.

There was no formal closing of the Con and people just stood around saying goodbye. The best parting shot was Bill Temple's account of how he was walking down the Strand one moonlit night with Arthur Clarke's brother, just after Ego had left for America. Bill stopped suddenly and pointed at the moon. "My God," he said, "Arthur's left it behind!" "It's all right," said the alter Ego, "He's got an American edition."

The last fan to leave the Convention was James White, of whom more was heard in the days which followed.

ODDENDA - continued from page 109: message between happy and gay friends, always arriving on time. It has no resemblance to the meaning of a similiar word found in the dictionary. OK, boys, now let's see what you can do with "similiar". Actually though, thish of CSF was very good. Pity I missed the other 33. :: A messily mimeced (?) circular enquiring about advertising rates just arrived from 'The Office of L. Ron Hubbard.' By the look of it it must have come from what estate agents refer to as the 'usual offices.' :: Max Keasler writes: "Little did you know that Madeleine and I arranged this whole scheme to get you to the Chicon. Wait till I don't show up at the Convention and you get a postcard from me from Belfast, and you'll know what I mean, But of course by the time you find out...it will be too late. I am laughing in my teeth and crying on the inside." :: Ken Slater's 1952 Operation Fantast Handbook really deserves to rank with the Fancyclopedia. 42pgs chock full of information about fandom, fanzines, fan language, clubs, prozines, dealers, agents and whatnot.....



4"Willis Discovers America" is the improbable fannish-fiction saga Walt Willis wrote in the summer of 1952 while Shelby Vick was raising the Fund which was to bring Walt to the Chicon later that year. It is reprinted from Willis! 1955 edition of the serial and presented with the footnotes which Walt added at that time in an effort to preserve "like a fly in amber (or ointment) fandom as it was in 1952." rb)

# Chapter 1, Confusion #8.

As the Queen Elizabeth edges the last few inches towards the quayside the excitement of the waiting crowd approaches hysteria. At last all the mooring cables are made fast and the gangway lowered. The crowd on the deck parts as a tall distinguished figure appears at the top of the gangway, escorted by the Captain. He pauses dramatically before making his descent. The band strikes up, only to be drowned by the cheering crowd. ("They mustn't like music," says the third trombone, as he goes down for the third time.) Acknowledging the cheers with a courtly bow, the great man walks slowly down the gangway, to be swallowed up in a throng of admirers and reporters. Slowly, signing an occasional autograph book, he makes his way to the waiting car to begin his triumphal drive through the streets of New York.

Meanwhile the raft on which Shelby Vick is rowing Walt Willis across the Atlantic is nearing the Statue of Liberty, some miles from the scene of General Eisenhower's arrival. Willis looks up from the typewriter on which he has written his passage across the Atlantic and examines the huge stone figure with awe. "Begorra," he exclaims (he is practising saying 'Begorra' because he knows it is expected of him). "I knew of had caught on over here, but I didn't realise it had gone so far that they were making statues of ASF covers. February 1941, 2 isn't it? I know it's not April '43." 3

"I think it's been there longer than that," says Shelby doubtfully. "Must be a Clayton issue."  $\underline{4}$ 

"I told you we should have brought James White," says Willis. "He could have told us rightaway."

"Roscoe forbid," replies ShelVy, "I've got a blister on my hands already."

"I don't think that's a very nice thing to say," replies Willis, hurt. "Don't forget all the money you're going to make from this book of ours, 'The Con-Take-Me Expedition'. And you have finally proved that is is possible for copies of The National Fantasy Fan to drift across the Atlantic by themselves. Think what a relief that will be to Bill Berger."5

"Don't look now," says Shelby, "But there's a launch coming."

"Good," says Willis, "I'm hungry. Haven't had a thing to eat for days except corn. Good thing I brought all those old articles of mine, but it's hard on me to have to live by eating my own words."

"Oh you are a silly columnist," says Shelby impatiently. "It's a launch, not a lunch. I think it's the Immigration Officers."

The launch draws near and bumps into the raft, which promptly disintegrates and begins to sink. "There now," says Willis, "I told you we should have used three staples. It was a silly idea to make it out of old Amazings anyway."

"I couldn't get enough Fantastic Adventures," explains Shelby as he climbs aboard the launch. He looks back as the raft disappears beneath the waves. "Poor George," he says mournfully, "you played your part well."

"Never mind the raft," says the Immigration Officer. "Which one of you is Willis?"

"Shure and I am to be shure, begorra," says Willis. He consults his notebook. "Bedad, bejabers and faith, ye spalpeen," he adds for good measure.

"Mmm," says the Immigration Officer. "Nationality?"

"Well," says Willis, "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdon, but as a native of Erin, that emerald gem set in a silver sea, I claim jewel nationality." 7

Willis is hastily overpowered and searched for further concealed puns.

"Allegations have been made," says the Immigration Officer sternly, "that you are a Fifth Columnist, and guilty of Un-American fan activities."

"It's a lie," shouts Willis. "I never had more than three columns going at once. I'll bet it was that dirty redd Boggs who put you up to this." He draws a copy of Spacewarp from his pocket, raises it in his right hand, and declaims passionately; "I swear by the Sacred Writings of Roscoe that I am not now and never have been a member of the Columnist Party. I swear that I have no intention of overthrowing the National Fantasy Fan Federation by force of arms. I--"

"A Roscoeite!" exclaims the Chief Immigration Officer in horror. "By Ghu, this is a purple-letter & day for us. We'll show you how we treat vile infidels here. Mon! Seize Ellis and transport him to Willis Island. His confederate too."

"The South Shall Rise!" 9 shouts Shelby defiantly as the Ghuist hordes close in on him. "Yeast is yeast and...." He continues to outline the cardinal points of his faith as he and Willis are carried below and chained in the hold.

1. At this time General Eisenhower was preparing to return to the States to accept the Presidential nomination. 2. The Statue of Liberty appeared on the cover of the February 1941 ASF, illustrating Bond's "Magic City". 3. At one time I needed only the April 1943 ASF to complete my collection. Actually at the time this was written the April 143 issue was the only one I had, the rest having been sold to help the Fund. 4. Clayton were publishers of ASF from 1930 to 1932. 5. Berger was at that time mailer of the NFFF official organ and there had been complaints about delays in sending it to British members. 6. George Raft, then still appearing in films. At least in Belfast. 7. Citizens of Ireland have dual Irish/British nationality. 8. Purple is the offical colour of the Ghuist religion. (From hecto ink.) 9. Slogan popular in Quandry, the only fmz sold for Confederate money. (Richard Eney sent Lee a Confederate \$100 bill, and was thereafter listed as "Finantial Editor.")

# Chapter 2, Quandry #20.

"Your Immigration Service not only disarms me," says Willis, "It sends me into transports."

"Oh shut up," says Shelby crossly. "Ghosh I wish I had a cigarette." He paces up and down the narrow hold, the ball and chain at each ankle clashing about as he walks and making his remarks sound like a Stan Kenton vocal arrangement.

"It's a good thing I'm a chainsmoker," says Willis, puffing reflectively at a link of mild steel. "While you've been stalking up and down there throwing your weights about, I have figured a way to get us out of here. Just in the nicotine."

"How?" asks Shelby, pulling up his stalking.

"We'll bore a hole in the side of the ship," explains Willis.

"What with?"

"With one of my boring articles, of course." He takes the deadly thing out of his pocket and presses it against the side of the ship. It makes very little impression.

"That's only to be expected," says Willis, "it had the same effect when it was published. Everyone said it had no point. Here, we'll try this very cutting one I wrote about Russ Watkins."  $\underline{\underline{}}$ 

This time the article rapidly bores its way through the ship's timbers. In a few moments it cuts completely through. A torrent of water pours through the hole, rapidly filling the hold.

"Hmm," says Willis. "Something would appear to have gone wrong. Wonder if I have another article with a good plug in it?"

"Puns!" shrieks Shelby hysterically, "at a time like this! We are trapped! Trapped, I tell you, trapped like rats in a trap!"

"Speak for yourself," says a passing rat, swimming confidently through the hole.

"Hm," says Willis. "I could have sworn that was Edwin Siegler."2

Abruptly the inrush of water stops, and the hold is flooded instead with liquid notes of music. It is some strange denizen of the deep.

Shelby stares in disbelief. "I must write to Willy Ley about this," he says. "I never saw a fish playing the banjo before."

"Don't be ridiculous!" says the unexpected visitor, wedging himself further into the hole. "This isn't a banjo -- it's a guitar."4

"Oh, that's different," says Shelby, "But what are you doing here?"

"I was the only one that escaped of that band playing at the quayside," explains the stranger. "We played our very best, but we were drowned by the cheering crowd."

"You must have been playing in the wrong quay," says Willis. "But what's your name, and what are you here for?"

"My name is Ted," says the stranger, "I'm a Sturgeon by trade. I'd like to help." He proffers a fin. 5

"Keep your filthy money," says Willis proudly. "As a True Fan I would never accept money from any vile pro---" He stops abruptly as Shelby kicks him violently on the shin. There is a muttered conversation in which the words 'five dollars' can be heard. Willis rapidly divides by  $2.80.\ \underline{6}$ 

"On second thoughts," he says, "I've decided that since you are not a filthy huckster we can accept your help. We'll send you to rouse fandom on our behalf. I'll just dash off a brief note telling them of our plight."

Two hours pass, and Willis is still battering away at the typewriter. Shelby goes

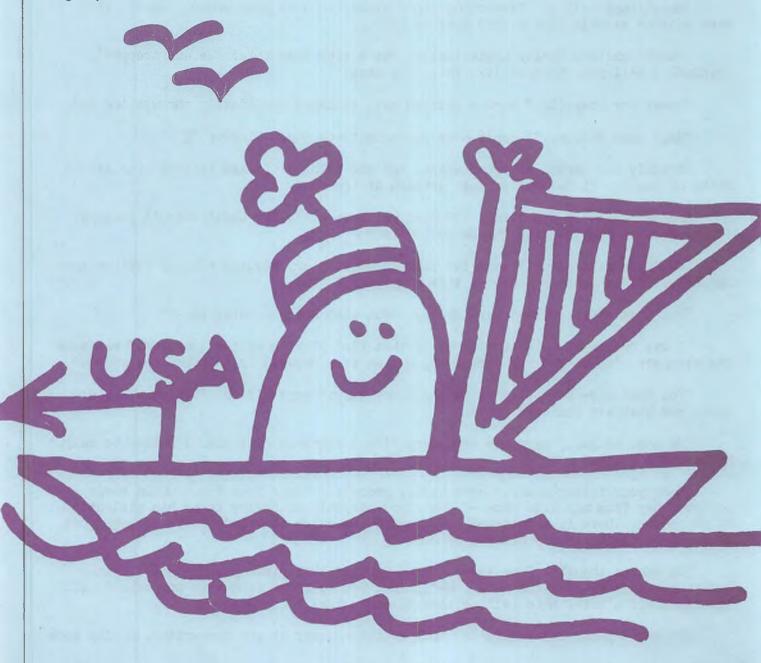
over to him. "All you have to do is ask for help," he complains. "You don't have to write a column about it. And what's all this about the April 1943 ASF? How will that get us out from behind bars?"

"Well, it would give me a complete file," pouts Willis. "But all right. There," he says, tearing a piece of paper from the roll in the typewriter and handing it to Sturgeon, "Go!" He points dramatically in the direction of the Sargasso Sea. "Tell fandom!"

As Sturgeon wriggles out of the hole and darts away, the sea begins to pour in again. The water level in the hold rises. The ship takes on a heavy list, which is checked. 7

"As if things weren't bad enough," groans Shelby, "they have to take aboard the Don Day Prozine Index! What'll we do now?"

"I think we should bore another hole and let the water out," suggests Willis brightly.



"That's absurd," cries Shelby. "What's to stop the water coming through both holes?"

"Easy," says Willis. "We'll label one hole "IN" and the other one "OUT". Any water worth its salt will be able to tell the difference."

"I don't think it's just as briney as that," says Shelby doubtfully.

They are still arguing when the ship grinds to a shuddering stop and cries of panic are heard from above. The ship is sinking rapidly.

1. Russ Watkins "Clean Up Fandom Crusade" was the current controversy. 2. Siegler had made himself notorious for his race hatred letters in the promag letter columns.

2. Willy Ley's "The Lungfish and the Unicorn", dealing with rare and mythological creatures, had recently been published. 4. Ted Sturgeon's guitar playing is a feature of American Conventions. 5. American slang for five dollars. 6. Current dollar/sterling exchange rate. 7. The Don Day Checklist of promags had just been published.

# Chapter 3, Confusion #9.

Up on deck the Captain peers anxiously into the gathering fog. He turns to the Assistant Flag Lieutenant.

"Lieutenant Willow," he says, "I think the fog is thickening."

"Oh, I couldn't agree more," says the AFL. "I think it'th pothitively dithguthting mythelf."

The Captain gives him a cold look and turns to the Chief Immigration Officer. "Would you mind going up top and having a look?"

The CIO pops up to the poop, peeps, and pops down again.

"Captain!" he cries, "There is a dangerous pile of flotsam ahead. I don't know what it is, but it looks for all the world like a shoal of musical instruments!"

Before the Captain can stop the ship there is an earsplitting noise, a hideous cacophony of sound.

"By Ghu," exclaims the CIO, "We have struck a submerged riff!"

"It must be that jazz band that was playing on the quay until it was drowned by the cheering crowd," says the Captain. "ABANDON THE SHIP!"

"I don't see any band on the ship," expostulates the CIO. "It's still in the sea."

"Don't quibble!" roars the Captain. "Get in the lifeboat." He turns to the AFL.
"Go and join the CIO," he says, "and strike for the shore. 1 I am standing by my ship."
He darts into the radio room to send a message to the news agencies.2

When he comes out again the lifeboat is drawing away. "What about the prisoners?" shouts the CIO.

"Oh Ghu yes," says the Captain. He throws open the hatches. "Are you there?"

"Bubble bubble," says Shelby.

"What about Willis?"

"O'bubble O'bubble," says Willis, with his last gasps of Eire.

"Well don't just stand there blowing bubbles. Come on up."

Vick and Willis emerge onto the deck and are thrown into the lifeboat. Before they have covered ten yards the waves close over the launch. The Captain's head can be seen for a moment, still looking for the newsreel planes, before it too disappears beneath the sea.

"I wish he'd never heard of Captain Carlsen," says the CIO. "Ah well, there goes the finest boat in the Immigration Service, the good old S.S !\*@&+=\*\*!."

"What was that name again?" asks Shelby. "The !@ =+\*\*\*?"

"No," says the CIO, "the !\*@&+=\*\*!"

"Even so," says Shelby, "that's a funny name to call a ship."

"Yes," says the CIO, "but you see, while Judith Merril was launching it she hit her thumb with the bottle."3

"It was a launching slip," comments Willis weakly.

"Shut up," says the CIO, "and keep rowing."

"She had real pain instead of champagne," says Willis, still working on it.

"SHUT UP!" shouts the CIO.

"There <u>must</u> be a better one," persists Willis doggedly. "Cursory send-off.... stern words....embrocation....bargee Pohl4....naughty-call names.....quay words...." he mutters.

"I wonder where we are?" queries the Lieutenant, trying desperately to change the subject.

"Ghu knows," says the CIO. "Shall I give you a sounding?"

"Have you April 1943?" asks Willis stupidly.

The CIO ignores him and drops the plumb line over the edge of the boat. In a moment he pulls it up again. "This is plumb crazy," he says, "It shows the depth as zero."

"I wish the fog would lift," complains Willis. "I feel as if I were rowing into a brick wall."

The CIO stretches his hand into the fog. "You are," he says. The fog lifts for a moment, and they see before them the wall of an enormous building, stark and forbidding.

"Where is this?" asks Willis fearfully.

The CIO laughs cruelly. "We are on the mainland," he gloats, "and this is the dreaded Chateau d'IF!"

"NO! NO!" screams & Shelby. Struggling vainly, the two fans are dragged inside the

great iron doors and along vast echoing corridors to a door marked 'Prison Ghuvernor'. The CIO knocks and they enter. Behind an enormous desk sits the Governor of the Chateau d'IF.

"Sir," says the CIO respectfully, "these are the two Roscoeite prisoners we were taking to Ellis Island when our launch was shipwrecked. May I borrow a boat to proceed with our journey?"

"I don't have any lending craft at the moment," says the Governor, "but there's no hurry." He selects a long spaceship-shaped object from the box on his desk and lights it. Eying Willis thoughtfully through a cloud of smoke he remarks thoughtfully, "So this is the great fan wit I've heard so much about. Say something funny, Willis."

"Er...." says Willis, "er.... Duhhhhhhhh."

"The reports seem to have been only half correct," sneers the Governor. "And this is the renegade Ghuist, Vick. I must say I cannot see how a man could sink so low as to reject the Ghuish Way Of Life once the True Ghuspel had been revealed to him."

"You must remember," intervenes the CIO, "that he was under the corrupting influence of Willis for the entire Atlantic crossing, constantly exposed to rappturous pro-Roscoe propaghanda."

"Well, they seem harmless enough," says the Governor, "but better search them for concealed weapons." The CIO frisks them rapidly and produces a horse-whip from a secret pocket in Willis's jacket. The Governor examines it gingerly. "What a ghastly weapon," he says, horrified. "To think that anyone would use this on a poor animal..."

"But it's for Max Keasler," explains Shelby.6

The Ghuvernor silently hands it back to Willis and turns to the CIO. "I shall arrange for their transportation to Ellis Island," he says, picking up the phone. "Hello? Ghuvernor Fairman here, I----"

"FAIRMAN??!!!" screams Willis hysterically. He throws himself across the desk, knocking over nine signed portraits of Howard Browne. 7 Seizing Fairman's throat he beats his head violently against the stone floor, muttering through clenched teeth, "Slater, huh?....Grrrr."8

After some time he is overpowered and Fairman struggles to his feet. "By Ghu," he exclaims, "he'll suffer for this. He'll rot here in the Chateau d'IF until his case comes for trial. The man is a raging maniac!"

"He's only raging because you asked Ken Slater to write your guest editorial," explains Shelby. "You shouldn't have done that, Mr. Fairman."

"But I'd never heard of Willis," says Fairman, puzzled.

At this Willis collapses on the floor in a foetal position, moaning piteously. After a few moments he crawls into a corner, where he begins to recite the Quandry Poll results to himself. "Willis 76, Tucker 27...."9

Fairman calls the guards, "Men," he says, "lock these creatures in the vilest durance we have."

1. The AFL and the CIO are the two main US Trade Union organizations. 2. This was shortly after the episode of the 'Flying Enterprise.' 2. Judy Merrill was supposed to

have a great command of invective. 4. And was married to Fred Pohl. 5. Max was supposed to have designs on my wife Madeleine. 7. Fairman, then editor of IF, had expressed great admiration for Howard Browne and 8. Had asked Ken Slater to write a guest editorial as the most prominent overseas fan. 9. The Quandry Poll results for 'Best Fan of 1951', just published.

# Chapter 4, Quandry #21.

Shelby totters into the dungeon with Willis's lifeless body and dumps it on the bed. He looks around at the cracked walls and sloping floor of the dungeon and protests to the guard.

"This place doesn't look structurally sound!"

"Naturally," leers the guard, "It's the condemned cell." He draws his gum and shoots the bolts. As the smoke clears away Shelby walks round the cell reading the crakes on the walls. "YNGVI IS A LOUSE...FORWARD WITH FOO FOO...I HAVE A COSMIC MIND 1...THE POO IS MIGHTIER THAN THE YOBBER...EAT AT OMAR'S 2...ROSEBUD 3...MY ALL FRO ISSUE 4...JOIN THE N3F...KONNERS CORNER WAS HERE 5...UL-UL 6...BURBEE WAS A GOOD EDITOR...KUTTNER IS VANCE 7...THE MERROR OF FANDOM 8...BLOCH KORSHAK ESHBACH AND EVANS 9...TUCKER LIVES ON...BHEER...NUT IN 53 10...CHRISTIAN SLANS READING SLANZINES 11...ULTRA WEIRD ARTIST 12...THE ROOSTER THAT WORE RED PANTS 13...FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE...THE SOUTH SHALL RISE...ROOM 770 14...UNENDURABLE PLEASURE INDEFINITELY PROLONGED...SOUTH GATE IN 58...SPRAGUE DE CAMP IS A LOUSE...." He breaks off on hearing a scrabbling noise behind him. Willis has come to what he refers to as his senses and is scraping on the floor of the dungeon with his screwdriver. Shelby watches him tolerantly for a few minutes.

"What do you think you're going to find under that stone?" he asks, "Max Keasler?"

"I'm digging a tunnel," explains Willis, "like the Abbe Faria in "The Count of Monte Cristo". I knew all that non-sf stuff I used to read would come in handy some day. Broadens the outlook you know. You ordinary uncultured fans wouldn't understand them littery masterpieces."

"If you really want to broaden your outlook," says Shelby, "take a look out of the window. This dungeon is on the Eighth Floor."

"Oh bother," says Willis. "What a cell! I've a good mind to retire from fandom in high dungeon."

"You can't retire from fandom yet," points out Shelby, "You haven't even started on your memoirs. Lee Hoffman would never forgive you."

"True," says Willis. "We must think of an egress." 15

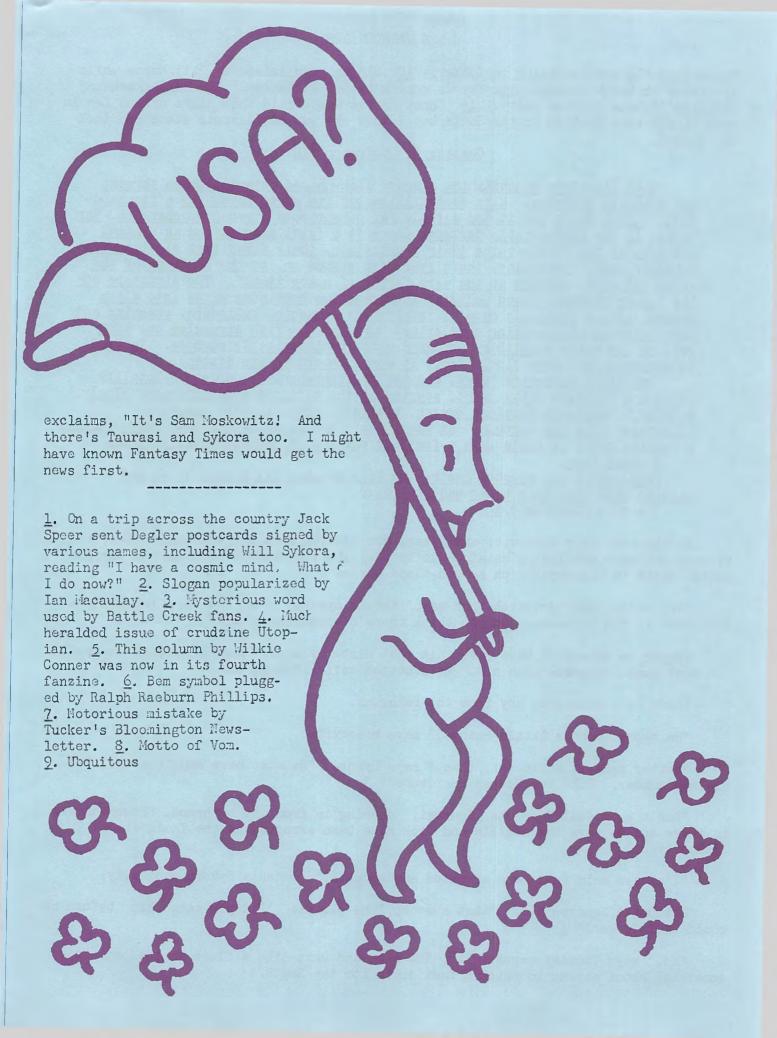
"Suh," says Shelby stiffly, "You have insulted a fair flower of Suthun womanhood."

"Tch, tch," says Willis, "I only meant we must think up some way to get out of here." He goes over to the window.

Suddenly a soft voice is heard raised sweetly in song and golden cadences of melody are wafted through the cell window.

"I say," says Willis, "Get a load of this. Golden cadences of melody are being wafted through the cell window!"

"No kidding?" says ShelVy. He goes over to the window and looks out. "Why," he



Convention figures according to Tucker. 10. Slogan popularised by Bill Morse while stationed in North Canada. 11. Famous remark by Eva Firestone. 12, Ralph Raeburn Phillips' famous Nolacon party. 15. Chuck Harris was afraid this might offend Lee in view of the race feeling in the South but I knew she was of Illinois stock and took the chance.

# Chapter 5, Confusion #10.

With limitless velocity the slender fish-shaped object plunges through the inchoate darkness. With each millisecond its speed increases a thousand-fold, though aeons ago it had already far outstripped human comprehension. Far behind in the impenetrable darkness there is a faint sussuration as unnamed entities of the depths voice their frustration, their feral eyes glowing with mindless hate. Unheeding, the silver fish speeds on, to the confines of the known universe, tearing at the very fabric of space itself. The structure of the cosmos changes beyond belief. The spacetime continuum wares into alien shapes, into a fantastic maze of intricately connected cylinders, crossing and recrossing in mindwrecking complexity. Grimly, the fish struggles on, each cell of its being indelibly impressed with one indomitable purpose. To find! To communicate! More slowly now, it moves onward to its destiny.

One final torturing twist, and the breakthrough is complete. Totality becomes a blinding white light, searing at the tortured consciousness. Slowly, painfully, sense-impressions emerge, coalesce, are collated, analysed, integrated with the purpose. At the rim of the new white universe there floats a reddish orb. It falls into a familiar pattern of spatial relationships.

A human face.

From out of the plumbed depths the fish speaks, all doubts at an end, wishing only that this typer had italics...
"Is this Flushing?" 1

In the next room Moskowitz and Sykora are resting from one of Fandom House's riotous one-shot publishing sessions while they check Taurasi's calculations on the postal rates to Minneapolis on second-class bombs. 2

"No, we'll never get Rich that way," agrees Sykora. "By the way, Taurasi's a long time in the bathroom. Do you think there's something wrong?"

"Maybe we shouldn't have given him that Elsberry wine," says Moscowitz worriedly. "It must have disagreed with him. We'd better call a fan doctor."

There is a strangled cry from the bathroom.

"He seems to be a little hoarse," says Moscowitz.

"Better make it a fan vet, then," says Sykora. "He must have caught a colt." He dials a number. "The Van Houten residence?" 3

"Don't be a foal!" shouts Taurasi, dashing in from the bathroom. "Sturgeon was in there and he says that Willis and Vick have been arrested by the Immigration Authorities."

"I always said fans were arrested adolescents," comments Sykora cynically.

Moscowitz ignores him. "What a scoop," he gloats. "Did you catch him before he could tell Tucker?" 4

"No," says Taurasi regretfully, "He came and went like a flush in the pan. Said something about having to catch a fast drain for the South."

"He must be making for Savannah," says Moscowitz, "That's for sewer. There's not a moment to lose before Tucker gets the story. You should have been able to catch him some way. Cast a net for instance."

"He already had one," says Taurasi, "and a couple of maracas. Said he picked them up from some band he met on the way that had been drowned by a cheering crowd. Their music had been pitched in a quay of sea."

"That's enough of that," says Moscowitz. "Did he give you any more of Willis's message?"

"Only something that sounded like ASF 43," says Taurasi puzzedly.

"That doesn't sound like Ellis Island," muses Moscowitz. "It must be the Chateau d'IF."

Taurasi hastily notifies Van Houten and Meyer and within an hour a special edition of Fantasy Times is on the streets.

"You know," frets Taurasi, "I can't help thinking we should have put some in the mailbox too. People are just kicking then into the gutter."

"Well, at least Keasler will get one," says Sykora. "But keep quiet for a moment. Moscowitz is calling Wollheim." 5

"Hello? Hello?"says Moscowitz. "Wollheim? We're going down to rescue Willis and Vick. Can I give you a lift."

He listens for a moment and then turns sadly to the others. "He still refuses to have any truck with me."  $\underline{6}$ 

"Gosh, Sam," says Taurasi, taking his fingers out of his ears. "I wish you had used the phone." 7

"What, on a local call?" sneers Moscowitz. "But for long distance I open the window."

"What window?" asks Taurasi.

"Oh dear," says Moscowitz. "Has it gone again? Never mind, we can go out that way and save time."

They all jump down into the street, where Sykora starts to board Moscowitz's truck.

"We haven't got time for that," snaps Moskowitz, knocking the planks and hammar out of his hands. "If it rains we'll just have to let our insurance cover us. Let's get going, and Laney take the hindmost."

<sup>1.</sup> This was supposed to be a parody of vanVogt. The editorial offices of Fantasy Times are at Flushing, New York. 2. Rich Elsberry of Minneapolis was unpopular with Fantasy Times because he used their name in a hoax about ASF having folded. 3. Van Houten is a leader of the Fan Veterans. 4. There was revalry for news between Fantasy Times and the Bloomington Newsletter. 5. An old enemy. See The Immortal Storm. 6. 6. Sam Moskowitz is, or was, a truck driver. 7. He is renowned for his loud voice.

# Chapter 6, Mad - Special Issue

Humming softly to himself, Moskowttz speeds his truck in the direction of Newark. The traffic draws into the kerb and air raid wardens rush to their posts. Through the deserted streets the truck rushes on until it reaches Moskowitz's house, where the three fans leap out and start loading the famous collection onto the truck. Hour after hour they toil, carrying out armfuls of books and magazines and hurrying back for more. The wheels of the truck gradually sink into the concrete of the road, but still the work goes on. At last the entire collection is loaded, and the truck moves off slowly in the direction of the Chateau d'IF, leaving deep ruts in the road.

It is dusk when they arrive at the Chateau, and they are able to drive the truck right up to the building. They park it on the narrow spit of land between the Chateau and the sea, and gaze anxiously at the enormous walls.

"What a lot of windows," says Moskowitz worriedly. "How are we going to find out which cell Willis and Vick are in?"

They all get out of the truck and walk up and down the shore, turning over the problem in their minds. Suddenly there is a twanging noise and Taurasi falls headlong in the mud. The others help him to his feet and start wiping him down, but he brushes their hands aside impatiently.

"Something just struck me!" he exclaims.

"No," says Sykora. "You fell."

"I know," says Taurasi impatiently, "that's the point. I tripped over a chord. Haven't you noticed this whole beach is covered with musical instruments?"

"It must be the remains of that band that was playing on the quay until it was drowned by the cheering crowd," muses Moskowitz. "But so what? They're all washed up now."

It's given me an idea," says Taurasi, "We'll serenade Willis and Vick like Blondin and Richard Coeur de Lion."

"Who's Blondin?" asks Moskowitz.

"Don't you ever read the funnies?" says Sykora in contempt. "Blondin Bumstead of course. Say, whaddya think of Lil Abner----" 1

"Never mind that," says Sykora. "Moskowitz, you sing and Sykora and I will accompany you." He picks up a trumpet and hands it to Sykora, taking a saxophone for himself.

Moskowitz takes out a copy of the Dianetics Handbook and clears his throat. He begins to sing.

"We three
Intend to free
You from the penitentiary,
Taurasi,
Sykora
And me.
I need hardly mention how at our Convention
We kept the Michelists at bay; 2
And now we are prayin' that we'll find a way in
To---"

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He breaks off abruptly as two arms are seen waving frantically from one of the windows. With an encouraging gesture the triumvirate run back to the truck and begin to unload it.

Watching them anxiously from the cell window, Willis turns to Vick.

"What do you think they're doing?"

"It looks big enough to be SaM's entire collection," says ShelVy. "OH! They must be going to pile it up against the wall for us to climb down. Yes, look, they're laying a fantasy foundation of big ones first. Early FantasyBooks, old Amazing Quarterlies, 1943 Astoudings----"

"WHAT?" shouts Willis. He throws himself against the bars, wrenching at them vainly. Eventually he calms down and watches quietly as the three below erect an enormous mountain of books and magazines against the prison wall.

"Well, that's the last of them," says Moskowitz finally, "a file of recent Fantasy Books and the Dell edition of "Universe! 3 I'm afraid it isn't enough. I wish they'd had 'Common Sense!." He broods grimly. The others steal a look at him and turn their eyes away hastily from his harrowed countenance. Moskowitz stands still for a long moment and then grits his teeth and walks slowly back to the truck. He emerges with a white face and a roll of black velvet. Unrolling the latter he produces a book, at which the others gaze with reverent awe. Still holding the book he begins to climb up the mountain of sf. Sykora and Taurasi uncover their heads and stand in silent tribute.

Up above ShelVy turns to Willis. "He is making the supreme sacrifice," he says in hushed tones.

Even Willis is impressed. "Not .... not THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS?" he gasps. 4

"Yes," says ShelVy sombrely.

As Moskowitz continues his perilous ascent other fans begin to arrive in ones and twos and watch in perilous silence. There is a gasp of relief as he nears the top of the pile and places THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS on the summit. Then, very carefully, he climbs the remaining few feet and stands on the sacred volume. He is now only a short distance below the cell window.

Balancing himself precariously on the narrow peak he reaches into his pocket and produces a small sew.

"Here," he says, "Saw through the bars with this. It's a hacksaw I borrowed from Ray Cummings." He stand on tiptoe and reaches it up.

Willis and Vick both stretch out their hands but try as they will they cannot quite reach the saw.

"Another hundredih of an inch would have done it," says ShelVy, falling back in despair. "Ricky Slavin has a lot to answer for." 5

Overcome with disappointment and emotion at the recollection of his lost dust jacket Moskowitz has to rest for a moment before making his descent. He is just pulling himself together when there is a frantic cry from below and a wildeyed figure dashes towards the pile, muttering inchoherently to himself and drawing a fountain pen from his pocket. It is Clark Ashton Smith.

"For Ghod's sake stop him, Mike," shouts Alan Pesetsky. "He's caught sight of one of his published poems with uncorrected typos!" 6 But Michael de Angelis is unable to bring himself to restrain his hero. 7 "No human power could stop him anyway," says Ken Beale in horror. "That was a Keasler zine he saw. Run for your lives!" 8

But it is too late. Smith has already reached the pile of books and magazines. With maniacal strength he grabs a duplicated fanzine near the bottom of the mountain and pulls savagely. For a long moment the vast edifice shakes and quivers: then, with an earsplitting crash, it falls to the ground, burying Taurasi, Sykora, Gibson, Pesetsky, de Angelis, Beale, Clancy, Smith, Gluck, Quinn, Krueger, Crane, Wesson, Serxner, Friedman, Hoskins and Kirs.

"Well," says Willis callously, "That's the first time all New York fandom has been in Moskowitz's good books."

Lil Abner had just caused a comics sensation by getting married to Daisy Mae. 2. A reference to the famous 'Exclusion Act' in which Moskowitz, Sykora & Taurasi prevented the Michelists (Wollheim etc.) from entering the 1939 Convention. See The Immortal Storm. Incidentally I realise that the 'Triumvirate' no longer exists but at the time my knowledge of the history of New York fandom stopped where 'The Immortal Storm' did. 3. The Dell reprint of Heinlein's "Universe" was probably the thinnest pocketbook ever published. There was some wonderment that they hadn't included the sequal, "Common Sense". 4. Moskowitz' copy of Lovecraft's "The Cutsider & Others" was the pride of his collection and on a famous occasion, described in the Insurgent 'Spacewarp' by Joe Kennedy... 5. New York fanne Ricky Slavin, during a quarrel with Moskowitz, tore the precious dust jacket. 6. Smith was said to have the habit of correcting by hand any typos he found in his published works. 7. Michael de Angelis published quantities of Smith's poems. 8. Keasler's fanzines were of course notorious for their typos. (Cf. 'Kerles' in The Enchanted Duplicator'.)

# Chapter 7, Confusion #11.

"Well," says Willis callously, "That's the first time all New York fandom has been in Moskowitz's good books."

"You just said that," points out ShelVy.

"I know," says Willis, "I heard me. But that was in another magazine. These people mightn't understand your next remark unless I repeated that one."

"Well, you should split your instalments better," says ShelVy crossly.

"Joe Palooka does it that way," says Willis mildly. 1

"Always trying to end with a punch line," grumbles ShelVy.

"I'm sorry," soothes Willis, "I was only trying to do my judy."

"No order! No method!" ShelVy mutters.

"Look who's talking," says Willis indignantly, "Losing precious letters from Robert Bloch and sending Schultheis masses of blank pages? For ghoodness sake get on with it. Here we are halfway down the page already and we still haven't mentioned the April 1943 ASF."

"Oh well, if you want to make an issue out of it..." says ShelVy. "Where were we?

Ah yes: that was only half of New York fandom down there. But here's the rest of it now." He points to a distant cyclist on the road below, pedalling furiously in their direction and looking back guiltily over his shoulder.

"Looks like Keasler mailing the next Opus." says Willis. "Who is it?" 3

"Bob Silverberg, of course," says ShelVy. 4

Silverberg jumps off his bicycle beside the pile of books and starts digging. There is another slight landslide and the movement revives Moskowitz, who has been lying dazed at the top. He waves weakly at Silverberg and starts to make his way down.

"Avalanche?" asks Silverberg.

"No thanks," says Moskowitz, "I just had one."

The two have been working busily for some minutes when a fast car drives up and Gerry de la Ree jumps out, shouting and pointing excitedly upwards. There is a drone of aeroplane engines overhead and parachuted figures can be seen dimly against the darkening sky. As they land they are seen to be Darrell C. Richardson, Walter Coslet, Roy Squires, Clyde Beck, Russ Hodgkins, Lloyd Eaton, Don Day, Phil Rasch and Russell Leadabrand. 5 As soon as they have disentangled themslves from their parachutes they raise their heads and sniff keenly. Then with unerring instinct they rush toward Mt. Moskowitz.

"Amazing how they got wind of our plight so soon," says Willis. He goes on brokenly, "It's...it's grand to see all these true fans rallying round like...like---"

"Like vultures," says ShelVy bitterly. "Look at them!"

To his horror Willis realizes that they are not clearing away the pile of books at all, but are merely burrowing into it and comparing each item with their little black notebooks. Every now and then they come upon an item on their Want Lists and with eager grunts stuff it into their capacious pockets. There is an occasional vicious scuffle as two collectors seize upon the same item, and all the time Moskowitz is dashing around desperately trying to reclaim his treasures.

"What a shocking exhibition of greed," says Willis, aghast. "And at a time like this!" He puts his head out of the window. "What about us?" he shouts. "HELP! FOR GHOD'S SAKE..."

"What do you want?" asks one of the collectors.

"Do you see an April '43 ASF?" begs Willis.

But the collector is no longer listening, having come across Moskowitz' copy of "The Outsider and Others." Unfortunately for him he cannot resist gloating over it for a moment before hiding it away, and with uncanny quickness three of his rivals notice it and pounce on him. They all lay greedy hands on the book and a grim tug-of-war ensues. Finally there is a horrible ripping sound and the book tears into four pieces. Moskowitz, fighting his way to the scene, cannot restrain his anguish and emits a blood-curdling wail. The others realize it must have been heard inside the Chateau and prepare to flee. But they are too late. The great iron gates open and armed guards cover the collectors. In a moment a large garbage truck drives up, and the wretched collectors are forced to shovel the books and magazines onto it. Some of them collapse from sheer frustration, but eventually the entire pile is loaded onto the truck and the half suffocated fans who were underneath are revived. They and the collectors are

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all herded inside the Chateau and the truck drives off at breakneck speed. Just before it moves out of sight the driver is seen throwing away a false beard and a moustache. Borne upon the night air there comes a distant cry of triumph. "I'VE GOT THEM ALL. EVERY ONE!" 6

"That vile truckster," says Willis bitterly. "But he's given me a novel idea. Suppose we disguise ourselves as guards and just walk cut! They often do it in books."

"Where would we get the disguise?" asks ShelVy.

"Well," says Willis, "You pretend to be ill. I'll call the guard and when he comes in with the doctor we'll overpower them and take their clothes and keys."

"All right," says ShelVy. He lies down on the bed and starts to groan. Willis shakes the cell door and shouts, "WARDER WARDER!"

The guard strolls along the corridor and locks in. "Will you have it in a bucket or a glass?"

"Everyone wants to get in on the act," says Willis coldly. "That pun was beyond the pail. Take a gander at my friend here -- he's sick unto death."

The guard peers into the cell. "He does look a bit thin," he admits. "Needs a shave too. But I'm not going to be taken in by any lying story."

"Take a proper gander," says Willis. "That's a broom you're looking at. There's ShelVy over there."

"Oh," says the guard, "I'd better call the doctor." He moves hastily off. 7

1. The boxing comic strip Joe Palooka always starts off by repeating the last panel of the previous series. 2. Recent mishaps in Confusion. 3. Keasler had so much trouble mailing his fanzines at his local Post Office that he used to cycle out of town with them. He claimed it was "the only border-run fanzine." 4. Bob Silverberg was reported as having said he was half of New York fandom. 5. Well known collectors. 6. Slogan of New York book dealer Frank Schmidt. 7. Shelby is very thin,

# Chapter 8, Oopsla #6.

Half an hour passes and the guard has still not returned.

"Looks as if he isn't coming back," says Willis. "We'd better try something else. Now, what would a vanVogt hero do? But of course, he'd construct a deadly weapon from the simple materials as his disposal."

"We've got a dry cell?" says ShelVy hopefully. 1

Willis ponders for a moment and then produces a screwdriver from his pocket. Deftly he removes the front of the wall switch and examines the wiring.

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?" asks ShelVy nervously. "Shouldn't you be wearing rubber gloves or something?"

"I didn't come here to be insulated," says Willis coldly. "Of course I know what I'm doing." He makes some delicate adjustments to the wiring with long sensitive fingers.

There is a blue flash and every light in the Greater New York area goes out. Willis

reels back wringing a long sensitive finger. "I must have done something wrong," he says regretfully. "If only I'd had that April 1943 ASF with the last part of "The Weapon Makers..." He is still wringing his finger when the door opens and the guard calls: "Did I hear scmeone ringing?"

"Yes," says Willis, "it was my finger. The skin is pealing. I hope you brought the doctor?"

"I couldn't find him", says the guard, "so I brought the nurse instead."

By the moonlight shining through the cell window ShelVy and Willis can discern a tall and pretty brunette standing at the door.

"Come in," says the guard, "The lights should be on any minute -- every available electrician is working on it."

"Many hands make light work," mutters Willis. 2

The nurse comes in, sniffing at the air. "What's the matter?" she asks, "Somebody dead?"

"Not yet," says the guard, glaring at Willis. "My patience may be exhausted, but yours is over there on the bed."

The nurse bends over ShelVy. "My Goodness," she says, "This man looks as if he's at death's door. But I'll pull him through." She reaches down the neck of her blouse and produces one after another a selection of small bottles. ShelVy watches with admiration. "That where you keep your medicines?" he asks.

"Yes," she says, "This is my medicine chest."

"Well," lears ShelVy, "If you ever get a cold on it, remember I'm Vick."

Meanwhile Willis has been circling round the guard, and now sticks his screwdriver in his back, shouting "HANDS UP!" Taken aback, the guard obeys. "Now drop your gun," says Willis, "or I've got something here that's just the thing for obstinate screws."

3 The guard drops the gun. Willis picks it up and puts his screwdriver back in his pocket with a sigh of relief. Shelvy changes clothes with the guard, then ties him up and dumps him on the bed.

"Now, "says ShelVy to the nurse.

"NO, no," she cries, blushing.

"Yes, yes," says ShelVy. "We are desperate fen, and we don't care what we do. We correspond with Max Keasler and everything. I tell you, we stop at nothing."

"Don't be shy," says Willis, "I'll cover you with my gun."

The nurse takes off her blouse and skirt. "You know," says Willis, "this is the most interesting thing I've seen in America yet. I think when I get out I'll go on a lecher tour of the United States."

"Careful," warns ShelVy. "Don't forget Russ Watkins has subbed to this issue."  $\underline{4}$ 

"Oh da---er, bother...yes," says Willis. "All right," he tells the nurse, "That'll do. But it's lucky for you this instalment isn't being printed in Opus." 5

He struggles and puffs his way into the blouse and skirt while the nurse puts on his jacket and pants. Then they tie her up and put her on the other bed.

"Can't you forget about Watkins for once?" appeals the guard. 4

"I say," says Willis, "We can't have these people shouting for help. We'd better think up some way to keep them quiet."

"Well, there's always those old articles of yours," says ShelVy.

"You mean, for the gags in them?" grins Willis. "No, I was thinking more of something like chloroform."

"So was I," mutters ShelVy.

Willis is rummaging among the nurse's bottles. "Here we are," he says, "We've got both chloroform and nitrous oxide. I guess ether will do."

He uncorks the bottle and sets to work. "What a horrible smell," he says. "Reminds me of that bad spell of diphtheria I had."  $\underline{6}$ 

"Well, that's that," he says finally. "Now all we have to do is walk quietly out."

1. In vanVogt's "The Changeling" the hero made his escape from captivity by making a beat bomb out of a 1½ volt dry cell. 2. This pun was donated by Bob Shaw. 3. Criminal slang for prison warder. 4. Fandom's current controversy was Russ Watkins' "Clean Up Fandom Crusade". 5. The Keasler zine which succeeded 'Fanvariety' after the latter was pilloried in Amazing for alleged indecency. 6. Peter Graham's "Willis Death Hoax" announced that I had died from "diptheria" — spelt that way.

# Chapter 9, Fantasias, Special Issue.

"Now," says Willis, "All we have to do is walk quietly out."

He unlocks the cell door with the guard's keys and is opening it slowly and noise-lessly when there is a sound of rushing feet in the corridor and several men in prison guard uniform burst into the cell. Before Vick and Willis can utter a word they are gagged and bound by six of the strangers while the rest carry out the unconscious guard and nurse. The leader pauses dramatically on the threshold. "If anyone asks you who rescued Willis and Vick," he says proudly, "tell them it was Harlan Ellison and the Cleveland Science Fantasy League. That'll show Ken Beale. 1 It's not every fan group would have thought of overpowering some of the guards and taking their uniforms."

He has barely finished his triumphant speech when he is knocked flat on his face by a rush of his followers back into the cell. They are engaged in a fierce hand to hand struggle with another group in guards' uniforms. After a grim battle the Cleveland fans are all either unconscious or bound and gagged and the newcovers have captured the guard and nurse and are bearing them triumphantly away. The leader pauses drematically on the threshold "If anyone asks you who rescued Willis and Vick," he says, "Tell them it was Allen Newtown and the Baltimore Science Fiction Forum. That'll show Dave Hammond. 2 It's not every fan group would----" He breaks off at the sound of running feet in the corridor.

Two hours and six fan groups later the cell is piled high with bodies and fighting is still going on in the corridor. Willis and Vick have given up trying to get the gags out of their mouths and are communicating with each other, and relieving their feelings, by kicking the hot water pipes, "I thought the Michigan Fantasy League put on

the best show," taps out Willis reflectively. "So far," agrees ShelVy. "I never realized there were so many fan clubs. I wish there was a bit more co-ordination between them...."

He breaks off at the sound of a pleasant female voice in the corridor. "Unless my natural born shellpink-type earbones deceive me," it says, "I is heared fan-critters talking Morse! They is along here somewhere."

The door opens to reveal Lee Hoffman, Manly Banister, Henry Burwell, Dick Ryan, Gregg Calkins, Dave English and Dave Ish. 3 They are all clad in guards' uniforms, and Manly Banister carries a dowsing rod. 4 Lee Hoffman looks in alarm at the heaps of recumbent and unconscious fans. "Reminds me of Room 770," she says. "Manly," she goes on, "Us is gone to require your Walter-diviner again."

Manly grips his hazel twig and picks his way among the bodies. It dips down over Willis, still clad in the nurse's clothes. "Oh no!" cries Lee, "Don't tell me WAW is a girl! No one could be so deceitful!"

"The rod never lies," says Manly gravely. "Lets's take the gag out of her mouth and see what she has to say,"

As soon as the gag is removed Willis starts talking, but they have to remove ShelVy's gag before they understand the situation. "The way I see it," says ShelVy, "is that every fan club in the East has found its way into the Chateau in the darkness, over-powered some of the guards, and stolen their uniforms. The whole prison must be chonk full of fans in guards' uniforms trying to rescue us and fighting each other, while the real guards are all locked in the cells. Just listen to that noise below; it sounds like a convention. We'll have to go down and explain."

They untie the other fans in the cell and venture out into the corridor, where they make peace between the Philadelphia Science Fantasy Society and the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization. Then they make their way down to the entrance hall of the Chateau, from which most of the noise seems to be coming.

The place is a milling throng of fans, all shouting and fighting. The noise is so great that they cannot make themselves heard. "I wish we had Moskowitz here," says Ryan, "or at least a stick of dynamite. Anything to attract their attention."

As they are wondering what to do the main door of the Chateau opens and two mailmen stagger in with a huge box. They dump it just inside the door and stand mopping their foreheads.

"What's in it?" asks Burwell curiously.

"Don't know," gasps one of the men, "but it must weigh a blooming ton."

"Hmmm," says Burwell, "The postmark is Illinois, And here's a number, 280, scratched out and 702 written over it." 5

"Open it!" cries Hoffman.

They throw open the lid. At first the box seems to be full of straw, with an occasional brick here and there, but they have hardly removed the top laywer of straw when an alarm clock goes off somewhere inside. Suddenly Bob Tucker's head appears. He scrambles out, removing the straw from his hair and rubbing his head where he struck it on a brick.  $\underline{6}$ 

"Ha!" he gloats, "I made it."

He peers at the figures standing around him in the dim light.

"Who are you?"

"Well," says ShelVy, pointing out Lee Hoffman in her guard's uniform and close-cropped hair, "This is Lee Hoffman."

"HAW!" sneers Tucker, "You can't tell me that. Here boy," he says contemptuously, "Sign your name." He gives her a copy of SFNL 7 and a pencil. Lee signs her name and hands it back, 8

"There," says Tucker, "I told you you couldn't fool---- My Ghod! It is her signature." He stares at it incredulously. "A dcuble hoax!" As the full enormity of it strikes him he sits down weakly on the box.

"Ah well," he says after a few moments, "Who are the rest of you."

"Well," says ShelVy, indicating Willis, still in the nurse's clothes. "This is Walt Willis."

"OH NO!" cries Tucker. With a terrible expression on his face he silently hands Willis the SFNL and pencil. Willis signs his name and hands them back.

Tucker examines the signature. Then without a word he creeps back inside his box and pulls the lid down after him.

"Who was that?" asks Willis.

"That was Tucker, The Man Himself," says Hoffman.

"The name seems familiar," says Willis. "Not the Bob Tucker who had the story in "Probability Zero" in the April 1943---- 9

Suddenly they are all thrown to the ground by a terrific explosion.

"Atomic war?" asks English, scrambling to his feet.

"Worse then that," gasps Ish, who has dashed outside to have a look. "It's Ben Singer and some of the Michifans. They've let off a bomb outside the Chateau and blown half of it to FAPA." 10

"That's torn it," says Burwell, "We'll have the police down on us in a minute."

Sure enough the scream of police and fire brigade sirens can already be heard in the distance.

<sup>1.</sup> A current critic of the Cleveland group. 2. A current critic of the Baltimore group. 3. Principal supporters of Shelby's "WAW With The Crew In 52" Fund. 4. At this time Manly Banister was keenly interested in water-divining. 5. Tucker's address had recently been changed from Box 280 to Box 702, Bloomington. 6. In Quandry #19 Tucker drew attention to the high cost of hotel rooms, suggested that fandom should build its own Convention Hotel, and urged every fan to send a brick to the Chicon Committee. In Quandry #20 Rich Elsberry denounced this as a vile pro plot to get free bricks, said that Tucker should make his own, and urged everyone to mail him a bale of straw. (A group of British fans designed this Convention Hotel. The plans were beautifully drawn out by Bob Shaw, presented by me to Tucker at the Chicon and subsequently published in FAPA. The front elevation appeared again recently in Arthur Thompson's

illo on pg 23 of Chick Harris's "Through Darkest Ireland", illustrating an abandoned hotel we thought would be ideal for Conventions. A nice example of fannish time-binding.) 7. New name for Tucker's Bloomington Newsletter. 8. Until Lee Hoffman appeared at the Nolac on fandom thought she was a boy and Tucker refused to believe her identity until she signed her name for him. 9. After the famous "Michigan Bomb Plot" in which some local fans let off a small bomb in front of Arthur Rapp's house, blowing out the front room window and bringing in the police, Rapp discontinued Spacewarp as a subscription fanzine and retired into FAPA.

# Chapter 10 -- The trial. Confusion, Special Pre-Chicon Issue.

The Case of the State versus Willis and others," calls the Clerk of the Court. He can scarcely be heard above the buzz of conversation from the public galleries.

"Tell the ushers I must have silence," says the Judge. The ushers rush about calling "Ush! Ush!" The crowd peer forward to watch as Willis is brought in, followed by the 300 fans who are being tried as his accomplices. The District Attorney stands up to read the indictment.

"Walter Alexandrew Willis," he says sternly, "You stand accused before this Court that on divers dates within the last seven days----"

"What do you mean, divers dates?" queries Willis. "Mermaids?"

The D.A. ignores him. "---you did feloniously and wilfully commit the following offences, to wit: illegal entry into the country, perjury, blaspheny, resisting arrest, malicious damage, mutiny, assault, attempted suicide----"

"Attempted suicide?" asks Willis puzzled.

"Making fun of Francis Towner Laney," explains the DA. He goes on: "attempting escape, incitement to riot, sabotage, indecent assault, theft, transvestism, AND..."

He takes a deep breath and concludes grimly, "criticising the National Fantasy Fan Federation!" 1

A shocked murmur goes round the Court. Three women faint and are carried out. Eva Firestone is expelled from the public gallery. 2

Order is eventually restored and the trial proceeds. One after another the various witnesses are called and the evidence against Willis piles up. Despite a brilliant speech by his lawyer the case is obviously going against him.

"Mr. Speer," 3 says the Judge, "Does your client wish to give evidence in his own defence?"

"Yes," says Willis.

An interpreter is summoned.

"He says 'Yes'" he reports.

"Thank you Mr. Clarke," 4 says the Judge. "The prisoner may take the stand."

Willis goes into the witness stand. The clerk hands him a book.

"Take the gholy ghible in your right hand and repeat after me," he says.

"After me. After me. After me. After----" says Willis.

"Not that," says the Clerk impatiently, "I meant the oath."

"Sorry," says Willis. "Carry on."

The Clerk reads the cath. "I had one grunch..."

"I had one grunch," says Willis.

"But the eggplant over there."

"But the eggplant over there," says Willis. 5

"So help me Ghu."

"So help me Roscoe," says Willis.

"Ghu," says the Clerk. "Roscoe," says Willis.

"Hhu! Ghu!" says the Clerk crossly.

"Baby talk!" sneers Willis. "I refuse to swear by the name of the false ghod Ghu. Furthermore," he goes on recklessly, "I refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of this court or any other run on the ghuist principles. Roscoe is the only true Ghod."

"You realise the consequences of this?" asks the Judge gravely.

"Yes," says Willis proudly, "Ghu is a creature of Oscar the Malevolent Muskrat." 6
The jury retire and bring in a verdict of guilty on all the counts of the indictment.

"Walter Alexandrew Willis," says the Judge, "Have you any last request to make before I pass sentence of death?"

"I was hoping you'd ask me that," says Willis. "Could I have the April 43 ASF? I'd like to finish "The Weaponmakers' before I die."

"Hmmm," says the Judge, "What twicers have you got?"

"Which one do you want?" counters Willis.

"July '40?" asks the Judge hopefully.

"No," says Willis regretfully, "James White needs that one too."

"You'll just have to think of something else," says the Judge. "I could let you have a coplete file of OCTWA." 7

"Isn't there a law against cruel and unnatural punishments?" protest Willis indig-

"Never going to get rid of that," mutters the Judge crossly to himself. Aloud he goes on, "There's nothing else you want?"

"No," says Willis.

"In that case," says the Judge solemnly, "nothing remains for me but to pass sentence." He dons the black beanie. "Prisoner at the bar," he intones sternly, "you are hereby condemned to be taken from this Court to the place of excecution and there to undergo death by nausea through exposure to "Fantastic Science Fiction". And may Ghu have mercy on your soul."

Willis blenches, but remains silent until the guards begin to lead him away. Then he suddenly turns back to the Judge. "Would you," he begs, "ask the Prison Governor to

make sure that my Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate is buried with me?" 9

There is a hushed silence.

"What did you say?" asks the Judge.

"My Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate," says Willis. He produces it from the lining of his jacket.

"You mean," says the Judge incredulously, "You is a genooine certificated honorary

swamp critter?"

"Is," says Willis modestly. He hands the certificate up to the Judge, who examines it respectfully.

"Well, dagnab and rowrbazzle'" exclaims the Judge, "This is sho 'nuff a genooine

natural-born Honorary Swamp Critter Certificate! Lookee."

He shows it to the jury. There is a murmur of awed admiration as the great names are recognized: Cherchez la Hoffman, Rinocerwurtz of the Macauleys, Heinrich de Burwell, Sarcophagous Macguthrie, J.F. (Bewitched) Streinz, Seminole Sam Thomas Esq., Alabaster Jacks, J. Wiley Cat Burge, Faul D. Cox (conoscor of fancy fried catfish), Jay Tadpole Liver, Bob Farnham and Roger (Rowrbazzle) Aycock. (Printed by Vernon McCain.) 10

The judge beams at Willis. "Whuffo you not tell this hyer court yo was a honorary swamp critter, suh?" he whispers. "Could have saved all those heavydents." He raises his voice. "Honorary Swamp Critter Willis," he declaims, "yo is hereby discharged without a stain on you character. This Court apollygises for you inconvenients."

"What about all these other fans?"asks Willis. "They is all for Pogo."

"They is all freed," says the Judge magnanimously. "And furthermone in reckonpence for the wrong this Court is done you I hereby donates you this little ol' Chateau d'IF for yo personal use for as long as you stay in these Uninety States of the US & A, and for any time you come again."

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of this building free of all charge to fandom for the holding of all future Conventions, conclaves and conferences, thus making them independent of the Tucker Hotel. Of course," he murmurs thoughtfully, "it looks as if they'll have to have me over here before they can use it...."

1. Some of the leaders of N3F at this time were showing considerable sensitivity to criticism ... 2. Including Eva Firestone. 3. Oldtime fan Jack Speer is now a lawyer. 4. Ving Clarke was quite confident no one in the States would be able to understand me. 5. This phrase comes from Roger Price's "In One Head And Out The Other", a book which was popular in fandom at the time. Price's character Clayton Slope "had a clever trick of saying any conceivable sentence so that it sounded like, 'I had one grunch but the eggplant over there'" Hence the title of Ving column in Hyphen ('Grunch'), the subtitle of my Chicon report in Quandry ('Over There With Grunch and Eggplant') and other fannish allusions. Incidentally on the ship I went to the States on, a Greek one, one of the prominent items on the lunch menus was... eggplants. 6. This is the evil deity in the Roscoe theology. 7. Out Of This World Adventures, the promag with the built-in comic section. It lasted two issues, for the information of students of Comic Sections. 8. Probably the most tasteless and obnoxious promag over published, (One issue this one lasted, thereby proving it is possible to lose money by underestimating the public's taste.) 9. This was a certificate Lee Hoffman sent me in December 1951, signed by all the Georgia fans who were like most fans of the time keen admirers of Pogo. It was published in Q17 with a speech of acceptance, and the original hangs on the wall at Oblique House. I used to put the letters HSC after my name, until Lee and I went to the Okefenokee Swamp in September 1952 and sent poctsareds to all our friends (dipped in swamp water) and I signed them 'SC'. With 7th Fandom and MAD (the comic that is) Pogo lost his exclusive hold on fandom's affections. 10. Signatories and imprimatur of The Certificate.

THE END

Dear Shelly,

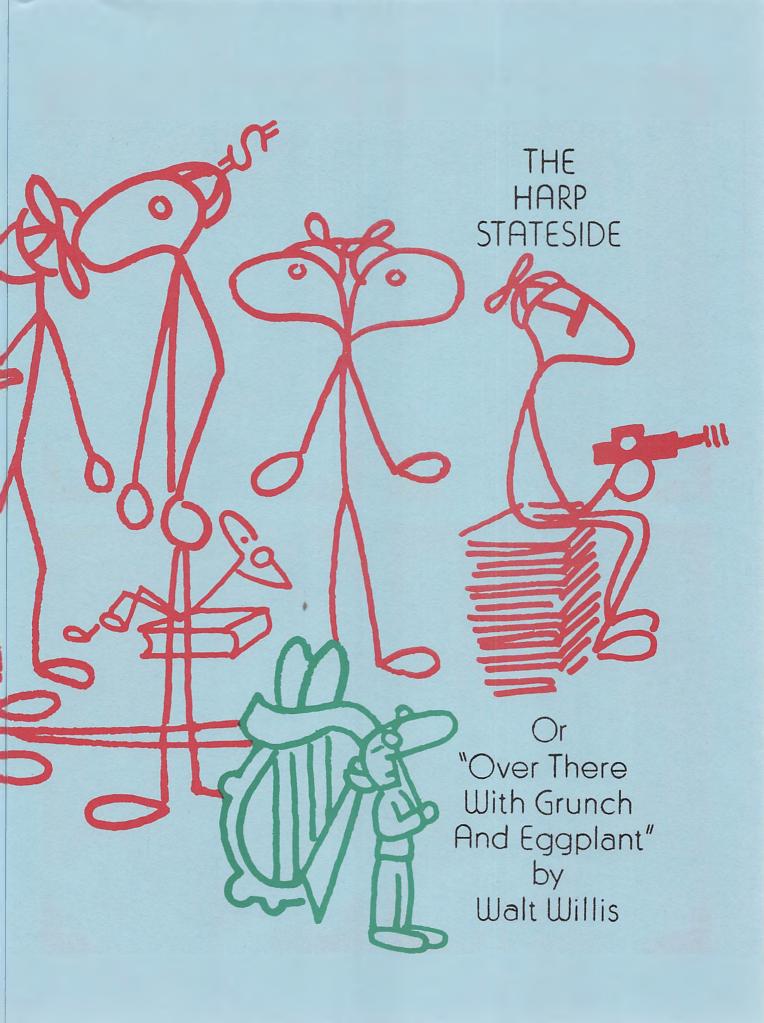
Huh!!!!!????? Me at the Nolacon? My imagination boggles, and I can tell you it takes a lot to make my imagination do that. In fact I just can't get on top of the idea at all. I am incoherent. But calming down for a moment, I can see that in the first place there would hardly be time to organize even such a worthy project and in the second place I would hardly win the Most Popular Foreign Fan Contest. Not this year anyway! (My money would be on Ken Slater at the moment...) So I don't think it's very likely that I'll be strolling along Basin Street this September, at which I am almost relieved. Almost. It has been my secret fanlife ambition to attend an American Convention, but I can't help thinking the awful thought that once the delegates get a good look at me they'd be trampling over themselves to get their money back. However Forry told me he was trembling like an aspirin at his first Con where he had to make a speech and look where he is now. Maybe in a year or so I would have the self-confidence for it, though it would be worse thinking that all those people had paid for you and were expecting something for their money. But all this is beside the point, which is that in any case I don't see how I could manage it this year (complications connected with my job) even if by some miracle the idea came off.

In any case, many, many thanks, Shelby, for such a wonderful thot. Believe me I'd give ten years of my life to just be in New Orleans and meet you and Lee. It was awfully nice of you to think of me and I really do appreciate it. I swear that some time before

I slide into dotage I will come over there and shake that sunburned hand of yours.

Sincerely, Wall July 31, 1951.







#### PART I

It seemed to me at the time that it had all started with an innocent remark I'd made at the end of a report on the '51 London Convention in the Quannish... "Sometime it might happen, though I don't know how, that I might attend an American Convention and see how it should be done..." Anyhow, the next thing I knew, Shelby Vick had started a whirlwind campaign to import me for the Nolacon the same year. After it had been whirling for a couple of weeks he remembered to write and tell me about it. This was only a month before the Nolacon and I figured it was just a fine piece of faunish foolishness, best nipped in the bud before it gave anyone any trouble. I airmailed Shelby that I couldn't get away: though of course I could have. In fact, knowing Shelby as I do now, I sometimes wonder if I mightn't have got to the Nolacon after all.

After that blew over I assumed the thing was finished. You know what fan projects are...or were. Though it was pleasant to think that even a couple of people had had such a nice idea, and I began to toy with the thought that maybe if I fanned hard and saved lots of money I might get to South Gate in '58. But of course it was only a vague dream, like the way each young faned secretly cherishes the thought that one day he will get a letter from Street or Smith saying they've been impressed by his editing and has he ever thought of taking it up professionally...

I was still underestimating not only Shelby Vick, but fandom. Manly Banister donated an electric mimeograph for a raffle, the Chicon Committee offered to put me up during the Convention, and leading fans like Lee Hoffman, Gregg Calkins, Forry Ackerman, Dick Ryan, Robert Bloch, Henry Burwell, Ian Macauley, Dave English, G.M. Carr and Dave Ish were behind Shelby. Furthermore, people were actually sending in money. Incredibly, it began to look as if Shelby might bring it off.

I put Slant into suspended animation and began to try to do my bit by writing as much as I could for other fanzines. At one time I was writing a bi-weekly column, a monthly column, regular features in four other fanzines, occasional articles for another dozen or so, and letters of comment on every fanzine that came into the house. In my spare time I had started a mimeoed mag (Hyphen) to keep Slant subscribers quiet and was trying to keep up with my correspondence. It was quite a job for someone who isn't naturally prolific and it got more difficult as time went on and I began to feel as if I was performing in a shop window. Shelby would ask me for a short column and I would sweat out some laboured fragment ... I always find it very difficult to write short articles ... and later I would find to my horror it was being run as a sort of advertisement in some publicity issue, with introductory remarks on the lines of "Look what genius the man has! Wouldn't it be worth paying money to meet him?" It was all very embarrassing and I tried desperately to put over the suggestion that it wasn't me personally that was important so much as the Idea itself. In Shelby's celebration issue of Confusion I ended a message of thanks with "...I happen to have been the accidental focus of the first concerted and successful effort of science fiction fandom. It shows that fandom today is more capable and greater in every way than it has ever been. If it can do so much for one ordinary member of it, what couldn't it do for something really worth while?"

It still seems that way to me. Shelby's Fund was the first successful attempt to bring a fan across the Atlantic (there had been previous attempts but the amount raised had been negligible) and it led directly on to the Transatlantic Fan Fund.

One of my attempts to discount the propaganda for me personally and to prepare fandom for what I regarded as the inevitable anticlimax was the following piece I wrote for one of Shelby's publicity issues. I thought I might quote it here because although it was supposed to be funny it will give you a pretty good idea of the way I was feeling...

# WILLIS VIGITS CHICAGO (A Nightmare)

The Deputy Chairman rises to call for order. He announces that he is pleased to introduce the famous...er.. (he consults a scrap of paper) Walt Willis, editor of ... er . . . (another look at the scrap of paper) Slant. There are confused murmurs. ("Who's he? What's Slant? Must be one of those "fanzines".") You can hear the inverted commas. A tall figure trips down to the stage, falling over Bloch, Korshak, Evans, Eshback and Tucker, in that order. They curse him for knocking the cards out of their hands. The tall figure climbs onto the stage. Shelby Vick presents him with the scroll of contributors and leads him over to the microphone stand. He gives a dazed look at the audience, unscrews Shelby's bow tie and tries to pull his head up. Shelby hastily points him at the microphone and retreats. He grasps at the real microphone like a drowning man at a straw and succeeds in knocking it over. Three members of the audience are given treatment for perforated eardrums and the public address system is never quite the same again. He drops the scroll and picks up the microphone, steadying it very carefully. Then he bends down to pick up the scroll. Out of his breast pocket there tumbles a pen, two pencils, a sheaf of notes, a comb and a screwdriver. They rattle about the stage. He stoops forward to pick them up and knocks the microphone over again. The entire platform party hurry forward to help him. Finally he is propped up against the microphone and the scroll tucked under his left arm. He clears his throat. Some of those who have already heard him talking think he has started his speech and clap encouragingly. He feels in his breast pocket and realizes to his horror that he has stuffed his notes into some other pocket. Confusedly he starts to look. The scroll pokes him in the eye. He puts it carefully on the floor with a silly apologetic grin at Shelby Vick and goes through his pockets. The audience crane forward expectantly. "Sonjuring tricks, eh? This is new." After transferring articles frantically from one pocket to another for some time he realizes that this is getting him nowhere. He begins systematically to empty his pockets. The audience watch, fascinated. An interesting little heap grows on the stage. A complete file of Slant, on which he places his cigarettes and matches so that it won't blow away, a handkerchief, a copy of Galaxy, keys, a knife, a revolver, a life insurance policy (you can't tell him anything about Chicago), mars, aspirins, money, a magnifying glass, a packet of sandwiches, fourteen fanzines, half a cubic foot of lettuce (he hates lettuce, but he doesn't like to hurt people's feelings), a half eaten bar of chocolate, a list of addresses, a notebook, the Convention Program and a pair of socks. But no notes. No white rabbit either, in spite of the lettuce: the audience is bitterly disappointed. They have got nothing on Willis. He stuffs everything back into one pocket and, carefully avoiding the microphone, picks up the scroll again. He unrolls it, looking for inspiration. The first thing he notices is the names of three fans whom he has dreadfully insulted in his last column. There are now three layers of blush on his face. Even his goosepimples have goosepimples. As he lets go the bottom end of the scroll it whirs up madly like a roller blind and strikes him smartly on the chin. This seems to give the audience ideas. In desperation he starts to say something -- anything. The audience calms for a moment, and then begins to look around for headphones such as delegates to UN meetings are provided with. Shelby makes apologetic gestures. The speaker stumbles on, his unconscious fingers methodically tearing the beautiful scroll into tiny pieces. Shelby looks round for the nearest exit. The audience looks ugly. The platform party looks ugly. Bea Mahaffey makes a hopeless attempt. Sinister murmurings are heard, and fans dash along the aisles to cut off Shelby's retreat. Willis wishes the ground would open up and swallow him.

Willis is never seen again, but some sixty years later a frail old man tucks some money into an envelope with shaking fingers and strikes off the last name on a long list. The pen drops from his palisied fingers and he crumples back in the

bed with a peaceful expression on his face. His debt is paid at last. Mrs. Vick mournfully draws the sheets over his face.

### 2: Blues of the Berth

Round about April Shelby and I began to think it was time we started making some tentative enquiries about berths and things. We knew there was more to crossing the Atlantic than going down to the seaside and waving to a boat to stop, but we didn't know how much more.

We found out.

We approached a few travel agents and were rather startled to find that passages were scarce. How were we to know that most people apparently have their berths booked before the ship's keel is laid down? However we figured that among all those hordes of boats there would be surely room for one little fan; we asked the agents to see what they could do and I set about the other formalities.

There was no trouble getting a passport -- apparently the British Government had no objection at all to getting rid of me -- but when it came to the visa the US Government weren't so accommodating. First they refused to let me even start applying until I had my tickets. (I should maybe explain that the first step in getting a visa is to apply for a form applying for permission to obtain a form on which to apply for a visa. This is literally true. As you can see, they don't stand at the window and throw handfuls of them into the street.) What a nerve, I thought. Am I supposed to spend a fortune buying tickets just on the off chance that I might be allowed to use them? I suspected that the whole thing was a racket between the Consulate and the travel agents. Every day thousands of innocent people ask the Consulate for visas and are told to go and buy their tickets first. As soon as they've trustingly planked down their money, the agent calls the Consulate and says, "OK boys, another sucker on the way." When he comes in the Consulate turns down the poor wretch because he's wearing a red tie or parts his hair on the left side or something. ("Reason for refusal of visa: shady leftish character with communist ties.") Then they split the money with the travel agent. I suspected the cloakroom in that office was just full of mink coats. However I persuaded the agent to perjure himself by giving me a letter to the effect that he was getting me the tickets, and talked the Consulate into accepting it. That took about two hours, off and on, and in the intervals between interviews I read through the Seams Roebuck catalogue and the Christian Science Monitor, which they have there presumably to demonstrate the American Way of Life. Eventually a pretty girl came along and held my hand, which would have been quite nice if she hadn't kept sticking my fingers onto an inkpad and a piece of paper describing me as an alien.

I humored them in their delusion, grudgingly promised not to overthrow the American Government by force of arms, and in due course got my visa. Now all I had to do was get a smallpox injection and a ticket.

All! If I'd been given smallpox instead of being protected against it I couldn't have had more trouble with the travel agents. Time began to run out and hope to evaporate. Shelby's was the first to give up: they told him there was absolutely no prospect of a berth. My own had been fairly confident of a last resort called The Greek Line, which was evidently regarded among the trade as slightly better than walking on the sea bed, but abruptly even this possibility faded. It seemed the only thing was to fly. Shelby postponed a dental operation he needed and I sold my collection and we booked a flight by TWA on the 25th August. I wasn't very happy about it because it cost a lot of money and even so it was a Tourist Flight which meant it was all at night and you couldn't see anything, but I was reconciled to it.

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Not so were TWA. About a week later they wrote casually to explain that they found they were booked up round the 'desired date': however, they went on gaily, they were booking me for a flight on the 7th September.

That would get me to the States just a couple of days after the Convention. It was now the beginning of August. I copied from the City Directory the address of every travel agent in town, took the day off work and trudged round from one to another. It was a miserable day. They all looked at me as if I had asked for a tourist berth to Alpha Centauri. Some of them practically rolled on the floor in hysterical laughter. I felt they were just waiting till I left to phone their friends "You'll never guess what someone just asked for!"

I got home late, tired and unhappy. As a last desperate gesture I wrote a special delivery letter to the Head Office of the Greek Line in London, enclosed a mass of stamps for a reply by telegram, and went out and posted it. Next afternoon I got a telegram offering me a cheap berth to New York and back. I wish I'd kept the carbon of that letter; it must have been a masterpiece.

First thing in the morning I was down at the travel agency, clutching the telegram. The man came up to me with professional commiseration. "Not a thing, Mr. Willis," he said lugubriously, "I checked with The Greek Line only yesterday. They're full up." I handed over the telegram without a word. He read it three times and slunk away to get the forms. I filled them up, handed over the money, and then made him call London and confirm the reservation. Then I went off to the Western Union office to cable the good news to Shelby. After that I telegrammed the Greek Line Office myself. I had given up trusting travel agents.

## 3: Fits and Starts

The boat, the SS Neptunia was due to call at Cobh, a port at the other end of Ireland, some time on Monday the 18th of August. The last few days were like that spaceship factory in "When Worlds Collide", except that we hadn't had time to make a schedule to be behind in. And then we found it would take two days instead of one to get to Cobh, Sunday transport in Ireland being what it is. It was as if Bellus had sent a postcard to say he'd be dropping in a day earlier.

But at last all the articles and letters were written, the Hyphen stencils cut r and mailed to Chuck Harris and the debris tidied up. The pressroom hadn't looked so tidy since before fandom happened to it and it thought it was the laboratory. On that last night James came up to say goodbye and we stood on the front lawn talking. about how far we'd come since we entered fandom and how far I was going to go.

Next day there began my grim struggle with the transport systems of the world.

The first skirmish was comparatively mild, a mere matter of the train being full... there'd been some motor races at Belfast I hadn't known about...and my having to wait three hours in a queue while the railway people scoured the country collecting coaches for a special train. They must have put completists on the job, for when it was finally assembled that train was the longest I have ever seen. I think they were charging the people up front half fare. It was also the slowest. I don't know what devious route it took to get to Dublin, but I know I never heard of any stations called Omsk or Tomsk, or even Nijni-Novogorod, on the usual line. About midnight, some ten hours later, I got into Dublin; a hotel tout sent me to an Unapproved hotel, where I spent the night in such a Terribly Strange Bed I felt like Wilkie Collins getting between the covers of another weird tales anthology.

The train for Cork left at llAM next morning and since it was the only train

that day and there was just no other way of getting to Cork, I decided to be in plenty of time. Besides it was a lovely morning and Dublin looked specially beautiful in the early summer sunshine. I walked to the station and got there about 9:20. At 9:40 the station opened. At 9:50 a train came into the platform. At exactly 10:00 it steamed out again, leaving me behind. For a long terrible moment memories flashed through my brain of countless disastrous confusions caused by differences between Eire and Northern Ireland timetables during the period of British Summer Time: but then the train stopped and the cleaners got on. Nevertheless as soon as it got back I got on to it, just to make sure.

It was another slow journey to Cork, through stations with quaint names like Sallins, Borris in Ossory, Ballybrophy, Gentleman, Glonoulty, Ballagh, Sallon Bar, Knocklong, Gentlemen, Buttevant, Mallow, Blarney, Refreshmentroom, and finally Cork. It was now 4:30 and I had to report to the shipping agents in Cobh at 6:30. Still innocent of the malignant fate that was dogging my footsteps, I asked what time was the next train to Cobh. 6:30. I went to the bus stop outside the station looking for information. The queue was eager to help. Regretfully, they couldn't offer me a bus to Cobh direct, but they went into a conference under a huddle of umbrellas (Irish weather was back to normal) and issued a statement to the effect that I could get a bus to a place called Monkstown on the other side of the estuary and take the ferry to Cobh. Would get me to Cobh in half an hour, they announced confidently.

One hour later I get off the Monkstown bus at a windswept huddle of cottages and looked round for the ferry. All I could see through the driving rain and spray was a little stone jetty running or rather staggering out to sea, and a small boy sheltering in a tin hut. I asked him where the ferry was and he pointed out to sea. At first I couldn't discern anything but more rain and spray, but then suddenly there it was. Lifted briefly into view on the crest of a tidal wave was a tiny rowing boat, manned...if that is the word...by two little boys. I stared at it as it bobbed in and out of sight. "That's the ferry," I said. It wasn't a question. I just knew it was. "Yes", said the boy, "That's the ferry."

I looked at the ferry for almost ten minutes, but I still couldn't make up my mind about one little point. "Is it coming or going?" I asked finally.

"Coming", said the boy. "It'll be here in about fifteen minutes." He seemed to feel that some sort of explanation was due and added comfortingly: "The proper ferry gave up when the storm started and these fellows don't know much about it."

I felt that explained a lot. "A bit rough today," I said casually after a while. "Yes," said the boy, "This will likely be their last trip." I thought so too, but I wouldn't have been so callous about it.

However there was always the chance that they would make it, and I thought I'd better get my bearings. "Is that Cobh?" I asked, pointing to three whitewashed cottages on the far shore. It seemed rather small to be a port of call for transatlantic liners, but then nothing surprises me in Ireland. "No," said the boy, "Cobh is four miles further along. But you can get the train there." I saw it coming, but I let him read his punch line. "What time is the train?" I asked, as if I didn't know. "It leaves Cork at 6:30," he said innocently.

Thinking regretfully of another probability world in which I was waiting for that very same train in a warm bar in Cork, I turned back to the ferry. For a long while I could have sworn the little boys were losing ground and I was expecting them to turn back. I was hoping they would turn back. I was praying they would turn back. I do hate to see people drowned, especially anyone as near and dear to me as me.

But at last they reached the jetty. One of them held onto it grimly and looked expectantly at me. "Do you want to live forever?" I asked myself. Ignoring the small internal voice that answered "Yes!" I threw one suitcase down into the boat and lifted the other one up onto it. Then, catching the beat on the way down again like an express elevator, I lurched in and collapsed among bits of wet rope and rusty bailing cans. As we got out from the comparative shelter of the jetty I put my feet on the suitcases to stop them falling overboard and held on to the sides of the boat with both hands. It wasn't a very long journey, if you didn't count the distance we went up and down, and to my surprise we arrived on the other side. I'd even managed to keep my head from dipping in the water when the boat rolled. They asked sixpence for the fare. I reflected that life must be cheap in these parts and gave them a shilling. I wouldn't have gone through that again for a thousand pounds. This is one Irishman who has ceased to believe in ferries.

I set off along the road to Cobh, determined to try my thumb at hitchhiking. I was quite pleased with myself for getting a lift from the very first car that passed, until it turned out to be a taxi. However it got me to Cobh five minutes before deadline, and the agent even put me on to an hotel which had room available in the middle of the holiday season. I found out why. It was an incredible place, even for rural Ireland. In the lounge there were not only the usual antimacassars, aspidistrae and photographs of very dead relatives, but also 37 vases...I counted them... about a million other pieces of highly breakable bric-a-brac, two stopped grandfather clocks, and an acoustic gramophone with a pre-electric recording of John McCormick singing "Silver Threads Among The Gold". I didn't play it. It wasn't that sort of place. Probably the gramophone had been bought by granduncle Timothy, the black sheep of the family, in a particularly wild moment: it had only been played once and half the family had died from the excitement, at the moment shown by the stopped clocks. Now their portraits glared down at the devilish contraption.

When she was showing me to my room the old woman who owned the joint asked me did I drink. Being short of money, I said no thanks. "That's good," she said unexpectedly, "because I draw the line at drink." She seemed to draw the line at, and under, almost everything. She came into the lounge that evening at 10:30, when I was writing a letter to Madeleine, and told me it was time to go to bed. I'd advise Cobh fandom to look elsewhere when they decide to hold a convention.

I finished my letter in my bedroom, cheered up by a friendly black kitten I found in my bed, and who wakened me in the morning by walking gently over my face. As a substitute for both hot water bottle and alarm clock he did a wonderful job. Somebody should train hundreds of black kittens and put the manufacturers out of business.

# 4: The Soul of Music Shed

Next afternoon I was in the big Customs shed looking curiously at the other passengers. It seemed there were other people going to America too. Most of them seemed to be returning Americans, mainly middle-aged women, By the expressions on their faces, and some they used in conversation, it seemed that some of them were a bit disillusioned about Ireland. Looking round, I thought it was no wonder. It was still raining and the Customs shed was cold and dreary, with the atmosphere of guilt that always hangs around these places. Outside was the shabby town of Cobh and the riffraff of souvenir sellers and tip-hungry porters that infests tourist spots. I began to feel ashamed. After all, I thought, what has Ireland got that people should come thousands of miles for Nothing but rain, ruins and a lot of wet scenery. I resolved I wouldn't ask anyone what they'd thought of Ireland so as not to put too great a strain on their politeness.

And then, suddenly, the old country made a comeback. It was totally unfair,

illogical and unreasonable, but Ireland managed to redeem itself with one casual thoughtless gesture. A strolling musician with an accordeon unexpectedly appeared in the locked customs shed and began to play "Come Back To Erin". The place was suddenly full of music and everything was changing. It wasn't just a nondescript shed any more, it was Ireland and we were all leaving it. Even I felt the sadness of it, and I was going to come back. Some of the women began to cry quietly and the Customs officials stopped trying to behave with English efficiency, substituting for brusque enquiries about dutiable goods, kind words and little jokes in their soft Cork brogue. If the entire resources of the Irish Tourist Board had been directed to produce this flood of sentiment they couldn't have done better...and yet it was characteristic of the country that it was all lone in spite of authority, not because of it. I asked the musician later how he'd managed to get past the guards at the door and he said he'd pretended to be drunk. It might not have been a particularly cunning ruse in any other country, but it worked here.

The tender that was to take us out to The Neptunia was over an hour late starting and when we got to the rendezvous out at sea the ship wasn't there. I was coming to expect this sort of thing. Eventually a speck on the horizon developed into a big and rather shabby looking ship. We went up the gangplank into a couple of hours of utter confusion, caused partly by the fact that the Company seemed to have sold half the berths in the ship twice over, and partly by the fact that ship time was two hours behind ours and nobody had thought to mention it. The result was that the dining rooms were full of hungry and angry passengers looking for food and non-English-speaking waiters perplexedly turning them away with shouts of "zu fruh!" Although the ship was supposed to be Greek it had been built in Holland, registered in Panama (where apparently you can register anything that isn't actually sitting on the sea bed) and was manned almost entirely by Germans. The passengers were about equal parts German, American, Irish and British.

I was too thrilled to settle down that day and spent the rest of it trying to find where everything was, principally my cabin. Every time I let it out of my sight it would nip round to the other side of the ship, but after a while I wore it down and retired victorious.

Next morning the weather had cleared up and I just wandered around looking at the sea and thinking. It was the first time for weeks I'd been able to sit down calmly and think about the trip itself instead of deadlines and timetables and tickets and passports and money. All that was over now and here I was, actually on my way to America. It was still incredible, but it seemed to be happening. Sometimes I felt awed at myself, as if I was somebody else. Sometimes I felt wonderfully elated. Sometimes I just felt like jumping overboard. But there's something very soothing about a world consisting entirely of sea, day after day. For all you know the land might have ceased to exist ... and anyway it all seems less important in a planet which is, you realize, mostly water. You look at the Atlantic beneath you going down for miles and miles and think that it's been there unchanged for millions of years before Man, and maybe no one has ever been over that particular bit before, or ever will be again. I used to go up to the prow of the ship and watch it plunging through the water, or the other end swinging up and down across the curved horizon, and feel the way you do on the top of a high mountain...just you, alone with the planet. It's an awed, mysterious feeling, especially at night, but it does something good to the soul.

# 5: Heads of Oak Are Our Men

On the third day out we had lifeboat drill, a rite which must have been designed by airline saboteurs to frighten thoughtful people into travelling by plane. The idea was that on the code blast from the ship's siren everyone was to dash down to their cabin, don their lifejackets and dash up to the place on the deck indicated

by the notice in their cabin. No doubt in the months following the loss of The Titanic this was taken very seriously, but by now it had degenerated into a meaning-less ritual. In the first place they announced the drill at breakfast, so that lots of people collected their lifejackets immediately afterwards and took them along to their deckchairs; then when the siren went they ambled casually along to their station. If the alarm were to go in the middle of the night the only route they knew from their cabin to there would take them halfway round the ship. But the other defect of the system struck not just at the safety of the passengers but the future of the human race. Take my example for instance. When the siren blew I went to my cabin, picked up my lifejacket and went straight to the place in the corridor where I'd seen a notice with instructions for putting it on, on the way down observing with tolerant pity the struggles of less intelligent passengers caught in the web strapping. Quietly conscious of my own superior intelligence and fitness to live I read keenly through the notice and proceeded calmly to follow its directions.

I couldn't get the dammed thing on. All around me people were beginning to emerge from cabins, correctly attired for shipwreck and eying me curiously as they went past. I was still struggling, knee deep in imaginary water, when the last of them passed and I was left alone in the doomed ship. At last I carried the thing up on deck where, shamefacedly studying the others, I got it on just in time for the Captain's inspection. I found out later that the notice referred to an entirely different type of lifejacket from the one the ship was now supplied with. You see what I mean. Everyone who didn't or couldn't read the notice would have been saved, while the flower of civilized intelligence, namely me, would have perished miserably. I don't think it's right that the lifeboat rule should be "Women, children and morons first."

It wasn't a bad ship as ships go, though it didn't go very fast. It had about the same cruising speed as a bicycle. I didn't mind that it was a sort of ocean dachshund: I loved everything about the voyage and as far as I was concerned it could go on forever. The food was wonderful ... they had everything on the menu, including eggplant...and the further we went the wormer it got, so I spent most of the time sunbathing on the boat deck. If my tan had got any deeper I'd have had to ride on the back of the bus south of St. Louis. I made several friends -- two shopgirls from Brooklyn who'd spent a month in a farmhouse in County Kerry and were crazy about Ireland, a Canadian sculptress who'd been hitchhiking in Europe and North Africa, a sailor from Belfast who was going to join the US Navy, and an English intellectual going to New York to work for a ballet magazine. The last two were both after the Canadian girl and carried on a lively feud the whole time. The intellectual could outtalk the sailor but the latter's brash proletarian self confidence was an impervious defence. The only time I saw him successfully insulted was at the end of the voyage, when we were all packing. The sailor announced in his usual stentorian voice that he had lost his toothbrush. "Perhaps", said the intellectual, "you left it in your mouth?"

The intellectual was also at war with a group of what he persisted in calling "culture-hungry Americans"...a crowd of Greenwich Village types on their way back from Paris and as intellectual as they fake them. He was reinforced by the Canadian girl after one of them worked a classic 'OneUpManship' ploy on her. It was a pretty dark girl who made a fulltime job of being vivacious. She asked the Canadian what she 'did' and when told she sculped she said, "My dear, I tried that, but it came so easy that I gave it up."

They asked me what I did and why I was going to America, the way people do on board ship, and in a reckless moment I told them I was a pulp author going to the States on my dollar earnings, which was the nearest I could get to the truth without a long and complicated explanation involving fandom, fanzines and Shelby Vick.

I defy anyone to explain any of these phenomena in a voyage lasting only eight days. I affected to regard my 'work' with amused contempt, but they had such an awed respect for anyone who actually made money by writing that they would stand around asking me humbly how I thought up plots and so on, and I would give them cynical dissertations about markets and rights and word rates and everything. It was fun. Towards the end of the voyage they asked me was anyone meeting me in New York and I replied, quite truthfully, "Just a few fans." Haw. I wondered sometimes what I'd do if there turned out to be another science fiction fan on the ship, but it seemed pretty unlikely. Admittedly I'd noticed a young man in the lounge reading Lovecraft, but that didn't mean anything.

It did though. I met him again two weeks later in Los Angeles and it turned out to be Allan Hershey, leading Outlander and past President of the LASFS.

# 6: "My God, the place is inhabited!"

Time went drifting by, like the sea, until one morning there was a notice on the bulletin board LANDING IN NEW YORK 5:30AM TOMORROW. I went up to the sharp end of the boat, as we sailors call it, and kept watch all afternoon. We weren't going to sail on past America if I could help it. Round about four o'clock land appeared on the left, a long low strip like a cloudbank. And I was the first to see it! I guess maybe the poor old Captain thought it was a cloudbank, just because it wasn't marked on the map; we can't all have eyesight like mine. Anyhow he didn't evince any interest until some more land appeared an hour later in a different place. It didn't lock so much like a cloudbank and soon it filled the forward horizon and the sea was dotted with ships converging from all points. As darkness fell we were gliding very slowly towards the entrance to New York harbour. Straight ahead was a tiny Statue of Liberty, and on the left the multicolored illuminations of Coney Island. All around were the fast moving lights of car headlamps. Up among the faint stars the lights of downtown Manhattan shone dimly through the heat haze. The water was oily and very calm. Bits of garbage sailed majestically past. The ship slowed to a stop and dropped anchor.

In the sudden silence the American passengers could be heard excitedly pointing out landmarks and calculating how long it would take them to get home and what they would have to eat. The Eritish, on the other hand, were strangely quiet. They stood around as if they were lost. The foreign ship, this immense foreign country that these people thought of as home, it all made them for the first time consider the possibility that they might be the strangers here, the incredible idea that they might be...foreigners. It was all too much for them.

In the bar that night it came to a head. Every previous night the room had been taken over either by the Irish with Ceilidhe music or 'Come-All-Yez' or by the Germans with compah music or yodelling, and the British and Americans had just sat quietly and watched their antics. But on this last night the Americans began to sing. They started with Stephen Foster tunes and cowboy songs and worked their way enthusiastic. ally along to modern dance numbers. As far as the British were concerned this was the last straw. A small group of them in the corner began quietly but defiantly to sing 'Loch Lomond'. This was typically English...there wasn't a Scot among them. They were soon joined by reinforcements from London, the North Country, Wales and all over, and sang Ilkley Moor and Cockles & Mussels and The Lambeth Walk and The Old Kent Road and all the old songs they could think of which reminded them of home, all at the top of their voices. Their repertoire was enlarged by the arrival of comtingents from the Empire -- Canada with Alouette and Australia with Waltzing Matilda -and finally two Frenchmen joined the party. Both the Old World and the New World groups were now bawling as hard as they could, each trying to drown the other. It was a glorious row. The Americans began to lose ground, but at the same time

everyone seemed to run out of songs. The battle degenerated into guerilla warfare, as now and then someone on either side would start a song and find nobody knew the words. (There seemed to be a sort of Geneva Convention that it wasn't fair to sing the same song twice.) The whole odd episode would have petered out in a vague but very real antipathy between the Americans and the others if it hadn't been for an intervention from a totally unexpected quarter. One of a group of three West Indian negroes who'd been sitting unnoticed in the corner began to sing calypso. The whole room sat entranced for a few seconds and then everyone joined in with a roar that must have been heard in New York. It was glorious...and at the time it seemed so right that everyone was suddenly very happy. Even after he had run out of calypsos the West Indian knew more good songs than anyone, and somehow they were all songs that everyone could sing.

About one o'clock in the morning, tired but happy, people began to drift back up on deck. It was incredibly hot and humid, with not a breath of wind on the oily black water. We couldn't face going down to our stuffy cabins. We thought of sleeping on deck, but everything you touched was as damp as if it had been raining, and nobody felt like going to sleep anyway. We stayed up all night, leaning on the ship's rail and talking.

About four o'clock breakfast was being served and the ship was moving again. We passed the Statue of Liberty almost unnoticed in the morning mist (except by the English intellectual who was heard asking cynically what it advertised) and saw the big red sun rise spectacularly behind the Manhattan skyscrapers.

At last we docked, and hordes of officials swarmed on board. I got a letter from Joe Gibson saying he was meeting me and he'd be wearing a blue suit. Eventually the Immigration people got their screening machinery set up and started to process the passengers. All the US subjects sailed smugly through first, and then it was the turn of us aliens. I had a whole deck of documents in an old Galaxy envelope and every time I came to an official I would shuffle them and deal him a hand. If I'd won I'd be allowed to go on to the next table, like a bridge tournament. I'd had some practice in this game already and at last I won the first prize, a clear view of the gangway. I found to my shocked surprise that suddenly there was absolutely nothing to stop me walking ashore. I promptly walked ashore.

# 7: "Well, I declare!"

I was twenty yards down the Customs shed before I realized I had stepped onto American soil without even thinking about it. I was nearly going back to do the thing properly, with appropriately solemn thoughts and perhaps a few quotable words, but I was too glad to have got away from those officials to risk being caught up in the machine again and finding myself on the way back home. So I just made my way to the sign marked 'W', and waited to be claimed.

Someone in a blue suit came up and shook my hand. "Joe Gibson?" I deduced keenly. This was my first utterance on the American continent, and it was a mistake. It was Dave Kyle. It was true that as I had been told there was only one pass allowed per passenger for visitors to the shed, and Joe had got it...but Dave had wangled his way in on a press pass. Joe came along in a few seconds. After a few minutes chat the two revealed conspiratorially that Will Sykora and his henchman Calvin Thomas Beck were lurking outside to meet me. They suggested a cloak and dagger scheme by which they would go out and wait for me a couple of hundred yards outside the shed, while I strolled out by myself past Sykora and Beck, who wouldn't recognise me.

I was thrilled. Nobody could have arranged a more fannish welcome. Not two

minutes in the country and already I was up to my neck in New York fan feuds. Now-ever I temporized; I had nothing personally against Sykora...I had never been able to sort out New York fandom anyway...and I rather wanted to meet such a legendary figure. Besides I knew Shelby had in his innocence asked Beck to meet me.

Fortunately I didn't have to commit myself either way, because in a few minutes the legendary figure himself materialized inside the shed, having finagled a special pass from the Chief of Police at Hoboken, whom he knew. He immediately swept the ground from under Kyle & Gibson's feet by announcing that his side had a car and was willing to take all of us anywhere we liked. Being unable to produce a private helicopter at short notice, the home team had to admit defeat and Kyle retired gracefully to enquire about plane reservations for me to Chicago. I'd wanted to get there before the crowd, and of course the boat had been a day late.

By this time I'd been waiting beside my luggage for some time but no one seemed to be taking any interest in it. For the first time I looked around me and about half a mile down the shed there was an enormous and ominous queue. I set off down to it, and sure enough this was the bottleneck, a mass of hot and bothered people who had all made the same mistake as me. For some strange reason passengers were required to report at this checkpoint, and find and bring a customs official to their baggage. I supposed it was a piece of unamerican inefficiency designed to make us old world visitors feel at home, but I'd have been just as happy if they hadn't bothered. Halfway up the queue I saw my friends from aboard ship. I joined them casually, trying to look as if I'd just been stretching my legs. After an anxious minute or two I realized I had got off with it, but it didn't seem to be doing me much good. For the first half hour the queue didn't move an inch. Then suddenly it happened. We moved an inch. I began to wonder if I would get out of here in time for South Gate.

I have to call this a queue, because it was anything but a line. It was in the form of an enormous wedge, tapering to single file between two tables. When the pressure got beyond so many tons per square inch, a mangled body would be projected with great force down between the two tables in front of the Customs Inspectors, in no fit condition to tell lies about any dutiable goods he happened to have. Every now and then the mass of angry people at the back would surge forward, pushing the queue and the tables and the Customs officials and everything else before them several yards further down the shed. I calculated that assuming we survived this heat we'd push the bastards into the Pacific by December.

After each stampede policemen would come along and swear at the queue and the queue would swear back. Vitriolic remarks were passed about American efficiency and hospitality and the ancestry of the Customs officials and demned foreigners and if-you-don't-like-it-here-why-don't-you-go-back-where-you-came-from. (I always say there's nothing like travel for promoting international understanding.) Now and again someone would try to dodge round to the front of the queue and the crowd would roar like an animal and I would try to look shocked and policemen would come and push us and shout to us to form fours.

While I was thinking what a pity it was I'd never be able to print some of the crowd's replies to that last suggestion, Evelyn Smith found me. She said she'd got into the shed by claiming to be my mother. (She isn't really.) After we'd exchanged greetings I told her to go and sit down: someone had better be fit enough to carry me out. Besides police-men kept shouting at her, thinking she was a queue-breaker. Sykora came along a couple of times in the next hour, waving encouragingly and asking me if he could get me something to eat. I couldn't lift my arms to wave back, but I appreciated the kind thought and considered asking for an intravenous injection. After a couple of hours I was seriously thinking of abandoning my luggage

altogether, but by now the Customs officials were in real fear of being lynched and were speeding things up, and at last I found myself at the front of the queue. I was really surprised; I'd ceased to believe there was a front to that queue. The customs examination itself was quite an anticlimax. I wished I had a couple of atomic bombs or something to make it all worth while. The man rooted around until he came up with a copy of the Quannish, read bits of it here and there, gave me a peculiar look, and scrawled a rude word on my case. I staggered out of the place with my retinue, casting a last guilty look at the wretches in the queue who'd been there before me and hoping they wouldn't still be there when I was coming back.

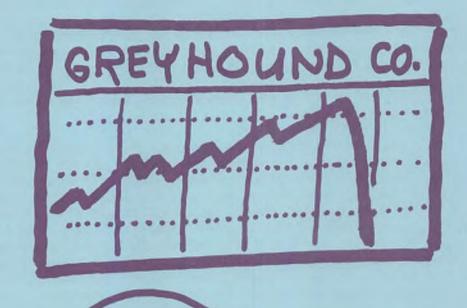
## 8: Staggered Start

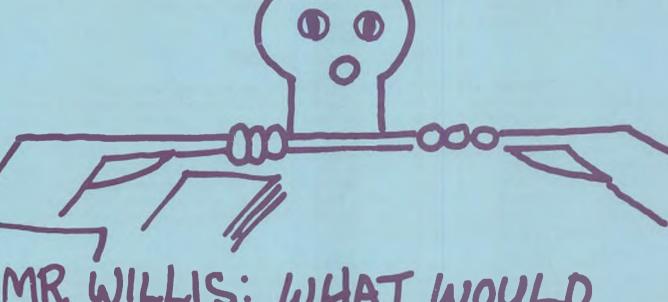
Outside, in the fresh clean smog of Hoboken, were Ken Beale, another New York fan called Marcombe, Mrs Beck and her son Calvin Thomas. The latter two put themselves at my Beck and Cal, as it were, and offered to drive me into New York for lunch. I said I'd just as soon have a snack though, and we stopped off at a diner in the Palisades. I had my first hamburger, closely followed by my second. As far as I was concerned, the food problem in America was now solved. I phoned Dave Kyle from there, at noon as arranged, but the fare turned out to be more than I could afford so I thanked him and said I would go by bus. Joe Gibson then said he would go this afternoon too instead of tomorrow, to keep me company. There were a few hours to spend before the bus left so I phoned H.L.Gold and was invited down to his apartment. We all set off in the car. On the way Calvin was stopped for speeding, but Mrs. Beck said she wouldn't do it again: the policeman was so taken aback at this that he let us off and went away by himself to think it over.

At the Greyhound station the party disintegrated. Joe went home to pack, Sykora went to work, the Becks went home to park their car, and Evelyn and I made our way to Gold's apartment. It was a nice place, full of interesting things like advance copies, manuscripts, galley proofs, beer and Horace Gold. After an hour or so the Becks arrived, just as we were leaving for the bus. They said hullo and goodbye to Horace in the same breath and we all set off again. Cal and Evelyn had a superficially polite arguement about the comparative advantages of taxi and subway, which Cal won after Evelyn had virtually thrown herself in front of several cabs without avail. There followed a series of wild dashes from train to train, the monotony of which was relieved by fighting with the rush hour crowd and controversy about the correct route. Everyone was solicitous about my welfare in the New York rush hour, not having seen this particular sheltered flower boarding a tram in Ballymacarrett on a wet night. Why, here there weren't even any people being dragged along behind. We got to the bus station at 5:29, one minute early, to be greeted by Joe with the news that the bus left at 5:30 Standard Time, not Daylight Saving, and we had an hour to spare. Feeling like dopes, we went along to a drugstore. I only wanted something to drink, but Mrs. Beck was worried about me and carried on a stout rearguard action aimed at diverting the party to a proper restaurant. She reluctantly followed the party into the drugstore still protesting, but, presumably out of consideration for the owner's feelings, switched her language to French. I told her I wasn't hungry in Frech either and she settled for bringing me a dish of soup. I must say I never expected that six hours after landing in America I'd be arguing with a fan's mother In French. It's little surprises like this that make life interesting.

Life was interesting that day. The bus left punctually at 6:30, full of gasoline and good intentions, but only struggled as far as the next stop before the spirit ceased to move it. A procession of mechanics, each one cleaner than the last, had conferences over it until finally one with a tie on made the decision that we should change buses. From my experience I'd say this sort of deliberation must be a full time job.

However, I would like to defend the Greyhound Company against an unfair accusation





MR WILLIS: WHAT WOULD YOU CHARGE US TO TRAVEL SOLELY ON TRAILWAYS BUSSES? that has been levelled against them. It has been bruited about, probably by some brute in the pay of Trailways, that my bus broke down three times between New York and Chicago. I am happy to say that this is not true. There may have been three breakdowns, in fact there were, but they were three different buses. Not once, in all my long and eventful association with the Greyhound Company, have I known that noble and generous organization to foist me off with a patched up bus. Every time one broke down they would simply throw it away and bring on a new one. Their courage in persisting with this policy in the face of financial ruin was in keeping with the old bus company motto, "None but the brave deserve the fare". I am glad to say that their persistence was finally rewarded: you'll hardly believe this, but the last bus, the fourth, did not break down at all. This remarkable vehicle was whisked away to the Greyhound Laboratories, where they hope to develop a form of Willis-proof transport.

Joe and I didn't talk much at first. He'd begun the journey by remarking that he didn't like the stuff I wrote and since I couldn't for the life of me remember anything at all he had written, a whole field of conversational gambits was closed. Besides I was too busy getting my first look at America; things had been moving too fast in New York to look around. I knew I should get some sleep because I'd had none the night before and I wasn't expecting to get much in the next few, but it was all too exciting. I did drop off though through sheer fatigue, for in the early morning I awoke like a van Vogt hero to find myself walking along a long tunnel, without the slightest idea of where I was or how I got there. It turned out to be an underground passageway beneath the Pennsylvania turnpike, leading to a diner on the other side of the road. I had been having a dream in which I'd been walking along a corridor in the ship and it took several minutes to convince myself the floor wasn't rolling and pitching, it was me.

## 9: Descent Into The Maelstrom

By next afternoon, after the three breakdowns, we were so late that the driver just didn't care any more. We must have been a good 200 miles from Chicago when we passed the first sign advertising the Morrison Hotel, but I kept expecting it to be round every corner. It wasn't, and what with the nervous tension and the heat -- the last few buses had had no air-condidtioning -- I was a wreck when we did arrive. With one last effort I dragged my luggage out and looked round the bus station. Lee Hoffman and Bob Tucker were right in front of me, but for a few seconds I didn't see them. Maybe I had never really believed they were real people. Then they suddenly came into focus: I thought they were just like their photographs, only different. Better looking, for one thing, and in color.

I'd been geared up for anything, even Bloch and the 2000 snakes he'd suggested for me in Quandry, and it was a relief to find only two. Two people, I mean... though I learned later that they and Bloch had planned a fiendish welcome for me at the hotel which hadn't come off only because of lack of time. I was to be shown into my room to find Ginny Saari in my bed and there was to be a knock on the door and the house detective asking had I a women in there and when I said no he was to throw another one in and there were to be jealous husbands and blackmailers and a gun battle with blank cartridges ending in Tucker being shot and bleeding tomato ketchup all over the floor. Tucker's death would have been the give-away of course; I couldn't be expected to believe that. At the time I wasn't too unhappy that all this fell through. I hadn't seen Ginny Saari yet.

Tucker took over and whisked us all efficiently to the hotel by cab. Joe at once went to his room to lie down. I don't know if it did him any good, but it made me feel a bit better -- to think that I had stood up to the heat and everything as well as a native of New Mexico. In my own room Lee enrolled me into the Confederate

Army and issued me with a peaked cap bearing the initials FLEAC. In case there is anyone in fandom I didn't explain this to at the Masquerade Ball, it stands for "Fandom's Leading Expert & Critic", a distinction conferred on me in a New Worlds article describing the members of the International Fantasy Award panel. Vin¢ Clarke has never let me live it down, though I pointed out to him that I had reviewed a book once and that 'expert' was obviously just a misprint for 'export'. I countered by formally designating Lee an Honorary Irish Fan and giving her my other harp brooch brought specially for the occasion. These solemn ceremonies concluded, we went down with Bea Mahaffey and Bob Tucker to get something to eat.

Over the meal Hoffman & Tucker told me all about how they'd been waiting for me for three hours and had gone to wait in the railroad station because it had a much nicer waiting room but I wasn't there either, and I told them of my adventures in America so far. Suddenly there was a stunned silence as everyone realized what an extraordinary thing was happening. We could understand each other! I was immensely relieved that the dire prognostications of Vin¢ Clarke turned out to be so unfounded...though a little regretful that I wouldn't have an opportunity to deal with mutual incomprehension the way I'd planned: I'd prepared a little card with nine concentric circles on it and when they couldn't understand my accent I was going to take it out and point to the third one. Still dazed and exhausted, but very happy, I made three puns; hearing the third and worst, Tucker shook me solemnly by the hand, saying he was convinced I wasn't an imposter even if I didn't have an Irish accent.

On the elevator back upstairs we were privileged to be the first to encounter Bellhop #31 -- also known, at least to the elevator girl, as 'Loverboy'. He revealed himself to be no ordinary bellhop, but a fan. He was thrilled to find a science fiction convention being held right under his nose and declared his intention of attending it even if it meant throwing up his job. Meanwhile, he said, if there was anything we fellow fans wanted, anything at all, we were to call on him. Nothing would be too much trouble, and of course there would be no question of payment. Bea enrolled him as a Conventioneer right there in the elevator. He was as good as his word, as many fans found out, but at least one pro, Tucker, had been so calloused by years of vile huckerstering that he had forgotten the innocent sincerity of such dewy-eyed neofen. At any rate, when Loverboy imported a couple of call-girls into a poker school room they were shunned until taken over by two rival pros. It is reported that Tucker's anguish on learning the true facts was heartrending. "Of course, they weren't pretty," he cried, "but My Ghod, for free!"

The party that evening consisted of us four -- Iee, Bea, Tucker & me -- plus Robert Bloch, Marty Greenberg, Dave Kyle and Evelyn Gold; a nice number. It kept moving from room to room to keep from getting any bigger, on a sort of reversal of the snowball principle. Every now and then somebody would ring up asking if there was a party there and somebody would answer "Communist Party Headquarters" while the others talked gutterally about atom bombs and the NKVD. If the enquirer persisted he'd be told to call in five minutes and the Party would pick up its drinks and steal away. Thus it was after midnight before we made another recruit. Tucker greeted him with a too innocent enquiry as to why he wasn't writing in ASF these days and I guessed it was George O. Smith.

About 2AM...we were in GOSmith's room by then...everyone decided to go out and get something to eat. In the restaurant somebody started to tell risque jokes and Dave Kyle came solicitously down the table to make sure I understood the words. At the desk going out someone, probably Bloch, suggested we send a postcard to Marty Greenberg, whom we'd lost some time ago. Somebody, probably Bloch, wrote something witty on it and we all signed it. On the way back to the hotel someone even remembered to mail it. The fact that they mailed it in a garbage can wasn't intended as an

aspersion on either Bloch's literary style or Greenberg's living habits: it was just that kind of party. Besides, American Post Office pillar-boxes do rather resemble their garbage cans, a fact which does a lot to explain some of the fmz you get.

Back in the hotel, about 3AM, it suddenly occurred to GOSmith to wonder if Boucher had arrived yet. A man of action, George called his room. After just about the time needed to waken a tired man out of a sound sleep, Boucher answered: and almost immediately, after some gay if onesided badinage, he hung up again. George just couldn't understand it. This wasn't like Good Old Tony. He must have been cut off. He called the number again, listened to Good Old Tony for a moment, and then put down the receiver with an injured look on his face. That bastard Boucher couldn't do that to him. We must all go along to his room immediately and kick the door in. Or, better still, push a strip of film under the door and ignite one end of it. The sheer beauty of this glorious suggestion moved us almost to tears, but after some discussion George finally settled for us all cancelling our subscriptions to F&SF.

## 10: Day of Daze

Some time later I went to bed for the first time in three days. I must have got up again a little later that Friday, but I don't remember it. In fact the whole day was a complete blank until I read Gregg Calkins' report in Oopsla. From that I see that I was sitting on the floor outside the Convention Committee suite some time that morning. That's right. Let's see, I remember now I was talking to someone there when I saw Rich Elsberry whom I hadn't met yet so I excused myself and ran after him and we had walked once round the hotel when someone called me into the Convention suite to tell me about some change in my part of the Programme and since I hadn't seen the Programme yet on account of the postal delivery on board ship being so bad it was all one to me and on the way out again I met Eva Firestone and GMCarr and Ray Higgs but had been talking to them for only a couple of minutes when someone called me away to meet Howard Browne who said he knew I didn't think much of Amazing but didn't I think the new Fantastic was all right and they had printed a quarter million copies of it and he hoped the fans liked it and he seemed very pleasant and almost deferential and I remembered all the rude things I'd said about him and was quite taken aback to find he had read them because I never think of anyone reading my stuff except a few friends but then someone said Forry Ackerman is here and asking for you so I said yes I thought Fantastic was the best looking sf mag I'd ever seen without too much emphasis on the 'looking' and went to say hello to Forry whom I was now meeting for the third time -- London, Belfast, Chicago -- and we shouted at each other for a few minutes until Forry said look there's John W. Campbell don't you want to meet him and I thought hell no because ghod knows he might have read some of the things I wrote about him too and how could I explain in this madhouse that I was rude to him not because I didn't think he was a good editor but because I knew he was but not so good he could do it without trying so I said no thinks Forry not now but hey you come and meet Lee Hoffman because it was one of my pet ambitions to introduce two of America's alltime top fans to one another so we went outside and I introduced Forry Ackerman to Lee Hoffman fan historians please note and we all sat at the end of the corridor outside the suite and talked just as Gregg says and after a while the place was full of BNFs what with Lee & 4e & Tucker & Bloch & Keasler & Calkins & Elsberry and beyond them was a sea of faces stretching as far as the horizon with McNeil's rising like a full moon and we talked for a long time but all I can remember is Tucker saying that he once advertised autographed copies of the Weinbaum Memorial Volume for sale and got three replies and Gregg presenting him with a "Little Gem Dandy Huckster Badge" in pokerwork and I thought the poker touch was especially appropriate and Bloch had his head in Hoffman's lap and somewhere in the distance GMCarr was talking in interlineations such as

until I had to go into the Committee room again because Ginny Saari wanted me to write out some facts of interest about myself and I thought she was Judy May because I didn't see how anyone as pretty as that could have existed in fandom without me hearing about them and though of course I couldn't refuse her anything I just couldn't think of anything to put down except maybe that I had introduced Forry Ackerman to Lee Hoffman and after puzzling about it for a while I decided I'd wait until I was asked again and then find out what it was for so I just waited and watched Max Keasler throwing a one-man exhibition of his serious artwork which seemed just like his unserious artwork except that the girls were a bit more twisted looking and I was thrilled to find myself sitting beside Ray Nelson who I think is one of the few true geniuses in fandom and tried to get him to promise to do me some cartoons not knowing that this was the wrong approach because Ray never promises to do cartoons he just does them and what you have to do is follow him around with a scratchpad and a pencil and put them in front of him whenever he sits down and hope for the best and you're liable to get it because I saw him later turning out masterpieces for Max at the rate of one a minute which made me jealous since all I'd got was one little cartoon which I'm beginning to be dreadfully afraid I've lost though I kept hoping it would turn up sometime like the airmailed sock someone sent after me but after a while Ginny Saari seemed to have disappeared so I went outside again and everyone had gone and there was nobody in the corridor except GOSmith who said Dona had told him he needn't come home if he didn't get me to promise to call on them in New York so I said thanks very much I'd love to I'd hate to come between a man and his wife and we stayed talking for a while until Sturgeon drifted past and George started speculating to his face as to why it had grown a beard and I made a little joke about it and Sturgeon went on out and closed the door behind him and then came back to say I heard that it was good and I was pleased because most times people don't hear my jokes since I'm inclined to throw them away which is maybe the best thing to do with them and shortly afterwards I left GOSmith and wandered downstairs or rather downelevator by myself to the lobby where I fell among hucksters again more or less the same crowd as last night except that something new had been added called Jim Webbert only of course I didn't know who he was and took him for another vile pro although he kept offering me cigarettes and exploding his lighter under my nose because I don't think he knew who I was either but figured that if I was with the pros I must be important enough to be offered cigarettes to and it turned out he had a notebook with all the important people's preferences in cigarettes and drinks listed and everyone was amused when Tucker asked had he sexual preferences listed too and because he had John W. Campbell and George O. Smith on the same page and it was all very interesting but I figured there should be a lot of people arriving I wanted to meet so I excused myself on the grounds that I wanted to see if the Terrace Casino was available for the taperecording of Lee's "Fannius McCainius" Gregg Calkins wanted to make with the original cast and in the lobby I ran across Lee Hoffman whom I hadn't seen since morning and we went down to the Terrace Casino but instead of fans it was full of peculiar people like accountants or Catholic girls or something so we went up to the lobby again and met Shelby Vick arriving and admired his contribution to the art of conversation a red flag with the word 'joke' lettered on it which he proposed to pull out of his pocket and wave as necessary and when Shelby went to unpack we accompanied Sam Moskowitz to Wimpey's Glorified Hamburger where we drank several chocolate malts and talked about one thing and probably another but the only thing I can remember is how wonderful chocolate malts were so that I swore a mighty oath that I would drain Chicago dry of chocolate malt but I had the job only half finished when we went back to the hotel and roamed around talking to lots of people but none of them seems to have written a Convention report yet so I don't know who they were.

# 11: And So To Bedlam

And that's all I can remember about Friday. Or rather most of Friday and a good part of Saturday. I do remember though, with horrid vividness, that the phone rang

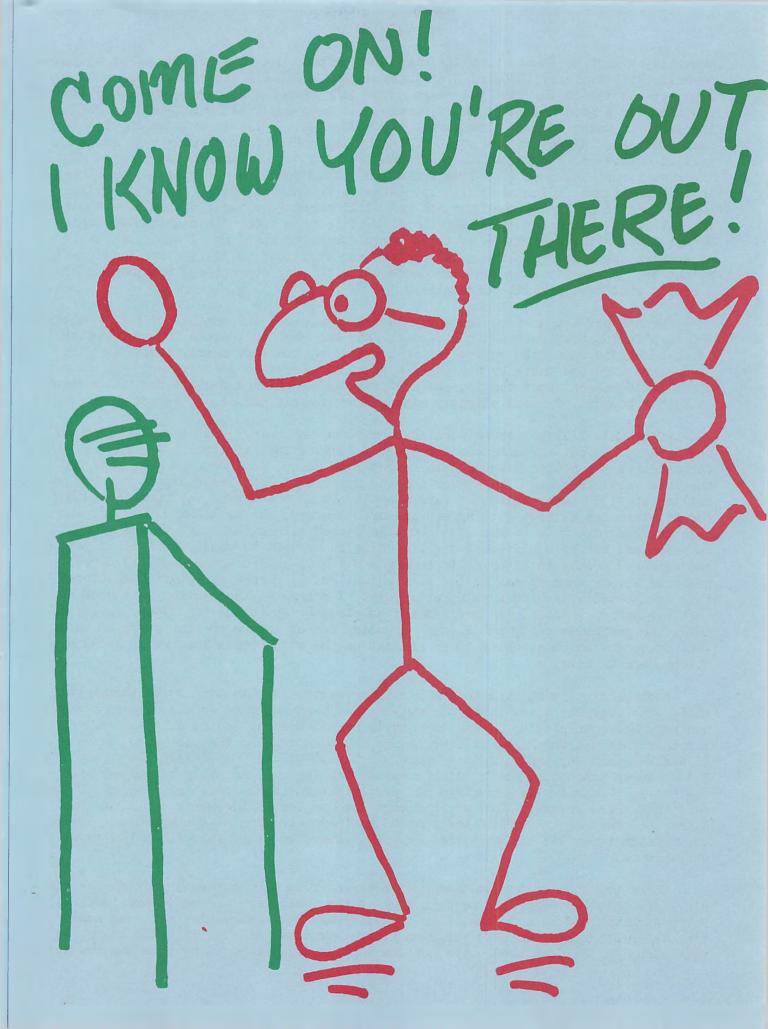
at 7:30AM Saturday morning. I didn't think there even was such a time. It was Dave Ish. He had just arrived, and was full of energy and enthusiasm and horrible things like that. There should be a law against young fans arriving at Convention Hotels at impossible times in the morning full of energy and enthusiasm. I explained that I'd had less than eight hours sleep in the last five days and the Convention hadn't even started yet, and that if I got up at all that day it would probably be tomorrow. I dropped the receiver in the general area of the rest and relapsed into unconsciousness. I should have told the operator not to put through any more calls, but at the time such a brilliant stratagem was quite beyond my powers of thought. The phone began to ring every ten minutes. After a while I took to answering it "Peter Graham speaking" and when they asked for me I told them Willis was dead. But no one believed it but me.

Finally I gave in and got up, almost falling asleep in the shower. I went down-stairs and had four cups of coffee. I met Dave Ish on the way, but decided to let him live. I met Keasler and Hoffman and we bought a bottle of Indian ink and took it up to my room. It wasn't an artists' drinking party, we just wanted to make some additions to the Tucker Hotel plan I'd brought with me. Then we just sat there in a state of suspended animation until it was time to register for the Convention. We took our places at the end of the line. I had my convention membership ticket all ready -- I'd been careful to pack it because I'd have had a long way to go back for it -- but someone called Lee & me to the front and registered us before anyone else. The direct adminsitration of raw egoboo like that can be embarrassing.

At a quarter to three we were in the Convention Hall looking for a table. I wanted one near the door so that at least I wouldn't snore right into the PA system, but someone called us and we were edged at a crowded table halfway down the terrace. The Convention was supposed to start at three, but it wasn't until 4:15 that Korshak got up and announced that there had been a delay -- some of us had noticed this -- and that it had been due to the fact that Catholic girls had been using the hall. You got the impression that they had been doing Nameless Things in it. He promised faithfully that there would be no further delay. This announcement was punctually followed by ten minutes delay, during which someone called plaintively for Bea Mahaffey over the PA system. Many fans who also wanted Bea Mahaffey felt that the PA system conferred an unfair advantage. After a final desperate entreaty "Does anyone know where Bea is?" Hamling made a graceful little speech of welcome and Korshak got up to introduce the guests.

In some ways this was the best turn of the Convention. Korshak's eyesight is on a par with his knowledge of present day fandom, and he spent more time apologizing for the first than displaying the second. After picking out a few notables in the front row he peered despairingly about the auditorium, finally being reduced to calling on just anyone whose name he happened to know. He had announced first that he was going to "jump from table to table", a prospect which delighted those among us who felt that an acrobabtic spectacle of this sort was just what the Convention needed and were looking forward to a review of it in the "Burroughs Bulletin". But before he even started beating on his breast and swinging on the chandelier, Kroshak unaccountably turned vicious, threatening to "strike here and there at random" and to "hit as many people at the tables as I possibly can". Naturally, this terrified the guests and they cowered in the shadows so that he couldn't find them. This seemed to infuriate Korshak even more. He knew they were there all right. He produced the registration lists to prove it, and revealed blackly that he was going to "shoot up and down the list, picking cut the highspots".

Cowered, the victims stood up and surrendered. Among the highspots so picked out were various ornaments of antediluvian fandom whose simulacra still walk at Conventions, and such luminaries of the future as Harlan Ellison and Roger Sims. Among the



nonentities left to their obscurity were Lee Hoffman, Max Keasler, Shelby Vick, Henry Burwell, Rich Elsberry, GMCarr, Eva Firestone and virtually every other fan who had been hyperactive in the last few years. The only reason I got among the immortals was that for a good half hour Henry Burwell had been shouting "Walt Willis!" and passing cards up under Korshak's nose with "Introduce Walt Willis!" written on them in block letters. He was on the point of organizing a fireworks display with my name spelled out in colored lights when Korshak, running out of names he remembered from the most recent issue of "The Time Traveller", introduced me. I stood up and brandished a programme, grinning foolishly. After a decent interval I sat down again, and noticed to my dismay that Korshak was still peering helplessly about the auditorium. I looked round for something to throw at him to attract his attention, but before I could lift the table he asked again for me to stand up. I stood up, waved programmes about my head like a helicopter, and was about to start a small fire when he saw me. I was the only fan introduced twice to that Convention. Sometimes I think I really must have a split personality.

Korshak at last gave up the struggle and introduced the members of the Committee who were fortunately just under his nose. Judy May then introduced the gavel which is to be handed down from convention to convention, and very nearly broke the line of descent then and there by hitting the table two terrible blows with it. After a nice little speech about the present day prestige of science fiction she was presented with a bouquet of roses slightly bigger than herself and almost as attractive.

After this I'll bet there were announcements and things, but I was feeling far too dreadful to pay any attention to them. I decided that if I was going to last through this Convention I would have to get some sleep, so I went to bed. This was the most sensible thing I have ever done in my life. I left instructions for Lee to call me at 9:30 sharp, which she says she did. In fact she says she rang the number for five minutes without getting any answer. Alarmed, she called Shelby Vick, who came in from next door to view the body. He lacked either the heart or the strength to waken me, but he could see I was breathing so he left me until about 11. I got up and wandered dopily into Burwell's room where a girl called Rosen whom I'd never heard of before came up and called me a chiseller: my morale momentarily shattered by this unexpected attack on a vulnerable point, I retreated through the next room and took a glass of whiskey, Lee Hoffman and an elevator up to the top floor. We looked in at the penthouse party but it was too noisy for us in our present state so we went on up to the observation tower and sat on the steps for a long while looking at Chicago and talking.

Eventually we went back to the penthouse party, just in time to be thrown out along with everyone else. I don't know what had been going on -- all we'd glimpsed had been Sturgeon playing his guitar and it hadn't been as bad as all that -- but I gather this was the night all the damage had been done in the penthouse, because it was the next day that all the rumors started about Ies Cole having flown back to Frisco in an unscheduled huff, disenchanted with fandom. Actually he stayed on at the hotel, though he withdrew from all participation in the official program. It was said that there was over \$100 worth damage done to The Little Men's penthouse that night, and that at the end of the Convention they were afraid to check out because they couldn't pay it: and that the money was raised by other fans in an impromptu whip-around.

There was such an immense horde of refugees from the penthouse waiting for the elevators that Lee suggested we walk down to the 20th floor and catch the local. Forry Ackerman and me and some other congenial maniacs accompanied her, and some time later staggered out onto the 20th Floor, surprised to find it still there. We went along to the Committee suite but one look at that amoeba-like mass was enough:

we decided we'd prefer a nice roomy sardine can any day and went out for some chocolate malts. At least that's what I had. Then we went back to the Atlanta suite and talked till some time in the morning.

## 12: The Pros Take The Mickey

I got up at ten, feeling fine except for the usual worry about my speech at the banquet. I went next door to find that Burwell & Vick & Calkins had been up all night, and looked it. So had Bea Mahaffey, who didn't. I took some of their coffee and iced water, which had long since reached the same temperature, and drafted another speech. Then I had breakfast with Hoffman, Keasler, Kyle and Calkins and went along to the Fapa meeting. I don't know if it was over by then or whether it just never got started, but the only fapans present were GMCarr, Lee Hoffman, Hal Shapiro, Martin Alger and Walter Coslet, and there was just some desultory conversation. I think everyone was subconsciously expecting Burbee & Laney to appear in their midst in a pillar of fire.

Unpunctually at 1:45 the Convention started again, with the pro-editors' panel. Boucher said the various magazines were not competitors, and something else equally genial but not so ridiculous on which I can't decipher my notes. I wish these people would speak more legibly. Howard Browne, on the defensive right from the start mentioned the letters he'd been getting on 'asbestos paper' and defiantly described Mickey Spillane (currently disfiguring in Fantastic) as "one of the best science fiction writers in America". (sic) (me too). Through the general daze induced by this remarkable appraisal, Browne tried to pass off on us the equally remarkable argument that if fans didn't object to sf in the Saturday Evening Post they had no right to object when sf magazines printed detective stories. (Mr. Spillane's career as a science fiction writer had lasted approximately 35 seconds.) This was more or less equivalent to saying that since we didn't object to digging our food out of the ground we had no right to protest to the waiter when we found dirt in our dinner. This glittering target hung temptingly in the air, but John W. Campbell manfully ignored it in favour of a few stultifyingly uncontroversial remarks about the various magazines being complementary to one another. Evelyn Gold promptly livened things up again by being ingenuously uncomplimentary to ASF. Palmer made a speech about Other Worlds's policy. Other Worlds had no policy. He added however that it had a new associate editor, in the form of Bea Mahaffey. I could think of few better forms, but doubted if in fact Bea would ever be more than a glorified consultant. The man who pays the paper calls the tune. (Though I must say that Palmer told me later that Bea recently rejected one of his own stories: he rewrote it and Bea rejected it again. whereupon he sent it to Howard Browne. I don't know what Browne did with it ... he seems to be at the end of the line.)

Quinn of If quoted a letter from a fan who panned everything in his mag unmercifully, and then enclosed a sub. Quinn seemed to think this nullified the criticism, it having evidently not occurred to him that the fan was probably a completist.

Next came the questions session, starting off with one that was inspired only in the sense that it had been cooked up beforehand to start the balls rolling. It was why were they all in the editing business. Reasons varied from love of money to marrying Gold, but most of them said they like it too, even Howard Browne. JWC said it was because he was interested in speculative thinking and wanted people to help him do it. It was interesting to reflect that JWC was the only person there who could not only say that sincerely, but be believed.

A more interesting question was why editors didn't write more. JWC, at whom it was obviously aimed, said he had a sort of gentleman's agreement with Street & Smith. Apparently he didn't think it was quite fair to S&S to write independently while in

their employ, and S&S didn't think it was quite fair either.

After they had all been coy about their circulation there came a question which gave everyone their long awaited chance to jump on Howard Browne. It was "What is the place in science fiction of the impinging fields of detective fiction etc?" Or, in basic English, "Mickey Spillane? What the hell?"

Browne came out of his corner fighting. Millions of people read Spillane and he would help Fantastic to make money. That, he implied, was that. Evelyn Gold, unsheathing her claws again, apologized for not having been able to hear what Browne said, though she was sitting right next to him. Browne, a little redder in the face and speaking a good deal louder, said that if he was proved wrong he was willing to take his place in the bread line. Apparently he kneaded the dough. Mines said nothing of importance and Boucher said that was what he was just going to say. In an improbable alliance with Browne JWC vouchsafed the opinion that the best source of new sf readers was from among the detective story readers. Del Rey said there were no detective story readers, an excellent point, if true. Browne said there were no detective story readers because there were no good detective stories. Del Rey said there were no good detective stories because there were no detective story readers.

The argument petered out in this morass, it being difficult to say who had won. In a sense Browne did, because he brought everyone else down to his level. The whole issue was fought on the assumption that the only criterion is commercial success, whereas...though it may sound old-fashioned and olde world...the real point is that anyone who traffics in perverted trash is doing real harm not only to his associates but to his fellow men. Dope peddling is also commercially successful.

On the question on reprints Browne was more likeable. He was so disarmingly frank that one felt pretty sure that neither Mr. Ziff nor Mr. Davis was within earshot. He said Ziff had made him reprint the Poe stories and all he could do was pick the shortest ones he could find. "Mr. Ziff," he said, "thinks that Mr. Poe is still writing good science fiction."

# 13: Turning Point

After the questions the speakers all stood up amid applause, like the last night of a musical comedy, and the Convention adjourned for the auction. I didn't intend to buy anything, though I thought I might bid for an April 43 ASF if one came up, just to perpetuate a fannish tradition. I just wandered around looking for people I'd missed seeing so far and trying not to get too nervous about the banquet. I didn't succeed too well at either. Inexorably the hour came when I had to mount the platform. Among those present on the scaffold at this time were de Camp. EE Smith, Clifford Simak and Jack Williamson. I carried on brief conversations with all of them as we drifted past one another like ships in the night, driven by the whims of the organizers in their attempts to arrange us in a less hideous array. Simak and I played several rounds of musical chairs which I must have won, because I was finally placed next to Ginny Saari. Or perhaps it was on the theory that no one looking in that direction would notice me, for I suddenly observed to my slight horror that everyone else was dressed up while I was still in my sports coat and baggy flannels. However I'd no other clothes with me so there was nothing to be done except look as if I was an apostle of dress reform. I just hoped the Committee's feelings weren't hurt.

After some more arranging of thorns among roses the banquet was served. I stared at the first dish in horror. Was all my work come to naught? Had I not written a widely disseminated article designed to alert all America as to my tastes in food?

And yet, at this banquet expressly designed in my honour, what do they serve me? LETTUCE! Oh, the horror if it. I toyed with the idea of throwing the plate in the faces of the Committee and stalking out, ignoring their piteous pleas to return, I knew fandom would be behind me. From LASFS to QSFL fans would breathe to one another in shocked whispers; "Did you hear what they served Willis at the Chicon?"... "Not---?"..."Yes, lettuce!" Elsberry would write an Open Letter to Harry B. Moore thanking him for not having poisoned the guests of honour at the Nolacon.\* I should be a martyr to fandom. Furthermore, I would have got out of making a speech.

But on the other hand I was sitting next to Ginny Saari. I remained where I was and toyed idly with the dish. (No, not Ginny Saari.) I poked viciously at the vilestuff until someone came and took away the mangled remains. After that they served some food. It was good, but I partook sparingly, even though I hadn't eaten since morning. No doubt I was going to disgrace myself in innumerable ways, but at least I was not going to be sick. I don't remember what the food was because I was talking to Ginny Saari, but I do remember thinking that out there in the darkness everyone must be commenting on the peculiar way I used my knife and fork. I felt that perhaps I should rise and make a brief statement to the effect that it wasn't just that I didn't know any better, but that in Europe everyone ate this way and I could if necessary prove by time and motion study that it involved less muscular effort, less wear and tear on cutlery, and less delay in the elevation of nutriment than the American system. But I restrained my impatience to make a speech.

In due course the banquet ended and the debris was cleared away. Will F. Jenkins then performed 1952's Greatest Service To The Cause Of Science Fiction by remaining absent and leaving Robert Bloch to master the toasts. He was wonderful. After his opening remarks I felt deep within me the firm conviction that it was the unanimous feeling of the Convention that all us other guests should remain silent for the rest of the evening and just let Bloch talk. I for one was willing, nay eager, to sacrifice my own place on the program. But not so Hugo Gernsback. Nothing was going to stop him reading his speech after he had spent all that money getting it printed and circulated. He got a tremendous welcome when he stood up. Personally I thought the ovation was rather to his name as the almost accidental symbol of science fiction than to Gernsback himself, but Hugo seemed to entertain no such doubts.

Now Huge is a nice old boy, no doubt, kind courteous and a thorough gentleman. He is also the Father of Science Fiction and a respected figure in the publishing world. Furthermore he stood Forry & me a lunch in Los Angeles. All these are mighty virtues. Nevertheless it seems to me that the paper he read was not altogether suitable for the occasion. Its whole point was that people who foresaw inventions should have a cut of the profits, a suggestion from which no one would stand more to gain than Hugo Gernsback. In fact, if it had been law he would own half the world today and the rest of it tomorrow. It seemed to me that a World Science Fiction Convention was hardly the place to air a private brain wave like this, especially one as odd as the idea that people should be paid just for thinking up things it would be nice to have. I knew that Hugo felt he was speaking for all sf writers, but when he was reported in the papers what sort of publicity would there be? Not something about modern sf, but that Hugo Gernsback thought of the wheel before the Russians.

However Hugo sat down eventually, to applause not much less enthusiastic than

<sup>\*</sup>After the Chicon Elsberry published an open letter to Harry B. Moore thanking him for not having been guilty of all the things Elsberry thought the Chicon people had done wrong, This was the first good word he or anyone else had had for poor Harry and the Nolacon. No one says anything good about a Convention till after the next one...

before. He was followed by Sprague de Camp, who obviously enjoys making speeches. He was good...a lot funnier than his humorous novels, which to me always seem to suffer from the slight defect that they aren't funny. Someone told me during the Convention that de Camp has no sense of humour at all but is a very intelligent man and after many years of observation and experiment has succeeded in isolating the elements that constitute humour. Retiring to the privacy of his laboratory, de Camp then combines these elements in new combinations, synthesising these novels of his which roll the customers in the aisles. However, his speech seemed to me genuinely funny: maybe he's discovered a new formula.

Doc Smith, who obviously doesn't love making speeches, followed by explaining how he didn't expect to have to make this one, and went on to confess disarmingly that his previous ones had been written down and learned off beforehand. I loved this part of his talk, especially when he pointed out that people who can write can very often not speak in public and shouldn't be expected to. Me and EESmith, I thought. But he went on to prove himself a traitor to our cause by making one of the best speeches of the Convention. Tho he is held in such affection that I think he would have got nearly as much applause if he'd merely read the Stock Exchange quotations in a Swahili dialect, as apparently I did at the Loncon.

Simak was next, but I didn't hear a word because I was on just after him. This was the moment I'd been dreading for nearly a year and it was all worse than my vivid imagination had visualized, even after seeing that terrifying photo of the Terrace Casino in the Convention Booklet, which had haunted me for months. All these unknown people, the foot-lights, the calibre of the other speakers, the microphones which were obviously so low that I would either have to crouch over them like a gorilla or risk them coming to pieces in my hands when I tried to adjust them. My only comfort was that the Committee had gone out of their way to assure me I could be as brief as I liked and since everything was running late I could take them at their word.

Simak finished and sat down. Bloch introduced me in the most tactful way possible, with a few choice insults. I drifted to the rostrum. Good old Gwasdorf scampered forward and adjusted the microphones before the applause died down. I spoke for a few minutes, trying to remember to talk slowly and helped by part of my mind listening to a strange voice with a most peculiar accent coming back over the PA system and waiting for it to go on. I made three bad jokes which were laughed at and one good one that wasn't. I went back to my place and sat down.

Life, it seemed, went on. I had never really thought of it doing that. While I was getting used to this extraordinary behavior on the part of life, Boucher came up from the floor, with a remark that coming to the platform like this was a Conventionmanship ploy worthy of Bob Shaw. I was delighted about this allusion and resolved to airmail Bob about it first thing tomorrow. Boucher finished his witty speech and the banquet was over. Still suffering from shock I went down into the hall and met Keasler & Hoffman. They threw their arms around me affectionately and said my speech was wonderful and they were proud of me. I loved them for that, even if it wasn't true. They can have my right arm any time they like, and I'll even pay the postage. I loved not only Lee and Max but everyone...the fans, the pros, America, life, the Convention. The Convention! My Ghod, here was this wonderful thing going on and I'd wasted half of it worrying about a trifle like a speech. I declared the Convention open as far as Willis was concerned and went to change my shirt.

# 14: Ball Roles

Soon afterwards the three of us met again in Lee's room, Max and I persuading Lee that she must come to the Masquerade Ball in her costume. It was the most fannish dress ever, consisting of Quandry pages mimeoed on lengths of silk and sewn together,

and embellished with as many ingenious Hoffmanotions as a contents page of Q. We were overcome with admiration. Max was so inspired he resolved to come in costume after all. After some thought he took off his shoes, socks and shirt, rolled up his trouser legs, and came as a fan from Missouri (which of course he was.) I put on my Confederate cap and we set off for the elevators.

A lot of people had already gathered in the ballroom, and more were coming every minute. Evelyn Gold was fetching as Galaxy in a stardusted evening dress and many of the other girls had pretty costumes, but the men seemed to prefer to be monsters. We roamed around saying hello to people. Every time we met someone not in costume I would say, "I say, that's clever," and Lee would say "Gad what a terrifying costume," and Max would say "Gosh, you look horrible." And of course if they were in costume we would ask them why they weren't. We did this to SJByrne, who was made up hideously as The Thing, green skin and fangs and all. He caught on quick and, coming unexpectedly on conservatively attired Forry Ackerman, screamed and reeled away gibbering with terror. Shortly the punch was served. This consisted of fruit juice and absolute alcohol, the latter smuggled across countless State borders by the Little Men, and was compounded under the expert supervision of George O. Smith whom they had co-opted as spirituous adviser. There was no provision for washing glasses, but Les Cole reassured people with "What can you get but syphilis?" After the punch things livened up and became a little more like my original idea of an American Convention. A procession of fans was weaving its way conga-like about the hall singing, to the tune of "John Brown's Body," a song with the refrain "Glory how we hate Ray Bradbury, It's Eric Frank Russell for me". A smaller group was staging some sort of mimed play, surrounded by curious onlookers. Someone was shooting flying saucers across the room from a plastic gun. Helicopter beanies were in evidence. The floor was littered with flashbulbs and spilled punch, through which Max picked his way gingerly. In one corner a waterpistol fight was being waged. A real casualty round about this time was GMCarr, whom we had last seen got up as a woman with three heads. Apparently she got the middle one caught in an elevator door. We were sorry to hear this, though Max commented callously:

"I hope the hotel doesn't sue".

He always talks in interlineatons, like that.

I'd meant to go up to the Atlanta suite at one o'clock, but I got roped in to judge the costumes, along with Bill Hamling & Shelby Vick. Being inexperienced in these matters, we took the most logical and least tactful way of doing it -- had the entrants parade before us several times while we rejected them one by one. Bill Hamling, as the one with most moral courage and experience in issuing rejections, got the job of pronouncing our sentences, which he did with great suavity. The main advantage of the procedure we adopted was that we got several excellent views of Ginny Saari, being the only people who could really take in the finer points of her costume without appearing rude. Finally we gave her first prize. I don't see how any red-blooded male could have done otherwise, but actually the best costumes there belonged to two girls who didn't enter the contest...Lee Hoffman and a girl from the Little Men's entourage who caused a minor sensation in a low cut dress whose neckline plunged on either side of a shockingly lifelike third breast.

By the time I got up to the Atlanta suite things were every quiet. This unusual state of affairs was due partly to the house detectives and partly to Bill Entrekin, who had imported from Georgia a carboy of some liquid that appears to have been the American equivalent of poteen. It had wrought havoc. Bob Farnham innocently took one glass and passed out for ten hours. Some other fans who tried it were never heard from again. Some say it even made Henry Burwell's eyebrow twitch. I would however like to deny the rumour, spread by Tucker, that my esteemed colleague Jim



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Harmon passed out in front of the elevators. This is not true. The fact was that he came to in front of the elevators...while the cortege bearing his body was being interrogated by the house detectives.

My remembrancer Gregg Calkins says I was talking that night with him, Elsberry, Shapiro, Briggs, Van Splawn and some other people. This may be so, but all memory of what passed was blasted from my mind by the stark horror of seeing what Max Keasler was drinking -- ginger beer mixed with creme de menthe:

### 15: Armageddon

Next morning I was awakened by the phone ringing and Ed Wood telling me I was due to speak in the panel debate in five minutes and could I hurry on down. I asked would I have time to shave and he said yes. Greatly daring I asked would I have time for a cup of coffee and he said yes. After such consideration I didn't like to ask could I have time to prepare a speech, which I'd figured on doing that morning. I had some notes already but they were for a proposer, not a seconder, and would need altering. Twenty-four hours ago the prospect of doing this on the spot would have petrified me. but I was a new man since the banquet. I shaved and had some coffee and strolled into the hall just in time. Moskowitz introduced us and Evans & Wood led off while I cut chunks out of my speech and scribbled smaller ones in. It all went off OK I suppose, though I was half asleep. So was most of the audience, so it wouldn't have mattered anyway. At question was whether fandom was a constructive force in science fiction, but nobody felt like a constructive force in anything that morning except maybe the people who were trying to prove we weren't. The most interesting part was the question period, when Jim Harmon got up and made a speech the purport of which was that Joe Gibson was an imbecile. As if this were a mere procedural error, Moskowitz told him he must ask a question, not make a speech. Whereupon Jim, logically enough, asked the panel whether or not it agreed that Joe Gibson was an imbecile. It seemed to me at the time that this was a much more interesting topic than the one we had and I'd have liked to ask Jim to state a case. Maybe Joe could have been found and asked to take the negative and we could have had a full dress debate on this controversial question. Unfortunately SaM ruled the matter out of order so I never found out what had made Jim so eager to divulge his revelation to the world.

The afternoon session began with a book publishers' panel, it says here. For all I knew it could have been a troupe of dancing girls, for I was far too busy talking to all sorts and conditions of people to pay any attention. However, we all kept quiet when Bloch came on. I just don't see how it's possible to have a good convention without Bloch. I think he should be preserved intact for future generations, immortal like Tucker. The very next time I have a million dollars I shall rent a hotel and hold a command convention: Bloch will referee a debate between Bill Temple & Arthur Clarke, Tubb will handle the auction, and Max Keasler will make occasional devastating comments over the PA system. And the whole thing will be filmed with sound so that I won't have to sit and beat my brains out trying to remember what people said. I'm afraid I more or less stopped taking notes after the banquet. I was having so good a time. Of course I can remember a few things from Bloch's speech. like how he named Evelyn Gold & Bea Mahaffey as the editors he'd most like to submit to, and how he talked about someone being so busy they couldn't even take a couple of hours off to edit an anthology, and how he compared the flight of a ship in interstellar .space to a thought flashing through an editor's head and how he presented a toilet seat to Judy May and threw a saucer at Willy Ley. But for all I know, John W. Campbell may have done all those things and more: I just don't remember. I

<sup>\*</sup>These prophetic words were probably the inspiration of Vernon McCain's Society For The Preservation of Robert Bloch.

know I'm failing in my duty as a conreporter in neglecting this important speech, and I'm sorry. However, all is not lost. I do happen to have one note of what Mr. Campbell said and though I can't quite understand it just now it must obviously be very significant. Apparently at one point in his address he made the following statement, as near as I can make out: "Hawming beys ate hanr levy." I haven't seen this remark reported in the press, so perhaps it has been suppressed in the interests of national security and the FBI are up in Campbell's office again. If so, the next generation of fans will hear about it. Frequently.

It's no wonder I can't understand what notes I have here, because people kept stopping by our table and talking. Every few minutes someone would come along asking had we seen so-and-so and Max would invariably reply "Over there", pointing to the other side of the room. Like Maxwell's Demon, Max would in time have had the entire convention up against that wall, but after Campbell's speech we went up to the roof and flew paper aeroplanes. We'd plenty of fanzines with us and were able to follow several interesting lines of research. One of the most important contributions to aeronautical design made by Hoffman, Keasler & Willis that afternoon was that photo-offset aeroplanes fly much better than mimeoed ones: maybe it's because their contents are meant to be on a higher plane, or maybe it's just that they fold more readily. Anyhow the theory was proved when a Hoffman Mark IV photo-offset model flew halfway out over Lake Michigan at an altitude of 38 stories and then wheeled in an enormous arc over Chicago. Few fanzines can have had a wider circulation.

Having proved that fandom was a constructive force in science fiction we went downstairs again because I wanted to see the voting for the next Convention. I don't want you to think I'm just a dilettante constructor of paper aeroplanes, it's just that I simply had to see this ballot. This was history, the sort of thing that gets written up at length in The Immortal Storm. I got out my notebook and determined to miss nothing. (By the way, looking at this notebook again, I've just realized what Campbell actually did say, because there's a Keasler comment underneath which referred to it. Campbell said "Human beings are human beings", and Max said, "That's a broad statement.")

There were nine contenders, the first two being New York Kyle and New York Sykora. Sykora claimed the nomination on behalf of the Queens Science Fiction League, the New York Science Fiction Society, and the American Science Fiction Society. Kyle, not to be outdone, claimed it on behalf of the Eastern Science Fiction Society, the New York Science Fiction League, the Bronx Science Fiction Club, the Hydra Club, and the New York Chapter of the Little Monsters of America. The two protagonists stood panting at each other while behind the scenes their supporters hastily constituted further fan clubs in case reinforcements were needed.

Round about here I'm afraid I started to get mixed up. Not because there seemed to be more fan clubs in New York than fans, but because EEEvans got among them somehow and confused me. Besides, people kept talking to me while I was trying to sort everything out. These American fans don't seem to realize how historic these things are. No reverence, that's the trouble. I didn't catch up with the march of events until it'd got as far as Detroit, when I was astonished to hear their spokesman declare that they didn't want the Convention at all, it was just that they'd got into the habit of bidding for it. This seemed pretty odd, even for fandom, until he went on to say that his group was in favour of Fricco and began to speak on its behalf. I was overcome with awe at this neat trick for getting in extra time for Frisco's case, and got my first inkling of the intrigue that was going on behind the scenes. I got a whole bottlefull of inkling almost immediately afterwards when I was taken aside by Henry Burwell, one of the conspirators for Philadelphia. Psychically erecting a small smoke-filled room round us, he told me confidentially it was all arranged to swing the nomination to Philadelphia; that most of the other

bids were dummies which would be withdrawn at the critical moment to precipitate a landslide against San Francisco; and that if I would say a few words in favour of Philadelphia I would get my fare paid over next year. I refused as politely as I could, climbed back over the caususes, and sat down by myself for awhile to recover.

Somewhere about this time people were asking what facilities the various cities could offer, interesting mainly for their implied criticisms of the Morrison Hotel. This was the first public expression of the widespread disgust for the Morrison Hotel and its house detectives and everything they didn't stand for. At one point it seemed clear that Niagara Falls would get the nomination if only the proposers could promise that the Falls would run rye for three days. One shocked member of the audience asked if they wanted a serious constructive convention or a drinking brawl and got the inevitable answer.

I finally gave up hope of writing a connected account of all this when I was called onto the stage to supervise the counting of the votes. All I know is that everything worked out as I'd been tipped off it would and Philadelphia got the nomination. I thought it was a dirty shame that the Little Men lost it after they'd put in more honest work than all the other contenders put together, and I still do. It was all very exciting from the stage and it must have been hectic in the auditorium. I know that one New York fan had his ballot paper torn up by others who didn't agree with his vote and had to fight his way down to the front for another.

After the result was announced the atmosphere was tense and Judy May asked me to make a short speech on behalf of world fandom asking everyone to let bygones be bygones and pull together for the next Convention. I started to try and work out something that wouldn't sound too presumptious but then she decided it would be better to have the interval first and let tempers cool down. I took an N3F application blank to write on -- they seem to have had the only exhibit that wasn't reported stolen -- joined the Philcon in the lobby, and went out for something to eat. Afterwards I turned up in the wings with about 5000 words, 4500 of which were crossed out, and waited nervously with this clutched in my hot little hand. But either the Committee had forgotten all about it in the general chaos or had felt that the breach between the parties was too deep even for my silver-tongued Irish oratory. Neither would have surprised me.

Greatly relieved, I went back to my seat and watched the official program. There was an electric guitar, accompanied by Ted Sturgeon, and a ballet. After this there was to have been a play, but it was cancelled by agreement between the Committee and the Committee. At least the producer Bill Venable was surprised at the announcement that it had been agreed to cancel it, but he and Bea Venable sportingly sang a song from it called "Science fiction is my addiction" which went down well. Like most people in the rear of the hall I soon gave up trying to follow the Philadelphia Group's turn. People were saying that if this had been put on before the voting San Francisco would have got the nomination, but it would probably ahave been OK if everyone behind the third row had been issued with binoculars and a hearing aid.

Round about this time the winning tickets were drawn in the various ballots. There seemed to be only three people involved in this: Forry Ackerman held the hat, Evelyn Gold drew the tickets, and Doc Barrett collected the prizes. This laborsaving arrangement left everyone else free to wander about and talk. Doc Smith stopped by and asked me for my autograph, for his daughters. I was so flabbergasted I forgot to ask for his. (Not that I collect autographs, but as a matter of courtesy.) Now, I kept thinking, something has happened that will really impress James White. Next time he speaks of EESmith in that hushed voice I will mention casually that he asked me for my autograph at the Chicon.

I can't remember where the excellent sketch by Garry (World Citizen) Davis &

Harry Harrison fitted into all this. All evening I'd been getting up from my table to roam around looking for people I'd wanted to meet. Later on I reported back every few minutes because I'd been told there was going to be a formal presentation of the scroll of contributors to the Fund, and I didn't want anyone to think I was trying to dodge it. When the films started, however, it began to look as if I was going to get out of making yet another speech (sometime I must publish a collection of my undelivered speeches) and I sneaked a look at the scroll, which Bill Entrekin had left with me while he went looking for someone to present it. This was the first time I'd seen a list of contributors, and I was shaken to find how many of them I hadn't met, or worse still have met without saying a word of acknowledgement. In desperation I went about peering at chests like a movie talent scout, and was shaken again to find that people were leaving all the time. The Convention was breaking up before my eyes. Somehow I'd imagined it would end with everyone joining hands and singing Auld Lang Syne, or at least standing around and saying goodbye. Instead it was just petering out in universal chaos. Shelby Vick, whom I still thought of as having just got in, had checked out hours ago. People had even given up looking for Henry Burwell, a quest which had united the entire convention earlier. With the end of their ordeal in sight the Committee had gotten out from under and were just wandering around aimlessly muttering to themselves and seeking pathetically for assurances that the Convention had been a success. All the time groups of people were checking out. It was like the breakdown of civilization.

## 16: Elevator To The Stars

Finally it dawned on me that the Convention was actually over, that the only vestige of the official machine still functioning amid the ruins was the film projector, and that I could take up my scroll and go with a clear conscience. I didn't feel like sitting and watching movies, so Lee and Max and I left to look for a party. We were immediately joined by Ken Beale. The four of us roamed the hotel for something like an hour, searching for fannish good cheer. We would amble along disconsolately for a while, someone would suggest a room, we would go to the elevators, get out at another identical-looking floor, find another dark and silent room, and resume our trek through the endless wastes of red carpet. We knew there was a party in the penthouse but we didn't think the four of us would get in. Lee suggested throwing a party off the roof, but Ken Beale wouldn't co-operate.

Some time after 2AM we were in the main lobby again when Bea Mahaffey & Henry Burwell came in and called me away for a consultation about the ballot. I arranged to meet Lee & Max again either at Lee's room or in the penthouse -- like most people Max & I had checked out of our rooms that morning to save money -- and went out with Bea & Henry to a night club. We sat in an alcove and drank Tom Collins's and talked as best we could while a brassy woman sang at a piano in a niche above the bar and another one with no clothes on swam around in a glass tank. (Gad, how I've lived.)

After a while I found my way back to the hotel and knocked on Lee's door. No answer. I stood for a moment assuring myself that this wasn't the wrong room. As a matter of fact I wouldn't have been too surprised if it had turned out to be the wrong hotel. I'd been five days in Chicago and I still hadn't had time to take a look at the place, except from above. As for the hotel, the forty-odd floors were so absolutely identical in appearance that my subconscious was firmly convinced there was only one of them, though with several million rooms and a system of corridors with infinite connectivity. All I knew about the layout of the hotel was that if I wandered about praying to Roscoe for guidance I would eventually find myself at the door I wanted. Yes, this was the right room all right; I was still sober enough to remember the number. I was unsober enough however to give the door a couple of heavy thumps before I moved off, the way you do when you're really quite sure there's no one there. I had just done this when I saw two house detectives bearing down on me.

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I suddenly realized that my position was delicate. I didn't know much about hotel ettiquette, but I suspected that the house detectives mightn't approve of me battering down the door of a girl's room at 3AM, especially when I wasn't registered at the hotel. I began to visualize myself cut off from fandom and condemned to roam the streets of Chicago till dawn.

I nodded to them casually and asked what time it was, trying to capture the initiative. When they told me I said tch tch they must have gone out for something to eat, and set off briskly towards the elevators. But they were going that way too and fell into step behind me, muttering to themselves. One of them asked where I came from and I said Ireland. The other asked me what my room number was. I said "1630", wishing we weren't just about to pass it. As I feared, the worst happened. They stopped dead in front of it. "This can't be your room," one of them declared, "everyone checked out of that suite this morning." I hadn't thought they'd know the Atlanta suite quite as well as that. I played my last card. "Oh really?" I said, producing a key marked 1630. This was an extra one I'd picked up somewhere and thought I might as well hold onto until I really left the hotel.

They were shaken, but still waited for me to open the door. I supposed they were looking for luggage, so I was pleased to see a pair of shoes beside the bed. I had left them behind because they weren't mine, and no one else seemed to have claimed them either. I sat down on the bed and made to change into them hoping they would fit and not feeling a bit like Cinderella. "Everyone was supposed to have checked out of these rooms this morning," said the obstinate one, "Where's the rest of your luggage?" "In the car," I lied (actually it was in someone else's room), "I am checking out this morning." That confused him for a minute.

"Where are you going?" he asked for lack of something more sleuthlike to say. "Los Angeles," I answered. Animal cunning gleamed in his piglike eyes. "OH!" he exclaimed triumphantly, mentally polishing up his Dick Tracy badge, "I thought you said you came from Ireland?" You had to give him credit, he knew Ireland wasn't in Los Angeles. Maybe not even in California.

The sheer injustice of being suspected because I was telling the truth for once infuriated me. "I come from Ireland and I'm going to Los Angeles," I explained with exaggerated patience. "And I don't see what damned business it is of yours." We glared at each other for a few moments and then the communicating door opened and in walked my guardian angel disguised as Bill Entrekin. It seems the car had broken down and the Atlanta suite had checked in again. "Hello Bill," I said, trying not to look surprised.

The detectives were quite demolished. They'd had a bad time of it the last few days, they explained apologetically. "We've had all sorts of Conventions here," said one of them, "but we've never come across anything like these science fiction people." "I don't think they'll get the hotel again," added the other naively. "I don't think they'll want it again," I said, holding the door open for them.

I did up my shoes again, picked up the ownerless pair because Bill thought they belonged to Manly Banister (I carried them 4000 miles to Kansas City and found they didn't), and made for the penthouse. The door was locked. I knocked, but the only result was that someone inside shouted "Don't open". I scribbled a note -- "Are Hoffman and Keasler there?...Walt Willis" -- and pushed it under the door. Nothing happened. I was just going away to look for a phone when the door opened to let some people out. I went in, picked my note off the floor where it had been lying unnoticed, dumped the shoes in a corner, and went on into the big room. It was certainly an exclusive party...just Lee, Max, the Little Menfolk and some pros -- Bixby, Boucher, Byrne, Reynolds, Anderson, Evelyn Gold and others.

As the night wore on more fans came through the pearly gates, but the party stayed very close to our ideal -- not too many people and all of them conscious. The only noise seemed to come from the pros round the bar, where for a while I got caught up in a crowd which seemed to consist mainly of Mack Reynolds, though one caught glimpses of Tony Boucher, Poul Anderson & Jerry Bixby roaming around his outskirts. I scored an almost fatal success with a couple of limericks they hadn't heard before. "This Willis is a well," announced Mack Reynolds reverently. "A well, that's what he is." It wasn't that I didn't enjoy the present company, but I wanted to get back to Max and Lee: god knew when us three would ever meet again. But Mack would have none of it. "Willis is a well," he insisted to the crowd at the bar. "We can't let our well get away," he pleaded, pressing another drink on me to make sure I didn't run dry. Finally I promised to mail him a complete list of all the limericks I knew and escaped, followed by resentful rumblings of "I tell you the man was a well. A positive well."

I went back to the window-ledge where I'd been sitting between Lee and Max. We spent the rest of the night there, holding court with various people who dropped by, including Les & Es Cole, Rich Elsberry, Robert Briggs, Roger Sims, Tom Quinn and others. Mack Reynolds made occasional sorties out of the bar to beg for more limericks. I would dredge the resources of my memory and he would retire again, shaking his head and muttering to no one in particular "A well". Poul Anderson came along wanting to be taught some Irish drinking songs. I sang him as much as I could remember of "The Cruiskeen Lawn" and promised to mail him the rest. I had some competition from SJByrne who was standing in the middle of the room singing excerpts from Gilbert & Sullivan to a select audience. Tucker was being very quiet on a sofa in the corner, Max, who had earlier been dancing with Evelyn Gold in her stocking feet and had so swept her off them as to sell her a subscription to 'Opus', was dispensing No-Doze tablets to everyone. He had been living on them himself for days and was beginning to feel very odd indeed.

Time went by and things got quieter and quieter until we seemed to be the only ones who were fully awake. As the dawn broke the three of us were quietly very happy and talked about how wonderful it had all been, and how much we were going to miss each other and how we must meet again some time. As for me, I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life. All the tension of the last few days was over, and to look forward to I had the prospect of four weeks of seeing America and after that a return to fandom without the worry and embarrassment that had spoiled it for so long. I had now been just seven days in America without even having had time to think about it, but now a feeling of utter exaltation swept over me to realize that here I was sitting between Lee Hoffman and Max Keasler at the top of a Chicago skyscraper, watching the sun rise over Lake Michigan. Life can be wonderful. It was one of those moments that has to be broken while it's still perfect, and when the sun was fully up we went down to have breakfast.

#### PART II

# 17: Afterthoughts

On the way down from the penthouse we attracted Jim Harmon & Dave Ish, who accompanied us in prospecting for breakfast. We ended up in some dump miles away where at this hour the only things laid on the tables were chairs. These were immediately replaced by the inevitable glasses of iced chlorine, and the waitress asked for our orders. But for all most of the party cared about food, they would just as soon have eaten the chairs as anything else. A continuous supply of coffee was organized instead, the waitresses virtually arranged like a human chain carrying buckets of water to a fire. You could see that the manager was speculating whether it might not be more economical to lay an underground pipeline to our table. I however, with

consumnate callousness and lack of tact, ordered a hearty meal of hem and eggs and devoured it before the shrinking gaze of the others as if I hadn't eaten anything for days. Which, now I come to think of it, was more or less true. Nevertheless I felt fine. I seemed to have been living through this Convention in a different direction to everyone else. I'd started as a physical and mental wreck, and now I was on top of the world, unreal but wonderful, and so exalted that I wondered whether if that Convention had gone on for another few days I might not have developed into another form of life altogether.

Back at the hotel, everyone else went somewhere quiet to collapse and I went up to the penthouse to collect that pair of shoes. I couldn't remember the layout of the place and went quietly about opening doors and peering in. It had never occurred to me that people actually lived there, and I was quite taken aback to find myself alone with Es Cole in her bedroom. I explained that I was only looking for a pair of shoes. Surprisingly now I come to think of it, Es seemed to accept this as quite natural and helped me look for them. They were there all right, which was just as well. We talked for a few minutes and I admired the baby, which the Coles had had to produce in a final desperate effort to convince Laney that they weren't 16-year-old twin brothers, and then I went down to argue with the management about my hotel bill. They had charged Burwell for two nights when I wasn't in the Atlanta suite at all, which was unfair. However confusing that Convention may have been I'm sure I was never so far gone as to allow myself to be in two rooms at once. During lulls in the struggle and after victory I patrolled the hall saying goodbye to people and trying to avoid people I had already said goodbye to twice. a nice exercise in both tact and memory training.

The place had just about filled up with people waiting around in armchairs in whose direction I couldn't look, when our own little party began to gather at the main door. It was supposed to consist of the Palmers, the Ackermans, Bea Mahaffey, SJByrne and myself, but it took a long time for it to attain the critical mass it needed to go off. A few would gather, wait for a while, and then some or all of them would decide either that they had forgotten something or that they should go and look for the rest. During these periods while everyone was looking for everyone else I would stand there steadfast and alone, feeling like a landmark, a rallying point, a symbol of continuity in this shifting chaos, and troubled by an unreasonable conviction that everyone else had met at the other door and were just about to give me up.

All other possible permutations having been exhausted, there finally occurred one in which we were all at the same place at the same time. We piled into Palmer's station wagon and set off for lunch at a high class joint called 'The Well Of The Sea'. I thought for a moment that the lights had fused, but it turned out to be just one of those places where they have coloured fish swimming about in the walls, coloured waiters swimming about on the floor, and everything so dark that no one is quite sure which is which. In all fairness to the management, I don't think the reason for the impenetrable gloom was that you shouldn't see what you were eating. I examined the food while striking a match to light a cigarette, and it seemed quite fit for human consumption. I think the real reason is so that the more tender-hearted waiters won't have to see your face when you get the check.

After the meal we blinked our way into the daylight again and drove off to Evanston where we were to leave Bea and where I had my first view of a promag head-quarters. Naturally I had visualized these as great gleaming glass and concrete skyscrapers. But this one appeared to be just a lock-up shop, and the milling throngs of personnel I'd expected turned out to be merely three clerks. No doubt they did their best to mill, but they just weren't throng enough. On a sort of balcony at the back was the Mailing Department of Other Worlds, which seemed to consist



of two youths actually putting magazines into envelopes with their bare hands. No earth-shaking machinery, no conveyor belts, no flashing lights. I was horrified. Why, I thought disillusioned, promags are just fanzines with delusions of grandeur. Bemused, I looked around to see where Bea & Ray set up type, examined an advance copy of OW lying on Bea's desk, and tried to read as much of her correspondence as I could without actually lifting it up. Then we were introduced to the staff. A young man at a typewriter turned out to be Chester F. Geier, and stone deaf.

Just before we left Bea gave me the advance copy of OW and I wished I'd paid less attention to it and more to the correspondence. (Anyone want an advance copy of OW for November 1952?) Then we set off for Amhurst, Wisconsin, wherever that was. I tried to find out from the tattered old map of the USA Eva Firestone had soon after I entered fandom, but at first I ran into difficulties. It was nearly as bad as in Ireland during the war when all the signposts were taken down to baffle parachutists and even the old stone milestones defaced, but eventually I figured out what was wrong. These crazy Americans, not content with driving on the wrong side of the road, had put all the signposts on the wrong side too. Not only that, they had stuck them right down at eye level instead of concealing them decently up in the stratosphere as we do. Once I got used to these eccentricities I was able to plot our course pretty well. We seemed to be going in a direction almost diametrically opposite to Los Angeles, but I thought I'd worry about that tomorrow and lay back comfortably half asleep and listening to Forry singing Al Jolson songs, which he does very well. It was all very peaceful. I relaxed for the first time since the boat docked and began to sort out my impressions...

American fans had been a pleasant surprise. Subconsciously influenced by the fulminations of Francis Towner Laney, I had been half expecting them to be brash, rude and unbalanced. Instead I'd found them considerate, friendly and likeable. The only real exception was the Rosen girl I mentioned, who apparently went round deliberately trying to make enemies and a-laney-ate people as a form of self advertisement, and the concern so many people expressed about her behaviour made a more lasting impression on me than she did. Even the people whom the American fans had regarded as obnoxious seemed less so than their British counterparts. Ken Beale, for instance, was disliked in some quarters -- I remembered Hal Shapiro saying to him "Before I met you, Beale, I hated you without knowing why. Now I've met you, and I know why" -- but in retrospect his only unpleasant characteristic was a certain limpet-like quality, which was inclined to make you impatient with him. He had to have a house fall on him, and occasionally...as in the Shapiro quote above...it did. Jim Harmon, hitherto almost consistently unpleasant in print, turned out to be cherubfaced and pleasant. A neofan called Harlan Ellison was thought by some to be a bit brash and bumptious: certainly he was no shirnking violet ... when he arrived he discovered there was a Roman Catholic Convention in the same hotel and found his way about by opening doors at random and asking "Are you fans or Catholics?"...but when you got to know him he was fundamentally sincere and likeable. He was one of those worried about the impression that might have been given by Su Rosen and got her activities suppressed in the Convention Reports.

Of the other people I wasn't to meet again, I got to know Max Keasler best and formed a great affection for him. He was not only a likeable character but a fabulous one. I'd noticed with awe that not only did he talk in interlineations, but he also spoke with the typos which were his trademark...persistently, for instance, referring to Laney as "Lanny". Robert Bloch turned out to be just as good to listen to as read, except that he had a habit of throwing away his gags out of the corner of his mouth, and as a person was one of the nicest people I've ever met. So was Tucker, who completely lived up to expectations, a feat you would have thought impossible after the build-up Lee Hoffman had given him to me. Gregg Calkins, then a teenager, had caused a minor sensation by being twice as adult and intelligent as anyone could

have expected, and scored a big personal success. Joe Gibson had had a sort of knowing veneer which made it difficult to talk naturally with him at first, but when as during the midnight hours of that long bus trip he stopped being a character he was interesting and likeable. But this could degenerate into a mere recital of names. Later, Vin¢ Clarke was to pull my leg because my letters kept saying that people were "nice"...but it was true.

The Convention itself had been bigger, quieter and less efficient than I'd expected. In Europe we're accustomed to think of Americans as 100% efficient and it was surprising, but not unpleasant, to see they had just the same sort of mix-ups and breakdowns as London. It made everything seem more human. The Official Programme had been good, but not as good as I'd seen the Londoners put on. Offstage the Convention was more respectable than I'd thought it would be: I'd expected all sorts of vice and hordes of youngsters running around with beanies and zapguns, As for it being so large, this had been a surprise for the Convention Committee too, but what struck me was not the presence of so many non-fans, but the appearance of so many fans I'd thought were dead long ago. Apparently in America there is this ghost fandom which walks only at Conventions. People like Kyle, Moskowitz, Sykora, Madle, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans and so on, who are never heard of for 362 days in the year and who if they take any part in national fandom in that period must do so under assumed names...come Convention time they spring to life and are seen right in the thick of it, speechmaking and organising and intriguing and politicking just as if they were the very core of fandom. Amazing. It's as if they had been preserved in great glass tubes in a state of suspended animation from Convention to Convention. On the first day the Convention Committee operate the secret controls and they stir again to to their strange pseudo-life, carrying on just as they did in The Immortal Storm and ignorant of everything that has happened since.

One thing people kept suggesting I should find odd, and which I didn't, was the alleged fan/pro cleavage. Essentially, there seemed very little more of it than there was in England, and what difference there was seemed probably to be due to the fact that there were so many more of each category than in England: naturally they would tend to form into congenial groups, or if you aren't in one, cliques. Equally naturally the group will try to preserve its identity and there will be outcries from those excluded. Actually I thought a more notable cleavage was that between the 'BNFs' and the ordinary fans. Unlike England, there was a large number of neofans who looked up to the BNFs and whom the BNFs tended to look down on; some of them either hung diffidently around the august BNFs, afraid to introduce themselves, or fastened onto them determinedly like the little groundhog in Pogo. There was a nebulous caste system based on a generally accepted notion of fan status, which had not manifested itself in England.

This in turn seemed to me to derive from the fact that American fans were more fannish than their English equivalents. A Britisher would go to a Convention primarily as a person in his own right, not as a fan, and would regard himself as the equal of anyone there. Normally he would not consider forcing his company where it was not invited nor conversely would he withhold it through diffidence. There would be none of this perpetual wooing by neofan and rejection by ENF that seemed to have become a sort of game at American Conventions. I noted with interest that in self defence the BNFs had developed quite elaborate techniques for shaking off unwanted retinue. A group that wanted to get together would for instance leave the Convention Hall independently on a pre-arranged signal and rendezvous in a deserted part of the hotel. If they still found themselves embarrassed by hangers-on they would announce that they were going to their rooms to shower or sleep and make another rendezvous by phone. If after this they still found themselves encumbered they would in desperation look for what I mentally christened a Cuckoo Party. This would be a party to which they didn't want to go themselves, but where their hanger-on

would be accepted. They would drop in here, mingle with the crowd until their encumbrance was seen to be absorbed in conversation, and then quietly escape to make a wild dash for the party they really wanted to go to...and where of course they could only go if they were unencumbered. It was a breach of the unwritten law to turn up at a party where one was invited in the company of people who were not, because thereby you embarrassed your host. This process of separating out used to take literally hours; sometimes it would never succeed at all, one of the group having to do a Captain Oates act, accepting exclusion from his friends so that they could go on alone. It was all very cruel in a sense, but there was no alternative if every party were not to degenerate into the meaningless noisy brawl it is the natural tendency of all Convention parties to become; and I thought it was nice in a way that people would go to all this trouble rather than resort to open rudeness.

I had found the whole business absolutely nerve-wracking. On the one hand I wanted to meet as many people as I could. On the other hand I had special friends here whom I might never see again and whom I wanted to talk to away from the melee. And on both hands, being a guest and a special kind of one at that, I wanted more than ever to be pleasant to everyone and not hurt anyone's feelings. It seemed to me that if I just let myself drift I'd probably fail at all three, so I tried to work to a plan. Part of the time I used the newly-mastered BNF techniques with ruthless efficiency...to have been half-hearted about it would have been to make the worst of both worlds...and got together with Lee and Max and such other of our friends as we could separate away from the mob. The rest of the time I would deliberately leave them and go off by myself to mingle as thoroughly as I could. At the end of it I felt as if I'd been walking a tightrope for five days, but I was reasonably satisfied that I'd made the best possible use of my time.

Looking back on it now after four years I still think so. In fact in some ways I seem to have succeeded only too well, because what criticism there was over my conduct at the Chicon was directed, not at me for being cliquish, but at Lee Hoffman and to a lesser degree Tucker and some pros for having selfishly 'monopolized' me. I had evidently been so damned tactful through all that I was universally regarded as the innocent victim of unscrupulous monopolists, whereas I knew quite well what I wanted to do and did it. If anyone was the innocent victim it was Lee, and I've felt guilty about it ever since the publication of the Hoffmanopolist view in Elsberry's 34-page (pooh, a mere filler) Chicon Report in Opus 20: Keasler titled it "The Ice-cream King" (it seems he has every flavour but the one you want...a typically subtle Keasler comment on the Elsberry attitude) but Elsberry's original title had been "Walt Willis, Boy Yo-yo", and according to it Lee had led me round the Chicon by her apron strings. However someone, probably Elsberry, would have been critical no matter what happened: it was a universal complaint that nobody got talking to half the people they'd wanted to and it wasn't likely I'd be the exception.

One other Convention Report that worried me slightly was that of Bob Tucker, who hung a "Quiet Man" label on me. I admit I didn't swing from any chandeliers or throw bottles out of any window, but I did quite a lot of talking and believe it or not even made quite a few jokes; far be it from me to quote them, but other people did in various fanmags later. I only mention this because I hate to think of people who'd contributed to Shelby's Fund getting the impression that I didn't enjoy myself at the Chicon and that their generosity had been wasted.

However at the time all this was far in the future. Mulling drowsily over the last five days in the car speeding through the dusk to Amhurst, I felt reasonably well pleased. I had made a lot of friends and as far as I knew no enemies. I had got over the speech-making hurdles without ignominy. I might have lost a lot of weight but I hadn't got sick as I'd feared I might from the heat and unfamiliar food. No, I hadn't done too badly...and I'd had a wonderful time, after the banquet anyway. Relief washed over me in gentle soothing waves.

Having sorted through my impressions I realized that one was missing that should have been there. I searched sleepily about my mind for it, but there was no sign of it. There was no feeling of strangeness. I realized with a start that I felt quite at home among these Americans, and had done so for days without noticing it. Apart from worry about speeches and stuff I had felt more at ease at the Chicon than I had at London. Partly I suppose it was because they could understand my accent here, and I theirs: and partly because I was more of an American fan than an English fan. There might be other reasons, but they'd involve complex considerations of national character and hundreds of years of Irish, English and American history. Whatever the reason was, I felt I was among friends in a way that even the natural friendliness of Americans couldn't account for...and I was very pleased about it.

Round about 11 o'clock that night we finally arrived at the Palmer farm. We called first at a cottage on the estate where the Palmer children had been left. The babysitters turned out to be none other than Mr. & Mrs. Shaver. I was thrilled at being present at this historic first meeting of Palmer, Shaver and Ackerman, protagonists in the greatest feud in fandom's history, but unfortunately none of them seemed willing to live up to their responsibilities. There were no gauntlets thrown down, no manifestos read, not even any carefully worded communique issued to the fan press. However it seemed we were to see Shaver again tomorrow. We took the children home to the Falmer house and had something to eat. Then the Ackermans, Byrne and I tottered wearily into beds in a cottage the Palmers keep for guests.

# 18: Soiree With The Fringe On Tap

After ten hours sleep we were all feeling much better, and Byrne heralded the new day by unveiling to me a monumental pun he'd been working on since he awoke...or maybe it came to him in a nightmare. Byrne is one of the most enthusiastic and talented punsters I'd ever come across, but he works by rules not sanctioned at Oblique House. It is The Law there that a pun must be mortised into the conversation so that it appears to follow with hideous inevitability the previous remark; it's not permissible to trot it out on its own merits. These conventions are not observed by Byrne, who worships only at the shrine of complexity. This particular pun was the most complicated one I'd ever heard. It had layer within layer of meaning like a Chinese box. While I was working my way down through it gingerly to the lowest stratum of semantic significance, we were both startled to hear dreadful groans like those of a soul in torment coming from the Ackermans' room. Through the wall we heard Wendy asking anxiously, "What is it, Forry?" "Ohhhh," groaned Forry, "I just had the most terrible dream. I dreamed...oh the horror it ...I dreamed I heard Stu Byrne say---" and he repeated Byrne's Pun, the actual words of which have been erased from my memory by the healing hand of time.

We went for a row on a lake that afternoon, a pretty little place in a wood. Forry was propping his eyes open with a twig and referred to himself as "Prop-eye The Sailor Man". Much later he sent me the original twig for the Oblique House Museum of Fantiquities. In the evening we met Shaver again at Palmer's house and there was a long conversation about the Mystery and allied subjects. It was fascinating to watch Forry coping with the situation. On the one hand he regards Shaverism as a few degrees more repulsive than leprosy. But on the other hand he is one of the most fundamentally courteous persons I've ever met, so it was impossible for him to convey directly to Shaver just what he thought of his ideas. He tried to solve the problem by resorting to the Socratic method. He would simply ask Shaver questions about the caves and the deroes, each going deeper into detail. Then when he thought he had led Shaver into making a statement that anyone, even Shaver, could not fail to see was self-evidently ridiculous, he would just sit there waiting for the utter absurdity of it to sweep through his opponent's consciousness.

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Unfortunately this doesn't work with Shaver. While Forry was sitting back confidently with a "There you are" expression, Shaver would also be sitting back, equally confident; happy that he had met so helpfully that request for information and eager for the next one. It would go something like this...

Ackerman: What would be the total population of the caves?

Shaver: About 40,000.

Ackerman: You mean all over.. I mean under... the world?

Shaver: Yes.

Ackerman: They must be spread pretty thin then?

Shaver: Well, they have small communities.

Ackerman: You mean like towns?

Shaver: Yes.

Ackerman: With cinemas and things?

shaver: Yes.

Ackerman: How big are they?

Shaver: Pretty small. They hold about 40 or 50 people...er, deroes.

Ackerman: It could hardly be an economical proposition?

Shaver: Well you see they use slave labor. It's just typical of their selfish arrogance.

Ackerman (closing in): What movies do they show?

Shaver: The same as up here.

Ackerman (shaken): Where do they get them?

Shaver: Steal them, of course.

(The thought of deroes watching bootlegged double features, presumably munching bootlegged popcorn, was momentarily too much for Forry. There was a pause.)

Ackerman: Do they charge for admission?

Shaver: Yes.

Ackerman: What do they use for money? Shaver: Why, ordinary dollars and cents.

Forry rested his case. I was thinking of underlining the point by asking why this discrimination against the sterling area, but it was not the sort of nasty question you could ask. Shaver so obviously believed every word he was saying, and was so obviously trying not to force his beliefs on us, that both Forry & I felt somehow it would be bad manners to harass him. It was the same when we got to Mantong, the part of the Mystery that's always annoyed me most. I don't know if you remember any of this stuff, but this Mantong was supposed to be the grand-daddy of all languages, and a list was published in Amazing of the various 'meanings' assigned to each letter in the alphabet, and examples given of how various English words can have their meanings deduced from the individual letters. All blithely ignoring the facts that only a few languages have the same alphabet as ours, that some languages have no alphabet at all, just pictographs, and that words with the same meanings have totally different forms in other languages, and vice versa. In fact the front was so broad it was hard to know just where to attack it. Besides, Palmer began to intervene, rescuing Shaver from pitfalls by more bizarre and fanciful explanations than Shaver could have thought of, and sidetracking the issue by reading the characters of his guest from the letters in their names. I had just got around to asking for the Mantong derivation of the word 'robot' ... it's of course a synthetic word invented by Capek only a few dozen years ago: though I suspected that even if Shaver did fall into the trap Palmer would get him out by claiming that racial memory led Capek to subconsciously formulate the word in accordance with the purest Mantong....when Wendy intervened. I gave up trying to correct Shaver as he was assiduously analysing "rowboat" and listened, fascinated. Wendy had been following the conversation with growing horror. All this was quite new to her, and at first she'd thought it was a joke, and then that Shaver was an unfortunate lunatic whom we were all humouring. It

had shaken her to see Byrne sitting carefully on the fence, and occasionally even putting his foot down on Shaver's side by treating what he was saying as if it was sense, but when Palmer intervened on Shaver's side she just didn't know what to make of it. She could contain herself no longer.

"Mr. Palmer," she burst out, "surely you don't believe all this rubbish about malignant entities living under the Earth?"

"No, I don't," said Palmer. Wendy looked very relieved. "No," Palmer went on fiendishly. "personally I think they live in the stratosphere."

He went on to advance ideas quite as preposterous as Shaver's. Wendy retired from the conflict for a while, baffled. For a long time she sat and listened to Shaver talking about the Mystery and his persecution by the deroes and so on. You could see there was one question she desperately wanted to ask, but she couldn't think how to put it. After all it's not easy in polite social conversation to suggest that somebody is a lunatic...

"Mr. Shaver," she finally plunged, "don't you think it possible that all these 'experiences' of yours and this persecution you think you've undergone, could be more easily explained as some form of...er, mental illnesss?"

"No," said Shaver.

### 19: Westward. Ho?

Next morning we were up at 5:30 and Palmer drove the Ackermans and me into Amburst village to get the bus back to Evanston. The bus that eventually arrived was the only one in my entire tour which didn't break down under me. This was because it had already broken down before it reached me: it was obviously a highly strung vehicle and had had a nervous breakdown. During the long wait who should come along but Richard Shaver, driving a truck and looking in his element. I had a long talk with him and he told me all about his troubles in spreading the Mystery, how his publishing plant was mysteriously sabotaged and everything. Now his attitude was that he had done his best to warn us and he could do no more. I found myself feeling quite sympathetic: instead of feeling hostile to Shaver on account of his Mystery, I was beginning to feel friendly to the Mystery on account of Shaver. He was really a pretty nice guy, just a truckdriver who took the wrong turning. If science fiction has to be disgraced by crackpots, we could have worse ones than Dick Shaver.

I couldn't warm so much to Palmer, for instance, who is a more intelligent man and should know better. Whether he believes any of the rubbish he prints or not he must know it makes the whole sf field stink to many intelligent people: as for the ridiculous presentation to him at the Chicon of an Award as "The Son of Science Fiction", it only proved that science and fiction aren't properly married. Personally, he seemed an upsetting little man, too fond of making people uncomfortable, with more of the traditional misanthropy of the cripple than you would expect from the gushing bonhomic of his editorials. But he was hospitable and friendly to me and it's unfair to write him off with such a superficial judgment: he's a very complex character, with many good qualities which show through more clearly in his editorials than on short acquaintance.

Eventually the bus tottered along. It was almost full, but there were three seats. It was a source of continual amazement to me how Greyhound busses never seemed to be either empty or overcrowded. You got the impression that the Company had found some way of putting surplus passengers into deep freeze to be popped into buses when required. Or maybe that they employed hordes of zombies to travel in empty buses to keep up appearances, and to get out when real passengers come along. Yes, I

think that must be it. Haven't you noticed the vacant mindless stares from long distance buses passing through in the night? Like fish in an aquarium.

Soon we were passing through Oshkosh, which I was thrilled to discover was a real place, and through Fond du Lac, a name soon to ring through the world as the home of Dean Grennell, and then into Milwaukee. Here we found that we'd missed the connection to Evanston, and had to wait for the next. Forry started on his habit— wal search of the newsstands, presumably just in case someone in Milwaukee had started up a new prozine. By now I'd got over my initial awe at seeing US editions of sf mags just lying around loose to be picked up by anyone and was looking along the comics for the latest Pogo when a new thought struck me. Here in Milwaukee should it not be possible, theoretically at least, to speak to Robert Bloch on the telephone? Congratulating myself on remembering the name of the advertising agency where he then worked I looked up the number, studied the directions in the phone booth, mastered the outlandish equipment, and spoke with Bloch. Yes, actually and literally. Still dazed by the wonder of it all I incautiously revealed my destination to the man, with results I wasn't to know until I reached Los Angeles.

Rog and Mari Phillips and a De Soto sedan were waiting for us at Evanston bus station to take us to Los Angeles. As Wendayne had uneasily suspected, so was one Jim Webbert: he was being given a lift as far as Salt Lake City. We all stood looking helplessly at the back of the car for a while. What with the Phillips' luggage and a small mountain of prozines and fanzines Webbert had accumulated at the Chicon, there seemed nothing to be done with our poor belongings but to tie them on with string and let them trail behind. But Rog was undaunted. He pushed and pulled and swore for several minutes until most of the contents of the boot shrivelled with fright into a condition resembling collapsed matter. The front wheels of the car were still touching the ground, so off we went.

We called first at the Other Worlds Building to pick up Bea and then went on to Hamling's house, where we were served with daquiries. This was the first time I'd come across a drink that you eat. It consists mainly of crushed ice and comes wearing a bedsock, presumably so that your delirium tremens won't be complicated by frostbite. It is the only drink I know of that packs its sock outside. Munching my drink, I looked admiringly round the editorial offices of Imagination. This was more like it. It was a long pleasant basement room with a bar and a TV set at one end, shelves of books and a desk at the other, and in the middle a comfortable couch and Frances Hamling. Everything for The Rich Full Life. Later on Hamling scribbled on a piece of paper and handed it to me. I stared at it perplexedly It looked for all the world like a cheque for \$50. I demurred incoherently, but Bill insisted it was his contibution to the Fund, with some amiable nonsense about it coming off his income tax. I thanked him gratefully and accepted it: If I'd known what that \$50 was to mean to me I'd have bowed down and worshipped him.

About 7FM we finally set off for Los Angeles. There were six in the car...Forry Ackerman -- big, easy-going, gentle, an inveterate punster but with also a quiet subtle sense of humour that doesn't come out in his writings: Wendayne Ackerman -- vivacious, impulsive, almost childlike in some ways: Mari Wolf Phillips -- beautiful, intelligent, with a lively sense of humour and at that time very much in love with Rog in a timid sort of way: Rog Phillips -- big, blunt, a strong man who knew his own strength and suffering horribly from neuralgia: me: and Jim Webbert.

Webbert had been as prominent a feature of the Morrison Hotel as the house detectives. He had seemed to be trying to run a sort of Room Service of his own in opposition to the Hotel's. Wherever two or three pros were gathered together, there would be Webbert in the midst of them...mixing drinks, proffering cigaretts and information, and generally engaging in his own peculiar form of fawn activity.

It consisted above all of lighting people's cigarettes. He was a new type of fan -- a lighterhack. He had one of those trick cigarette cases incorporating a cigarette lighter -- and, for all I know, a shoe polishing set -- and this he would cause to materialize within an inch of your nose the moment a cigarette touched your lips. Most of the pros had seemed to be unable to make up their minds how to treat him: the notable exception had been Mack Reynolds, who had taken the logical attitude that if Webbert wanted to be a lackey, the thing to do was to let him. So he ordered him about like a dog. It was "Webbert, fix me a drink", "Webbert, cigarette!", "Webbert, how about rustling up some women?" Webbert's resources didn't extend to this last but I'm sure he'd have done his best if Bellhop #31 hadn't already had the callgirl situation in hand. It was curious that in one hotel there should be a bellhop with the soul of a fan, and a fan with the scul of a bellhop.

Phillips' attitude to Webbert was one of gruff reserve. He hated having Webbert light his cigarettes, but Webbert was not to be easily thwarted in his mission in life. A strange form of contest developed. Rog would glance sidelong at Webbert to make sure he wasn't looking and then, like a Western hero on the draw, make a desperate bid to whip out a cigarette and light it before Webbert could beat him to it. But Webbert was very vigilant and so quick on the trigger that Rog seldom got the drop on him. Mari & Wendayne were highly amused at Webbert's attempts to make himself useful to Rog. At the diner where we stopped for supper, Webbert followed Rog closely into the restroom and I overheard the girls speculating lewdly just how he was going to offer to assist Rog in there.

### 20: The Route of all Evils

Shortly after midnight we crossed the Mississippi. Or so I was told -- I didn't see any showboats or levees. Perhaps because it was pitch dark at the time, but I still felt the Mississippi belonged in an entirely different part of the country. However I wasn't going to argue about geography -- I had measles during North America -- and I had other things on my mind. Wendayne had chosen this point to announce that she couldn't sleep in the car, and that was bad news. Not just because motels cost money, but my timetable allowed only 3 days for getting to Los Angeles: it hadn't allowed for the two days in Wisconsin either, so I was already that much behind schedule.

The situation didn't make me warm to Webbert any more. From the map it seemed we were going several hundred miles out of our way to leave him off at Salt Lake City, and him with a bus ticket to the place in his pocket. I thought of leaving the car and going on to the West Coast by bus, but then I would miss the Grand Canyon. If in later years I ever became disenchanted with fandom I'd never forgive myself for passing up the Grand Canyon in favour of some fan.

As anyone who has ever been faced with the problem will agree, the strain of choosing between the Grand Canyon and Charles Burbee is very wearing on the intellect, and the place we stopped that night didn't raise my spirits. It was called Tama, Iowa, and consisted of a road stretching to infinity in either direction, a sleazy motel, a dirty garage and some trashy Indian souvenirs, all except the road in advanced stages of decay. This was something new to me in the States — hitherto everything had been polished and opulent, immaculate and new, a ballad of chromium and glass. But this fly in the ointment brought home to me the essential difference between the average Irish, English and American landscapes. In Ireland when a place gets dilapidated the people continue to live in it undismayed until it falls down or is burned to the ground in one of our periodic disturbances. Then they move down the road a bit and build another one. The result is that the country is littered with ruins ranging in age from 30 to 3000 years. In England when a building gets dilapidated

they restore it, patching it up here and there from century to century until it gets to be a sort of architectural anthology. In America, on the other hand, buildings are never allowed to get dilapidated. As soon as they begin to show signs of wear, or even before, they tear them down and build something bigger.

It's this restless energy and extravagance that hits the foreigner first. Shops and diners open all night, lights blazing away wastefully from sunset to dawn, a whole army of workers staying up all night to cater for people who don't want to go to bed. All very startling to anyone from a country where everything, but everything, closes down well before midnight. It seems almost eerie. As Bob Shaw put it once when George Chartes told him he went to work at 6AM: "Are there buildings and everything around at that time?" I wondered what sort of people inhabited this strange nocturnal world.

Next night we stopped at Kearney, Nebraska, and the trip hit a new low. The motel was short of rooms and I had to share a bed with Webbert. Quite apart from the fact that my dislike of Webbert was now approaching the stature of a mania, I am not used to sleeping with men. I was horrorstruck that perhaps in the middle of the night I might make some amourous advance to him. Webbert would probably run screaming from the cabin in the direction of Los Angeles to denounce me to Francis Towner Laney. I wished I had something -- a sword, the State of Nebraska, anything -- to put between us, but all I could do was to get as far away from my bedfellow as I possibly could.

I only fell out of bed once, and nothing worse happened as far as I know. Next morning we left Kearney at the crack of 1PM. I had been up and about for hours, looking ready, but it didn't seem to have much effect. My impatience abated once Rog got the speedometer needle hovering comfortably round the 70mph mark. I couldn't drive a car myself at the time, so I didn't mind how fast he went. The only times I got a bit uneasy was at night, when it was often quite clear to me that we were driving off the road or into a stone wall, but the road somehow always seemed to dodge round in front of us again and I regained my simple trust in the driver.

On the rest of that day and during the following night we drove on through North Platte, Ogallala, Kimball, Cheyenne, Laramie, Rock Springs, Green River and Ogden. I don't remember a thing about any of them, but it's nice to think I've been there; and to be able to say. in an offhand manner, "Last time I was in Cheyenne."

Come to think of it, the last time I was in Cheyenne, Forrest J. Ackerman told me, "This place is noted for its fiction, you know."

"Is it?" I asked innocently.
"Sure," said Forry. "Didn't you ever hear of Cheyenne's fiction?"

We passed through a thunderstorm soon afterwards and I fully expected Forry to be struck by lightning. However he survived, and next day desecrated the name of Zion, also.

That thunderstorm is one thing I do remember. Ah, to have driven in a fast car through a thunderstorm in Wyoming! Speeding out of the afternoon sunshine into unnatural night, the road to Laramie a dwindling streak in a tunnel, the horizon advancing and receding under the storm clouds, forked lightning playing over the mesas...

We didn't stop at a motel that night. Webbert had once expressed the wish to be home by Sunday morning and though he kept saying it didn't matter, everyone else seemed to think it was a hell of a good idea. So we tore on through the night, Forry & Mari relieving Rog at the wheel. I stayed in back, watching the United States

whiz past and catching up on my sleep. Webbert stayed in the front seat playing with the car's cigarette lighter. This was one of those gadgets on the dashboard that you press in when you want a cigarette and it pops out again glowing eagerly when you've changed your mind. Webbert, master lighterman, had taken over the control of this device and kept it in perpetual readiness in case Rog or Mari would attempt to light a cigarette themselves. You could see that as far as Webbert was concerned it was the greatest invention since fire. With this he could beat anyone to the draw.

About four o'clock in the morning, when we were somewhere near Green River, I awoke to find the car full of smoke and some sort of commotion going on in the front seat. The car had stopped, the doors were open, and people were shouting at Webbert and hitting him energetically. Reluctant to interrupt this noble work I waited until things had quieted down before asking what was up. It seemed that Webbert had practically burned himself to death with the cigarette lighter. This seemed to me the quintessence of poetic justice. Smiling contentedly to myself I went back to sleep.

### 1 21: Shell Shock

Dawn was breaking over the mountains behind us as we neared Salt Lake City and the peaks ahead of us, on the far shores of the lake, were glowing with a highly improbable shade of pink as they rose out of the darkness. It was very beautiful, but it also gave me another feeling I didn't recognize at first. Homesickness. These were the first mountains I'd seen since I left Ireland: I hadn't realized I'd been missing them so much.

We'd taken the long way round, through Ogden, so that now we drove south along a road overlooking the lake. It was now a beautiful translucent blue in the early morning sun, very different from the parched-looking mudhole I'd been expecting. I had, I suppose, been thinking of the Dead Sea, which I always imagine as having decomposing bodies floating on it. Salt Lake City was unexpectedly beautiful, too. We drove in a complicated search pattern to find Webbert's house, so it was one American city I had a good look at. Usually I found the straight streets and monotonously rectilinear blocks depressingly uniform, but Salt Lake City's suburbs were treelined and you could see the mountains from them. In the early morning sun it seemed cleaner and brighter than you could reasonably expect a large town to be. There didn't seem to be that sordid industrial belt you find in large towns in Europe, all grime and cobblestones -- just the prosperous downtown district and immediately the flowering suburbs. I don't think I would mind living in Salt Lake City, even with only one wife.

We deposited a slightly singed and rather chastened Webbert at his house. The leave-taking took only a few seconds, but at the very end the old Webbert made a brief final appearance. He told Rog & Mari to be sure and call him when they were starting out for the Philcon next year, so that they could give him a lift. They said they would -- I think they would have promised him a lift to the Moon at that moment -- and we drove off into the city.

There seemed to be more extra room in the car now than could possibly be accounted for by the removal of only one person. Rog drove tranquilly through the city in the general direction of Los Angeles. I was navigating by this time, having always had a weakness for maps and having discovered to my delight that you could get fresh ones at gas stations, and had maneouvred us into the outskirts and onto US Highway 69 leading South before Rog realized where he was going. He promptly pulled into the curb and we had one of those "Of course it's what you want" arguments. Rog just wanted to go somewhere and lie down. Mari wanted to do just what Rog wanted, but she also thought it would be nice to stay the day in Salt Lake City and maybe have a bathe in the Lake. Forry wanted to get home was soon as possible but was too polite

to say so. Wendayne didn't care how long the journey took as long as she saw all the scenery that was to be seen. I was fascinated by the idea of bathing in water where even I couldn't sink, but I was even more anxious to press on to Los Angeles. We were now four days behind my schedule, and according to the complex calculations I'd been making on the backs of envelopes, if we lost another I wouldn't be able to get to Lynn Haven, Florida, in time for Shelby's day off work. I was very sorry for Rog but I'd hate even worse to let down Shelby, but for whom I wouldn't be here at all. Looking at the back of the map folder I remarked innocently that US Highway 69 apparently overlooked vistas of unparalleled magnificence and moreover led past Bryce Canyon, unsurpassed in scenic grandeur. It suddenly occurred to Wendayne that she'd miss all this if we stayed here and drove at night. She threw in her lot with the progressive underground. Rog fought a bitter rearguard action with a protest that the desert was too hot for driving. Wendayne pointed out that Forry could drive. Forry agreed, and I pointed out that US Highway 69 lay in the shade of the mountains. Rog gave in, but said he would stick it out until he got the car filled up with oil. He had just got a new engine and the mechanic had implanted a post-hypnotic command that no oil should be allowed near it but Shell X100. Apparently any other type of oil would cause the engine to burst into flames or rapidly grind itself into minute iron filings. We drove South in the direction of Provo looking for an early-rising gas station.

Poor Rog was in a bad way. He was more like a bear with a sore head than anyone with two legs should ever have to be, and it was no fault of his. His neuralgia was getting worse and the drugs he was taking for it were only making him feel tired instead of killing the pain. Besides, if his iron constitution hadn't been rusted by now it would have been a nine days' wonder. Of those nine days, three had been spent driving nonstop from LA, three at the Convention, and three driving back. It says much for him that he was always courteous to us his guests, and the only real sign of the strain he was under showed itself in diners. It started with coffee. Rog is one of those people who maintain that there is no such thing as strong coffee, only weak people. And he isn't one of the latter. He has for coffee almost the same religious respect that some pepple have for wine. Improperly made (weak) coffee is not only an insult to him, but an abomination to God and man that must be denounced. But it wasn't long before the mild "Take this away and bring me some coffee" rebuke developed into a gallant one-man crusade to improve standards generally in American eating-places. At a sleazy joint somewhere in Nebraska he proclaimed loudly that his hamburger sandwich was cold, refused to eat it or pay for it when it was warmed up, and finally declined even to sit in the place, going outside to buy a bag of cookies and eat them in the car until us less courageous customers had finished. He left behind him on his journey across the continent a trail of shaken and selfcritical diner proprietors, and if since 1952 anyone has noticed a remarkable improvement in the cuisine along US Highway 30, they know whom they have to thank.

At the last place he had started on his reformative work even before the meal was brought. We had placed our orders and Rog had gone along to the washroom. Almost immediately he was back, his great bulk looming over the little diner like an avenging angel. It was obvious that his breath would suffice to incinerate the coldest hamburger sandwich. He began calling for the Manager in controlled tones, as if luring the wretch to come out from his shelter into the open. "What's wrong?" we asked timidly. "There is no soap in the washroom," he ground out. We quailed. This was bad. We were all cowering in our corners when Wendayne had an idea. Fumbling hurriedly in her bag she produced a small object and handed it to Rog. It was a tiny cake of soap labelled "Hotel Morrison". He sat clutching it in his great hand for a few moments. Then he rose and stamped back to the washroom without a word, his rage twice as dreadful now that it had been denied its outlet. As he disappeared the waitress was seen bringing our order. Forry looked at her and at Rog's retreating back; then he put his elbows on the table, placed his palms together under his chin and looked

upwards. "Please, God," he intoned, "Please, God, let the coffee be strong."

Such was the Rog who now set out looking for oil for his car. We drove only a few miles out of Salt Lake City before we found a gas station open, but it didn't have Shell X100. We drove along another few miles and found another, but it didn't have any either. Neither did the third, nor the fourth. The situation was getting serious. We were on the outskirts of civilization and the car couldn't get across the desert without oil. We hadn't any breakfast yet either, but food had become secondary. At last we came on another gas station, obviously the last for hundreds of miles. Rog got out, slammed the door with an impact that nearly turned the car over, and advanced on the unsuspecting attendant. If they didn't have Shell X100 here he was going to know the reason why.

We could hear the conversation quite clearly ...

"Have you got Shell X100?"

"Nope."

"You know where I could get some?"

The man considered it. "Guess you'd better go on to Arizona... Or maybe Texas would have it. Sure won't get any in Utah."

Rog glowered over the little man like a thunder cloud. "IS UTAH," he demanded,

"IS UTAH A PART OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OR IS IT NOT?"

The attendant was undaunted. Instead of scurrying to and fro in Rog's shadow he stood his ground. "Utah is a part of the United States," he re-assured Rog, "and a durned good one too."

"My mechanic," said Rog, "told me I could get Shell X100 anywhere in the United

States."

"Not in Utah," said the man complacently.

"Why NOT?"

"Sold their concession to Conoco a couple years back," said the man complacently.

Rcg sagged. He knew now that he was in the grip of million-dollar commerce, a
pawn in the machinations of industrial empires. It was part of the American Way of
Life. He tried another tack...

"Does Conoco make an oil equivalent to Shell X100?"

"Sure," said the attendant.

"OK," said Rog, "put some of that in."

We all breathed again. Such a simple sensible solution. The crisis was at an end. We looked admiringly at Rog. He looked as if he would have preened himself if he had had the strength.

"Right", said the attendant smartly. Then he paused. "Is Shell X100 a detergent or a non-detergent oil?"

We all looked at Rog again. An awful expression of doubt had come over his face.

"I...I don't know," he said. "Does it matter?"

The attendant looked shocked. "Can't mix a detergent with a non-detergent oil,

you know," he said, like a Southern Senator referring to miscegenation.

Rog rallied desperately. "I can find out," he said. He got back in the car, made a U-turn, and drove back towards Salt Lake City. All the gas stations were open by now, but not one of them knew whether Shell X100 was a detergent or a non-detergent oil.

By now I had met nearly as many Utah gas station attendants as I had American fans. The fans could not possibly have known less about Shell X100.

At about the twentieth place, Rog decided to telephone to the Conoco agents in Salt Lake City, but there was no reply. Their office wasn't open yet. As he came out

the attendant said speculatively, "Of course, I could always drain your sump and refill with a fresh oil altogether."

We looked at him, awed. But of course, this was obviously the solution. "Do that." said Rog.

Sighing happily we began to look around for a place to eat.

The attendant came out from under the hood. "Have to fit a new filter," he said. "OK," said Rog without hesitation. "Fit one." I believe he'd have bought a whole new car if it had been suggested to him.

"I haven't got that type of filter in stock," said the man. "Better try up the

road."

Without another word we piled into the car again, made another U-turn and set along the same stretch of road for the third time...this time looking for a De Soto filter Mark IV. We had passed dozens of gas stations all bulging with spare parts, and one of them was bound to have the one we wanted.

None of them did. It seemed that the De Soto people had on one occasion devoted their entire resources to making this one unique filter, arranged for it to be installed in Rog's car, and then broken the dies, burned the blueprints, and shot all the technicians responsible.

Rog was no longer speaking to anyone. His eyes fixed glassily on some point in the desert where he was probably seeing mirages of Shell X100 signs, he drove from gas station to gas station. At each one he would get out, say the ritual words to the attendant...many of them old friends by now...and get back in the car almost without waiting for the ritual reply.

We were getting further and further into the desert and had begun to lose hope altogether when we came to the one garage which had still been closed during our previous incarnations. A lantern-jawed young man with horn-rimmed spectacles came out with a cup of coffee in his hamd. It looked like strong coffee and Rog regarded him with approval. He asked about The Filter.

"Sorry," said the young man regretfully. We felt nevertheless that he had nearly had one. He inspired confidence. Rog explained our dreadful plight.

The young man sprouted a halo and wings. "No need to drain your sump," he said in god-like tones, "I can put in an oil that'll mix with either a detergent or a non-detergent."

We barely restrained ourselves from getting out of the car and kissing the hem

of his coveralls.

"You..you can?" said Rog, awed.
"Sure." came the confident reply.

"And it won't do the engine any harm?"

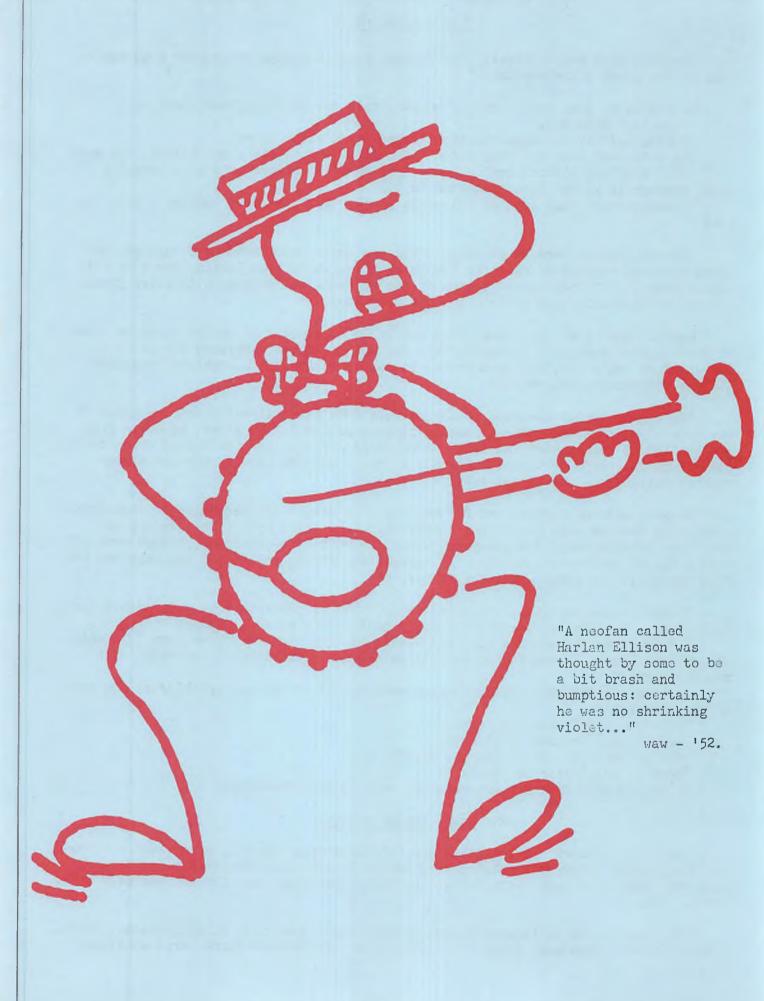
"None at all," said He kindly.

We backed away from His presence and went to have breakfast.

# 22: Male, Female an' Utah

About ten o'clock, having filled up with breakfast and oil, we at last continued along US 69. Forry was driving, Rog having lapsed into unconsciousness in the back seat once he'd made certain that the engine believed what the man had said about the new oil.

The road led South through Provo, Spanish Fork, Bunnison, Axtell, Salina, Aurora, Sigurd, Central, Elsinore (just a hamlet), Cove and Sevier. There were mountains



on our left, great gray rounded things like sleeping elephants. Further away they were a deep blue, just like in Donegal. I used to think that color was due to the heather, but I doubt if there's much heather in Utah.

On the right of the road was the desert and salt flats and beyond that more mountains. As we went on the valley narrowed until we had hills on that side of the road too. One of them was The Big Rock Candy Mountain, a hill of yellow striated rock fully fitted out as a tourist attraction. I calculated that at the present rate of exploitation it would easily last another 500 years, becoming then presumably the Small Stone Candy Mound. Although we were getting into wooded country it was still very warm and a mountain stream we passed affected us like Martians. Forry stopped the car just past the bridge and we all trooped through the trees to the water. We sat on the bank and dipped our feet in. I took mine out indignantly at once: with all this heat about I'd thought even a mountain stream would have been tepid, but it was freezing. I might just as well have been in Ireland. I counted my toes to make sure they were all still there and put my shoes on again. I was startled to see that Mari & Wendayne didn't think it was too cold at all. In fact they were so determined to bathe that they were prepared to dispense with bathing suits. They held up newspapers and started to undress behind them.

As a gentleman of the old school I shall not reveal what I saw. I shall only remark that seldom have I seen a newspaper give more inadequate coverage to such an interesting event.

After a while I thought it might be more tactful to retire from the scene and explore the woods. I felt quite daring venturing into the wilds like this unarmed, because there were undoubtedly all sorts of alien perils like snakes and poison ivy, not to mention bears, pumas and Red Indians. However as it turned out the most dangerous phenomenon I encountered was a piece of barbed wire; and the strangest... well, I had accidentally (that's my story, no matter what Freud says ) wandered down to the river again and got an eyeful of some attractive scenery that wasn't in the guide books: I was hastily retreating into the primaeval forest when I saw just ahead of me something even more startling — a wild piano!

My eyes fixed on this extraordinary natural phenomenon, and no doubt still a bit glazed, I hurried forward and ran into a piece of barbed wire stretched between two trees at eye level. Well, my eye level anyway, because I got a barb in my eyeball. After I'd reassured myself that I'd still be able to read 3D comics I continued stalking the wild piano. I ran it to earth on a large piece of concrete, at the other side of which was a sort of fire-place. All was now disappointingly clear: this was a place for the native rite known as a barbecue; the piano had been put there by human agency, and was not a mutant plant formation like Williamson's space-ship trees in "Dragon's Island". It was astonishing enough to me though, that pianos could be left out in the open like this. If they'd done it in Ireland it would after three days have been only fit for growing mushrooms in. But this one was working, because I tried it with my complete repertoire of pianoforte solos. I venture to say there are few fans who have played the theme from the second movement of Dvorak's New World symphony on one finger with one eye on a piano in a forest in the wilds of Utah. Gad, how I've lived.

Eventually we got in the car again and set off through Marysvale, Junction, Circleville and Panguitch. (Don't let all these names make you feel inferior about your memory -- I'm reading them off a map and I don't remember a thing about any of them.) A few miles after Panguitch we turned off to see Bryce Canyon. (Also of course Red Canyon which is on the way and was pretty impressive but you don't have to pay to see it so it can't be up to much.) Forry was still driving and I was able to admire for the first time his technique for doing National Parks with the

minimum of delay. He would drive very fast straight for the far end of the thing, whizzing past noticeboards proclaiming PANORAMIC VIEW, INSPIRATION POINT, SUNSET POINT, RAINBOW POINT and so on. Whenever Wendayne caught a glimpse of one of these she would cry out for the car to be stopped, but Forry would point out we take all these in on the way back. By which time the noticeboard was far behind. And of course the view from the far end was the most comprehensive of all -- in these case 9105 ft, which was the highest I had ever been, not counting the last night of the Convention -- and as we whizzed back past the noticeboards Forry would point out we'd already seen all this.

Even so, it was three hours before we got back onto the main road. It had been very impressive, I had seen some chipmunks, and my eye had stopped bleeding. We went on thru Hatch, Long Valley Junction and Alton to spend the night in a little place called Kanab, two miles from the Arizona border. We arrived here comparatively early, about 9PM I suppose, and for the first time I'd an opportunity to walk around one of those small American towns I'd found so attractive passing through. Kanab wasn't as nice as some I'd seen, being a bit straggly and short on trees, but it still had some of the things I now think of as being characteristic of America -- warm evenings sussurating with neon signs and crickets, and tiny precious pieces of grass being perpetually sprinkled.

One thing that did distinguish Kanab was dogs. They quite cutnumbered the people. The next morning Mari & Wendayne & I were sitting round the car waiting to set off again when one of them came along and began to make up to us, nuzzling our knees and wagging its tail. Mari & I stroked it, but Wendayne spoke crossly to it. "Go away, dog," she said, adding explanatorily to us, "I don't like stray dogs." The animal shrank away, but after a few minutes sidled round the car again tentatively. "Hello, dog," I said, "you like stray people?" Mari looked at me and we both looked at Wendayne. She grinned, and reverted to her usual self; so much so in fact that when Forry & Rog came along a few minutes later she was such friends with the dog she wanted to take it with us. But Forry affected to believe she was joking and we set off for the Grand Canyon without it.

# 23: Salad, Jackson!

You would almost think that the Grand Canyon had been specially designed as a National Park. You'd expect that a thing of this size, which Nature had just left carelessly lying around in the open, would be pretty hard to conceal from casual passers-by. But no. It's not until you get within a few yards of the edge that it bursts on you.

In front of you, the next installment of normality is ten miles away. In between is not just a deep cleft, as I'd always imagined, but a whole different world, a wild jumble of alien geography. It takes a while to realize how fantastic it is, because at first there's nothing to compare it to. In the Canyon itself, for instance, are mile-high mountain ranges which look so near you feel you could almost jump down on their peaks. It's not until you convince yourself how wide and deep the thing actually is, and how far away is the other side and the blue mountains far beyond that, that you feel really awed.

The trouble was that this took me about three months, and by that time I was too far away to come back for another look. This was my twelfth day in America, and every one of them had been so full of new impressions that I was suffering from a sort of intellectual numbness, an anaesthesia of the sensibilities, that was to last for weeks after I got home. I stood there on the rim of the Grand Canyon, telling myself that here was a majestic phenomenon of awe-inspiring grandeur, but all my subconscious would reply was "Ah, yes, the Grand Canyon. A very big hole in the ground."

I went conscientiously from spectacle to spectacle, trying hard to be impressed, but my case was hopeless. Despairingly I realized the only thing to do was try and remember as much of it as I could so I could appreciate it later. Now I marvel quite often at the Grand Canyon in the 3D viewer I got there and am quite awed by it and by the fact that I was there, whereas neither seemed at all extraordinary at the time.

We spent a couple of hours walking from one promontory to another. Once it started to rain, and everyone was duly astonished. Even me, because I hadn't seen any rain since mid-Atlantic and had almost forgotten there was such a thing. I thought of writing to the Fortean Society about it -- "Look, water is falling from the sky!" -- but they explained it was just a gesture to make me feel at home.

Eventually we tore ourselves away and retraced our tiremarks through Jacob Lake, Fredonia & Kanab onto the road for California again and through Zion National Park. This latter was a new look in canyons, because the road goes right along the side and down into the canyon floor through a mile-long tunnel. Every now and then there's a window cut in the tunnel wall to look through and in one place where they've been careless they've patched the broken bit up with concrete carefully camouflaged to look like canyon from the other side. It's a tremendous engineering feat and it made me think ruefully about Irish tourist attractions, which usually have nothing more in the line of display than a battered signpost and a muddy lane.

It was at Zion that the adherents of terrestrial scenery had finally to admit defeat by Forry Ackerman. Repeatedly in the last two days they'd been drawing his attention to peculiar rock formations, odd colors, startling vegetation. "There," they would say, "isn't that fantastic?" But Forry refused to admit that they were in any way noteworthy. He looked contemptuously down his nose at them as if to say, "poo. Mere terrestrial stuff." He implied that these things, even the outre formations of Zion, where the very earth had raised itself up and writhed to impress him, were very commonplace compared to even the lunar landscape. His attitude seemed to be that these canyon things were a sneaky attempt by the National Parks Service to divert the attention of the American public from the wonders waiting to be seen on the other planets. They were, in that sense, anti-science fictional, and he would have nothing to do with them. I felt sorry for the National Parks people after all the trouble they'd been to, but they shouldn't have allied themselves to the "See Terra First" party.

The sun set soon after we left Zion, and darkness followed with disturbing haste. It was still very warm though as we started to cross the desert, even going very fast with all the car windows open. It was the first time I'd ever felt a warm draft. There was nothing to see but the stars, and I was startled to see the Plough almost below the horizon. We must have been in nearly the latitude of North Africa. After some hours fast driving there was a glow in the sky ahead like dawn. It was the lights of Las Vegas, for we seemed to emerge straight from the billboards into a forest of blinding neon signs all jumping and swirling like a fireworks display where everything has gone off at once. We went into a den of gilded vice called "The Golden Nugget", on the theory that food was cheap in gambling saloons because the owners wanted to lure patrons to the gaming tables. It works too, because I was lured there myself. It was an enormous room with fruit machines or one-armed bandits all round the walls, and in the middle poker, faro & roulette tables all covered with neat piles of silver dollars. It seems this is the elephants' graveyard of silver dollars; I never saw one anywhere else. They make fine chips. I put  $25\phi$  in a fruit machine just to say I had gambled in Las Vegas (I lost, heavily...all 25¢) and went back to the eating annex. I had tomato juice, minestrone, roast turkey with cranberry sauce, sherbet and coffee all for \$2.00, which I suppose was fairly cheap for

the States, even counting my gambling losses. I suppose I could say I broke even in Las Vegas.

Forry, on the other hand, felt he would just like a little salad, and ordered the one on the menu.

This was a mistake.

First, they brought a big sort of vase thing all full of long thin vegetables like celery for us all, including Forry, to nibble at while we were waiting. Then they brought each of us, including Forry, bowls full of crushed ice and carrots, scallions, celery, radishes, asparagus, olives and other miscellaneous vegetation. Finally they brought Forry's main dish, The Salad. They trundled it along on a trolley and heaved it onto the table. Forry looked at it aghast. It was on an enormous glass plate, some 18" in diameter. From this there towered upwards a pyramid of tier after tier of vegetables. It was like a sort of Monument of Market Gardening: every vegetable I have ever seen was represented in force, along with about fifty I never even heard of. It must have taken hours to design, let alone construct, and I'm sure it was reinforced internally with steel girders. It wasn't so much a dish as the sort of thing you would expect to find being towed along in a carnival procession, embellished with young women in flowing draperies and represening The Spirit of Vegetables or something. Forry, already surrounded by as much green grocery as a rabbit in heaven, cowered away from the monstrous edifice. "What", he said weakly, "no neon sign?" He was right, we saw, it did call for a neon sign. If anyone ever invents luminous celery, I suggest he get in touch with the Golden Nugget.

Forry managed to eat some of the outworks of the thing without it falling on him and we went into the hot air again and into the darkness of the Mojave desert. Dawn broke as we reached Pasadena...and I began to realize I was subconsciously disappointed. I hadn't seen the Pacific Ocean. I know it was silly, but ever since I'd thought about going to America I'd had such a clear mental picture of going through a high steep pass in the Rockies and seeing spread out before me the green plains of California and in the distance the blue Pacific. But no, we arrived in Los Angeles without seeing anything more startling than an all-night store called The Farmers' Market selling orange juice at  $10\phi$  a glass -- with free refills. I proceeded to try to drink them out of business...I'd never had enough orange juice in my life...while Wendayne bought groceries and Rog a copy of Amazing. There was a reader's letter in it praising one of his stories and he read it twice and then decided he still had to have it to keep. Pro authors apparently like egoboo as well as fans.

We got to Forry's house about 8AM. The most unusual thing about the outside of it is a life-size figure of Marlene Dietrich in cardboard propped up in the porch. She was obviously cut out to be a receptionist. Rog & Mari went off home and the rest of us staggered to our beds. Mine was the couch Wendayne used for her dianetic auditing.

# 24: Los Angeles, Tuesday

We got up again about noon and had breakfast, while Forry opened his mail and I helped him read it. Then he started making phone calls while I browsed around. (He has three rooms and two garages full of science fiction.) (The car stands in the driveway.) Apparently he was inviting people to a party tomorrow, either to meet me or for me to meet them. Every now and then I could hear him spell out my name for one of the latter category.

Also staying in the Ackermansion at this time was Alan Hershey, the young man reading Lovecraft on The Neptunia, with his wife. In the evening we all went out for dinner at a Chinese restaurant. I'd never had Chinese food before and thought it was wonderful, but I still haven't got over the shock of hearing Forry order four dinners and five plates. Apparently one Chinese dinner is more than enough for one person, and this eminently sensible solution avoids waste of their food and our money. I can't help thinking that we Europeans haven't got our restaurant managers properly trained.

Then we went back to the house and talked until far into the night. Forry showed me some of his curiosa...rare books and magazines, collections of promag covers illustrating plagiarism through the ages, original artwork, interesting letters... and finally, gramophone records. I heard Forry's first speech (he sounded nearly as nervous as I was) and the actual voice of Claude Degler himself speaking at the convention.

### 25: The Outsider, And Authors

Next afternoon Forry took me for a little drive in the car and I had my first look at Los Angeles. At least I assume it was Los Angeles and not half a dozen suburbs: it seems a curiously difficult town to pin down. It appears to consist of a group of what town planners call 'conurbations', each one ten minutes fast driving from any other. There is, it seems, no street corner at which one can pause and say, "Lo, the heart of this thriving metropolis," It appears to be the ultimate in an American trend -- the first Drive-In City. I gathered there was some system of public transport, but nobody seemed to use it. You got the impression that the few remaining local buses and trolley-cars were wandering around hopelessly looking for pedestrians.

We wound up at Morris Scott Dollens' studio, a wild jumble of projectors, cameras, amplifiers and papier-mache models. Dollens played us his new film, a photomontage of shots of space, stars and naked human figures right in there straining fit to bust, encouraged by a poetic commentary. Dollens had done a great deal by camera tracking to compensate for the lifelessness of his subjects, but not enough.

Later that afternoon, back at Forry's house, van Vogt arrived. He explained that since he wouldn't be able to make it to the party that night, he'd popped along in the afternoon to say hello to me. I thought this was very nice of him, and the more I saw of him the more I liked him. He was tall, quiet, gentle, dark and wore glasses, and altogether reminded me very strongly of James White. I avoided the subject of dianetics -- I knew I'd be a hero to fandom if I converted him back from it, but honest fellows I just didn't have the time -- and just said how sorry his admirers were that he hadn't been writing sf lately. (He was, and is, my favourite ex-author). He said, rather guiltily I thought, that he was working on 2 or 3 shorts and revamping the Ezwal series for book publication. Forry, always thoughtful, provided me with four of his books which he represented to Van I had brought all the way from Ireland, and the good man pulled out his pen and wrote messages in each one. What impressed me even more was that the messages were all different. I wouldn't have a clue what to write if someone presented me with one book to inscribe, never mind four.

Later that evening there was the party, thirty or so people milling about the big front room being plied with fruit juices by the teetotal Ackermans. Many of them I'd never heard of: of those I had the only names I can remember are Bradbury, Rory Faulkner, Ford McCormick, Walt Liebscher, Healy, Clifton & Apostolides. Rory Faulkner alone was worth coming 2000 miles to meet. I had quite a long conversation with Bradbury too, partly about -- of all things -- Westerns. He had a theory that

sf and the Western both represented the frontier story, dealing with human beings engaged in a struggle with an inimical environment. The only difference was that the Western was set in a mythical past and the sf story in a mythical future. All sf needed to capture the public imagination was acceptance of its locale, just as the equally unreal "West" has been accepted. Bradbury was young, friendly, enthusiastic, talkative and looked a bit like a boxer. He may give the impression of being a little pleased with himself, but then he has a great deal to be pleased about, and there was nothing bumptious about him. I liked him very much.

Eventually all the guests staggered home, full to the gills with fruit juice and good talk. In the course of the evening Forry had had an unexpected phone call from Roy Squires; he wanted to warn Forry that the person staying with him was not Walt Willis at all, but a Bowery bum Willis had paid to take his place while he drank all the trip money in a New York bar. This information he had had in strict confidence straight from Robert Bloch. Forry, bursting with suppressed laughter, assured Squires that I was the same person he'd met in London and Squires rang off indignantly to take the matter up with his impeachable source.

# 26: Busy Day In L.A.

Next morning Forry had gone to try and arrange a visit to a film studio, Wendayne had gone shopping, and I was alone in the house. I was mooning about happily when the doorbell rang. I opened the door and a little man came in, claiming to be Sherwood Springer. I told him Forry was out, I was minding the house, and my name was Walt Willis, a visitor from Ireland. Without any greater provocation Springer at once hauled off and said something to me in Irish. It so happens that I do not understand Irish, my mastery of the language being limited to eight words, so I do not know what he said. All I am sure of is that he didn't count up to five or wish me a hundred thousand welcomes. Coldly I informed him of my linguistic limitations, concealing as best I could my loss of face at being unable to speak my own country's tongue as well as an American. But next time I come to America I shall be ready for Springer. I will mount a counter-offensive. I shall learn off a few idiomatic phrases in Sioux or Cherokee and confound the man.

Forry came back about noon, discussed with Springer some tv show they have been about to spring on an astonished public daily for the past four years, and Springer left with another phrase in Irish which again left me speechless. Shortly afterwards Hugo Gernsback phoned. This was an event in the Ackerman life comparable to receiving a posthumous manuscript from H.G.Wells direct via Cuija board, complete with agent's authorization. Forry projected this sentiment down the telephone with such sincerity that Gernsback condescended to eat lunch with us and said he'd be along in ten minutes. Forry went around happily selecting things to show him, while I went quietly into his den and hid some of the lewder pinups. I knew that Gernsback published a sex magazine...in fact he probably invented sex...but I felt his interest in it would be more serious and constructive than Forry's.

Soon Hugo arrived, with Mrs. Hugo. I thought no more or less of him than I had in Chicago, but his wife endeared herself to me immediately by remarking, "Ah yes, you're the young fellow who made such a nice speech at Chicago." A lady of remarkable discernment, or at least tact, and far too good for Gernsback. Hugo was taken on the Ten Minute Tour of the Ackerman collection, and was so enthralled as to suspend from time to time his dissertation on his own affairs. After this we all piled into Forry's car and went off to a posh eating place in Beverley Hills known as The Tail Of The Cock, one of those places you wouldn't be allowed into in England unless you had a title and talked like John Brunner. It's one of the refreshing things about America that you can go anywhere, if you have the money.

Gernsback was quite at home there. He had several kinds of alcoholic beverages

with his meal and ordered the waiters about like King Farouk. He is fond of The Good Life. Conversation was uneventful until the end of the meal, consisting mainly of respectful enquiries from Wendayne & Forry about the Gernsback Life and Works and pontifical replies by Himself. This cosy atmosphere was however abruptly dissipated over the coffee, when by some evil chance the conversation drifted slowly and fatefully round to dianetics. This was a loaded subject because Wendayne was of course a dianetic auditor in her own right and Forry believed in it too, inasmuch as he believes in anything but science fiction. I expected Gernsback would be cool to dianetics...after all, he didn't invent it...but I didn't expect him to put his foot in it quite so deeply.

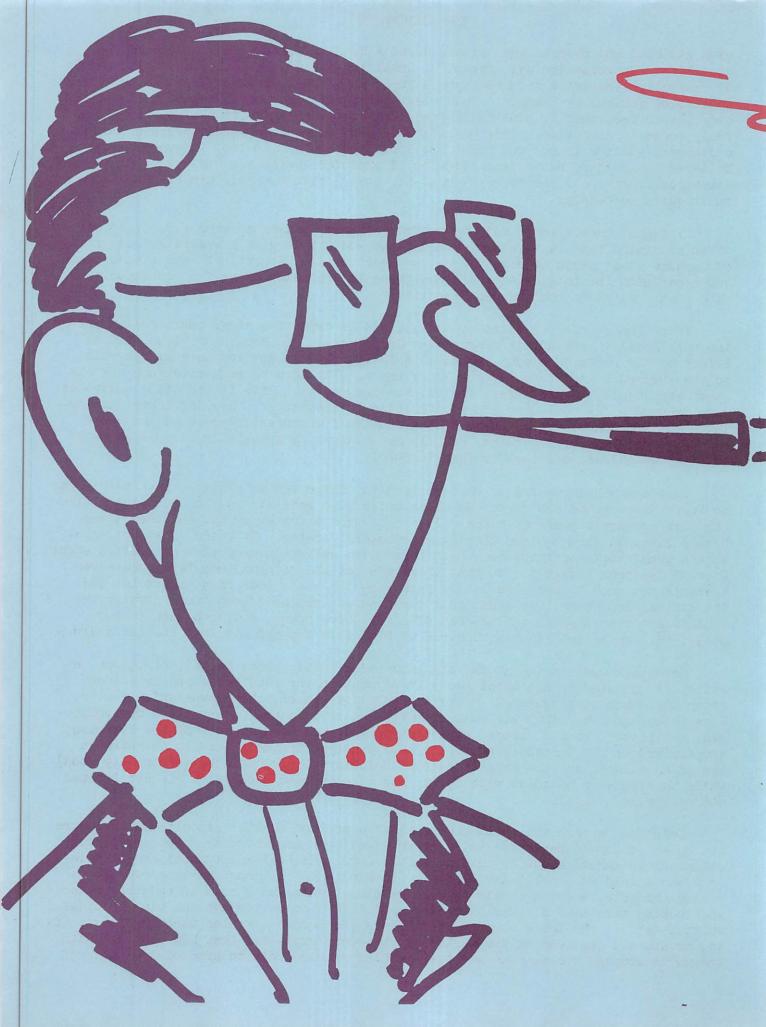
"I cannot understand," said Gernsback severely, taking an expensive cigar out of an aluminium time capsule and cutting the end off it with a specially constructed machine that would have gladdened the heart of Jim Webbert, "I cannot understand how a man with the intelligence of John Campbell can allow himself to be associated with such fraudulent nonsense as diametics."

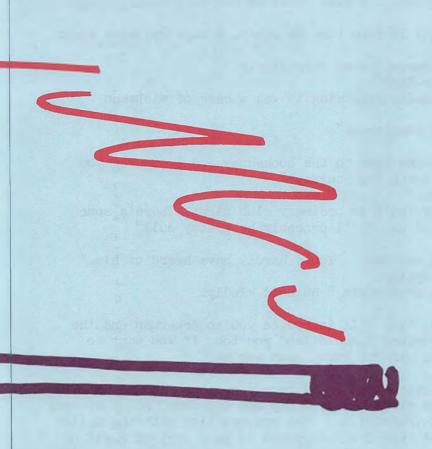
There was a dreadful silence, and a cloud of expensive cigar smoke rolled across the battlefield. Behind his smokescreen Gernsback lolled back, oblivious of the effect of his words. Wendayne vibrated quietly, rapidly developing schizophrenia as she awaited a lead from Forry, Forry was equally torn between reverence for his guest and loyalty to his wife. The silence dragged on. Into it the still oblivious Hugo dropped a few more derogatory references to dianetics. They lay there smouldering. The atmosphere was so charged with tension I momentarily expected the smoke clouds to be split by lightning. Finally Mrs. Gernsback gracefully changed the subject and we all set off for Gernsback's hotel.

On the way Hugo wanted to see the tarpits. There was no place to park near them, so Forry drove round and round the block while Hugo made his tour of inspection. The tar pits are small ponds of black oily stuff from which every now and then a huge bubble rises in slow motion, leaving an ephemeral crater. It seems that well preserved prehistoric monsters have been found here and statues of them are dotted about. Once it has been broken to you that these are not the original monsters themselves there is not much to see; the little park has the seedy look of a vacant lot and the statues are crude...as admittedly the monsters may have been too. However the whole scene was slightly reminiscent of a Paul back cover, and Gernsback seemed satisfied. We hailed Forry at the end of his sixth lap and got into the car again.

Gernsback was staying at the big Ambassador Hotel, where he had, of course, a suite. I wondered if the hotel accepted payment on the same basis as his authors. Among the other distinguished guests was Adlai Stevenson, then campaigning for the Presidency, and the lobby was full of hardfaced politicians, journalists and policemen. We passed rows of rooms, expecting to see smoke pouring out of the keyholes, and arrived at the Gernsback suite. He gave Wendayne and me access to an enormous box of chocolates and the latest issue of Sexology (the chocolates were pretty good) while he discussed business with Forry, and then we said goodbye to him and trooped out of the hotel again.

Near the carpark the hotel had provided a sort of adults' sandpit, an enclosure got up as an unreasonable facsimile of an Hawaiian beach where the more prosperous citizens can sprawl about in bathing suits. Among the business tycoons and politicians who should we see but Ray Bradbury, looking quite at home. He came over to us beaming broadly, wearing a pair of blue bathing trunks and a coat of reddish suntan and looking more like a boxer than ever, and talked to us through the wire netting... which I take it was there to prevent the less prosperous citizens throwing foodstuffs to, or at, the denizens of the enclosure. Bradbury explained that his contract with the movie company for whom he was then working required him to produce two pages of





"I just
don't see how
it's possible
to have a
good convention
without Bloch."
waw = '52.

script per day. It was his practice, he said, to write four pages every other day, which took him about half an hour (knowing Bradbury dialogue I can well believe this), and spend the rest of the time in luxurious idleness. I formed the firm opinion that if ever there was a sensitive poet who could survive among business men it was Ray Bradbury; I almost felt sorry for the film industry.

That night, being Thursday, was the LASFS meeting. The LASFS clubroom is a big room on the ground floor of an apartment house. At least it had been a big room, but evidently the feeling was that a much smaller place would be adequate for the club's activities after I had been there: a wall was being erected across the middle, and all the sensitive fannish faces, some thirty or forty of them, were congregated at one end. I looked around them and recognized Rick Sneary. Since Forry had been buttonholed the minute we entered the room I struck off on my own. I talked to Rick and Len Moffat for a while, mostly about the Convention -- they were very curious about it and I found it piquant to be telling US fans about their own Convention -- but after a while I thought I'd better circulate a bit. The trouble was there were no nameplates here and it's awkward to go up to strangers saying brightly "I'm Walt Willis". You're always afraid of the answer "Who?", or even "So what?" So before very long I found myself back at the door again, looking speculatively round the room and trying to cudgel my brain into total recall of a photo I'd once seen in an old fanzine of the entire LASFS membership.

A young sailor who had just come in spoke to me. "Glad you could make it," he said.
"Thanks," I said, "so am I."

"This your first time here?"

"Oh, yes."

"I thought you'd get here sooner or later."

"I'd always wanted to see this place." I said. "but of course I never thought I'd actually be here."

"Oh," he said, "I knew you'd make it some time or other. I hope you come again,

often."

"I'd like to." I said, "but it doesn't seem very likely."

"Why," he asked. "Have you come far?"
"Yes," I said, startled, and finally realizing it was a case of mistaken

"Yes," I said, startled, and I identity. "Quite a bit."

"Oh," he said, "You live out of town then?"

"Yes," I said, "Well outside."

"Oh," he said, "I'd seen you around town in the bookshops and I figured you "Oh," he said, "I'd seen you around town in the bookshops and I figured you "The Thope you think it's worth the journey?"

Thope you think it's worth the journey?"

"Oh, yes," I said, "Very much so."

"Of course," he warned me, "This isn't an ordinary club night. There's some foreign fan or other coming to talk to us. It'll probably be pretty dull"

"I expect so." I said.

"Guy named Willis, I think," he went on. "You'd hardly have heard of him."

"The name's familiar." I said loyally.

"If you like I'll introduce you afterwards," he said kindly.

"Gee thanks," I said.

"Come again soon," he continued, "and I'll introduce you to Ackerman and the other famous fans here. I've some fanzines I could lend you too, if you want to know more about fandom. Anything you want to know, just ask me.

But before this fascinating conversation could go any further Jim Wilson called the meeting to order and I went to my place beside Forry and sat down. After an easy little talk about the Chicon Forry introduced me. The conversation with the sailor had been the first intimation I'd had that I was supposed to be a sort of guest of honour here and expected to make a speech -- I'd assumed I was just going to a LASFS meeting like an ordinary fan and would have nothing to do but drink it all in -- but after the Chicon banquet nothing could seem so terrifying. I went to the front and sat on the table, swinging my legs, made a short speech and answered questions for a while. It went off all right I thought. Afterwards there were a hectic series of conversations with various people -- Walt Liebscher, Rory Faulkner and lots of others -- but alas, no insurgents. I hadn't really expected Burbee or Laney to show up, even with false beards.but I'd thought perhaps Rotsler might. But no; it began to look as if I might leave Los Angeles without meeting them at all, which seemed rather like touring Borneo without seeing a headhunter. I hadn't felt like asking Forry, because it would have been rather like asking for a letter of introduction from the relative of a shrunken head. I put my problem confidentially to Rick Sneary, who immediately understood: he undertook to arrange an Outlander meeting in neutral territory on Saturday and invite Burbee.

After I had asked to see the historic LASFS mimeograph and it had been duly unveiled for me, a party of us went along to a deified soda fountain called The Melody Iane. We all sat down at a long table and I was passed an acre of cardboard purporting to be a menu. I started at the North West corner and began reading my way into the interior. Seeing the dazed look on my face Forry exhorted me to live dangerously and made a few bizarre suggestions, none of which I had ever even heard of. At random, I plumped for a hot nut fudge sundae.

Friends. I should like to warn you all here and now about the hot nut fudge sundae served in The Melody Lane, Los Angeles. It's a wonder that the LASFS, the Insurgents and the Outlanders do not parade before this restaurant in shifts, or some other striking garment, bearing placards inscribed BEWARE THE HOT NUT FUDGE SUN-DAE!! The fact that this was no ordinary hot nut fudge sundae but a hot nut fudge

sundae of transcendental malevolence was brought home to me when I realized it was making me feel ill even before I saw it. The miasmic aura of the thing (say, this is pretty highclass writing, isn't it? First transcendental malevolence and now miasmic aura) extruded round me from the catacombs of The Melody Lane where it was even now being awakened to its hideous pseudo-life. Cold shivers ran up and down my back as I realized it was crawling to me from the vaults. By the time it reached me I knew the best I could hope for was that I could get home to South Sherbourne Drive before I was physically sick in the presence of the elite of West Coast fan-The sheer horror of that thought, of being ever afterwards known in Los Angeles fan circles as the guy who was sick in The Melody Lane as van Couvering is known for having walked through a glass door, made me summon up my last reserves. Calling on Roscoe for aid I struggled desperately against the hypnotic lure of that hot nut fudge sundae. Ghod knows what would have happened if I had succumbed and actually tasted the thing, but I finally overcame it. Driving a sharp spoon through its heart I staggered out into the night. It had been a grim fight but I had won. I should be known in Los Angeles as nothing Worse than a guy who bought hot nut fudge sundaes just to look at. (They might think I belonged to a Sundae Observance Society.)

### 27: Foot And Drink

Next morning was largely wasted trying to book a plane passage to Kansas City. I had to go by plane to get to Florida for Shelby's day off work, and thanks to Bill Hamling I had the money. Naturally the first agent we tried was the one who called himself "The Flying Irishman", whose real name I think was Flaherty. At any rate his motto should have been "Flaherty will get you nowhere". The others weren't hopeful either, but one called "The Bon Ton" promised to call us back.

Meanwhile we set out for the Pacific Ocean. This ranked up with the Insurgents on my private list of the sights of the West Coast and since as far as I knew it had never carried on a vendetta against Forry, I expressed a wish to see it. I had quite a clear picture of what it would be like. There would be this spectacular cliff road and beside it a beautiful golden strand, deserted except for an occasional beautiful film star committing suicide or playing immersion heaters with Burt Lancaster. You can imagine my surprise then when after a drive of about half an hour... I'd always thought Los Angeles was on the coast...we pulled up at a sort of funfair. Hot dog stands, ice cream vendors, shooting galleries, the lot. One of the sideshows turned out to be the Pacific Ocean. It had a concession of a few square yards of rather dirty sand, and looked depressingly like the Atlantic. I valiantly tried to feel like stout Cortez, silent upon a hot dog stand in Darien (I am now equally valiantly trying not to attempt a joke about a Peke) and sat down at the water's edge to take off my shoes and socks.

It was my intention to wade out a short distance, thinking appropriately solemn thoughts...such that I had now reached the furthermost point of my journey westwards, and this was the turning point...and feeling as poetic as I could in bare feet with my trousers rolled up, I stalked rapidly into the Pacific Ocean. Only to slow down abruptly with an aching sense of injustice. It was COLD. My Ghod, the Pacific cold! It was intolerable. However I suppressed my indignation and continued on to where the water got deep. I paused, savouring the solemnity of the occasion. Here I was in the Pacific Ocean -- My romantic reflections were shattered by a shout from Forry. I looked round. He pointed. I looked down. There, sailing past in line ahead at a good fifteen knots, were my only pair of shoes in 7000 miles. With a strangled cry I leaped after them, letting go my rolled-up trousers legs, which immediately fell down into the water. I overtook my shoes halfway to Hawaii and struggled back to dry land. I regret to have to tell you that Forrest J. Ackerman, a fine man in many ways, failed to show the quiet sympathy which would have been appropriate at this tragic moment. He was rolling on the sand, laughing. And as I

trudged up to him he said, "A slow boot to China!"

I wrung out my trousers, put on my shoes and squelched back to the hot dog stand for a chocolate malt to restore my faith in life. Feeling hungry after the afternoon's surf sports, I also ordered a hamburger. Then I took my shoes off again and began to drip quietly onto the floor. I realized the hamburger man was speaking to me.

"What?" I said.

"With?" asked the man.

"With," I said, Whatever it was, it was evidently free and I wasn't going to pass it up.

"With onions?" asked the man.

"With everything," I said recklessly. Forry looked at me.

"Everything?" asked the man, with an air of incredulous hope.
"Everything," I said. I was beginning to have vague premonitions, but since I didn't know what he was going to put in. I didn't know what to tell him to leave out.

A wild gleam came into the fellow's eye, and he momentarily disappeared in a blur of motion. He was leaping about his booth like a mad thing, collecting samples of every organic substance within a radius of ten feet and piling them onto the foundation stone of my hamburger. I stared aghast. Obviously this man had dedicated his life to thinking up things which could be incorporated in a hamburger. I could see him waking in the middle of the night with a wild cry of glee and noting down the name of some edible Peruvian root he had overlooked. But then as the years went by his simple faith in his mission in life must have been disturbed: was it, he must have asked himself during the long frustrating years of preparing commonplace six-ply hamburgers, was it all worth while? Would his genius ever be recognized? And then at last I had come along, his soul mate, the Perfect Customer, the Man Who Wanted Everything. This was his destiny, the culmination of his career.

The hamburger rose to the sky like an edible Tower of Babel, an awesome monument to the ambition and ingenuity of Man. And still it grew, tier after tier, higher and higher. Until finally the human whirlwind subsided and looked around distractedly at his depleted shelves. I kicked my shoes out of his reach. After a few more moments of meditation he sighed and delicately added the roof to the hamburger, like a great artist signing his masterpiece. He stepped back and gazed up at it, tears of pride in his eyes.

Cowering in the shade of the edifice, I looked helplessly at Forry. He pretended he wasn't with me and went to make a phone call. Looking round the hamburger I could see the fierce eyes of its creator fixed on me. I nibbled guiltily at the fringes of the thing for a while and then desperately lifted it in both hands and began to gnaw at it. A shower of mustard, onions, beetroot, pickles, lettuce and countless other foodstuffs began to descend over me and the immediate neighbourhood. I hoped Forry was warning the Fortean Society.

After some time I had absorbed, either internally or externally, enough of The Hamburger to give me courage to make a break for it. I stole guiltily away, resolving to make a will leaving the remains to the United Nations Famine Relief Fund. I met Forry coming back from his phone call with a downcast face. He had called home to see if there was any word about a projected visit to a film studio tomorrow and had been given instead a message from the Bon Ton Travel Agency that the only flight they could offer left tonight. We called in on the way home and I paid out \$67.91 for the ticket, and then called Rick Sneary to wish him a sad goodbye and ask him to apologize for me to the Outlanders and Burbee.

In the evening Forry took me out for a last drive. I saw Hollywood Boulevard

and Sunset Boulevard and everything, including Grauman's Chinese Theatre where they have the impressions in cement of such anatomical characteristics as Joe E. Brown's mouth and Durante's nose: I noted that for some reason Jane Russell was represented by her feet.

I know I didn't see much of California, but what I saw was a bit disappointing. I'd been thinking of it as a green and golden paradise, and hadn't realized it was largely reclaimed desert. The surrounding hills were unexpectedly barren and ugly, and the houses among them looked from the distance like matchboxes scattered among uncompleted excavations. Los Angeles had some fine streets and buildings, but seemed too diffuse to have an integrated personality, and the most lasting impression I took away with me was a cafe sign advertising "The Original Rain On The Roof". The notion of simulating the sound of rain as an attraction seemed to me quite startling.

28: High Jinx

The plane left at midnight and we were at the airport in good time for me to take out an insurance policy. This was the first place I'd seen where you could literally "take out" a policy...out of a slot machine. It wasn't that I was particularly nervous -- it was my first flight, but I was reasonably convinced that aeroplanes were practical, even if they do have all that air to push against -- it's just that it seemed such a bargain. \$5000 for  $25\phi$  -- I wish I could get paid that much to go on living.

I said mournful goodbyes to Forry & Wendayne at the entrance to the tunnel to the planes and came to the surface again in the middle of the airfield, surrounded by lights and propellors. I got into the plane and took the first window seat I could get. realizing too late it was over a wing. It was too late to change: even the seat beside me was now occupied, by a young man in US Air Force uniform. I took a dislike to him when the pretty little hostess was delivering her set speech, all about how Transworld Airlines had selflessly dedicated themselves to the happiness and safety of each one of us personally. The poor thing was obviously new to the job and spoke her lines haltingly. But she'd almost finished when the airman beside me shouted "Speak up babe, we can't hear you". The girl broke off, blushed, tried to start again and retreated in confusion back to the pilot's cabin. The airman turned to me guffawing. I gave him a distant look... I can be awfully British if I try...and started to read through the little library TWA had installed in front of my seat. The first item was a booklet about the Constellation aircraft, how perfect it was and how it's always being improved and everything. I'd just come to the bit about how it has 134,000 separate parts, not counting nuts, bolts and rivets, and was thinking they'd have done better not to mention this at all because obviously when anything has 134,000 bits to fall off, not counting nuts bolts and rivets, it's practically a foregone conclusion that several of them will -when I realized the airman had put down his comic book and was speaking to me.

"This is a Constellation?" he said, looking at the notice in front of him which said CONSTELLATION. They couldn't hide much from him.

"Yes," I said.

"Death traps," he said.

I wondered if there was something about me to indicate that I'd never flown

"Death traps," he repeated mournfully. "Never known anyone to walk away from one yet." He looked speculatively at the door as if he was going to make a break for it, and then grasped my arm and pointed to the exhausts on the wing, which had just started to smoke gently. "If those start to glow red," he said, "we're done for. That's the fuel tanks there just below."

I shrugged and went on reading. The airman lapsed into a gloomy stupor. After

a few minutes the engines revved up with a deafening roar and we started to move. We tore thru the darkness for what seemed like miles, the engines going faster all the time. It was very exciting. Both the exhausts were glowing bright red like a blast furnace. I waited for the airman to notice this phenomenon.

The engines made a last desperate effort and lifted the plane into the air. We had been travelling for several miles at an altitude of six inches when the airman looked out of the window again. He let out a strangled cry. "You see them! The exhausts!" I nodded serenely. I really didn't care very much. After all that had happened to me in the last few weeks, being killed in an aircraft accident seemed almost trivial. I reflected comfortably that I was insured for \$5000 and went on reading.

Not so the airman. He called loudly for the airhostess and directed her attention to the exhausts. "They shouldn't be like that," he appealed.

"It's all right," she repeated. She would have said the same thing if the aeroplane had been hurtling vertically downwards in flames with both wings torn off and the undercarriage retracted. The airman realized this. "Tell somebody!" he urged.

"Yes, yes," she humoured him, and moved on with her tray of barley sugar. Nothing more happened. Exhausts glowing cheerily, the plane sped through the night. The airman sat tensed on the edge of his seat. After a while the pilot published a mimeographed fanzine containing the news that we were cruising at 30,000 feet at 360mph and nearing our first stop, Phoenix, Arizona. The airman seized the hostess' arm as she was distributing the mailing. "Did you tell him about the exhausts?" he pleaded. "It's all right," she said, and went on handing out the oneshot. The airman sank back hopelessly.

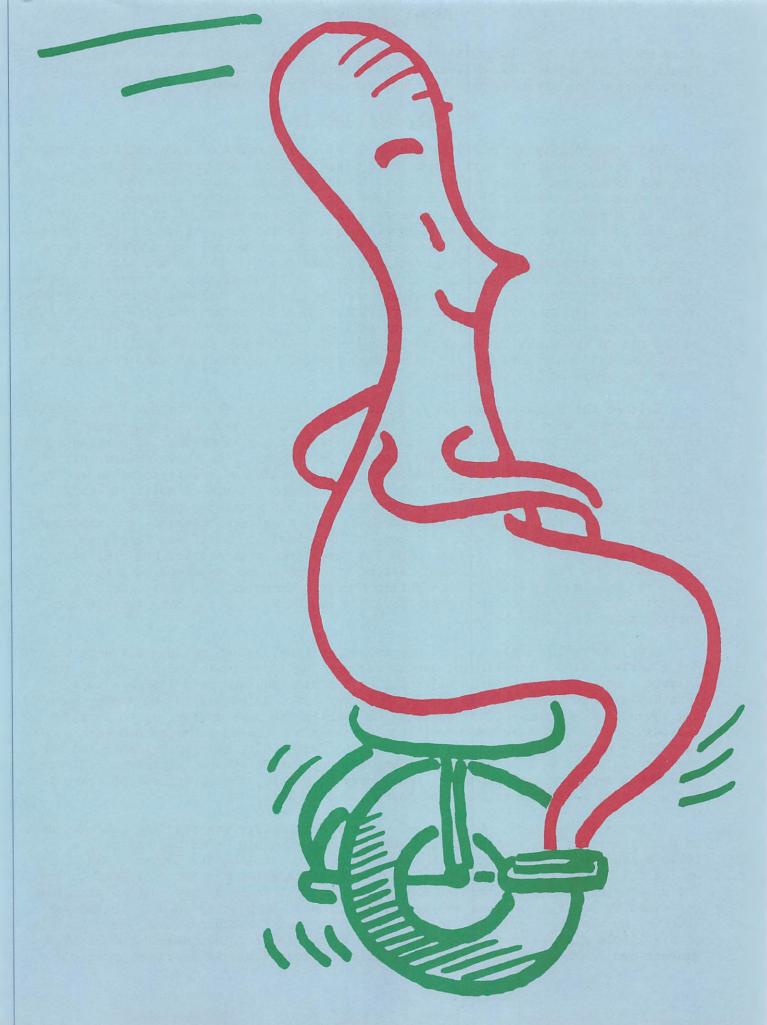
Shortly afterwards there was a loud thump and a funny squeaking noise. The airman shot up in his seat as if an ejector cartridge had gone off beneath it. Quivering like a violin string, he grasped my arm. "What's that? What's that?" he implored. I put my book aside and listened. "I expect," I said thoughtfully, "it's the flow of hydraulic fluid to the actuating cylinders of the landing gear." Surreptitiously substituting a copy of Astounding for the booklet "Questions & Answers About The Constellation" (Question 6:WHAT CAUSES THE THUMP AND SQUEAKNING NOISES A FEW MINUTES BEFORE LANDING?) I pretended to go on reading.

He was quiet after this until he got off at Amarillo, Texas. I stepped out of the plane too, just to say I had been in Texas and found him examining suspiciously some Chinese hierogliphics on the nose of the aircraft. "What's those?" he was asking. "It's Chinese writing," said the airhostess.

"Commies, huh?" he glowered. "That's not so good, is it?"

The pilot happened to be standing behind him and explained in a few withering words that the aircraft's name commemorated service against the Japanese in China during the War. After he had finished the airman slunk away and was swallowed in the darkness of the Texas night. An unsavoury morsel.

Soon after Amarillo the dawn began rising to meet us. I'd been disappointed that I wasn't seeing anything on my first plane flight, but this sunrise made up for everything. At first you could see just the tops of the highest trees and buildings picked out of the darkness below and then, very rapidly, you were flying over a strange surrealist landscape of long shadows and glowing prominences. Then the colours began to be filled in. In front it was already another hot Midwest day, behind there was still a wall of darkness. About 9AM we were nearing Kansas City and you could see for hundreds of miles in the vast empty sky. Straight in front of us there was what looked like a column of smoke. The air hostess said there was a



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storm ahead and we were detouring round it. We turned sharply -- how sharply I didn't realize until I found I was looking straight down to the ground through the window across the aisle -- circled round Kansas City and landed.

### 29: Max, Sex & Insects

Hell is probably a place like Kansas City, a wilderness of dust, dirt and ugly people. In the whole two days I was there I saw scarcely one pretty girl or pleasant looking man. The way to Manly's house was a half hour crawl in a tram, during which loudspeakers droned advertisements at their captive audience. You would think any self respecting citizenry would have torn them out by their roots. Half the journey lay through a squalid negro quarter and the rest in a seedy residential suburb, all flyblown shops and cracked pavements and weeds. Even Manly's house seemed to be contaminated by the prevailing decrepitude -- when he was showing me his printing plant in the cellar I noticed that the foundations were propped up with jacks. A horrifying sight to a European, who when he says "safe as houses" is thinking of solid masonry and finds the American custom of treating them like Erector sets quite disconcerting. The final touch of malaise was provided when Manly warned me not to sit on the grass in the garden. Apparently there are things called chiggers which bore into your skin and lay eggs. What sort of a place is it when a man can't sit on the grass of his own planet?

I liked the Banisters and Marjorie Houston, of course, but somehow I never felt quite at ease. When I got back home I learned that a break-up had been impending and had only been postponed on account of my visit: Manly later married Nekromantikon contributor Marjorie Houston and went to live in Oregon. I may have sensed this at the time but at least part of my uneasiness was a feeling of restlessness caused by too much travelling and too much still to be done, and a sense of guilt at being mentally unable to co-operate on the oneshot Manly had wanted to produce. We spent the two days talking, going back and forth on that nightmare trammide, and watching television. This was the first I'd seen of US television and I was fascinated. I was impressed by Sid Caesar, whose name I'd remembered from a brief but brilliant appearance in a film years ago, and less so by asymmetrical captions, multiple sponsors, female wrestling and the Philip Morris commercial...in that order. And I thought with nearly twice the number of lines as the British standard the picture quality might have been better.

Henry Burwell, always a great one for organizing, called me long distance the day I arrived with a complicated scheme for meeting me en route and driving me to Atlanta. But after working it all out I called him back and said I'd have to go to Lynn Haven first to be in time for Shelby's day off. So at 1:15AM on Monday morning there I was in Kansas City bus station starting to make my own way to Florida and tasting the first excitement of long distance bus travel...the announcements of buses leaving for faraway places like Seattle, Mexico City and New Orleans, and the feeling you could walk on to any of them, the way the PA system started to call your name the moment you wandered away, the scurry of people, the daringness of travelling so far in a strange country and being about so late.

I got a ticket to St. Louis first. I knew Max Keasler was starting college there on Monday morning and I meant to stop off and surprise him. The bus had only a token breakdown, a mere gesture, and we rolled into bustling St. Louis at 9AM. I called the University but they disclaimed all knowledge of Max, so I decided to try and make my way to his Fraternity house. Eventually I found my way onto a streetcar captained by a surly motorman who was evidently set on putting down the passenger traffic. He was impatient with me because I didn't at first understand the principle of his little glass-topped box. It was the first time I'd encountered one of these gadgets and I wanted to make sure of my change before I let it devour my precious

 $50\phi$  piece. He was already contemptuous of me because I hadn't realized that in a country like this where the street numbers are nearly as long as the phone numbers, it's no use saying just the street you want without the number of the house. After this I was afraid to ask if this Waterman Boulevard we were trundling along was the same as Waterman Street in case he would throw a fit, and by the time I risked it we were past Max's number. I trudged back and found it to be a neat white semidetached villa. I rang the bell several times, but there was nobody home. What with all the exploring I'd been doing I was feeling quite adventurous, so after a few minutes I opened the door and walked in, and went skulking around looking for fannish type mail or some other spoor of Max. But there was nothing, not even an interlineation. Eventually I brought my case in and washed and shaved. I was still feeling like a burglar, but at least I needn't look so much like one.

Then I went back out on the porch and sat in a deckchair for an hour or so. Eventually a student came along. He knew of Max, but nothing since last term. I talked with him for a while about literature and politics and stuff like that there but I was getting hungry so I just left a message for Max and caught another streetcar in the other direction and sat on till I saw something that looked familiar. After having some lunch I went looking for some excitement to pass the time until the bus left. This was the first time I'd really been loose in America by myself and I enjoyed the sensation of freedom. Unfortunately the nearest thing I could find to big-city sophistication was a little "Adults Only" cinema advertising a bill about sex education, marihuana and burlesque. The first two were of a disgustingly high moral tone and dull enough for a Sunday school concert, but the "Queens of Burlesque" were better value...though I doubt if what we saw was really worth about ten cents per pubic inch.

Feeling depressingly undepraved I went and caught the bus for Memphis, Tennessee. It left on time and actually covered about 100 miles before it broke down. There was another delay at Memphis and soon after I got on to the bus for Birmingham, Alabama, I went to sleep. At 3:45 I woke to find there had been another breakdown and that we were all being herded into a squalid diner in a place called New Albany, Mississippi. It had the loudest jukebox ever made, no doubt to drown the mutterings from discontented patrons. It didn't have a record of silence so I drifted outside again into the warm night...only to find myself in the middle of a sort of air display. The night was full of great insects crashing all around and making forced landings on my head. Dozens of them lay twitching on the sidewalk. I felt like joining them, but rallied and braved the jukebox again and, cowering in the opposite corner, finished the letter to Madeleine I'd started during the last breakdown.

After a couple of miserable hours a replacement bus came along and took us as far as Birmingham. I'd missed my connection, but after a while I got one which landed me in a small town called Dothan at 6PM, with 2 hours to wait for the connection to Panama City. I telegrammed Shelby, explored the town thoroughly -- both streets -- and then sat wearily in the bus station.

By the time we got to the swamp country of Florida it was dark again, but I could see sinister foliage rushing up in the headlamps and town names with "Bayou" in them. This was exciting because for weeks I'd been haunted by a Vaughn Monroe record on all the diner jukeboxes called, I think, "'Jumbalayo' which kept repeating. "by the bayou" and it seemed a strange exotic kind of thing, whatever it was. Shortly before ten Shelby flagged down the bus and I got off. The driver refused to surrender my luggage because it was booked through to Panama City, so I left it with him and walked with Shelby along some dirt roads to his house, a wooden bungalow.

I didn't think I was going to like this country: it seemed no place for anyone with a phobia about insects. The big flying ones (locusts?) in New Albany had been

bad enough, but Lynn Haven seemed to be a sort of small game preserve. Not only were there clouds of flies everywhere, but I'd hardly got indoors when an impossibly large cockroach thing marched majestically across the floor as if it owned the house. For all I know it did -- it looked large enough to have built it. I stared at it in utter horror as it tramped past. If Shelby and his mother had moved a muscle I'd have been standing on a chair gibbering, but they seemed so unconcerned I just sat there hoping it wouldn't turn on us. After a supper of pork chops Shelby and I talked for a while but I'd been travelling for 48 hours so I called it two days and went to bed, about 4AM. I searched the room to make sure there weren't any insects bigger than myself and collapsed in the unaccustomed luxury of a bed.

# 30: A Beakerful of the Warm South

Next morning we went down to Panama City to collect my luggage, which I hadn't seen since I checked it in at St. Louis the day before yesterday. I was so amazed to find it had actually arrived that it seemed only a slight additional mystery that it should turn up at the Trailways Office. We also called at the grocery store where Shelby worked, and then set off for the beach. All this journeying was done in Shelby's van, a vehicle of quite spectacular decrepitude beside which Ken Bulmer's notorious one would have looked streamlined. It did about ten miles to the gallon -of water, that is, Shelby stopping every few miles to borrow a bucket and pour it in, vividly reminding me of Frank Reade And His Steam Car. None of the meters on the dash worked, if indeed there was anything for them to record, and neither did the self starter. Every time we stopped Shelby had to get out and give the engine an intravenous injection to restore animation. Because of some other obscure defect he had to drive with the lights on, so that oncoming cars kept flashing their headlamps at us as if blinking in astonishment...as well they might, for we must have looked like nothing so much as a pile of scrap iron collecting itself and reporting to the junkyard to give itself up.

Eventually we rattled down to the beach, which proclaimed itself on a huge placard to be "THE FINEST BATHING BEACH IN THE WORLD!" On first impressions I doubted this...the strand was narrow and shelved steeply, and was backed by rows of scruffy sand dunes and bungalows interspersed with hot dog stands, and the sand was white instead of the approved golden brown. However the water was clear and green. We changed...me into my sexy Swedish fishnet trunks that Madeleine got cheap because no one in Belfast would wear them...and went in. Ah, that water. It was warm -- not the warm that those hearty come-in-the-water's-lovely people lie themselves even bluer in the face about, but actually warm. I'd ceased to believe there was such a thing nearer than Venus. It was wonderful. I wallowed about in it voluptuously for hours, washing away the frustrations of a lifetime and bitter memories of shuddering plunges and frantic rushing about in hopeless attempts to avert death from exposure. So this was the perfidious Gulf Stream that was supposed to warm the coasts of Ireland. I forgave it everything.

About two o'clock Shelby complained he was suffering from sumburn and hunger so we retreated into the shade of a hot dog stand and had hamburgers. A thermometer there said the temperature was 90°. Then, while Shelby cowered under a handkerchief, I resumed my amphibian existence, glorying in the sun and water. I found an old plank of flotsam and played out in the surf, ecstatically happy. But about six Shelby said we should go home so I let myself be reluctantly enticed out of the water and we drove home in our bathing suits. This was the life for me -- I'd always suspected I was naturally native to a warm climate. And no, I didn't get sumburn or sunstroke. Just Shelby.

We spent the rest of the evening at the house of Joe and Johnny Green, then "poetry editors" of Confusion. Johnny was Joe's pretty young wife and a good cook,

but also a mutterer in the anti-Hoffman underground. It seemed that the Greens had tried to run a small convention In Lynn Haven and Lee hadn't come. Neither, apparently had anyone else but Lee having failed in the role of Judas Ram was inevitably cast as scapegoat. The Greens were nice people, if a trifle egocentric, and I was sorry when it came half eleven and I had to leave to get the bus for Atlanta. I'd thought of staying another day and going to the beach by myself, but it had been so wonderful there today I didn't want to risk spoiling it. I was happy to have that wonderful golden afternoon glowing in my memory all by itself.

I don't remember much about the bus ride to Atlanta, except standing in a square in Tallahassie at 2AM; that seemed a wonderful thing because Tallahassie has always been to me one of those fabulous places like Samarkand or Mandalay. Henry Burwell met me in his car at Atlanta about ten that morning and drove me to his home, a pleasant new white house in a prosperous suburb. Burwell was dark and very tall and thin. with a nervous excitable temperament heavily disguised by his Southern drawl, and was one of those people who throw too much into fandom and are correspondingly disappointed when their bread returns after many days looking pretty crumby. The Chicon had, it proved later, been the climactic point of his fan career; he had spent hundreds of dollars on hospitality, lost a tape recorder and a play for Bea Mahaffey, got himself deeply involved in fannish political intrigue, passed out after a terrific binge and generally lived. Now came the morning after, while at the same time his publishing progress had ground to a halt in a cul de sac with the purchase of a printing plant...the kiss of death for fan publishers. Anyway Henry produced only one fanzine afterwards, a mimeoed oneshot about the Chicon, and then left fandom in as fell a swoop as he entered it in. He sold his entire collection in one go, including absentmindedly the cream of my own fmz collection, and was never heard from again. Among Henry's collection, incidentally, was the original of the Other Worlds cover for October 1952, which had a curious history. It was a touched up colour photograph of a girl maked from the waist up, wearing only a conventional spaceship. representing "The Naked Goddess" and bearing a startling resemblance to Bea Mahaffey. Burwell bought it at the auction and, examining it later, found that the spaceship was painted on a separate sheet of paper and gummed on. He promptly peeled it off and there were the salient points of the young lady's anatomy, revealed to have been augmented by a couple of deft but unfinished brush strokes.

On the second day Henry took his family and me on a drive to a local landmark called Stone Mountain, a huge heap of granite about 1600 feet high. On one face some slab-happy sculptor has started to carve a Confederate memorial, presumably Stonewall Jackson and other of the boulder spirits of the South. It isn't finished yet -- apparently the sculptor has knocked off to chisel some more money out of the local population -- but what there is is quite impressive. It seems that in the ear of one of the figures there is room for six men to sit abreast. It's the sort of thing that some Europeans affect to regard as vulgar, but I don't see that it's essentially different from cutting white horses in the Sussex Downs. And for sheer flamboyance, why I know a man here who set out one day with a bag of acorns to plant his initials in oak trees right across the Castlereagh Hills in letters two miles high. Anyhow it's not as if this Stone Mountain thing was particularly beautiful as a mountain -- it's just a sort of Doesn'tmatterhorn and obviously only good for carving things on.

And, of course, for looking at the view from the top. I could understand Henry wanting to do that, but he surprised me nonetheless. Even after what I'd seen of the reluctance of Americans to get out of their cars for anything, I still wasn't expecting him to announce his intention of driving to the summit. Maybe it doesn't sound all that unusual, so perhaps I had better explain that there is no road up this mountain. And by no road I mean no lane, path, track or other aid to vehicular progress. The only thing that made the project even conceivable was that the mountain

was composed of slabs of granite and the overall gradient couldn't have been more than one in three. Henry sighted at the distant peak along the hood, changed down a couple of gears, and up we went. We all held on grimly as the car lurched from side to side and bounced about like a ball. Henry, flushed and snarling, clawed madly at the wheel, swerving first one way and then the other to preserve his momentum and keep us from overturning. It was a subtle exercise in driving technique, because from time to time the car would balance momentarily on a ridge, swing slowly round until one or other of the back wheels regained contact with the ground, and then shoot off abruptly in some unexpected direction. We careened up like this for about a thousand feet, by which time the grating of the car chassis on rock outcroppings and the agonized whine of the wheels as they were parted from the ground must have started to get on Henry's nerves. It was making me wince, and it wasn't my car. Henry reluctantly abandoned it, carefully explaining to me that he knew the feat was possible because when he was younger he had driven up an old Ford and crashed it off the very summit. I believed him -- it was just the sort of thing he would have done to pass the time.

We finished the ascent on oldfashioned feet and returned to the long-suffering car for another wild chariot ride down the mountain. On the way home the gas station attendant presented him with a set of drinking glasses: not, apparently, in recognition of his services to mountaineering techniques, but just because it was the gas station's birthday. I don't think we Europeans have any of our business firms properly trained.

That evening we called at Ian Macauley's house and I inspected his fan den. Everything was sorted and filed with a fanatical neatness more like a business efficiency exhibition than the sort of fan room I'm accustomed to. I couldn't imagine Ian ever writing to anyone as someone once did to me, apologizing for their handwriting but they'd mislaid their typewriter. However in spite of this unnatural trait. Ian proved a very pleasant person to meet, quiet-spoken and friendly. He was also at the ASFO meeting next day at Burwell's house, where I was given an honorary ASFO membership card valid for 100 years (I think they might have given me a life membership), along with Carson Jacks, Jerry Burge and other agreeable Southerners, including Paul Cox from way out of town. It was a very pleasant day, except for a few minutes when I allowed myself to get involved in an argument about politics from which I'd difficulty extricating myself, and for another rumbling from the anti-Hoffman underground. This time the indictments were that Lee had spoken slightingly of the Atlanta fanzine and Kay Burwell's bathroom. The latter was obviously some silly misunderstanding, but you know what fans are --- anyone who would criticize their fanzine would stoop to anything, However we all parted on the best of terms, a large party coming down to the station to see me off on the 10:45 train for Savannah. What with all the talk I'd had nothing to eat since lunch but a couple of sandwiches but I bought a few candy bars from the Negro attendant and tried to get some sleep.

# 31: "Darling, it's playing our noise!"

Trains as well as planes seemed to be immune from whatever virus I carried and we arrived in Savannah station on time, 8AM. Lee was waiting for me. I'd brought a beat-up copy of Slant all the way from Belfast for this occasion, in case she meant to re-enact her part in the imaginary account of it she'd written way back when neither of us conceived of my actually visiting Savannah. But as it turned out we were too pleased to see each other again to think about fannish nonsense for a while. Later, sitting in Lee's room at 101 Wagner, with evidences of Quandry all around, I heaved a mental sigh of relief and contentment. I was, in a sense, home. It was pouring rain now and we spent a restful day finishing up an issue of Quandry, the first of the four issues Lee was to publish that October. I was pressganged into composing a piece on the stencil and stapled parts of my thumb to several

completed copies with a vicious little instrument she had called, only too appropriately, a 'hand stapler'. Ah well, I always say an editor should put part of himself in his fanzine. Then I wrote a latter to Madeleine and we ventured out during a lull in the rain to mail it. On the way I found I'd forgotten to put the return address so I began looking along the sidewalk in case someone happened to have dropped a pencil. Lee asked me what I was looking for and I said wayside pencils. "You're in the wrong state for that," she said. Innocently I asked what state I should be in. "Pennsylvania," she said...

Charles Wells called that afternoon, and concealed any astonishment he may have felt to find us talking about symbolic logic :so did we. I'd been curious about Wells, because I knew he was the visitor Burwell had inveighed against in a letter in a recent issue of McCain's Review. At Atlanta he told me that what had annoyed him was that Wells had abruptly expressed horror at the smell of his hairoil and stalked away holding his nose. Meeting Wells, I could understand how he might have peeved a Suthun gentleman like Burwell: he had a sort of artificial poise, an exaggerated self-possession that could easily be misconstrued as affectation or arrogance, instead of the shield it obviously was. Instead of the engagingly muddle-headed little fan you might expect Wells to be from his writings, he turned out to be very tall, formally dressed and with at first a stilted, almost haughty manner. This facade melted away rapidly and he proved intelligent and likeable: we had an enjoyable afternoon talking and finishing the Quandry mailing.

Next morning it looked as if the rain might have stopped and we went into Savannah, calling first at the Hoffman radio shop. While we were there we heard the strangest of noises in the street and went outside to investigate. There was a big crowd in the distance, but it looked too far away to be the source. However, after a while a couple of elephants emerged from it. The noise became earsplitting, and finally the cause of it was to be seen -- a strange and wonderful machine like a disembowelled steamroller, all pipes and boilers and valves. Jets of steam hissed terrifyingly from the top like volcanic eruptions and a great cloud of vapour roiled continuously round its base, half concealing it from view. In the midst of all this sat an intrepid human being fighting for mastery, the struggle producing a noise which bore a distant relationship to music, but transcending it as sheet lightning transcends a taper. It was the first time Lee or I had ever encountered a steam callione and we were quite bowled over. We followed the wonderful thing devoutly for some distance, until it came on to rain again. I was not surprised; rain was the least effect you could fear from a noise like that. It sounded more like the end of the world. We took refuge in the Savannah Museum and sat talking amid a reconstruction of an early American kitchen...which looked just like a contemporary kitchen in rural Ireland. We inaugurated there and then a vast field of steam callione mythology, part of which appeared later as correspondence between the Fort Mudge Steam Calliope Company and the Bulmer Aqueous Vapour Company.

In the afternoon the weather cleared again and we walked along the river through old Savannah, with its old stone mills and quays. In the evening we went to the pictures.

Lee left the choice to me so I picked "Paleface" with Bob Hope, because I knew James White would go to see it when it came to Belfast. Sure enough, six months later this long term planning was to pay off. James, who had had a habit of saying "I saw that in Paris, with French subtitles", asked me if I was going to see "Paleface". "No." I said, "I saw it in Savannah with Lee Hoffman."

### 32: We Go Pogo

Next day we went to the Okefenokee swamp. We got up at 5AM, snatched a hurried breakfast, and stole out of the house like an eloping couple. We made it to the

station on an early bus just in time for the train, and some three hours later got off at the small town of Waycross. Now all we had to do was find our way to the swamp, a few miles further South. Unfortunately there seemed to be a conspiracy among the inhabitants of Waycross to keep the existence of the swamp a secret. The stationmaster knew nothing and said the Chamber of Commerce was six miles away, and the waitress at the cafe where we went for lunch had apparently only heard rumours about some swamp hereabouts, When we came out of the cafe we found the Chamber of Commerce just across the street but all they could do...exhausted no doubt from having moved their office six miles in half an hour...was refer us to the bus station. They in turn seemed to regard the routes of their buses as highly confidential and it was as much as they would do to let us inspect their timetable, a highly complex affair covered with cabalistic signs. We puzzled over this vainly for a while and then I thought the hell with it and went out and phoned for a taxi.

Obviously it was no fault of the National Parks people that the location of their swamp wasn't better known. The sole trouble really was that America just does not cater for non-motorists. Just outside Waycross there started a series of enormous coloured billboards. proclaiming OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK 7 MILES. OKE-FENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK 6 MILES, OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK 5 MILES...and so on, just like a spaceship take-off. By the time we'd got to OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK & MILE. OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK & MILE and OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK 100 YARDS we were quite tensed up. Finally, there was one which just said triumphantly OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK with an arrow: we turned sharp left, paid our dollars at the gate lodge and sped along the drive. Lee said that if we'd gone straight on there'd have been another notice reading OKEFENOKEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK --- AW HECK, YOU MISSED IT. After a mile or so we came to a big log cabin. I paid off the taxi (thanks Bill Hamling) and we went in. The place was crammed with souvenirs, postcards, photograph albums, transfers, fossels and countless other souvenirs of the swamp: but the most startling phenomenon was something that wasn't there at all. Among all this huge collection of swampiana there was not a single reference or allusion of any sort to Pogo. Apparently these people had never heard of Walt Kelly, or were boycotting him. Indignantly, we signed the visitors' book "Lee Hoffman, Savannah: Walter Willis, Belfast: Horrors Gree-ley, Fort Mudge" and passed through.

We immediately found ourselves in a sort of miniature zoo. The possum's cage was empty, but there were plenty of alligators -- some quite big ones, about a yard long, just lying around loose on the banks of the water. The really big ones were all in a sort of concrete tank, dozens of them all lying on top of one another sleeping. Or at least trying to sleep. Every now and then one of them would get restive and twitch slightly, disturbing the one on top of him who would twitch a bit more, disturbing the one on top of him who would slither off irritably, bumping into two or three more who would writhe about angrily, infuriating everyone within range. A sort of chain reaction would build up like this, accompanied by a horrible dry rustling sound getting louder and louder. The twitching and slithering would spread to every side of the tank and back again to start a new and angrier reaction. until there seemed no reason why the whole seething mass of alligators shouldn't boil up over the sides of the tank. However after a few minutes of this a new equilibrium would gradually be established: the rustling sound would dwindle to a whisper and all movement would be stilled, leaving just a tankful of layers of deadlooking alligators and the same dreadful smell. It was fascinating, in a horrible sort of way. They did look a bit like embittered Alberts, and the raccoon and the porcupine and the turtle looked vaguely familiar too, so that you almost expected them to say something funny.

After this we joined a party in a flat-bottomed aluminum boat and we were rowed some distance into the swamp, along a narrow waterway. The guide had never heard



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of Walt Kelly either, apparently; all he had in his head was Hollywood movies. We'd be gliding through some eerily beautiful backwater and come on a skull on a post sticking up out of the water: the guide would announce that this was where they shot such and such a scene in such and such a movie. However, he couldn't spoil the swamp. I'd been expecting it to be dank and clammy and sinister, but it wasn't. It was bright and clean and colorful, and very beautiful. There were no mosquitoes or unpleasant smells, just dark calm water and cypress trees and peace. There were great floating islands that looked for all the world like dry land, but shivered as the boat went past, and long mysterious inlets full of water lilies stretching far into the swamp like tunnels. No doubt it was really a very dangerous and deadly place, but on this sunny autumn day it looked just as kind and happy and Walt Kelly's world.

Eventually the guide even ran out of B movies and took us back to the landing stage. Lee and I wanted to see more of the swamp -- this was her first visit too -- so we took the boardwalk which has been built through part of it and which leads to a big observation tower from where you can see the parts of the swamp where nobody goes. On the way back we dipped half a dozen postcards in swamp water and I filled a Coca-Cola bottle to take home...wondering how I would explain it to the Customs.

Back at the log cabin we hitched a lift in the Park Superintendent's car as far as the gate lodge, where I phoned Waycross for a taxi. While we were waiting we had sodas and buns at a little cafe across the road, not without some confusion because I didn't know they called all aerated waters soda here. When we'd finished there was still no sign of a taxi so I called again. They didn't know what had happened to the last one, but said they'd send another. While we were waiting for the second taxi we were engaged in conversation by the garrulous gatekeeper, who turned out to be one of those professional Characters in which Georgia seems to abound. With his countryman's keen eye and ear he deduced from my accent that I was a Canadian and from Lee and I being together that we were an engaged couple. After half an hour there was still no taxi, so I called another firm. Their's arrived in about ten minutes and we got into it quickly lest two more should turn up now that the dam had burst. "Fort Mudge," I told the driver.

I should explain that Bob Tucker had found a map of Georgia on which Fort Mudge, well known to Pogo lovers as the terminus of the Denver, Seattle & Fort Mudge Rail-road, was actually marked. We were resolved to visit the town and mail our post-cards from there. But there appeared to be some confusion. The driver, a young Negro, was turning round with a puzzled expression. "Where is it?" he asked, "About five miles along this road," I said, "You can't miss it." He shook his head perplexedly, obviously thinking that he had lived in this country all his life and here were foreigners giving him directions. However he drove on willingly enough. After what the speedometer claimed to have been eight miles we had passed no sign of human habitation but a wooden hut, so I told the driver to turn round and we went back more slowly, looking for hidden sideroads. When we came to the wooden hut again Lee and I got out to ask for directions. It turned out to be a tiny shop, specializing in chewing gum and Coca-cola. At least that was the entire stock. An elderly man greeted us as if we were the first customers he had seen for years, which we probably were. "Can you direct us to Fort Mudge?" I asked.

"This is Fort Mudge," said the old man.
"Is this all there is of it?" I asked.
"Yes," he admitted.
"No post office," I said.
"No," he said.
"Any postcards?" asked Lee optimistically.
"No," said the old man.

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We looked disconsolately round for something, anything, that would be specifically Fort Mudgean, but there was still nothing but Coca-cola and Beechnut chewing gum, both imported products. In desperation we bought two sticks of chewing gum. I kept this cherished souvenir for years until one day my little daughter Carol found it and, not realizing its profound significance, ate it as if it was an ordinary piece of chewing gum. However in 1955 Lee and Ken & Pamela Bulmer went back to Fort Mudge and bought me another piece to replace it.

Dazed by the sudden rush of business, the old man followed us outside, visions of fantastic commercial success no doubt flooding through his mind. Imagine it, strangers from foreign parts seeking out his shop in taxis to buy chewing gum. He shook hands with us at the taxi door. "You're a fine young couple," he maundered, "a fine young couple. I hope you'll be very happy." Half an hour ago one of these Characters had had us engaged, now this one had us on our honeymoon. We thanked him solemnly and went back to Waycross, where I paid off the taxi. (Thanks again, Bill.) The driver stood looking after us in a most peculiar way.

We mailed our postcards and strolled about the town until the train came and then, tired but happy, dozed while it sped through the night to Savannah. It had been a wonderful day.

We spent the next one quietly talking, looking through old Pogos, listening to wire recordings and collaborating on a travelogue about Fort Mudge for the third October issue of Quandry. In the evening we went for a walk along the dirt roads and swung on the swings in a dark and deserted children's playground. On the way back lee asked if I'd mind being exhibited to some neighbours who'd wanted to see the real live visitor from Ireland. Conscious of my shortcomings in this respect I put on a thick Dublin brogue for their benefit. They seemed satisfied.

Next afternoon I caught the bus for New York. As Lee and I were waiting at the departure platform, yet another Character accosted us. Surrounding us in a cloud of alcoholic goodwill he shook us both fervently by the hards. Then, patting Iee paternally on the shoulder he told her not to fret, I was going away to serve my country. Then he sympathized with me for having to leave my pretty young wife for the hardships of military service, added a few brief notes about his own experiences, shook hands with me again and reeled away, turning every now and then to wave to us.

Before this State-wide conspiracy could provide us with ready made children the bus arrived. I got in, waved a last sad goodbuy to Lee, and as the bus swept through the streets of the town tried to settle down for the last long journey to New York.

### 33: Latitudes & Attitudes

All too soon it got dark again and I thought ruefully to myself that I wasn't seeing much of America. I'd been deliberately doing most of my travelling by night so I could meet friends during the day, and in the eight days between Los Angeles and Savannah I'd spent only four nights in bed. My impressions of the return journey across the continent had therefore been of a night-time America that must be as strange to many Americans as it was to me...all night diners with bright lights, loud jukeboxes and silent drowsy people, bus stations with whitefaced hurrying travellers, and outside in the warm night deserted towns basking in the glow of wasted neon. And between them endless miles of anonymous roads with urgent traffic signs flashing continuously up out of the darkness...so that even today I cannot see a main road at night without a twinge of nostalgia. Nowadays all those diners, bus stations and roads are just a composite blur, but a few oddities stuck in my mind. The way roads advertise against one another for traffic, sometimes

impersonating legitimate traffic directions; the series of advance advertisements for motels, one of which started 1000 miles away: the odd notices, like NIGHT CRAWLERS (I never found out what that was) and the even more provocative ones on the backs of trucks, some of which strike the foreigner as illustrating peculiar vagaries of American thought —— like DRIVE CAREFULLY, LIFE IN AMERICA IS WORTH LIVING, or, even more questionable, HIRE THE HANDICAPPED —— IT'S GOOD BUSINESS; the speed and competence of American motorists, weaving in and out like bobbins; the goodness and cleanliness of the food and service in the average diner; the cute little cartoons of cream you got for your coffee; the big casters you got your suger in, so you had to learn to measure your sugar not in lumps or spoonfuls, but in milliseconds; not being able to send a telegram from a Post Office; free book matches, and conversely the slightly shocking practice of commercial slot machines selling three  $3\phi$  stamps for  $10\phi$ .

I had caught a glimpse of cotton pickers in a field in South Carolina before night fell, but this was the nearest I'd seen to the South of the mint julip tradition. What I had seen of the country outside the big towns I hadn't cared for much. To me it had meant seedy little towns -- I'd never realized that "the wrong side of the tracks" had such a literal meaning, that these places were built after the rail-road -- filled with sullen Negroes and thin-lipped white men in blue shirts who would obviously lynch you sooner than look at you. At first I'd kept absentmindedly going to "Colored Only" ticket desks and diner sections and being brusquely redirected, as often as not by Negroes, and it had begun to get on my nerves. But the dreadful thing was that after a while I found myself starting to get used to it. accepting it as normal and proper. The fact of Negroes being confined to separate and invariably inferior facilities inevitably made your subconscious with inferiority. At the same time your intelligence realized that they weren't inferior, or that if they were it was the fault of your race. It's not humanly possible to live with this contradiction without resolving it one way or the other, and since one instinctively tries to justify oneself and to rationalize whatever is in one's own interest you tend to think of the Negroes as really inferior and yourself entitled to your aristocratic privileges: and not only that, but to blame the Negroes for your mental discomfort and resent their very existence. On the way to Atlanta, for instance, the bus had left several groups of Negroes standing by the side of the road because the back seats were full, though there was plenty of room at the front. Eventually it stopped to let a white on, and a colored woman with two little children followed. She and the children had to stand all the way to Atlanta, though there were still seats at the front. Now everyone in the bus must have known there was something basically wrong about this, but since nobody would do anything about it, all us whites had to choose between despising ourselves and resenting the coloured woman, and presumably she had to make a similar choice with regard to the whites. This sort of thing must be happening several times a day to everyone everywhere segregation exists, and it seemed to me that the atmosphere of guilt and resentment in that bus pervaded the whole South. I was glad to get back to the fresh air of the North.

It was daylight again when we passed through Washington and its fine buildings, and I wished I could have stopped off and seen some of the notables of the city, like Eney and Jacobs and Briggs, but I had to be in New York before the end of office hours on Friday. The Steamship Company's book of instructions had been firm that no one was allowed to leave America without a clearance from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and my boat left on Monday morning. We sped on efficiently through Baltimore and Philadelphia and finally entered the outskirts of New York shortly after noon. I began to feel quite relieved. There had been no breakdown so far and we were nearly there. As if the same thought had struck the bus, it turned sharp left and began to make a detour round a huge airfield. New York seemed to be quite near — across the airfield there was a smoke haze and a suggestion of towering

buildings. The bus continued to skirt round the vast empty plain, now accompanied by a significant grinding noise from the back axle. When it had got as far from civilization as it could in the vicinity of New York, it broke down. The driver got out, glared at the back wheels and set off along the long empty road. After he had dwindled away in the distance we sat watching the planes landing and taking off for a long time, while the smoke haze darkened on the promised land.

Time passed and eventually our driver came tearing along in another bus and took us round the rest of the airfield and into New York at a furious speed. the bus station I leaped out and ran for the nearest phone. It was 5:35PM. Mercifully, some dedicated servant of the public remained at his post in the Bureau of Internal Revenue: he listened sympathetically and told me it'd probably be all right if I explained everything to the Inspector at the docks on Monday morning. Relieved. I hung up and started looking for Evelyn Smith, to whom I'd sent a telegram from Philadelphia. There was no sign of her. I called her home, but there was no answer. There seemed nothing to do but wait and I hadn't had anything to eat since breakfast, so I went to the lunch counter and had two hot dogs and coffee. I was just finishing my second hot dog when an uneasy thought struck me. This wasn't like the bus station I had set out from five weeks ago. In fact it was a different bus station altogether. With a pang of self reproach I remembered there had been another bus station in New York, the one where we'd had our first breakdown. This must be the Pennsylvania one, or whatever they called it, and poor sweet noble Evelyn must still be patiently waiting for me at the real terminal. All my luggage must be there too, but I should have my map of New York in my pocket. Yes. Gulping my coffee, I consulted it. Thirty seconds later I was running along 34th St., trotting along Eighth Avenue, tottering past Madison Square Garden, and staggering breathless into the Capitol Greyhound Station. Evelyn wasn't there, and I knew what had happened. The devoted creature had waited for hours, met my belated bus, found me not on it and gone home worrying helplessly about me...and all the time I had been guzzling hot dogs and coffee. What a slob I was. I rushed to the phone and called her number again. She was in. I had got about halfway through my contrite explanation when I realized she was apologizing to me. Her mother had been taken ill and she hadn't been able to get down to meet me at all. All taken aback I arranged to see her tomorrow and took down complicated intructions for getting to George O. Smith's flat by subway, and hung up dazedly.

# 34: Night Out In New York

It was early yet to inflict myself on the GOSmiths, so having collected my luggage I stowed it away in a couple of slot-machine lockers and went outside to explore. And was thrilled to find myself on Broadway. Excited, I wandered along as far as Times Square and paused happily, gazing at all the flashing signs and hurrying people and marvelling at it all. Here I was, Walter Willis, in the heart of New York! Looking around at all the famous names, I suddenly remembered the New Yorker. As a devoted if occasional reader of that magazine I had for years been accustomed to poring wistfully over the "Goings On About Town" page: now, by Ghod, here I was and now was my chance. I found a newstand and bought a copy of the current issue. Standing at the corner of Times Square and Broadway I opened my New Yorker and turned to the "Goings On About Town". It was one of the great moments of my life.

But as I came to the end of the list a disconcerting realization came over me. There was nowhere I wanted to go. Now, when it came to the point, I seemed to be too tired to work up enough enthusiasm for any particular show to seek out the theatre and try to book a seat, and it seemed absurd to go and see a film, however rare, that I might catch in London or even Belfast. Besides I was too excited to feel like just sitting somewhere passively for three hours. And yet it seemed such a

waste to be in New York and not go somewhere. But where? Unsettled, I wandered irresolutely along 42nd Street and back again along the other side, feeling vaguely cheated. It was all still wonderful though, and I told myself it would actually be a waste of time to go and sit in some theatre and miss all this. But when I had myself quite convinced on this point, and the nervous tension of indecision had e-laxed, I suddenly found I was much more tired than I'd thought. I had to go somewhere and sit down. But it was too late for the theatres now. Dissatisfied with myself I stole guiltily into a little cartoon cinema and saw Gerald McBoing-boing.

It was very good, but I hoped it never came to Belfast. Afterwards I collected one of my suitcases from the bus station and ventured into the sordid catacombs of the New York subway, where, as in so many places in America, you're not allowed to smoke (No wonder that statue offers you a light as you enter the country -- it may be your last chance.) When I got to the turnstile at the end of the tunnel I found I hadn't got a dime for the slot. There was a man sitting in a sort of sentry box reading a pulp magazine with a sign above him saying "No change given for anything more than a dollar". I asked him if he would change a two-dollar bill. (Put this down to a national characteristic, not to my being unable to read.) He didn't even deign to answer, just went on reading his pulp as if I didn't exist. I was relieved to notice it was a Western. "You read that crazy Roy Rogers stuff?" I muttered, and lugged my suitcase back along the tunnel.

Coming to a newsstand I bought the smallest paper I could find, a copy of Keyhole. The newsvendor grinned understandingly at my \$2 bill and said, "You don't have to buy anything -- I'll give you change." And they say New Yorkers are rude.

Eventually I emerged from the subway at the right station, but promptly lost my way in the suburbs of Queens and had to ask directions from several passers-by before I arrived at GOSmith's flat, soon after ten. They seemed pleased to see me and assumed I was staying until the boat left, which was a relief. I had invitations from Dave Kyle, Will Sykora and Calvin Thomas Beck, but I didn't want to get involved in feuds again. I was grateful for the Smith's offer but puzzled why they had made it, because I'd never had any previous contact with them. The mystery was solved very soon after we started talking. Apparently Dona had got hold of an old Slant where I'd published a mock letter to John W. Campbell, her former husband, from his publishers. It was actually about the competition from Galaxy, but as a sideways allusion to the current gossip it was signed "Yours truly, Street and (if you'll pardon the expression) Smith". This had tickled Dona so much she'd told George to invite me to stay with them so she could find out if I'd meant what she thought I meant. Three nights board and lodging for one gag! If I could get regular rates like that I could give up work.

We talked until about 3AM, and next morning Evelyn Smith called as we were having a late breakfast. We went downtown and bought some libidinous lingerie for Madeleine, some toys for Carol and stereoscopic reels of the places I'd been to. After lunch in Greenwich Village (which was just like Belfast) Evelyn went to hospital -- to visit her mother -- and I went happily roaming about by myself, looking at secondhand portable typers and at the view from Rockefeller Center. Somebody asked me the way to Times Square and I told him. In the evening I met Evelyn again at one of the two stone lions that flank the entrance to the New York Public Library (which was obviously designed that way to force people to make jokes about reading between the lions) and we went to a Hydra Club meeting.

It was in a dingy basement room, more like a Communist cell than a literary salon. Everyone was drinking canned beer and listening to one Jerome Stanton holding forth from a strategic position in front of the fireplace and beside the beer. Among the people I talked to later were Cyril Kornbluth, Lester del Rey (who had

an advance copy of Space with a Chicon report in it, scooping all the fanzines). Robert W. Lowndes, Harry Harrison, 'J.J. Coupling' and others. I'm sure that with all these active minds countless brilliant things were said, but all I can remember is an impression that these people should publish a monthly guide of Who's Living With Whom for the benefit of confused visitors, and that they were all much more like Europeans than any Americans I'd met so far. They seemed to lack that fundamental innocence which seems to characterize Americans generally. I had liked the average American, but conversation with him seemed to be on a simpler basis than with Europeans. When Europeans talk there is I think a silent and complex interreaction beneath the surface: each person is thinking not only of what he is actually saying but of the way he is saying it and its possible repercussions on other people and their opinion of him. Whereas Americans tend to be more straightforward. saying what they mean and taking what you say at its face value. In practice it works out that Americans seem tactless and Europeans touchy. I suppose the basic reason is the absence in America of class distinctions, national boundaries, divided loyalties and wide variations in cultural background: in a sense the American is much more anonymous than the European. One reason I thought this might be true was that the American simplicity didn't seem so evident among fans. I suppose in a way fandom is a European-type culture, with its class distinctions and traditions and so many intensely individualistic characters and groups that social intercourse tends to be semantically loaded in the European manner.

### 35: Farewell, Columbia

Next day Evelyn took me to Radio City Music Hall and Lindy's restaurant on Broadway which I was thrilled to discover was Runyon's 'Mindy's' and where we had some wonderful stuff called pastrami. I always say you haven't seen the real America until you've seen New York. Later we went to Horace Gold's apartment, where Evelyn Gold cooked us a fine dinner, and then we went on to Willy Ley's place for a party which lasted till early morning.. This was my last day in America, and I wish I could remember more about it. Looking back on the whole trip, that's the sort of thing that gives me a sense of loss, an uneasy knowledge that bits of this wonderful experience are constantly slipping away, eroded by time. I don't even know how much I've lost. Of course I have a few vivid memories -- chocolate malts, the Grand Canyon, orange juice, the Okefenokee Swamp, hamburgers, the Gulf of Mexico, pastrami, the Rocky Mountains, fried chicken, the New York skyline -- subtle nuances like that in the American scene which the less perceptive tourist might have passed unnoticed, but I had traversed 30 of the 48 states: surely I should have quite a gallery of clear mental pictures, a collection of photographic stills from this five-week travelogue. Instead the pictures have run into one another; the colors are there, but the details are blurred into a sort of impressionist smudge. I can for instance evoke vividly a small American town...tree-lined streets, young people in summer clothes, pleasant houses, sprinklers on fenceless lawns, bright drugstores offering strange delectable concoctions, an atmosphere of prosperous tranquility, and above all a nostalgic memory of warm evenings susurrating with the chirping of crickets and the crepitation of neon signs, symbolically indistinguishable from one another. Symbolic because those sounds seem to me to represent how the American small town combines the virtues of two ways of life, the pleasures of civilization and the peacefulness of the countryside, in a synthesis that makes it seem to me the most pleasant place to live in that's yet appeared on this planet. And yet I know this small town I'm thinking of may not exist at all; it's a composite impression. like the one I have of America itself. Every now and then I find myself thinking nostalgically about America and wishing I lived there...until I ask myself, just where? What I seem to want turns out to be a small University town in the Rockies on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico, within easy reach of New York. I suspect it may be difficult to find. I don't want to jump to hasty conclusions after a mere 8000 miles travelling about the country, but at times I was really coming to suspect

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the place was a lot bigger than it looked on the school atlas. You travel all day and night at 60mph and next morning find yourself still in the same state, that of bewilderment. I have a feeling that it would give me agarophobia to live in it, if that's the opposite of claustrophobia, and a feeling of insecurity. Americans sometimes say that Europe is 'finished', but America struck me vividly as unfinished...like an immensely vast building lot.

Then of course there are the Americans. The place is full of them. Why, there are more Americans in America than there are in Europe. (Nicer ones, too.) The average European newspaper reader subconsciously thinks of them as either gangsters, crazy teenagers or dollar-mad business men, but I didn't seem to meet any of those, just ordinary nice people like everywhere else (except that they weren't terrified by US foreign policy). They didn't even look like the Americans we see over here, who seem to belong to a special race of bland roundfaced people with loud voices, fawn overcoats and wide hats. The Americans in America are individuals -- friendly, unassuming and very nice to know.

Embarkation next morning was from 9 to 11, and we left soon after 9 -- GOSmith, Evelyn & me. We called first at the bus station for the rest of my luggage and then took a taxi for the train to Hoboken. We had gone about 200 yards when something happened that surprised everybody but me. The taxi broke down.

We left the driver scratching his head over it, hailed another, and eventually arrived at the docks. We even found the right pier in time. I said goodbye to Evelyn and George and told them to go on home because the ship -- it was the Neptunia again of course -- might not sail for hours, if at all. I went through the bureaucrat lines (there was no trace of the Inland Revenue man), dumped my suitcases in my cabin, homed to my old secluded corner of the boat deck, and collapsed. Thank God, it was all over. For all I knew there were hordes of fans down there on the quay on the opposite side of the ship, but it was highly improbable, and anyway I didn't feel up to shouting and waving at anyone. I had had enough. The last five weeks had been tough going for an introvert: now all I wanted to do was hide in a quiet corner and snarl at anyone who came near. I had had enough of meeting strange people and trying to be bright and pleasant, I just wanted to relax and be my usual obnoxious self. I stayed in my sunny cave on the boat deck all through the distant fuss of departure, looking idly at the 3D reels I'd bought in Macy's the day before yesterday until the ship began to move. I watched as the docks and then the skyscrapers drifted dreamily away; very soon the harbour and finally the coastline itself was lost in the mists, and there was nothing but the sea. For all its size and importance America faded away very quickly.

# 36: EpiTaff

It was mildly pleasant to be an experienced passenger among all these novices and know where everything was on the ship, but it didn't make up for the lost magic of the first trip. There was nothing new to discover, and even the food seemed commonplace now. The weather got rapidly colder and after the first day there was no more sunbathing, just grey skies and spray. I spent the first three days reading steadily through the ship's library and spoke to nobody, luxuriating in the sensation of not having to go anywhere or meet anyone. Then I began to recover slightly and take notice of the other passengers. The ship was only a quarter full this time and most of them were Germans, who seemed an ugly and unpleasant lot. I made friends with a young Jewish couple on their way to a kibutz in Israel and played table tennis on the promenade deck. Table tennis is quite a different game on a rolling deck in mid-Atlantic. In the evenings there were films in the dining room, the roof of which was far too low for it. However I saw the top half of some excellent movies and realized for the first time how much more I was going to enjoy American movies now...looking for places I recognized and even enjoying B movies more because they're

not shot on studio sets and in night scenes you can hear the crickets behind the dialogue.

On the eighth morning the sea was blue and calm again and there on the left were the Scilly Isles glowing in the sun. It was cold and damp again when we reached Southhampton, but the reminder of sunshine had been enough. It brought back the long days of sunbathing on the outward voyage and Florida and Okefenokee and those warm American nights and the friends I'd made, none of which I was ever likely to see again. As the tender chugged away over the choppy sea to Southhampton and I had a last view of the Neptunia with the crew all waving goodbye I felt an unexpected surge of affection for the old ship that had taken me to all this. Here now was Southhampton and the British winter and it was all over. The last link was being broken and it was unexpectedly painful

The anaesthesia was wearing off, but it was months before I recovered completely. I had seen enough new places and strange people to last me for a long time and I was completely exhausted, mentally as well as physically. With nervous strain and lack of sleep and irregular and inadequate meals I'd lost a great deal of weight, and next spring I went down with pneumonia. But it was all worth it. Now I had something to remember for the rest of my life. I shouldn't have to grow old with the feeling that I'd done nothing exceptional with my life. I had been to America, seen the Pacific and the Grand Canyon and bathed in Florida, and I'd done it all through writing articles in fanzines. It might not be an awfully big thing, but it was exceptional, scmething that not everybody did: at least no one had ever done it before. And now, maybe, somebody could do it again, and fandom would become a more exciting place on account of that wildcat scheme of Shelby's. I hoped so, for the sake of the generous fans who had helped me to come over. For myself it had all been I feel that this report should wonderful. have started --

"Once upon a time...."

