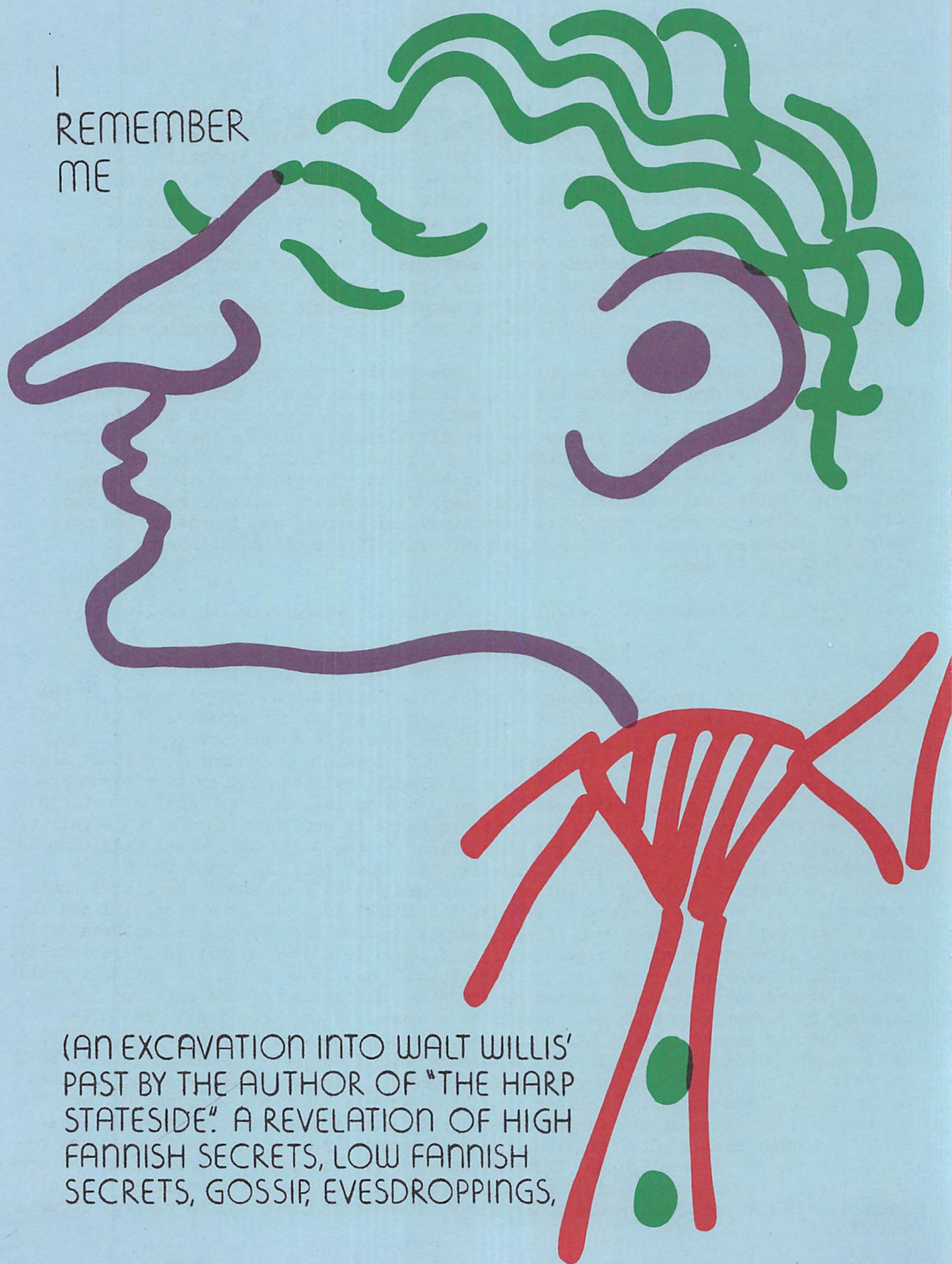
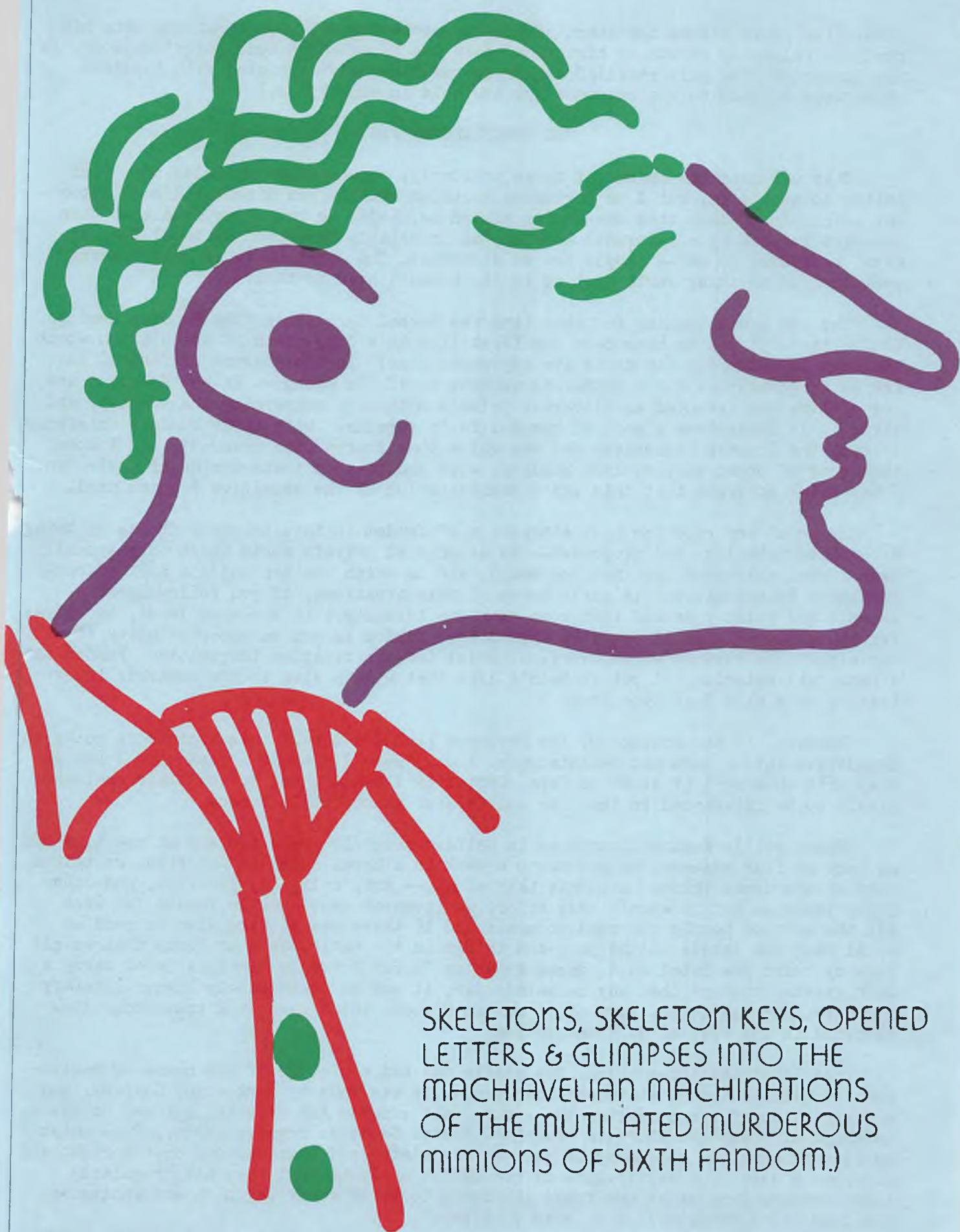


I
REMEMBER
ME



(AN EXCAVATION INTO WALT WILLIS'
PAST BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE HARP
STATESIDE." A REVELATION OF HIGH
FANNISH SECRETS, LOW FANNISH
SECRETS, GOSSIP, EVESDROPPINGS,



SKELETONS, SKELETON KEYS, OPENED
LETTERS & GLIMPSES INTO THE
MACHIAVELIAN MACHINATIONS
OF THE MUTILATED MURDEROUS
MIMIONS OF SIXTH FANDOM.)

(rb: Five years before the start of Willis' archeological investigations into his past the following strata of historical data was revealed in Redd Boggs' Skyhook. In the Spring of 1952 Walt recalled a teen-age self already imprinted with impulses which were to lead to the evidence you now hold in your hands.)

THE SUBCUTANEOUS FAN

This was meant to be one of those scholarly, constructive articles that your editor so excels in, but I am beginning to think that he has discovered some important principle of life that has so far eluded me. Redd: do you ever find that when you want to look up a reference someone has invariably borrowed the book? It's always happening to me -- people are so dishonest. The worst of it is that I never seem to find anything worth quoting in the books I have of theirs.

The one I was looking for this time was Rachel Ferguson's "The Brontes Went To Woolworths". It was to have been the first link in a long chain of speculation about the ways in which the fan mentality expresses itself in the absence of fandom. As far as I remember -- don't bother to correct me if I'm wrong -- Rachel Ferguson and her sisters had invented an elaborate private mythology concerning the Brontes, and lived in it themselves a sort of pseudolife in parallel with their mundane existence. I think the Brontes themselves had one which they shared with Branwell, and I know that lots of other people, like Shelley, also had these private worlds of their own. I was going to argue that this was a manifestation of the sensitive fannish mind.

To me at any rate the main attraction of fandom is this property it has of being a combined mythology and microcosm-- an artificial private world which does actually have a real existence (but not too real), and in which one can enjoy a sort of contemporary reincarnation. (A whole bunch of reincarnations, if you follow Speer's example and split yourself into more than one identity.) At the very least, two lives for the price of one. It could be argued that fandom is not an escapist hobby at all, but almost the reverse -- an overflow outlet for the creative imagination. Fandom is a nocturnal emission. (I put it baldly like that with a view to the remark's immortalization on a Wild Hair type cover.)

However, in the absence of the Ferguson book I'm afraid this article is going to degenerate into a personal reminiscence. I only hope I'm right in assuming I can get away with this sort of stuff in Fapa. Certainly I can't think of any other audience likely to be interested in the rise and fall of sauce bottle fandom.

Sauce bottle fandom flourished in Belfast about 17 years ago and at one time had as many as four members. We met twice a week in a local cafe, and at first we talked only of the usual things students talk about -- art, religion, politics, and other dirty jokes -- but it wasn't long before we invented sauce bottle fandom. We were all the sort of people who read at meals and if there was nothing else to read we would read the labels on the jars and things on the table. We soon found that we all knew by heart the label on a sauce known as "H.P." Not only did this label carry a much greater wordage than any marmalade jar, it was of an immensely higher literary standard. For one thing, part of it was in French, which gave it a tremendous distinction in the eyes of us Francophiles.

The label had three sides. The middle one had a picture of the house of parliament at Westminster, a statement that the sauce was made by Garton and Company, and a description of its constituents -- pure malt vinegar and oriental spices. On the lefthand side was the blurb in French -- "Cette Sauce de premier choix..." -- which we intoned with the solemnity we gave to Baudelaire and Rimbaud. And on the righthand side was a copy of a certificate by two public analysts that they had "regularly taken samples from stock and found the sauce to be in every way pure and wholesome. --Signed, A. Bostock Hill & William T. Rigby."

It was those names that got us. There seemed to be limitless significance in them. A. Bostock Hill was obviously a short stocky type, stolid and unimaginative, but steady as a rock and honest as the day was long. William T. Rigby, on the other hand, was a wayward genius, brilliant and eccentric and with a streak of the Bohemian artist. In no time at all we had the two characters fitted out with parents, schools, careers, love lives, friends -- an entire world. Every detail was filled in with loving care. Finally we had constructed an entire imaginary universe for Hill and Rigby, with a cast of scores which included virtually every proprietary name in the British bottling, canning, and confectionary industries.

Every change in a proprietary label was the outward sign of some vast drama taking place behind the scenes, and the occasion for long and serious speculation by us. We were, for instance, saddened when the H.P. people suddenly substituted typed signatures of Hill and Rigby for the holographed ones we had known since childhood. It could only mean that poor old Hill was failing. No doubt he had for some time been unable actually to take the samples from stock himself, but his loyal friend Rigby, ever the more dashing of the two, had shown him his results and guided his faltering hand in signing the hallowed document. Then in 1939 two things happened. The war broke out, and the certificate disappeared altogether. The latter could mean only one thing, and sauce bottle fandom came to an end.

By that time the mythos was really immense. We had not only accounted for every idiosyncrasy in proprietary labels, but had incorporated dozens of other odd items that had caught our imagination. Things like an enormous and mysterious unsigned painting of a lady in blue that hung in the attic of my grandmother's old house, several Victorian lithographs of domestic scenes in the downstairs rooms, and a photograph of an unknown Edwardian ancestor whom we christened Wallace Willis. And finally we had integrated the whole thing with another equally massive mythology in a different field, quite incommunicable since it dealt mainly with local placenames and Irish words, and ingenious theories as to whatever happened to the Picts.

Nobody ever got around to writing the whole thing down -- it would have been quite a job -- and I thought it had perished completely until the other day I found among some old papers a draft I had sketched of the main events in the Hill-Rigby story itself. It started off with A. Bostock Hill's childhood and already one of the two Holy Grails of the saga -- absolutely pure malt vinegar was making its appearance. As you probably know, vinegar is made from inferior wines, and in the first chapter, based on one of the Victorian lithos, old Squire Hill is staggering home drunk from his nightly debauch. "'D--n and b---t,' he roared thickly as he reeled up the stairs. Mrs. Hill blanched. 'Shut your ears, children,' she murmured, clasping her eldest son in her arms. 'Arbuthnot,' she cried, 'tomorrow you embark on the great sea of life. Swear to me by a mother's love that you will fight this daemon Empire. Wine that has enslaved your father, and that you will remember always our family motto SPIRIT VINI RECT.'"

In the next chapter Hill goes to boarding school and falls foul of the school bully, Guy Fletcher (Fletcher's Tomato Ketchup) and his toadies Cyril Urney and Sidney Needler. (Urney and Needler were makers of chocolate we thought vastly inferior to Cadbury's.) He is rescued by William Terence Rigby, one of the school bloods, and confides in him his dream of transforming his father's curse into a blessing for all mankind. Later at Oxford, where Rigby is specializing in tropical flora, they meet some of the other characters in the saga -- Wallace Willis, Vladimir Potemkin the mad painter, Richard Cadbury and Sydney Garton. They also spend a holiday at Heidelberg, where they meet Gustav Tobler and Heinrich Heinz. Towards the end of their university life, however, both Hill and Rigby fall in love with Wallace Willis' sis-

*Pharmaceutical term for vinegar.

ter, the mysterious blue lady painted by Potemkin, and Rigby goes East to forget. Worried by reports that he has gone native, Hill presses on with his monumental work.

"The furore which greeted the publication of "Pure Malt Vinegar, Its Past", need not be described. The book was at first greeted with derision and obloquy, but when it was realized that the author had effectively discredited all previous thought on the subject a wave of despair swept the world. Such was the position when Hill produced the second volume, "Pure Malt Vinegar, Its Future". It was the young men who first realized the daring scope of Hill's ideas. Absolutely Pure Malt Vinegar, hitherto thought but a vain dream, was possible! In Paris, Montmartre student opinion rallied to the new leader as a result of some anonymous prose poems and manifestos..."

Hill can now afford to organize an expedition to search for Rigby. He enlists the aid of old Professor Heinz ("57 Varieties have I made, and I will no more until Rigby is found make") and with Tobler they set out for the orient. They find Rigby in the heart of the Burmese jungle "writing feverishly on a bamboo table covered with scientific instruments. The piercing gleam in his eye belied the signs of dissipation on his features..." "Your book made a new man of me," he says, "and I have begun my researches again. I don't want to raise false hopes, but I think we have an appointment with Sidney Garton...and I have one of my prose poems ready for Sidney if he cares to use it. 'Cette sauce de premier choix...'"

They all return in triumph to England (except old Professor Heinz who succumbs to malaria with his life's work uncompleted. Or don't you have Heinz's 57 Varieties in the U.S.?) and Garton produces the ultimate sauce. Not without opposition from Fletcher, Crosse, and Blackwell, but the saga ends at one of the "quiet dinners Hill gives regularly to his friends. The genial old man sits at the head of the table, with Rigby, frail but indomitable and with still a youthful gleam in his eye, on his right hand, and Dr. Otto Heinz, son of the revered Professor, on his left...The gay conversation rises and falls, stilled only when the butler enters bearing tenderly a priceless cobwebbed bottle of old vintage vinegar."

And to think I might have poured all that energy into fandom instead of a sauce bottle, if I had come across the Belfast SFL in 1935!

I REMEMBER ME

1

A couple of years ago the headquarters of Irish Fandom moved from a room at the back of the house into the large front attic described by Chuck Harris in Through Darkest Ireland. I installed four power points in it with the help of Bob Shaw and a toy motor of Carol's (the latter to help thread cable under the floorboards) and erected bookshelves all over. After everything was finally moved up and the floor was found not to sag noticeably I looked round with satisfaction. For the first time in my life I had a room for everything. I even brought some books up from downstairs to fill up empty shelves.

But now things are just as bad as they were before, and there isn't a bigger room in the house. The downstairs books have long since been repatriated, Clearly, something will have to go...and the correspondence files are by far the biggest and most unsightly item, apart from myself. These files of mine contain virtually every letter I've received since I came into fandom nearly nine years ago, and carbon copies of every letter I wrote, even before I got a typewriter. (The first item of fanac equipment I ever bought was a ball point pen.) It seems to me that such a comprehensive dossier is bound to be of some historical or at least psychiatric interest, if only to me. I hate to destroy it without at least taking some notes.

Hence this journal. I will proceed to go through these old files ruthlessly destroying everything, but making notes here of anything which might conceivably be of interest to anyone. This way you will not only have the semi-illicit pleasure of reading someone else's mail, but I will have a ready-made set of notes for my Memoirs, should I ever be possessed with a mad urge to write them. In fact, now I come to think of it, so will you. If anyone would like to write my memoirs, just go ahead.

Incidentally, this could be of interest to anyone thinking of writing a history of fandom during the last decade. There were many things that happened behind the scenes that were confidential at the time and which never did become public. I will tell everything here....

In the summer of 1947, in a second-hand bookshop in Austin St. in the slum quarter of the lower Newtownards Road, I came across the January 1947 issue of the US Astounding containing the first part of the Padgett serial "Tomorrow & Tomorrow". It was a tremendous shock for Madeleine and me, for hitherto we had innocently thought that the British Reprint of Astounding was all there was. The realisation that we had been missing more than half of it, including all the serials, was indescribably shocking. Immediately we began searching Belfast systematically for more US editions. I even made forays to provincial towns by bicycle. We never found any more US Asfs, but Madeleine did run across a copy of Walter Gillings' promag Fantasy. It had a letter in it from somebody called James White with a Belfast address. I wrote asking him to call, adding by way of bait that I had quite a few old BRE Astoundings. He replied on 26th August, a date now celebrated as Irish Fandom day:

Dear Mr. Willis:

I received your letter this morning and am more than pleased to hear of another science fiction fan in Belfast.

I am interested in Astoundings mostly and have a small collection of them, chiefly wartime British editions.....

"Chiefly"!! That meant he had at least one American edition. It might even be February 1947 with the second part of "Tomorrow & Tomorrow". We suggested a night and up he came. He turned out to be very tall, dark and gently mannered. (He still is, except when playing ghoddminton or writing about Chuck Harris.) He had not only a virtually complete file of BREs, but dozens and dozens of American editions. He was the reason we hadn't been able to find any in Belfast. He was the mysterious figure who had been in just a few minutes ago and bought them. James worked in the City Centre and spent his entire lunch time combing the second-hand shops.

For the next few months we read through each other's books and magazines and combined our collecting efforts. Through the advertisements in Fantasy we'd made contact with SF Service in Liverpool. We included each other's wants in our own lists and took turns to share the spoils. Later we saw an advertisement for something called the British Fantasy Library, and on 16th December 1947 I sent a stamped addressed envelope for particulars. We still had no idea that there was any such thing as fandom....in fact I don't remember any particular point in time at which I became consciously aware of its existence as an entity. Certainly I remembered vaguely reading in the 1930's letters from a fellow called Tucker and some talk about staples, but it never struck me as something anyone could join in. These people were too far away in space and time...the Astoundings and Amazings I was reading then were newstand returns shipped over as ballast, appearing in Woolworth's in tattered jumbles many months later. And though they were only 3d each I could never buy enough of them, even living on chocolate and walking home from school. No, all we were interested in at the time and for a long while to come, was getting more copies of the American Astounding.

The first letter I ever got from a fan was dated, neatly enough, 1st January,

1948. It was a brief scribble from one Ron Holmes of Liverpool, enclosing a mess of duplicated matter. There was a 'Booklist' and a 'Wrapper Supplement' (sic) containing apologies for the reproduction and for the delay in publication and for the non-appearance of the Christmas Card, and a complaint that half the members had failed to renew their subscription. At the time I didn't appreciate how completely typical this was. Another enclosure was the BFL Handbook, which had a potted history of British Fandom to date.....

During the ten years before World War II there was much activity among those interested in fantasy fiction...we recall such titles as Nova Terrae, Satellite, Fantast, New Worlds, Fido and Gargoyle.

But at the height of keen activity the war called away the enthusiasts, many never to return; fandom struggled for existence, then fell into a lethargy.

When it seemed that the star of fantasy was on the wane, a champion arose in Michael Rosenblum of Leeds, who formed the British Fantasy Society. Its purpose was to hold together the rapidly diminishing remnants of fandoms---and it succeeded.

The termination of hostilities found things somewhat different; the actual work of the Society was being done by four individuals only.... Officially the Society was wound up, but the two remaining enthusiasts combined the Library and "chain" into what is now known as the BFL. It is, perhaps, the last struggling effort of organised Fantasy Activity in this country; or the first brick of a new structure.

These two Last Fen were Ron Holmes and Nigel Lindsay. The roster of BFL members contained only eight names known to present-day fandom---Norman Ashfield, Rick Dalton, Charlie Duncombe, E.R. James, F.G. Rayer, Mike Rosenblum, Ken Slater and D.R. Smith--and of these only new member Ken Slater was to play a really important part in the revival of British Fandom. In fact he might almost be said to have revived British Fandom singlehanded. His Operation Fantast, the first issue of which appeared in September 1947, was the first British fanzine to appear for almost a year.

I got my own copy at about the same time as the Booklist: I can't remember whether it arrived separately or with the BFL mailing. It consisted of ten duplicated quarto pages containing an announcement on the lines of a military "Operational Order" about OF and its aims ("To encourage and promote greater interest and enthusiasm in sf...to complete our files of magazines with missing issues"...), extracts from correspondence between KFS and Carnell about the inordinate delay in the publication of New Worlds, an invitation for suggestions for new sources of power (this was the time of the fuel crises), reports of flying saucers, information about US sf mags, news items and ads. I really don't remember what I actually thought about it at the time: probably I just accepted it, having no standard of comparison. Anyway this man had magazines I wanted; obviously I should try to get into his good books. I wrote my first fan letter....

Dear Mr. Slater:

You haven't heard from me before as I am just a new member of the BFL....I received Operation Fantast No.1 only a few days ago which is why I'm so late in replying to it. However may I say that I found it very interesting indeed---I hope you will be turning out further issues.

I have been reading science fiction myself since about 1934....

I went on to ask him for the '46 & '47 Asfs he'd advertised for sale and finished up by throwing in a quote from Wireless World about electronics and space flight which I thought he might be interested in, and a request to be told if he knew of any other fans in Belfast.

I got a business-like reply dated 3rd January mostly about the mags he was sending,

apologising for not being able to write more at present, and adding that he didn't know of any other fans in Belfast. Since he'd just sent an unsolicited copy of OF to James White, my opinion of the efficiency of his organisation sank a little. However I thanked him sincerely for the mags he'd sent, told him the story Conklin was asking about in the preface to his Best of SF was Taine's White Lily, and sent him a longer Want List.

There didn't seem to be anything more to do. For the next few months I paced up and down on the fringes of fandom, pestering Ken and SF Service for the mags I wanted, comparing notes with James and making out checklists with little squares for each issue so that I could have the lustful pleasure of filling them up when I got the magazines. James, who has an orderly mind, went even further. He kept a book listing the stories, authors and cover artists of every Astounding he'd got, and knew the lot off by heart. We still had no particular desire to write to other fans, unless it could help us fill the gaps in our collections. If this seems unhealthy, remember that we were starved for sf. For years we'd been subsisting on the meagre Atlas quarterly reprint. We'd try to read them slowly, counting the pages left, or save them up for a special treat, and then read them again and again. These American editions were a glimpse of paradise for us, and we had succumbed to collecting mania in the worst possible way. And make allowances for the fact that what little we'd seen of fandom...and indeed what fandom there was at the time, for our kind of fandom wasn't really in existence then...had little appeal for us. We didn't feel ourselves a part of it, any more than we identified ourselves with the dealers we wrote to.

The December OF, No.2, came out towards the end of January. As well as some fan fiction, a poem by Rayer and some articles with rather more merit, it carried the addresses of some American fans. I wrote to one Paul Doerr, who wanted to trade US for British mags, and to David MacInnes, who offered free copies of his fanzine Necromancer and who I thought might be interested in trading too. Also in the issue was a report by KFS on a visit he'd made to London: he had met Ken Chapman, Ted Carnell, Walter Gillings, Charlie Duncombe, Eric Williams, Fred Brown and others, and discussed among other things a possible revival of the British Fantasy Society round some sort of London organisation. He evidently hadn't got much encouragement.

On 25th January, KFS sent out a circular with the news that he was being posted overseas, but that OF would continue operating with the help of a Miss Joyce Teagle, the girl he'd left behind him. There was also a news item: Ron Holmes was going into hospital.

This left Britain without a single active fan. (Except perhaps for Nigel Lindsay, who was still carrying on the work of the BFL Chain Magazine scheme with quiet efficiency.) However KFS soon demonstrated that mere exile to Germany couldn't remove him from the fan scene. Another OF duly appeared in March. There was a letter from one James Grimes bitterly bemoaning the lassitude of the membership of the BFL, and a complementary one from Fred Brown explaining patiently that the London fans ("The LONDON CIRCLE, if you must have a name for us.") did NOT want to form a club. This was the first round in a long, long struggle.

More important to me than OF, as it turned out, was one of its enclosures...the first issue of Norman Ashfield's "Alembic". It was just two duplicated foolscap pages, stapled together in the top lefthand corner. It was this that started me off as a fanzine publisher, for Madeleine held it up and said, "Surely you could do better than that!"; and I thought maybe I could. I hope this doesn't hurt Norman's feelings. It wasn't that we had such a contempt for 'Alembic', it was rather that it was more our sort of thing than OF had been. OF had had news items and all sorts of proper magazine stuff, whereas 'Alembic' was just comments and general talk by Norman. Besides this was only the second fanzine I'd seen, and it made me realise that there

was no closed shop. (I was of course getting Walter Gillings' Fantasy Review but that was professionally printed and, I thought, professionally written. Gillings never answered my letters and his contributors were all strange names: I assumed they were all august literary figures, whereas of course they were actually pseudonyms for ordinary fans.)

I wrote Norman a letter of comment, in which I made my first joke in fandom. "I notice these flying utensils have been reported from Italy: I wonder what they're seeing in the Plains of Lombardy?" This was a pretty sad joke, but no worse than the draft first issue of our fmz which I eventually came up with. I finally got a friend in the office to type it out for me, and it worked out to three closely typed pages of foolscap, in a form which I now recognise as that of a column. It started off...

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Way back in the bad old days when Asimov was just a name in Brass Tacks and Van Vogt had not yet found his vocation, all an author needed was an idea, and the more fantastic the better: as long as he destroyed a few million people or a universe or two and made everything come all right in the end by marrying hero to heroine he didn't even have to worry about style. As for science, it was enough to mention rheostats or coils occasionally or possibly to wedge in a slab of impressive jargon which the morons could conveniently skip, flattered at the thought that they were supposed to understand it. This was known as the educative value of science fiction.

and continued thus for almost a page, followed by other shorter items of comment and 'news'. One, headed "Sykes Seeks Soaked Civilisation", was about a certain Egerton Sykes who had according to the press formed an "Atlantis Research Group" for underwater exploration. This same Sykes, who was continually being reported as being about to go to Mount Ararat to look for the remains of the Ark, was to make a brief but stormy appearance in fandom before long. There was also a dig at Hubbard and a little article about bookbinding, based on my own attempts to bind my little collection of Asfs. Hardly any of this stuff ever saw print.

Meanwhile the April 1948 Booklist unexpectedly came out, Ron Holmes having been discharged from hospital. It mentioned that one Tony Young would be enclosing a sheet with the next mailing. With excessive delicacy I wrote to him that I'd meant to do the same and would he like me to hold mine up so as not to queer his pitch. He replied sensibly "The more the merrier", so we went on with our plans.

By now I'd had replies from Doerr and MacInnes. Neither was particularly chatty, but Doerr suggested I join the NFFF and MacInnes (who at that time had the superbly science-fictional address of "Mars Estates, Baltimore") sent me a copy of *Necromancer*, the third fanzine I'd seen. I still have it, because for some time I filed any fmz I received along with my correspondence, but I don't recall that I was particularly impressed. It was very much a science fiction fanzine, which was all right by me at the time, but it was mostly about American sf which I'd never seen. All I was interested in was ASF. Even the fanzine we planned to put out was primarily intended to increase our net for pulling in the back issues we wanted.

When I'd got the draft typed up I made enquiries as to how much it would cost to have it professionally duplicated. Then the project was quietly abandoned. Until one afternoon a week or so later I happened to call on a friend who worked in a chemist's shop. I went up to the attic to help him sort out the junk while we were talking, and I came across an odd looking metal box festooned with levers. It was a little printing press the boss had bought ages ago to run off billheads, and then dumped in the attic and forgotten. I borrowed it and smuggled it out under my coat, along with a composing stick and all the type we could find. There proved to be

enough only to set up $2\frac{1}{2}$ lines, but I wanted to see if the machine worked before I bought any more, so I sent away the roller to the makers (Adana Ltd.) to be recovered.

While we were waiting, OF No.4 came out, dated June 1948, closely followed by the July 1948 BFL Booklist. This was an Emergency Issue, leading off with the following editorial:

Since the conception of the Library I have struggled against adverse circumstances, blow after blow has rocked me, unemployment, illness and many other misfortunes, the latest of which---I need not give details---has finally broken up my existence. I am almost on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and I look to the members to return, in what measure they can, the thirty odd hours per week I have lavished upon them during the last three years. Primarily, I need your co-operation in having all items borrowed returned to me by August 1st. I need someone to take over the Library temporarily until I am on my feet again. I need money and request that those interested in the items I have for sale respond quickly. To those who have the power; can you get me a decent job, anywhere?

I wrote him a sympathetic letter, but I'm afraid that, vulture-like, I was really more interested in the Asfs he had for sale; not that I got any of them. Ron Holmes was never heard from again.

This Booklist also carried a second reference to the BFL Directory of Anglo-fandom, a mysterious Necronomicon-like document which had a curious history. The previous Booklist had said it was now available. This one formally blacklisted one Thomas MacDonald of Carlisle, who had "promised to print it but had not returned the material or answered our letters".

Round about this time there arrived "Whitconzine", a report of an informal one-day Convention held in the White Horse on 15th May, 1948. It was in this I first saw the name of A. Vincent Clarke. He had a long, serious and comprehensive report of the affair, which had apparently been attended by some 50 or 60 fans, almost all from the London area. It had been organised by one John Newman, and the platform party was Walt Gillings (Chairman), A. Bertram Chandler, Ken Chapman, Ted Carnell, John Newman & Arthur C. Clarke. Attendees included Bill Temple, Daphne Bradley (later to become Daphne Buckmaster), Sandy Sandfield, Ted Tubb and Ken Johnson from the North.

The Whitconzine included also an article by Ted Tubb called "The Need For Organisation", in which he appealed to the younger fans to show what they could do. Ken Slater had been present at the Whitcon only in spirit, having sent along £2 for drinks, but on 1st August he issued a circular headed "The Time Has Come" in which he put forward proposals for a national fan organisation. There would be a series of levels, from single fans through town or area groups, county representatives, regional representatives, etc., culminating in a Council. Each fan would register his abilities and resources with the next higher formation and orders from the Council would be transmitted to him through this chain. (All it needed was a uniform and a Fieldmarshal.) Ken himself didn't want to be more than a fairly active member.

I wrote offering to help, but suggesting that if the chain of command broke down the rank and file fans would be left in the air and that it would be simpler to have communications issue direct from the Council to everyone than have stencils cut all over the country. On 15th September KFS issued another circular saying that sufficient enthusiasts had come forward to form at least the nucleus of a Society. There would be a Conference in London on 26th September and an open meeting at the White Horse on 9th October.

Meanwhile our roller had come back and we'd tested the machine. It printed. I

hadn't much faith in Adana so I took down a couple of letters from our little supply of type to a printer's supply house in Belfast and ordered half a font of the same. When it arrived it was nothing like the stuff we had, being a very bold condensed type, but we figured it would be stronger. Anyway we were too keen to get started to have any more delay. We had set up about half a page when the 'i's gave out. I reworded the editorial to reduce the incidence of 'i's---this was to become standard practice---but that still gave us only a few extra lines. Here it was that James leapt into the breach by volunteering to do woodcuts to fill up the page. All we knew about woodcuts was that you got them by cutting wood, but James set to determinedly with plywood and a razor blade and produced results that we thought were wonderful. This was the origin of James' famous wood and linocuts, which were the most remarkable phenomena in the history of fan art. He did a symbolic cover showing a spaceship and an open book (a more polished version of which I still use on my posh notepaper), which nearly led to our first editorial argument. He had been to immense pains to carve out a border for the picture; I thought it looked more tasteful without it and persuaded him to chop it off. I was backed by Dick Merritt, a friend of mine who was mildly interested in sf and who'd come in on the fanzine project. Before the first issue was completed he moved to England and we eventually lost touch with him.

On 20th September I wrote to John Gunn in Nottingham, who KFS had told me had taken over the BFL, to say that we were producing a fanzine and could he let us know his next mailing date. He replied on the 23rd that he was sending out an emergency issue next week, and the deadline for the following one would be 15th October. By 11th October Slant 1 was ready and Gunn still hadn't sent out his emergency issue. I wrote to him asking if Slant could go out with it. He ignored my letter and distributed his emergency booklist on 20th October. I wrote to him the day I got it asking for his next mailing date and offering to pay part of the mailing costs. He ignored this too and sent out another Booklist on the 9th November. I wrote to him again more in sorrow than in anger, offering to send out the next mailing for him. We would have sent out Slant on our own, except that we didn't have any addresses. The Emergency Booklist had announced, with apologies to MacDonald, that the BFL Directory of Anglofandom was a splendid job and now in circulation, and copies could be obtained from the Editor. But neither money nor entreaties could produce anything from Gunn but booklists.

So by the time Christmas was near we had been sitting on our first fanzine for over two frustrating months, and our first creative pride had cooled to misgivings. Viewed dispassionately, it wasn't much to look at...three folded foolscap sheets, saddle-stitched to make a twelve page magazine...and there weren't any big names in the contributors. In fact there weren't any names at all, since there weren't any contributors. As well as the editorial (in which it was mentioned that the name of the magazine had been chosen by sticking a pin in the dictionary and choosing the second word thus impaled---the first had been "pamphrey", a kind of cabbage), I had written two columns, a story which was pretty poor as a story but which contained a gimmick which still hasn't been used by anyone else and still seems pretty good to me, a little article called "Telekinesis and Buttered Toast" which was supposed to be deadpan funny and two bits of satirical verse written expressly to fill up spaces of a certain size. After all these years I can at last (I think) look at it quite objectively, and on the whole I suppose it wasn't bad for two inexperienced neofen, considering the standards of fandom at the time. It suffered from a certain lack of intimacy as well as naivete, but then we didn't know any of the people we were sending it to...and in any case printing is an inhibiting medium for spontaneity, when you are setting the type yourself.

In any case, whatever our private doubts....and we never expressed them to each other....the thing represented such a colossal expenditure of time and trouble that we had to go on believing in it. The thought that we'd wasted some 100 hours of

backbreaking toil was too horrible to contemplate. So we continued week after week and month after month impatiently watching the post and thinking hard thoughts about John Gunn.

On Christmas Day a parcel and a letter arrived. The parcel contained nearly 200 copies of the December Booklist---two quarto sheets starting off: "Hi Members! Here's Booklist once again, with my very best wishes for a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year....Walter Willis and his gang in Belfast are distributing Booklist this month so that they can include their own production of a fan mag...." We thought ruefully it was a bad start for Slant that we should get the blame for holding up the Booklist till after Christmas. The letter said: "Herewith the new edition of Booklist, which has just arrived to hand, and I am bundling it off to you rightaway." There was also more about the mysterious document.....

I am also enclosing the only copy of the Directory of Anglo-fandom in existence, so please don't lose it.

There was neither stamps nor money enclosed, and indeed we never did get any recompense for the cost of the mailing, but it didn't matter anyway because there was no postal collection until after Boxing Day. We spent most of the intervening time writing addresses and sticking wrappers for about 150 people---the 49 noted as fully paid-up members of the BFL plus 101 others chosen more or less at random---and on 27th December, 1948, the first fanzine ever published in Ireland was released on an unsuspecting fandom.

2

At the end of our last thrilling instalment our two innocent neofen, Walter Willis and James White, had just sent out their first fanzine....a little twelve-page affair called Slant, hand printed on a junked machine....and were anxiously awaiting developments.

The first one was a copy of Slant returned through the post. This was all right though--it was a copy I had mailed to myself to check that the mailing would get through in spite of its defying the postal regulations. I opened it and read it through, trying to put myself in the mental attitude of a stranger. I don't know if you ever do this, but anything I publish I can read over and over again from differing points of view: when I'm not pressed for time and when, as sometimes happens, it's something I like myself, I often read through the copies going to various people... Grennell's copy, Ken's copy, Russell's copy....seeing each one afresh from a different aspect. This time the synthetic stranger thought Slant #1 wasn't too bad.

The first outside reaction was from the nearest English fan to us, T.L.MacDonald of Carlisle, the same one who had been so mysteriously concerned with the non-printing of the illusory BFL Directory of AngloFandom. It wasn't a comment though, or even a letter, just a few lines of verse in answer to some of mine about the pronunciation of van Vogt. For the first taste of egoboo we had to wait another day, and it came from one Raymond Bailey of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. His momentous letter began:

I thoroughly enjoyed every word of Slant...the illustrations were very good...

As well as this heady stuff he sent some stamps to help with production costs, so there could be no doubt he meant it. Bailey has vanished from the fan scene these many years, but I hope he somehow sees this and realises we're still grateful. For days afterwards we lived in a rosepink cloud.

During the next few weeks we got some ten other letters, all more or less

appreciative. They converted us from amateur publishers to fans. The writers were people called Medcalf, Fears (who started "Dear Mr. Wallis", enclosed a copy of Science Fantasy News #1 and invited me to join the SFS, of which I was already a member), Gunn, Bell, Hillman, Jackson, Walker, Kerr and Clarke. Clarke was the A. Vincent Clarke who had reported the Whitcon and whose address appeared to be the source of SFN (no editor was named). He was obviously a serious thoughtful type and his 2½ page letter was much the best we got. If the present day Vinz will forgive me, I'll quote...

Dear Walter:

Many thanks for 'Slant'1. It was a complete suprise (sic. Vinz has always had trouble with that word), and its printing rather shook me after having been struggling with the rudiments of duplicating, in helping to turn out SFN No.1. It must have taken you an awfully long time to do, but it certainly looks better than a mimeographed mag.

When we were discussing the possible name of SFN, I believe 'Slant' was mentioned as a possibility, but as we all had names that we thought were good, we settled on the prosaic 'SFN' as favouring no one. 'S's s-f-ish ring is probably due to the 'Slan' part.

....Well, as to general criticism, I like the layout, and the woodcuts haven't come out at all badly---the cover's good. Tell James White to watch that tendency, in a lefthanded person, to draw spaceships with their noses pointing right (left on the copy). Or am I wrong? If all one needs is some plywood and a razor blade I must see what I can do! I seem to recognise the illustration at the end of the story---Uranus eclipsing the Sun, is it not?

I like your sense of humour as exhibited in the Editorial and the bits of terse verse (or terse Erse verse), but would have preferred a serious treatment of the telekinesis theme.....

....Well, as you will have gathered, I think you've put up a pretty good show for a nearly one-man effort---I shouldn't make it too much of a one-man show if you can help it however, and pu-leese don't have too much facetious comment.

Good luck and good reading,
A.Vincent Clarke

He was wrong about James being lefthanded and we thought he was a little solemn to have taken seriously our pretended ignorance of 'Slan', but it was a very intelligent letter and we felt the future of the SFS was in safe hands.

But Ken Slater didn't seem quite so confident. This first issue of SFN had apparently come out just in time to avert an explosion from Germany, where KFS had been pacing up and down impatiently like an expectant father. In OF, dated December 1948, he had rumbled:

By the time this page gets out, I hope the SFS have produced their first newssheet. It is intended that this be sent out every six weeks....But, my friends, I am not running the Society, and I hope you will all join me in chivvyng, in a friendly spirit, the committee when they seem to be, er, not showing any action. First issue of the News Sheet was due before Christmas....have you had it yet? (And on the back cover.) To date, I have not had any more news about our lil' club... hope the Committee haven't started to hibernate....someone down in the South of England give 'em a nudge for me please.

However he can have had little fault to find with SFN itself. The editorial said earnestly:

It is intended that this magazine shall provide a common meeting ground for all lovers of science, weird and fantastic literature. In it, all are invited to air their views, opinions, likes and dislikes, for it is our magazine.

This was followed by a long article by Ken Slater about the history of British fan organisations and the aims of the SFS, and 3 pages of news and reviews. The names of the SFS Committee were given as Fears (Secy.), Plumridge (Treasurer), Clarke, Clay, Duncombe, Newman and Slater. In accordance with Ken Slater's draft constitution, all communications to them about the Society from ordinary members were to go to the Regional Secretaries, whose addresses were listed.

Shortly afterwards I heard from my own Gauleiter, one Peter Bell of Glasgow. He was "glad to see that we've got such a flourishing fmz going in our group already." I eagerly offered to help by printing announcements and advertisements, but heard nothing further until February, when Bell apologised for the delay, but he had "been engaged in trying to form a fan group here in Glasgow." I had a brief mental picture of Peter wandering the streets of Glasgow ringing his bell and accosting passers-by.

Spring brought a minor renaissance in British fan publishing. There was the first issue of 'Wonder', by Mike Tealby of Leicester, an SFN Bulletin announcing a one-day Convention in London at Easter, SFN 2 with six pages of news and reviews including the very first published egoboo for Slant ("an interesting little affair") and the news that Ted Tubb had replaced John Newman on the SFS Committee, another 'Alembic', an OF Trading Supplement and another SFMinor acknowledging the loan of a rotary duplicator from Ken Slater. Previously SFN had been run off on a flatbed... if the word "run" can ever be used in connection with a flatbed. Just as a matter of interest, the current US fanzines round about this time included Liebscher's 'Chanticleer', Burbee's 'Shangri L'Affaires', Sneary's 'Gripes & Groans' and Rapp's 'Spacewarp'. I didn't see any of these until much later of course...this list was from an N3F leaflet. Eva Firestone had inducted me into the organisation by offering to pay my dues by way of a subscription to Slant and sending me an application form. I was too busy assembling material for Slant 2 to pay much attention.

I wrote again to the "C.Walker" who had commented on Slant 1, now identifying him as the Cedric Walker who had had a good little story in OF. He had offered to send material, otherwise I wouldn't have dared: at the time I was doubtful about the ethics of such matters. In fact I had written to Mike Tealby for advice....

...what are the ethics of this contributor business? I mean do you think other fanzine editors would think it a low act if you wrote to people whose work you admired in their zines and asked them for a contribution. Stealing authors? Would be glad to know what you think...Particularly interested in Newman and Ridley.

Mike's reply was evasive....I think he was trying to hold onto his own authors.

I also wrote to Wilkie Conner of North Carolina, whose name had been given to me by N3F Welcommittee member Zeda Mishler as a willing contributor, but my main hope was Clive Jackson. His letter of comment on Slant 1, written on 9th January 1949, had read:

Dear Walter:

This is just a brief note in appreciation of your brain-child, Slant. I'm not a fan of long standing or great experience, but I think your 'zine is a praiseworthy effort. The only fault that I can find with it, an unavoidable one, is that there isn't enough of it. The part I liked best was "Telekinesis and Buttered Toast"---did you write it, I wonder, or was it some other lunatic?

From the slender evidence of this first paragraph I deduced that here was a kindred spirit and eagerly took him up on his suggestion that he might supply material. Having heard nothing further, I wrote again in May and got back almost immediately

a brilliant little Bradbury pastiche called "The Still Small Voice", which was subsequently to see republication in prozines, books and newspapers. I also got a nice little story from Walker, who was a much more solemn type and abhorred my attempts at humour, but the approach to Conner hadn't been so rewarding. He had sent me an article about trends in American sf which I thought was wordy and trite. (There's nothing like setting type by hand to give you a respect for brevity.) I held onto it until Slant 2 was finished and then plucked up the courage to return it on the grounds that I hadn't been able to fit it in and that anyway most British fans knew about American sf: I suggested something about US fans and fan doings would be more acceptable. Because of the length of time it took to produce an issue of Slant we were stuck with fiction for most of the contents, but I still wanted some gossip stuff.

Another thing that worried me a lot about this time was a solicited contribution from Frank Cooper of London, who ran a bookshop and library and had some connection with Nova Publications, and was therefore a person of awe-inspiring importance. This was the time just after Fantasy Review had published a translation of the notorious article in the Russian Literaturnaya Gazeta attacking American science fiction, the reverberations of which have still not quite died down. Everyone assumed only too readily that the Russian article meant that sf was proscribed in the Soviet Union, but I knew this wasn't so. According to Ashby's book "A Scientist in Soviet Russia" science fiction was very popular in Russia and there was even a special section of the Soviet Writers' Praesidium devoted to it. But unfortunately this was all I knew. I tried to get further information by writing to the British-Soviet Friendship Society, but they never replied. So I wrote Frank Cooper, who had seemed to be the only pro-Soviet contributor to the discussion in Fantasy Review, and invited him to state his case in Slant. Unfortunately his article didn't seem to me to be up to much. I tried rewriting it, but when I'd finished the result bore so little resemblance to what Cooper had written that I didn't dare print it. After a lot of mental anguish I guiltily returned Cooper's article. After that I took care to solicit material only from people I was pretty sure would come up with the sort of thing I wanted.

By the 13th May 1949, Slant 2 was nearly finished and I wrote to Vincent Clarke asking him for the next SFN mailing date. We had to have some two weeks notice because it would take that long to set up and run off the last few pages with news and Peter Bell's SFS advertisements and other perishable stuff. Clarke had invited me to send out Slant with SFN and I was only too willing to save the postage and trouble: anyway the list of SFS members published in SFN hadn't given any addresses so I'd no choice.

By the end of May I'd received no reply, so I wrote again. Another month passed. In desperation I appealed to Frank Fears. He didn't answer either. I was furious. Here we were kicking our heels again for months, just like last time. I wasn't going to stand for it. On 7th July I wrote a registered letter to Clarke and sent copies to Fears and Plumridge....

Dear Vincent:

I suppose that since my letters of the 13th and 31st may remain unanswered there is very little point in writing to you again, but I feel I should give you a final opportunity to reply.

If I don't hear from you by the 15th July I don't see what else I can do but print the enclosed explanation and send out Slant No.2 myself.

I must say that this has been a great disappointment to me. I could understand it if you had thought Slant not worthy of SFS distribution---though I have already told you that the second issue is a considerable improvement.

PS. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

Note the undertones of hurt pride and insecurity. The awful Special Announcement ran as follows. (The first sentence refers to the note "Issued free to all members of the British Science Fantasy Society.")

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The reference on the contents page to the SFS is no longer applicable. As far as Slant is concerned the SFS has apparently ceased to exist. Letters to Vincent Clarke and Frank Fears over the last two months have failed to elicit even the courtesy of an acknowledgement. Accordingly, as I have been unable to obtain even a list of SFS members, this issue of Slant is being sent out only to people on my own mailing list and at my own expense, as was No. 1. (Note the sideways swipe at John Gunn. I was right in there, bitching.)

If circumstances remain unchanged future issues of Slant will be distributed in the same way. If the SFS has really folded we will be happy to offer our facilities to other fanzine editors on a co-operative basis by providing regular quarterly mailings for their own productions. Our present circulation is 240.

This got results. Both Plumridge and Clarke replied by return of post. Plumridge sent the list of SFS addresses and promised to refund our postage on sending out Slant separately if we hadn't heard from AVC by the 15th. He himself hadn't heard from him in weeks and thought he must be ill. He hoped the 'Special Announcement' wouldn't be necessary.

Vince's letter was contrite and poignant, and enclosed a copy of the new SFN, No.3. There was, surprisingly, a reference to Slant in the editorial...."We are hoping to include the second Slant with SFN 4; Walt Willis, editor of this printed fanzine has been ready to produce for some time, but not knowing when this SFN (which sets the date-line for the next) would appear, we have not been able to contact him about it."

The reasoning behind this explanation confused me somewhat, but Vince's letter threw some light on it, even if it didn't make it look any more logical.

The trouble has been caused by the fact that up to the present, the SFNews, and most active administration by the Committee has involved yours truly as the most active agent.....Unfortunately...if anything happens to me the whole business is kaput for a time. (He went on to explain that he had been under the weather for a while.) I suppose the best thing would have been to have posted off some of the work to other fans with typewriters, but I foolishly credited myself with more energy and spare time than I actually possessed, and thought I could manage it myself. At the moment, I'm looking for another job and lodgings away from home (these lodgings turned out to be the famous Epicentre), which also complicates things.

....I never dreamed that this SFN would take so long to prepare. I thought it would be out at least five weeks ago, when I could have sent you the informationIf you would overlook my rudeness and send Slant along whenever it's ready, I'll push it out whether there is anything to accompany it or not....

As you see, from the enclosed, I haven't been exactly idling my time away, in spite of everything. I've duplicated 130 SFN 3s, 150 new membership forms, 100 odd copies of the 'Introduction', 170SFNMinors, all of which I stencilled, and have also turned out, with help, 50 of the "Hints on Stencilling" which were stencilled rather badly by Ken Slater....Happy, carefree days!

I reflected ruefully how much trouble would have been saved if some of this energy had been devoted to the writing of one postcard, but I was learning, the hard way, that fandom has different standards from the Civil Service. We set to and

finished off Slant (without the special announcement) and sent it out ourselves, with a friendly postcard to Vince. Yes, I even kept copies of postcards....didn't I tell you I was in the Civil Service? Look:

Dear Vincent:

Thanks very much for your letter. What a relief! Was afraid I was going to be left high and dry. You seem to have got enough to do at the moment so I'm sending out Slant myself. Hope you like it. Am sending out another 160 to other people---BFL members, Americans, etc. If you like, let me have some of those SPS brochures and I'll send them with it. You seem to have had a poor time of it lately---hope you're feeling better.

As you can see, I was already beginning to acquire the attitude of affectionate tolerance which enabled me to remain friends with those unreliable but likeable Londoners throughout the years.

Slant 2 had 26 pages and a cover woodcut by James showing a helicopter dropping flares on a wrecked spaceship, a scene from the Cedric Walker story chosen because it was all sharp angles and highlights and had lots and lots of black. (In a woodcut, white is work.) We innocently thought Walker would be overcome at "getting the cover", and such a wonderful cover too, but he seemed to take it quite calmly. As well as the Jackson and Walker stories there was one by me with a highly complicated plot related with such regard for brevity as to amount to little more than a synopsis, an allegedly humorous story about how an underground railway tunnel through the centre of the Earth foundered in a pool of Universal Solvent, a short short ghost story (which was later to have the rare distinction of being reprinted in a US hectoed fanzine called "The Purple Bem"), a column called "The Prying Pan" (an allusion to Merwin's "The Frying Pan") and the editorial. None of these had my name on them except the long story (well, it must have been all of 2500 words), which I was very proud of at the time. Having set it up in type letter by letter I could see all the subtleties and profundities quite clearly, and was quite disappointed when readers complained it was hard to follow. I read it just now and damned if I can make head or tail of it myself. However it was a pretty wonderful magazine, we thought at the time.

James and our original co-founder Dick Merritt, by then in England, had been rather disappointed in the response to Slant 1. A dozen letters seemed poor return for six weeks spare time. However, I'd been pleased that even twelve people had taken the trouble to write, and since it was obvious that Slant 2 was several times better than Slant 1, we were happily confident that the response would be more than twice as good. Alas for the innocent hopes of neofans. Two weeks after the mailing I was unburdening myself on Clive Jackson....

Maybe you'll be surprised at my answering your letter (received today) so soon, but don't feel yourself rushed. It's just that I'm all keyed up for writing long letters ever since Slant went out and haven't been given the opportunity. After No. 1 went out there were about a dozen nice commentful letters like yours from various people and I expected to get more this time, in the proportion that No.2 was better than No.1. But NO. We got about half a dozen straight off from people who confessed to having read nothing but the 'For Sale' ads and couldn't wait to get their hands out. Two or three from dim but well-meaning types who "haven't had time to read the mag yet" but were very grateful. We were beginning to think that nobody would read it. Finally two letters from semi-illiterates, or possibly elementary school children, also about the ads, but saying also a few ill chosen words about the mag....And that's all so far. Very disappointing. But I suppose a lot of people are on holiday and anyway I sent nearly as many to America as to England this time.

The US recipients were mainly picked at random from the N3F membership list, and all the officers of that noble organisation.

It wasn't as if there was nothing going on in British fandom at the time. SFN3 had had a report by Plumridge on the 1949 Loncon, a one-day affair that ground on right to 10.30 in the evening. Familiar names there included Gillings, Temple, AV & AC Clarke, Laurence Sandfield, Daphne B., Ted Tubb and Derek Pickles. Ted Carnell was absent, suffering from vaccine fever contracted as part of the preliminaries for his visit to the Convention later that year.

In July the first printed OF came out and I wrote Ken Slater 2½ pages of enthusiastic comment. Ken replied commenting on my comments but failing to refer to Slant. This was a pattern that was repeated for quite a while, until I stopped commenting on OF. At the time we suspected he was peeved at our having beaten him to the post in the matter of printing (we didn't consider Fantasy Review a fanzine) but probably he just didn't care much for Slant, an idea that was inconceivable to us at that stage. His published comments were usually to the effect that it must mean a terrible lot of work and we were rather to be pitied: this used to annoy us quite a lot, because our subconscious agreed that we were mugs. Besides, Ken had his own worries. At this point he had spent £25 for 1000 copies and got in 20 subscriptions.

The gloom of the rest of July and part of August was relieved by short but kind letters from Mike Rosenblum and Ted Tubb, but that was all. I wrote to Mike Tealby commenting on Wonder 2, ready to share our woes, but he replied disgustingly cheerfully that he had got much more comment on his second issue than on his first. He thought it might be because he charged a subscription rate.

But on 11th August the tide turned, because on that day we got a letter from the fabulous Forry Ackerman: "Hello Walt---I set the brand new TWS aside to glance thru Slant 2, got interested in reading the contents. "The Still Small Voice" is "Ray" markably Bradburyesque (My Ghod, eight years and I set it up in type, and I've just noticed that's a pun!) and I'm sure my friend Ray would be amused to have a copy ..." In 1952 in Los Angeles Bradbury was to tell me he'd got that copy and commented on it, but I never got his letter. Forry went on to express interest in the Walker story also from the agenting point of view and asked for 25 copies of the magazine, offering a promag per copy. He also sent a story of his own for us and said he was asking his client E.E.Evans to send us one too.

This was by far the most wonderful thing that had happened to us and I wrote post-haste to Jackson and Walker with the great news. By this time I was carrying on a close correspondence with both of them and had invited them over to visit us. Walker's plans fell through, but Jackson came over for a week or so towards the end of August.

His visit was something of a disappointment. This was our very first meeting with another fan and we'd been expecting too much. We'd innocently assumed that Jackson would sparkle continuously, like he did in his letters, which were witty, fluent and sophisticated. Instead he was quiet, almost lethargic. We liked him, but conversation after the first few hours was full of embarrassing lulls. I hadn't yet realised that for bright conversation you need between four and eight people.

There was also the affair of the abortive ascent of the Cave Hill. This is a mountain just outside Belfast, about 1100 feet high and very steep on one side. It's a popular walk for Belfast people, at least those who live on James's side of the city---I'd climbed most of the prominent mountains in Ireland but never even been on this one. James, acting as guide, scorned the easy path and led us up the steep face of the mountain. We soon found ourselves in a forest of fir trees growing at

an acute angle from a wet and slippery slope, so that the only way you could make progress was in a series of desperate lunges from one tree to another, throwing your arms around the trunk until you found a secure foothold for the next lurch. By this method we traversed back and forth until we were about halfway up, and then Clive went all white and shivery and sat down, clinging to a tree. We thought he was probably scared, but we didn't like to appear to assume that, with him being in the RAF and everything, so we all passed it off as a sick turn. I told James the route was too difficult for me anyway and he agreed he'd been foolish to try it in wet weather and we made our way down again shortly with, we hoped, our visitor's face saved. It was a trivial and silly affair but I've felt ever since that it created a barrier between ourselves and Clive, us thinking he might be embarrassed or resentful, and suspecting he thought that we thought he was a coward. It would have been better if we'd been frank all round and laughed it off---after all there's nothing to be ashamed of in being allergic to heights even if you are in the RAF---but we were younger and less knowledgeable about people then and having once started on the path of insincerity we couldn't see any way to get off it and clear the matter up. The subject was never mentioned again..though for all I know Clive never gave it another thought. And I still haven't been up the Cave Hill: the highest point we now take visitors on the usual fan tour is the Tower of the Enchanted Duplicator, on a grassy hill on my side of Belfast. Though even there we had trouble with the ultra-urban Evelyn Smith and a stile...but that's a long way ahead yet.

Clive's visit was far from a total loss of course. We did have a lot of good talk, just not as much as we'd foolishly been expecting, and on his last night we kicked around various plot ideas, one of which was The Swordsmen of Varnis, which probably holds some sort of record for number of subsequent pro republications.

After the visitor had left I resumed my fanac. Arthur Rapp, then an N3F official, had started sending me Spacewarp: I wanted to go on getting it between issues of Slant, so I sent him a letter of comment, part of which he published. It was a very poor letter, but it was the first thing I ever had published in another fanzine. Having become an adherent of Roscoeism, the revelation of which was in the first Spacewarp I got, I asked for permission to reprint the Sacred Writings: and availed myself of it a mere seven years later.

Round about this time Wonder 3 came out, with probably the most hideous cover girl ever seen on a fanzine, even including Femizine. There was a story by Walker and an article in defence of the Shaver Mystery by Ron Deacon. There was also an editorial, which I read with mixed emotions...."In a letter to this address Walter A.Willis said that he was rather disappointed in the response to the second issue of Slant. Whatever the reason, I'm glad to say that such is not the case with Wonder. If you read Slant, drop Walt a line now and again...." It was nice of Mike, but I didn't want charity especially from what even then I regarded as a crudzine, though I probably didn't know the word then. This just about completed my disillusionment with British fandom and accelerated my tendency to turn towards American fandom which had been started by Forry's letter and Spacewarp. And by another great event of that month, a letter from Rick Sneary, already a legendary figure to me from his letters in promags. The one to me was a full two pages of interesting and sensible comments: it was the first real letter of comment we'd got on that second issue which we'd thought so wonderful, and I was so grateful I made him our first life subscriber. There was one thing, though, which I couldn't understand in his letter, the slogan at the end. I asked him about it. "What is the purport," I enquired, "South Gate In '58?"

Then, on 9th September 1949, came a letter which stopped me writing off British fandom...and indeed did as much to keep me in fandom as any single thing. It was 3½ handwritten pages from somebody called Bulmer, who was apparently now living with Vince Clarke at 84 Drayton Park, Highbury, London. It started off with

some enthusiastic praise of Slant, which was meat and drink to us, with a passing recommendation of an old mag called Zenith published by one Harry Turner, and then went on to technicalities...

I notice you used an ordinary M.F. Printing for the most of the mag with a centre of Cream Laid and it looks like 'Kingsclene' Cream Wove for the cover. For the M.F. the ink must have been too runny, for she shows through. Try an S.C. and see if you get better results---although an S.C. is hard on type face.

We didn't understand a word of this--we'd just been asking for 'paper'--but we were immensely impressed and felt quite proud of ourselves for using all that stuff he mentioned. After commenting on Slant in detail he went on to make a brief mention of his own activities...

....I've started a small effort called "Nirvana", to be increased later on--if enthusiasm and money permit--to a full size subscription magazine.

and then referred briefly to the enclosure, a story of his own called "Wishful Thinking" which he was submitting to Slant. We ran it in the next issue with the title changed to "Last Wish" because we hadn't got enough large letters for two long words like that. Any facility I have for thinking up titles can be traced back to early training in coping with such eventualities. Ken finished up in a blaze of glory---for us, that is:

If I do see it in No.3 Slant I'll know it's in good company in the best fmz in present existence.....I haven't seen Operation Fantast in its printed guise (or even duped) but I hear it's a flop....I gather you are in the trade---the whole atmosphere of Slant reeks of a professional job...

Naturally this unbounded enthusiasm for our poor little brainchild gave me a deep affection for this Ken Bulmer, but it's a feeling that a more adequate acquaintanceship with him has not diminished: quite the reverse. What he said may have been overly fulsome...we even thought so at the time...but it was nice of him to say it and take the trouble to give us some encouragement, which he must have guessed we needed. And I like people who can show enthusiasm and appreciation. Equanimity is a fine virtue, but as expressed through the mails is hard to distinguish from torpor. Anyhow, I like to think that the regard we felt for Ken after this letter wasn't just gratitude, but a subconscious appreciation of the kindness and sensibility I was to find in him when we really got to know one another.

I replied at once, in a letter I would quote if I could find the slightest trace of interest in it, but didn't hear again from Ken for a couple of months. Meanwhile I'd been looking for material from the N3F Manuscript Bureau and in October three pieces arrived from Wrai Ballard, who was running it at the time. There was a story by Wilkie Conner and a poem by Ed Ludwig, which I returned at once, and a piece by Bob Johnson (then publishing a fantastically ostentatious thing called ORB) and his girl Sandy Charnoff, which I returned to them for revision and never got back. I tried to explain my Editorial Policy..."I'd like Slant to be a bit more sophisticated---it's hard to avoid the word highbrow---than most fan magazines, so I'm looking for material that's original, off the beaten track. I don't mind if it's obscure or even queer, as long as it's intelligent and different...The trouble is that the people I'm after don't read fanzines, and don't think of writing for them, but I might get a few of them in time."

In the next instalment our sophisticated Hero, bless his little cotton socks, gets a typewriter, encounters Chuck Harris, and has other wonderful and terrible things happen to him. Will he survive?

As I would be very surprised if any of you remember, we left our heroes working like eager and inky beavers on the third issue of Slant. They were toiling in the shadow of a December 19th deadline, which had been given to them in the summer by Ted Tubb as the date of a bumper SFS mailing for Christmas. It was a deadline which as time went on seemed to exercise a hypnotic fascination on the whole of British fandom: like a hen hypnotised by a chalked line on the ground, they seemed unable to think of anything else. By the end of November there hadn't been an SFN for five months. Ken Bulmer wrote:

The idea was to have an ish out by now and a bumper Christmas number in the mails for the blokes to digest with their Christmas pud. I hope that still works out, but everything seems to have turned against us....

Vince has big plans to get out an SFN every month commencing with the New Year....

Vince himself explained:

The duplicator which Ken Slater loaned the SFS has turned out rather a disappointment (instead of reams of SFNews). We've had a lot of bother with it, scrapping finished stencils right and left, and in desperation Ken has gone and done it. Bought a Gestetner with automatic feed, automatic counter, and all one needs do (we hope) is turn a little handle like mad. If it works, the job of turning out a monthly News, which I was contemplating doing on Slater's cursed contraption, will be no bother at all.

.....This is The Epicentre (point around which things occur) signing off.

To my knowledge this was the first recorded use of The Epicentre as a name for 84 Drayton Park, one of the most famous fan addresses. It was neither the first nor the last mention of its Holy Grail, a monthly SFN. On December 9th I replied to Vince, in a letter which turned out to be prophetic in more ways than one...

I really am more pleased about the new duplicator than you would think--it's quite important for isolated fans like us to feel that there really is a live central organisation in being, and I've always been worried that it might fold and leave us high and dry. However there seems no danger of that with you people in charge...

....Why not a World Convention in London during the Festival of Britain? I've been thinking of starting a campaign for it, like Sneary's South Gate In 58 (but it's hard to think of a rhyme for London or 51). There has been some desultory talk among American fans about a World Convention in London, and there'll never be another opportunity like the Festival...

Meanwhile we'd been toiling away three nights a week on Slant, cheered up towards the end by a laudatory review of Slant 2 in Amazing which Wrai Ballard kindly typed out and airmailed over. The Heinlein novel "Gulf" had just appeared in Astounding and some things in it so annoyed me that my editorial boiled over: so I chopped the lot off and sent it along to Ted Tubb, who had just asked me for material for the Great Christmas SFN. This was the first time I'd ever submitted anything to another fanzine, for reasons which I'd earlier told Ken Bulmer when he asked me to do something for Nirvana...

....I'm a bit diffident about my own stuff; as long as it's only in Slant it's OK but I should hate to think it was cluttering up some other fanzine because the editor was too kindhearted.

I did make an offer later to write a regular column for SFN, but Vince ignored it.

The item in Slant 3 we were most proud of---justifiably, as it turned out---was Jackson's "Swordsmen of Varnis", but in our innocence we thought it was mostly pretty good. Apart from the stories by Ackerman and Evans, which I've already mentioned...we didn't think a lot of them but we were impressed by the Big Names and their generosity in sending them...there was the retitled story by Ken Bulmer, illustrated by James's first attempt at delineating--or delinoating---a human figure. (Through what he regarded as a grievous error on the part of the editorial department, the story contained no spaceships.) Since we now had enough material from outside I had thankfully given up trying to write fiction, but I'd used one of my plot ideas for a competition, giving the readers a situation and asking them to figure how it could have come about. (We got one entry.) It seemed to me at the time that it was far too corny and oldfashioned an idea to make a real story out of it, but five years later Fritz Leiber wrote the identical plot up in Galaxy and made a polished sophisticated job of it; which just shows that a good enough craftsman can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. I also had an editorial and a short column and some readers' letters (the real ones didn't seem lively enough)---and I had actually dreamed up a cartoon. I mean that literally--it came to me in a dream. It may not have been a very good cartoon but it was the first one we'd ever had. Besides I thought it was sort of interesting: you know the way you often write whole wonderful novels or direct film masterpieces in your mind while you're asleep, or solve the riddle of the Universe or something, but you never get any of it written down before you forget it. Well, this time I did get up and write it down. It wasn't the work of sheer genius I thought in my sleep, but it was all right for a filler and easy to cut in lino...a picture of a coffin with the caption, "The Case For Shaverism." The whole issue ran to 26 pages this time...most of them closely printed, since I'd now bought another half font of type...and represented several months of spare time.

The 26th page, the outside back cover, we had left until the very last because it was all news items and lists of the Astoundings we wanted or had for exchange. By Sunday 11th December, well on schedule, we had it provisionally set up and were running off a few advance copies for cash subscribers and other exceptional people ----when disaster struck.

The press we were using, the one I had smuggled out of the chemist's attic, was basically just a metal box. The type stood in the box itself and the paper was tucked inside the lid. To print you simply closed the box and applied pressure with a crude lever consisting of a handle with a sort of cam at the end. There had also been an arrangement whereby a roller was pulled back and forth from an inking plate on to the type, but we never used it because it didn't seem to ink properly. Instead we took it off and I inked the type while James worked the press: this division of labour was because James was bigger and I was nimbler. As I was rolling the roller on the type he was putting in the paper: as I was rolling the roller on the inking plate (we used a piece of glass on newspaper) he was bearing down on the lever: and as he was picking up another piece of paper I was plucking out the finished sheet. The degree of synchronisation required was nerve-wrecking but we used to work up to some remarkable--and dangerous--speeds. The reason the press's own inking system didn't work was one we didn't find out for a long time...that a printing press is not supposed to print a type area of much more than half the size of the area of the bed. Ours, on the other hand, was so full of type that we didn't even have room in the bed for the wedges (technically, quoins) that are used to tighten up the type so it all stands straight. Instead we used to hammer in little strips of metal until we couldn't force in any more. The power we had to use to print all this stuff--all bold type, too--was so colossal that the solid steel of the bed and platen had assumed a visibly curved shape.

However as I was saying we were running off a few advance copies of the last page. It was another closely printed one, and James was bearing down with all his

weight and strength, his 6'3" off the ground, when there was a sharp explosion, James collapsed on the floor and pieces of steel flew across the room like shrapnel. Madeleine came dashing up stairs to see what had happened. The lever had disintegrated. Haplessly we tried putting the press on the floor and standing on it, then jumping up and down on it, but all we got was a vague smudge. The pressure that lever exerted must have been almost inconceivable. No, we were finished: and the Great Deadline only a week away. That evening I wrote to Adana for a replacement lever and, knowing it wouldn't arrive in time if at all, to Ken Bulmer, special delivery, asking him to run off a substitute last page on his new Gestetner. We were downhearted. All that work, spoiled at the last moment...

My cry for help was just another complication in the already hectic situation at The Epicentre. I was by this time practically a part of the SFS directorate, the regional bureaucracy set up by Ken Slater having disintegrated, and in fact Slant was being subsidised by a couple of donations of £1 from the SFS funds by way of a bulk subscription...and I'd volunteered to send out the whole Christmas mailing from Belfast. Ghod knows why: partly out of innocent helpfulness I suppose and probably partly so I could make sure that the good copies of Slant went to the right people. Anyhow, it was a mistake. Vince and Ken were running around in circles wrapping up parcels for Belfast and consigning them to the bottomless pit of the Christmas mails wreathed in "Express" labels and following them with desperate notes of corrections, explanations of surpluses and deficiencies, detailed instructions, special instructions and amended special instructions all of which arrived before any of the parcels. In the middle of it all their stapler broke and they had to mail half the SFNs as loose sheets. Meanwhile I was scratching my head over the instructions, clearing the decks for action and worrying the already harassed officials at the GPO about the missing parcels. When they had all come it was quite impressive, like a football pool office on a Saturday morning. There were copies of the Gestetnered backcover of Slant, address labels, lists, Alembics, SFNs stapled and loose, Nirvanas, SFS Christmas Cards and BFL Newsletters. And of course Slants. The last consignment from The Epicentre arrived at 10.45am on the morning of Wednesday the 21st. I had taken a day's leave and had most of the mailing in the 2.45 collection the same afternoon. That included stapling SFN, assembling the mailing, wrapping up and gumming down 100 copies, sticking on sticky labels and then taking them off again and sticking them again with gum because they weren't sticky enough, amending addresses, putting on stamps and posting the lot in several different mail boxes.

I was quietly proud of this achievement, so different I thought smugly to myself from the slipshod ineffectiveness of The Epicentre's organisation, and it was unfortunate that the first reaction from Vince was an indignant outcry:

What the blank blank was the idea of not sending Slant out? You've got all the trouble of doing labels and stamping another hundred packets, as well as invalidating any good sending the stuff to you might have done in the first place! As it happens I'm darned glad I didn't put much about Slant in SFN...

(In fact he had put nothing.) This was an unfortunate misunderstanding, but the injustice rankled with me deeply for a long time. What had happened was that Vince had given me the wrong address for one Trevor Wilson, and his mailing had been returned to Vince, whose address was on it. It so happened that Trevor was one of that selfless dedicated group of suckers who had voluntarily subscribed to Slant, even though they would have got free copies as SFS members, and I had sent him one of the advance copies run off before the press broke. (Come to think of it, this must have been the reason I offered to send off the SFS mailing, so I could do things like this.) Vince didn't know Wilson's special status of course, and assumed I hadn't sent Slant to any of the SFS members.

Meanwhile Adana had replied to my appeal: the model hadn't been in production

since 1932 and they offered no help...typically. I took the remains of the old lever along to a neighbourhood blacksmith and the mighty man made a replacement out of iron. It kept bending under the strain and was never as efficient as the old one, but we were able to make a reasonable job of finishing up the Slants left over after the SF6 mailing.

Reaction to the 100 or so already sent out to British fandom had been very disappointing. Up to 2nd January 1950 we had had only 3 letters. As I wrote to Ken Bulmer: "Perhaps when a fanzine gets established no one bothers to write to the editor any more. If so, can't see Slant lasting much longer." At this I was better off than Ken Bulmer, who never received one single solitary letter of comment on the first issue of Nirvana. (Except, that is, from me, and one from Bob Shaw many years later, who wrote gravely that he had seen a copy soon after he came into fandom but that it had taken him all this time to understand the prose poem.) In the circumstances it was surprising that the reference to Nirvana in Slant 3 ("A fanmag with a future") should have proved so prophetic.

Ken however wasn't discouraged, and sent me one of those wonderful long revitalising letters of his (four pages, one paragraph), so heartening that I immediately sent him a nine page interim (!) reply. It ended casually: "Have discovered through letter in Fantasy Review unknown fan in Northern Ireland. Hot on his track. Will probably start my own organisation!" The unknown fan was George Charters. He came up in response to my invitation, but for a long time his visits were very infrequent and he would just sit quietly in the corner while James and I worked on Slant. We didn't like to ask him to help and he was too diffident to volunteer.

Other encouraging things that happened about this time included a letter from Ackerman reporting he had sold "Swordsmen of Varnis" to a prozine, one from Carnell suggesting that Slant authors might like to submit to New Worlds, and a story from Ted Tubb. (I asked him for more like it but he said "the other efforts of mine to become an author are of a totally different type---adventurous, space stuff. To be truthful, they are all corny.") As Ken said "It really begins to look as though Slant is becoming a forcing medium for fan authors into pro although, rather naturally, I'm not thinking that way myself."

A more discouraging development was a letter from a reader pointing out that the Evans story in Slant 3 had already been printed in Peon. I wrote and apologised to Lee Riddle, who was very nice about it and said he'd guessed I hadn't known. He also thought the Ackerman story had already appeared in Shangri-La. I realised Ackerman had figured Slant's circulation would be almost all in England so it wouldn't matter about the stories already having appeared in America, but I was annoyed all the same and acquired a dislike for Ackerman which I didn't lose until I met him in 1951.

I had now been fanning for two years with a ball point pen and I was getting tired of it. I wasn't the only one. Ken said: "I am thinking of inaugurating a fund entitled "Great Project for Humanity and the National Health Eye Scheme. Fighting Fund. A typewriter for the Willis. Buy shares etc." One day I saw in the office an old typewriter belonging to the head of the Registry, an eccentric old boy who liked to tinker with junk. It was in fact the same man on the same typer who had typed out for me the material for the original unpublished Slant of 1947. The typer was a three-bank Cliver, the same model as the dreaded Shaw-Berry typer frequently maligned but still used by John Berry, but in fact quite a decent machine in the hands of anyone who isn't a mechanical moron. It's only real fault is slowness---the letters are mounted on concentric half hoops which loom above the paper like a couple of amphi theatres, and it takes a while for them to make the descent and resume their places---but it's plenty quick enough for two fingers. However it definitely

looked quaint and primitive, and it was the only typewriter I'd ever seen that looked as if I could afford to buy it. I borrowed it with the intention of holding on to it if I could (I later bought it for £3) and one dark February night James and I carried it home from the man's garage slung between us on a broomstick. The first thing I did on it was a letter to Ken Bulmer. I don't have a copy of this: I have the original...

Let not this startling development weaken the effort of the Fighting Fund. This extraordinary contraption is one James and I dragged through a driving rainstorm last night and we shall probably have to return it before I learn to use it, though I hope to put another finger to work when I find where all the letters are. You are getting the carbon because the top copy is rapidly being completely covered with the paraffin that was poured over the works. However this is one letter from me that you will be able to read.

After two double-spaced pages of comment quotes on Ken's story in the last Slant and general gossip, it ended...

Well, this is about killing me, so I'll close now. The things I do for fandom! Cute the way they do exclamation marks on these machines. It's all very interesting, but maybe it would have been quicker to set the letter up and print it. That would have shaken you!

Reaction to this was highly satisfactory---a 4½ page letter including a three-act play about fans dying from shock at getting legible letters from me. I debated for some time about publishing this, but decided against it because of its limited interest. I've just held exactly the same debate with exactly the same result, but instead of throwing this letter in the wastebasket with the rest I'll pass it on to Ken so he can incorporate it in his memoirs.

As you'll probably have noticed, I was gravitating towards Ken rather than the other inmate of The Epicentre, Vince Clarke. Partly because I was a little irritated with Vince over all the past delays and confusion about SFN, partly because of the way he had assumed my stupidity over the affair of the Christmas mailing and partly because he seemed to be studiously ignoring Slant. This sounds very vain, I know. The only excuse I can put up for my former self is that Slant represented an enormous investment of our time and energy, and recognition was the only return we had to expect: subconsciously we suspected we were being mugs and we wanted reassurance, I suppose. Besides, or probably because of these prejudices, I got the impression from Vince's letters of the time that he was a snooty type. Ken's letters were enthusiastic, friendly and sincere, while Vince's were much less frequent and seemed offhand and patronising. I visualised him as a conceited sneering pseudo-intellectual, who probably visualised me as an eager-beaver provincial nuisance and upstart.

Five months went by amid mutterings of discontent among the provincial fans with no sign of the projected monthly SFN. When it did come, towards the end of June, I looked eagerly for my promised bouquet. But instead of editorial comment on Slant there was a fulsome advertisement, which didn't seem to me to be the same thing at all. I was bitterly disappointed, but wrote fairly calmly to Ken...

Three hours ago I returned bronzed and fit from four days hostelling in the Antrim glens. Ready for anything, I thought I was, even a Shaver story in ASF. But not for SFN5! THAT AD! Don't you realise, PEOPLE WILL THINK I WROTE IT. Woe woe woe. I'll never live it down. And what will Slater think. Seriously, it was very nice of you, but would you mind mentioning to the other bods that it wasn't my idea to make those extravagant claims for Slant. Dignified restraint, that's my racket. It was a kind thought to say a few kind words about S but if it had

looked like editorial comment rather than a paid advertisement I should have been even more grateful. However thanks all the same, and no hard feelings.

And later, in the course of a page of comments on SFN...

Quotes, Notes & Reviews. Let us be honest. I am no less subject to the sins of the spirit than those of the flesh so I am a bit disappointed that there is no mention of us here. I had expected you might mention our coming reprints in prozines or Cedric's successes. I should have thought they would have been newsworthy enough. British fan authors crash prozines. However I can see you are short of space and I suppose in a way since everyone in the SFS gets S anyway there is no point in mentioning it, as if it were a proper subscription fanzine.

Note the implied accusation of ingratitude. I must have felt slightly ashamed.

The above sounds terrible now I look at it in cold blood. Pay no attention. Me, behaving like a prima donna.

After about a month's silence from the Epicentre, I got a reply to this letter from Vince:

Am standing in for Ken for the time being as he is trying to throw off the effects of reading "Seven Days In New Crete" with a stiff dose of "World Below" (the benighted ignoramus aint read it!). In any case I have a bone or three to pick with thee.

Firstly (logical minded we sf fans--always putting first things first), I must plead guilty to dashing off the copy for that ad of yours. Seeing that you were printing Ken's stories, I was unaware that "dignified restraint" was your racket. As the SFS members already receive Slant, the only people it would or could impress would be the humble neophyte, and the h.n. takes everything thats printed or mimeoed in a fanzine as gospel truth. Natch. He hasn't had a chance to learn better. And you wanted the durn thing advertised didn't you? Even the "Times" would be pretty expansive if it went in for advertising.

How about this for the next ish? Right on our back cover.

SLANT

can't
shock your maiden aunt
Each story
is terrific
Also scientific
Each article
is a particle
of wit from a higher sphere
Yet SLANT supernal
can be your journal
For a mere two bob a year.

He apologised for missing out the news about prozine reprints and then, after a page of news and gossip....

Let us chant
In praise of "Slant".
Closely printed in solid black
Picture on the front cover
Adverts on the back.

This letter got me mad. That bit about "closely printed in solid black" struck home specially deep, because I knew I'd bought the wrong kind of type, but apart from that I thought the letter was sarcastic and superior and clever-clever. So I flew off the handle and told Vince just what I thought of him. I haven't got a copy of this letter because I dashed it off at work with a pen, and I haven't got Vince's reply either, I think because I was so ashamed of myself afterwards that I destroyed it and tried to forget the whole incident. But of course I didn't. I remember it vividly. I always remember, Ghod help me, occasions when I make a fool of myself. Vince had got my letter the following evening, Thursday, on his return from work and had stayed home from the White Horse answering it. It was a sincere and friendly answer, without the slightest trace of superiority or sarcasm, and it hit me like a bomb. It impressed me deeply that Vince should stay away from the White Horse...making what seemed to me the supreme fannish sacrifice...just to straighten out a confused neofan like me: even more, that he should think my friendship worth keeping, or making, when he could so easily have torn me apart or just ignored me. Anyway, I was grateful, and have been grateful ever since. It may not seem a very important incident to describe in such detail, but it was important to me. It was the first real lesson I learned from fandom and I've never forgotten it. I've learned a lot from fandom since but I think that was the most important and perhaps if it had been someone other than Vince Clarke I'd never have learned it until it was too late.

Vince said I seemed to have a chip on my shoulder. My first reaction was shocked incredulity, but then I looked at my mental shoulder---and there it was. A chip, if there ever was one. All of a sudden I realised what had been happening to me. All my life I have thought of myself as a mild and inoffensive person---too mild and inoffensive. When I came into fandom and started as it were a new life in this new world, I automatically tried to correct this defect in my mundane character. I was over-compensating, overlooking the fact that these new people didn't know I was actually a mild and inoffensive person. To them I just looked to have a chip on my shoulder. It was a startling thought. As I've said half seriously before, fandom is a wonderful school of character training and, as you'll probably see from other evidence in these memoirs, the understanding and frankness of other fans has changed me a lot through the years, and is still changing me. I still do stupid things in fandom, but thank ghod the intervals between them seem to be getting appreciably greater.

That momentous letter of Vince's was in the latter half of July, and we've jumped ahead six months. But we're now in 1950, which was the start of my really becoming active in fandom and so many things were happening---a visit to England and the Epicentre, contacting Eric Frank Russell, Manly Banister and Lee Hoffman, the entry of Bob Shaw, etc---that it would be impossible to follow strict chronological order.

So back to March 1950, when I got another momentous letter...though I must admit it didn't look much at the time. It was in pale blue ink in an almost supine backhand handwriting from someone in Dagenham...

Dear Mr. Ellis, (sic)

Many thanks for the Spring 1950 issue of Slant. I hope that the enclosed magazine is suitable for a 'subscription'. If the prozine offer is only open to US fen and/or you have a good supply of English reprints, you can have the 2/- postal order instead.

...Can you give me any information about the British Science Fantasy Society? I've heard of it before, but don't know anything definite.

It's rumoured that "Fantasy Review" is folding and that Gillings will start a prozine. If this happens to be true, your mag. should jump into F.R.'s place as

the leading British fanzine.

Cordially,
Chuck Harris

PS. How did you get my address? It must have come from the States because I only know one other Anglofan. I suspect Ron Friedman.

I was a bit annoyed about the BRE Weird Tales...I could flog a US edition of a promag for 2/- any time, but any BRE was worth just nothing...but I was polite. I was learning....

Thanks for your letter, and the magazine. The latter is quite OK. After all I did say any prozine, and I didn't happen to have bought that one yet.

It was indeed Ron Friedman that I got your address from, or at least from his fanzine. Funny you shouldn't have been in touch with the SFS. You can get the gen from Ken Bulmer, 84 Drayton Park, Highbury, London N.5. Sub is 5/- a year and it entitles you to Norman Ashfield's "Alembic" as well as "Slant"* Also the club organ, The Science Fantasy News, which was announced in the last issue dated Christmas as about to go monthly. You will draw your own conclusions. Though they're not unlikely to be erroneous. The London Circle has periods of inactivity, but it never quite dies.

It seems to be quite definite, or as definite as these things ever be, that Gillings is going to revive "Fantasy" as a sister to "New Worlds", incorporating some of the features of FR. Thank you for the flattering remarks about Slant's status in that contingency, but I should imagine that Ken Slater would have something to say about that.

*No refunds!

I never got a reply to this letter. I passed on Chuck's name to Ken Bulmer, along with that of one Dave Cohen of Manchester who had sent me a weird letter purporting to be a communication from an inhabitant of a planet called Botturor in the Milky Way, and forgot about it.

Until next month, that is, when a copy of the ISFCC zine "The Explorer" arrived with a little story by C.R.Harris which I liked. I turned up the previous correspondence and made with the orchids and blandishments:

I was going to quote the letter here but I've been wondering about something and I think I'll just stop here until I see what you think about it. Do you like reading other people's correspondence? I do. I'm one of those who believe that there's no such thing as an uninteresting letter...at least when it's written to someone else. It's sort of like an unscripted live television interview--anything can happen, or at least you can get all sorts of fascinating sidelights and insights into personalities, things which you weren't meant to see. But maybe some of you just find other people's letters dull unless they affect you personally or have literary merit? If so let me know, because I've got an awful lot of old letters here I'm not quite sure how to deal with.

It's a terrible thing to have an orderly mind. You'd think that reading through old letters and reminiscing about them would be a pretty easy way to churn out prose, and so it was when I started these memoirs and they dealt with the period early in 1950 when I was just getting started in fandom. But then things began to proliferate...if that's the right word: it sounds OK and you don't often get a chance to throw one like that about...and lots of things were happening at the same time. My bureaucratic mind began to visualise dividing the great Work into sections, following each line for a time and then going back to another one, like a History of

Europe or a Burroughs novel. The project got so ambitious that I shelved it, and then it fell down behind the shelf where it's just taken me half an hour to find it. I figured I've got to push on with it somehow or the tide of waste paper will sweep us all into the street. So to Oscar The Malevolent Muskrat with system and logic. I shall take up these old letters one by one and if I see anything of conceivable interest in any of them I'll give you a glimpse of it on it's way to the fireplace...

Dear Walter:

25.4.50

I was just getting around to answering your previous letter, but your second letter beat me to the post.

You really startle me,---do you mean you'll consider publishing a story by me without paying me for it?

Seriously, I've never written anything other than the piece you saw,--this sad state of affairs will be rectified just as soon as I can get a reasonable plot worked out...

This pale blue backhand belongs to Chuck Harris...curious how mild he seems in longhand. I don't know if I said anything about this last time (I know I could go upstairs and check, but that would be the upstirring of organisation again. Down sir!) but I'd seen a story by him in a fanzine called The Explorer published by Ed Noble about a magician who said he would saw a woman in half and did and I thought it showed promise. The second story when it arrived turned out to be about a werewolf who picked up a girl in India who when confronted by a death worse than fate turned out to be a weretiger. James White saw the gimmick after the second paragraph and I told Chuck this when rejecting the story, which was the beginning of the great White/Harris "Feud". At about this time Chuck had a regular thing about werewolves and produced the first line of a story about a whole group of them, which was really a classic among first lines: "The family were changing for dinner". But back in April 1950....

Thanx for the information about the SFS. I will write to Ken Bulmer (sometime) and become a member. I've heard of the London Circle, but have never attended any of their meetings.

We'll come back to Chuck and the London Circle later, no doubt. I've just destroyed a four page letter from somebody called John Edmiston Blyer or Butler, who published a little zine called Makhzan, and a ten-page reply from me. He seemed a pretty good prospect for a columnist but the correspondence lapsed and he was never heard of again that I knew of. I'd like to destroy the next one too, but if this is to have any interest for you you'll have to have the uncensored truth. This is the sort of fugghead I was in 1950...What sort I am now I suppose I'll have to wait another ten years to find out.

Dear Bob:

1 May 1950

Thank you for your S-F Newsletter 15. Naturally I want to receive future issues. (Yes, it's me to Bob Tucker)

I hope you will not mind my making a few remarks about the review of Slant 3. This is, I suppose, the 'worst' review we have had yet, but please don't think I am bellyaching (haw!) about the position you gave us, or about your commendable refusal to deal out the indiscriminate flattery which is unfortunately so common. (Eechh!) What I should like to point out is that this sickeningly familiar comment about the amount of work the magazine must involve carries an implication you might not have intended. It always reminds me of Johnson's remark about the woman preaching. "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". The implications are that we are mugs and that the reviewer cannot think of anything

more creditable to say than that the magazine has freak value. As for the first, you are probably right, but I should have thought you were one of the last persons to say so. (An allusion to the fact that SFNL was expensively photo-offset and distributed free.) And since when has enthusiasm become a thing to be despised in fandom? As for the second if this is your opinion we would rather you would say so, and why. I expect you mean your reviews to be helpful rather than discouraging.

However I have probably got hypersensitive on this point. (You can say that again.) Probably the Scot in my subconscious does think I am wasting my time.

Bob did not, naturally, reply to this letter, and I can only hope he never got it. What a horrible mixture of pretentious pompousness and injured vanity it is. I hate me. This next one doesn't help much either.

Dear Mr. Russell:

2nd May 1950

I have just read your story "Dear Devil" in the May issue of Other Worlds, and I felt I should like to write and tell you how much I enjoyed it. Although you have been one of my favourite authors for years--since "Metamorphosite" anyway---I should never have thought of writing to you if I hadn't just been reading a book by Llewellyn Powys where he mentions that even famous authors like to receive letters from readers sometimes. If he is right I should be very happy to think I had repaid some of the pleasure you have given me, and if not there is no harm done.

Apart from the fact that "Dear Devil" is a fascinating story in itself, well and intelligently told, it is a most refreshing change from the vicious stuff we are getting so much of nowadays, like Heinlein's "Gulf" and Hubbard's "Greed". In the old days heroes certainly wiped out whole universes with gay abandon, but in the most honourable way and with the very best of intentions. Never were they guilty even under the most intolerable provocation of anything which could possibly be described as 'dirty', or indeed anything which one could remotely believe. Nowadays they go in for torture, murder, even genocide quite as enthusiastically as the villains. Indeed the only thing that distinguishes from their rivals in iniquity is that they are invariably victorious and of course American.

So it is a real pleasure to know that there is one author who can turn out stories which are a pleasure to read, in more ways than one. At least one of your readers is very grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,

Let's analyse this odious letter. It is true that I had liked "Dear Devil" very much (and "Metamorphosite") and wanted to tell the author so, and I had been struck by that remark of Powys, and I was worked up about Hubbard and Heinlein. But what is sincerity? It was also true that I wanted to 'cultivate' Eric Frank Russell---what a thing it would be to have something by him in Slant!---but oh so subtly. Hence the deliberate avoidance of any mention of myself as a fanzine editor, the allusion to Powys to establish myself as another cultured intellect, and the tying-in of Heinlein and Hubbard... ..in a paragraph that I'd used practically word for word in two other letters and which eventually dragged its feeble corpse to a grave in some unfortunate fanzine. I wasn't going to make the tactical error of suggesting that he reply to my letter but I was going to give him something to reply to.

EFR replied by return of post far more courteously and cordially than I deserved... Even after all these years I'm not going to endanger a friendship I value by quoting him without permission, nor am I going to ask him to go to the trouble of reading through a batch of his old letters. It'll be enough to say that he

thanked me for writing and told me something of the history of "Dear Devil", quoting from a letter of rejection by an editor whom I took to be John W. Campbell. This fascinating flash of life behind the zines was too much for me: Willis the Fanzine Editor sprang. Casting aside my sheep's clothing and revealing my feral faned's face I asked him for permission to quote his remarks. And although I'd delayed writing for ten days so he wouldn't feel himself rushed, I was still so megalomaniacal as to try to inveigle him into expanding them into an article, thus:

15. May 1950

The part I would like to quote is of course that about the difficulty of pleasing editors. This is a most fascinating subject, and what it would be very nice to do would be to run a sort of symposium about other editors slants, or more generally, about how to write successful science fiction. However even if I had the nerve to ask you to amplify your remarks it is obvious from the fact that most of your work has appeared in ASF that you have never had enough trouble in placing your stories to acquire any distressing familiarity with the thought-processes of editors. I'm assuming that you offer most of your work to Campbell first, as I expect many front rank authors still do, such is the prestige of ASF. It is very nice for Mr. Campbell to get first pick like this, but unless he makes better use of it he may not have it much longer. Personally I suspect he has been spending too much time on that wireless station of his. Certainly some of the stories he has printed--not to mention those he has rejected ---give one the impression that for some time he has been editing by remote control, leaving Miss Catherine Tarrant to follow a few simple directives, like no more atomic bombs. Certainly some of these "C.T." stories have been really shocking.

I agree that "Dear Devil" does not really call for a sequel. Only a story which is basically incomplete does, and in any case it seems to be a law of nature that sequels are anti-climatic from Catriona to Children of the Lens.

When I was reading some books on telepathy recently I was reminded of 'Sinister Barrier' in a rather unusual way. The mention of iodine. As you probably know, iodine is associated with thyroid complaints. In "The Reach of The Mind" Rhine says: "The young woman in question was treated for hyperthyroidism. She had scored above QI hits per 25 through 74 runs carried out before her breakdown. After the period of treatment...a second series of tests was made, but the average score this time was close to 'chance'". Later, Rhine says: "the case of a hypothyroid lad...had exceptional ESP ability...when the boy was treated for hypothyroidism he lost his ability." Carrington in "Telepathy" has nothing to say about iodine but he does say this: "under bromide he did significantly better..." But probably you know all this, and perhaps I had better not waste any more of your time. Assuming you are still with me at all!

Thanks again for replying to my letter.

Yours sincerely.

Did this obnoxious neofan get his well-deserved come-uppance? Stay tuned for the next disgusting instalment.

5

You will all remember from the last gripping instalment how things stood in May 1950. Walter A. Youngfan had got into correspondence with Eric Frank Russell and was trying to manoeuvre him into expanding some of his remarks into an article for Slant, with all the Machiavellian subtlety of a hog rooting for truffles. The reply was prompt, two pages long, and friendly and interesting, but crystal clear on the truffle situation.....

Reason why people like me often don't respond to letters is that they've

found from sad experience that no confidence is respected, and that they're likely to be quoted, or half-quoted, or even mis-quoted, for the sake of creating a fancied scoop in a fan-mag. That, sir, is the surest way to make any writer clam up. Of course, if said writer turns out something specifically for the said mag, it is different - he then has some control over what he is saying rather than is alleged to have said. But please don't come back at me asking for an article. I did them years ago, would like to do them today and occasionally do if the time and inspiration come together, but mostly they don't. I am very hard pressed for time these days.

He went on to defend Campbell, without actually denying in so many words that it was he who had rejected "Dear Devil", and to discuss some other things which you'll probably be able to identify from my reply.

Well now, touching Mr. Campbell (to think that the day should ever come when I of all people should try to clast this ikon) I realise that there may be people so lost in turpitude as to like the stories I dislike, but I consider myself a fairly average asf reader and I assume that asf has tried to please a certain section of the reading public who don't like the more pulpy story. Either asf is changing it's policy or Campbell is falling down on the job, because the stories I have in mind are not good by asf's standards. Apart from that moreover stories which have been both commercially and artistically good have been rejected by jwc and acclaimed by other mags. I base this on statements by the editors themselves in their own magazines. Manly frankness is the fashion among them today. Another complaint I have against Campbell is that he nowadays just throws the magazine at you. Three or four years ago every big story got a terrific build-up beforehand. You didn't take it all too seriously but it was nice to feel that things were happening, even if they didn't turn out as big as they were billed. Nowadays all we get is a few tired cracks about the inelasticity of type-metal or the difficulty of comparing apples with oranges or whatever cliché he happens to have set up in type. I am glad to see that you agree that there is too much blood in s-f. But on looking through these old issues of asf the other day I was reminded that you were unnecessarily blood-thirsty yourself once. In "The Undecided" to be exact. A lot can be forgiven such an excellent story, but were you not very cruel, vicariously, to the alien soldiers? I know aliens are often considered fair game--like Jews and gypsies in Germany--but surely it is obvious that the wholly evil aliens of the more naive stories like those of E.E. Smith are a juvenile concept. Any race which lives a highly organised community life must have the virtues which make that life possible--consideration for others and respect for public opinion. Conscience. Tolerance. Possible we should start a movement for the prevention of cruelty to bems. Its not a purely hypothetical question, even if we never encounter a flying saucerfull of monstrosities. My point is that the frame of mind that aliens are murderable and torturable just because they are different is very easily acquired and hard to get rid of. Easy to acquire because it pleases the subconscious and hard to lose because once the first million have gone into the gas chamber it's difficult to entertain the concept that possibly you have made a mistake. Possibly I have a bee in my bonnet about this question but I was very impressed by Huxley's story "Time Must Have A Stop". It seems to me he is right that even the smallest of one's actions may have infinite repercussions. It may for example have been a malacious story told to Hitler in his youth that resulted in Aushwitz, and every one of one's actions should be judged in that light.

I can't remember whether I was still hoping to get material out of Russell or whether I had now for once no ulterior motive. I suppose it's possible. Maybe I had even reconciled myself to developing my own authors, because things were going

well. Palmer had actually paid money to Clive Jackson to reprint his "Swordsmen of Varnis" from Slant 4 and our other bright star, Cedric Walker, had sold a longer story to the revived Marvel, and altogether we all looked to be advancing towards a roseate dawn. Whatever happened?

But I see now that in June I was after Chandler too. I found his address somewhere and wrote admiring a story called "Haunt".

Another correspondent was Mike Tealby. Ploughing through a 4-page letter in purple ink, I see he was commiserating with me about contemptuous reviews of our fanzines by Merwin in TWS (we thought Merwin read the fmz) and that I was already offering to print his covers for him. He wanted a sphinx, but settled for a pyramid.

But to conclude the EFR story for the time being. In mid-June he wrote again defending Campbell, discussing editor and author problems, and defending "The Undecided" on the ground that the aliens were aggressors. I was getting more confident....

Dear Eric:

(As you say, to hell with diffidence) I must spring to the defence of my beloved bems. I suppose you think you know all about the set-up just because you wrote the story, but listen! WHOSE PLANET WAS IT ANYWAY? So they defended themselves when invaded. The fiends! "Cet animal est tres mechant. Quand en l'attaque lise defend". As far as I can gather from your garbled account of the affair these alien bods were going along quietly minding their business, keeping themselves to themselves in a most gentlemanly fashion, save only for their friendly overtures to terrestrial spacecraft. Even when these were uncouthly rebuffed there is not even a suggestion that they raised a tentacle against the craft which had cut them dead. Now all of a sudden homo and his menagerie of other sapiens lands on his planet. Obviously a scout, if not the advance guard of an invasion from these sinister monsters. Even then they merely send one lone representative to test the defences. This courageous soldier is horribly murdered by the goothirsty terrestrials. I ask you, is this cricket?

Coming back to our discussion about diffidence, I should have thought the famous would regard it as a virtue almost as worthy as it is rare. From the other side, you certainly need a thick skin to dispense with it. There was the fellow here who was a great admirer of the poet Ezra Pound. Read every instalment of the cantos as they came out and was generally what you might describe as Pound foolish. Well, one day Ezra's latest effort was published and this chap found a mistake in one of the esoteric references. Also an opportunity. He sat down and concocted a letter to the master, full of humble worship and also pointing out with a certain amount of false modesty the slight mistake. In anxiety he awaited. Would the great man reply? Would he deign his humble admirer the privilege of a personal letter, perhaps later to be published to his immortality in the "Life And Lettere"? Yes! In a short time an envelope came, addressed in the handwriting only a poet could think up. Tearing it open with shaking fingers, he read: "Dear Sir, I think you are a bloody S++t." ...and so on, for another couple of closely typed foolscap pages. I apologise for the coarse Pound anecdote in this refined and ladylike fanzine, but no doubt Ethel will substitute asterisks for that four-letter word and, as you'll see later that anecdote turned out to be quite important. One wouldn't have thought so at the time, because EFR was quiet for a month and then wrote, on 18 July: and for once I quote in full....

Dear Bro. Willis:

I'm getting too pressed for time to keep it up - so accept this Wesso

original by way of a consolation prize.

Sincerely,
Eric F. Russell

The Wesso original was an enormous detailed drawing but I hated the sight of it. I considered that I had been given the brush-off in about as final and insulting a way as possible. Whether it was my guilty conscience or not, it was quite obvious to me at the time that the reference to a "consolation prize" meant that he believed I'd been after another "prize" from him, that he was now bored with my antics as one gets bored with a dog doing his tricks, and he was paying me off to keep me quiet. I never even wrote to thank him for the Wesso.

So ended that phase with EFR. I was so disheartened that I never even replied to Chandler when he wrote a friendly letter thanking me for my comments on "Haunt" recommending some of his stories he preferred himself and passing on an anecdote about a Pilot friend of his who had claimed to know Chandler the writer and that he was a Chief Officer in Shaw Savill's. "Rubbish" said his messmate, "whoever heard of any Mate in Shaw Savill's being able to read or write?"

But then, on August 11, EFR wrote again.

Greatly enjoyed that salty Pound anecdote of yours. I passed it on to Tiffany Thayer who is a friend of Pound and sees him quite often. Today, Thayer writes back saying it is probably authentic because "the old boy is fully capable of it and was never constituted differently". This makes me happy. I like to think that some of the world's characters are real. Did you get that Wesso drawing I mailed you? Or have your censors (the Pope's Own Fusiliers) seized it and burned it?

I wrote back apologising for not having acknowledged the Wesso, but without explaining, and saying I hoped to be passing through Liverpool soon...fishing for an invitation to call. But that first trip of mine to England had better wait another instalment.

6

In August 1950, you may remember, I was contemplating a trip to England. One of the three friends I hoped to meet was Chuck Harris...but I didn't, for a reason that surprised and saddened me. On 24th August he wrote:

...I don't think you'll be seeing me when you come over. During the war I caught meningitis, whilst in the Navy, and it destroyed both auditory nerves. Hence I am completely deaf. Lip-reading is a very exacting science (harder than dianetics!) and I'm not very proficient. Most of the "conversation" has to be written down for me, and it makes things rather difficult.

At the time I didn't know Chuck well enough to dare try override his protestations, so I just accepted his wishes. Even now I doubt if I should have tried to see him, because Chuck was then very sensitive about his disability. For years it was one of the best kept secrets in fandom, known only to me and then to a widening group of other personal friends.

Anyway, one evening that autumn I took the night boat to Liverpool. I spent the afternoon in Eric Frank Russell's house, a fairly small suburban-type semi-detached villa in a village a few miles from Liverpool. He works on a big roll-top desk in the front room, the walls of which are decorated with ASF cover originals. There he sat for hours talking about his writing and experiences and the sf world in general. It was just as well he needed only an occasional question, because his

larger-than-life personality had a wilting effect on me: in fact it was years before I could hold my own with EFR except on paper. He was a very hospitable host.... actually it was EFR I was mainly thinking of for the character of Profan in "The Enchanted Duplicator"....and his wife's cooking was wonderful but, determined not to presume, I left after tea and spent the night in Chester Youth Hostel.

Next morning I set out along the road to Nantwich to try my hand at hitch-hiking. I found I hated it. I felt like a beggar standing there pleading for lifts, and when I finally got one was relieved to find the driver was going all the way to Birmingham. To make myself feel better I took his name and address and promised to send him a pound of Irish butter...hard to believe now, isn't it, that rationing was in force five years after the war? (And yes, as a matter of fact, I did send it.) That finished me with hitch-hiking, so I got a bus from Birmingham to Leicester, where I stayed with Mike Tealby (see Void 23). Then, on Thursday morning, I took another bus to London. I met Vince Clarke, accompanied by Ted Carnell, at a Lyons cafe and we went on to the White Horse. I don't remember much about that, but afterwards Ken and Vince invited me to stay at The Epicentre, and I do remember that. 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, but within a few weeks of getting back, in an article for Pickle's Phantasmagoria called "Veni Vidi Vinci" (I came to see Vince) I was writing like this:

....They seem to stop drinking very early in England, so soon after ten everyone went home, their fanning finished for another week. I went with Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer to the flat known for reasons lost in the mists of antiquity as "The Epicentre". It is near Holloway Gaol. In fact I believe it was Holloway Gaol, until the League for Penal Reform got going. In the wilder parts of North London, where the hand of civilised man has never set foot, is this long grimy street, sinisterly deserted. On one side is a railway shunting yard. This is known as the goods siding. Opposite are Bulmer and Clarke. This is known as the bad siding. In front of their house a watchful Borough Council has installed a single warning lamp of a shade of green I had not seen since the boat docked in Liverpool. Pausing only to sign a certificate indemnifying the caretaker against any claims by your relatives you start the long climb to the flat. If your oxygen holds out, and you are not caught in the tangled mass of SFN deadlines which cover the stairs, you eventually arrive at the door. This must be opened carefully. Heaps of whitened bones tell of the fate of earlier travellers who were crushed by one of the periodic avalanches from the mountains of unanswered correspondence which give that peculiar curved appearance to the walls.

And so on. Keen students of literary style will notice that this is more or less the way I write now. Yes, I had spent a night in The Epicentre and I had become a fan.

Next morning Ken and Vince went to work and I was left alone in The Epicentre. In an earnest but rather foolish attempt to do something for my keep I tried to tidy up a bit, but after bringing to light a fantastic quantity of decaying food-stuff and corroded coins in the vicinity of the sink I had an agonising re-appraisal of the rest of the flat and gave up the unequal struggle. Every level surface was covered to the point of instability by fanzines, prozines, letters, stencils, busts of Napoleon and model ships, their outlines blurred by a deep film of coal-dust which sifted continuously through the window. I reflected I was no Hercules and went out to visit various cultural centres of the capital like the Folies Bergere, The London Casino and Charing Cross Road. (The Windmill was too dear) Actually it wasn't Hercules who finally cleaned up The Epicentre, but a slip of a girl called Pamela, whom I have ever since regarded with awe and admiration.

I can't remember anything about the rest of Friday and Saturday except that

Ken Bulmer invented the steam engine, but I know what happened on Sunday because there is documentary evidence. Vince Clarke produced a oneshot called Inductive Reactance, in which he mentions that Ken and I had gone to Regents Park Zoo... where incidentally we arranged to collaborate on a story called 'The Gatecrashers'. This oneshot was in reply to one Mike Tealby and I had put out in Leicester called 'Slander' (Slant + Wonder--Mike's title and brilliant I thought) which carried a semi-serious feud against the London Circle whose current inactivity was, as you'll have gathered from the extract above, a source of dissatisfaction among us provincials.

As I think I mentioned before, Ken Slater had set up a British fan organisation called the Science Fantasy Society, with an elaborate structure of regional gauleiters, and had then been posted to Germany. Most of the London fans who had been in on its conception, including Ted Tubb, had then left Ken and Vince to carry the baby. My own feeling was that they should either do something about the organisation or drop it, but instead the SFS dragged on a nominal existence from year to year, so that nobody ever knew where they were. Ken Slater made a last desperate effort to save it by arranging for one Egerton Sykes to take over the Secretaryship and sent him along to the White Horse. Unfortunately Mr. Syke's only qualification for the job appeared to be that he was perpetually on the point of setting out to Mount Ararat to discover the remains of the Ark, and the London Circle did not particularly want to be organised. They explained to Mr. Sykes, not too diplomatically by all accounts, that there was no money or publicity to be made out of organising fandom and he vanished from the scene never to be heard of again...except perhaps in Armenia. Disgruntled, Ken Slater washed his hands of the SFS and started a drive to popularise the N3F in England without very much more success.

The most unfortunate aspect of the SFS affair was that for years Vince Clarke's publishing activity was perforce confined to Science Fiction News, the official organ of the zombie organisation. Perforce, because he and others felt that if he had the time and money to publish anything, it had to be SFN. He did publish some fine SFNs, but I always thought that editing a mere newszine was a waste of his talents, and a job for which he was temperamentally unsuited. An incurable perfectionist as far as publishing was concerned (it was he I was thinking of for Perfexion in "The Enchanted Duplicator"), he kept holding up issues for hot news, and by the time he got the news the rest of it was cold, and by the time the stencils were re-cut (of course, they had to be re-cut) the hot news was cold again, and so on. Looking back on it all, one can't help feeling that the SFS was an unmitigated disaster for British fandom. It did no good, and it wasted Vince while we had him.

This is, of course, an objective appraisal. Subjectively, the SFS had its merits as far as I was concerned, in that it had provided a ready-made mailing list for the first issues of Slant, and Ken and Vince had contributed from its funds towards our costs...I think about £2 in all. Nor did I mean to cast any reflection upon Ken Slater. The SFS may have been a flop but it was no fault of his as could be seen from the success of his own Operation Fantast, which virtually created post-war British fandom.

It was mainly OF which had brought us into fandom and, while I was staying with Mike Tealby, then acting as its British agent, he got an enquiry from another unknown in Belfast. I made a note of his name and was able to his surprise to greet him by it when he called at my house some while after I got back home, having been given my name and address by the OF contact bureau. I excitedly reported the event to Ken and Vince:

The Belfast Triangle is no more. It is now a quadrilateral. We have discovered a fan who is...listen to this. A: Mad keen to be active, publish fanzines and

all that. B: Writes stories. 3(sic) Draws some of the best sf illos I have ever seen. Can you imagine! And lives not a quarter of a mile from my front door. He didn't know a thing about fandom, and you are the first English fans to hear about him. But by ghod you won't be the last.

Of course you recognise the description. Yes, it was Bob Shaw, and that historic meeting had taken place on the evening of 10th October 1950.

I was so impressed by Bob's elegant little drawings that I borrowed from star Slant author Cedric Walker the carbon of an MS he had sold to New Worlds and got Bob to do some illos for it, and sent them to Carnell as an example of his capabilities. I didn't really expect him to use those particular illos, after all he might already have allocated the story to someone else, but I hoped at least for some encouragement. Carnell replied a month later:

...I am not greatly enamoured with the enclosed. I presume that they are finished articles, and not roughs. If I tell you that my artists submit roughs which look like these, you will understand that the finished jobs really look good.

This from a man who published Alan Hunter. It was then that I had my first suspicion that Carnell might not be a very good editor.

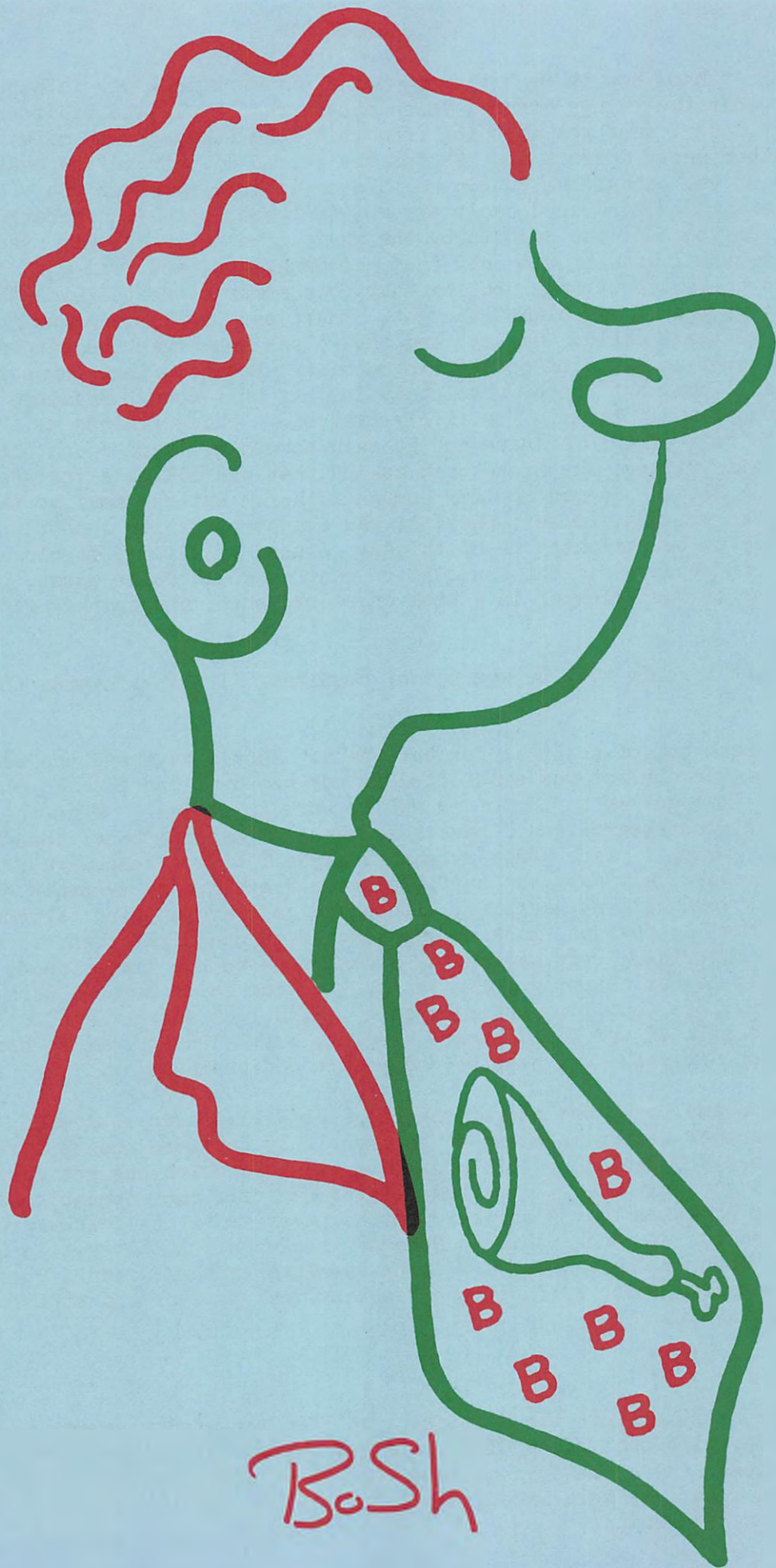
One of the congenial people I'd met at the White Horse was Peter Phillips and, between exchanging shaggy dog stories, he'd asked me to look up a journalist friend of his in Ireland. I'd also got a story from him, to which Ken Bulmer had waived an option in my favour, about a post-atomic world in which a Geiger Counter had become a magic talisman. In November I was writing:

I'm sorry I haven't been able to find any trace of your friend over here, unless he has given up journalism and taken up honest work as a breadserver. At least that's the occupation of the only person of that name listed in the directory...I gave that clooshmaker story of mine a new lease of life in your improved "oggle-box" version and it seems to be doing well. Anyhow the other day somebody tried to tell it to me. Marvellous how they get around, isn't it? You know, sometimes I think the main pleasure in listening to a shaggy dog story is looking forward to telling it to someone else. This ties in neatly with the theory that the origin of humour is in the discomfiture of others, arising from the explosive release of breath at the unexpected downfall of a dreaded enemy....They don't go over well on paper, but here's a short local one. Two men in the shipyard. About the middle of the morning one says to the other "What's the time?" His mate puts his hand in his pocket and produces an old boot-polish tin. He looks at it and says, "Half eleven" "Wait a mihute", says the other, "that's only an old blackening tin!" "Oh, sure anything's good enough for work".

His reply, unexpectedly, came from a hospital.

No, I haven't been shot, run over, bitten by a mad dog or contracted bubonic. For the next few weeks--or months--until they cure my merry little anxiety neurosis, the above will be my address. I'm under Dr. E.T.O.Slater, who reads Astounding, likes my stories and thus has a friendly interest in restoring my productivity...I managed to knock out five odd stories before incarceration, and they've all sold. The American fantasy market is so wide-open at the moment, they'd probably buy Anderson or Grimm with very little rewriting.

I rushed to the aid with two pages of closely typed foolscap of which I'll quote the first three paragraphs:



I don't know how it is with you, but from the time I was in hospital I remember that two things assumed vast importance. Meals and visitors. As for the first, can I send you anything from this land flowing with milk and honey-- seems rather messy doesn't it? As for the second I'm afraid the best I can do is write to you occasionally... So one Slater is looking after you. Well, well, there's a thing. Mind he doesn't try any of these Fantastic Operations of his on you. Do you know the Captain by the way? I've never met him myself and until recently I knew of him only from his magazines, and from what Ken and Vince had to say about him. But he must be a more let-me-tell-you-the-story-of-my-life type than I had always thought. There's a little magazine for little magazine editors, called "Galley" and their last issue was the biography number. Some dozens or so pages of potted biographies. Most confined themselves to a few modest lines, but Slater absolutely let his hair down. Amazing, all about his childhood and whatnot. Positively Slavonic. Which reminds me, Mike Tealby once wrote to a girl in America and he said something "Fans being Slans". Well, you know his writing, she wrote back asking what was all this insistence about Finns being Slavs. Seemed obvious enough to her. But who am I to talk about people's bad writing, whose typewriter was bought by public subscription... Things always seem to be reminding me of things. I used to think I should look around for a job in which efficient association centres would be an asset, but all I could think of was salesmen in a book or record shop, and neither gets much of a wage.

Peter didn't reply till he was out of hospital. I think towards the end of February.

I've been out of hospital for four weeks. Should have had the sense to stay there until the dry-rot was eradicated in our new dwelling and the coal shortage was over. I've got me a room of my own to work in at last. When the builders replace the floor-boards and I have some means of heating other than a halfpint oil heater, which I place under my chair, maybe I'll get some work done. My backside keeps nicely warm but my fingers are freezing and my brain congealed. And I don't work with my backside, although a contrary opinion is probably held by the Piccadilly business lady who approached me one night when, in my capacity as a crime reporter, I was waiting in a dark nook to see a spiv about a story; and in reply to her charming solicitation (Looking for somewhere warm, ducks?) I said: "Sorry love, but I'm working myself". The look she gave me would have curdled the milk of the Ten Contrary Virgins; but I didn't realise her misapprehension until she was gone beyond recall and explanation.

And that seems to be the end of the Phillips/Willis correspondence. I was looking for another letter in which he interestingly deplored the "private jokes and curious excesses" of fandom, but it must have been one which has not survived. It's an unhappy thought that when they cured Peter's neurosis they appear to have eliminated his creative talent as well, for he never as far as I know wrote anything up to the standards of "Such Stuff As Dreams" or even his little gem in Slant, published as "Counter Charm", which I think was later anthologised. However he is still to be met at British sf functions, as convivial as ever and strikingly like a BRE of George O. Smith.

7.

Before I go any further into the Fifties, I've been repeatedly asked, both times by Ethel, to describe what Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer were like in those far-off days. This seems like a pretty good idea, except for the fact that I haven't the slightest idea what they were like. All I know is how they seemed to me, which was by no means the same thing.

You see, I had this idea that fandom was like the French Foreign Legion. People joined it to Forget, or at least to start a new life. No matter what sort of a fugghead or a failure you were in the mundane world, you began anew in fandom. You had a second chance to be the sort of person you wanted to be. You could have a new character, even a new name if you liked, and build your relationships with other people on a new and better basis. It was a sort of contemporary reincarnation.

So I reasoned it was not done to ask fans about their mundane background, though you could speculate. I speculated. Vince Clarke, for instance, had a Home Counties accent, the sort that in Ireland is recognised as belonging to the governing class. Moreover, he spoke with what seemed to me an aristocratic, almost contemptuous, drawl and was obviously well read. Nevertheless he was unemployed and living in poor circumstances. It seemed pretty clear to me he was a Harrow or Winchester type gone wrong, maybe through having failed his exams at the University and having been disinherited. His manner, both in person and paper, initially gave me little cause to doubt this assessment. He was polite, friendly, but reserved and casual as if not wishing to be too intimate: he might have gone native, but he still mentally dressed for dinner. I liked and respected him, but for a long time regarded him with a certain degree of awe and caution. In appearance he was tall and thin, with a very large and round head with thinning yellow hair. I think I described him once as looking like a distinguished toffee apple.

I was still not familiar enough with English accents to recognise Ken Bulmer's as almost pure cockney, so I put him in the top drawer too, though not as high as Vince. I visualised him as coming from a small country vicarage, not quite big enough for a tennis court and immemorial elms, but with a lawn of the sort admired by the American visitor in the old anecdote. (How do you get a lawn like this? It's quite simple, you just sew some good grass and roll it every day for 600 years.) The vicarage was of grey stone and covered with ivy, and Ken's widowed mother lived there with her memories. She was of solid upper-middle class English stock too, but hers was a naval family. Presumably Ken had spurned or been spurned by both the Navy and the Church and had fled to the Epicentre to Forget. All this was based on a photograph of an elderly woman on Ken's mantelpiece, a model ship on the sideboard and a passing reference of his having been in a church. In appearance he was much like he is today, now that he has shaved off his beard again...smallish, dark and slightly stooping as if bowed down by some load carried cheerfully.

Both these backgrounds were pure phantasmagoria, but I don't think I would have visualised them so clearly if they hadn't represented to me a real difference in their characters, as revealed fleetingly in their letters. Vince wrote interestingly and well, but with a certain degree of cynical detachment. Even when he was complimentary it was with overtones of flippancy, as if condescending, and for a long time I viewed his remarks with suspicion and they were inclined to rub me the wrong way. Ken, on the other hand, was from the start full of friendliness and enthusiasm, which gushed out in his breathless all-one-paragraph letters. When Ken liked something, he let you know it, and we loved him for it, poor egoboo hungry waifs that we were. He had a rare talent for flattery...or, if you were the recipient of it, appreciation. If you had worked every night for four months at a printed fanzine, wouldn't you love a man who wrote by return of post a letter like this?

Dear Walter:

Have some very serious news for you. Thought you would like to know right away. Vince and I today received through the post two magazines, professionally produced jobs, and with, I must admit, absolutely first class artwork and print set up, on semi-slick paper and turned out in the best way I've seen any magazine dolled up. However these magazines, obviously from a long established professional

house, quality breathes through them, have the temerity to title themselves "Slant". Not only that, but impudently enough, they style themselves as being edited by a Walter A. Willis at your address. Further, they claim to have artwork by a James White and a Bob Shaw. These false claims, as we are still hopefully waiting for Slant to come along, do not fool us in the least. There is a certain doubt that they may confuse other readers of Slant, who also are waiting for copies, but we well know the truth. I thought you might be interested, in fact you are obviously interested in such a matter close to your own interests. I do not see any professional editorial address, the publications claiming to be made from N.Ireland. What confounded impudence! The only thing that can be said is that they are of beautiful workmanship, a real credit to the publishing profession. However I do feel that any publication capable of such glorious work should not stoop to the inglorious ruse of assuming the name of Slant in the search for further circulation. I now notice that my own name also is included, coupled with yours. Monstrous! Believe me, I shall not rest until I find the perpetrators of this effrontery and let them know, in forceful though restrained language, that the correct place for their publication is on the bookstalls and not sneaking through fans letterboxes under the guise of an old and loved friend. Watch 'em, Walter.

Yours,

The correspondence with Vince and Ken continued volumniously, but almost entirely about each other's publishing activities and the coming 1951 Festival Convention, that climatic event. There wasn't much more to talk about, since there were still less than half a dozen active English fans. As Vince put it:

The trouble with British fandom at least is that the personalities are so nebulous in any writings. A number of personal allusions would be lost on the 'outside' reader at the moment. Regular and frequent publication of about 3 different fanzines would be needed before a sufficiently strong background could be built up in the non-active fans mind, and he would know instanter of the allusion back of, say, my crack concerning Shaver and Deacon in IR.

Parts of my reply have some historical interest.....

On the same day your letter arrived I had a letter from Banister saying that on the same day my last letter to him had arrived he had a letter from you saying that on the same day his last letter to you arrived accepting your story my letter to you arrived accepting your other story. What did you want to start all that for? By the way, don't let that mention of carbon fool you, I'm not at all business-like; it's just that I have to be careful because I tell so many lies. I remember once a letter from a fan who quoted a reference number at me at which I felt properly insulted....I think you do pretty well for Ray, and I hope he gave you his Invisible Little Man, which must obviously have been intended for you. What you really need is a plot-twister. We can supply a model almost as good as the one we use for Van Vogt. Just feed in a simple plot at one end, turn the handle, and it emerges at the other end in any desired degree of complexity. I am afraid we cannot supply the identical VV Mark 11 model because this has to be handled by skilled operators. We had a lot of trouble with it some time ago. Some of the plots got very badly buckled and when we tried to straighten them out there was a lot of loose ends which proved impossible to unravel so we had to invent Charles Harness. So called of course because he was all traces and bits of VV....Would like a copy of Wastebasket, and it doesn't matter how sorry looking it is. It won't look as sorry as I will if I don't get one. Actually I don't much care how a fanzine looks as long as it reads well. People who are stuck with printing have to do the best they can with it, but my own favourite fanzines are chaotic, informal and frequent. Like Warp

and in a lesser degree Quandry. Not lesser in content, that is now very high, but Hoffman seems to spend too much time on the appearance of his magazine. Not that he doesn't make a very nice job, but I wonder would it not be better if he cut out some frills like these linocuts.

Quandry edited by a man, and printing linocuts! But such were the weird inchoate beginnings of the era known as Sixth Fandom. Lee had produced the first issue of "The Quandry" in the autumn of 1950 and when we got Slant 4 finished I sent an exchange copy...hence, probably, the brief manifestation of linocuts in Quandry, a mistake which Lee soon realised, returning to the mimeo artwork for which she had such talent. And hence this momentous letter she mailed in November:

Slant arrived today. Gorsh, thanx. As is my custom I read the editorial first. Terrific! Liked to laughed m'self silly. If you should ever feel so inclined don't hesitate to send material to Quandry...Hah, I am laughing at your comments on multi-colored paint. I know how you done it. I havn't spent years as a stage hand for nothing.. It's done with lights. Simple....Neither "Destination Moon" nor "Rocketship X-M" has come to Savannah yet. Personally, I doubt if the world is ready yet for STF...or if it ever will be. I believe in the cyclic philosophy...that all things wax and wain (or is that wane?) I saw a stf movie made about 1930 not long ago. It was a Flash Gordon serial spliced together. Two of them were released recently to cash in on the stf trend..... "Rocketship" and "Mars Attacks The World". I saw the latter. It was the funniest movie I've seen in years. Especially the part where Flash and his friends were locked in a cave on Mars when suddenly a hole appears in the wall and out tumbles the Prince of Mongo (a planet) who just happened to bore in and just happens to be an old friend of Flash. So tell me this is strictly for the kids, I know... Savannah is a fairly large town. Around 190 thousand. Well, way over on the other side of town a fan grew. Over here I grew. He did it by himself. I delved into the black mysteries and purple ghlories with a lil shove from a guy who was a fan five or six years ago. I entangled two friends slightly. That gives Savannah a fan population of 2 slans, 1 retired slan, and two non-slans. Yet when I go dashing down to the mag. shop looking for something that came out a week or so ago when I was really broke...what do I find? Yes, nothing. I, too, fear that we dwell in ignorance on the edge of a ghreat fandom in which Ghu, himself, walks. Perhaps it is the oft mentioned fan-heaven...could be fan-hell too. It's my theory that they're the same.

I had just been waiting for someone to ask me to do a column, because I always had bits left over from Slant, so I jumped at the chance. Not too obviously of course..

I'd be very pleased to write for Q but I'm not the sort of bloke who can sit down and dash something in cold blood. Let me know what sort of thing you would like and give me a weeks notice and the number of words required and I'll airmail some sort of crud back. I suppose a one page column would be the best thing, could put anything in it. Would try to keep a monthly schedule but it might break down during the period Slant was going out.

8.

Well, as I was saying, I wrote this column for Quandry, calling it "The Harp That Once or Twice" because I thought its future was doubtful: but taking as much trouble over that first instalment as if I knew how important it was going to be. I mailed it on 22nd January 1951, and three months later I was writing to Lee:

Letter section was more interesting to me than usual this time. I'd been

a bit worried about how THTOOT would go over--you never say anything about it in your letters and for all I knew you were disgusted with it--but it seems to have been received quite well. Ghod bless Joe Kennedy. Not only does he say the thing is good, but he implies that anyone who doesn't agree is a bit stupid. What more could you ask?

I notice from the rest of this letter that I had by now joined Fapa, or rather been inducted into it. Out of idle curiosity, I had scrawled a note in a sample copy of Slant to Harry Warner asking for the dope about it. Next thing I knew I had got a letter from Burbee notifying me I was a member and that the current mailing was on its way. Apparently Bob Tucker had paid my subscription knowing the exchange difficulties British fans were faced with at that time. I was a bit taken aback by this unexpected extension of my publishing activities since I didn't have a duplicator, but with the help of Hoffman and later McCain and Vick I kept up my activity requirements by contributing to existing Fapazines. When I eventually retired from Fapa in 1958 G.M. Carr pointed to the small number of issues of my Fapazine Pamphrey and suggested I wouldn't be missed. However true that may have been, the fact was that I was active in Fapa before and outside Pamphrey.

Lee took to heart the implied rebuke in my letter:

Lemme see now, yes, I printed what Redd Boggs said about Harp in No. 10. And he seems to have voiced the general opinion of my readers. At least he's summed up what they've said, pretty well and he's put what I say into words. Namely in the lines: "Walt Willis is easily the fan find of the year, and you're lucky to snare him as a columnist." Only it was you found me. I was sitting home one day when a Slant came. I was overjoyed at the fact that you wanted to trade such a lovely magazine for poor miserable li'l Quandry. Then I realised that you probably had never seen a copy...only seen one of my ads and fallen for it. Then I read Slant and I sat me down and tried my best to write you a sufficiently intelligent letter to merit a reply. Apparently you received it on a slow day for I did get an answer. And wot an answer! Where I had daringly ventured that you just might sometime mebbe find it in you to write a li'l bit of something for Quandry please? you offered to do a column! So I can't claim to have found you...you found me or something...but regardless, we are both found so now Q and I are thriving happily on the egoboo that comes to the ed of the zine with Harp in't. You make me so happy I could sit here (I sit cross-legged on the bed to type) and die from sheer ecstasy...with a smile on my face...

She ended on a more cryptic note:

Hey, Walt, how are you on keeping secrets? I mean really hanging on to one for a few long months...not telling a soul....?

You will no doubt be thinking I was pretty stupid not to have guessed what the secret was--I mean, what male fan would sit cross-legged on a bed to type--but you haven't heard anything yet. I can be much stupider than that without even trying. Why, three months before, in February 1951, seven months before the secret was detonated in front of an astonished Tucker at the Nolacon, Lee Hoffman had sent me a Valentine. It was a picture of a squirrel with the legend "You're nutty but nice", and so inured was I by now to the eccentricities of fans that I accepted it quite casually as a mere fannish pleasantry. Finally, Lee had, almost literally, to draw me a diagram. She never actually told me she was a girl: she just sent me a photograph and let me draw my own conclusion. Looking back on it now, it's uncanny to see the way Lee and I were almost unconsciously building Quandry for its destiny as the first Anglo-American fanzine. The next important step was all Lee's own idea:

It one day occurred to me that you people can't just reach into your pockets and pull out a dime to stuff into an envelope and send to me over Quandry. Subsequently I stopped short and said to myself, "Hoffman, these fans outside of the US can't just reach into their pockets and pull out a dime to stuff into an envelope and send to you." "True," I replied thoughtfully. "Well," sez I, "Are you trying to be a professional amateur publisher or do you do this for the fun of it?" "Wot do you think?" I asked me sarcastically. "Which means mo' to you? A measly li'l dime or a letter from somebody?" I question further. "W-e-e-e-l-l-l," I look longingly toward an ad for some grease...which shows beautiful golden chicken frying in full colour, and reply, "A letter." "So?" asks I. "So," sez I. So from now on overseas fans can have Q for a letter or note of acknowledgement per issue.

At that time Q had a circulation of 93, only two of whom were in England. And neither of those two were leading fans; they were Ken Johnston of Liverpool and Pete Ridley of London. But after my London Convention reports British fandom took advantage of Lee's offer and swarmed aboard the Quandry bandwagon. However all that was still to come. Slant was still the main thing with me and I was pushing it into all sorts of odd corners. I had read a sf poem in "The Listener" by Robert Conquest, and sent him a copy care of the BBC. He replied with a letter of comment and a subscription. I was infiltrating with a character in London called Borrow who produced a printed little-magazine called The Glass. I wrote for it an introduction to sf and fandom especially aimed at the highbrow mentality, which Ethel might think worth publishing as an appendix to this. And I had sent a copy of Slant to somebody called MacGregor in Aberdeen, who had had an interesting letter in New Worlds. This seed seemed to have fallen on stony ground, but it eventually burgeoned into the following correspondence:

Dear Walter:

I got a copy of Slant about eight months ago and have finally read it. What do you mean, an insult? I have ASFs of much earlier date which I haven't read. All in good time. At any rate I liked Slant (I didn't read the fiction, of course.) Is it still alive? If it is, you will probably react to that as I did when someone asked me if I had anything published yet. Violently. At any rate, I enclose a PO of convenient denomination and would like to see Slant, please....I promise to read it before the end of 1951. If you would like some fiction for this magazine which may and may not exist, I have a 500,000 word novel I could let you have. But I had better warn you that I'd have to revise it first, and it would be a little longer after that.

....Recently Planet, knowing no better, sent back a story for a minor alteration. I added ten thousand words. That, I trust, learned them.

Yours sincerely,
James Macgregor (J.T.M'Intosh)

Dear James:

Thanks for your letter and the sub. And of course for the very nice play in proauthorship, but it wasn't really necessary. We know you. You wrote "The Curfew Tolls" in ASF 1950/12 and you have a story coming up in New Worlds. But I did not know that you were the MacGregor who had the letter in the October '49 issue which we thought interesting enough to be from a potential subscriber. Nice to see the prognostication fulfilled even after such a long time. About TCT, now. I remembered that story and I'm glad to meet the author. Not just because I wanted to query this O & S business. This I do with the greatest reluctance, since I like this sort of twist, but here it didn't seem to have any logical connection with the plot. Besides it seems a most curious way to go about selecting people. On the most severely practical grounds, how about the several hundreds of millions of people who write their names with an ideographic

"alphabet?" However it's a small point and the story was done well enough to make me quite willing to suspend my disbelief. Thanks again for writing..Oh, and about that novel: sure, send it along and we'll serialise it if it's any good. Should be able to get it into only about 500 instalments....Well, it was good enough for Dickens!

Cordially.

Dear Walter:

Yes, you have a very nice zine. But how could anyone say a word against it when he thinks of all the effort it must take? Ploy in proauthorship, indeed... I shall confine myself to remarking that if I had really been plying I should certainly have mentioned my ten stories coming (as of January 1) in US and British magazines. However, I now have. As for O & S....At first, never having had a high opinion of TCT, I was going to let it pass. But on consideration I find I am quite prepared to defend it. In the first place, I don't think the ideographic alphabet question matters much. An author can always cover himself in matters like this. He can explain in tedious detail exactly what was done in all the out-of-the-ordinary cases. But then he has a big unwieldy story which doth protest too much. No, I wanted some method of random selection, and this is never easy. In fact, I am inclined to think it's never possible. Maybe you know some of the classic cases. An oatmeal manufacturer, on the basis of a survey of three pages on the London telephone directory, found a colossal consumption of oatmeal and publicised it. Random selection? No. He omitted to mention that he took his three pages from the Mac section. Another case in Aberdeen not long ago had doctors tearing their hair. There was an upstairs ward and a downstairs ward in the maternity hospital. Over a period deaths, length of convalescence and percentage of stillborn babies were incredibly low in the upstairs ward compared with the other. Theoreticians got busy. Had atmospheric pressure something to do with it? Was there a psychological factor? Again no. Someone found out that the porter had been directing the cases who could walk upstairs and those who were carried in filled the downstairs ward. Enough to upset the random selection completely. So when I wanted a method of selection from names (to include all families as units) I hit on this one. Alphabetical order is not good. You start off with the Aarons and Aaronsons and Abrahams. At various other points you get nothing but Macs and O'somethings. On the other hand, while the OS method means that your first group includes all the Stones (possibly biasing your selection) the fact that the Stones have absolutely nothing to do with the Carsons and the Costers tends to remove the bias. Though you have a lot of 'sons', there is no bias in this suffix that I can see. No, frequently I have to admit that if I were writing a story again I'd do it very differently. But on this point I stand firm...My novel is practically on the way to you. Galaxy, perhaps, and ASF.....

Yours sincerely,
Jim

I was making a lot of new contacts in America by now--Max Keasler, Duggie Fisher, G.M.Carr--but our letters don't seem to be of either intrinsic or historical interest so I've ruthlessly consigned them to oblivion lest these memoirs get so long that I never catch up with them...or even gradually lose ground. There was also Ed Noble, the one who changed his address so many times that Bob Shaw called him "the roamingest Noble of them all". He and I were bound by a bond of fellow feeling since Sam Merwin had castigated our fanzines in his review column. I thought myself specially unfortunate because when I had written a letter of mild expostulation he had quoted parts of it as an excuse to change his reviewing system to one in which he merely listed most of the fanzines without comment. Actually the real reason was that he couldn't be bothered to read them--he admitted when he left the TWS/SS editorship that he hadn't even read most of the ones he did review--

but it worried me that I should get the blame. My problem was to protest my innocence in such a way that Merwin would print it, so I conceived the idea of writing an article called "The Mind of Samuel Merwin". Ostensibly it was a psychological analysis of Merwin based on his personalised writing, but worked in with it was this episode of the reviews. I figured Merwin would hardly resist reading an article like that and that prima donna that he was he might even refer to it. Curiously enough this strategy worked. He devoted a whole page or so to it, quoting copiously just the bits I had wanted him to. I felt quite Machiavellian.

But now everything was being overshadowed by the forthcoming London Convention, the Festival Convention, the first real International Convention to be held this side of the water. There was only one man who made it really worthy of that title and the letter from him I got that Spring is as good a way to end this instalment as it was to presage that climatic convention.

6 Mar 51

Dear Wally the Jolly:

I just received Slant No.5, roared over the departments, and find your fan-nouncement on the bacover not to be ignored. I give you fair warning: don't come to the Loncon! Because I shall be there, and I weigh 202 pounds in my stalking feet (or hadn't you heard I've become a detective)--and if you dare show your face in my presence, I warn you that as sure as God made little green apples, little green fen, and little green Irishmen, I shall give you the most awful thumping on the back out of sheer exuberant enthusiastic ebullient enthusiasm for the unadulterated pleasure that your treasure of a fanmag brings to me! I trust I have made my intentions clear? Stf be with you and yours, far friend, and I look forward to soon setting foot on your shores--and hand on your back in appreciation.

With every good wish.

Forry

FANDOM FOR THE HIGHBROW

The first magazine to specialise in scientific romance was published in 1928. It was called Amazing Stories, and included reprints from Poe and Verne alongside new stories by hack authors. At the end of 1950 there were 26 such magazines in America alone. A few specialise in reprints, chosen recklessly from the works of authors ranging from E.R.Burroughs to G.K.Chesterton, Arthur Machen, Olaf Stapledon and C.S.Lewis, but most of them consist entirely of material that is original, or at least new. Much of it is written by professional authors who have specialised in the genre, or by scientists and technicians with some literary talent, but on the whole the standard of writing seldom rises above the competent. The aficionado is accustomed to skimming through a dozen stories before he finds one he considers worth reading, but the superficial observer is apt to take away with him the impression of a mass of nonsensical and ill-written rubbish. The appearance of some of the magazines does nothing to encourage a closer look. Since none of them has a circulation of more than 200,000, they fall inevitably into the category and company of "pulp" magazines, with whose lurid covers their own must compete for the attention of the casual buyer. Recently the better magazines have tended to give up the struggle, adopt restrained covers and pocketbook format, and rely on subscription sales. The best of these are Fantasy And Science Fiction, Galaxy, and Street and Smith's Science Fiction. The cover of this last actually bears vestigial remains of its former juvenile title Astounding. A reprint is available in England, and except for the British magazine New Worlds is the only "sf" magazine on sale here that is worth inspection.

One of the first things that the publishers discovered about sf was that it inspired an extraordinarily articulate interest among some of their readers. The

editor of Amazing, commenting incredulously on this in his third issue, dubbed them "fans", and in time they have come to accept the name with a special significance of their own---rather as the "Contemptibles" did. Those correspondents whose letters were printed in Amazing immediately began to correspond with one another and in 1929 some of them published the first fan magazine. Since then about 3000 fan magazines titles have appeared, some lasting only one issue but many publishing regularly for years. Quite a variety of reproductive processes have been used--letterpress printing, lithography, mimeography, hectography, handwriting with carbon copies, and even wire recording. At the moment there are about 200 being published. Their circulation ranges from 50 to 1000. Their paid circulation is notoriously less. It has never been reliably confirmed that any of them has ever made a profit: they are very seldom meant to, and many are distributed free.

These magazines all circulate in the tiny world of "fandom", sometimes called the Microcosm. Estimates of the number of fans vary according to the degree of activity one adopts as the criterion. The nucleus is the two Amateur Press Associations of some 100 editors, who as it were live by taking in one another's magazines. Just outside are the editors of subscription "fanmags", each the centre of the closely knit group of his own subscribers, many of whom are in close touch with other groups. Most of these editors spend all their spare time in fan activity--publishing, writing, drawing, editing and corresponding. The most active often end by throwing up their jobs for a hazardous existence as professional authors, editors, publishers or agents. About half the editors of the professional sf magazines are ex-fans.

At any one time the number of really active fans is about 300. In addition there is the comparatively sane fringe of people who are active to the extent of occasional subscribing to and writing for fanmags, writing letters to the professional magazines, and corresponding. The total number of people known to take an articulate interest in sf is about 1500. About a thousand of these are in America, and the rest mainly in the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

Explanations of fan psychology have ranged from a viable mutation to a castration complex, but the truth is probably no more than they are journalis manques, brought together by an interest so eclectic as to give them almost the status of a persecuted minority. As for the interest itself, it seems to me what requires explanation is not why it exists, but why it is not more widely shared. There are two facts that should be more widely realised. One is that space flight is today a practicable proposition (1). The other is that there are estimated to be a hundred thousand planets in this galaxy inhabited by intelligent beings (2). Either space travel or contact with extra-terrestrial thought would be the most important event in the history of mankind. Are science fiction readers wrong to take an interest in them? They were virtually the only members of the public who were mentally prepared for the atomic bomb, the political and psychological implications of which had been a subject of discussion among them for ten years past.

(1) "The Conquest of Space", Ley and Bonestell

(2) "The Nature of the Universe", Hoyle

The British Convention of 1951 was the first I had ever been at, and the 15-page report on it I wrote for Quandry was frighteningly uninhibited. At least it frightens me now when I re-read it: if it had all happened in New York, I'd probably still be in jail. It didn't frighten me at the time partly because I didn't yet know personally any of the people on the official programme, and partly because I was under a peculiar misapprehension about them. I thought of them as pros, remote godlike figures who moved and had their being on a higher plane

altogether. Nothing a scruffy little fan could say about them could ruffle their Olympian composure. So I was cheerfully caustic about everything on the programme, from the food (I'm not saying a word against the catering arrangements at this hotel. It's just that it's the first I've seen where they have a fifth place on the cruet stand for a stomach pump.) right up to the Convention Chairman.

This was poor Ted Carnell, whom I saw as a Machiavellian figure who had manoeuvred Walter Gillings out of his central position in English science fiction. This theory was based on nothing more than doubt as to whether Carnell was really a better editor than Gillings, reading in old fanzines about their long standing rivalry, and a speech which I reported as follows:

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 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 Science Fantasy that a complete abolition of all traces of him wouldn't cure.....

And so on. The first warning I had that the Olympians could be ruffled was a letter from Vince Clarke to Madeleine, whom he affected to believe was my widow. Then George Charters told me he had had a letter from Carnell in which he asked me to pass on the message that my convention report "stank". I'm relieved to see that I didn't respond to this by a grovelling apology: in fact I was almost defiant.

George Charters was here this evening and passed on your comment on my convention report.

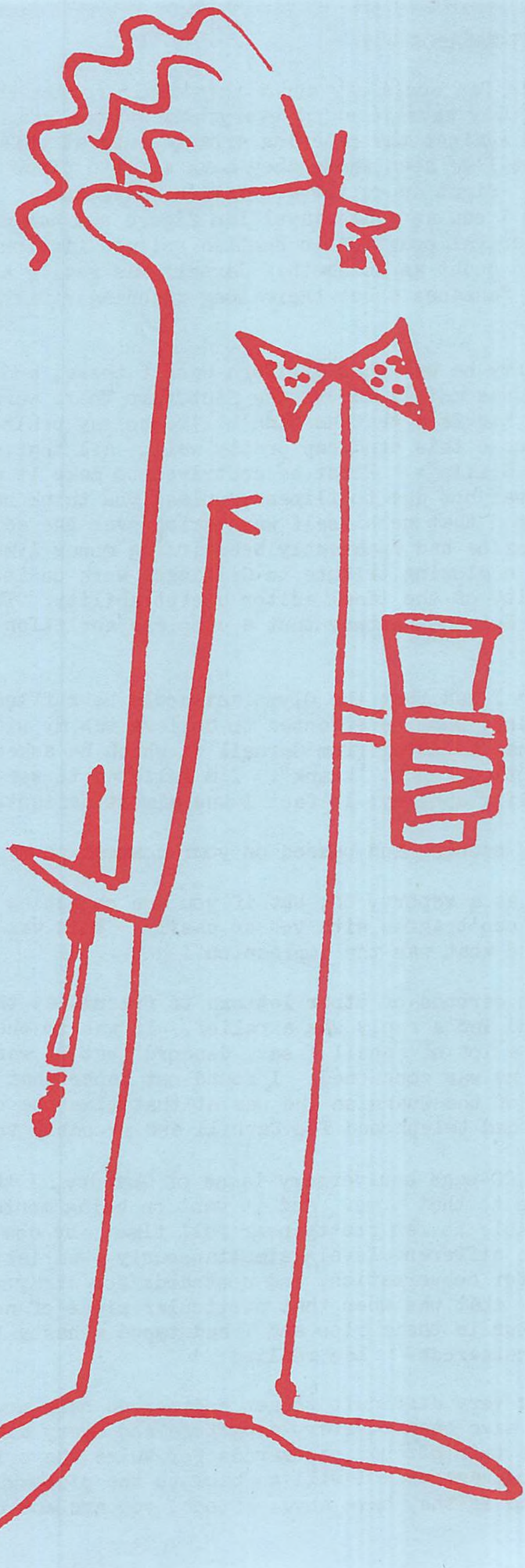
If you mean the report stank as a report, OK, but if you are objecting to the way you appeared in it yourself I can't agree with you so easily. This was a frankly impressionistic account and that was the impression I got...

Nevertheless I was, judging from carbons of other letters to friends at the time, quite upset about the affair and Ted's reply was a relief. It was to the effect that my report had stirred up a lot of "shall I say, discord" but it was now all water under the bridge as far as he was concerned. I found out later that immediately Bill Temple got his copy of the Quannish (he was at that time the only London pro on Lee's mailing list) he had telephoned Ted Carnell and probably the others and read out the juicier bits.

The Quannish was of course the 100-page anniversary issue of Quandry, I think the largest fanzine ever published up to that time. And it went on being monthly, Lee at this stage of her life being able to fan pretty near full time. By now she and I were in correspondence on three different levels, simultaneously---airletters for urgencies, long surface letters for conversation, and postcards for stray thoughts. Or maybe I should say pactsarcds, for that was when that particular piece of nonsense started. There had been a hiatus in their flow and I had typed a hasty PS to a letter which came out, "What, no pactsarcds?" Lee replied:

No, Walt, I'm sorry but it is very difficult to get pactsarcds here now. Seemingly there is a shortage. I have been to every drugstore and every dime-store in Savannah. I can get some fair pitcuer pactsarcds for twice the price of regular pactsarcds. But that is outrageous. I will go back to the place where I originally got pactsarcds and see if they have any. If not, you are out of luck on the pactsarcd situation.

Ted Carnell



Having a printing press gives you an advantage in some situations. I got some blank cardboard and promptly printed some "Poetsarcds" and sent them off to her. While I was at it I ran off some for myself and printed Lee's name and address on the other side. She was charmed at the idea of incoming mail with her letterhead on it. I also printed up a supply of visiting cards and mailed it to her at the Nolacon Hotel, where the great Secret was to be revealed. Though the inner circle had grown (and Chuck Harris was being uncannily perceptive. Way back in June he had said casually "I'd always thought previously that Lee was a female.") Lee had set her heart on keeping the Secret until the Nolacon, an event which was loomng very important in her young life. The way she told me was by sending me a photograph, with a letter which read in part:

Concerning the Secret which is enclosed: You, Shelby Vick and Bobby Pope are the only fans to whom this has been revealed....All will be made known at the Nolacon of course, but until then I want it kept secret. I've built Q and myself up in fandom pretty well on merit alone...no quarter asked because I am a girl and none given. The N3F's voted me top faned and I like to think I earned it and not that I was just given it. It's a nice feeling to achieve something.

My immediate reaction was a stunned and airmailed postcard, which Lee pinned to the wall of her room: I can't remember what was on it, but later I was writing:

Still haven't got used

to your being a girl. I suppose the idea should have crossed my mind some time or other, especially when I got the valentine, but it never did. I had quite a clear picture of you in my mind---a short tubby chap with twinkling brown eyes and an absent-minded manner. Don't imagine I'm disappointed--I'm delighted, especially when you turn out to be pretty. And it's an absolutely wonderful hoax. I don't think there's ever been one as good. And that business of sending me a valentine was delicious, like THE PURLONED LETTER.

By the time the Nolacon came I knew Lee pretty well, and looked forward to it nearly as much as she. I was with her every mile of the way to New Orleans...more literally than you would expect. For instance there was this letter I got post-marked Montgomery, Alabama:

Well, I'm off. Right now I'm on the train, 20 miles out of Savannah. This is a "local" and it stops at every crossing between here and Montgomery. Left Savannah 7.30pm, arrive Montgomery 7.50am. Change trains. Arrive New Orleans 3.10pm. My first train trip alone....I am and we're sitting on a siding waiting for some other train to use the track...This is a very modern train. All the latest conveniences, like wheels. Only trouble is that they stop every few miles --probably to water the mules. Laid over 45 mins. in Waycross, so I had a cup of coffee...Well, the train we've been waiting for has finally come. I'll mail this in the next stopover, probably Montgomery, Alabama.

This arrived in Belfast even before the Convention had started and, intoxicated by this participation in Lee's historic trip, I replied immediately under the sub-conscious conviction that she was still on the train.

Dear Lee:

Gosh, what are you doing in Alabama? I don't want to worry you but are you sure you're on the right train? Besides how did Alabama get in there anyway? I don't see any justification for it at all. I don't know much about US geography, but I do know that both Savannah and New Orleans are somewhere down there in the bottom right-hand corner only an inch or so apart. With such a convenient arrangement I see no reason for Alabama to come butting in a spoil everything. In fact I'm beginning to take a very poor view of Alabama altogether. Sinister sort of place. Did you notice you are always hearing about midnight choo-choos leaving for Alabama, BUT YOU NEVER HEAR OF ANY OF THEM COMING BACK! Vestigia nulli retrorsum or something--no footprints coming out. Of course I'm willing to admit that my knowledge of the US is not very extensive--in fact it could be written down on this form. There are 48 states plus Washington, DC. There may be a Washington AC too but I never heard of it. On the top righthand corner is the communist state of Rhode Island, a foul sort of place. At the other end is California and at the bottom are various Mexicos in various age groups. But the bottom righthand corner baffles me. I don't ever like to talk about Texas for instance because I have a sort of neurotic bloc about it--one of those things that are always happening in ASF when you feed electronic brains contradictory data. 1. The west is where people shoot sheriffs and punch cattle. 2. Nowhere do they do this more assiduously than in Texas. 3. Texas is in the South East. Let's see, this is the 31st. This won't arrive till the third at the earliest, by which time the con will be over. Imagine that. I'll bet you're worn out. So----WELCOME HOME!

While Lee Hoffman is steaming on her midnight choo-choo through Alabama on her way to her first convention, I think maybe I should interrupt my own train of thought for a confession. This is a dark secret I have been keeping from fandom for many

years, and I only make a clean breast of it now because it will be impossible for you to understand these memoirs without it. Not to make any bones about it, the skeleton in my closet is this. I am neat.

Neat by fannish standards, that is. By mundane standards I am no doubt slap-happy enough, but compared to Shelby Vick (who once lost his typer in his fan room) or Duggie Fisher (who mailed out his fanzine copy by copy whenever he happened to trip over a subscription) I am not a proper fan at all. If you haven't already ground this page under your heel in disgust, I'll explain how it takes me. I don't put the letters I receive in any of the recognised places like the floor or under the bed, I actually at some stage or other file them. Yes, in real manila folders with a file tag.

When I first started this addiction I put everything on the same file just as it came in. This was my own infallible invention to prevent letters being put on the wrong file, and it was convenient for passing comments on to contributors. But of course when I began to correspond with more people it became difficult to find previous correspondence, so I took the momentous step of opening special files for people like Lee Hoffman and Chuck Harris.

It was from this fatal decision that you are now suffering. For having followed Lee Hoffman halfway from Savannah to New Orleans, you are now unceremoniously jerked back out of that timestream and deposited breathless in London, where another portentous event has just occurred.

Oh. No, it hasn't. The letter I was looking at was dated 16th January, 1951, but I now notice that my reply was dated January 1952 and in those days I was quicker to answer letters than that. We won't come to that portentous event for another four months, so back to Lee Hoffman and the Nolacon. Sorry about these dizzying transitions, but I am close to Ethel's deadline, and the explanation about the filing system will serve for alas too many discontinuities in the future.

During the next few weeks there trickled into Belfast a small stream of hectic airletters, letters and postcards from Lee in New Orleans (including one reading simply "MET TUCKER!") from which I gathered that Lee had had a wonderful time, and that the denouement of the Great Hoffman Hoax had been sensational. Though not perhaps as sensational as Lee had hoped, judging from one letter-in which she repeated three times darkly "Fans are blabbermouths." Indeed by this time quite a few fans were party to the great secret, and were comparing notes. One was Ian McAulay that is, whose description of Lee as she was at that time was disarmingly frank compared to the delicate hints of older fans:

When I got off the train at Savannah I nearly fainted. Boy what a surprise! A big fat girl came up to me and said, "Are you Ian McAulay?"

Before we move into the stirring events of 1952, "The Year of Not Enough Time" as Lee called it, there are a couple of 1951 letters I can't throw away without some record. The first because it was written by a great sf writer from whom we won't hear again.

Dear Walter:

Thanks for the Winter Slant. C.L. Moore and I were delighted. I hastily enclose a buck for our subscription. The magazine is very refreshing, somehow. I'm not sure exactly why. Possibly it's its high literacy which compares so favorably to the majority of U.S. fan magazines, though there's more to it than that. Possibly the maturity of the humor (most of it, I qualify) gives Slant its extremely pleasant air. At anyrate, there is no air of feverishly compensatory

neuroticism, the sort of thing which makes many U.S. fan magazines rather embarrassing. I've always felt that writing should involve at least some amount of mental activity. This may prejudice me fatally. I'm sorry I didn't see your article on Van Vogt and Kafka. They do have something in common, certainly. But your statement that Kafka seems to be a s-f writer manque - couldn't you with equal justice say that most science-fiction writers are Kafkas manque? It rather turns, to my mind, on the definition of science fiction, a term for which I've found no satisfactory answer as yet. I'm working on it, though; wish me luck. I suspect the answer may turn upon method, as in the "pure" detective story, fathered by the Gothic, the detective was a symbol and not necessarily the protagonist; the criminal was the centre of the target, and the inductive process the method. In s-f, my present hypothesis is that the target needs better definition, and perhaps the method. Since I get confused quite easily, I admit that I may be wrong. But at least I know there is a target. This automatically puts me one up on Kafka. On the side of general popularization, I still say that what s-f needs is an H.Rider Haggard. Glad you like "Fairy Chessman", and thanks for your kind words. I got the advance copies on the book last week, but couldn't bear to re-read the story. I figure that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, and, whenever I pick up one of my published yarns I realise that it certainly did.

Regards,
Henry Kuttner

And the second because it contains a piece of information about a famous story which however slight would otherwise perish completely.

Dear Walter:

I shall introduce my section on proauthorship very adroitly this time with a true story. Part of the story could have been told earlier, but the end has only just supplied itself. When I sent you a little story for Slant some time ago it was only after two prolonged searches for the thing. After the first, I decided "Look Out, Grandad" was lost for ever and sat down to write another short piece for you. The only idea that occurred to me was the not very new one about human beings refusing to follow out the commands of an electronic brain for their own good. Good enough for Slant, I said blasphemously to myself. I got under way as follows, viz.

On Earth a town dies. Its name was Katahut.

But Katahut was on Venus.

It was like Koko's story to the Mikado. When Economics Centre said "Let a thing be done", it was as good as done--practically, it was done. When EC said a town must die, the town was as good as dead--practically, it was dead--so why not say so?

This went on happily for a while. But when I reached the bottom of the second page, it became obvious that "Katahut Said No" was not, as I had intended, going to be finished on page three or four. So I put it aside and instituted another search for "Look Out, Grandad"--this time successful. I sent it off, and that was that. Last week, however, I heard from my agent that he had just sold "Katahut Said No" and another story, "The Bliss Of Solitude" to Galaxy. So when you read "Katahut" in Galaxy, remember the first two pages were written for Slant. That may enable you to add a few trenchant phrases to your comment about rejecting stories merely out of a high regard for H.L. Gold.

J.T. McIntosh

When someone dismisses our hobby as worthless I think of Chuck Harris. Not just because he is one of the finest people I have met through it, but because his

father once took me aside and thanked me for fandom.

Chuck contracted meningitis while serving as a nursing orderly in the Navy during the war and lost his hearing completely. Being stricken suddenly with deafness in adult life is a very different thing from growing up with it, and back in civilian life Chuck became a virtual hermit. Then he came into fandom through the International Science Fiction Correspondence Club and started writing letters, first to American fans and then to me. But he still never met anybody. When I was about to make my first trip to England he wrote and explained about his deafness and asked me not to call on him.

I accepted this at the time, but after I got back home I kept nudging him and the Epicentre towards one another, and on 16th January 1952, Chuck wrote:

Remember I told you I'd written to Ken? Monday I had an answer from Vince. A damn nice answer too. Five pages mostly about duping. Vince asked me to go see him at the Epicentre (and Ken). Listen...."where else can you see them but at the Epicentre? We've been meaning to ask you around ever since Walt Willis gave us a glowing account of your letters (ta) along with the reason why you fight shy of the White Horse..." I shall go up on the 27th probably....I'm a bit scared of going.

The historic visit actually did take place on the 27th, and next day Chuck reported to me:

CHUCK VISITS THE EPICENTRE. Last night!!! Hell, I just can't describe everything that happened. It was the most enjoyable night that I've had out for a long time. I think Vince and Ken are really terrific. Even Gold couldn't have had a better welcome. Almost all the time I was there Vince balanced his portable on his knee and provided a sort of running commentary...Primarily, I went to see the duplicators but we never got around to it---I'm going again Sunday week!!

And so it started, the nucleus of what came later to be known as Sixth Fandom, the closest and happiest gestalt ever formed in international fandom. It lasted until the Great Mackenzie War, but that was a long time in the future, and meanwhile for some of us fandom became in one sense of the hackneyed phrase a way of life. It was one that was to end in tragedy for Vince Clarke, but for Chuck I cannot think it brought anything but good. After visiting the Epicentre he went to the White Horse and then to Conventions, lost his sensitivity about his deafness and became as social a person as anyone. I don't think he would have done all this so quickly and easily in any other group. Where else can you progress so circumspectly from letters to meetings: where else do people find it natural to converse by writing things down: and where else, let's face it, are people so sensitive towards one another?

Chuck is now happily married and, temporarily at least, has left fandom. But he still writes to me and he's still the same likeable character I was swapping promags with back in those early days. Here's some correspondence we had way back in late 1951 which shows his characteristic style:

Dear Walt:

What a bloody silly place to hide a spares list. I want those zines I have made tix after. Don't misunderstand this and send me a cruddy heap of Amaz and FA. Let us have no misunderstandings about this. Either send me those ASF I have listed or stand by to run out of fandom.



Chuck Harris

This was a footnote to a letter I wasn't to bother answering. I replied:

Dear Chuck:

So I'm not to answer your letter am I? No wonder, after you made such an exhibition of yourself, coming cringing and whining to me for magazines instead of asking for them forthrightly like a healthy clean living English lad. And what magazines! Look, Harris, you may think it's smart to follow the crowd like this, typical of you rabble-rousing agitators, but do you never think that I might welcome a spot of originality now and then. Where's your initiative (and don't say you never had one, we were too poor)? What's wrong with solid substantial mags like Amazing and FA, which can be used for a variety of purposes about the house? But no! He must ask like everyone else for ASF and F&SF, just because everyone else is doing it these days. Don't you realise that AM and FA have the biggest circulations of any sf magazine? They MUST be good. The mere fact that the superficial observer notices FA good about Amaz shouldn't put you off. Study them carefully, maybe they're in code. I have a beautiful stock of FA and Amaz here and because of our beautiful friendship I'll let you have them for exactly the same price as those tiny little magazines you asked for. These Amaz and FA have been in my possession for a long time and I can recommend them as being thoroughly housetrained and free from eyetracks.

Chuck came back with:

Dear Walt:

Ohgoshohboyoboy, do you really mean this about these Amazings? You would really let me have'em? I did start to save these at one time but couldn't get enough to make it worth while. I've got a swell idea about these,--you know how Unger sells those complete sets of asf and Unk at such ridiculously high prices? Well, IF you had a COMPLETE set of Amz you could do the same. I've always tried to help you since you entered fandom--with a little help you may go far--and I am willing to stretch a point and let you have my Amz in exchange for those tiny ol' asf. Please don't thank me for this,-- we fen must stick together and try to help each other.

We were all mad for old Astoundings those days. Talking of which, I have a curiosity here, a letter from myself to Vince Clarke, signed with an assumed name, and the reason it came back into my possession was that he wrote to Chuck on the back of it and Chuck passed the conversation on to me. That was one of the nice things about our relationship. Everytime Chuck went to the Epicentre he or Vince kept all the pieces of paper on which Vince had written down what he said to Chuck, and afterwards they mailed them on to me. It was like being there. Come to think of it, there's another little piece of fannish history buried in this letter, because it was sent inside a copy of Astounding. It was all in pencil and in crude capitals, and it said:

DEAR MR. CLARKE:

I AM ENCLOSING AN OLD 'PROZINE' FOR A ~~SUBST~~ SUB TO YOUR S.F.N.E.W.S. I HOP THIS IS AL RIGHT BECAUSE I HAVNT GOT ANY CURRENT ISSEWS JUST A LOT OF THESE OLD THINGS WHICH I FORGOT TO GIVE TO THE SAVAGE MEN LAST TIME.

FANCERELY,
A.N.E.O'PHAN

P.S. I THOUGHT YOUR CONQUEST OF SPACE WAS VERY GOOD.

The enclosure was the April 1943 issue, which Vince needed for his collection. I had needed it for mine too; in fact some of you may remember that I made a sort of fannish Holy Ghraill out of it. But curiously by this time it was not the only war-time ASF I had missing, but the only one I had. Two people had sent me April 43's

but I'd sold the rest of my collection to help the Fund Shelby Vick had started to bring me to the 1952 Chicon.

And that is really jumping ahead a bit. We should really go back as far as June 30th, 1951, when in the middle of one of his letters Shelby Vick embedded this casual query. "Any chance you might strike an oil well, and attend the Nolacon?" I said, equally casually, no but if I did I would. Whereupon Shelby hit me with this-----in a PS!

I'm instigating a contest. It's to find out who is the most popular foreign fan. There is, of course, a possibility that you will win. If you do, and if enough money is donated, you will be brought to the Nolacon, post paid...You might make sure you can come, in case everything works out.

12.

Unless I start to lead a more humdrum existence or I get a move on with these memoirs I'm going to start losing ground. I shall have to cover at least three months of the past each installment.

So this time I'll try to polish off 1952. It's made easier by the fact that I have already written up six weeks of it in unremitting detail in the Harp Stateside. I left that account on the tender at Southampton at the last sight of the Neptunia because it was the nearest approach to a climax, or at least a natural termination. What happened afterwards was, until I got home, something of a let-down. I got the train for London with a minute to spare and no time to notify anyone of my arrival, and when I got to Waterloo there was no one there to meet me. I was a bit let down because I thought there might have been. I said as much to Chuck in the first letter I wrote when I got home....

I haven't even read some of the letters here but I do gather you people were expecting to see me in London. I'm sorry to have dashed away like that, but by the time I got to Waterloo I was very browned off with lugging that luggage and with my travelling generally and when there was nobody there to meet me I thought what the hell and phoned BEA and made a reservation. I didn't fancy making the safari to Welling (where Vince Clarke lived then) without native bearers. If I'd been in Vince's place I'd at least have met the likeliest train--I got up at 6.30 one morning to meet the Liverpool boat that time we thought he might be coming--but that's Vince and I wouldn't have him different for the world. But I do think he might have given me a phone number to ring. As it was I sent him a telegram to meet me at Waterloo that afternoon and we had until then until the plane left at six. Anyway I wasn't so keen on going to the White Horse...I was very fed up with large aggregations of fans.

While waiting until it was time to meet Vince who at that time was out of work, I wandered about London, feeling very anonymous and sophisticated. Anonymous because I was surrounded by fans who didn't know I was there, and sophisticated because suddenly London was so commonplace. Only six weeks ago it had been to me a distant and glamorous metropolis, attainable only after weeks of preparation and a whole days journey. But to a world traveller, familiar with New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, and about to fly home that evening, it was like my own backyard. Both feelings were curiously sad and pleasant. Back at Waterloo and I met Vince and reclaimed my suitcases from the Left Luggage Office, and we made our way to the Air Terminal talking all the way. There was so much to talk about I didn't find out until I got home why he hadn't been at Waterloo in the first place. He had written to me care of the Shipping Company and they hadn't delivered his letter: it reached me eventually in Belfast and I wrote to Vince explaining this and various other

things, such as:

After a suitable interval I hauled Madeleine over the coals for not passing you on the gen from the letters I wrote her, intended for the SFNEWS. I told her she should be a member of the London Circle. (Her lawyers tell her this is grounds for divorce)...I don't right now feel like writing anything about the trip---I'm in a sort of deep spiritual exhaustion...by the way, thanks for passing on the quote from Shelby's letter. I've been wondering what the reaction was---I'm afraid to open fmz that come in nowadays.....Lee and I are going to start a whispering campaign in fandom that Burbee and Laney are That Way. Have already started by making James change an inscription mentioned in his current pro story to "CB loves FTL".

....the main impression I took home from the Chicon is that we in Britain won't really know what a convention is until we engage a hotel for it. The only thing that prevents our conventions from being the mad and glorious affairs that the US ones are is that we give up at 11pm, when the Convention should only be starting....With their set-up the Convention attains very soon the sort of organic unity we know only in the closing sessions. It gathers momentum from day to day instead of, as with ours, being merely a couple of desultory lecture sessions.

It seems strange to think that British conventions used to be like that. But then how familiar some of the rest of this is. Isn't it a strange coincidence that this period in my memoirs should come up at a time when I'm re-enacting it. And that our editor should have a fellow-feeling now too for that weary WAW of ten years ago.

The quote from Shelby was a complimentary reference to me. He wrote direct, too, his letter starting..

.....and what do you say after you say "It's over?"

9.29.October 10th 1952

Suppose I just try saying: "Hi, Walt-----" Now that it's gone and finished, what do we do; pick up like nothing has happened. Start over again? Pretend we don't know one another? Try to ignore the whole thing? Aweel.

But then he reverted to his usual cheerful self and went on for another four pages about his plans for Confusion and everything. But I wasn't the only one in the house getting letters from Americans now. Madeleine had an unexpected one from one Robert Bloch.

Dear Madeleine:

The other day a man named Chuck Harris requested that I do a piece on Walt's visit. I turned it out for him in short order...having some difficulty, as I had previously done a number of similar items for fanzines in this country and was running out of foolishness on the subject. I sent it off and thought no more about it until last night. Then I got to thinking that I have been a damned fool and I had better write to you.

Fan humor, so-called, has always been pretty rough...through the years I have more or less fallen unconsciously into a pattern of acceptance, and have gone along with perpetrating some rather outrageous libels more as a matter of course than anything else. This based on the feeling that fandom as a whole can dish it out and take it without being too serious about the matter.

Knowing Walt as I do, I had (at the time) no hesitancy or guilty restraint in laying it on pretty thick. Quite suddenly I realize that someone else is involved...viz, you...and I might have unthinkingly embarrassed you by depicting Walt as a crude, libidinous, besotted monster. Even though you probably realise it's all a gag, still the repetition of such japeries may have irked or upset you.

If that's the case...please accept my sincere and humble apologies along with this explanation. I want you to know despite my libels, that I (along with a couple of dozen of other pros & American fans who have recently corresponded with me on the subject) hold WAW in the highest esteem. But oddly enough, our way of showing our esteem usually takes this negative, backhanded method of humorous slander and calumny. Now my conscience is somewhat clearer...and the next time I concoct some vile slur about your husband I'll do so with the feeling that you know it and there's no truth in it!

Only hope that some day you will be able to accompany Walt on a joint expedition to the colonies here...if you're half as nice as he says you are, American fandom is missing something.

You needn't show this note to Walt if you don't want to...it might be just as well for him to go on thinking of me as a complete stinker. After all, the poor guy is entitled to have a few illusions!

Believe me to be,

Yours most sincerely,
Robert Bloch

I don't suppose I need have quoted that letter, because most of you already know what sort of guy Robert Bloch is. But I don't like to see a man do so many good deeds by stealth without being from time to time exposed. Early in 1953 I had a closely-typed 11-page letter from Richard Elsberry and I wrote him a six page reply. We had only the most desultory contact before and after, and it was as if we had discharged a whole lifetime of correspondence in one great spasm. Looking back on it, that huge flashover illuminated a watershed in fannish history, and I'll keep some of it for the next installment, which will deal with so-called Seventh Fandom. But there are parts of it which seem too appropriate for this present mood of mine not to quote here.....

.....One of the things I've noticed since I got back is that it's harder to write letters to some people. It's like those stereoscopic viewers. The first time you look through them the eye persists in seeing two separate images, until your brain makes the adjustment. Before I went over I had perfectly clear mental pictures of the people I met. Now I have another perfectly clear mental picture, but just slightly different. Not much more different than the two pictures in the stereoscopic viewer, but still different enough so that you're not quite sure which one to concentrate on...

..I wasn't offended by anything you said in your con report. In fact I guess I got off lightly. I feel rather as if I had passed my finals. I expect you can imagine how I feel about this whole thing, how important it was to me that this Fund affair wouldn't appear to posterity as a dismal misguided flop. And it's not what happens at the Convention that matters as far as that's concerned, but what happens in the con reports...as for the Hoffman angle, I was expecting some talk about that. It's rather peculiar the way this happened. People had been assuring me that I'd be surrounded by crowds of neofen and I'd finally come to believe they might actually be so very different from English fans. Of course at the time I actually believed that the younger fen wore helicopter beanies. So I just naturally waited for them to come to me. Everything was so hectic that it wasn't until the con was nearly over and I totted up mentally the list of fans I'd met against those I hadn't, that I realised people weren't thrusting themselves forward. I was being accompanied by a train of a few like Ish and Beale and Mitchell who had little backwardness, while dozens of people I'd really wanted to meet were staying tactfully away. I'm not accustomed to being a social lion and it was really hard for me to accept that if I wasn't seeing much of Shelby it wasn't because Shelby had other things he preferred doing, but because he thought I mightn't want to see him. By the time this possibility had dawned on me the convention was nearly over...But if I didn't see as much as I wanted to of some people the fault was theirs or mine, not someone else's. Certainly I don't

think anyone should blame Lee or Max. Curious that no one criticises Max, with whom I spent as much time as with Lee.

...You have some real complex stuff in that Pogo thing. Vince Clarke would love it and I must pass it on to him when I get my energy back. Right now I can't even get interested in psycho-analysing Su Rosen though there was a time when I thought about her a lot. She really shook me that time. I had my guard completely down, full of bonhomie and vague amiability, and a type like that was the last thing I expected to bump up against. I'd known people like that when I used to knock about with the arty crew in the local Bohemia but I never expected to find one in fandom...and so young too. Extraordinary. I kept wondering why she behaved like that. I mean, where's her percentage? It's a useful act in a high-brow set, where the idea is to get a reputation for eccentric genius without actually doing anything, and you get invited to parties as a sort of turn, but in fandom where most intercourse is on paper it doesn't seem to me it should work out so well....Maybe she's trying too hard, not realising that in fandom any girl with looks is bound to be a big hit anyway. The nymphomaniac act was just piling Pelleas on Melisande. I really did like America. I felt absolutely at home there. The people knew what I was saying, I knew from the movies how to get about in it, and after the first few days it didn't feel like a foreign country at all... Thought the postal service was poor, as if the US was so deeply committed to private enterprise that they were reluctant to have a public one, and couldn't get used to not being able to send a telegram from a post office...The average nonfan citizen seemed pleasant and amiable, though with maybe a higher percentage of ignorant louts. Though maybe that's only because where people are less inhibited in expressing themselves you recognise boors sooner...It would be better if your cinemas would allow smoking and ban popcorn. You drive twice as fast and twice as well....You have an irritating habit of disguising your tv sets as 18th century commodes...Your food is more plentiful than ours, but no better cooked, and in most households not treated with proper respect. The American kitchen not only looks like a snack bar, it often actually is...I thought your newspapers dull and unweildy. I resented being a captive audience for commercials in Public transport. I think drug stores are wonderful...The story about there being no class distinction isn't cant, it's true and wonderful. The supposedly unpleasant features of the AW of L one reads about, like low educational standards, crime, corruption, greed and conformity, I didn't have personal experience of. The climate didn't affect my health. I felt sort of dull and mentally anaesthetised much of the time, that I think was the absorption of too many new impressions, and the heat.

It's curious how little of this letter I would change if I was writing it again today. Of course being so much older and wiser I didn't make the same mistakes at the Convention: I made a whole different set of new ones. The bit about Sue Rosen is put in because it will be of intense interest to those of you who knew her later. She has for years been living a strange secret existence in the shadows of fandom, a sort of Dark Lady of the DNQ's. As far as I know she has been mentioned only twice in public, once in the Harp Stateside and once in an outrageous letter from Ray Nelson in Hyphen, which I couldn't resist printing. You must remember the episode it recounted - the punch-line was "And tell Harlan Ellison our engagement is off!"

13.

Since I'm still toiling on the Great Trip Report, which is getting to be so long it'll take nearly as much time to read it as it did to live it, I think I'll let this installment be taken over by the rest of the two letters which comprised the great Elsberry/Willis correspondence of early 1953.....

Dear Walt:

Oh, God, Walt I've just got to write! I could jump on my foot, bang my head against the wall, cut off my arm with a rusty knife, smash my knee-cap, gouge out my ear with a broken beer bottle, smash myself in the face, pulp the flesh with an old sludgehammer, kick my teeth out, stick lighted matches under my fingernails. Maybe even pinch myself. I'm mad. Bitter! Yes, bitter! And all because I haven't written to Walt Willis for so god-damn long!

What set me off, and finally got me wound up enough to write is Confusion #13. I had a card to Shelby in the typer, and I decided to comment on Fusion and so I pulled it out of the stack and began to look through it. First I got p.'ed with Dave Hammond, and almost stopped to dash off a short article kicking him in the gonads; but I held myself in check. Tho I read Willis's article. "This Ackerman fellow isn't such a bad guy after all," I said to myself. "I've got to tell Walt about it." Of course, I knew I wouldn't. Not yet anyway. Then, suddenly, I found a reference to myself. A lean intense man inside me, eh? So that's what Boggs was talking about! I thought he was just being cryptic again. I immediately propelled myself upward from the bed, tossing Confusion to the winds, tore the postcard out of the typer and began to write this letter. That's the way it happened.

Of late, I've been wondering if its worth it all. Fandom, that is. I've found that if I don't read the promags I don't really miss them. The same with fanmags--probably because there are so few good ones. The majority of fan material of late has been truly cruddy, and I've probably contributed my share. You can look through a dozen fan mags without finding anything worth remembering or commenting upon. I remember at Chicon, Tom Quinn asking me if I thot I could give up fandom. I told him yes, and he just gave me an incredulous stare. Right now I don't think I've ever been so sure of that answer.

Fandom doesn't carry that glorious exultation any more. I find myself finding fault with things, perhaps justifiably so. As I said, the good fanmags are few and far between, and I just don't have the time to fan like a true fan should. I thumb through a fanzine and see good fans wasting themselves. Instead of turning out reams of fan crud they could be working on a story to sell to the pros. But it's a vicious circle, you can't break away from it without severing a lot of ties. I can't figure out fans anymore. They've become aliens of some sort. Take Hoffman. She's loaded with talent, but of late seems to becoming cynical and cliqish. Some issues of Q are directed toward just one or two people or a little clique of her friends. And she says, "So what. If you don't like it go jump." I don't mind the attitude, I employ it myself sometimes, but not all the time! Instead of doing something worthwhile I find her mumbling on about Bloch being her great-grandmother etc. I am not amused. In fact, I find it almost silly. I like humor, and fan humor and satire is vitally essential to combat the cliquish type. Like I say, I cant figure Lee out. She isn't the fan she was a year ago. Now, somehow, she is remote and aloof. Fandom is above her. Q has slipped badly. I've read whole issues of late and found nothing in them. I'm lost. It seems that a new fandom has arisen, and I'm not in it.

Dear Rich:

I've been down with a real 1919 type flu. After eight days with a temperature of 102 I tottered downstairs with the thought of a week or so of full time fan-activity in which I might actually get up to date with everything and get onto a sort of day to day level--only one day's mail to deal with--and started to get organised. (I wish I had that peculiarly fannish ability not to bother with things....I should be a lot happier...but I will persist in keeping letters, not only keeping them but filing them and even answering them.) Started with the business type ones and worked up to the more important ones, mailing out Slants and Hyphens the while, and then of course found myself in such a state of complete exhaustion that for the last week I've only been able to read and doze all day.

I haven't felt so brownd off with fandom since I came into it. Maybe it's just post-influenzal depression, but the letters I get seem stupider, the new fanzines seem more completely devoid of merit, and the general standard of fanzines in corpore seem more depressing than I've ever noticed before. The only encouraging thing is that the few people of worth in fandom seem to belong to the inner active circle, the True Fans if you'll excuse the expression. But a census of them makes you realise how horribly precarious the position is. I suppose if you count the number of people without whom fandom wouldn't be worth belonging to... well let's do it. Reading from left to right, Sneary, Burbee, Laney, the Coles, Calkins, Boggs, yourself, Vick, Hoffman,...oops Bloch, Faulkner, Tucker, Silverberg (there must be more I can't be bothered totally recalling fandom) and on this side Clarke, Harris, Bulmer and Enever....there couldn't be more than a couple of dozen altogether. It makes you wonder what fandom will be like in a couple of years, now that the prozines have virtually withdrawn their support and the rate of recruitment is starting to drop. On the other hand quite a large proportion of the good fans have been in fandom a long time and look like staying in it more or less all their lives. I don't think myself I'll ever completely withdraw from it: it's far too interesting to watch. Another reason is that fans like ourselves have an extra interest in the timebinding qualities of fandom. We get not only egoboo out of it, but immortality. That is assuming that fandom is still extant in another twenty years, and fans still have this interesting tendency towards fancest or worship, there will be eager neofans fingering with awe hallowed copies of the Elsberry OPUS or the Willis Q and writing goshwowoboy articles about us legendary giants. It's a fascinating prospect and makes me wonder should we not in our own interests rally round the N3F, which after all does do the drudgery of digging up potential acolytes.

You wonder why people think you're bitter. Well, you do give that impression. But as you imply yourself it's not so much what you say about things but the things you select to write about. You're inclined to select the things which should be criticised and criticise them effectively, neglecting the things which should be praised. In the OPUS report you dissect with surgical dispassion and efficiency a number of things that deserve it, but you don't praise a number of things that equally well deserve to be praised. Of course I know it's hard to be interesting when handing out compliments, and criticism is more fun both to read and write-I had the same trouble myself, which is why as you say my report was better when it wasn't about the con--and there's really nothing to be done about it. The best con report I've ever written per se was the one on the 61 Loncon and that was because it was written at a time when I didn't know the people I was writing about very well and had the neofan's idea that pros were semighodlike creatures with no ordinary human feelings. I tore into them without restraint and started regretting it almost immediately. Apparently 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. Since then I've been more circumspect, and of course in any case as a guest it wouldn't have been ethical for me to have been really rude to anyone at Chi. Which is one of the reasons your conreport is a better one than mine.

Of course I think sometimes your reputation precedes you and people attribute to you bitterness beyond the call of duty. As for instance when Chuck comments: I thought it was wonderful too. Elsberry would insult anything except the Mpls. U. He must have a hell of a job fitting a little stinger into every paragraph. I bet Kyle passes around his Chesterfields at the next Convention. Whereas it hadn't occurred to me that you intended any dig at Kyle at all. (Note: It is not customary in America to pass cigarettes around.)

This letter has already taken me two weeks so I guess I'd better not try to finish this page. That flu seems to have really taken it out of me. I get up about eleven, read for a while until my conscience begins to hurt, send out some /s and maybe write a note to somebody, and then feel so tired there's nothing I can do the rest of the day but read and doze. Ah well, I guess it's about time

I had a rest. I've been active in two fandoms for too long without a break.

Thank Ghod I'm not feeling now as I did then. That sort of mood was endemic in fandom at the time, as if everyone had had pneumonia (which it turned out to be in my case) and we were entering the long and difficult convalescence known as Seventh Fandom.

14.

But I can't remember me in those days without remembering Chuck Harris and Vince Clarke, without whom fandom has never been the same. Here is Chuck as he was at the beginning of 1953:

I don't know whether you are sore at me about my"- " thing. I wouldn't be surprised: it seems to be "Let's Trample on Chuck week". I am alone and comparatively unloved and don't particularly care for the Feb asf. I don't particularly want to go to the Philcon either. I am dull and despondent. A woman's plaything without any hope of ultimate salvation. I have neuralgia, insomnia, and constipation. I lay awake nights muttering snatches from Hamlet and odd stanzas from Browning.

"Do I live? Am I dead?"

Sometimes I wonder if I'm going bloody barmy. Alright. On with the motley. It hasn't been a great week for fanning, but I've knocked out a couple of hot letters to Vince--I'll see if I can find the carbons afterwards. I think you'll enjoy this episode. If Vince and I ever run out of teacups we'll make Fran v 4e look like a kiddies picnic. Fortunately, there isn't much danger of that happening,--I think we set too high a value on each other's friendship. The longer I stay in fandom the more I find myself inextricably tangled up in other people's lives. No sooner have I stopped worrying about whether you are being scalped by Red Indians, than I find myself taking a paternal interest in Bob and Sadie, I worry about Lee's virginity and Vince's hair. I even interest myself in James' career as a pro. Ghod knows why this should happen to me--but I get quite a kick out of it. And I just can't imagine myself not being a fan. Ordinary people seem to live drab lives. Their whole lives seem to centre on what will win the 2.30 or whether Arsenal will beat Spurs or 'the smashing boy I was out with last night'. Fanning can't be just a sublimation with me. I think I would be aware of it if it was. I'm beginning to think that we really are star-begotten.

Vince and Chuck did eventually run out of teacups, but that sad day was still far away. I still have the correspondence Chuck referred to above and I can't bear to destroy it. And since it would be nice to see those two in OMPA again, maybe Ethel will let me quote it virtually in full, with the draft they were arguing about. Anyway, it's not every day you see literary criticism of this calibre. And I mean calibre.....

THE HAPPY FANNISH CIRCLE

A Farce in several acts. Co-Authors Harris & Clarke

Prologue

Once upon a time, in the earliest eras of Fandom, Willis was hoaxed. He was fooled, sucked in, and bamboozled by the diabolical efforts of Clarke and Wilson (the latter appearing in Belfast as a neofan called Wainwright). This culminated in Willis--all agog at discovering a literate neofan--sending a carefully prepared manuscript back to Clarke with a note attached. "Isn't he a natural?"

Interval

Harris, fogbound at Welling, discovers the mss, steals the Willisania attached re-reads the unfinished corn and says: "You know Vince, this stuff ain't bad. Why don't you fit an ending?" Clarke, desperate to do almost anything to distract Harris from his correspondence, whips a new sheet of paper into his typer and the two greatest writers in fandom cooperate to finish somebody else's opus. They dream up a reasonable ending and agree that the whole thing could be pretty good if it was re-written. Harris takes it home and rewrites it. He deliberately overwrites it, changes the ending, laughs immoderately at the finished product and rushes back a carbon to Clarke. With the carbon is a little note telling Clarke just how good it is and would he please signify approval to Harris's scheme of sending it to Hoffman.

NOW READ ON.....

Bullets on Bbllzznaj or Thataway by Jim Wainwright (isn't he a natural!)

A howling screech of displaced air and tortured metal broke the unnatural quietness of the main street of Slopes' Gulch as Slim Destron's space-black ship sent up a wave of red-hot dust before settling on its tail. The airlock sprang open and Slim stepped out onto the deserted road, humming a lone spaceman's song to himself. There was a thud as a glass someone had left in mid-air fell to the ground, and in the middle-distance a crippled waif who couldn't get under shelter was digging himself in.

Slim smiled, and his tough leathery features cracked across the middle. Pulling open a small door in the nose of the sleek little flyer, he brought out a chain and clamp which he snapped to the hitching rail, locking as he did so the nasal lock that was keyed to his body odour. It was a strong lock.

Protestingly, the rickety wooden stairs of the Last Chance Saloon creaked under the weight of Slim's magnificently proportioned body. It was often said of his proportions that he was exactly broad as he was long. His head was high-browed and intelligent, his eyes steely grey and piercing -- he had worn through sixteen pairs of spectacles--his jaw firm as a planet in its orbit. Greyish was the leather space uniform--it should have been white--and belted low across his thighs were the two horn-handled sub-atomic-deltron-ray-blasters.

Shouldering his way through the swing doors of the saloon, he sent a sweeping glance over the crowd inside. Blinking the dust from his eyes, he saw his quarry slouched across one of the gaming tables with three of his cronies lounging on either side. Slim strolled to the long imitation-mahogany bar, and nodded at the bar-keep. "Four fingers of jet-swill, pard" he lippered thinly. "I've burnt space to get here on time to meet Dione Ecro." He jerked his head towards the gaming table. "That him?"

"Shore is," said the bar-keep, who was an old sailor. He looked curiously at Slim. "Got business with him, stranger?" Slim's space-tanned hand reached for the jet-swill and a flicker of his steely eyes gave the affirmative answer. With one gulp he downed the acrid raw spirit and sauntered slowly across the saw-dust to the gaming table.

He smiled tightly as he saw what they were playing. Four dimensional Blasko a card game played by the inhabitants of Spudgtt, a far outlying sun-system. Cat-like grace was in his movements as he eased himself into an empty chair at the card table and purred softly. An easy nod to the dealer sent eight four dimensional cards skimming across to him. He picked them up. Four skags, three blurts,

and one squash. A good hand.

He hefted his purse onto the table. The dealer opened it and amazement rippled round players and spectators alike as he spilt a shining steady stream of 1000 credit pieces onto the green beige. The dealer's hands trembled as he counted the sum aloud, (as was the custom), and when he hoarsely announced "One million credits!" Dione gasped. His lieutenant's mouth fell open, and somebody stole his gold teeth before he could recover.

There was a brief muttered consultation, then Dione leaned forward, pale phlegmy eyes glistening with greed. "You gonna bet the works, stranger?" he crisped. Slim's eyebrows rose slightly. "Kin you cover me?" he drawled softly. Dione drew first and called on the second slurp. Slim worked a skillful three dimensional move, and covered himself, as he saw what their play would be... three straight drooles and a second dimensional slurp. As he concentrated on the drooleplay a flicker of ultra energy caught his attention. He dropped his cards on the table, his steely grey eyes turning a fiery blue.

"Dione....you cheated!" he gritted savagely. "Yeah? Prove it, stranger! These folk din't see nuthing, did yuh, folks?" He looked around menacingly, and there were hasty head-shakings. He leaned back and leered at Slim. "Dione," ground Slim, "I saw you urble those cards through the fifth dimension and out through the seventh. You know that's cheating." "Huh. So what? And what are yuh gonna do about it?" His hand strayed toward the micro-blaster in the shoulder of his black alpaca jacket.

"Dione, I got proof yuh were behind them Snargo Gum hold-ups beyond the asteroid a couple of cycles back. An' what's more yore a meteorite rustler..no, siddown an' lissen..if yuh ain't off this planet by the first sun's setting, I'm a-coming for yuh!" He rose and stalked out.

Came sundown...At the far end of Main Street, Slim stood erect and steady, a light breeze ruffling his crisp hair, and when a figure appeared at the other end, he began to pace slowly forward. He dropped into a fighting crouch, the lines of his body converging instinctively to offer the smallest possible target. A flaming neutron bolt flew past his left ear. Slowly, he shifted his chew to the other cheek.

And then, swift as a Martian snurk, or the lesser banded schniss that roams the lunar seas, his hands flashed at faster than light speed towards the well-worn leather holsters at his hips. In a poem of easy motion the twin DeLameters leapt into his hands and his fingers jammed the firing studs against the barrels. And then, instead of the trembling, crackling roar of energy drawn from Space itself, the barrels were cold, lifeless, dead. Instinctively, he glanced behind him to see Dione's lieutenant grinning balefully over a cone-shaped forcefield projector.

Despairingly, he straightened up,---if he had to die, then he'd do it like a freeborn Terran instead of spacelanes scum. He called the half smile back to the corners of his mouth and thought regretfully of the green hills of Kentucky where he'd spent his childhood, of the arid red deserts of Mars where he'd spent his adolescence, and of Big Gertie's Pleasure Asteroid where he'd spent his.

Coldly, ruthlessly, Dione burnt him down. With one contemptuous foot he rolled the lifeless body in the gritty dust. "Another increase in Boot Hill's population index," he sneered.

Somewhere, in the sombre hills behind the town, a lone coyote howled.

Clarke dislikes Harris's efforts. He says so....

Dear Chuck:

Thanks for the carbon of THATAWAY. The 'thanks' is merely because I'm polite, understand. Personally, I'm not only fed up with reading the damn thing but I think you've made a lousy job of rewrite. Frinstance, you're afraid that we overdid the corn. You CAN'T overdo the corn on a thing like this. Corn is its lifeblood, its undying glory and its main reason for existence. Take away the corn and you have a mere husk worthy only of Sol, Orb, or Operation Fantast. The ending up with which we eventually came was a beauty, except that I'd have added the sun..a sun sinking with a dull hiss onto the last sentence. You've entirely missed the point in the opening paragraph. When the ship was landing, the street was crowded; after it had landed, the street was deserted except for the cripple. See, stoopid? Otherwise, the glass in mid-air and the cripple lose half their force.

And the object of fan fiction rewrite should be to compress, condense and consolidate, not add a few purple adjectives here and there. You're not trying to write a second "Gone With The Wind", however flatulent your prose. Calling a bar 'imitation-mahogany' instead of plain 'bar' ain't funny, and we're not trying to be realistic. If you called it a 'polished uranium bar'....'acid raw spirit' is like saying a 'hard metal gun'...the terms are not exactly synonymous, but too complementary for comfort...I agree that the confusion of the gang 'leaving' and 'doing' when they started the game should be eliminated, but not by putting 'played' and 'playing' within 6 words of each other...I give you full marks for having 'em leaning over the card table instead of the bar... that was an original mistake of Mike's I didn't bother to alter. Why 'he hefted his purse'? The other is more picturesque. Why 'shining, steady stream'....you gotta lotta adjectives you want to find a home for? Or do you just like alliteration? Same goes for 'pale phlegmy', tho' it might be allowed on the grounds of supercorn if there is such a word. Why 'drawled softly! have you ever heard or read of anyone drawling loudly? Why 'called on the second slurp' instead of the first? Don't you know that your overhand can be jimmied if you cast a slurp in Blasko? Be more careful..it's these little details can get you into trouble with the readers. You'll get some expert writing in and ri-i-ip goes your reputation in shreds. I may be a fake pro but I know that much.

Vince

HARRIS RETALIATES!!!

Dear Vince:

Thank you for the professional criticism. I'm enclosing your original draft. It's not my idea--you can do what you please with. I suggest a small hole in the top left-hand corner and a loop of string. It's a waste of time trying to argue about it. Obviously you've been deified since I last saw you. However, I don't propose to kneel here whilst you kick my teeth out. I think your assumptions are unjustified and your sneers are bloody rude. You've had this thing for almost a year and done damn all to it. At least I tried. Perhaps you'd care to spend ten minutes on it sometime and then sell it to Carnell?

Certainly the corn was overdone. Parts of it were not only childish, they were puerile and embarrassing too. "A sun sinking with a dull hiss" was just silly, especially in the last line which was sufficient as it stood. I thought that a quieter build-up would add more effectiveness to the last line. I wasn't trying to amuse RJ Banks or Wilkie Connor. I thought that this version was more likely to amuse say, Willis and Hoffman. I still think so.

I thought the opening paragraph was sufficiently pointed by using "unnatural quietness" i.e. the inhabitants were transfixed by the sight of Destron's spaceship. I thought the object of a fan fiction rewrite was to improve. I can't

see the use of compressing and condensing a mere thousand or so words. The idea that I had was to weld cowboy cliches into a space opera. True, the adjectives were purple -- they had to fit in with the ones already there. I'm sure that you'll be able to fix the little inaccuracies without using played and played in juxtaposition,-- although you seem to want to use "first slurp....first slurp" a page or so later.

"Hefted his purse" seemed more picturesque to me. He had one thousand 1000 credit-pieces. I pictured this as a £5 bag of copper which wouldn't clink. And hence, "shining steady stream". All Western gamblers have "pale phlegmy eyes". "Drawl" means to talk in a slow lengthened tone. If you'd allow "said softly" I can't think of any reason why you should quibble about "drawled softly". In the original state, I doubt whether Dave Ish would find it funny.

But after you've re-written it.....

CLARKE POURS OIL UPON THE TROUBLED WATERS

Dear Chuck:

Don't thank me for the professional criticism; I'm giving it to you for free. Just part of my service to you young fan authors. Of course I shall expect some commission on your first 45 sales, but we'll leave the sordid financial details till later. No, I haven't been deified yet, if that's the way you spell it. I've been canonised tho. This doesn't mean shot out of a cannon, much as you might like to do same.

I've succeeded! Harris has called me 'rude'! I must write to Walt about this! Infame at last!! I don't think there's any further goal left, except maybe to be called obscene by Rog Philips. James must know too. I had a letter from him by the same post as yours. He is telling me all about his plans for the Convention. By the way, is your bungalow fire-proof?

Well, the only way to see whether Walt and Lee are amused is to send 'em the corn and await criticism. As the first draft was 80% Mike in construction, and was intended, as I said somewhere or other, for the JF's London Circle 'zine, I'd never felt inclined to do the extensive re-writing job needed to run it in a respectable zine. There is one good idea in it...the card game, but the rest is well-cooked corn. This present thing I just regard as an exercise in corny wisecracks and puns, and your particular angle on it...overwriting as well in great gobs...never struck me until a few moments ago when I started thinking constructively on the sam.

Uh-huh, the idea of re-writing is to improve, and I have a fetish (M'Gooli-M'Gobbla) that improvement in fan-fiction means condensing. It's not that I have an ambition to Write Perfectly of Beautiful Happenings in words of which each one is as perfect as a lustrous pearl in a gold setting..which I have..but as an Editor and Publisher, the less wordage there is to a certain piece, the less money spent on paper, stencils, and ink and the less time spent on turning the duper handle and other odd jobs. Do you remember that FAPA mailing with a drawing by Lee in which there was just an eye and a bit of foliage and the thing occupied a whole page? I could no more think of doing that than I would...well, duplicate on only one side of each sheet.

As to the specific instances quoted (coo, don't it sound impressive?), I think the cleared street is preferable to the 'unnatural quietness': matter of opinion; I think that there's a big element of incongruity in the business of the purse; you're led into believing that it's just a small object, and if you're awake your mind does a double-take when it appears that there's a 1000 pieces in it. That's where the humour lies; not in the fact that he's toting a million credits around. I give in to the pale phlegmy eyes, tho' it's still got echoes of albino bushmen to me. "Drawled softly" "Shouted loudly" "whispered softly"

"Hummed musically, "laughed cheerfully" "hissed menacingly" are all much of a muchness to me; a style which I don't cultivate. Van Vogt does it. I'd allow 'Said softly', because you can have 'said loudly', 'said cheerfully', 'said menacingly', 'said slowly' etc. The last two you could also drawl but with the 'loudly' and 'Cheerfully' it would be..well..not compatible. 'Drawled softly' is a borderline case, and if it pleases you to have a double adjective where a single would do, far be it from me to stand in the way of your grammatical Combine Harvester. The...well, I suppose it's not a punch-line, just a rattle in the tail, (-le?) is a knotty problem. It's no good dismissing the sun sank line as plain silly 'cos not only are a number of other things plain silly, including this seriously-taking-thot-about-epic, but it emphasises the point of the coyote. Coyotes always howl at sundown. As an old coyote lover myself, I'm willing to call upon outside opinion as to this. Not only from coyotes either. Tell you what I'll give this thing some serious consideration for an hour some evening when I can't think of anything better to do, and will send you the result..a Clarke adjusted epic. Then you can tear it to pieces. I would have put a paragraph in up there, but I'm having to fight off a dog trying to climb into my lap. I must have a kind nature as animals love me. Do you?
Vince

HARRIS HALF-SHEATHS HIS CLAWS.

Dear Vince:

I'm delighted to hear that you have become a revised edition of St. Francis. Cats and dogs may love you,--but I'm not Assisi. Most of the time I feel like tearing you limb from limb. I am now contemplating going into the holy relics racket. When I said you were rude it was merely the best euphemism that I happened to have laying around. Actually, you were insufferably pompous, over-bearing, and flatulent. The next time your spleen needs venting I suggest you take two Rennies instead of heaping scorn on my deathless prose.

I shan't bother about your footling remarks about "Thataway". I shall stockpile my answers until I see your version. I never agree with vague generalities like "nothing is so short it couldn't improve by shortening". This may be all very well for Mama's lil Babylove, but as a fully certified sex-fiend I could list you several instances where the reverse applies; I must say I was astounded that the possibilities of over-writing it had only just dawned on you. Surely, this is what Mike had in mind when he wrote the thing instead of just using it as a vehicle for puns.

Ever Thine,
Chuck

PS There is no past participle of "deify" in my O.E.D. It does have argument tho'.---With only one 'e'.

All sorts of things had happened to me by 1953 which don't seem to have been mentioned in these memoirs yet, like the confidences Peter Hamilton used to make me about the behaviour of Ted Carnell and vice versa, and the grandiose plans of Bert Campbell which were always highly confidential until they fell through, and sending a telegram to John Brunner while he was still at school with the news of his first professional acceptance (a novel to Curtis Warren: they didn't have his school address so they told me), and being offered an Associate Editorship of Galaxy, and the excitement of seeing all those Slant stories being bought by prozines, and being on the International Fantasy Award panel and everything. Oh I was a Great Big Man.

And true enough it was all very exciting at the time, but it doesn't mean much to me any more. I used to think that pros were sort of deified fans, whereas now most of them seem rather poor creatures who are not as good at their jobs as we are at our hobbies. I feel less compunction about throwing all that junk in the waste-basket than over one letter from Chuck Harris. As for the International Fantasy Award panel, I knew I was only on that because I was a sort of foreigner and that "Fandom's Leading Expert and Critic" as Les Flood called me in his blurb, to Vince Clarke's disgust, would be dropped as soon as they got hold of some more serious-minded Europeans and Americans. I read the books and voted soberly enough, but Chuck took it far more seriously than I did. He would try subtly to influence my decisions, thus.....

Ghu knows why you voted for Fairy Chessman (you told me why you voted for Sands of Mars. Nyaaa), Kuttner has written a damn sight better stuff than that, that I would have voted for. Galler is a Moron, the other continental judges are ignorant swine. Fred Brown is the only competent judge on the panel and I told him what to vote for. (He ignored me). I am seriously thinking of starting a rival Award with only one person on the adjudication panel. Me.

Here's another letter from Chuck, referring to my thanking him for contributing to Shelby Vick's Fund. He was the only British fan to do so and I wouldn't have known about it if his name hadn't been on the scroll they gave me at Chicago. I had felt guilty about being invited to the States instead of fans who deserved it more, like Ken Slater, and had sort of kept the existence of the Fund from British fandom. This wasn't difficult because at that time Quandry was the only US fanzine with any circulation in Britain and it never mentioned the Fund because until nearly the end Lee Hoffman didn't think it had a chance of success.

Certainly my name was on the scroll. "Rainham's No 1 Fan endorses Willis". Being your True Friend and Confidante I felt it incumbent on me to help swell the coffers, and I sent Shelby an American coin that I had (with a picture of a buffalo on it) and some uncanceled stamps that I steamed off of various issues of Quandry. Hell, I bled myself for you. The lifetime sub to Cf that I got could never replace that foreign coin (I don't know what its worth in real money) or fill in the gaps in my stamp collection. I shall be wearing my ribbon (in my hair natch) at the Whitcon. I shall expect some really fervent protestations of gratitude and half a column of acknowledgements in the next Slant.

The ribbon referred to was a green silk thing with my initials on it in Gothic capitals, that Henry Burwell was distributing to everyone who contributed to the Fund. They were supposed to wear them at Chicago. I hated the whole idea, though I couldn't very well say so. I visualised people avoiding me or apologising because they hadn't got one of the damned things, and watching me to see if I was observing who was wearing their receipt. I was neurotic enough about the Fund without that. Chuck had a talent which amounted to genius, and one which was to recoil upon him later, for putting his finger on sore spots like this.

Another belated repercussion of the 1952 trip was the arrival of a suitcase I had left in London. It was too heavy to go on the plane to Belfast so I had left it with Vince Clarke to forward by rail. This resulted in a clash between Vince Clarke and British Railways. They tried to charge him twice, and got this letter.....

Re. attached slip, this account was paid by me when I visited Broad St. Station to hand in the goods for despatch, at approximately 5:46pm on a Friday in the middle of October, probably the 17th.

I received a small, white printed receipt at the time. At the moment, I have neither the time or inclination to pander your inefficiency and see whether

it is still in existence; no doubt a proper check will reveal your copy. Surely it is not your custom to allow private individuals to send goods by rail without pre-payment? Kindly remit 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d to cover cost of this letter when forwarding apologies.

With the Compliments of the Season.

My comments on this at the time still seem to me appropriate, and a possible basis for a fan fiction story....

I love to see this sort of situation...it's one of the basic dramatic situations like Cinderella and almost as appealing--the one in which some powerful giant comes up against an apparent weakling who turns out to be a giant in his own way. You know, Harpo Marx, David, etc. I can imagine BR bumbling on its way through thousands of easily-awed and incoherent men-in-the-street and then unexpectedly coming on a fan, who has been writing rude letters all his life and sees a victim even bigger and more vulnerable than the National Fantasy Federation. You know, one of these days some fan will be the centre of a national cause celebre.

True enough, British Railways was no match for Vince. They replied with incredible humility: "You will appreciate we deal with thousands of accounts..due to a bad impression from a rubber stamp...regret the trouble you have been caused and enclose the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d postage stamp as requested."

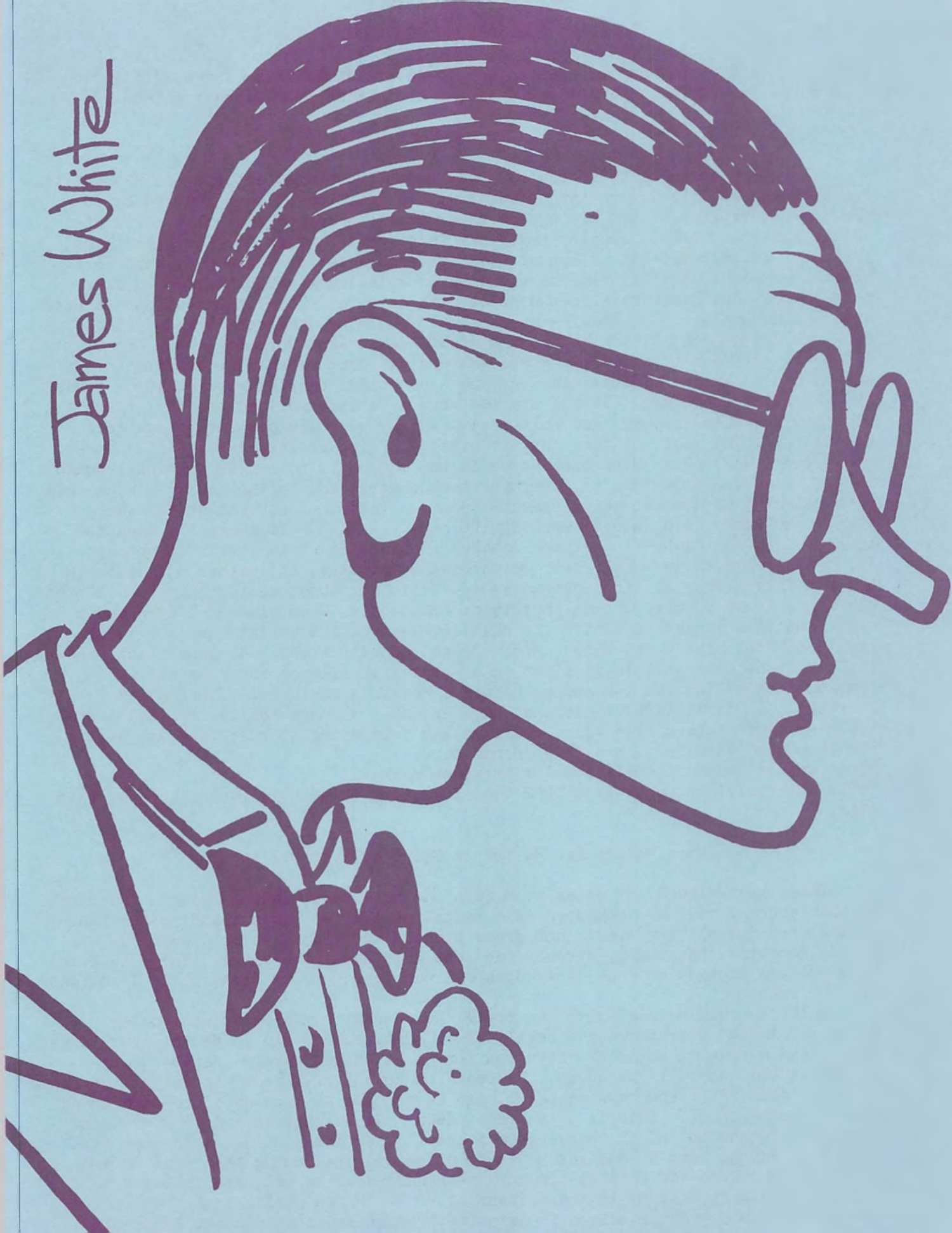
The season of which Vince wished BR the compliments was of course Christmas 1952. The Oblique House Christmas Card had already assumed its present form, though one of the things I subsequently stopped doing was leaving a blank space in the stencil in the body of the text and typing in each recipient's name. I stopped it because so many people thought it was mimeoed in, and were flattered at the individual mention. Not that I minded that, but I was afraid they might be hurt if and when they were disillusioned. One I had no compunctions about though was Rich Elsberry, who had no compunctions about other people's feelings. So when I found he had made this mistake in 1951 I typed his name in red in 1952, with the footnote: "Look, a special run in colour!"

16.

Even the most circumspect of fan writers eventually accumulates a backlog of unpublished articles, and (even more frustrating) one of half-published ones. The latter kind is the worse, for while an unpublished article can always be repulped and issued hopefully afresh, a half-published one is almost a total loss. When someone pays you the compliment of asking you for material, it does not do to send him something which has already been published, however carefully you explain it was only hecto, ten years ago, and to the tiny fan population of Oshkosh, Wisc. For if you or the editor fail to mention that fact, it is a law of nature that every surviving member of the Oshkosh Science Fiction League, now scattered all over the fan world in positions of vast power and influence will leap to the nearest housetop and denounce you for a fraud.

No, the only thing to do is wait until you are an old fan mumbling through your memoirs, when with any luck it will be found that that old article is so relevant to your subject that it would be a crime to destroy it. Here, for example, I have two little biographies that James White and I did of each other in July 1952, for someone called Henry. I think it was Henry Oden, and I think they did eventually make a faint ghostlike appearance, in either spirit duplicating or hectoplasm, in an illfated fanzine whose name I can't remember. I don't think anyone else in present-day fandom will remember it either, except of course the ex-members of the

James White



Oshkosh Science Fiction League. But anyway, here are James White and myself as we were in those far-off days before James became a big-time professional author.....

Walter Willis by James White

The sorry state of this country today cannot be blamed entirely on Mr. Willis, for although he is a Government official with a position of some importance in the administration--he has his own personal staff, which he naturally calls his shillelagh--his work is comparatively harmless. His hobbies, on the other hand, are not. I first met him in August 1947, through a letter I had published in a British prozine. At that time he was deep in building a radio that would have turned the Venus Equilateral crowd green with envy, all shiny aluminum panels outside and a completely nauseating mass of multi-colored spaghetti inside ((the circuit was designed by Signor Macaroni himself--WAW))--and worrying about becoming a father. It wasn't until both these matters had been cleared up satisfactorily and he had a super-efficient receiver and a beautiful baby daughter that he turned his attention to fandom. It all started when a fanzine arrived one day (I won't plug it; it folded anyway) and Walter said surely we could get one out as good as that.....The rest, as they say, is history. (Too modest, James --it's your story too.--WAW) His chief occupation at the moment is of course fanning, though he still devotes some time to governing the country, and in the summer varies this with climbing an odd mountain, playing tennis. ((Not, of course, at the same time. You would need an even mountain for that. --WAW)) If there's a deadline to meet he often dashes in between matches in his nice white shorts to operate the press, engages in a half hour of whirlwind activity, and dashes out again in his nice black shorts. In appearance he is slim and about medium height, 6'1" to be exact, is very quiet spoken, has thick brown hair, keen blue-grey eyes and a thin sensitive tanned face with the high forehead of a true intellectual. ((It has to go back next week--WAW)) And he's got knobbly knees. He puns a lot, and his slightest utterance is received in a suspectful silence and examined for cracks, ambiguities and innuendoes before a reply is ventured. The English language just isn't safe to use when he's around. I don't really feel qualified to be writing a thing like this, and I wouldn't be doing it only that Mr. Willis has been very kind and I'm deeply in his debt.

*Note sophisticated translation for American market.

**The interpolations date from 1952 too, I decline to be held responsible at this date.

James White, Art Editor of Slant by Walt Willis

Those keen-minded, or cross-eyed fans who have been reading between the lines of that account may have conjured up a mental picture of James spending the long summer evenings slaving over a hot press turning out Slant, while I enjoy myself in the sunshine, tanning my knobbly face and thin sensitive knees. They may even have got the impression that James does all the real work on Slant while I collect all the egoboo.

Nothing could be nearer to the truth. With real feminine intuition Lee Hoffman, without ever hearing directly from James, summed him up as follows: "I've always had a special sense of affection for James White, partly because he is--as far as one can tell--so quiet. He seems to go quietly about his tasks, performs them all with efficiency and despatch, and never gets as much as a nod or a thank you for doing them." This is very true indeed. James puts more into fandom and gets less egoboo out of it than anyone I know. Each issue of Slant is more his work than anyone else's, and yet he is so quiet and unassuming that even me and Bob Shaw, who like and respect him more than anyone we've met, are inclined to overlook the fact that he is the mainspring of Irish fan publishing, the power behind the zines. Nevertheless it is quite true to say that without James Slant

would not be what it is today, or even exist at all. Apart from his linocuts, where without any previous training or experience he has worked up a technique which puts most professionals to shame, every issue represents hours of patient conscientious work by him setting type and working the press. We all look up to James here, and not just because he is about 6½ feet tall.

That wasn't of course the first published writing by James White. To be scrupulously correct, his first published words were "These views on the great Smith are not those of the typesetter, J. White", diffidently but stubbornly inserted in parentheses in a column by Clive Jackson in Slant 4. Slant was now dying, being replaced by Hyphen, and with the disappearance of linocuts and of the labour of typesetting James's post in Irish fanac was becoming redundant. So we urged him to start writing. He kept saying he couldn't write, but after the London convention in 1951 he turned up at Oblique House one evening with part of a convention report. If it had ever been finished it would have broken all sorts of records, because after 24 closely written pages he had got no further than 8:3 pm on the night before the Convention started. I ran a fragment from it in Inclinations, a duplicated letterzine transitional between Hyphen and Slant, and persuaded him to send a rather longer piece, rewritten as a story to Vince Clarke's SFN. There it was duly published in the issue dated March 1952, under the title The Unconventional Fan. We didn't appreciate just how important this debut was, but we were determined it shouldn't go unnoticed, so Bob Shaw and I mounted a campaign. For weeks Vince was getting letters of comment like this:

Bikodney Atoll

Dear Sir:

I have been writing to fanzines for 75 years now, yet I have never read one before. But something drove me to read James White's story in the current SFN. I was profoundly stirred, as if I had swallowed an eggbeater. This story, sir, is a masterpiece. It will stand the test of Time. Indeed I venture to say that when the ephemeral scribbles of lesser authors--Heinlein, Van Vogt, even Willis--are forgotten, this story will live on, bringing inspiration to countless thousands. When I read this story first I was unable to contain myself, and poured over it again and again. But now I am exhausted and can only proffer these pithy comments.
yourth thintherey. Prof. Harold Urine (No 1 fan)

Or this on the back of a picture postcard of Windsor Castle:

Dear Mr. Clarke:

We were amused by the story about the Unconventional Fan by Mr. White. This is one of our favourite subjects.

yrs.

E.R.

X---This is our room.

My grandmother's postcard album wasn't restricted to British scenery:

Capetown

Great! Colossal! Goshwowboyoboy This guy White is terrific. Why doesn't he try for Slant? Don't let Gold get him. Throw out all those other hacks of yours and let White fill the whole magazine. Give him his head. (What are you doing with it anyway?)

Yours for more White

A White Fan (A. Caucasian Winnower, Mr.)

Tropical Palms Court, Florida

INTERESTED FILM RIGHTS WHITE SUPERCOLOSSAL SMASH HIT EPIC STOP OFFERING \$10000.00

OR SUB TO SLANT STOP WITH WARM CLASP OF FRIENDSHIP HANS TORRID RKO

Elbbrucke, Hamburg.

My Dear Mr Clarke:

I like White!

Yours sincerely,

D'White Eusehower (General)

Meanwhile Bob was busy too:

Dear Vincy-wincy:

I have just read your cute little SFN, I love every line of it. Would you do a little girl like me a bi-i-i-g favour? You would! Oh you dear boy. Just send me the address of James White who wrote that adorable story. I feel we are sould mates. I can just imagine him--dark, strong and ever so brutal. I must meet him--that super-doooper story convinced me. It was great! So vital, don't you think?

Yours eagerly,
Leva Firestone (Miss)

SEXY SEX STORIES

Could you send me White's address? I want very much to get him into my magazine. I think he is the very type we need.

X.Tasy, Editor.

And so on. I wouldn't be surprised if James got more comment on that first story than on anything else he has written subsequently.

18.

Lee Hoffman, in 1952, used to date her letters "The Year Of Not Enough Time". For most of us survivors of Sixth Fandom the following year was the one of Not Enough Energy. By early 1953 the strain of the American Trip had finally caught up to me, and in March I was writing to Chuck Harris.....

I went into the office that Monday with the sole purpose of borrowing the stapler and they sent me home that afternoon. Went to bed, next day sent for the doctor, temperature 102, sulfa drugs, no good, medical science baffled, doctor collapses with flu, second doctor says penicillin nurse comes in daily with garden syringe, 600000 international units, finally after eight days temperature gets back to normal, after 11 stagger downstairs, start weakly to send out /s, too much for me, back into semi-coma.

I still don't feel so good, but I'm a hell of a lot more cheerful than I was. That second doctor sent me down to the Mass Radiography place for an X-Ray. They called me back for a larger one, and then recalled me again for a medical examination yesterday. This did not make me happy, because I've always had a thing about tb, and I had already mentally drafted a gallant message to fandom and was wondering whether I should make a joke about the fanatarium. However the bod says for his money it's nothing but a post-influenzal inflammation of the lungs so I may live awhile yet.

I feel something like that at the moment, which is why this installment is briefer than usual and less controversial than I had intended. I had thought of embarking on a study of the first phase of the Great Mackenzie War, but the research needed is beyond me at the moment. I had also thought of doing a survey of the notorious fanzine Incinerations, the only fanzine to my knowledge ever to have been actually banned by the Postal Authorities, but I lack confidence in my ability to

(rb: For some reason the 17th installment of "I Remember Me" was skipped during the stenciling of the other chapters. This omission was not discovered until after I started stenciling the table of contents and rather than leave it out entirely I've decided to give you four extra page 510s and a complete "I Remember Me.")

17.

It has been pointed out by one of our perceptive new fans that I took up a lot of space in the last installment of this column with previously circulated material. I'm truly sorry about this, but I seem to have this strange difficulty with memoirs... everything I remember seems to have already happened. My only consolation is that my critic's complaint is not that he or anyone else has actually seen the material before; just that it may have made the writing of that installment too easy for me. In an effort to make this installment more readable I am accordingly typing it in the dark wearing boxing gloves. I shall also try to make better speed in disposing of all this dull old stuff from dull old fans so that we can get on to really interesting people like Charles Platt.

So into the wastebasket with:

Postcard, 20th June, 1952, from Peter Graham. "Dear Mr. Willis, I wish to offer my sincere apologies for the card about your death I sent out. It was a stupid asinine thing to do, and I realise this fully. I am truly very sorry." That is the only document in that Affair that hasn't been previously circulated, and I thought it should be recorded.

Letter, 8th February, 1963, from Eric Frank Russell:

I think you're going to find several after-effects, as we did. For one, the Belfast-Liverpool boat will now seem like a piddling ferryboat, as the Isle of Man boat does to us. And NYC is no longer thought of as someplace on Mars, but rather as the other terminus of a local boat. The American Way of Life has some big attractions we'n never been told about: chocolate malts, for instance. And some repulsive aspects we didn't know about either until we got there. (I think that general blatant dishonesty took me aback more than anything. Not being stuck by money restrictions as you were, and being well heeled, I could bribe anybody to get anything or do anything no matter how illegal. Any cop would direct me to a brothel for a couple of bucks). Within three days of getting to NY I knew where I could obtain filthy pictures, morphia, marijuna cigarettes or a whore or even a professional pansy. Yes, me - but E and I both concluded that while the inhabitants of USA are greatly to be envied in some respects, in many others they can have their way of life and welcome.

Postcard, 17th February 1953, from Arthur C. Clarke:

Congrats on a brilliant travelogue. Even friends of mine who don't know a thing about fandom enjoyed it. I'm off at the end of March -- will be driving up from Atlanta to the Indian Lake Con, then going to Florida for a trip in a cabin crusier along the Keys. Hope to do quite a bit of underwater photography which may be the end of me if I run into anything with better false teeth than mine...

Letter, 7th January, 1953, from Poul Anderson:

Dear Walt:

A thousand thanks for the Songs of Ireland, which came just the other day... Have been reading a good deal of late, inter alia Costain's two volumes on English history -- which would have no surprises for you, but plenty for me; and the man's non-fiction story is far superior to his novels. Have also been playing around with

communications theory, whose basic concepts seem to have some startlingly broad applications -- biology, sociology, the arts, etc. It does seem to me that a genuine methodology is beginning to emerge for psychology and sociology; so far it's been mostly huge accumulations of uninteresting and largely irrelevant data, but some possibilities exist for the foundation of a true theory in the next few decades. Funny how the really important advances are made so obscurely, almost unnoticed at the time. The work on stearin synthesis was buried in the back pages of the newspapers a couple of years ago, over here at least. I haven't recieved "Slant" for quite a while, and imagine my subscription has run out. If you'll drop me a line as to how to re-subscribe, I certainly want to do so. "Slant" along with "Rhodomagnetic Digest" and maybe a couple of others, is that very rare bird, a genuinely readable and interesting fanzine. In fact, it would be more accurate to call it a little magazine or something of that sort. An amateur publication, in the old sense of "amateur", one who works for the love of it.

Letter, 10th March, 1953 from Robert Bloch:

Seriously, Walt, it may well be that the release of your intended memoir marks the passing of an era in sf-fanhistory. There are signs and portents which I interpret to indicate that your good friends and mine are gradually withdrawing from activity. Lee, Max, Shelby and a number of others have not shown their wonted industry of late...methinks it's the beginning of the end. But they have left their mark on fandom with their greasy little paws; and God bless their greasy little hearts, they've done a lot which we can all be grateful for, whatever their activity in the future. I may be wrong...this may only be the lull before the storm...but something tells me that the Ides of March have come. You will remain as the Living Memorial of Sixth Fandom. Dunno what to predict of the new group. I have a horrid fear that fandom may one day be dominated again by a Serious Element. There may be Committees and Plans and Purposes and Crusades and Positive, Right-Thinking Constructive Attitudes. If that comes to pass, I'll be down in the bar with Tucker, crying in my beer of the good old days and wishing it wasn't a bar but a pub and not beer but Black Ben. There is, fortunately, a heartening note. If Hyphen and Slant are any indication, and if Harris, Clarke, Shaw and others are representative, a new Sixth Fandom is arising mightily in the Isles. From Bangor to Donaghadee, from Carrick-fergus and across the Strangford Lough comes the clarion call, "Pyromaniacs of the World, Ignite!" Yes, I have high hopes for you in this endless struggle against the Decent Element, this battle against the Better Things.

Hm, I've just noticed that the pros seem to be taking over this column. The obvious anti dote is a letter from Chuck Harris from this huge file I have here, but this rich lode is curiously difficult to work. The humour is so thoroughly embedded in the text that short quotations are difficult to extract. Madeleine tried it once for an article for Femizine, she was writing about Chuck and failed, so that the article was never finished. Here's what there was, and I assure you it has not been previously circulated....

I REMEMBER HARRIS by Madeleine Willis
incorporating
CHUCK HARRIS, FRIEND OF FISH by Walt Willis

The next time we met was at the '54 Convention in Manchester. He didn't seem so shy this time. I had gone into the Mackenzie's room to say hello to Stu when Chuck, seeing me from the passage, dashed into the room so boisterously that he felled me to the door. He led me away, moaning softly and added insult to injury by explaining: "I knew Walter was downstairs so I thought I had better look after you. I don't trust Mackenzie with women". Mackenzie hadn't attempted anything, not

even knocking me down with a door, but I appreciated the kind thought. I think Chuck was worried over my welfare, though the compliments he paid me were such that only a fan would appreciate. He constantly offered Walt his complete file of Galaxy in exchange for me, and after staying at Oblique House and sampling my cooking he offered to throw in his Vargo Statten #3. He even sent me all his cheques for his pro writing (uncashed) to provide wallpaper for the fan attic, and only the unappreciative stupidity of pro editors prevented our being unable to cover the remaining 99.9999% of the wall with the same contemporary design. I commiserated with Walt that he wouldn't be able to point out to visitors that the wallpaper had an interesting check pattern but he said he would just say the rest hadn't come yet. Walls, he said it was generally known, had arrears. Talking of Walt, he has asked if he can use this space, which is lying vacant while I make his supper, to present what he claims is a little known facet of Harris, that of the Sportsman...I hope Ethel won't regard this as a sneaky attempt to crash the purdah of Femizine.

Walt speaking. Thank you ladies. I'm sure you'll appreciate that to get a properly rounded picture of Chuck Harris, you need also to see him as a Man's Man. It is true that one does not think immediately of Harris as a huntin', shooting, and fishin' type, in spite of his familiarity with Prince Philip. His nickname is not an abbreviation of Chukka, although it is true that his path and that of the Duke of Edinburgh crossed during their service careers, as described by Chuck himself in Orion some years ago. Prince Philip may have forgotten this memorable encounter, but Chuck Harris does not forget his old comrades though he has attained a prestige in fandom far greater than the Duke's.

I used to wonder why such a multi-talented person exhibited no talent for field sports...with one exception of course...until one summer day in County Donegal. It was a reason that did him credit. Simple that he is too fond of dumb animals.

My daughter Carol is crazy about sea creatures and spends most of her holidays dabbling about among rock pools with a fishing net. Naturally the fish she catches by this means are no Moby Dicks, and one evening she was complaining about this. I looked helpless, because at the time I knew absolutely nothing about fishing except that the sea seemed a pretty good place for it, but Chuck stepped competently into the breach. "I will show you how to fish tomorrow" he said. Next morning we went to Dunfanaghy village, and he bought a sort of square wooden frame with a lot of green cord wrapped round it, a contraption which I'd always thought was for flying kites, and we tripped along to the end of the pier wall, where Chuck unrolled about 100 feet of the green line, revealing a vicious hook and a piece of lead. On the former he impaled a bit of cold fried bacon he had saved from his breakfast, at great personal deprivation. I had never myself heard of any fish that subsisted on cold fried bacon, but I kept silent, realising I was in the presence of an expert at whose knees Walton himself might have knelt...especially if he was whizzing around his head a length of cord with a hook on the end.

Having baited the hook, Harris took the line in his less severely wounded hand and, standing up, whirled the end round and round at ever increasing speed. Then, when the noise of its passage had risen from a hum to a scream, he released it. The coils of line on the pier began to disappear like smoke in a high wind. The lead weight was flying out over the sea in the direction of Newfoundland, closely followed by the hook, the piece of cold bacon, the green cord and the wooden frame. The surface of the pier suddenly looked very empty. Chuck looked at it completely without expression. Carol looked at him with an expression changing slowly from admiration to puzzlement. "How are we going to pull the fish in?" she asked. I was at a loss. How to explain to this unsophisticated child, I wondered, that at that last vital moment, the moment of truth, the Great Sportsman had been replaced by an even greater facet of Harris, that of the great humanitarian, the St. Francis of the fishy world?

.....

rb: If my memory serves me correctly (and it may not) it seems to be that Walt has forgotten (this is getting complicated) one Ermengarde Fiske (thank god there weren't two I am moved to murmur as we wend our way through this thicket of parentheses in a determined effort to avoid picking up something from her style -- something contagious, I mean). So finding myself with an extra page 510 in the middle of "I Remember Me" I think I'll take this opportunity to prod Willis' memory with a page of

I REMEMBER ERMENGARDE FISKE

who was a columnist who wrote the oddest "New York Letter" in Slant and in a few issues of Hyphen. For instance:

From Slant 5, Spring, 1951:

One of the great pleasures I am going to get from this is seeing my work a l'anglais. In Britain, I am given to understand, American authors are translated into English, but in America every last morsel of British spelling is preserved by the publishers to lend a really exotic touch to the work. Often I have murmured to myself, "Oh, if only I dared write of honour and gaol and forge cheques," and now my opportunity has come. Of course I wouldn't do this myself (to use British spelling in America is an affectation; it is too common to be an eccentricity, which I wouldn't mind,) but I trust Mr. Willis will see that it gets done. I also hope his type fonts have enough parentheses; if not, he can use dashes fore and aft. I have tried to preserve a judicious balance between dots and dashes so as not to tax any one symbol too severely.

From Slant 6, Winter, 1951:

Science and science fiction, in general, are getting along slowly but surely, I note. An atomic golf ball has been invented -- your editor apparently doesn't think much of it, but I regard it as a splendid idea -- which will revolutionise the game. The lost ball gives off radiations; the caddie finds it with a Geiger counter. What could be simpler and more beautiful? As a matter of fact, one could apply this principle to anything likely to get lost -- children, for example.

From Hyphen 2, September, 1952:

I was glad to hear from you and to know that you haven't given me up for someone with fancier notepaper, although the red ribbon is suspicious and I wonder whether we really should let you into the United States. When I got a passport I wasn't asked for my fingerprints because my noble character showed on my face. Besides, they had them anyway. My fountain pen leaked. I didn't have to get any visas either because Americans are Welcome Everywhere. Please step to the rear for knifing.

It's all right to fill out those forms any way you want as long as you keep your fingers crossed. The only person who could fill them without a qualm is a Communist who can, of course, lie. Other people are not supposed to. Thus we fill our country with perjured Communists. You understand of course that our Congress is Communist because there was once a Communist member and everyone belonging to an organisation which also contained a Communist is, of course, axiomatically a Communist himself -- or so McCarthy says, only we don't have to believe him because according to his own rule he is then a Communist and, also according to his own rule, also a liar.....

Anyhow, I am now exploring the depths of the untrimmed pulps, and I see I have missed much. Not only the stories, many of which are fine ones, but the advertisements, which prove even more fascinating. Have I been wasting my money on sf when for a trifling sum I could learn hypnosis and bend editors and people to my evil will? Or perhaps I could be a detective. "Experience unnecessary, particulars free" -- my qualifications to a t. I might cure myself of the tobacco habit; the fact that I don't smoke should make it even easier.....

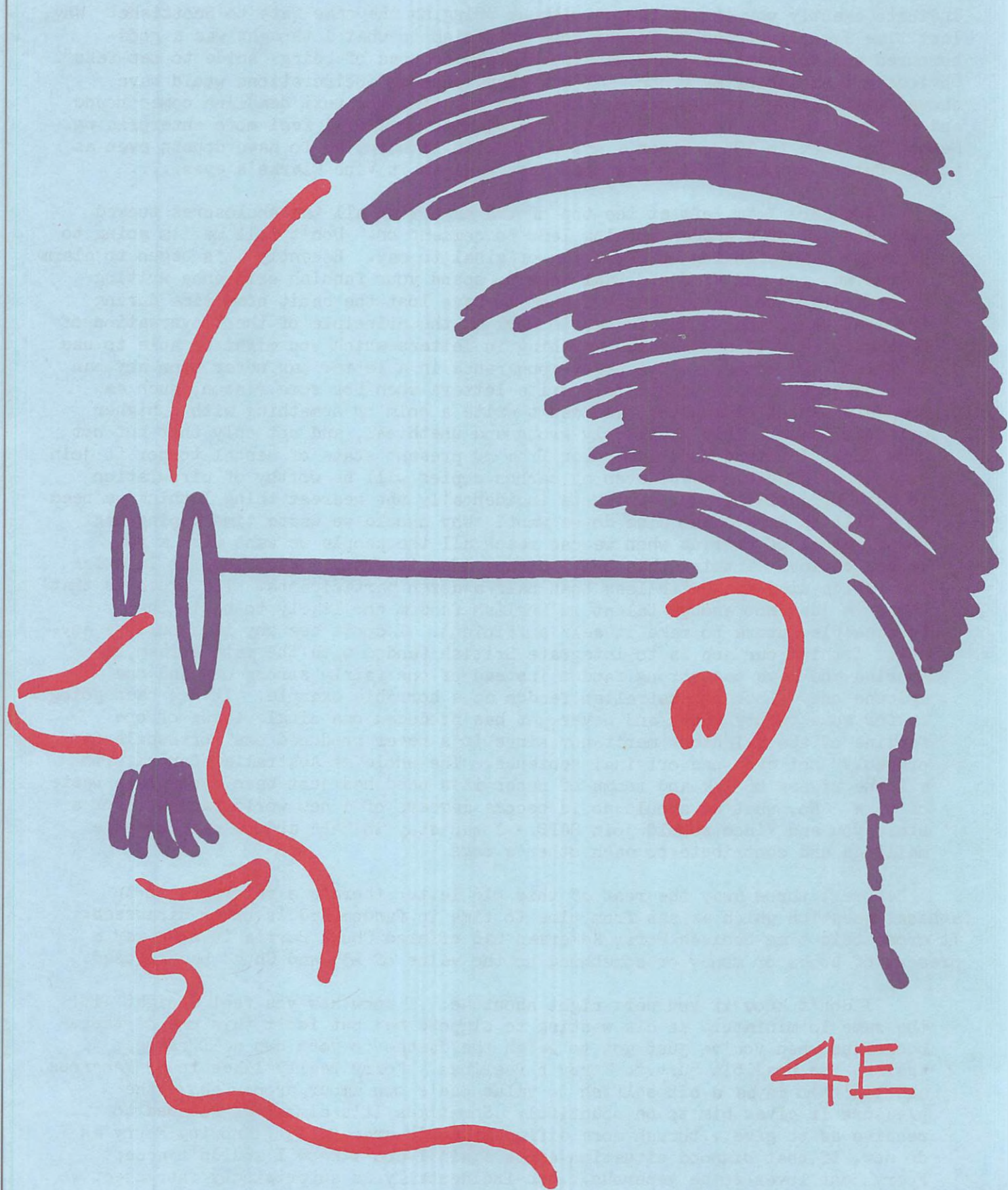
.....

indicate exactly why it was banned without bringing the same fate to Scottishe. Why, last time I merely tried to answer some criticism in what I thought was a good-humoured and tolerant way, and was immediately accused of being "snide to neo-fans". Obviously I am losing my touch. It's a pity, because Incinerations would have showed what "snide" really means. Maybe by the time the next deadline comes round and the hospital has found out what is wrong with me I will feel more enterprising. Meanwhile, back in 1953, I see I was so sunk in lethargy as to have doubts even as to the future of Ompa, which was then just a gleam in Vinc Clarke's eyes.....

Now here I am left at the top of the page with all the enclosures tucked away and all of a sudden nothing left to comment on. Don't tell me I'm going to be reduced to thinking of something original to say. Recently it's begun to alarm me the way you and Vinc and Paul seem to spend your fannish existence writing witty letters to one another. I seem to have lost the habit some time during the last year, when I was forced to work on the principle of the Conversation of Fenergy...that is never waste anything in letters which you might be able to use in print. Or rather, since prior appearance in a letter has never been any ban to subsequent use in print, only write letters when for some reason, such as complete mental exhaustion, you can't write a colm or something with a higher crifanac index. This is utterly wrong and unethical, and not only that but not much fun. I intend once I recover from my present state of mental torpor to join your happy circle. Maybe even my carbon copies will be worthy of circulation in this congenial group. Which is incidentally the nearest thing I think we need to a British Fapa. Who else do we want? Why should we waste time duping mags for a parcel of cretins when we can reach all the people we want with a few carbon copies. I think this British Fapa idea is crazy. Just look at Initiative Inc. which died away with less than half a dozen participants. The truth is that there is just not enough talent in English fandom nor likely to be in the foreseeable future to make it self sufficient. I don't see why it should be any-way. I think our job is to integrate British fandom with the main stream in America and have one strong fandom instead of one fairly strong one and one epicene one. Look at Australian fandom as a horrible example. It has been going on for some twenty years and never yet has produced one single issue of one fanzine of the slightest merit nor since it's never produced one worthwhile fan, probably not even one original sentence. The whole of Australian fandom with all the rivers of ink and reams of paper it's used had just been a complete waste of time. No, what we should do is become members of a new world fandom. For a start you and Vince should join SAPS. I can stay in FAPA and we can exchange mailings and contribute to each other's mags.

Before I throw away the rest of this old letter there's a reference to an ethical question which arises from time to time in fandom and is never discussed. It arose this time because Forry Ackerman had offered Chuck Harris in some way a present of books or money or something to the value of £5, and Chuck had refused.

I don't know if you were right about 4e. I know how you feel alright--it's the same in miniature as his wanting to bigpond me; but isn't this one of those occasions when you've just got to weigh the damage to your own self respect against the possible hurt to Forry's feelings. Forry really likes to be generous, and isn't it maybe a bit selfish to value one's own amour proper above the pleasure it gives him to be bountiful. Sometimes it's almost as blessed to receive as to give...though more difficult to do gracefully. Knowing Forry as I do now, if that bigpond situation arose again I don't know I wouldn't accept. Forry just loves to be generous...and incidentally is surprisingly introspective about it, speculating to me, in a wry sort of way, about it's being a symptom of psychological insecurity...and the way I behaved over the bigpond affair really shook him. I believe it sort of struck at the root of his psyche, at the deeply



4E

held belief that there should be none of this debit/credit nonsense among friends, and all along the journey from Chi to LA he was sort of timorous. I'd been expecting trouble with him standing me things and maybe announced a bit too firmly my intention of paying my own way...meals, drinks and whatnot. Anyway he was sort of cowed about it and almost leaned over backwards to avoid offending me by pressing anything on me. Though when he saw the opportunity to do something--as for instance when at Grand Canyon I was eyeing a stereoscopic viewer as a possible present for Madeleine and he jumped in and bought it himself for her---he took it with glee. It's awfully hard to know what to do in these affairs, when to draw the line. I accepted one of Forry's shirts in LA against one that had been lost in the wash, and before I knew it I was being fitted with an entire outfit... jacket, trousers, shoes...which were supposed to have belonged to Alden Lorraine and which of course they were just going to throw out since they didn't fit 4e. They did fit me perfectly, and by this time I'd come to have a revised outlook on Forry's make-up, so the next time you see me I'll be wearing a jacket that used to belong to Alden Lorraine Ackerman, and maybe trousers and shoes too. If I can do that, you can accept five quid. Who are you thinking of, yourself or 4e?

And finally, a piece of gossip.....

Lava Firestone wants details of British fmz for an N3F checklist. I'm gonna give her Nirvana. Did I ever tell you about Eva and GO. Smith? One day GOS was wandering thru a convention with his feet about two inches off the ground as usual, when someone stopped him with "George, give us a dollar." George generously obliges, whereupon the other says "Congratulations George you are now a fully paid up member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation." "NOOO!" screams George falling to his knees. But there was no escape. Muddily mimeographed mutterings began to come through his mailbox. And also letters from well-meaning old ladies calling themselves the Welcommittee. One of them, Eva, was helpful with advice as to how to get on in fandom. Comment on fanzines, she exhorts him, writes letters, articles, be active" George replies, deadpan, that he's sorry he wouldn't have much time for fan-activity--he's too busy with his professional writing. Back comes a congratulatory letter from Wyoming. "I'm so glad," she says, "to hear that you are trying your hand at pro writing. Just keep trying," she advises him, "and one of these days I'm sure you'll crash the prozines." This GOS assured me, is the absolute truth.

Chuck's six-page reply was as fascinating and as unquotable as ever. To show I'm not hogging the limelight I shall send the whole letter with what I regard as the quotable bits indicated, and let Ethel quote the whole six pages if she likes...

If Degler was ever equipped with a conscience, he must have felt just like I feel right now. If only I'd known you were ill I could have bombarded you with letters, 'get-well' cards and medical dictionaries. Instead, I thought I'd been pariahed and I maintained a haughty silence. I'd been frantically re-reading my old carbons trying to find out what I'd said...I shall write to Vince tomorrow and try to find out if he's sick too....I'm sorry you've got influenza. For my money it's an underrated infection. It can be damn dangerous (Ol' Job used to love my bedside manner). Whatever you do, don't go back to work in a hurry, and don't be overly energetic. Even after all the symptoms have vanished there is always an aftermath of a terrific sense of depression. The best cure for this is lassitude. To do this you just sit....I agree with you about a British FAPA. It was Vince's idea at first but I think it was mainly constructiveitis. It never struck me that we could cover the elite by using carbon copies. I half-believe that you are a genius too. I think you are a little harsh on Australian fandom. One original sentence indeed! How about "one-handed readers"?They're building a Full Gospel church down the main road...Up on the caravan site some-

body's kid fell in the cesspool when they left the manhole open and his mum dived in and saved him...Do you think I would look a fairy in a red corduroy jacket?.....I've got terrific fat during this winter. Mainly around the gut. Haven't reached Elsberry stage yet--I only look about four months gone....After I've posted this I have to pollinate the peach tree. It's too early for bees so I do an imitation with a twist of cottonwool stuck on a piece of bamboo. It's not very exciting. Bees have a very dull existence. I would rather be a female spider with hubby as a post-coital snack.

19.

"There has passed away a glory from the Earth; where is it now, the vision and the dream. It was different in the old days, when there was only a handful of sf mags being published. One had time not only to read them, but also to re-read them. A new novel which had even a trace of sf in it ----- be it only the old Mad Professor --- was an EVENT. A new sf film was so rare it was a MOMENTOUS EVENT.

"When fen met, they could discuss their reading and be on common ground, for the other fellow was bound to have read the story you were so enthusiastic about.

"Today sf batters you with more magazines and books than you could hope to read if you did nothing else all day. It's all over the cinema and tv screens, and drools from the radio. It infests advertisement hoardings, strip cartoons, comics, toy shops, literary weeklies and pantomines. It's even been mentioned at the Globe.

"We always wanted to spread sf, and now, God help us, we've done it. And somehow in the stampede the Magic has been trampled underfoot.

"Science fiction is too much with us; late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers".

This William Wordsworth Temple in March 1954, in a letter of comment on The Enchanted Duplicator, which we published the previous month. This, and indeed TED itself, was typical of the period of introspection which fandom had entered.

The Enchanted Duplicator was received by fandom with such awe-inspiring enthusiasm that it must obviously have filled some deep-felt want for a new basis for our hobby, now that our former proselytising zeal for science fiction no longer seemed to make sense. More surprisingly it was warmly welcomed by people like Ken Slater and the new generation of serious-constructive fans in the North (Bentcliffe, Varley, Ashworth, Cohen and Mackenzie) whose attitude to fandom it had criticised by implication. In fact the booklet received such general acclaim that I thought it worth while answering in detail an enquiry from Redd Boggs as to its origins. And since it has been reprinted since and may be reprinted again soon elsewhere, perhaps this may still be of interest to some of you.....

If you are really interested, Bob Shaw wrote most of Chapter 5 and 6, part of 7, and the first para of 17, but the idea itself is a much closer collaboration. It arose out of a conversation two years ago about a radio play by Louis MacNeice based on the quotation "Childe Rolande to the Dark Tower Came". We kicked the idea around for a whole evening, ending with a pageful of notes. I wrote the first four chapters almost immediately and passed them on to Bob. That was the end of it for more than a year. Then when Vince was over last September we had a discussion about the sad state of fandom at the time---at that period Seventh Fandom was howling alone in the wilderness---and put TED high on the list of Projects to promote a fannish revival. Like the new Hyphen and Toto. George Charters offered to cut out the stencils, and every Tuesday afternoon I'd scribble

a chapter or so in the office, type it out at teatime, and give it to George that evening. At one time I thought I'd never get it finished, because new ideas kept coming to mind more rapidly than the story progressed to a conclusion, and finally I'm afraid I cut it short too abruptly. There was to have been an Ultimate Temptation, science fiction itself, but I found it difficult to symbolise the exact shade of action representing the True Fan attitude to sf; and there was to have been some reference to FAPA and SAPS; but whether because of the same difficulty or plain impatience---I was no longer quite so enthusiastic, having lived with the thing for eighteen months-----I just brought it to a close with that purple passage. Which I felt quite uneasy about at the time as perhaps having gone too far.

I see I have mentioned Mackenzie again, and indeed he had entered fandom quietly in 1953 and we have arrived at the first of the long chain of events which I think of as The Great Mackenzie War. You must have gathered from the number of times I have referred to this without saying anything definite about it, that it is a subject which both fascinates and frightens me. It fascinates me because it was so full of drama and psychological complexity: it may not have culminated in a real live bomb, like the Insurgent Schism in America, but it did ruin at least one life, with such lesser incidental catastrophes as lawsuits, the disruption of the remaining nucleus of Sixth Fandom and of the London Circle and the downfall of the body regulating world conventions. The subject frightens me because the emotions it aroused cannot be wholly dead yet, and because its ramifications are so complex. Finally I have decided that I was too intimately involved with some phases of it to write an objective history, and since this column is frankly nothing more than the raw material of memoirs, I should confine myself to presenting to you the various events as they presented themselves to me at the time.

But first I think I should say that the term the Great Mackenzie War is unfair to Stuart Mackenzie, just as it is unfair to blame Jenkins for all the consequences of the War of Jenkins Ear. He was not even involved in the later stages, when it spread to New York, and even in his early actions for which he was so harshly attacked at the time, I still cannot instance any concrete example of wilful treachery or malicious intrigue. He may have lacked discretion, but basically I think Mackenzie was simply a Force and that it was fandom itself that made him a destructive one. He merely exerted pressure on us, and we split along lines of psychological weakness which had been below the surface all the time.

It wasn't even he who started it all. In fact, looking at the first letters about the unimportant event which started it all, these scraps of paper blown ahead by the advancing storm, I find to my horror that I could be said to have started it all myself.

In January 1964 I had a letter from Eric Bentcliffe, who was then editing the serious-constructive fanzine called Space Times for the Manchester Group comprising Brian Varley and Dave Cohen who were going to put on the forthcoming Convention in Manchester, the Supermancon. The fanzine was being published by Stuart Mackenzie in London. Bentcliffe told me a deal had been arranged with the publishers of the new prozine, the Vargo Statten Magazine, for them to print the fanzine covers in return for free advertising. Now the VSM was of course devoted to juvenile potboilers of John Russel Fearn under his various pseudonyms and was properly despised by all us fans; it struck me as wryly amusing that these serious dedicated sf lovers in Manchester would accept a subsidy from it. I sent a postcard to Bentcliffe reading, in part, "Will the golden calf be on show at the Supermancon?" and published the news item in Hyphen with the comment, "Nice, but ST musn't be surprised if people make remarks as they do about girls and mink coats."

This was I'm afraid sheer mischievousness, but I had no way of knowing that pulling one leg in Manchester would throw the entire group off balance. Dave Cohen sent an ultimatum to Eric Bentcliffe demanding his resignation from the editorship of Space Times, for unauthorised disclosures of information leading to the group being brought into ridicule. Eric Bentcliffe sent carbons appealing to everyone involved protesting the injustice of this. I sent carbons appealing to everyone for calm and a return to the status quo after the convention. Mackenzie then wrote me enclosing a dittoed letter he had been about to issue, implying that he had lost the offer of a good job on account of Bentcliffe's "ill-timed disclosures". (It had been Mackenzie, of course, who had arranged the deal with VSM), complaining bitterly about his editorship and refusing to serve under him any more. He wanted my advice on whether to issue it or not, revealing that Cohen's ultimatum had been the result of a complaint from him and Brian Varley. Before I could answer Eric formally resigned, bringing the immediate crisis to a close but leaving a lot of unanswered questions and bad blood.

When the dust had settled the VSM had gone bankrupt and the Northern SF Club was in fragments, but the editorship of Space Times was securely in the hands of Stuart Mackenzie and Brian Varley. It was at this point that I re-christened the latter Machiavarley, but I am sure this was an injustice. I am not so sure about Mackenzie, because all the following feuds in which he was involved seem to follow an eerily similar pattern.

But let's end on a note more science fictional than these petty squabbles. When Brian Aldiss was in Belfast recently for the Arts Festival he gave a very fine lecture about sf, but admitted that it had not anticipated one development, that the Russians would be the first in space. So it was with some pride I found the following in a letter of comment that I wrote to a US fanzine in March 1954.....

Joe Gibson is an extraordinary mixture of sophistication and naivete. His letter is intelligent, but his article about space flight and Russia is almost childish. Does he really think the concept of space stations etc has only occurred to the Russians? They have been reading and writing science fiction for years and they probably know more about what's going on in Western scientific circles than most Western scientists. It doesn't pay to underestimate those lads. ...Better be careful that the first space flight isn't made from some base in Central Asia (a steppe rocket, of course) and Mars really becomes the Red Planet.

Which proves that pro authors, and indeed the United States Government, should read more fanzines than they do.

20.

Having already spent three hours on this column without getting past the first paragraph, I am forced to a dread conclusion: Creeping Perfectionism has struck again. This disease is one of the most serious that can afflict a faned, since it can lead to annishthesia and permanent gafia, and like malaria it's never permanently cured.

I used to have it pretty bad myself. I remember my first letter section, for instance, in a forgotten fanzine called Inclinations which consisted of letters of comment on Slant. Slant had never had a letter section, since few people write letters of comment which cry out for immortality tersely enough for a hand-set printed fanzine, so when I finally got myself a duplicator I had years of frustrated letter-section editing to work out of my system. That letter section was the most edited there has ever been. First I typed out all the interesting bits from the letters: then I rearranged them in what I felt was the most effective order; then I typed them

all out again with a linking commentary so designed that the comments on one letter led on to the next one, the idea being that each quotation should fall into place with uncanny aptness; then I transcribed the lot onto stencil. By that time, as you'll have noticed, I had copied out each letter three times. And yet in the end I had a letter section not half as good as Max Keasler could produce with one hand tied behind his back.

What he had got, and what I had thrown away, was spontaneity. You knew that anything was likely to happen in a Keasler letter column, so you kept watching with the same fearful fascination that you watch live outside broadcast interviews on tv. Somebody might say something rude, and in Keasler's fanzines they often did. It's arguable that the best letter section is one that is not edited at all, like Forry Ackerman's VOM. That was claimed to be the Mirror of Fandom, and with some justification, because Forry took pride in reproducing each letter with photographic completeness, even down to the signature. You knew that what you were getting were the readers' reactions to Forry and his fanzine, not what he wanted you to think they were.

In the same way it occurs to me perhaps that I am wasting my time by trying to impose some sort of thematic continuity on the quotations which make up this column. It's a temptation to link up letters one with another, discerning trends and all that, but if I were writing a Decline And Fall of Sixth Fandom I wouldn't be writing this column at all. All it was ever meant to be was a final wastebasket for my correspondence files, and people who expect something else from it are looking for silk purses in a piggery. I only hope there are enough of you others, people like me who like reading other people's mail, to out-number them.

12.Feb.1954. Robert Bloch on fan activity and pro writing:

As to my fan activity being a secret vice....vice it may be, but hardly a secret one. The reason for my indulgence is so basurdly simple (I started out to write 'absurdly simple' but now that I see the neologism I think I'll leave it that way: isn't it a dirty looking word?)

In the words of AdoAnnie (a character in 'Oklahoma' which is as you know the American equivalent of 'Hearts of Oak') my trouble is that I can't say no. Somebody writes and asks for an article, chances are if the request is at all reasonable I'll oblige. Get roped into all kinds of fanactivity that way. too. (Did I hear some cosher in the back of the house mutter 'Egoboo'?) Well, it's not that at all. Egoboo is earned by pro activity. Me, all I get is headaches. I spent the whole morning doing an article for Calkins: because he asked me, and because he said he needed something to balance your illiterate contribution. It's just weakness that keeps me in fandom. Here I am, on p.111 of a slimy little opus about a one-eyed private eye---really---and instead of finding out what happens on p.112, I am penning random remarks to some faraway Belfastness in the wilderness. Are we still in this confounded parenthesis? Let's get out before we're suffocated.)

Hadacol and dianetics might help you to do creative writing. But with me the big trick is impersonation. More and more I've come around to writing stories in the first person, pretending to be somebody else. No need to be self-conscious then, because you merely adopt an empathy for the person you're supposed to represent and allow his or her attitudes and viewpoints to flow freely. At times you may find your own personality intruding, but usually it's easy enough to keep on the track. Of course I'm not a successful pro writer---just a hack, and a rather old-fashioned one at that, inasmuch as I don't adapt myself to current trends in sf. But what I do seem to sell is largely a product of this little trick, assuming a role for purposes of narration. Variation or extension of a monologue, that's what it is. I don't know if such a device suggests anything

to you which might be of help, but perhaps you can try it.

Well, at least this voice from the past may give hope to other writers who are thinking of themselves as oldfashioned unsuccessful hacks. The advice about writing wouldn't help me, but on another occasion Bob wrote trying to help me about public speaking on similar lines, and he did. He confided he hated public speaking and always felt nervous, and the way he made out was to make believe he was delivering someone else's speech. Thereby, as it were I suppose, shifting the responsibility

3rd.April.1954. Mal Ashworth, on receipt of The Enchanted Duplicator.

You told me you were hectically busy but when it arrives it's mimeoed!..... Fannagrevos. Aaaaah yes. Harrumph. When I did finally get the Janish of Space Times I found they had run that review I mentioned earlier of Hyphen 5. Well it wasn't exactly a rude review, just plain moronic and unappreciative. But then it was done about last November and that accounts for it. I don't know why the hell there isn't some injunction to stop necactifans from diving in and judging, criticising, expressing opinions about things and generally making fools of themselves before they know what things are about at least to some degree! There ought to be if only for their own sakes.

Round about this time Mal Ashworth and Tom White published the first issue of Bem. Recently I had said something about all first issues being badly duplicated, and Mal had the bright idea of saving a set of spoiled pages, further messing them up with inky handprints etc even including one page with an outline of a necktie in white down it, as if someone had got his tie caught in the duper, and stapling them all together and sending the horrible mess to me without comment. I was just finishing an issue of Hyphen myself and after I had run off the editorial stencil I cut a hole in it, inserted a disgusted review of Bem, and ran off one copy especially for Mal. By return of post I had a furious letter threatening to denounce me to every fannish authority. In case it was genuine I had to dash out and send a telegram to Mal telling him to look at Tom's Hyphen. By 1st May the smoke cleared and Mal wrote....

Did you not have even a tiny little fit about my proposed plans to restore Ben's fair name? Oh well I tried. I wish you'd call in an arbitrator and find out who ended up, relatively, where. I knew of course before I wrote that letter that my copy was a hoax, but I didn't know from the start. Oh no, not by a long way---you got me completely, I admit it....I never even considered my copy might be a hoax even tho there was some type missing beneath the review.

As for who came out best at the end, well you are posterity and you can judge. Personally I always felt that I had won because my hoax worked although Mal could have detected it: while theirs worked only because I couldn't check on it.

23rd March. 1954. Ted Tubb with some helpful suggestions about TAFF:

Each contributor to TAFF to be entitled to nominate ONE candidate. Then contributors will vote on candidates. The trick is, votes will be proportionate to amounts contributed, i.e. 2/6 and under--one vote, 5/- --2 votes, £1--3 votes and so on. The winning THREE candidates to then be revoted on. Now I know this seems undemocratic, but it makes good sense. Surely if a man is willing to contribute a £1 he is helping the winner eight times further on his way than one who chips in 2/6 and so should have eight times more say in who should go. Also, and this is it, it will make for a keen sense of rivalry and the money should come rolling in faster than it does now. After all, if a man gives 2/6 and then knows that no matter what others give he has the same power to vote as they, there is

no incentive to pay more other than pure fannish love which seems to be non-existent.

Fortunately Ted seems to have been wrong.

21.

One evening in March 1953 James White arrived at my house in great excitement clutching a letter from John W. Campbell Himself disclosing that he was willing to pay \$285 for a story James had sent him called "The Scavengers". This was a fabulous sum to us in those days, but even to mention money in the context was misleading except in that it lent an air of reality to the incredible glory which had descended on our humble fan group, born and nurtured on Astounding. Our feelings were more like some country vicar who receives out of the blue a tablet of stone announcing that his sermon last Sunday has found such favor on high that henceforth it is to be included in the Bible.

Before James's apotheosis could be confirmed it was necessary for his signature to a contract to be witnessed by a notary public, and his problem was that such creatures did not seem to exist in Northern Ireland. Momentarily sobered by my responsibilities as leader of the fan group, I brought my fine mind into action, examined my broad mental horizons, and deduced that the local equivalent must be Commissioner for Oaths. I even remembered that somewhere down the road there was a brass plate with those words on it. So we walked down the Upper Newtownards Road, disturbed an amiable old gentleman called Norwood and assured James's immortality. I felt equally godlike myself, for had I not discovered James and encouraged him to write and insisted he send that story to Astounding? All he had contributed was talent and industry.

After we had put in some more serious gloating James cycled home again, and I hurried to the nearest telephone kiosk to send a telegram to Chuck Harris with the awesome news. Like Robert Bloch, Chuck Harris plays a role in present-day fandom reminiscent of that of Yorick in "Hamlet", but in those days he was the friend and confidant of all the leading fans in what is now known as Sixth Fandom, admired by them as some writers are more admired by other writers than by the general public. He was a fan's fan, a confidant because of his sympathetic and generous nature and his isolated situation, and admired because of the wonderful letters he wrote. We all felt that if Chuck could only make the jump from letters to general communication, he would be a better writer than any of us. But he never did, and indeed it is curious how permanent seem the attributes which first revealed themselves in all of us as young fans. I see that on St. Patrick's Day 1953 I was writing to Chuck about Harlan Ellison:

I like Ellison. He had a short piece about himself in Vanations and he seemed for a minute to slip into sincerity with a story about his youth and how he coped with antisemitism in the Cleveland slums. Besides anyone with that much energy and enthusiasm is a real asset to fandom. Just figure how much work he must put into SF Bulletin -- 0 to 50 pages, 300 copies, monthly and every margin justified, sometimes in double columns. It just isn't possible.

Those impossible issues of SF Bulletin were muddily mimeoed on coarse absorbent paper, and ever since then I have been unable to read anything by Harlan Ellison, however elegantly produced and professionally praised, without thinking that it shows signs of over-inking.

Here is Harlan Ellison, the young fanned, seeking material for his fanzine:

Dear Unca Walt:

Whether you are aware of it or not, you dirty low-down sneaking slob, I've been holding up my annual since February on the promise of an article from you. And I will keep my 400 subscribers waiting until I do get that article. I already have Willy Ley, Tucker, A. Charles Catania, Paul Cox, Gregg Calkins, Mack Reynolds, Venable, Elsberry, Ridley, Wells, Nydahl, and about eight others of equal note, but I want a real BNF (bloody-nosed fan) and will stay on top of this stack of mouldy fanzines, eating nothing else but stale chicken-fat sandwiches until I get that piece of material (of decent length too, you louse) for the damn thing.....Please, please Walt.

...Beastley's was a complete flop. Read the con reviews in my next issue of SFB after #13. They will, I contend, blow fandom wide open. Everyone was potten ((sic)) and lascivious. A thoroughly nauseating spectacle.

Yours very birdbathly,
Max J. Runnerbeam

"Come now, Harlan," I temporised, "I'll have to speak to you like a Dutch Uncle. Luik, Mynheer, you can't expect me to believe you've been holding up an annish on account of me, especially as I didn't promise you anything...." But even gags pinched from S.J. Perelman were of no avail against a natural phenomenon like Harlan. He came right back:

NOW HEAR THIS! NOW HEAR THIS!

This is 100%, gold-plated, pure-bred truth. I have been holding up the SFB annish since February in hopes, in hopes mind you, of getting from you something. I've pleaded, I've cajoled, I've coaxed, I've threatened.....I've done them all to no avail. Over four hundred readers and fans have been waiting for this momentous tome to leave in the dust all such annishes. I have been, to put it bluntly, sweating my testicles off trying to get something out of you.

NOW I'VE STROPPED FOOLING AROUND!

Here it is Willis, you creep: if I don't get one of your best articles (or stories, if you so choose) in less than three weeks, you can expect to receive a visit from a certain short young man with a large pipe, an even larger nose, horn-rimmed glasses and portable birdbath cleaner. You think I am kidding? How wrong you are! I swear by all that is holy that I will come to Ireland to GET that damn material from you. And since I cannot afford to come at all, I will work over on a HMS garbage scow or something for fare. That is the truth!

I don't lie about things of such seriousness.

So if you don't want to wreck my life, you'd better send that mss. in QUICK-LIKE, brother.

I still love you like a nephew, however.

Actually the main reason for my refusal was one I hadn't mentioned to Harlan at all, a profound distrust of annishes. I had learned that either they never appeared at all, or if they did appear the editor promptly went gafia with exhaustion, or if it did appear and he did survive the readers were so stunned there were few loc's anyway. So while I did write something for Harlan's annish, purely because I had liked him so much when we met at Chicago in 1952, I sent the same piece to the editor of a London fanzine, and told both of them what I had done. Harlan telephoned me about this, presumably to expostulate: I don't know for sure because the conversation never took place. Only Harlan Ellison would have tried to call up somebody who wasn't on the telephone. He got my father's house, some few hundred yards away, and by the time my sister had come round with the message and I had reached the phone, Harlan had gone. The only outcome was an addition to fannish mythology. Chuck Harris was staying with me at the time and was in the very act of crowing over the fact that he had got more mail than I had, when the message arrived that a Mr. Ellison wanted to speak to me from Cleveland, Ohio. Do you often get phone calls from American fans, asked Chuck, chastened. Only when it's something

important, I explained with calm effrontery.

The only further contact I have had with Harlan was another meeting in Los Angeles in 1962, and yet I feel, and I think he feels too, that we have always been close friends. It is one of those undemanding but wholly satisfactory relationships which can continue to exist between people who never write to and seldom see one another, rather like a family relationship. Lee Hoffman, whose fantastic esotericisms often concealed startling perceptiveness, brought Harlan Ellison into her imaginary family tree as our nephew while he was still the enfant terrible of Seventh Fandom, and her intuition was sound. (This family tree business, incidentally, arose from an article by Burbee describing how he tried to disabuse Francis Towner Laney of the fixed idea he was supposed to have that Les and Es Cole were 16-year old twin brothers, a useful technique for writing humorous articles that I've used once or twice myself). The Hoffman/Willis family tree included Bloch, Tucker, Keasler, Vick, Ellison and a few others. There were quite a number of other leading fans of the day whom we liked and respected, but for some reason they did not seem to qualify. It was one of the disagreements between Lee and myself that she always seemed to me to be trying to form elites, using esotericism as a sort of wall to exclude outsiders, and the family tree worried me from this point of view. But when I tentatively nominated candidates for inclusion and she firmly turned them down, I could see that in some subtle way these people differed from the family. Eventually I accepted the situation, and now after 15 years I am coming to believe that she was wiser than I was, for none of the members of the family has ever fallen out with another.

Even the relationships still seem valid, although my nephew has become so famous. I admire Harlan for all the qualities I lack myself, just as if he were the child of my complementary twin.

I was right about his innish, because it never did appear. Dire forebodings were being heard on other fronts too. On 30th March 1953 I was writing to Shelby Vick:

Don't tell Peter Graham, but I've been very ill. No, not his "diphtheria"--- when I do die of some disease it will be one that's properly spelled --- but influenza with some newfangled version of pneumonia. Also gafia, but the doctor couldn't do anything about that.

...Had an unusually sombre letter from Bloch yesterday bemoaning the apparent demise of Sixth Fandom, where he mentions the silence of you and Max and Lee and seems to pin his hopes on the European side of Sixth Fandom. But to carry on as a living entity, and the most fun there's ever been in fandom, we need an American wing. This is where you should come in and CONFUSION should come out.. ..Unless you and CF can carry on for a few months we're all in real danger of losing something valuable that we've built up over the last year or so. Remember what happened when Spacewarp folded? All that wonderful crowd...Nelson, Singer and the others....just disintegrated. Fandom was plunged into ineffectual chaos for years until Quandry built up another world. And yet all during the interim between Warp and Q the potentialities were there. For myself, I was entering fandom just as Warp folded. If it had carried on or if Q had started earlier I'd probably have started The Harp two years earlier than I did. I'm sure the same goes for other people. Bloch for example had been hanging around just waiting. It was us that made him active as a fan. And now that Q is folding....or looks like it from here...it's left to CF to carry on our type of fanzine until some neo appears to carry the torch. Then you'll be able to retire and become a legend, like Tucker's Great Fan who was automatically sent a copy of every fanzine, like the British Museum or the Library of Congress.

I want very much to keep in touch with everything myself, but I've got to cut down my fanac. People tend to forget that in a sense I have been the first

world fan, fully active on both sides of the Atlantic. I only kept up that pre-Chicon output with quite a severe strain.

Whatever happened in the States it seemed a safe bet at the time that European Sixth Fandom would continue to exist. Chuck Harris, Vince Clarke, and myself backed by the rest of Irish Fandom (which had no separate foreign policy of its own) seemed a group so congenial and happy that it could continue forever without dissension. To describe the holocaust that destroyed the Second Foundation of Sixth Fandom, and which is one of the few calamities of the sort which was never reported in a fanzine except in the suppressed issue of Orion, of which I believe I have the only copy, would need at least one whole installment of this series. But perhaps I can start by reintroducing American fandom to Vince Clarke. He was one of the most talented fans of all time, but he was a perfectionist and his output was small, and inclined to be literarily oriented. It consisted largely of his news fanzine, which started off like this:

I have thought of my story, announced Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Pass the marmalade dear.

Percy looked vaguely around the breakfast table. Marmalade...lade..laden? Ah!That orb'd maiden with white fire laden, Whom mortals call the Moon, Walks....no, Flies.....no....ummmm.

Allow me, my dear Mrs. Shelley. Lord Byron passed the marmalade, and shook his curly head at Percy. Tut, Bysshe, you'll no more go aroving by the light of the moon, and the sound of revelry by night ill becomes a married man. But pardon, my dear lady. You have decided to enter our little contest of ghost tales?

Yes indeed, and I have a tale that is truly horrifying. I could not sleep last night and my imagination, unbidden, possessed me, going far beyond the bounds of reverie.....I saw a pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside a thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful.

She shuddered. Tea dripped into the marmalade.

His success must terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken. He would hope that its transient life would fade... he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench the hideous corpse for ever....he sleeps, but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold! The horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.....

Lord Byron nodded reflectively. Almost, he murmured, you might be describing:

SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS

THE POISONED PEN

This is all the editorial matter there'll be from me in this issue, because in less than a week from now I'll be on my way to discover America, just another bounder on the bounding main. As soon as I've finished this letter column I'll be sending the dozen or so stencils I've cut -- you'll recognise them by the absence of typos -- over to my associates Chuck Harris and Bob Shaw to turn into a magazine. I hope to get a copy while in America so that I can write them a rude letter of comment.

Walt Willis in Hyphen 2, September, 1952.

ARTWORK CREDITS

Lee Hoffman

Cover, 39, 55, 66, 118, 142-143, 157, 163, 170, 178, 192, 215, 223, 224, 230-231, 234, 249, 254, 260-261, 301, 318-319, 340-341, 358-359, 369, 387, 398-399, 408, 423, 558, 566-567, 577

Arthur Thomson

200-201, 438-439, 475, 486, 491, 507, 512, 583.....

Shelby Vick

127, 207.....

Bob Shaw

24, 105, 143, 224, 524.....

James White

524.....

Richard Bergeron

Dedication and quote by James Joyce (discovered by Tom Perry), 14, 31, 38-39, 54-55, 110-111, 122, 224, 275, 291, 304-305, 535, 558, 592, embossed cover emblem, end paper lining.

Gregg Calkins

144.....

General blame for the art direction and selection should be laid at the feet of the editor whose business it was to try to reflect the ambience and background of the period as it was created by such talents as LeeH, ATom, ShelVy, James White, and BoSh. The co-operation and general acquiescence of these people is greatly appreciated (Vick couldn't be located). Lee's Lil 'Peeple were really Lil 'Giants: capturing as they did the essence of an entire fannish era with an economical genius which is probably approached only by Ray Nelson in all our history. The incredible ATom, of course, illuminated the late 50s and 60s. Merci, mes confreres.

Acknowledgements

Lee Hoffman

Cover (inside): From Quark 9, Feb. 1965
From a doodle in a letter of comment.
39:From Null-F 7, 1957
66:From Quandry 13, Aug. 1951
118: Indian from LaziLee, 1952. Reference on the figure of the Irishman is lost.
142-143: "...Forty Four Forty or Fight", August, 1955.
157: From Quandry 27/28, Dec. 1952. Orig-

inal illustration in The Harp Stateside.

163: From Quandry 27/28, Dec. 1952. Original illustration in The Harp Stateside.

170:Quandry 13, Aug. 1951

178: From "...Forty Four Forty or Fight", August, 1955.

192:From Lighthouse 14, Oct. 1966

215:From Quandry 21, June, 1952

223:Reference lost

224:Reference on lyre lost

230-231: ...From SF Five Yearly, Nov. 1971

234: ... From Self-Preservation, May, 1964

249: From "...Forty Four Forty or Fight", August, 1955.

254:From SF Five Yearly, Nov. 1971

301:From Void 21, April, 1960

340-341:From Beabohema 13, 1970

398-399:From Beabohema 13, 1970

558:From Quandry 14, Oct. 1951

566-567:From Opus 6, July, 1952

Arthur Thomson

200-201: From The Harp Stateside, Feb. '57

438-439: From The ATom Anthology. No date.

475:From Grue 29, April, 1958

491:Reference lost

507:From Hyphen 19, January, 1958

512: ...From The Harp Stateside, Feb. 1957

127:From Confusion, November, 1952

207:From Quandry 13, August, 1951

Bob Shaw

24:From Warhoon 25, November, 1968

105:From Quandry 19, April, 1952

143: ...Irish figure from Quandry 22, 1952

224: ...Irish figure from Quandry 22, 1952

524: Woodcutter from Slant 5, Spring, '51

James White

524: ...Woodcut from Slant 5, Spring, 1951

Shelby Vick

127:From Confusion 13, November, 1952

207:From Quandry 13, September, 1951

Richard Bergeron

14:From Warhoon 26, February, 1969

31:From Warhoon 27, September, 1970

291: Based on a prozine cover drawing from

Science Fantasy News 5, Summer, 1950.

Typography: 38-39, 54-55, 31, 558.....

Unreferenced artwork appears here for the first time. The Gregg Calkins photographs first appeared in Quandry 27/28, December, 1952, in another cropping.

THE
SLANT
STORY



Willis takes us from font to fame with one of the most incredible tales of fanpublishing ever told.

"Thirty shillings a page," I said disgustedly one evening in 1948, "I could nearly get it printed for that." At the time I was sitting in the Cafe de la Victoire with a couple of fellow members of the intelligentsia. Well, actually to be quite frank it was a fried fish shop in Ballymacarett called the Victory Supper Saloon, with a decor of checked linoleum and fly-papers, but it was the best we could do. Belfast is short in open-air Montmartre-type cafes and we were short of money, so we had determined to inaugurate all on our own a tradition of left-bank avant-garde fish and chips shops and had started by rechristening this one without the knowledge of the proprietor. The next step, we felt, would be to supply him with a pile of old copies of transition to wrap his take-out orders of chips in, and soon the place would become the Mecca of international Bohemia with us as doyens. At the moment however we were talking about this science fiction fan magazine I was thinking of starting and about the high prices of professional duplicating.

"I know where you can get a printing press," said Alan Seaton, toying idly with a bottle of fine old vintage vinegar. (Yes, these are the people who invented the sauce bottle fandom I wrote about elsewhere.) Seaton was our artist: he painted an average of four pictures a week, using both sides of the canvas, but never signed any of them lest the market be debased when he became recognized. He went on to explain that his employer, a pharmaceutical chemist, had bought this press about twenty years ago to print his own letterheads but the technicalities had defeated him and he had relegated it to the lumber room. He had certainly forgotten all about it. So next afternoon I went to Seaton's shop and lurked about like a customer, ready to buy a bottle of aspirins at the drop of a hat if it became necessary to disarm suspicion, until I could be smuggled upstairs.

Arriving finally in the attic, breathless with anticipation and three flights of stairs, I was a little disappointed at my first sight of the Printing Press. The only printing presses I had ever seen before were the great whirring machines which the hero always stopped in the last reel of movies about journalists, and though I really wasn't expecting one of those, I at least thought it would be something that went round. Not a little iron box with a handle. However there was no time to think about that. We dumped it into a cardboard box along with everything that seemed to belong to it and I was smuggled out of the shop again successfully, all aspirations and no aspirins.

At home, I examined the prize more carefully. As well as the press, there was what I learned later is termed a composing stick and a vast quantity of type. The press itself seemed pathetically simple. There was a tray in which you presumably placed the type and the lid had a couple of clips on it to hold a sheet of paper. If you linked the lid and closed the box and leaned on the handle the paper would be pressed against the type and bingo. Privately I thought Gutenberg was a bit stupid

not to have thought of it sooner. There was nothing broken...in fact there was nothing to break...and the tray for the type was as big as the page of a small book. We were in business, and I told as much to James White when he came up later that evening.

"A printed fanzine!" said James, awed. We had only seen one printed fanzine so far, Walter Gillings' Fantasy Review, and that was so far above our lowly neofan level that we regarded it as an august professional publication, similar in stature to The Proceedings of the Royal Society. Its reviewers breathed such a rarified atmosphere of the higher learning that we had never even heard of any of them. It wasn't until much later we found that they were all house names disguising the identity of scruffy London fans like ourselves.

So, diffident, but undaunted, we set out to topple Fantasy Review off its pedestal. I grasped the composing stick and started setting up the editorial. Now in case you know as little about letterpress printing as I did until that moment, perhaps I had better explain that the letters come individually on the ends of little metal sticks, and there are shorter metal sticks of different sizes for the spacing between words, and by juggling about with these you can get all the lines exactly the same width. You arrange them in the composing stick, which is a little three-sided tray with one side which can be moved back and forth, and when you've got from two to eight or so lines set up, the number depending on your optimism or confidence, you release the screw holding the adjustable third side and holding your breath and the type in a desperate vicelike grip you lift up the whole mass of letters and spaced unsupported from beneath and transfer them to the printing tray you hope...phew! Nothing in mimeography, even the sound of a ripping stencil wrapping it self round the self-feed, compares with the stark horror of that moment when you feel the type disintegrating between your fingers and hear it starting to spatter on the floor. And even when you've become expert at it, disaster can still strike. I remember one evening much later we were setting up type and talking and Bob Shaw made an impassioned gesture, forgetting he was holding a composing stick, and two hours work went hurtling over his left shoulder like salt. We spent the rest of the evening picking the letters off the floor and putting them back in their compartments again, which is a very slow job when you have to look at each letter, reversed and decide which it is. (Hence the expression, mind your p's and q's and they could have added b's and d's and I's and l's.)

But we ran into yet another problem first. The vast store of type we had acquired with the machine ran out after three lines. However we managed to manoeuvre those three lines into the press and I rubbed them with a rubber stamp pad I had with great forethought brought home from the office and we clipped a piece of paper to the lid and closed it and levered it down and opened it up again. Impressions of several of the letters were clearly to be seen on the paper. We had printed something! Drunk with power, we gazed in admiration at the spotty purple hieroglyphs as if they were the Book of the Kells. What few imperfections there might be in the printing should, we agreed, be ascribed to worn type and wrong ink. We were suffering already from the occupational disease of new fan editors, Delusions of Legibility.

Next day I went down town bringing an example of our existing type to have it matched. An old man, probably Gutenberg himself, pored through an immense catalogue of typefaces and told me it was Gloucester Bold Condensed, so I bought a font of that. It cost about two pounds. I bought it home all silvery and shining in a neat little cardboard box, starting with an impressive two full rows of A's and ending with all sorts of quaint punctuation marks and diphthongs, and that evening I spent happily sorting them all out into a dirty old wooden type-tray the old man had thrown in for another five shillings, having first labelled all the compartments with bits of sticky paper. In my ignorance I just labelled them A B C D E and so on, not knowing

there was a special arrangement for printers' typetrays like QWERTYUIOP, and for the same very good reasons. By the time we knew better we figured it was too late to change.

By the end of the following evening we had finished setting the editorial and had somehow got it into the press. I had also bought a pound tin of printer's ink, for about half a dollar. It lasted the whole lifetime of *Slant*, which is one of the things that makes it difficult for me to find my way out of mimeograph supply shops nowadays, on account of the red mist before my eyes. James had come up again, all eagerness, and we rolled out a little ink on the bathroom mirror and then rolled it onto the type and printed again. The result was both triumph and disaster. On the other hand there was a clear and beautiful impression on the paper of nearly every other letter: on the other hand the editorial looked as if it had been started off with a whimper and finished with a bang. The type we had been sold was compressed and emphatic; it could hardly have been more unlike the type we had, which was obviously neither Bold nor Condensed nor probably even Gloucester. We cursed Gutenberg and conferred grimly. Finally we decided that rather than take all that new type apart again and clean it we would keep it for our body type and use the other for headlines. This was the first really bad mistake we made, if you don't count taking up printing in the first place, but we weren't to find just how big a mistake it was until the third issue.

Next evening we had the first part of the editorial reset in the new type, but another blow had fallen. We had run out of small i's. (It's a curious thing, but every writer seems to have some letter he uses more than the average, and with me it's small i's. Small i's, I said. I was to spend many hours in the future filing the tails of j's and changing words like insipid to tasteless.) I had barely got the editorial finished and yet it covered only about two thirds of a page. We couldn't publish a magazine with pages as tiny as that, but it would be another month before I could afford to buy more type.

Faced with this impasse, James made a diffident suggestion. He had heard, he said, of things called woodcuts. The idea presumable was that you scraped lines on a piece of wood and the ink didn't get into the grooves so they printed white on black. If we had illustrations we wouldn't need so much type. He was willing to try and supply them. I congratulated him on this brilliant suggestion and gave him a supply of old bits of plywood and single edged razor blades. Actually of course it should have been blocks of boxwood and tiny chisels but I didn't know any better: it seemed to me in my innocence that plywood, being faced with a hard wood, would be close grained enough and he could get large areas of white easily by just levering off the top ply. His first efforts showed our mistakes. The large black areas needed so much ink the type was nearly swamped and even then the grain of the wood showed. But as the production of *Slant* 1 went on James got cleverer and finally, for page 5, he produced a woodcut with only a few bits of surface wood left here and there. It looked like nothing on earth until we printed it and then in a way first impressions were confirmed because it turned out a perfect lunar landscape. Well, anyway, it looked perfect to us. It illustrated a story by me (I wrote the whole issue of course because we didn't know any other fan writers we could ask), a serious one about the problem of communicating with aliens by radio transmission alone. It wasn't up to much as a story...apart from my own limitations there's nothing like setting up your material in print to make you cut it down to the bare bones...but it used an idea which is still original. The aliens sent bunches of pips representing the first twelve prime numbers, and we replied with the thirteenth. Then they sent pairs of numbers which plotted on a graph became a circle and its diameter, followed by the value of Pi in their scale of notation. Once that basis had been established pictures of almost any complexity could be transmitted. The other contents included an article about telekinesis, a cleriheh, a short column and ...

what was really the reason we had thought of publishing a fanzine in the first place ...a list of the copies of ASF we wanted to complete our collections. (We needed, I see, all of 1940, 1941, 1942 and 1943, but were undaunted.)

The whole thing was contained on three sheets of folded foolscap, making twelve pages in all. Such was the publication which burst on a lethargic fandom in November, 1948.

Before pulling out all his dead bride's teeth, the monomaniacal hero of Poe's "Berenice" used to "repeat monotonously some common word until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind." It is possible for the same thing to happen to an entire magazine, if you have written and revised the contents yourself, typeset them by hand and checked the proofs. So by the time we had finished Slant 1 we had no idea what the contents were like.

Later I found I had a peculiar ability to assess my work as it would appear to others. Not objectively...it takes many years before I can do that....but subjectively from the point of view of someone else. I could pick up an addressed copy of a magazine I had produced and put myself in the position of that particular recipient, and read it quite anew as he would see it, and I could do this over and over again for everyone I knew, reading as it were a different magazine each time. I find, to take the most extreme example that Eric Frank Russell's copy reads quite differently from Eva Firestone's, and indeed when I am reading a copy of an issue just before mailing it, I have to take care that I pick one that's addressed to someone I like so that I won't feel discouraged. But at the time of Slant 1 this faculty was useless to me, because I didn't know any of the recipients: I had no idea what to expect.

I suppose we got about ten letters of comment on that first issue and we were intoxicated by this flood of unaccustomed egoboo. Most startling of all one thoughtful person had actually sent some stamps "to help defray expenses" (we had not thought of asking for subscriptions) and the idea that people would actually pay money for something we had produced was quite overwhelming. In fact I haven't quite got over it yet. Full of fresh enthusiasm, we plunged into our second issue. I replied to everyone who had commented and those who looked literate I flattered outrageously and begged for material. Two of them came through almost immediately, Clive Jackson and Cedric Walker, neither of whom had been active in fandom before or had written professionally. Jackson's story, "The Thin Small Voice", was a beautiful little pastiche of Bradbury, tiny and brilliant like a jewel and perfect for a hand-printed fanzine.

We led off the issue with it proudly, and then there was my first attempt at humorous fiction, a piece full of bad puns about an attempt to drill a subway to Australia which foundered in a pool of universal solvent. (All the samples distilled by successful alchemists had of course made their way to the centre of the earth.) Then there was my last attempt at serious fiction, which I have just now read for the first time in twelve years and can now be objective about. It had a good plot which has still not been used elsewhere and some good lines ("Do caterpillars believe in butterflies?") but was ruined by condensation. There was enough in it to make a novel, but it was so fined down to fit into eight small pages that now I can hardly understand it myself. Then came Walker's story, which still seems to me a pretty good one of short. And there was an editorial and a column and various other fillers by me, because I couldn't get anyone else to fill up the magazine.

It was after the publication of this second issue that things really began to happen. Like for instance Ted Carnell asking our Cedric Walker to write for New Worlds. This was a big thrill -- Professional Recognition -- and I don't remember

being at all put out that Ted didn't seem to be interested in my story. I don't remember if this was true humility, or whether I privately thought it was a bit too good for New Worlds -- probably both alternately. Cedric did duly appear in NW, and later in the American Marvel with a story I had rejected from Slant (only because it was too long -- we weren't all that choosy then) but he was a bit of a sobersides and after a while we lost interest and stopped cajoling material from him. We thought Jackson a much more congenial type and regarded him as our real find. This opinion was shortly confirmed by a startling letter from Forrest J Ackerman.

Ackerman was, I think, the only American to get Slant right from the start, and that was only because he appeared in the membership list of the then British Fantasy Society. I wondered at the time why that was and later found that he had done so much for British fandom during the war that it had become a tradition to list him as an honorary member of every British fan organization, local and national, and automatically to include his name on every mailing list. Hence he got Slant, and read it, and wrote offering to replace Jackson's story in a prozine. It eventually appeared in the Avon Fantasy Reader, Jackson netting the vast sum of \$19.00 and us a gracious acknowledgment as an "Irish fan magazine". We were utterly awed at ourselves.

We invited Jackson over for a holiday and had several story conferences, after one of which he produced "The Swordsman of Varnis," the most successful thing we ever published. It was reprinted by Other Worlds almost immediately, and later appeared in at least one hardcover anthology. We also had for No. 3 a story by E.E. Evans which Forry had sent us. Privately we didn't think it was all that good, but it was by a real live genuine professional author and we were bursting with pride. We worked four nights a week and all weekend on this third issue, which was to astonish the world.

We had learned a lot about printing by this time, but not enough. James, for instance was still cutting his illustrations with a razor blade on plywood, and although he was doing wonders his woodcuts still needed twice as much ink as the type, no matter how much furniture polish I rubbed into the grain. (We certainly had the most polished artwork in fandom.) So we had taken the roller off the machine and were inking by hand, a procedure for which we had trained ourselves in split second synchronization. While James was picking up the next sheet I was removing the printed one; while he was adjusting the margins I was inking the forms, one roll on the type and two on the woodcut; while he was cleansing the press and bearing down on the lever I was replenishing the inking roller on the old mirror which we used to spread the ink on. It was like nothing so much as machine guns firing through propellers, and I wonder that we survived without crushed hands. The room was a blur of motion, accompanied by rhythmic clicking and swishing noises and a pervading odour of methylated spirits and paraffin. Eventually we could print up to ten impressions a minute, and produce a whole page of the magazine in a single evening. An hour or so to distribute the type of the last page, two to set up the new one, fifteen minutes correcting and make-ready and half an hour for printing. I had wired an extension speaker and Madeleine downstairs would play us inspirational music on the record player, and later when we had finished bringing up tea and help us to admire the results of the evening's work. It was a dedicated existence.

That making ready business had given us a lot of trouble at first, because we found that even taking all the trouble in the world to make sure that all the letters were the same height, by such cunning stratagems as bashing them with a hammer and a piece of flat wood, some just refused to print. What you are supposed to do then is to cut out all the offending letters from a proof and paste them onto their images on the fixed backing sheet, so that they get that little extra pressure. We thought this a fiddling and time wasting job, all right for Gutenberg but not in keeping with the broad mental horizons of science fiction fans, so I experimented with various

resilient backing sheets such as rubber, finally settling on cork dinner mats. With a cork dinner mat and James' strength everything printed whether it wanted to or not. Admittedly it was in three dimensions, but we saw nothing wrong with a little embossing.

We had by now bought enough type to print a full page of text and were beginning to realize what a mistake we had made in settling on that bold condensed surface. In the first place, any printing press is supposed to print an actual type area of only about two-thirds that of the chase, and our chase was crammed so full of type we didn't even need quoins. (Quoins are the little wedges printers use to hold type firmly in the chase, or frame.) On top of that, our bold condensed typeface, with its large printing area per letter, just about tripled the overload. In our innocence we hadn't quite realized all this, though I did notice after a while that the steel bed of the press had become quite convex. However, I noticed also that by some happy chance the lid of the press was correspondingly concave, so we carried on determinedly. Admittedly it seemed to be getting more difficult to get an even impression, but really there wasn't much a few little pieces of type could do when levered against a cork table mat by an enthusiastic fan. We just seemed to go through a lot of dinner mats.

James had the job of operating the press because he's bigger than I, being about six feet four inches tall and the rest of him made to scale. He had the process down to a fine art, if you can describe as a fine art anything so brutal and awesome. Having closed the press he would take a deep breath, grasp the lever firmly with both hands and push himself into the air, where he could remain for a moment before returning to the floor. I estimate he had made this ascent twelve thousand times, and the first 25 pages of Slant 3 were stacked neatly in the corner, when disaster struck. We had set up and proof-read the last page, the back cover, and were ready to run it off. The time was about ten p.m. The page we were printing was even more crammed with type than usual, and James realized that an even greater effort than usual was required. Besides, this was the last page of an issue on which we had devoted our entire spare time for six months, he was going to finish the job properly. He eyed the press grimly, making sure it was firmly based. Then, retreating about three feet, he reached forward for the lever. Grasping it firmly in his two large hands, he bent at the knees and launched himself upwards in a parabolic arc, descending on the printing press from the vicinity of the ceiling like a heavy-weight avenging angel. We cowered in anticipation of the crunch of half a square foot of type and paper being rammed halfway through a cork dinner mat, but instead there was an earsplitting CRACK! Pieces of shrapnell ricocheted off the walls as James fell heavily onto the table and slid to the floor with a dazed expression, still clutching a stump of lever.

It was some moments before we had recovered sufficiently from the shock to realize what had happened. It appeared that the part of the lever which had made contact with the top of the press had completely disintegrated: at least we never found any of it except a few anonymous little particles like meteorites. We had never heard of metal exploding like this, but it was understandable. Being of cast iron it could not bend, and this was its only escape from an intolerable situation.

Putting the question of the long-term future out of our minds for the moment, we concentrated on the problem of getting the present issue finished. It would be difficult without proper leverage, but surely we could manage some sort of impression for the little there was left to do. We put the press on the floor and James stood on the lid. There were a few faint marks to be seen on the paper. James tried jumping up and down. It was difficult to land accurately on such a small field but James managed it. The number of faint marks had slightly increased. There was only room for one person to stand on the press but I balanced a plank across it and we all got

on... including Madeleine that is, who had rushed upstairs on hearing the cataclysm ... holding onto one another and balancing it like a seesaw. Then at a word of command uttered desparingly by me, we all jumped into the air. We made a good three-point landing but while we were still teetering about trying to keep our balance, the plank slid off onto the floor. Without bothering to get up I lifted the lid of the press. I had been willing to contemplate doing that 199 more times but it seemed it would not be necessary. A few words were now legible, but that was all. I began to have some idea of the fantastic pressure James must have developed with that lever.

That evening I wrote to Adana Ltd., manufacturers of the press, asking for a new lever. They replied that my model hadn't been in production since 1926 and no spares were available. Conceding temporary defeat I asked Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke to run off a mimeo version of the last page, and we mailed out most of Slant 3 with it. It was an ignominious anticlimax to our six months work, and the future of Slant looked black.

Our friendly neighborhood blacksmith had no spreading chest-nut tree, just a contracting clientele, but he lasted in business long enough to go out into a blaze of glory, by making a new lever for our printing press in place of the one that had disintegrated so dramatically. Watching him at work with his bellows and hammer, I felt a vague sense of dissatisfaction. To use such primitive means towards the production of a science fiction magazine seemed somehow wrong, reminiscent of that famous shot in "Things to Come" of the luxurious modern automobile, panned to show it being pulled by a couple of weedy post-atomic bullocks.

We weren't too pleased with the lever itself, come to that. It bent. Only a little, but enough to alarm two fans still suffering from shell-shock from the previous explosion. However, we braved danger and carried on because while the publishing of the magazine was getting increasingly difficult, its editing was getting daily more exciting. We were not only getting unsolicited material, but we were actually rejecting some of it ... and quite cavalierly, too. Rummaging through the old files last night I find, for instance, that I rejected a story by Charles Beaumont, submitted by Forry Ackerman. "Tell Beaumont to go back to Fletcher," wrote Walter A. Youngfan airily.

By far the most important factor in the progress of Slant was Manly Banister. He had produced the first issue of his Necromantikon in early 1950 and we were overcome with admiration. The material was excellent, the printed headings the last word in elegance, and the mimeography so incredibly good I really thought it was photo-offset. I wrote Banister an enthusiastic letter and sent him a copy of Slant. He replied to the letter and then when Slant arrived, wrote again without waiting for an answer. Apparently he was just as impressed with our efforts as we were with his, if for different reasons. We immediately formed what must have been one of the most enthusiastic mutual admiration societies ever to exist in fandom. Banister knew everything about printing -- he seemed to know everything about everything -- and was fascinated by what he thought the ingenuity and determination of our enforced improvisations. But, generous soul that he was, he could not bear to see us doing things the wrong way when he could help us do them properly. So as well as a never-ending stream of good advice, he started sending us all sorts of helpful odds and ends, even a font of 18-point Bodoni type for titles. We had a few of this type but only a couple of dozen letters, which meant we had to re-title almost all our contributions. It wasn't a bad thing in a way, because it forced us to develop quite a facility for thinking up short snappy titles. A story from F.G. Rayer, for instance, about a girl in a devastated post-atomic world became "Eve of Tomorrow". For the cover, by the way, we had no really large letters at all, and I used to borrow them from the printer down the road where we bought our paper. Through diffidence I never

told him what they were for and through politeness he never asked, thought I have often thought he may have been lying awake nights wondering what possible reason that character must have for coming into his shop every few months and borrowing the letters A L N S T.

Banister also told us about his own press, to give us some idea of what a real machine was like, and how it had come into his hands:

I thought I had printing troubles! I regard Slant with a tincture of awe. It was a monumental effort of herculean difficulty. The Augean Stables were a swoop of the shovel in comparison! The way you go about resuscitating machinery in the form of presses, typewriters, et al. It shows industry commingled with decisiveness of purpose. The enclosed tear-sheet shows a picture of my press -- which I bought second hand about a year ago for \$85 plus some extra for freight.

I have a friend who was then engaged in imprinting Christmas cards with a little 4X6 press. I thought I should like to have a press of my own, and looking into the matter, received a bulletin from a concern showing the little Victory press in the tear-sheet, but describing the Superior press. I figured this was about the size I should like ($6\frac{1}{2} \times 10$), and it did not seem to be much bigger than my friend's press, so I sent for it. Six weeks went by, while the shipment was held up by strikes, riots, floods, and I don't know what all. One day the wife called me at the office. "The press is here," she said, "and it looks like rain."

"Goody," I said, "what has that got to do with the press?" ... "It's out in the front yard," she told me ... "Well, for crying out loud, why don't you carry it in?" ... "I can't lift it!" ... "That little thing?" What you got for muscles -- rubber bands?" ... "Little thing?" she yells. "It weighs 280 pounds!"

Then I fell out of my chair. And I had to end-over-end the crate up and the front steps, through the house and upstairs. If I ever sell it, the buyer is going to have to carry it out -- not me. Caveat emptor!

We were doubly impressed, because our own press was so small that you could have thrown it across the room, and many a time we felt like doing just that. As we'd feared, the new lever broke half way through Slant 4, and it was back to the smithy again. Then a few weeks later this third lever broke. But we were determined to finish Slant 4 even if we had to place a standing bulk order with the blacksmith, and we did. In fact we had even staggered a few pages into Slant 5 with our fast disintegrating press when the most momentous of all Banister letters arrived.

It was a long, long letter, written over many days, and embedded from time to time among other fascinating items were a series of communiques about his own printing press and about his incipient feud with Redd Boggs, who had just published a hostile criticism of Nekromantikon in Spacewarp. The sequence showed, quite unconsciously, the operation of the endearing enthusiasms which made Banister not only a most likeable character, but probably the most impressive colossus ever to stride across our microcosm. He had, Manly reported, glanced idly through the Boggs article and consigned it to the incinerator: he had more important things to think about, having bought an old treadle-operated press: Boggs was somewhat irritating, but not worth

bothering about: he had cleaned and re-conditioned the treadle press and it was as good as new: maybe someone should slap Boggs down, but he hadn't time, he was fixing an electric motor to replace the treadle: all the same people like Boggs shouldn't be allowed to parade their ignorant presumption unscathed: now that he had this perfectly operating power press he might have the time to polish him off with a little satirical piece: he was going to sell the old press and put an ad in the local paper ... it was a pity we didn't live in Kansas City: the satire was turning out well and he was going to publish it on the new press, a real slap-up job that would wipe the odious Boggs off the face of fandom. (The satire, a beautiful little book called "Egoboo" about a character called, mysteriously, Vermillion Swampwater, was certainly the most impressive piece of ordinance ever to be used in a fan feud, Redd Boggs, however, is still around, fortunately, as Manly was soon to agree.): he was crating up his old press and sending it off to us. Would we see about an import license.

I demurred by airmail, aghast at the sheer expansiveness of this gesture, but Banister would have none of it. This was what he wanted to do, and he was going to do it. Still stunned, I arranged about the import license and we settled down to the long wait as the press made its way to New Orleans and across the Atlantic. It finally came to rest in Belfast that November, and even Banister's previous description, quoted above, had not prepared us for the sheer massiveness of the thing. Partly because over here we're not accustomed to measuring large weights in pounds. Between us James and I inched it up the stairs, where we spent some ecstatic hours assembling it and running off a printed letter to Manly to let him know it arrived safely. We set it up on the crate it had arrived in, a piece of Banister carpentry so substantial that I am still using it as a workbench. One other thing proclaims it as a piece of Banister work. It had printed address labels -- printed that is with my address and his in 18 point Bodoni.

We now went mad. We were like a man and his bride, like a hi-fi enthusiast with a new and perfect pick-up, like a violinist with a Stradivarius. We now for the first time had not only trouble-free running, but automatic inking and perfect register, so after getting over our first thrill at seeing our printing as clear and perfect as we had never dreamed possible, we could think of only one thing -- colour, colour, colour. James gleefully cut three linocuts for his illustrations instead of one, but that was still not enough colour, so we invented striped ink. It was quite simple really, we dogged the inking plate so that it did not revolve and rolled bands of different coloured inks on it. For about twenty impressions this gave brilliant multi-coloured backgrounds suitable for sunset skies, etc., and then the colours got muddy and we had to clean off and start again. It was worth it, though, even if only because it took the monotony out of printing. Every single copy of Slant was different and some we thought so beautiful we could hardly bear to mail them out. Even now those covers seem to me quite effective, and those post-Banister issues of Slant something to be proud of. Number 5 has forty-six pages and we reached our peak with Number 6, sixty perfectly printed pages, with multi-coloured cover and interior illustrations, including some professional engravings. Those last were the first signs of the end. James' eyesight had been deteriorating and he could no longer do linocuts. Besides we were getting terribly tired of typesetting, and for me article and letter writing were becoming a much more rewarding way of spending my time. So for Slant 7 I invented a way of reproducing mimeograph stencils on the printing press.

It worked quite well, but we didn't feel as proud of that issue as we had of the others. And if we were going to have mimeography we might as well get a mimeograph....

Fanzines are like people, their lives are usually anti-climax. The war hero ends up pushing a pen, the great statesman becomes a senile bore, the boxer turns wrest-

ler: seldom do their lives end on a high note.

But what they were is still the Truth, and Banister's gesture is none the less great because Slant no longer exists. Nothing lasts forever and it was in the nature of things that we should eventually tire of the drudgery of typesetting. But not before we had, I think, produced some issues of a fanzine that were a credit to Manly and a lasting memorial to the generosity that can be found in science fiction fandom.

So let's forget that last anti-climactic issue of Slant and remember instead those two excited fans in Ireland opening the great crate from Kansas City, a crate as big as the heart of the man who sent it.

.....

OH, THE SERENDIPITY OF IT ALL or ROSCOE'S NAME BE PRAISED

Dear Chuck & Arthur:

I was in the auction rooms the other day and I ESPIED this Gestetner blushing unseen. I asked the bod when it would be on sale and he said Friday about half twelve, so I turned up at half eleven and waited while the entire population of Belfast had been supplied with mattresses and wardrobes. I passed the time wandering casually over to the Gestetner whenever anyone seemed to take an interest in it, peering at it with an expert eye, moving a lever and shaking my head scornfully and walking away again. However nobody seemed to be really intent on it. There was one complication, though; there was now another Gestetner under the table, and by its lot number it was going first. I'd had a look at the one on the table and it had seemed OK, but I couldn't get at this one. All I could find about it was that it was a much earlier model; the serial number --9 thousand and something was on the label. The other one was 41 thousand odd. I decided I'd offer up to five pounds for the first one and six for the second, and thought through all the possibilities so that I wouldn't be disappointed. Like both going for £20, or the first selling for £5:10 and the second for £20, or getting the first for £5 and the second going for a song.

But of course the unexpected did happen after all. The auctioneer said "Lot 899, two Gestetner Duplicators". For a moment I thought of asking him to split the lot, but it was too late, he was off. I started to bid, was matched in five shillings up to £6, raised my own bid in over anxiety, listened to a couple of seconds of the most beautiful silence I have ever heard, and an even more exquisite solo on the gavel. I paid a deposit, rushed out for a taxi, and took the loot home before they discovered they'd sold two lots in one.

So here I am the owner of 2 (two) (count them -- 2) Gestetner duplicators, Model 26. They both work too, though the pressure roller on one is finished. The only thing is, I can't make up my mind which to keep. This is a position few fans find themselves in I expect...

Calloo, also callay, Walt.

.....

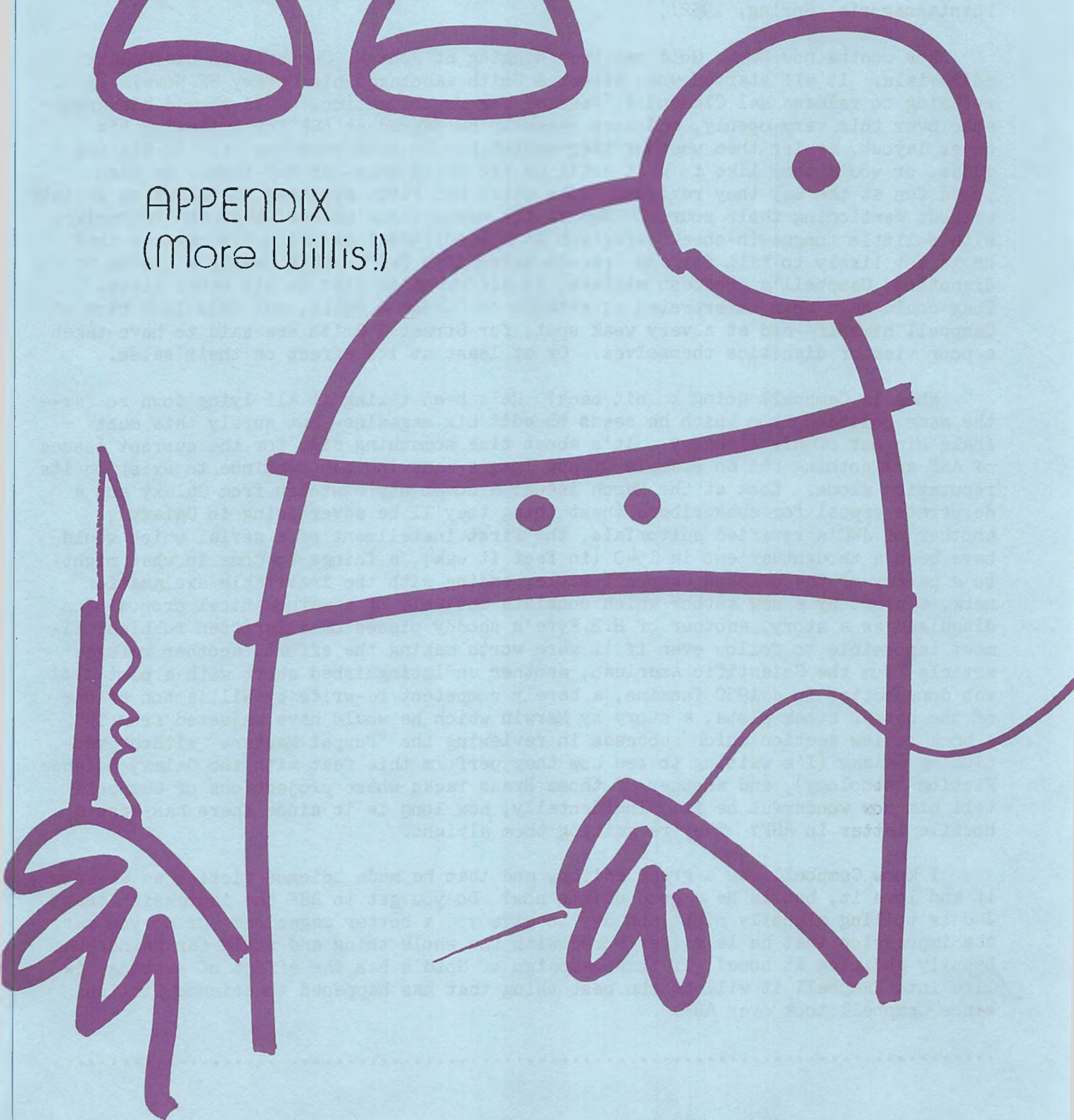
FANNING ON A HIGHER PLANE

I'm not gafia either but people think I am just because I don't write to them. Actually I keep writing letters and publishing fanzines here in my head (there's plenty of room) and all my fanac lacks is the crude physical manifestation of these. How materialistic people are.

Walt Willis in Psi Phi 4, September, 1959.

Some key statements
not otherwise covered
in these pages
(oddly enough).

APPENDIX (More Willis!)



THE GOLD WAR

(rb: The following piece is from "The Outpost", a column Walt wrote for Phantasmagoria, Spring, 1952.)

For months now H. L. Gold has been digging at John W. Campbell in his Galaxy editorials. It all started when Street & Smith sabotaged his Galaxy SF Novels by refusing to release Hal Clement's "Needle" for republication. Gold showed his annoyance over this very openly, and more recently he jeered at ASF for imitating his cover layout, asking them whether they wanted him to send over the rest of his new ideas, or would they like to wait until he had tried them out for them. He also poked fun at the way they reviewed books which had first appeared in Galaxy as serials without mentioning their source. Now in the March issue he has taken the offensive, with a little tongue-in-cheek paragraph in his editorial assuring his readers that he is not likely to fall for any "pseudo-scientific fad". This deadly allusion to dianetics, Campbell's greatest mistake, is different in kind to his other gibes. They could have been interpreted as attacks on Street & Smith, but this is a blow at Campbell himself--and at a very weak spot, for Street & Smith are said to have taken a poor view of dianetics themselves. Or at least at its effect on their sales.

When is Campbell going to hit back? He's been taking it all lying down so far--the same position from which he seems to edit his magazine--but surely this must shake him out of his lethargy. It's about time something did, for the current issues of ASF are nothing but an example of how long a magazine can continue to exist on its reputation alone. Look at the March issue: a cover style stolen from Galaxy and a desperate appeal for subscribers (next thing they'll be advertising in Galaxy), another of JWC's rarified editorials, the first installment of a serial which would have been a thoughtvariant in 1940 (in fact it was), a Things to Come in what might be a parody of the offhand Campbell style, ending with the inevitable exclamation mark, a short by a new author which consists entirely of a mathematical proposition disguised as a story, another of H.B.Fyfe's shoddy pieces of illwritten rubbish, almost impossible to follow even if it were worth making the effort, another refugee article from the Scientific American, another undistinguished short with a plot that was done better in a 1950 fanzine, a barely competent re-write by Williamson of one of the better stock plots, a story by Merwin which he would have rejected from TWS, a book review section which succeeds in reviewing the "Puppet Masters" without mentioning Galaxy (I'm waiting to see how they perform this feat with the Galaxy Science Fiction Anthology), and another of those Brass Tacks where projections of Campbell tell him how wonderful he is. Incidentally, how long is it since there has been a hostile letter in ASF? They're getting them alright.

I know Campbell was a great editor, and that he made science fiction as we know it and love it, but is he a good editor now? Do you get in ASF the impression that JWC is toiling mightily night and day to give you a better magazine? Or do you get the impression that he is rather bored with the whole thing and would far rather be happily auditing at home? If this campaign of Gold's has the effect of putting new life into Campbell it will be the best thing that has happened to science fiction since Campbell took over ASF.

.....

PRIMAL URGES

"I suppose Julian Parr is right about the motivations of the average faned, but I don't think it's necessarily true in the case of the editor of the long established fanzine. After some years the power of egoboo wears off, along with the novelty of publishing, and what is left to make you carry on is partly the urge to keep fandom going and partly the same impulse that makes you want to lend books to people. Lending books is an unprofitable and unrewarding occupation, like fan publishing, but you always keep on doing it from some deep-seated urge to see good things appreciated. Some obscure sense of justice perhaps. You must have felt it yourself. Suppose you get a good letter or article from someone. You can hardly wait to publish it, but it's not for your own egoboo. You know that you'll get very little more credit for it than the mailman who delivers the fanzine. Really, the reason you want to go to all the trouble of publishing it is that you feel 'it's too good to go to waste'."

Walt Willis, letter of comment, Void 13, 1958.

INTRODUCTION TO The BeaCon

(rb: In 1953 Bea Mahaffey visited the Willises on her way to the CoronCon via a circuitous route through Ireland. James White kept track of that journey in a report called The BeaCon and Walt wrote the following prologue before Mahaffey's White hope appeared on the scene. After James' pages of ecstasy Walt collects his wits and recalls the CoronCon -- the London Convention of 1953, I suppose.)

Stopping only for the usual reasons, and to send a postcard to Robert Bloch from Birr, Co. Offaly, reading simply "It's cold", Madeleine and I arrived in Limerick by nightfall. Next morning, having bought some postcards for Bea to send to her limerick collecting friends, we set out for the airport.

We were a little late because I'd had trouble maneouvering the car safely out of the hotel garage---I'd only just learned to drive and the car belonged to my father-in-law who knows the history of every tiny scratch on the paintwork and keens over them individually every night--but we arrived in time. Only to find that my baleful influence over all forms of American public transport extends to their transatlantic airlines- Bea's plane would be two hours late. I went back to park the car properly in case one of the big ones ran over it, and we hung about hoping desperately that the weather would clear so that Bea would have a good first view of Ireland and that we'd be able to see her plane coming in. At about one o'clock, as we were scanning the sky keenly towards the West, a fitful sun came out and an aircraft landed from the direction of Constantinople. On the distant tarmac an apparently endless stream of people got out of the Consternation, as from a taxi in an early Mack Sennett comedy, but none of them looked like Bea though we waved at everyone just in case. Even when she came into the arrival lounge I didn't recognise her. She had changed. She was wearing a blue costume instead of the black dress she'd worn in Chicago. Also, she had put her hair up and was wearing glasses. Furthermore she had an American accent I'm sure she didn't have the last time I was talking to

her. But it was Bea all right--I recognised the little mannerism she has of extending her left hand daintily in from of her palm upwards as if she were patting a very large dog or gently repulsing the advances of a very small fan.

Over coffee we talked nervously in the atmosphere of tension that pervades airports and railway stations--people feel they are missing something all the time--and then we led the way to the car, warning Bea not to trip over it. I drove assuredly along the broad concrete road and past a notice marked ALL VEHICLES TURN LEFT AND STOP. Unaccustomed to being a vehicle or to obeying notices for which there seemed no obvious reason I kept right and went straight on. There was a frenzied wail and a Customs policeman dashed out of his hut like a sabre-toothed tiger out of its cave. I stopped the car, switched off the engine, and listened miserably to his stern reproaches. Useless, I thought to myself, to explain to Bea that this little corner of easygoing Ireland must have been contaminated by foreign efficiency seeping from the airport--she must be terribly disappointed. However as we drove off again Bea, always the soul of tact, said happily, "He was MUCH nicer than a Chicago policeman."

Things hadn't gone very well so far, but the sun came out as we neared Ennis, Co. Clare, and we thought we might have a picnic. We bought a couple of pounds of steak in Ennis and stopped at the entrance to the grounds of Loughcultra Castle a few miles further on. I got out the primus stove and started to light it. Ten minutes and twenty matches later I declared that the resources of modern science had been defeated, and began to gather wood. I had a nice fire going and the tender promise of steak was beginning to pervade the air, when it started to rain. Almost immediately afterwards it began to pour. The fire was obviously losing ground. We put everything back in the car except the fire and the steak, donned raincoats, and sallied forth again to fight for our existence like *primaeval* man. Madeleine cooked, I prowled about looking for dry fuel, and Bea crouched gallantly on the grass holding an umbrella over the fire. Well, I thought ruefully, at least it must be a change from New York.

However she seemed to enjoy the experience nearly as much as the steak, and we set off again. It was really raining now, with a determination worthy of a better cause. Nothing was to be seen but an occasional picturesque ruin by the side of the road. With vague memories of a hastily leafed-through guidebook, we authoritatively identified as gazebos all the ones that weren't big enough to be monasteries or castles, until Bea was tactless enough to ask what a gazebo was. After that we merely pointed them out as picturesque ruined Things.

From Galway we took the road into the wilds of Connemara, through Oughterara and Maam Cross, and at Recess branched off on the mountain road by Lough Inagh to Kylemore. It was not a good road, even by Irish standards, though sometimes we hit up to 10mph. Many of the most scenic roads in Ireland are like this, and I suspect it's a deliberate policy of the Irish Tourist Board's. Ireland is a small country, and they have to spin it out.

The clouds were lifting now, and we could see the lower slopes of the mountains towering dramatically into the mist. About nine o'clock we reached Kylemore, a faery-like Gothic castle on the brink of a sheltered little lake. (The grounds also included two more lakes, a mountain range, and several hundred acres of woods.) I slowed the car on the entrance drive at the point where you see between the trees the castle mirrored in the lake and, just as I'd been subconsciously blaming myself for the rain, took as much pride in the fabulous thing as if I'd built it myself. I'd wanted to get Bea here for the first night after her long and hectic journey because it's the most restful as well as one of the most beautiful places in Ireland. Admittedly the bus from Galway now passes the gatelodge twice a week instead of once,

but in spite of this hectic onrush of civilisation the people seem to have all the time in the world. As we waited for them in the huge panelled entrance hall with its great oak staircase and gallery it occurred to us, being fans, what a wonderful place it would be for a convention; and after we'd been shown to our rooms Bea called us delightedly down the corridor to look at hers. "Look," she said, pointing into the enormous interior, "Four beds!" It was the clincher. We decided to start a campaign for Kylemore in '54 and next morning sent postcards to Tucker and Bloch pointing out among other things that they hadn't really lived until they'd dropped bags of hot water from a battlement.

But I'd better get on if you're to meet James on page 5. Actually nothing much happened during the next two days except that we had a lot of fun and saw a lot of scenery. We toured through Leenane, Westport, Cattlebar, Ballina, Sligo (with a detour to Lough Gill to show Bea the Lake Isle of Innisfree), Bundoran and Bellyshannon, and at noon on Sunday we were parked in the market square of Donegal Town looking out for James' bus.

While we're waiting for him maybe I'd better explain a couple of the allusions in his report.

First, all this talk about people trying to poison him doesn't mean that he's got a persecution complex. The fact is that many years ago in an over enthusiastic endeavour to emulate H.G. Wells he acquired a mild form of diabetes. The result is that sugar doesn't agree with him. As Bob explained it once, soon after James takes sugar his temperature drops and he gets stiff all over. This is known as rigor mortis.

Then there's the reference to the 'guilty secret' under the bonnet of our car. I should explain that the designers of the Morris Minor Car have in their infinite wisdom provided a space among the intricacies of the engine just large enough to accommodate a tea-kettle. However surprisingly few people know what this space is for. This ignorance of the finer points of automobile design extends to the garage attendant in Collooney, Co. Sligo, where we stopped for oil. The youth opened the bonnet and stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment. You could see him reviewing in his mind all his knowledge of the various types of internal combustion engine and associated machinery. This apparatus did not seem to be connected to anything, but he thought he knew what it was. Coming to a decision he sidled round to my window and dropped his voice confidentially. "Do you know," he asked tactfully, "that you have a kettle underneath your carburettor?"

"Yes," I admitted with manly frankness, "I do"; and drove off amid giggles and a flood of jokes about Mavericks, stray kettle, and steering.

But here is James now.....

THE CORONCON or Through Darkest England Burning The Candle At Both Ends

Halfway to the dock gate we were met by Dave Gardner who had been up since six and lost no more time in celebrating Bea's arrival by presenting her with a complimentary copy of the Liverpool group's newly published symposium Sex and Sadism. Bea gracefully accepted this bouquet of neuroses, opened it casually at one of the

lewest illustrations ever published in the fan press, and quickly closed it again. Shortly an enormous black car loomed up driven, appropriately enough, by vile huckster Frank Milne of SFService. We found later, however, that it hadn't been bought with the money bled from us poor fans but had merely been hired to take half the population of Liverpool to the Convention. We all got in and strolled about the interior, avoiding the dangerous overhanging slopes of Sex and Sadism, until we arrived at a sleazy cafeteria which was all Liverpool had to offer at this hour of the morning. Breakfast was over and the waitress was polishing the table with a dirty rag and a black look, when Eric Frank Russell made his entrance. He stepped immediately into his natural niche as life and soul of the party, greeting Bea with the remark that while in his writing career he had often said what he would like to do to pro editors, he'd never imagined it could be a pleasure: and proceeded thus outrageously to skate on the thin ice on the brink of bad taste without once putting his foot in it. Larger than life and a great deal more interesting, he manages to set the standards in any company in which he finds himself. But at one point he took time off from goodhumouredly insulting everyone present and warning Bea against the Londoners to tell the plot of an as yet unpublished story. It was one of those warmly human short stories of his which show Russell, beneath his bluff exterior, to be one of the most sensitive writers in the sf field and he told it so well that we all felt we only needed to have learned shorthand to be sure of a Galaxy cheque. Even the people at an adjoining table stopped talking to listen and when he had finished there was the moment of silence which is the supreme tribute to an artist.

After breakfast EFR drove us to Chester, passing through about ten feet of Wales just so Bea could say she'd 'done' it, then back to his house for a magnificent lunch, and then down to the station where we said goodbye to the hospitable Liverpudlians. It was a relief train and we had a carriage to ourselves for the whole of that golden journey to London. We talked and laughed and sang the whole way, except when we were reminiscing nostalgically (already) about the trip round Ireland. James found the key of his room at Portballintrae which he'd forgotten to hand in, and carried out an investiture of Bea with the number-plate as with the Legion of Honour not forgetting the most trivial detail of punctilio, and, carried away, proposed to her several more times. Next time she'll know to bring a suitcase of rejection slips.

Shortly before the train got into Euston, where 'harris' was to meet us, James filled his waterpistol and began to hum "High Noon"; but when we got out Chuck was nowhere to be found. James suspected an ambush and began to talk wildly of erecting barricades, but I finally ran Chuck to earth at the wrong platform. He had a girl with him whom we took to be his sister; however it later turned out to be Rita Krohne whom as a friend of our idol Robert Bloch we'd been ready to welcome with open arms. In the taxi we proceeded to let our old friend Chuck in on all the fannish nonsense we'd had so much fun with in the trip round Ireland, until Rita pointed out that the expression 'George' which poor Bea had taught us was actually quite 'passe'. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they are evidently right up to the minute on these matters, George went out over a year ago and had been superseded by other expressions which we can't remember now, possibly because we couldn't feel the same affection for them as we had for the now discredited George. Mourning the dear departed, we finished the journey to the Bonnington in sober silence; then on to the White Horse where our spirits were lifted by the warmth of the London Circle welcome.

The Convention next morning was due to start at 11am, and we took care and a taxi to arrive shortly afterwards so that in the event of its actually starting on time we should be on hand to carry out those who had fainted from the shock. But all was well---at 11.30 Ron Buckmaster was still asking everyone if they had seen the microphone. Evidently someone, probably a Northerner, had taken the mike out

of the Convention already. Someone suggested he should call for its return over the PA system. While the Committee were mulling over this we all milled around to the strain of Stan Kenton records.

At 11.43 precisely Chairman Fred Brown apologised for the delay. He offered no explanation, and nobody expected one. He also announced the last minute cancellation of the showing of 'Destination Moon', due to the London County Council's unexpected objection to the showing of inflammable 35mm film in unlicensed theatres. Evidently the Government had sneaked through the Cinematograph Act of 1909 without informing the Convention Committee.

He also read a postcard from Peter Hamilton regretting that he might not be able to be present. Since Peter was actually standing just under the Chairman's nose, it looked as if he had delivered the postcard himself to save postage. Fred also announced the cancellation of the Junior Fanatics play, adding rather tactlessly that something better would be substituted.

This, incidentally, was the first Convention I've been at where there was a special item listed in the official programme as "announcements of unavoidable changes". A wise precaution, and one which I hope portends a new era of more realistic programme booklets. Perhaps we shall one day have a really accurate printed programme scheduling such normal features of the average Convention as 'unavoidable delay', 'breakdown of PA system', 'confusion', 'collapse of Chairman', 'utter chaos' and 'Committee blind drunk'.

After all this excitement we adjourned for a nice restful lunch interval, during which we watched James and Chuck trying to trap one another in a wildly revolving door, James and Chuck having a running gunfight with waterpistols in Southampton Row, and a film company shooting a crime melodrama in a side street. James and Chuck were much the best, we thought. Then back to the Bonnington for the introduction of notables. The London Chairman was much gentler than Korshak, Bea and I agreed; all he threatened to do was 'run over us quickly', and he hadn't even got a bicycle on his nose to do it with. There was warm applause for Bea, and also for Chuck Harris attending his first convention.

William F. Temple then led off the pro authors panel. He began by saying he was supposed to speak about the future of science fiction, but he never read the stuff himself and he didn't believe it had any future whatsoever. Instead he would talk about the friends he had made through sf. He had a list here of 23 of them, 20 crossed out and the remainder trying to live down the film of "The Foursided Triangle". One of them was Honest John Carnell, the man who had made more undeclared money out of sf than anyone since H.G. Wells. We shouldn't hold New Worlds against Ted--he took the job as a mistake, being under the impression that it was paid. Ted had come a long way since then and he, Temple, hoped he was going a long way. The second was G. Ken Chapman. Fantasy was still Ken's first love, apart from beer, his favourite story being Algernon Blackwood's "The Tree That The Dogs Loved." Referring to Ken's appearance, he said he was very much of a middleman, having beaten most of his contemporaries to the paunch. He always thought of Ken when he heard Cabal in "Things To Come" calling war 'an ugly spectacle of waist.' Finally there was Arthur C. Clarke, the 'C' in whose name stood of course for 'corn', the same corn we had stood for so long. Arthur was one of those people who know everything, including the fact that they know everything; though even Arthur had his moments of self doubt and could be sometimes heard saying to himself "I wonder if I'm really as good as I know I am." Of course we all knew his books--'The Exploitation of Space', 'The Man Who Sold the Moon' and so on. He had recently found some excuse to go to America again and was now underwater fishing in Florida, engaged in submersive activities. After his experience of editors and agents he

should be quite capable of dealing with sharks. In fact Temple was sorry for the sharks.

The main defect of Temple as a Convention speaker, in fact come to think of it the only defect, is that he doesn't like speaking (extraordinary in one who does it so well) and insists on being put on early, with the result that everything else is something of an anticlimax. However Tubb kept the standard high, cynically advancing the theory that the reason for the bookshops being loaded with sf was that nobody would buy the stuff, and disposing competently of an inane interruption about flying saucers from a character called Burgess, who resembles nothing so much as Hal Shapiro's conception of Ken BeAle. (Other parallels which occurred to Bea and me were Bill Temple=Robert Bloch, Peter Phillips=GOSmith, and Dave Cohen=Henry Burwell. America doesn't seem to have any equivalent to Norman Wansborough.)

Other pros who spoke were John Brunner ("I predict a rosy future for sf--I have some more stories in my drawer"), Vince Clarke ("as half author of two books"), C.S. Youd ("No time to read sf"), and Frank Edward Arnold ("Haven't read anything new for 12 years"). Apparently nobody in the London Circle reads anything but their own stories. Carnell then invited questions and inevitably Spillane was brought up, as indeed he must be by anyone with a sensitive stomach. Frank Milne took his opportunity and rose up from the body of the Hall to flog a copy of "Sex and Sadism" to Carnell, who had been talking about it for ten minutes without having read it. Someone in the audience who had heard of semantics asked for a clear definition of 'bad'--- a subject which might have kept everyone talking until well into the Supermancon had not George Hay got up and disclosed that different people had different ideas as to what good and bad were. Youd said It Wasn't As Simple As That. It was a difficult point, but he knew what it was when he saw it. Helen Winnick said coyly that she hadn't read the Spillane story in question because none of her men friends would lend it to her. An unidentified voice from the audience, who sounded like Havelock Ellis, said that all forms of literature were substitute activities for sex. However science fiction being more constructive was, he stated astonishingly, more likely to produce an orgasm. Goaded by the Mystery Voice, Youd said sarcastically that it must get a different thrill out of sf than he did, and for no apparent reason then went recklessly on record with the opinion that Bester's "The Demolished Man" was "just Spillane on a lower level". Fred Brown said he thought the Spillane story in Fantastic was 'jolly good' and he'd pay 35¢ for it any day, adding equally gratuitously that he wouldn't give tuppence for a Youd story. Someone in the audience whom we only knew as Sidgwick and Jackson then said something inaudible in a refined accent and Carnell asked him to speak up. Sidgwick and Jackson, in a near shout, then announced that their sex life was satisfactory (I almost left the Convention Hall to send a cablegram to Francis Towner Laney) and resented the charge that sf was a substitute activity. George Hay, obviously determined to go one better than anybody, declared that sex itself was a substitute activity. So, he added sweepingly, was science. Proceeding into even higher realms of thought he said profoundly that it was a matter of opinion what was essential and what was not essential. The human being selects his effective field. He wondered if he had made his point clear.

Obviously perturbed lest the Convention spend the next few days worrying itself into a nervous breakdown over what sex could be a substitute for, Carnell hastily closed the discussion and made a belated introduction of another visitor from America, a Mrs. Sollieback of Seattle, Wash. (In fairness to Mr. Hay, though, I think I should say that in my opinion he was actually working towards a very sound theory first propounded by another Deep Thinker, name of me, when in last year's conreport I accused Ken Bulmer of sublimating his fan instincts with a woman.) Mrs. Sollieback from Seattle was, Carnell revealed, a member of N3F. Suitably impressed, we applauded warmly. However I am sorry to say that Mrs. Sollieback seems to have

detected a note of insincerity in our tribute, for in a letter published since in GM Carr's Gemtones she reports that "the N3F is not popular among the fans here." Presumably we should have bowed our heads and stood in silent tribute to the noble organisation, firing the British representative over its grave.

Carnell then made the first public mention of the Fund that had been started by an American fan group to bring a certain English fan to the Philcon. The fan in question had been unable to go after all and Don Ford and the Cincinnati group had generously thrown the offer open to any other British fan we chose who could risk having to pay most of the cost himself. Carnell didn't disclose the English fan's name but I see no harm in saying it was Norman Ashfield, who hasn't been active in fandom for quite a while but who has evidently kept up his correspondence with his friend, Don Ford.

After this came the play by the Junior Fanatics, the Committee evidently having been unable to get something better after all. The production suffered somewhat from under-rehearsal, the hero living in Lancaster and the heroine in Bournemouth and neither having very strong voices, and it rather lacked the polish and brilliance we have all come to associate with Seventh Fandom. There were also some slight difficulties at first due to them having forgotten their own lines, but with a fine spirit of co-operation they soon overcame this by reading each other's. The heroine was a new fan called Shirley Marriott who looks like a brunette BRE of Lee Hoffman. She has the same first name too, but I'm afraid I never found how much further the resemblance went; these younger fans keep very much together and don't mix with us old has-BNFs.

Dave Cohen followed with an address on what was wrong with the London Circle and was so convincing that Chuck Harris changed his London Circle badge to a Belfast one before he had even finished. One of Cohen's accusations was that the Londoners didn't support the last Mancon and in his speech of rebuttal Brown promptly put his foot in it right up to the neck by saying he didn't know about the Mancon. Since the last London Convention had been virtually knee-deep in Mancon propaganda, this was an unfortunate defence. Bentcliffe asked with deceptive politeness whether Brown hadn't seen the notices. Brown pulled the ground in on top of him by saying, too craftily, that he hadn't been up to the White Horse much during that period. Bentcliffe patiently pointed out that the notices in question had been in the Convention Hall and that Northern speakers there had publicly asked for support and been given to understand they would get it. Angry murmurings from Northerners in the audience confirmed this. At this point Bert Campbell came in and poured oil on the burning waters. He apologised for being late, he said disarmingly, but he had been up until four in the morning discussing sex with some visitors from the United States. The Northerners, he went on, couldn't expect celebrities to come to their Convention ("Well, I'm a celebrity, aren't I?") unless they made it attractive and publicised it properly. He further endeared himself to Northern fandom by pointing out how well the Londoners publicised their conventions. (I remembered the time Alan Hunter wrote to me in Belfast four days before the '52 Con to ask did I know whether it was still on and did I know where it was.) You couldn't go wrong, said Campbell blithely, if you followed the London Circle. They didn't just stick something on the wall in the hope someone would notice it. Fred Brown rubbed salt into the wounds by saying that the London Circle didn't have to pay anything at all for their publicity. (One wondered whether this meant the Mancon Committee could also expect free advertising in New Worlds, Science Fantasy and Authentic.) As illustrations of their ingenuity he instanced the fact that they wrote to Eagle Comics (apparently without result) and designed a poster for a showing of "War Of The Worlds" (which was not accepted). One felt his examples could have been better chosen.

During the tea interval which followed copies were handed out of the Harris/

Slater 'Looniecon' oneshot, a supremely fannish production. I seem to have spent the rest of the Convention explaining regretfully that I had nothing whatsoever to do with it and that it came as a complete surprise to me.

I didn't hurry my flock back from the tea interval....I'd noticed something called Whiskers in the program and I didn't want to be in at the death. This was a Thing I'd started while recovering from pneumonia, been too weak to finish, and had passed on to the London Circle to show that at least I'd tried. When I realised they were going to put it on just as it was, my only consolation was that people never listen to plays done over the PA system, when there are no actors visible to receive either applause or tomatoes. But when we did arrive, about half way through, I was astonished to find that they were not only listening, but laughing in some of the right places. I stood savouring this entirely new form of egoboo and realising I'd overlooked two things: the fact that audience reaction time is slower than that of readers, so that poor jokes go over well, and the fact that there are some very talented actors in the London Circle. The piece was done superbly well, especially by Bill Temple as Winston Churchill and by Bert Campbell as Bert Campbell, this last a particularly fine piece of type casting.

After this there were various quizzes, discussions and games. Audience participation was so poor as to be tantamount to a civil disobedience campaign, as it was all through the Convention. I think the reason was mainly that the weather was too hot for any form of exertion except jumping to conclusions; the principle ones seem to have been that the Convention was dull and the audience morons, and I don't think either was correct. Unfortunately I can't prove it, because it was apparently too hot for taking notes. It's a pity, because from the few I have it seems that quite an interesting variety of subjects was discussed. Bert Campbell said his own stories were years ahead of their time. Carnell said, "Poor fellow. He lives in a world of his own." Ted Tubb lectured on atom bomb protection, advising either brown paper or a very deep hole in the ground. Bert Campbell said that authors were parasites. Youd said he had sold Carnell three stories that had previously been rejected from New Worlds. Someone said they knew a girl with three heads and a calf with wings. Campbell said old fans were jealous of new ones. Ted Tubb said anteaters wouldn't be accepted in the French Foreign Legion. (I don't know quite how anteaters got into this discussion about how to retire from fandom; maybe someone suggested the best way was to tapir off.) Ted Tubb also presided gloriously at the auction but I didn't take any notes of this either, having come to an agreement with Vinç Clarke to let him immortalise Ted this year.

We'd been invited to a party in the Liverpool suite that evening but when I went up there I found it still empty, so we accepted an invitation from Bert Campbell. On the way Burgess appeared and tagged along, with evidently no intention whatever of crawling back into the woodwork. Campbell looked helplessly at me and I had an extraordinarily vivid sensation of deja vu, of having been in this exact situation before. As of course I had, and the heat and the long carpeted hotel corridors brought Chicago back even more vividly. It was that tightrope again. The inherent tendency of American-style conventions, as this one now was, is for everyone to gravitate in one enormous loud and drunken party, which no one really enjoys. The secret of enjoying oneself, on the other hand, is to gather together a few congenial friends and hide. Between the two alternatives stretches the tightrope, one false step on which means either frustration or the hurting of other people's feelings. I learned a lot about the tightrope at the Chicon and Bea is probably the foremost expert at it---notice how she has walked gracefully through British fandom, leaving them all at each others' throats for 'monopolising' her and not one of them blaming her---but Bert hadn't been to the Philcon yet. He couldn't think of anything but to open the door and usher everyone in.

The party was being held in Rita Krohne's room, since someone was having hysterics

in Bert's. There was no space here for anything like that----there wasn't enough room to swing a cat, never mind a cataleptic. The room was so small I wondered we didn't have to pay a penny to get in. I counted 26 people in it, and that was only the top layer. I arranged a code knock with James and left the Black Hole of Calcutta to reconnoitre the Liverpool suite again. On the way up I ran into Ken Slater, whom I'd met for the first time a few hours ago. We went to his room, opened a bottle of whisky, and discussed the Transatlantic Fan Fund. Then we went up to the Liverpool suite. I'd only been there a few minutes when James and Madeleine arrived with the news that they'd all just been thrown out of Rita's room and that the rest of Bert's party had gone along to Soho to get something to eat. We decided to wait until they came back, but in ten minutes or so the same porter came along and threw us out of the Liverpool suite. Madeleine and James and I felt there was no future in this and went home to Rainham with Chuck, where we got to bed about three.

So ended British fandom's first gallant attempt at an American style convention. I felt a little guilty about it all since this movement seemed to have started after my glowing accounts of Chicago, but it still seemed to me that everything would have been fine if the hotel had had bigger and more soundproof rooms and a more tolerant staff. The fans seemed to take naturally to it. The Liverpool Group, for example, fought a gallant rearguard action from room to room, succeeded in getting the porter drunk, and made a historic last stand on the roof. There they invented an entirely new convention pastime, that of dropping empty bottles down chimneys. Admittedly the only reason this idea has never occurred to American fans is that their hotels don't have chimneys, but no one can deny that the Liverpool group have made a valuable contribution to Conventionship, and one that is in the true Ben Singer tradition.

That's where I left this conreport three months ago, and despite numerous requests (well, two's a number, isn't it?) I don't think I'll ever finish it. Every time I think of that second day I feel again that utter tiredness resulting from a combination of the heat, convalescence from pneumonia and driving 300 miles without my L plates. I still think it was a good convention, but I don't want to go back to it...except for a few stray memories. James White's helicopter beanie falling off the coatstand at a Lyons and being returned to him by a dear old lady with "Is this yours?"....A copy of Slant 3 fetching 5/6 at the auction.....Bea Mahaffey saying that Other World's editorial policy was "flexible" and I asking Vinz prophetically if she meant the magazine folded easily.....And that all night party at the Rattigan's.....

Us True Fans had started a splinter party in the kitchen to get away from the poker players and dancers but our hostess was worried about us. About 4am she came in the immortal words: "THERE HAVE BEEN COMPLAINTS THAT NO ONE IN HERE IS DRINKING!" We denied the foul imputation. About dawn Fred Robinson opened the door to the living room and called us to have a look. It was like a morgue. Bodies lay here and there in what appeared to be advanced stages of decomposition. The sunlight wakened some to pseudolife and they stumbled out into the garden. We walked up the road for no apparent reason and then back again. Apparently everyone had thought everyone else was going somewhere. Bulmer took my arm and pointed at the rest of them. "Of course," he said, "These are all artifacts of Proxyboo Ltd."

"I don't need a helicopter beanie," said Fred Robinson mournfully. "The top of my head just spins round."

MARGINALIA

Poised as I am here between Britain and America, I often find myself having to

explain one to the other. Puzzled neofans come to me with their little worries, plaintive questions like "What does PTO mean?", "Why do so many Americans live in boxes?", "How can they have 31 months in the year?", "What is Harlan Ellison?", "Why do they print their calendars sideways?" and so on. One of the things that puzzles Americans most are the sheaves of black paper they receive from time to time bearing British stamps. Some recipients merely throw them aside after an idle glance but others, fans being the sensitive finely wrought creatures that they are, worry themselves into an early FAPA membership by fears that they are being put on the spot-- that these sheaves of black paper are a fannish equivalent of the black spot that Captain Kidd used to serve on his friends when they got his goat.

I can comfort these unhappy people. These sheaves of black paper are nothing but British fanzines! If you examine them closely you will often be able to distinguish individual words, and investigators with high-powered microscopes report definite traces of margins around the edges. (Much the best place for margins.)

Walt Willis in "Black Mail", Le Zombie 64, 1952

THE MAGNIFICENT FLOP

(rb: The Manchester Convention of 1954.)

The sun was shining on Manchester when Irish Fandom arrived. Before we could explain to the bewildered inhabitants what it was, we were met by Fred Robinson and Terry Jeeves, plenipotentiaries for Eric Bentcliffe, and escorted to the hotel. After everyone has fed their sensitive fannish faces we drifted along to the Convention Hall to make sure that everything was all right. It was.....the public address system had just broken down. Pleased to see that all was proceeding on traditional lines we drifted out again and mounted guard on the front steps to look out for the motorised convoy of Londoners. After an hour or so the others---fake fans all--- got tired of waiting and deserted their posts. I held my ground steadfastly, scanning the horizon with keen eyes and directing other strangers to Manchester to various places, and was eventually rewarded by the sight of a London taxicab tearing past loaded to the gunwales (the zapgunwales) with fans, the top layer consisting largely of Walter Gillings wearing a tropical pith helmet with a home-made aluminium propellor on top. My opinion of Gillings scared.

I waved and shouted at the taxi and it drew up at the next corner and began to disgorge an apparently inexhaustible supply of fans. I welcomed them to Manchester and helped them in with their luggage. I got no tip, except that Bert Campbell's motorbike had broken down outside Rugby and nothing had been heard of him since. This was so completely what might have been expected that nobody believed it for quite a while, and the Northerners obviously expected Bert to materialise in their midst at any moment. I think it was this, and not the official programme, which was responsible for the general air of expectancy throughout the Convention that any moment something might happen.

At precisely 11.30 I went along to the Convention Hall to see if the Londoners

would carry out their secret plan to draw attention to the official starting time with a rocket take-off count. Judge of my horror to find some brash Northern neo-fan called Harry Turner getting up to declare the Convention open and calling for witnesses that it had started on time. Some of the older fans would have collapsed from shock at this unheard-of breach of hallowed tradition, had not Dave Cohen swiftly restored an atmosphere of security with a few ritual apologies and by failing to introduce half the notables present.

One of the apologies was that because of the failure of the public address system it was not going to be possible to start the proceedings with a rocket take-off count as the Manchester Group had planned.

After this the lunch break was declared. When we got back we were told that the Convention Hall had been moved from the First Floor to the Ground Floor. I assumed at first that the Manager had been warned about sf conventions and had decided to move the Hall down a floor before this took place in the normal course of events, but in fact it turned out that his ignorance of Conventions was so blissful that he was only worried about his newly decorated walls being disfigured with cellotaped notices. He didn't seem to realise how lucky he was he still had walls. At any previous Convention the notices would have been fixed on with thumbtacks, nails or even daggers.

However the gentlemanly Manchester fans had spent the entire lunch break moving everything from one hall to another, and were still running around in little circles uttering plaintive cries. My heart bled for them, and for future Convention Committees. This was another Mancon 'first'. Many terrible things have happened to Convention Committees, but having to move to another Hall in the middle of the Convention is a new and ghastly weapon in the armoury of Fate.

Among the exhibits now on display was a fullsize water-closet marked "Vargo Statten" and a roll of toiletpaper with the same marking fixed to a placard reading "Cause & Cure." I took this to be another courteous London Circle gesture to the Guest of Honour on the lines of the "International Fantasy Award" they'd proposed to give him----a tiny gallows---but they and everyone else I asked disclaimed responsibility. I'd like to have been there when Vargo saw it---I wonder if he'd have been flushed.

After some more apologies, including one for the number of apologies, the afternoon sessions started a mere 55 minutes late. The first item was billed as 'a talk on radio-activity by Frank Simpson'. Most of us owe Frank an apology for not realising this was a sublimated thiotimoline type of hoax, but there was an excuse. The first stages of a Convention--in fact probably any stage of a Convention--is not the proper atmosphere for this rarified type of humour. Poor Frank lost most of his audience during his deadpan introduction, while he was still waxing enthusiastic about the table of elements. Norman Wansborough walked out in disgust, but the restiveness of the others manifested itself in another Mancon 'first'----the passing of notes among the audience containing interlineation-type quotes and comments. I'm not sure whether it was Ken Potter or myself who started this, but the inspiration was probably Vinç Clarke's 'quotecards'---small pieces of pasteboard bearing fannish messages which circulated all during the Convention. There were a thousand of them, with 100 different messages. Later Chuck Harris took to handing them gravely to passers-by in the street, sometimes with a muttered "Ghod bless you, Sir" and sometimes with a glance up and down the street and a finger pressed to the mouth. The rest of us lagged behind watching the victim's reaction to such items of information as "I HAD A POCTSARCD FROM GHOD THIS MORNING--Hyphen or "BLOODY PROVINCIALS". While we were walking around the square one evening he gave one to an old man sitting on some steps and the expression on the recipient's face

was so peculiar that we had to run after Chuck and find out what the card had said. It had been "DEFY THE DEROGES WITH DIANETICS -- Redd Boggs." Another made a wonderfully appropriate appearance at the Chinese restaurant where we had lunch, just as our orders had arrived and we were staring at them in a wild surmise. It was "IF YOU DON'T WANT CROTTLED GREEPS, WHAT DID YOU ORDER THEM FOR? -- Filler." We left this one tucked inside the cellophane cover of the menu.

After a monologue by Geoff Lewis which went over very well in parts (the parts nearest the speaker) we had the Medway Group's offering. It suffered not only from the continued defection of the public address system but from the fact that the script and timing weren't adequately adapted to the slower reaction time of a large audience. As last year Tony Thorne was reduced to asking ruefully "Did anyone see that gag?" and it was no comfort to be interrupted two minutes later by a dazed shout of "My Ghod, I've seen it!" The slightest diffidence of the actors, though disarming, didn't help either. Apparently to be funny in public you must above all have authority. Alistair Paterson for instance, who came next, made some of the feeblest jokes it has ever been my misfortune to be exposed to, but he produced them with such confidence that the audience was confidence-tricked into laughing.

He also made some good ones, like "I had some notes but I lost them, so I'll just have to B natural" (this fell rather flat) and "The Vargo Statten Mag has a circulation of over 50000; if you don't believe me I can show you the cancellations." And on the pocketbook situation, "Some of them are incredibly bad; perhaps the ones I don't publish aren't any better,"

After this, a day early and put on without announcement so that I hadn't time to escape, came the play I had written; brilliantly performed on tape by the Liverpool Group, who also deserve credit for the parody of US commercial radio inserted in the middle. This playlet seems to have become a yearly chore of mine, and it's a very welcome one--I can now refuse to make speeches with a clear conscience. I made up my mind a couple of years ago that I'd never speak at a Convention again--there's no point in trying to change one's psychological make-up at my time of life, and I don't see any other reason why I should force myself to do something I dislike so much. I did it at Chicago and Los Angeles, where it was necessary, but that experience didn't make me like it any better. Any more than being successfully buried alive is a cure for claustrophobia.

Later there was a curious interlude when Cohen announced that the London Circle was now going to demonstrate how to put on a Convention. Nothing happened for a very long time and eventually most people got up and went out or stood around talking. Finally Ken Bulmer went to the microphone and announced calmly that "The London Circle, having thoroughly organised this Convention, now hand over to the Manchester Group." I didn't know quite what to make of this...whether it was deliberate sabotage or a piece of London Circle self-criticism.

The talk at tea-time was all about the startling news that the film show that evening was to be Things To Come---NOT Metropolis. Shocked murmurings were heard when the announcement was made. Small indignation meetings were held. Neofans staggered about white and trembling, their world crashing to ruins about their ears. Old fans shook their heads forebodingly. No good would come from this mad craze for novelty. A Convention without Metropolis! It was unthinkable. As Rick Dalton was heard to complain, "It should at least appear on the programme!"

But there was even worse to come. No one discovered that the show was illegal under a twenty-year-old statute, the films arrived safely, on time, and wound the right way, no one ran around asking the audience if anyone had a 35mm projector, the projector did not break down, the film was not put on backwards, or even upside down.

In fact the whole showing went off without a single hitch. It was terrifying, like the end of the world.

Unable to stand the strain, many people went upstairs to parties. The London Circle had one for which the admission charge was ten shillings, but the passports you got for this were the best thing about it. There was nothing that you couldn't see at the seaside for free with a pair of binoculars. I thought of making love to my own wife, but I was afraid the London Circle might be shocked, so we went upstairs to the Liverpool party. Someone there had taken to heart the maxim that the recipe for a successful party is too many people in too small a room. It was the Black Hole of Calcutta...with zap guns. It was a wonderful party though, especially after John Roles and others had run amok with soda syphons and schwepped half of the people out. Sometime previous to this we'd gone down to have another look at the London Circle, but we still had the feeling we should have brought a portable key-hole with us to watch them through. Besides the party was supposed to be exclusive, but Burgess had been issued with a passport and Ken Potter had been turned away. We felt we were in the wrong place and went back to the more congenial Liverpool gathering until it was broken up by the night porter.

Many interesting incidents occurred that night which I cannot report here because of my innate sense of decency and my respect for the English libel laws. I'll report them in Oopsla instead. But I could mention the interesting affair of Burgess's entrails. These were several pounds of assorted livers, lights and other internal organs which Burgess had bought in London slightly too long ago, brought to the Convention, and deposited in Peter Hamilton's room for safe keeping. Unfortunately he had omitted to tell the occupant of the room about them and when Peter Hamilton found them he thoughtlessly threw them out of the window into the canal. Burgess came around later to collect them and was highly indignant at Peter for putting out his lights. He explained that he had intended to put them in Norman Shorrock's bed. I am sorry to say however that this eminently reasonable explanation was not in accordance with the facts. Actually the entrails were part of the props for a highly secret item the London Circle proposed to put on tomorrow---a fake human sacrifice to culminate in Ted Tubb throwing entrails among the audience; just another of the wonderful London Circle ideas which when the time came they found they hadn't the guts to put on.

Next day, Sunday, everyone was awakened at some godly hour by an unearthly din from the bells of the cathedral across the road. Indignation was widespread, and Viné Clarke was heard to complain "Can't these bloody Mancunians afford alarm clocks?" It was a Good Thing that the parties had been broken up fairly early in the morning, because it meant there was still some fight left in the conventioners. I came in towards the end of the fmz session to be told by George Charters that someone had objected to reprints of my stuff because it would discourage young fan writers. I made a grateful note of this argument to use against faneds who ask me for original material, but honestly, you young fans, don't let my example discourage you. I was like this even before I started fan writing.

After this came John Gunn, who went off quite well, and then John Russell Vargo Statten Fearn, whom George Charters had referred to as the Jest of Honour. He was interesting mainly because he was so disarmingly frank--but then he has so much to be frank about.

After this Ted Tubb began to take over the Convention. Little more was seen of the Convention Committee, and nothing of 11 of the 22 items listed on the official programme. Instead Tubb reigned supreme, first ad libbing his way through the remnants of Terry Jeeves' script for the mock trial of Bert Campbell--with good-humoured and often brilliant co-operation from Terry himself, who struck me as one

of the nicest people there--and then winding up the Convention with a riotous series of monologues and interviews, including one with Norman Wansborough. Tubb was wonderful. It seems to me it would be worth the while of any Convention Committee to hire Ted Tubb along with the hall.

Among this glorious melange of Tubb-foolery there occurred one of the most extraordinary events I've ever known happen at a Convention. No one, it transpired, had the slightest intention of bidding for the next Convention site and it began to look very much as if the Supermancon would adjourn without anything having been decided. Tubb fixed that. In the space of about thirty seconds he called for nominations, heard none, announced that the next Convention would be held in London, and appointed Shirley Marriot to take subscriptions. All this, apparently, quite on his own initiative. However, the London Circle appeared to accept it as their destiny.

People had started to leave for trains quite early in the evening, and the usual post-mortem had started long before the Convention was scheduled to end. Dave Cohen and Eric Needham stood by the door with distraught faces and courageously asked representative fans what they had thought of the Convention. There was a startling unanimity in the replies. Every one that I heard was to the effect that the official programme had been a fiasco, but that they, personally, had enjoyed the Convention.

That was what I had thought too, but there seemed to me to be more to it than that. Usually I don't express any opinion about the merits of Conventions because whether one enjoys it or not depends so largely on one's own subjective impressions, but the Supermancon was such an extraordinary affair that I find myself getting all philosophical about it.

For instance, take the situation in British fandom just before it. Bitterness between one group of Northerners and another, hostility between both groups and the Londoners, tension between Hamilton and the London pro-editors, the Londoners full of diabolical plans to sabotage the Convention, the Northerners under a desperate compulsion to justify their contempt for London inefficiency. All this amid the greatest burst of British fanactivity since 1938. It seemed to be an explosive situation, one that would wreck British fandom. All the disenchantment, recriminations and bitterness which normally follow conventions would be magnified to cataclysmic proportions.

But instead the incredible happened. The opposing stresses met, surged briefly and silently....and dissipated themselves in an atmosphere of good humour. The Supermancon seems actually to have strengthened fandom, a thing which no Convention has ever done before.

Apparently the Supermancon Committee wrought this fannish miracle by staging the worst organised Convention fandom has yet seen. You can almost see a mystical symbolism in what happened. It was as if all the sins of British fandom--the smugness of the North, the malice of the South, the snobbery of the Old Guard--as if they were all expiated by the Supermancon Committee as they crucified themselves in the Grosvenor Hotel. The point was that they bore their agony in such a way as to demonstrate the inherent goodness of fan. If they had showed signs of bitterness or pomposity in their ordeal things might have been very different. Instead they met every disaster with such informality and good humour that they won people's sympathy. In face of this sporting attitude the London Circle (though admittedly things might have been different if Bert Campbell had arrived on schedule) dropped their plans for sabotage. Not one of the fiendish plots hatched over the last nine months in Operation Armageddon was put into effect. The official programme was allowed to die

peacefully by mutual consent.

It was the way it died that was important. Last year in London it lingered on in agony. People sat around, bored and irritated, waiting for life to be pronounced extinct. This year people realised at quite an early stage that the official programme was already part of the pavement of Hell, and it was at this point in time that the British Convention completed the transition that had begun last year in the Bonnington. As I pointed out in 'Initiative Inc' two years ago, American fans have long been accustomed to regarding the official programme as a sort of running buffet. But such was the force of tradition that English fans, as long as an official programme existed, would have felt compelled to sit around and watch it. When the official programme collapsed at Manchester, British fans were forced into the American style of Convention. They took to it like a duck to water, and I don't think we'll ever see the old 'desultory lecture sessions' type of convention in Britain again.

The Supermancon Committee deserve credit for other things than committing suicide. They booked an almost ideal hotel--not too respectable, only slightly too big, and above all with plenty of lounges where people could talk, in a sort of perpetual party. The Liverpool Group also deserve a bouquet for their tour de force in booking a lounge for a latenight party--a completely new development in convention techniques. But the very success of the Supermancon as a social event poses, it seems to me, a new problem for British Convention organisers. If everyone is enjoying themselves the way they learned to do at the Mancon, who's going to put on the official programme? The Supermancon will go down in fan history as a success only because all the reports will be written by actifans. What about the neofen who turned up to see the sort of thing that was advertised in the promags and went away disgusted? Either we're going to have two Conventions, one for ourselves and one for the public, or we've got to let the pros take over the official programme, and run it as a commercial proposition.

THE BLOGGY BLOGGY DO

(rb: Willis at Kettering, whatever that might be, in 1955.)

After an interesting journey through, round, along and under some mountains which concealed themselves so haughtily in clouds that I assume they must have been the Pique District, the special early train from Manchester carrying Frances and Cyril Evans, Ethel Lindsay, Frank Simpson, Madeleine and a few hundred less interesting people, including me, arrived at the base camp from which the ascent into Kettering may be attempted. Scorning the assistance of native porters the expedition eventually mounted to the George Hotel....a mere 20 minutes after Dave Cohen, who had foolishly waited for the ordinary late train. We watched as he masterfully unsettled the booking arrangements for his party and at length I was provided with a key like that for a baronial castle, attached to a length of a drawbridge. I dragged it and our two suitcases up to our room. Pausing only to make sure it had an unoccupied bed we went downstairs again to be greeted by Chuck Harris, Joy Goodwin & Vinç Clarke. It was now clear what had happened to the Clarke follicles, who had not been heard from for some time. Desperate after years of wandering through vast echoing caverns, the few survivors had made a misguided sortie out onto his upper

lip, where he now bore a sort of crew-cut moustache. I entered Chuck's book title contest with "The Weird Shadow Over Vincemouth" and we all went and sat in the corner.

Among the large but select company were Mal Ashworth and a young lady with the fine old North Country name of Sheila O'Donnell and a nice line in humour. (As a married man I do not of course notice such things but I am assured by the President of the Union of Fully Certified Sex Maniacs, a Mr. Harris, that her other lines are commendable too.) There were also Ron Bennett, who seemed much nicer than last year & who was to become the first fan to play Rugby at a Convention out of doors, Brian Varley (who is not married), Denny Cowen, Convention Secretary, and lots of other very agreeable people. Dave Cohen engaged Denny Cowen in conversation and Chuck called to the latter across the room "Dave giving you some tips on how to run a Convention?", adding in a reflective aside audible only on the ground floor, "Fans have short memories, haven't they? Look at people talking to Cohen!" He then went on to speculate on the fact that Ted Tubb was engaged in earnest conversation with Frances Evans. I told him Frances was married. "That's all right", said Chuck. "Ted isn't superstitious."

The scene here in the bar lounge was picturesque in the extreme. Everyone seemed to be wearing helicopter beanies, all home made and each more picturesque than the next. Sheila wore hers, a double prop job, through the streets of Kettering without attracting more than cursory attention....which is a commentary on women's hats. Eric Jones's was by far the most imposing, incorporating as it did a radar antenna, several Van Der Graaf generators and a spaceship complete with launching bowl. He didn't so much wear it as shelter beneath it. During the official program Terry Jeeves lit a small fire under the spaceship. It presented a most imposing sight but Eric Jones remained oblivious, even when Burgess came up from the back of the hall and extinguished the conflagration with his zapgun.

The presence of all these helicopter beanies....far more than can be seen at a dozen American Conventions....was fascinating to the fan historian. The helicopter beanie was first introduced to fandom by Ray Nelson and (I think) George Young many years ago, but they've never been conventional headgear in America as they now are in British fandom, and they owe their currency, it seems to me, solely because of their convenience as a recognisable symbol for fan artists---mainly Lee Hoffman. As with Conventions themselves, British fandom is acting out what US fandom only dreams.

After a while the strain of carrying on seventeen different conversations at once began to get too much for me and I thought I'd take a quiet stroll over to the Convention Hall. I've never yet been able to have a good look at Convention exhibits. I was making my way past groups of people at a speed of about two knots an hour when Pete Taylor ran up to me with an "Is There-A-Doctor-In-The-House?" expression and told me that three local people in the bar were perplexed about the beanies and wanted enlightenment. He dragged me in front of three well-dressed matrons and promptly scampered off the sinking ship. I gave the three good ladies a brief synopsis of the history of Defiant Goshwowboyohboyism, of which I take the beanie to be a facet, from 1939 to date. They seemed reassured, which was more than could be said for me. My nerves finally shattered by this experience, I gathered a little party consisting of Madeleine, Chuck, Sheila & Mal and fled upstairs in search of peace and quiet. We found it in the dark and deserted Residents' Lounge. We lit one of the table lamps and talked contentedly in the little tent of light until gradually other people began to arrive.

The size of the party increased according to the well known exponential law governing Convention functions, until the hideously inevitable Burgess manifested

itself. Chuck, resourcefully, immediately sent him away for some tea. He came back with some story about it not being available until half ten. Recklessly, Chuck told him to go and find Wansborough and Reaney and bring them up too. He was more successful in this quest and presently ushered in Wansborough, just after Ken Slater had rung for tea again. Aghast, Ken exclaimed "That wasn't what I rang for!"

Shortly afterwards I thought we might as well go to bed. As I was escorting Madeleine out we passed by Norman Wansborough. He leaned forward confidentially and said, "Walt, I wish I was in your shoes." I told him I wouldn't be wearing any, and went on out. Though now I come to think of it, this was a mean and selfish attitude. Why shouldn't we share these things with those of our friends who are less fortunately situated? I shall send Norman a pair of my old shoes by the very next post.

When we got to bed I found that my body didn't agree with my mind that this had been a sensible thing to do. After lying awake for an hour I got up again, put on my jacket, trousers and shoes over my pyjamas, and went out in search of fannish good cheer. I was nearly knocked down by a fan swaying from side to side and looking for the lavatory. I directed him to the door marked "Bath", figuring he couldn't miss it, and continued on to the Residents' Lounge. There was a small party there, consisting of Ken Slater, Dave Cohen, Brian Varley (who is not married), Archie Mercer, Mike Wallace and John Brunner. Ken Slater was anxious to talk about TAFF but the atmosphere wasn't suitable for sober discussion. I had locked our bedroom door after me lest Madeleine should be awakened by drunks looking for their room or Wansborough wanting to try on my shoes, and after a while I went back to make sure all was well. To my remorse I found a note lying in the corridor. It read "SOS. Walter has locked me in and I'm dying of thirst. Would someone please tell him to bring me a drink." I went in and was told that the hotel taps provided only hot & cold running chlorine, and went out again for a glass of cider.

Having stayed her with flagons and comforted her with apples, like it says in The Bible, I went back to the Lounge, where I had the privilege to be present at the most historic intervention of a Night Porter in Convention annals. He shambled onto the scene at 2.45am. We had been making a fair amount of noise and were prepared for the usual retribution to overtake us. Everyone had practically thrown themselves out before he opened his mouth. When he did we could scarcely bring ourselves to believe what he was saying, but eventually it seeped into our numbed brains that the unthinkable was happening. There was no reproving reference to "complaints" from that mysterious horde of antifans who furtively follow us from Convention hotel to Convention hotel spoiling our innocent fun by selfishly trying to sleep. There was no Message From The Manager. No tactless reference to the lateness of the hour. No sinister suggestions about non-residents. Instead the man was talking about science fiction! He was a fan....at least of the BBC program Journey Into Space. Actually he looked more like a Weird Tales fan---in fact he looked like a weird tale---but Boris, as he came to be called, was a very fine fellow. There was a proposal that he be appointed Official Night Porter to British Conventions and be provided with his own travelling coffin.

Eventually I went to bed again, about 3.30am. Next day someone asked me how I'd enjoyed the previous night and I said, "Fine: I went to bed twice."

"Yes", said Madeleine, "and with the same woman!"

The Official Program began next day at 2:18pm with a 50 cycle hum on the PA system and speeches by Ted Carnell and Bert Campbell. I hear that Denny Cowen had attempted to start it at the advertised time of 11am, but no one was there to appreciate this whimsical gesture. It came to an end some 90 minutes later, but no

blame can be attached to Ted or Bert. Ted mandered on for a while, first about short stories not selling, and then about increasing people's reading speeds...as if he was resolved to convert all stories into short stories and put an end to the whole sorry business...but he soon became again the engaging soul of indiscretion we enjoy every year. Bert was at first uncharacteristically subdued under heavy fire directed at his fmz reviews....a sitting target....and was also most unbertlike in his defence of the Authentic Book of Space. He allowed his old enemies to retire in triumph from the field after the following brisk bombardment....

Eric Jones: "At what age was the Authentic Book Of Space aimed?"

Bert: "We are always very hopeful, optimistic---"

Eric Jones: "So was I when I sent for it."

Eric Bentcliffe: "I have sent a copy of it to White Sands, and now I hear that all tests have been canceled."

But after this just retribution by two of the famous Misfits, Bert brightened up a bit and became more like his usual outrageous but likeable self.

After this came the Liverpool Group's famous tapera, which was so good that the sensitive fannish audience subconsciously realised that anything else, even Ken Slater lecturing with laryngitis, would be an anticlimax. They voted for an interval with their feet, leaving a publisher who had begged a five minute spot in the Program for a plug with the task of selling his spring list to 120 chairs. (My brain received a message from the rear what they could do with them.)

We arrived back from tea in time for the tea interval, as usual, and to welcome the Convention Chairman, Bill Panter, to the empty hall. Then I contacted the custodian of the Liverpool tape recorder, a nice bloke whose name I have stupidly forgotten, to see if I could play on his machine two tapes made at San Francisco and sent to me by my Literary Executor, Peter Graham. I had been fighting a losing battle with these tapes for months. The first machine I borrowed played both tracks simultaneously, one forwards and one backwards, so that the fans' voices were drowned out by what sounded like a heated conference of Russian agents. The second played them separately, both backwards. This one played them separately, and in the right direction, but at half speed. I give up. Will any US fans who send me tapes in future please enclose the tape recorder they were made on...or at least a Russian dictionary.

At lunchtime that day the hotel manager had laid on lunch for fifty at 8/6 per head (or at least per person.) At one o'clock the vast organization had completed its preparations and stood ready to swing into action. Six waiters stood poised for zero hour, sworn to deal with the mad rush of starving fans or go down beneath their feet. By two o'clock six fans had appeared, the rest of them by this time finishing their fish and chips in cheap cafes. Denny Cowen didn't seem at all worried. He said the Manager had asked him for advice on how many he should provide for at lunch. 75? 100? "Well," said Denny thoughtfully, "I think you could safely allow for about six. Maybe seven. Or, if you want to take a chance, perhaps even eight." The Manager was incredulous. There were over a hundred people there; surely most of them would want lunch. "Not," said Denny firmly, "at 8/6 a throw." And so it turned out. I didn't have lunch there myself, but I hear the service was pretty good.

Next day the hotel put on what was evidently a "Fans' Special" at 6/-, but it was too late; the pattern had been set. The imperturbable Cowen took the view that the Manager had had fair warning and had only himself to blame, which was quite true. In any case the hotel cleared enough on the bar to win on the swigs what they lost on the roustabouts. They say Norman Wansborough took a bath in cherry brandy every night.

My nerves were still shot to pieces; I was, as the old gag has it, shaking like

an aspirin. Ever since the Chicon I seem to have been living Conventions backwards ...I start off with the hangover and finish on top of the world. The turning point this time came when Arthur Thomson, Roscoe reward him, recommended Alka Seltzer and went out with me to buy some. We came back, ordered two glasses of water from the astounded bartender and drank the mystic potion. Having carefully read the booklet of instructions I began to feel better at once and, hearing that Mal Ashworth was ill with flu I went up to his room with Chuck Harris, the bottle of Alka Seltzer and an unsolicited testimonial. Poor Sheila was speculating mournfully as to how much it would cost to ship a body back to Bradford, but after we'd been talking to him for a while Mal brightened up in sheer self defence and began to fight back. Sheila, still morbidly minded, had pointed out that there were tiny skulls in the wallpaper pattern. "It must have been meant for a scullery not a bedroom," said Mal. Satisfied that he was going to live....though whether or not he deserved to was another question....we went back downstairs.

Some time during the afternoon word had been spread by runners through the various lounges that War Of The Worlds was going to be shown that evening. My Ghod, we thought, the Official Program walks again. I dropped in about half an hour after it had started to make sure that the Martians hadn't found out about Alka Seltzer, and discovered the makings of an even worse catastrophe. Someone had decided to help defend Terra against the alien hordes with his little zapgun. Apparently these high class silvered screens are allergic to water and the maddened operator had called in the Manager, complaining that his screen had been ruined and his projector was in imminent danger. He said he would cancel the show if he wasn't afraid the audience would riot. I assured him he needn't worry about that and if he'd explained the position to them there'd be no more trouble. Then after discussing it with Vinz I told him we'd lift a collection to pay for the damage to the screen. I got Bill Panter to make the announcement and the film show went on without further incident. During the interval Vinz and I went round with beanies and collected £2:22:3. The operator settled happily for £1:10 and of the remainder 10/- went to TAFF and the balance in gratuities to the hotel staff.

Some people said afterwards that the people who did the damage should have paid for it, but I don't see how it could have been done in practice. I took the collection from the main culprit, a professional man with a University degree, and he only gave me 2/6 and was far more concerned about his confiscated zapgun than anything else. Besides until recently zapguns have been quite *comme il faut* at British Conventions and in a convivial atmosphere anyone can be forgiven for failing to take into account the possibility that a film screen may be something other than an ordinary white sheet.

All the same this incident could have ruined the Convention, and it seems to be the general opinion among the leaders of fannish thought that the zapgun should be outlawed. It had its uses in the dry-as-dust British Convention of a few years back, but we all know how to enjoy ourselves now without mechanical aids to informality. Many of the actifans left them behind in 1954 and hardly any BNFs toted them at Kettering. The trend will probably continue.

There was some speculation next morning as to what would take its place. Ken Slater was demonstrating a potato gun, but one hates to think of what fannish ingenuity might develop from this. Bombs loaded with cold mashed potatoes, bazookas firing half a stone at a time, french fried shrapnel, long range rocket missiles... maybe even guided potatoes, with electronic eyes. A horrible thought. Mal Ashworth and Ken Bulmer came up with the best idea---a double-barreled shotgun with one barrel loaded with tar and the other with feathers. It could be used for running people out of fandom....such as thoughtless zappers.

After the film show a number of us had a very pleasant party in the Residents'

Lounge...or at least I enjoyed it. Not too many people, only one talking at once, and everyone participating. Arthur was drawing cartoons, as usual---his graphic commentaries were one of the best features of the Convention, and became a sort of illustrated quotecard--and Pamela stole a particularly brilliant one for UGH, hiding it down the neck of her dress. ("She's wearing a strapless evening cartoon.") But after a while the word began to go around that we should mingle. For some reason everyone went to Bert Campbell's room, which was already crowded. It was about the size of two telephone kiosks and at one time contained 35 people, not counting the ones under the carpet. When there was a knock at the door I reflected that if it was the house detective asking if Bert had a woman in there he could have called out "Only about 17." I asked myself what sort of creature would go to this place when there was a perfectly good lounge. The answer was a lemming.

Eventually everyone else had the same idea and we went down to the 'Basket Lounge' where the Liverpool Group, those masters of conventioning, were throwing another classic party. It had quietened down by now, and you could almost see the other end of the room. This was more than could be said for the floor, where a well-known femfan was holding court. Under the impression that one of her satellites was a certain Northern fanned Chuck said "I'll bet Ted Mason doesn't report this" but when the police arrived at 4.20am it fortunately turned out to be someone else who was registered at the hotel. Chuck said "I'd rather go to jail myself than be Ron Bennett."

The rest of Sunday passed in a happy blur and then there was the usual mad rush round saying goodbye to people. Not as many as usual this time, because it seemed that all our friends were coming to see us off. There were the Bulmers, Vinç and Joy, Mal and Sheila, and Eric Bentcliffe. Even Eric Needham, who had just arrived on his motorbike. (The one with the wide handlebars, of which he had been heard to say "It's a good bike, but rather susceptible to forked lightning.") I heard him asking Chuck for a light for his cigarette. Chuck obliged, saying: "A light from Chuck Harris! Light an eternal flame from it or something." Eventually Madeleine, Chuck, Arthur and me, accompanied by our entourage, arrived at the platform and the train came in. We said our last goodbyes and started to clamber on. Suddenly the air was filled with confetti. Every one of them had been clutching a handful of it all the way from the hotel.

Madeleine and I leaned out of the carriage window dripping confetti---technicolour dandruff, as Bob Shaw, calls it---laughing and waving goodbye. As the train moved off Ken Bulmer shouted, "Give our love to your children when you get home!"

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FANDOM AT SIXES AND SEVENS

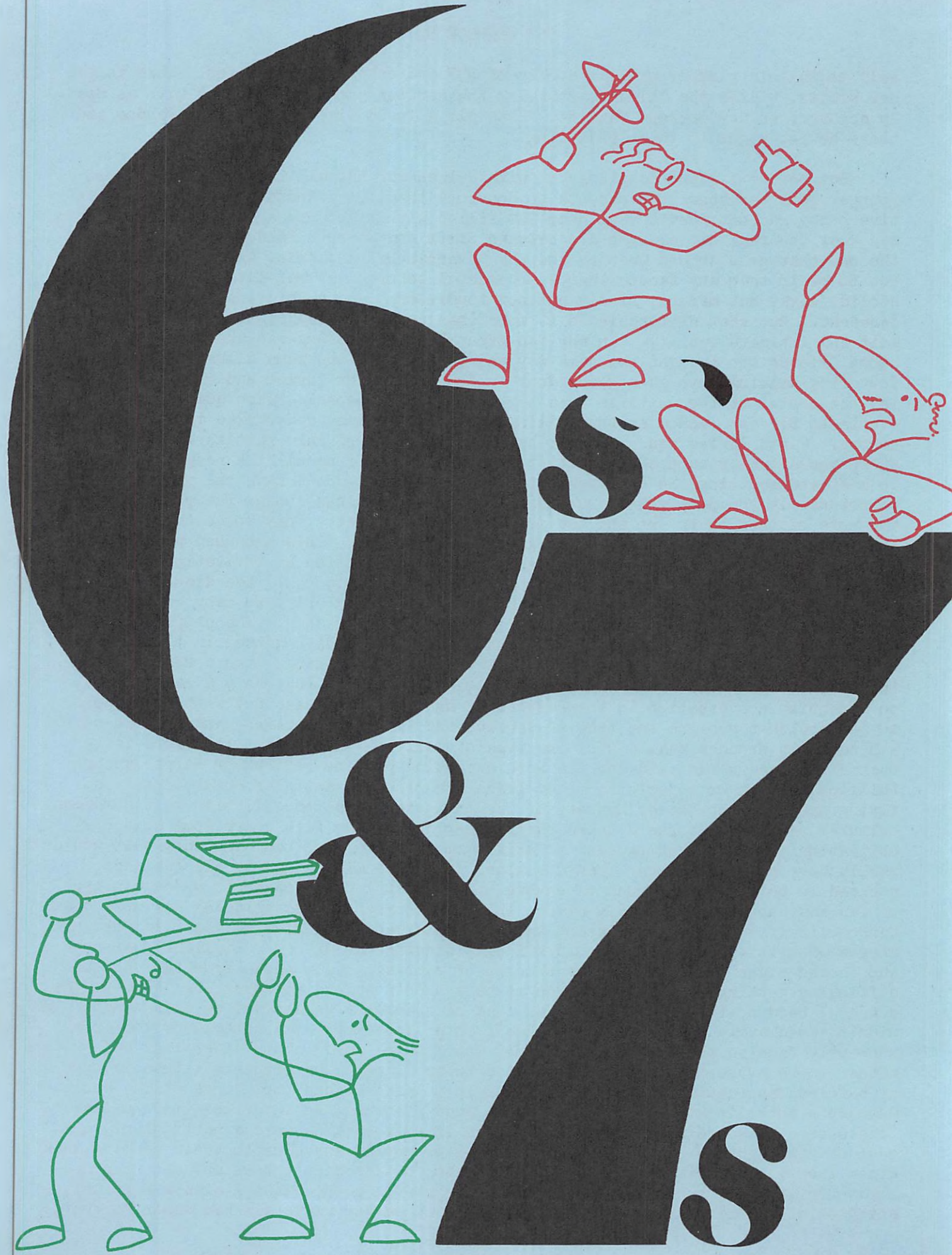
or

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE APPLICATION OF HEISENBERG'S UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE AND THE LAWS OF STATISTICAL PROBABILITY TO PHENOMENA IN THE MICROCOSM

A snappy sub-title if there ever was one. Well, don't all sit there with your mouths open. Rise to your feetbones as a token of respect for the new Willis. Fare-

well to the old playboy Willis, mocker of N3F and other sacred relics. This is the new Willis, Willis the Thinker, striking the serious constructive note with as deadly accuracy as any current fanzine. Show him a Trend like this Seventh Fandom and there he is, right in there analysing.

But before I start dazzling you with Heisenberg and all that stuff which you younger fans can show your parents to convince them that fandom is really an educative hobby and not just a vast Room 770 filled with tight men and loose women, let's see what the real differences are between Sixth and Seventh Fandom. Sixth Fandom, the one that grew around Quandry and the Savannah-Belfast axis, was, I think, more fun to be in than any fandom that ever existed before. It was intelligent but not stolid, wacky but mature, lively but not feudridden, and sophisticated without being decadent. But what distinguished it more than anything else, I think, was its close-knit and intimate quality. In any fan group between Los Angeles and London you were among friends who thought the same way and appreciated the same allusions. Van Couvering walking through a glass door in Los Angeles or Tucker and Oliver discovering the center of the universe in a bar in Columbus, Georgia, were quite as real events to Belfast fandom as the ceiling falling on Bulmer and Clarke in the Epicentre. Sixth Fandom was coming to be like one of those rare parties at a Convention where you actually succeed in getting together in one room all the people you want to meet and shutting the door against gatecrashers who don't have the password. Unfortunately the people left outside are annoyed, and the longer the party goes on the more of them there are and the more annoyed they get. They knock the door first, and if they don't get in they start knocking the party. This happened when Lee locked the door to Quandry by putting it on a "subscription by invitation only" basis. The word began to go around that Quandry was cliquish. Lee didn't mean to be cliquish, her attitude was simply that she could only print so many copies of Q and she wanted them to go to people who would appreciate them. The people outside didn't really want that kind of party and if they would have gotten in they might have destroyed it. A fanzine like Q is a very personal thing, like a conversation in the editor's house among a group of congenial people. Just as you can't carry on a fannish conversation in the presence of non-fans, at least not with politeness, so Lee couldn't publish the type of fanzine she wanted to publish--and any one person can only produce really well one type of fanzine---if she'd felt that a large number of readers had paid for and were expecting prozine reviews or Ralph Rayburn Phillips artwork or rejects from the lesser prozines or articles about dianetics, flying saucers, the Shaver Mystery or the influence of science fiction on the modern cultural pattern. If she'd taken their money she'd have felt under some kind of obligation to change her fanzine to suit them and we'd have had a Quandry that wouldn't really have pleased anyone. Many fanzines try to be all things to all fan and succeed in being nothing much to anyone. Quandry tried to appeal to a certain type of fan and succeeded supremely well. This didn't mean it was cliquish any more than fandom itself is cliquish. Fandom seems peculiar and exclusive to the outsider, but anyone whom it appeals to has no difficulty finding his way in. Similarly, any neo who showed signs of being what we thought of semi-seriously as a "true fan" had no difficulty getting copies of Q, even if he couldn't afford to subscribe. One of the signs, I used to think sometimes, was that he shouldn't be annoyed by things he didn't immediately understand, like Lee's interlineations. An interlineation is a supremely fannish thing in any case, not meant to be immediately understood but rather to be mysterious, provocative, and tantalising. The proper attitude is one of baffled fascination, as expressed once in a letter I had from Vince Clarke about Quandry's interlineations ending with the awed sentence, an interlineation in itself, "The dotted ones are the worst." Quandry's interlineations were a particularly good test because usually only people like Tucker or me had any clue to their meaning, and often they were intelligible only to Lee herself. She didn't have any ulterior motive for putting them in--she just liked to baffle people--but I always felt they acted as a sort of charm to ward off the type of person we've all had experience of,



who hates things he doesn't understand and resents people enjoying something he doesn't appreciate.

Now I may be wrong, but I don't think this type of person is going to be any happier about Seventh Fandom than he was about Sixth. He really shouldn't be in fandom at all but at the moment among all the new fans and new faneditors he doesn't notice that he's different. He probably thinks Seventh Fandom as it exists at present is just about ideal. However, as the new fanzines improve and their contributors develop he will find his unimaginative articles more frequently rejected and his dull letters more ruthlessly cut until he resentfully drops out of fandom or into some form of fanac that requires no talent whatsoever. Who remembers now the names of any of the original contributors to Quandry? It's my guess that it will be a startlingly short time until accusations are being flung around that Seventh Fandom is "cliquish". Don't forget that it's growing up in an era when the prozines have virtually withdrawn their support from fandom, whereas Sixth Fandom flourished at a time when prozine fan columns were drawing dozens of new people into contact with fandom every month. The only thing that's delaying the development of Seventh Fandom is the fact that the leaders are mostly new fans and don't know each other very well yet. The impulse towards "cliquishness" is there all right, as witness the gallant attempts of Cantin and Wells etc. at fannish fiction and satire, but who knows enough yet about the personalities of Nydahl, Touzinsky, Olsen, Mittlebuscher, Stewart, Wells, Grennell, Magnus, etc. to be able to write entertainingly about them?

No, I don't think Seventh Fandom is essentially different in character from Sixth; it's just at an earlier stage of development into a fully self-sufficient fandom, just emerging from the serious constructive chrysalis. What is really unusual about it is that it's the first fan trend to be fully selfconscious. This is all due to Bob Silverberg and his speculations about the "Seventh Fandom" that would follow the folding of Quandry. They were still fresh in everyone's mind when Sixth Fandom was struck down at the height of its achievement by a series of coincidences. Lee Hoffman fulfilled one of her lifelong ambitions by buying a horse and suspended Q while she galloped happily round the Savannah countryside, the first fan ever literally to leave fandom on a high horse. Max Keasler got caught up in examinations. Shelby Vick took a long-scheduled rest. Several other prominent fans gave up or slackened their fanac for unrelated reasons. I caught pneumonia and had to give up fanning altogether for some months. The back cover had hardly fallen off the last issue of Q when a horde of new fans started rampaging about under the banner of "Seventh Fandom". Wells called his fanzine the herald of it. Dave Wood was running about the London Convention with a beanie marked "Seventh Fandom" at almost the same moment as someone else was doing the same thing at Indian Lake. There were grave exhortations from columnists in the new fanzines that "Now is the time to seize power".

Well, you know, fandom is too small to be able to do this sort of thing without repercussions. If I may introduce old Heisenberg now, who has been waiting patiently in the wings all this time, he proved that the movements of any particular electron, just like those of any particular person, cannot be predicted with certainty. It is not inevitable that a kettle should boil instead of freeze when you put it on the stove, it is merely highly probable. It's highly probable only because there are so many electrons involved. In the same way, every man and woman has free will, and yet statisticians can predict exactly the number of them that will get married in a year or throw themselves off high buildings or do something equally foolish. But the predictions are only valid if the community is large and if the predictions don't themselves influence the phenomena. In a small community, for instance, the men and women might get sore at the statistician's smug prediction that 13.647% of them would get married during the year, and make his face red by living in sin until New Year's Day.

If Seventh Fandom had kept quiet about itself and just sneaked imperceptibly

onto the fannish scene as its predecessors did, nobody would have realised that we were at a crucial moment in fan history. Sixth Fandom would have faded quietly away without its leaders knowing a thing about it. But its exit was accompanied by such a fanfare of trumpets announcing the arrival of Seventh Fandom that everyone looked back to see what was happening. The result was that some of them started to come back, partly because they hated to think that Sixth Fandom should perish altogether, and partly to show that they were free agents and not cogs in the wheels of some historical cycle. Bloch wrote uncharacteristically sombre letters bemoaning the change that was coming over fandom, Tucker in FAPA looked to British fandom to carry the torch, Lee Hoffman revived Q if only on an if-and-when basis, and I'm just waiting till the autumn to plunge back into the mailstorm of fan publishing.

It's possible that we might all have a lot to thank Bob Silverberg for. Hitherto eras in fandom were rather like the civilizations in Asimov's "Nightfall". A fandom would rise, flourish, and then suddenly collapse in ruins. There is a period of chaos, with the survivors eeking out a precarious existence in the ruins or retiring to the Shangri-La of FAPA, until a new fandom is built up slowly and painfully from nothing. Take the Spacewarp era. Rapp's fandom seemed solid, rooted in strength. Then came the Michigan Bomb Plot, Rapp's enlistment, the climax of the last Warp presided over by the ghoul-like Insurgents, and then the dark ages again, the columnists, contributors and readers of Warp dispersed to the four winds. Then the age of chaos, with watchers peering into the darkness at each little flash of light in case it is a new dawn. The awakening of interest as it is gradually realized that Quandry is the new hope. The gradual building up of Quandry's sphere of influence to restore all the Spacewarp heritage, culminating in the recall of Burbee and Laney from the wilderness of Los Angeles, and simultaneously the conquest of new territories ---The Outlanders, British fandom, etc. and the rediscovery of legendary ones like Tucker and Bloch. Until finally the new civilization contains not only everything that made the old one great but a lot more besides. But at what a cost of time and effort. No one can assess the talent lost and the opportunities missed in that long period of transition. Bob Silverberg may have given fandom as a whole the all-important faculty of "time-binding", the ability to pass on accumulated knowledge and experience from one generation to the other. It's possible that Seventh Fandom may build directly on the legacy of Sixth Fandom, assimilating its survivors and building with them a greater fandom than any before.

AS OTHERS SEE US

"This Madle fellow seems to have it in for you." said Fingal, handing back Boyd's letter. Fingal O'Flahertie is a young neo here who has been burrowing through my fanzine collection, surfacing at intervals to ask questions. "I remember he was insulting you in prozines as long ago as last year."

"I don't think he meant that." I said mildly. "I think he just didn't quite know what 'bombastic' meant: probably thought it had something to do with bombs. At least he seemed quite friendly in London, even though he didn't accept our invitation to stay with us in Belfast. I think this is just an echo of the controversy about whether he deserved to win Taff. Chuck Harris said straight out in Ompa that he shouldn't have stood because he wasn't well known to British fandom. Naturally Bob is sore about that, and he probably thinks I share Chuck's views."

"Well, do you?"

"No, not on that point." I said. "I think Bob was quite eligible to be nominated. There are no less than 37 references to him in The Immortal Storm and he's known to the older British fans, like Mike Rosenblum. As for his record since then, well here's what he says himself."

"Hmm," said Fingal. "Mostly local club activity, and he probably got most of his votes canvassing people who didn't know anything about the other candidates."

"Well, there's nothing wrong with that from Bob's point of view." I pointed out. "The fact that his friends have never heard of Eney and Raeburn just means to him that Eney and Raeburn are little-known fans."

"But they're big names to me and I'd hardly heard of Madle until he won Taff." expostulated Fingal.

"So what?" I said. "Bob would say that's because you're just a fanzine fan. The people who voted for him would have said exactly the same sort of thing if he had lost."

"But what chance had I to hear about Madle?" asked Fingal indignantly. "These club fans can subscribe to fanzines if they want to find out about fans in other places. Was I expected to attend the meetings of the Carolina SF Society or whatever it was to find out what a fine fan Madle is? I thought the main idea of Taff was to further fan activity by rewarding people who did a lot for international fandom?"

"Well, that was my idea," I admitted, but don't forget Don Ford and the Cincinnati group were in it right from the start too, and they've always regarded it as more of a sweepstake. At least their idea is to get in a lot of money by selling as many voting forms as they can. They say that if we restricted the voting to people we regard as qualified to discriminate between the candidates -- that is, fans who read fanzines -- we'd never get enough money in to send someone every year."

"So what." said Fingal. "I'd rather wait to meet Bloch than have someone I never heard of."

"Well, that's your preference," I said, "but we've got to face the fact that the Americans think differently about these things and theirs is the way it's got to be in American elections. We've just got to reconcile ourselves to the sad fact that we're never going to get a British-type candidate like Bloch or Tucker or Grennell or Boggs or Eney or Raeburn -- they're not pushing enough for one of these canvassing competitions. It'll always be more the Harlan Ellison type. And after all that isn't so bad. When you think of some of the people who might have won Taff you'll realize we were lucky to get such a fine representative as Madle."

"Well, he may have behaved himself all right in London," said Fingal grudgingly, "but I don't think it's nice of him to start insulting the people who paid for his trip the minute he gets back."

"What on earth do you mean?" I asked. "That business about blankfaced nobodies or what he said in Ompa?"

"Well," said Fingal, "for one thing the fanzine fans contributed enough to bring over a blankfaced nobody named Lee Hoffman. She didn't take it and it was carried over till next year and Madle got the money, so that his trip was paid for

mostly by the fanzine fans he despises."

"Oh, come, come," I said, "that's a crude way of looking at it. Don't you lose your temper too. Bob doesn't really despise us fanzine fans -- after all he's been one himself from time to time. I'm sure he didn't really mean that about Lee and Shelby Vick and Max Keasler and Rich Elsberry being blankfaced nobodies....he's just annoyed because I said that in 1952 he and Kyle and Moskowitz and Sykora and Korshak and Eshbach and Evans were never heard of for 362 days in the year."

"Well, were they?"

"Not by me," I admitted, "but if Bob says so I must have been wrong. Presumably they wrote letters to each other between conventions, or for all I know they turned up in a body at every meeting of the Carolina SF Society. And you've got to admit he's right in one thing -- Lee and Shelby and Max are fannishly dead at the moment, while Madle's friends are just as active as they were in 1952."

"I don't admit it," said Fingal stoutly. "Lee and Max and Shelby aren't dead to me. It's those fanzines of theirs you lent me that brought me into fandom, so they live on in me and dozens of other neos all over the world. For all that Korshak and the rest of that ginger group of his ever did to interest me in fandom I would still be reading BREs. When did any of that battery of fannish dynamos ever say anything brilliant or funny or memorable, or even mildly interesting?"

"How do you know they didn't?" I countered. "For all you know the wit flows as scintillatingly in Cincinnati or Carolina clubrooms as it does in South Pioneer Boulevard or Inchmerry Road, it's just that nobody tells us about it. Take Moskowitz, for instance. He could hold his own in any gathering of good talkers."

"Well, yes, I give you Moskowitz," said Fingal. "He's a fanzine fan too. But if the rest of that lot are too stupid or illiterate to write for fanzines I'll bet their conversation is limited to swapping dirty jokes."

"Oh, come off it," I said. "There are people in fanzine fandom who aren't all that bright either, and we're in no position to point the finger-bone of scorn. We're far too inclined to write off these non-fanzine fans as rather pathetic fugg-heads who haven't got what it takes to write for fanzines and have to scrape around for their egoboo by struggling for power in silly organizations and playing petty politics, while us sophisticated fanzine fans look on at their childish squabbles with amused contempt. But for one thing, don't forget that they believe these antics are important, and sometimes they really are. They're not all what we think of as N3F types. As Bob points out, it's mostly they who put on the Big Conventions."

"Who wants Big Conventions?" sneered Fingal. "They're always flops anyway. The only fan organizations that have ever been run efficiently and without feuding are those which have been run entirely by fanzine fans, like FAPA and OMPA, or TAFF before the conventioning fans got their hands on it."

"That's unfair," I said. "An APA doesn't encourage politics because office involves more responsibility than power, and there was no feuding in TAFF's early days because the confans took no interest in it until they saw a TAFF delegate at a convention and the fanzine fans had all their own way. As for conventions, I know the argument that all we want is someone to circulate the name of an hotel every year, but it seems to me that if we want the pros to turn up we've got to put up some sort of official front, if only so they can claim the hotel bills against their income tax. The confans organize that, and it's a useful job."

"They make a heck of a lot of fuss about it, it seems to me. Look at New York. They can't be very good at it, for all their talk."

"How do you know?" I asked. "You've never put on a convention so you can't know what's involved. Anyway the less efficient they are the more trouble they have, so the more they resent us fanzine fans rolling up without a care in the world and having everything done for us and then going home leaving them to clear up the mess and writing snide conreports criticising the program and the organization which we never lifted a finger to help."

"It was mostly fanzine fans who put on London and South Gate," said Fingal defensively, "and they seem to have been all right."

"They were exceptions." I said. "Detroit in 59 will be back to normal -- there hasn't been a prominent fanzine out of Michigan since the Great Bomb Plot blew Rapp into FAPA, and he was insurging against the local organization. South Gate in 58 was a fanzine fandom tradition and for once we came down into the political arena and worked for it, putting on London in 57 in the process. But even there we had to rely on the confans for a lot of the fronting and platform work. Most of us are no good at speechmaking or throwing our weight about in public."

"All right," said Fingal, "I'll admit exhibitionists are useful people to have around at intervals, like garbage collectors; but that doesn't mean that garbage collectors are the elite of society or that they've the right to call us fuggheads because we don't take an intimate interest in their activities."

"There's a lot more to it than that." I said. "Try to put yourself in the position of one of Don Ford's friends who has never read a fanzine and you'll see it's a perfectly understandable point of view that we are fuggheads. To him we fanzine fans are just queer dim strangers who hang around aimlessly at conventions not doing anything to help and sitting in the wrong places and making jokes he can't understand. He feels that at any moment one of us is going to come up and bite him in the leg. Some of us behave like certifiable idiots if we're called on to make the simplest speech and we haven't got what it takes to participate in what he regards as the real soul of the convention -- making speeches and raising points of order and organizing things and outmanoeuvring other groups in smokefilled rooms and telling people where to sit and shouting each other down at loud parties. That's his form of fanac and we're no good at it, so we're fuggheads to him just as he's a fugghead to you."

"It's not the same at all." protested Fingal. "We see his fanac but he doesn't see what we do the other 362 days in the year. We can see he's just a loud-mouthed exhibitionist but he doesn't see our fanzine writing, so we can judge him while he can't judge us."

"No you can't," I said, "because we don't make the effort to get to know these confans at conventions any more than they make the effort to get to know us the rest of the year. If you manage to pry one of them loose from his caucus you'll find more often than not that he's a very intelligent and likeable person. Whereas on the other hand some of us fine minds of fanzine fandom don't look so allfired hot to a group of confans on their way from the bar to a smokefilled room and pausing on the way to exchange a friendly word. Some of us are so shy we won't open our mouths in a crowd. Some of us, like Boggs and Warner, won't even come to a convention at all."

"That's still no reason for them to call us names."

"Yes it is." I said. "Don't you see, they think we're being stupid or unfriend-

ly or both. For one example, I'll bet Anthony Boucher thinks I'm a fugghead. It was that penthouse party on the last night of the Chicon when he and Bixby and Reynolds and Anderson and some other pros were whooping it up in the bar and they wanted me to stay and give them some more imported dirty limericks. I rejected their friendly good cheer and spent the rest of the night in a window seat between two of those blank-faced nobodies. Until then I'd been on very friendly terms with Boucher but he's never addressed a word to me in the six years since that moment. I'm sorry about that, but I'd do the same again. I'd have been happy to stay in the bar if I'd thought I could have got talking to Boucher the way I could talk to Lee and Max in the window seat, but I didn't come 4000 miles to spend my time being part of an anthology of dirty limericks with a slightly sodden cover. I got bored with jokes and other forms of secondhand humor back home fifteen years ago."

"But those were pros." pointed out Fingal. "Aren't you getting off the beam?"

"No," I said, "I think I'm just getting on to it. The whole difficulty of social relationships at conventions isn't one of the difference between confans and fanzine fans, it's just one of psychological types. It seems to me that the crux of the question is that most fanzine fans are introverts -- otherwise they wouldn't feel the same need to express themselves on paper -- and that all confans are extroverts -- otherwise they wouldn't like public speaking. Both types have different ways of enjoying themselves and neither understands the other."

"You mean that was an extrovert party in the bar in the penthouse." said Fingal. "You preferred the introvert one in the window seat and the extroverts couldn't understand it."

"Yes," I said, "but I've thought of a better example. It was at a London Circle party in the living room of Dorothy Ratigan's house. Half the people there were shouting at the tops of their voices and the other thirty were trying to dance or play cards or just to breathe. I was half deafened and I hate shouting - I never seem to think of anything I consider worth shouting - so I got Vince Clarke and a few other introverts to sneak off with me into the kitchen. We'd been talking there happily for about half an hour when Dorothy Ratigan came in and glared at us and said: 'There have been complaints that there are people in here not drinking.' She was quite serious. She really believed that if we were not shouting and getting drunk we were having a miserable time and being wet blankets at her party. I'll bet she'd have called us blankfaced nobodies if she'd thought of it."

"Were you drinking?"

"I don't know." I said. "It never seems to matter with me. I usually have a drink in my hand to be sociable but I seldom drink much of it in case somebody fills it up again, because I hate getting drunk. No matter how much I drink there's always a small clear voice in the back of my head saying 'You're just getting stupider and stupider' and it makes me silent and depressed. You can see I'm a real introvert. A few drinks are a fine thing for most people, until they reach the stage when they only seem clever because their listeners are even drunker, but I seem to be able to get drunk on good talk alone. Literally, I mean. I get so intoxicated with ideas and excitement that I seem to be floating and when I get up I can hardly walk a straight line. You know some of these nights in Irish Fandom when everyone suddenly gets caught up in the current that sometimes flows through here and we find ourselves in another dimension of living when we can spin great shining wonderful webs of fantasy, or play with the language like a toy, or throw up bright lattices of wit, and your mind is racing away with you and the whole evening flashes past in a wild torrent of laughter and after we break up you feel dazed and limp and think what a wonderful wonderful evening and then you almost weep to realize

that nobody wrote anything down?"

"Yes," said Fingal, "but you wouldn't get that sort of thing at conventions?"

"Why else do you think I go to them?" I said. "It's more difficult, because you have to know and like the people well, and there can't be too many of them, not more than six or seven, and the presence of somebody uncongenial or phony can kill it stone dead, but it can be done. I remember specially once in the upstairs lounge at Kettering in 1955 with the Clarkes and Bulmers and Mal Ashworth and Arthur Thomson, before we broke it up to join the big extrovert party so that their feelings wouldn't be hurt. And then there were a few glorious moments towards the end of the London Worldcon when we broke through and made contact with some of the American fans and created the first international gestalt. And then of course there's another kind of gestalt you can get sometimes with only two or three other people, like Lee and Max and I had in that window seat in the penthouse or like one night in Tresco when I talked the night through to breakfast with Ken and Pamela Bulmer, when you seem to be communicating past the ordinary limitations of language. I can't describe it, though probably Sturgeon could, but compared to it ordinary conversation is like ships hooting at each other in a fog."

"Do you think confans get the same pleasure out of their extrovert parties?"

"Yes," I said. "I remember I got it once for some reason at a Liverpool party at the Supermancon in 1954. A different type of pleasure but basically the same. I felt I understood extroverts a lot better afterwards."

"Well," said Fingal, "do you think we have to wait for the same sort of accident to happen to the confans before they realize that fanzine fans are not just blankfaced nobodies who don't know how to enjoy ourselves?"

"I don't know." I said. "We could try transcribing this conversation and see if it helps us to understand one another better?"

HOW TO BNF WITHOUT TEARS

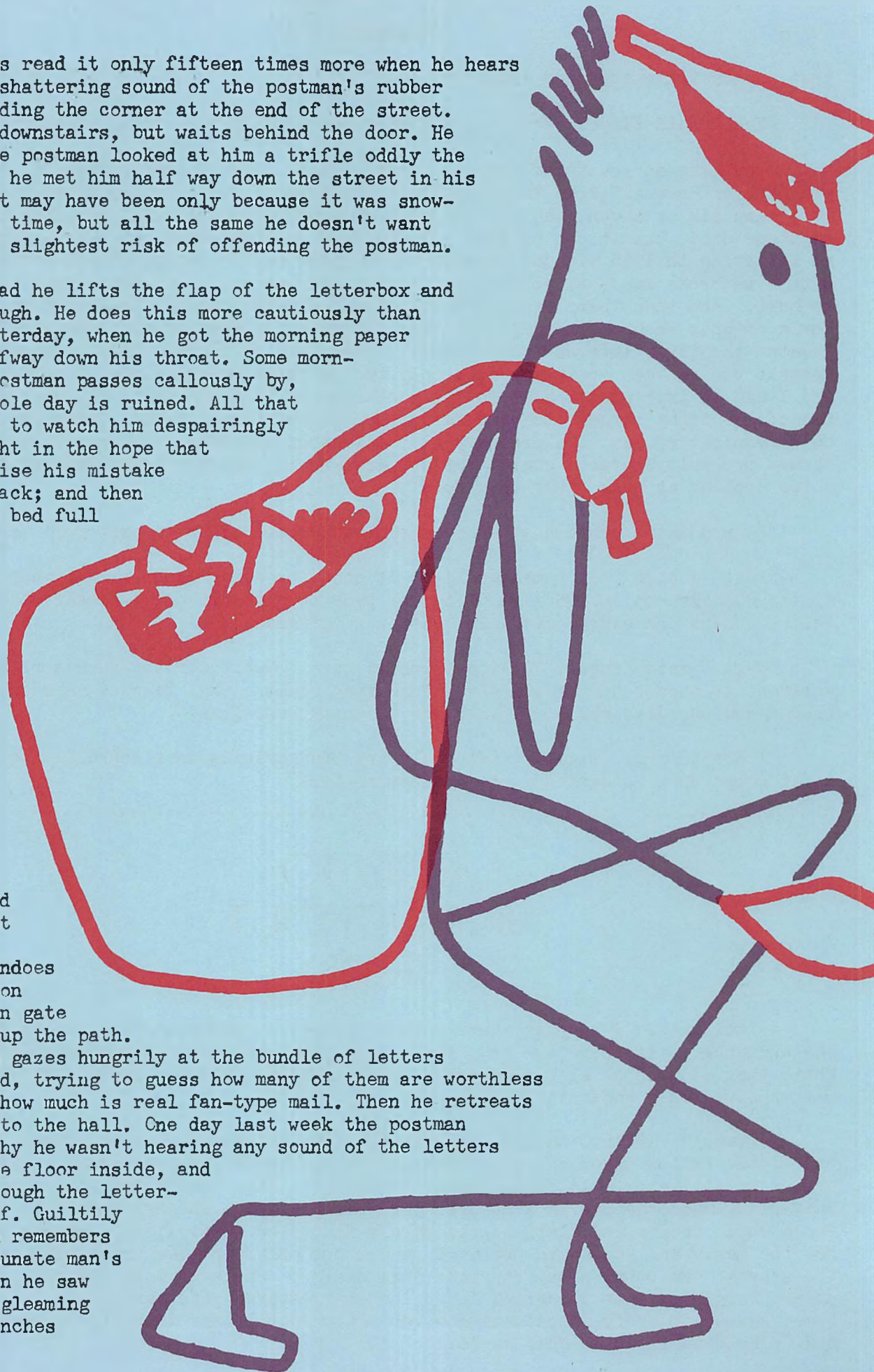
At this title I suppose there will be a howl of derision from the Neofans in the audience. (If there are any, that is; Neofans are as rare as ladies over forty.) What, they will shout with indignation, has a bloated BNF to complain about, compared with the wretched Neofan?

Very well, let's consider a day in the life of this wretched Neofan. Brighteyed, the little fellow wakes early, listening for the tread of the postman. His ears are so sensitive to this faint sound that he will leap out of bed, every nerve quivering, when the man is a hundred yards away.....whereas before he became a fan a whole battery of alarm clocks barely fluttered an eyelid. (Observe, parents, how the manly and educative hobby of fandom not only improves the mind, but sharpens the senses. No other hobby can make this claim.) While he waits he takes from under his pillow that wonderful letter he got yesterday and rereads it for the 85th time, savouring every intoxicating word. "Saw your letter in PERI," it says, "Wasn't bad." Such adulation! What egoboo!

He has read it only fifteen times more when he hears the nerve-shattering sound of the postman's rubber heels rounding the corner at the end of the street. He dashes downstairs, but waits behind the door. He fancied the postman looked at him a trifle oddly the last time he met him half way down the street in his pyjamas. It may have been only because it was snowing at the time, but all the same he doesn't want to run the slightest risk of offending the postman.

Instead he lifts the flap of the letterbox and peers through. He does this more cautiously than he did yesterday, when he got the morning paper shoved halfway down his throat. Some mornings the postman passes callously by, and the whole day is ruined. All that is left is to watch him despairingly out of sight in the hope that he'll realise his mistake and turn back; and then go back to bed full of a black hatred for the inefficient bureaucrat and the people who are getting his mail. But this morning the postman, that great-hearted and intelligent public servant, undoes the latch on his garden gate and comes up the path.

The Neofan gazes hungrily at the bundle of letters in his hand, trying to guess how many of them are worthless trash and how much is real fan-type mail. Then he retreats hastily into the hall. One day last week the postman wondered why he wasn't hearing any sound of the letters hitting the floor inside, and peered through the letterbox himself. Guiltily the Neofan remembers the unfortunate man's scream when he saw a pair of gleaming eyes two inches



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MAIL



from his own staring at him from the darkened porch. So he lets the letters hit the ground before he pounces upon them. There are no less than three this morning -- oh joy! But bitter disappointment supervenes. The first two are heartless frauds. No one can estimate the hate that rages in fannish hearts for football pool promoters and detergent manufacturers.

But the third is a real letter. He tears it open. It's from Ken Potter himself! The Great Man writes, with a truly democratic lack of condescension and what looks like the burnt end of a wax match; "Liked your letter in my last issue. If you want to try an article I might consider it for publication in my next magazine."

Fame! Glory! Immortality! Never taking his eyes off the letter, the Neofan floats upstairs, into his clothes, and eventually off to work or school. Here he spends the whole day in an ecstatic daydream in which he turns over in his mind polished phrases and pungent epigrams for The Article. It will set fandom by the ears. It will make history. Fearless, trenchant, outspoken, it will make his name ring through fandom. That evening he writes it out and sends off the eighth version, special delivery, registered. Then to bed to count the days that will elapse until publication, every one to be filled with the delicious pleasures of anticipation.

Consider now a day in the life of the BNF. He too is driven from pillow to post, but since he was up to two o'clock in the morning finishing an article he had promised for ten days ago, the postman has to knock twice to waken him. He staggers down the stairs, observing with a sinking feeling that the porch is covered with a layer of various sized envelopes. Kicking them aside he opens the door to see what the confounded man is still knocking about. It is three more letters from America on which excess postage is due. He totters upstairs for the money, wishing that American fans knew as much about their postal regulations as he does. Then he gathers the mail off the floor, looks at the return addresses, and stacks it on the hall table while he goes to shave. Judging by some of those names it'd be safer to have the razor out of his hand before he opens their letters.

Later, fortified by his first cup of tea, he nerves himself to start on the mail. Some of it he can put to one side without opening. A complimentary copy of a US prozine, for instance. It was nice when he began to get free issues, but his conscience demands that he send a letter of comment on each one, and he hasn't had time to read last month's yet. Some of the letters are from his friends, and he puts those in his pocket to be enjoyed later. Some are from self-appointed enemies, and he puts those aside until he feels stronger. The rest are from Neofen. Some of them want subscriptions to his fanzine. Some want information. Some want material for their fanzine. Nearly all of them are rude. He wonders for the hundredth time why so many Neofen are rude. Probably each of them thinks that all the other Neofen write servile, adulatory letters, and that the BNF receiving this refreshing piece of impoliteness will be so impressed with the writer's fine independence of spirit that he will fall over himself to cultivate his acquaintance. He puts the letters aside and starts on the fanzines, opening the right staples with unerring instinct and a nail file. Some interesting first issues, one containing an article by himself. Part of it is almost legible, and contains only 15 typos. Hello, here's a copy of Potter's latest magazine, and there's an article about himself by some Neofan. Oh dear. It's one of those fearless, trenchant and outspoken ones, resounding with phrases like "not afraid to criticise"....."high and mighty BNF"...."egoboo-sated"...."over-rated"...."the so-called Big Names"..... He wonders for the hundredth time why so many Neofen think that the way to the top is by pulling other people down. More trouble.

Now, on the way the BNF handles this mail depends whether he shall stay in fandom or retire suffering from chronic disenchantment like so many others. To a

certain extent it also, which is more important, determines the future of fandom itself. And this is a responsibility that some BNFs take quite seriously; some of them spend more than half their time dealing with Neofen. Since their names and addresses are widely known they are the first contact many potential fans have with fandom, and in addition their reactions to new fanzines carry undue weight. So I am going to suggest some rules which you might consider following when you become a BNF. (All that is necessary to become a BNF is to maintain a reasonably energetic standard of fanactivity for approximately two years.)

Fanzines. You won't be able to comment on them all, but try to comment on as many first issues as you can, and always find something to praise. Of course you might get a sarcastic letter back saying the faned knows his zine was lousy and you must have damned bad taste. This has happened more than once to me, but never mind, you may have given just that necessary encouragement to some budding Lee Hoffman. No first issue is a true criterion of a faned's worth. Bob Tucker's first fanzine was by all accounts one of the worst ever published.

Requests for material. Here you'll have to select the fanzines that look most promising, and most congenial to your style of writing. And of course you will have to consider yourself. Absence of typos, promptness of publication, presence of reader's letter section for egoboo, and so on. But there are a couple of general rules. First, never write for a hectoed fanzine. They have no future, and the sooner the editor realises it the better for him and everyone else. Besides, their circulation can't be more than a few dozen, so you're wasting your time. Second, never write for a first issue. Most first issues are never published, most of those that are published are illegible, and most of those never see a second issue. Let the editor prove himself first. If he can't produce a first issue single-handed in the fine old tradition he can't have the vocation to make a good faned. (There are exceptions to this rule, of course, as when you know the editor well enough to have confidence in him, or he knows you have just embezzled the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund and have booked your passage to South America.)

Letters. Always be polite and kind to Neofans. The usual result of this is that the ones who wrote you a polite first letter, write a second just as rude as the usual first one, but that's because they are trying too hard to be fannish geniuses. Persevere and usually they begin to write naturally and may turn out to be quite nice people.

Feuds. Humorous attacks on you should be encouraged -- they add to the interest of fandom, rank as egoboo, and might give you something to write about. Malicious attacks should be ignored, unless they're from another BNF. If there is some misunderstanding you feel should be corrected, write a short mild letter to the editor of the fanzine that printed it. Don't make it long, or faneds will use this as a means of getting material; and don't be vicious or you'll be accused of bullying. Humorous remonstrance is the right approach, if you can manage it. It's hard though, for while egoboo soon loses its effect on a BNF, malice always hurts.

If you exercise neverfailing tact, be kind and helpful to everyone and preserve a high level of fanactivity, you may be able to maintain your position in fandom without losing ground -- until Convention time. This will be your worst hour of tribulation. It's hard for a BNF, especially if he's normally rather a shy person, to remember that for these two days every year he is a celebrity and must try to master the technique. Everything you do will be noted, misunderstood and held against you in the Conreports. If you spend your time with another BNF you will be accused of monopolising him/her or being monopolised, depending on which of you is the more famous. If you stay quietly among your own friends you will be accused of cliquishness. If you run around introducing yourself to people you will be accused

of conceit. If you just sit quietly you will be accused of being aloof and stuck up.

The only really satisfactory way of coping with Conventions is to stay away, following the precedent set by oldtime BNFs D. R. Smith in England and Harry Warner in America. But if you feel you must go wear a false beard. Unfortunately this method is now impossible for British Conventions, on account of the danger of being torn to pieces by bloodthirsty provincials in mistake for Bert Campbell. Frankly, I don't know what the answer is for British Conventions now. I suppose the only thing to do is keep in the background as much as possible, while grinning vaguely at everyone all the time. In other words try to remain only half aloof from the proceedings. It may not be as successful as the old method, but.....er.....half aloof is better than no beard.

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IN DEFENSE OF THE PUN

In the last FAPA mailing but one Harry B. Warner said something so dreadful that I can hardly force my hand to write it down. (Three of my fingers are willing enough, but my thumb and forefinger are opposed.) He said -- Ghod forgive him -- that the pun was "the simplest and lowest form of humour". Comes the next FAPA mailing and I see that Warner is still alive -- by FAPA standards anyway. He has not been struck down. Obviously Simon Salt Peter, patron saint of punsters, has left it to me to warn the Warner, and to prove that the pun is not only the most complex, but the very highest -- I might even say the all-highest -- form of humour.

1. THE ARGUMENT FROM AUTHORITY. In the two most famous books in the world, the humour consists almost entirely of puns. Everyone knows that this is so with Shakespeare, but the Bible is an even more striking example. This is not generally regarded as a humorous work -- not by Christians anyway -- but there is one joke in it, and that joke is a PUN. I refer of course to the famous verse: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I shall build my church." If I may say so without being impious, this is not a very good pun, but then it has lost in translation. In the original language of course the word for 'Peter' meant also a rock or stone -- c.f. the Latin 'petrus' or the French 'pierre'. It was on this pun that the whole structure of organised Christianity was based, and on it the Roman Catholic Church maintains its claim to the apostolic succession. Can anyone doubt that the history of Christianity and the Western World would have been very different if Peter's name had happened to be 'Sandy'?

Truly, as Ackerman said in the Fancyclopedia, "the pun is mightier than the sword", and now that it and it alone of all forms of humour has approval at the very highest level there hardly seems to be any need to look for any other recommendation. I might just point out that puns occur throughout the highest works of English literature, from stray lines like "tread softly, for ye tread on hollowed ground" to the later works of James Joyce which consist almost entirely of puns and wordplay. I might also quote, without looking in any particular direction, the following passage from Fowler's "Modern English Usage":

"The assumption that puns are per se contemptible... is a sign at once of sheepish docility and a desire to seem superior. Puns are good, bad, or indifferent, and only those who lack the wit to make them

are unaware of the fact."

2. THE ARGUMENT FROM FIRST PRINCIPLES. In the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' Wordsworth came off with one of those statements so profound that one remembers them all one's life and applies them to every situation. This statement was to the effect that the basis of all aesthetic satisfaction lay in the recognition of similarity in dissimilarity and vice versa. This is very true when you come to think of it, and it might also be an actual definition of the pun. But the pun is not only the most artistic form of humour, it is different in kind and superior to all other types. The origin of laughter, I suggest, is in the savages abrupt release of breath in relief at the unexpected downfall of a dreaded enemy. The most primitive form of humour is therefore the spectacle of the 'boss symbol' slipping on a banana skin, and almost every form of humour is a variant on this. All depend for their effect on the discomfiture of other human beings -- mother-in-law jokes, jokes about foreigners, jokes about people at a disadvantage in sexual positions, jokes about deaf people or morons or lunatics. All jokes are more or less sadistic. Think of any joke you know and see how true it is. There are only two exceptions, the shaggy dog story and the pun. Even the shaggy dog story is suspect, because you are enjoying the discomfiture of your audience when they expect a point and find none. This leaves only the pun as the representative of humour in its most advanced and complex form, the very punnicle of civilisation.

3. THE ARGUMENT FROM PRACTICE. The pun is one of the most genuine forms of humour because it is usually spontaneous. The opportunity comes and passes and only the quickest mind can seize it before it vanishes never to return. It is seldom pre-fabricated wit. For the same reason it is difficult to quote, because it usually needs an explanation of the circumstances, which spoils the element of surprise. As an illustration take the complaint in VOM about the artist who kept defaulting on his obligation to produce a cover. Ackerman's comment was: "He's got ain'ts in his paints." Ackerman kept up for years a barrage of puns like this. Not that he only made good puns. He made them ALL. But among them were some that deserve to rank with the greatest in history, puns that are remembered not just because they are clever in themselves, but because they add meaning as well as amusement. I would hate to have to choose Ackerman's best pun -- it would be a life's work -- and otherwise the best example I can give is from a speech by an Irish MP in the late 19th Century. He was making an impassioned attack on Irish absentee landlords when someone shouted "Treason!" Quick as a flash he retorted: "What is treason in England is reason in Ireland, because of the absentee!"

It could be, of course, that he had a confederate in the audience. Most people who like puns have some in reserve that came to them as it were in vacuo, and which they file away in their memory banks to await the appropriate set of circumstances. For instance, the next time I come across one of those old-fashioned washing sets -- a jug and bowl on a chest of drawers -- I shall say: "Ah, ewers of water and drawers of wood!" And Bob Shaw here brought off a beauty the other day. While staying with friends he asked where the salt was and they told him it was in a jar on the shelf. When he looked the jar had fallen over and the salt spilled out. This was it. The chance of a lifetime! "The salt, dear Brutus," he said, "lies not in the jar, but on our shelves."

THE ANCIENT ONES

Some years ago Rick Sneary sent a questionnaire to various prominent fans. One of his questions was whether it would be a good thing if all fans lived in the same town. With uncommon common sense, most of the fans replied that it wouldn't, because if fans could talk to one another instead of writing, some of the most enjoy-

able of fan activities would tend to die away, such as fmz publishing and letter writing. In London, this is what has actually happened. It has at once the biggest number of fans and the least activity of any city in the English speaking world.

But London fandom is far from dead, whatever unkind things we provincial barbarians may say about it from time to time. Old English fans never die, they merely fade away into the saloon bar of the White Horse Tavern, where every fan in the greater London area congregates on Thursday nights. Coming into this place, the astounded neo-fan feels like his American counterpart entering FAPA and encountering the giants of a former era. But the White Horse is no elephant graveyard, full of whited sepulchres fulfilling their minimum activity requirements. It is more like the Elysian fields. There, any Thursday night, can be seen our ancestors, the legendary heros from the Fancyclopedia, alive and fanning still after their fashion.

Walt Willis in "The Immortal Teacup", SF Digest 4, Nov. 1951

HARPING ON THE PAST

Once upon a time.....well, just over two years ago if we have to be specific.... fandom was a dark and howling waste through which roamed savage hordes proclaiming themselves, with weird guttural cries, to be something called, "Seventh Fandom". These strange creatures are now extinct and perhaps it is worth considering possible reasons as to why they perished so ignobly. There are, of course, the statements of the last two surviving leaders---one to the effect that they succumbed to compound fractures of the groin inflicted by the kneecap of mad dogs, and the other to the effect that they were all an elaborate hoax--but I think we can disregard these as being anatomically and logically impossible, respectively. No, the real reason they died, it seems to me, was that like the mule they had neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity.

To assure its continuance in the present, fandom must preserve its link with the past. I think it was one Jack Speer who first pointed out that at any one time fandom depends for its existence on a mere handful of people, and if these were to leave it simultaneously fandom could perish. This very nearly happened in 1953, and it's up to us to do what we can to assure it doesn't happen again. Like any other civilisation, fandom depends on timebinding---the passing on from generation to generation of accumulated knowledge and experience--and this present series of fan-histories is an example I'm proud to be associated with. Incidentally, all this may seem pretty highflown talk about a little old thing like sf fandom, but I subscribe to the Burbee-Ashworth dictum that "Fandom is a Goddamn good hobby" and I'm ready to go to quite a lot of trouble to preserve it. Just as a game is only enjoyable if you play it according to the rules, so any pleasure like fandom is worth taking seriously within its own limitations. This is not to say that the game or the pleasure has any intrinsic importance outside itself: though it could be argued that anything that gives pleasure is pretty damned important.

But to get back to our argument. It seems to me that fancestor worship strengthens fandom all the way through. First, it retains and restores the interest in fan-

dom of older fans; it is interesting and pleasant to them to be looked up to and written about. Conversely the seventhfandom attitude of brash contempt for the past only alienates them and drives them into gafia. Such neofen are the prime reason BNFs retire into FAPA. If they only realised it they are selling their own birthright, because fancestor worship can make fandom a more attractive prospect for a neofan. Not only could they have BNFdom to aim at, but immortality. Finally, integration with the past increases the interest of fandom for everyone, by widening its field of reference in time as well as space.

About this last point, way back in 1953 I was crying this message despairingly into the wilderness, and amplifying it with The Enchanted Duplicator (first product of Serious Constructive Insurgentism, whose tenets I touched on above), the Hyphen of those days with the lighthouse symbol on the bacover, and the reprint supplement. About that, Anglofan Archie Mercer once wrote in to complain bitterly. What was the point, he enquired, of reviving these old esotericisms when it was all he could do to keep up with the present-day ones?

Well, of course Archie had a point. It's already almost impossible for one person to know all the intricacies of fandom, from the First Staple War to the misadventures of Courtney's boat, from Van Couvering's glass door or Harmon's wooden one to Jan Jansen's luminous porridge. But so what? It's just as impossible for one person to know everything about human history, but that's no argument for turning our backs on it. It just makes it more interesting, like a bran-tub with an infinite number of prizes.

Besides, it's not the mere collection of items of information that's important, so much as the attitude of mind. Someone said once that education consists not in knowing things, but in knowing where to look them up. Taking that in the widest sense, it's profoundly true. The mind of a really educated person is not a box full of hard little facts, but a sort of growing tree which can accept them like soil and transform them into an organic unity. In the process the facts get a bit blurred, but while he might not know whether Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492 or 1482, he does have a pretty good idea of how important it was.

And if you can think of a better build-up to apologising for not really knowing much about Jack Speer I wish you had told me about it before hand. Seriously though, I don't claim to be an educated person, but I suppose I know as much about fandom as most people....and yet if I was faced with an examination paper with questions like what year did Speer enter fandom, how many fmz did he publish and so on, I should probably not get a pass. On the other hand I seem to me to know quite a lot about Speer in some other more important way. I don't mean the big things that everybody knows about---FAPA, the Fancyclopedia---but the sort of person he is and the kind of influence he had on fandom.

As for the latter, he was one of the few great fans who were able to synthesise in himself the sericon and the fannish attitudes and fandom has been the better for him. It's been quite a while since he was active, and yet his influence on present-day fandom---on you and me---is still immense. I don't know about you, but in our group we have a standard indoctrination course for neofen and one of the two most important items, the crucial tests, is the Fancyclopedia. As for Speer the person, I have quite a vivid picture of him, built up from a lot of half remembered quotations and anecdotes. None of them sufficiently precise or evocative to be quoted, but all adding up to a firm impression that Jack Speer is someone I'd very much like to meet. I hope you'll feel the same after reading this magazine which is published as a tribute to one who made fandom more worthwhile for all of us.

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THE PENULTIMATE MAILING COMMENT

SATAN'S CHILD: I thought at first you were parodying something, but it went on and on.... I have spent the best years of my life drafting and interpreting Acts of Parliament and Government regulations, but every other sentence of yours throws me. Most of them can eventually be surmounted with a judicious re-arrangement of the commas, which appear to have been inserted with a shot-gun, but I can't even get a toehold on this one. Where's the subject? Where's the object? My Ghod, where's the verb? HELP!

"Still befuddled with theory and besotted with formulae the centre of much interest and speculation as to his future prompted by his unheralded arrival at said destination."

Having now read it some 17 times I can see that it is not intended to be a sentence at all, but a phrase in apposition to the missing tutor in the previous sentence. Well OK, we're not stuffy. It would have been a little more pellucid with commas after formulae (to prevent the reader thinking the formulae are the centre) and after "future" (to prevent the reader thinking "prompted" is operating as a verb), and if "his" had been substituted for "said" before "destination" (you haven't mentioned any destination before and anyhow "said" in this sense is a pariah word), but my advice to you is to tear the whole thing down and start afresh. No one will ever know what you mean unless you say so yourself.

Apparently, for instance, the words "still besotted with theory and befuddled with formulae" (or vice versa) have some tenuous and inadequate relationship to "the briefest of instructions" in the preceding paragraph, but this still leaves the controversial question of to whom does the "interest and speculation" belong. The fact that it, or they, relate to "his future" suggests first that they belong to the people in the classroom who saw him go, but this hopeful train of thought is brutally derailed immediately by your statement that they are "prompted by his unheralded arrival". Unheralded is right, by gosh: it was the first we'd heard of it. The very latest news we'd had from you about this character was that he had been teleported "clean out of this dimension" at the end of the preceding paragraph. It is only from the rest of the story that we dimly discern that he has landed somewhere, apparently back on Earth. Why don't you just say what you mean as simply as you can, instead of trying to "write"? You overestimate the intelligence of your readers and underestimate your own ability to write without affectation.

Walt Willis in his Ompazine, Woz, February, 1957

FROM Aa
TO
ZOMBIE

I feel a bit timid about writing book reviews. I think I've only done one once before and the results were alarming for one of a nervous disposition: they consisted of a hurt letter from F. G. Rayer and an appointment to the International Fantasy Award Panel. The latter was under the notorious alias of Fandom's Leading Expert and Critic, a designation cooked up by Les Flood which made Vinç Clarke tear his

hair. (Yes, sonny, this was a long time ago.) I lurked in the woodwork of this Panel for quite a while until the big-time publishers found out I was just a faan and had me turfed off with ignominy and a few other odd bods. I knew I'd only been on it in the first place because they were short of names of people outside America who they knew could read, so I didn't fight for my reputation by doing anything drastic like suing them for \$35,000 or even actually reviewing another book. But I'm going to do it now, review a book, I mean, because it's not every day a fan has the privilege of bearing witness to an event like the publication of Eney's Fancycyclopoedia. I feel, as Plato put it when presenting the dialogues of Socrates, proud and kinda humble.

But it's not easy to do justice to a Great Work like this without falling into the pit of Newstatesmanship, the style of reviewing you're apt to get in the back pages of literary weeklies. You know the sort of thing. Some professor has dedicated fifteen years of his life to the study of some abstruse subject and the critic has to write his review in ten minutes. He opens the book once, to consult the bibliography, and from one of the source books listed he turns up some fact so obscure and unimportant that the professor ignored it. Now he's all set. "Professor Wesfestink's study of sewage systems in seventeenth century Siberia is not without merit, but will be something of a disappointment to those of us who have long been immersed in his subject. The superficiality of his approach is indicated by his inadequate attention to the researches of Professors Gerberclanger and Falascaslap (two names picked at random from the bibliography) and he ignores even such vital facts as the sitdown strike in the glauber salt mines of Omsk in 1673." A few sneers at misprints completes the reviewer's task, which has been that of convincing the readers that he could have written the book much better himself if he'd happened to have a couple of hours to spare.

It's particularly easy to do this sort of thing with the FanCy because we're almost all experts on some facet of fandom, but I'm going to try and resist the temptation. For one thing, I know I couldn't have done it myself. I had the Project dropped in my lap once by Redd Boggs and a few hours thought convinced me the task was beyond my energy and capabilities. The torch would have flickered out then and there if Eney hadn't plucked it from my flaccid fingers. I admired his pluck at the time, and now I elevate my beanie respectfully at its magnificent results.

So I'm not going to mention any of the few inaccuracies I've noticed, even such trivialities as that I did not write the article which had Fanvariety banned, I'll just whisper them in Eney's ear by tape. Nor, having read the book right through from Aa to Zombie, do I feel like making any more sweeping criticisms. It had occurred to me at first that there might be more cross-references. But then I realised that the readers for whom it is designed do not need to be kept as it were on the 'q.v.', because it won't be consulted by uninterested strangers impatiently searching for a single snippett of information but by eager fans only too happy to browse along interesting obscurities. For when you come to think of it, even such a simple thing as a description of how fans visit one another may reveal another aspect of our way of life to the newcomer, and the subtle hints on etiquette may help both him and us. No, the more definitions good 'ol Eney, Ghod bless him, managed to cram in the better, and the only ones that I think should really have been left out are those of mundane political systems which can be found in any ordinary dictionary. (But these of course are a legacy from Speer's original.)

By leaving these out it might have been possible to give more information under more fannish headings, but then I'm inclined to think that maybe a Fancycyclopoedia could give too much. Do any of us really want all fandom efficiently dissected and served up complete on a slab in neat cellophane packages? "Well, that's fandom, that was. What next?"

FCII may not be a perfect work of reference by mundane standards, but its imperfections are the characteristics of fandom itself. It is fandom, in body and spirit. Here we have, for instance, the histories of the Great Yngvi Controversy and the Michigan Bomb Plot, the arcane recipes for blog, crottled greeps, grunch and eggplants and the hitherto unpublished truth about Nirvana, all presented with wit and cogency: but on the other hand the mystery of Courtney's Boat, fandom's Marie Celeste, is left unexplained. Deliberately, I'm sure, because Eney realised that part of the fun of fandom is its mystery --- as I did when new fans resented my publishing a glossary in Hyphen because it took away the pleasure of finding out for themselves. A Fancyclopoedia should not be a warehouse for old facts, but more like a mine where you can dig for yourself as deep as you like and know there is always more to find.

That's the wonderful thing about fandom----there's always more!

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STRATHCLYDE

It used to be the charming custom of fans to describe the environments in which they were writing; since I've recently changed mine after twenty years I suppose I should supply a corrigendum. I'm sitting beside a gas fire in the front attic of a late Victorian house: going clockwise round the room we have a bookcase, a loud-speaker, a washbasin, two windows with an ottoman in front of them and an R1155 radio receiver, a chest of drawers with a tv set on top, a map of the USA, a bed, the door and a fitted cupboard. So far not much has changed from Oblique House. But through the windows, by moving my head to the left I can see the Donaghadee lighthouse (eerily like the one traditional to the Hyphen back cover) and by moving it to the right I can see the Copeland Islands, the northeast extremity of County Down. In between there is nothing but sea and a few foam-girt rocks. Actually, between the house and the sea is a sloping lawn, a road, and a strip of someone else's garden, but all this is hidden by a little balcony. The illusion of being perched on a cliff-top is satisfyingly complete, and every time I see this dramatic view I think of John Keats.

I find it hard to explain to you just why this association fills me with an almost superstitious awe, because the coincidence which impresses me may seem quite unremarkable to you. Well, first, Donaghadee is just a small fishing village and summer resort with no great claim to fame except that it was here that Keats landed on his first and only journey to Ireland. He intended to visit the Giant's Causeway in North Antrim, but while walking to Belfast he got caught in the rain and contracted pneumonia.

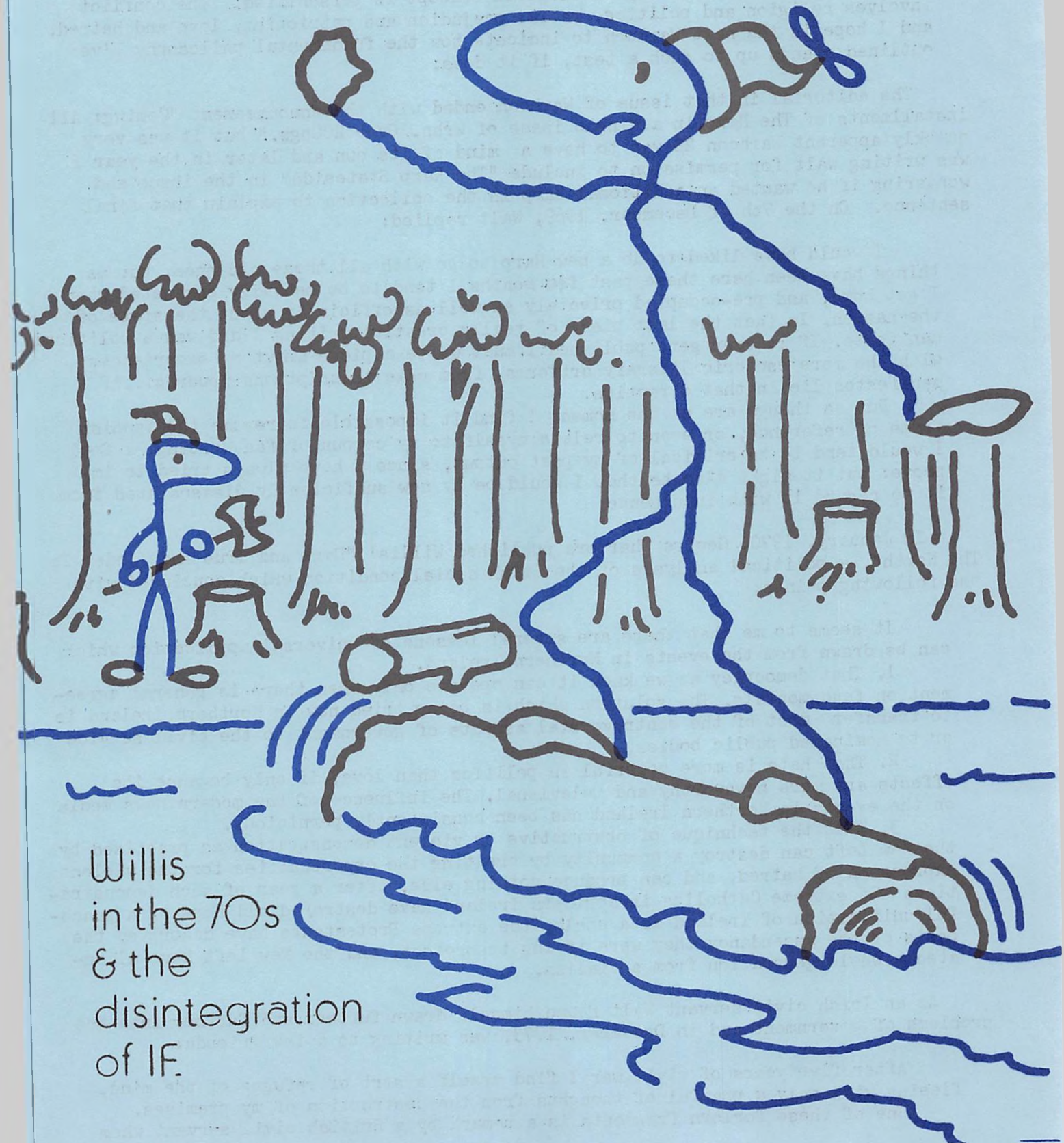
Secondly, it was a line of Keats which made me buy this house. Perhaps that's something of an exaggeration, but I think it's essentially true. One may have all sorts of logical reasons for preferring one house to another, but really it's as much an emotional decision as falling in love. I've never had much patience for poetry because it's an effort for me to subvocalise, but when I was a boy some lines of Keats got through to me:

...magic casements
Opening on the foam of perilous seas
In fairy lands forlorn.

For thirty years I have had that in my mind as the picture of the place I wanted to live, but as "shades of the prison house began to close about the growing boy" the possibility seemed more and more remote. How here I am in such a house, in a place where Keats walked.

Walt Willis in "The Perforated Finger", Lighthouse 14, October, 1966.

EPILOGUE



Willis
in the 70s
& the
disintegration
of IF.

(rb: In the final Harp in Warhoon, February, 1969, the Willis concerns of the 1970s are foreshadowed by the last sentence of that installment:

In Northern Ireland at this very moment the past and the future of Ireland, and perhaps in miniature of the whole world, are locked together in struggle in an arena so small that every ideological concept is personified. The conflict involves religion and politics, racial prejudice and patriotism, love and hatred, and I hope in the next Warhoon to indicate how the fundamental philosophy I've outlined stands up to such a test, if it does.

The editorial in that issue of Warhoon ended with the announcement "Coming: All installments of The Harp in a single issue of Wrhn. Over 200pgs." but it was very quickly apparent Warhoon 28 was to have a mind of its own and later in the year I was writing Walt for permission to include "The Harp Stateside" in the issue and wondering if he wanted an additional Harp in the collection to explain that final sentence. On the 7th of December, 1969, Walt replied:

I would have liked to do a new Harp to go with all these old ones, but as things have been here these past few months I tend to be mentally exhausted when I get home, and pre-occupied privately as well as officially about the state of the nation. In fact the last piece of really creative writing I did was a political manifesto. If it ever gets published I must write a piece about my experiences with the more esoteric literary artforms, from cake inscriptions upwards...if manifestos lie in that direction.

But as things are at the moment I find it impossible to resume the fannish frame of reference, or even to relate myself to my corpus of fan writing. I feel I would tend to be critical of my past output, since I have always tried to improve: but it might also be that I would be by now sufficiently disassociated from it to regard it with indulgence.

In January, 1970, George Charters published Willis' "Dark And True And Tinder Is The North", a political analysis of the Irish social condition which concluded with the following points:

It seems to me that there are several lessons of universal application which can be drawn from the events in Northern Ireland.

1. That democracy as we know it can operate only when there is general agreement on fundamentals. The solution which is being tried now in Northern Ireland is to transfer most of the controversial aspects of government to the civil service or to nominated public bodies.

2. That hate is more powerful in politics than love, if only because its effects are more newsworthy and televisual. The influence of the modern news media on the events in Northern Ireland has been consistently pernicious.

3. That the technique of obstructive or violent demonstration as practised by the New Left can destroy a community by creating the opportunities for the violent expression of hatred, and can produce nothing else. After a year of such demonstrations the extreme Catholics in Northern Ireland have destroyed all hope of a peaceful unification of Ireland as a whole, the extreme Protestants have destroyed the basis of the ascendancy they were trying to protect, and the New Left have alienated a whole generation from socialism.

As an Irish civil servant Walt found himself drawn further and further into the problems of government and in December, 1973, was writing to a few friends:

After five years of civil war I find myself a sort of refugee of the mind, fleeing with only a pramful of thoughts from the destruction of my premises.

One of these forlorn fragments is a remark by a British civil servant whom

nobody has ever heard of: "Any reform must be accounted a success which does not have an effect exactly the opposite of that intended."

I can no longer class myself as a socialist, a liberal or a conservative: a progressive or a reactionary: an atheist, an agnostic or a deist: an idealist or a materialist: not even...and here even deepest bedrock dissolves...an Ulster Unionist or an Irish Republican.

After five years of worry about the problems of Northern Ireland, a country so tiny and a community so close-knit that great historical processes are personified as people you know, the sort of conclusion I have come to is that there is no answer...or rather that everybody has part of the answer and it's all very complicated...or maybe it's very simple because... and here I'm apt to find myself enunciating some proposition which with sudden mortification I realise was better stated at the Mount of Olives.

Sometimes I wonder if maybe there was not really something profound in that revelation I had in a dream once and got up to jot down: the obvious is not necessarily untrue. For instance don't you think it maybe occurs to Nixon nowadays that maybe unsophisticated old Honesty may have been the Best Policy?

But to come back to something I know about, I keep thinking the trouble is the scorpions. You know that fable people are always quoting about the Israelis and the Arabs. How the scorpion asks the alligator to carry him on his back across the river, and the alligator says no you'd only sting me, and the scorpion says of course I wouldn't because if I stung you we'd both drown, so the alligator agrees and halfway across the river the scorpion stings him and they both drown, because that's the way scorpions are.

Well, politics is scorpion country. It doesn't even matter if there aren't any actually around, because as long as people suspect there are they'll suspect their presence in the most innocent of guises. It follows there can never be a genuinely generous gesture between one group of human beings and another, either in the making of the gesture or in the receipt of it. And, worse, that generous gestures are counter-productive because both those who spurned it and those who offered it feel worse towards each other afterwards.

So the years of my working life spent in inspiring generous gestures were wasted, and ended with Direct Rule. Now I suppose the situation is one in which a bigger and more thick-skinned alligator is trying to ferry two scorpions across the river, in the hope that they'll stop fighting each other when they get across. I'm part of this alligator too, and believe me us alligators get pretty fed up with scorpions.

By July, 1974, Willis' situation was exceedingly non-fannish and an unexpected phone call from Sid Coleman resulted in the following description by Walt:

A midnight phone call from Geneva made me realise how pedestrian my existence had become. How far a cry from the days when Harlan Ellison was hardly ever off the phone, and I ventured regularly each decade into perilous places like Chicago.

Nowadays nobody seems to visit me for some reason. No one even telephones me except James White, and he doesn't visit very often because he languishes in a ghetto dominated by the IRA, whereas I of course bask in the benevolent protection of the UDA. Bob Shaw has gone to England and I haven't met another fan for ages.

The silent sifting sands (Wow! You'd think I was getting paid by the word for this!) continued their monotonous way of turning everything into history: inevitably in the immutable course of things it came to pass in February, 1975, Mike Gorra published a special issue of Random devoted to commemorating the 10th anniversary of the last issue of Hyphen. Walt wrote a piece for that issue which was concluded in Random 10, June, 1975, filling in more details of the fragments of IFandom and ending with some special insights into the way Hyphen was created and his attitude toward fanpublishing in general:)

THE 10 YEAR HITCH

In the great days of the romantic thriller, authors used to add a few pages at the end in which they would set out briefly the humdrum later life of all the main characters, after the hero had clasped the heroine to his manly bosom and restored the blood-red ruby to the eyesocket of the statue of John Wesley in the Methodist Mission Hall at Stoke Newington. I always felt this practice showed a proper consideration for the legitimate curiosity of readers, and now, prompted discreetly by Mike, I feel I should add a similar postscript to the Hyphen story.

Well, as you've probably guessed from the news of the mundane world, Irish Fandom hasn't been living happily ever after. What no fannish feud could ever do has been accomplished by the IRA and Irish Fandom has disintegrated as a group. It was nothing to do with the political polarisation of the Ulster community, though both sides are represented in Irish Fandom: it was simply that travelling outside one's own district became too chancy.

At one time James White's suburb was completely dominated by the Provisionals, and his windows broken because he wouldn't pay their levies. This phase went on so long that the more respectable citizens sought an estimate from a contractor for a neat post-and-rail road obstruction to replace the untidy and insanitary barricade of burned-out cars erected by the IRA. I remember James and I discussing on the telephone the possible market for a new magazine to be called Better Homes And Barricades. Later my own area was dominated for a while by one of the Protestant para-military organisations which arose to counter the IRA, though since this is a high-rent district the barricade near our house was in a different class. There is nothing like a burned-out Jaguar for giving tone to a barricade.

More recently there have been the random murders and the Provisional bomb attacks on the homes of civil servants, of which I am one. Since my son's best friend is a Catholic we are possible targets for both lots of freedom fighters, and my son has started sleeping with a sword by his side and we don't encourage visitors.

So what with all these paramilitary organisations--inside every nut case is a colonel--there hasn't been a full meeting of Irish Fandom for years. However we do keep in touch and worry about one another. Madeleine and I saw the venerable George Charters as recently as Christmas Eve, when he called to leave in his Xmas present. George is retiring soon from his job and hopes to devote his time to arranging his collection and completing his Mammoth Index to all the science fiction magazines, despite my warning that there is not much public interest in stories about mammoths. He has a brother in Virginia and has been visiting him every other year. We used to complain bitterly that George, a shy sort of person, never called on any fans while he was in the States: so last September he went to the Discon, where he was Member No. 4582, saw no one he recognised, bought a few prozines and went away again.

Well, that's the really poignant bit over. James and Peggy White are well and the Andersonstown situation has improved since some local authorities were interned, but they are still thinking of moving to the Republic of Ireland where authors don't have to pay income tax. It's just that he can't get an ordinary job down there and doesn't write quickly enough to go full-time.

Bob and Sadie Shaw have already moved to England. Bob looked round for a medium-sized industrial area where he could live in the country and travel to work by train in about half an hour, figuring he could do enough writing in that time to

buy his own train.....which isn't a locomotive. Chuck Harris is living in the North of England now, saying in his Xmas card he is happy except for getting older, and Atom seems the same as ever. The last time I saw John Berry he told me that he was earning with overtime as much as the captain of a car and was going to buy a nuclear submarine, but I think he was suffering from overwork.

As for me, well when the trouble began here I diverted to my work all the energy and enthusiasm that used to go into fandom and rose so far that I was chief advisor to one of the Ministers in the mixed Protestant/Catholic Government last year. When it fell, through no fault of ours, I was left marooned with only a plush office, a devoted staff, a Selectric typer, and a Xerox 3000 photo-copier.

Yes, I know what you're thinking, but.....

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As I was saying, the currents of history had marooned me in a well-equipped office, and the thought crossed my mind that at last I was in the fabulous situation of oldtime fan Charles Koenig: who, it was reputed among us awestruck neofans, only had to summon his favourite stenographer when the spirit moved him. Then, putting his feet on the desk and his hands behind his head, he would intone the wondrous words, "Take a fanzine."

This story had made a deep impression on me. Like most fans of that era I had been brought up in hard times and was still at odds with the mundane world. To our generation, even a second-hand hecto was a major item of capital investment. The tiny printing press on which we started Slant was salvaged from the loft of a shop where a friend of mine worked: the big press on which we published the major issues was a surprise gift from Manly Bannister: and the Hyphen duplicator was one of two old Gestetners bought in a job lot at an auction for the equivalent of \$10. I passed the other one on at cost to John Berry, who published all his fanzines on it.

So I used to think quite a lot about Charles Koenig in those early days, but the more I thought the more snags I could see in this fannish nirvana.

It was necessary for me to believe that after Koenig had taken his feet off the desk he had nothing more to do until the letters of comment began to arrive in his In-tray. Any suggestion of further intervention by Koenig in the production of his fanzine would destroy the majesty of the concept of the resources of the soul-less mundane world being exploited by a fannish master-mind.

Really, what began to worry me was this: what would this Koenig fanzine look like? What, for instance, would happen when the typist finished stencilling an article and there was a bit of space left at the bottom of the page? How would she know to get out her lettering guide and put in South Gate In 58. Then again, what about art work? Could one assume that Koenig's firm, whatever it was, had some sort of advertising department which could be directed to produce a supply of spaceships and monsters, if not of esoteric fannish cartoons? No, I concluded, that would be too much.

Well all right, I thought, let's assume Koenig has a fannish art editor who keeps him supplied with drawings of assorted sizes, all easily traced onto stencil. And let's assume that Koenig, after dictating the main contents of his fanzine, goes on to dictate a number of fannish advertisements, slogans, interlineations and other miscellaneous fillers of varying lengths. Then the typist only has to take at random an illo or filler out of the box, the same size as the particular space left on her stencil. Wouldn't it be a proper fanzine then?

It was at that point that I began to doubt the artistic liberalism which had been one of my cherished beliefs since I was 14. The spontaneous creator of my ideal, free from the artificial bonds of artistic convention, began to look sick when I put him behind Koenig's desk trying to dictate miscellaneous fillers. I just knew I could never do that. Whereas I knew that confronted by a space of a certain size that had to be filled, I could occasionally come up with something that made not only the space but the context look as if it had been designed for that and nothing else; and which I would never have thought of otherwise.

However it was Arthur Thomson who really completed this phase of my education. Since I am completely devoid of any artistic ability whatsoever, and am indeed subconsciously inclined to regard it as some kind of sneaky conjuring trick, I tend to ignore artwork when stencilling a fanzine. So every time I typed up stencils for Hyphen I would find myself carried away by the words and wake up suddenly to the realisation that I had typed another wedge of solid print. I would hastily indent and then, since my margin stops were defective, find I had closed the space up again so that it was little bigger than a postage stamp. I'd indent again, and very likely the same thing would happen again.

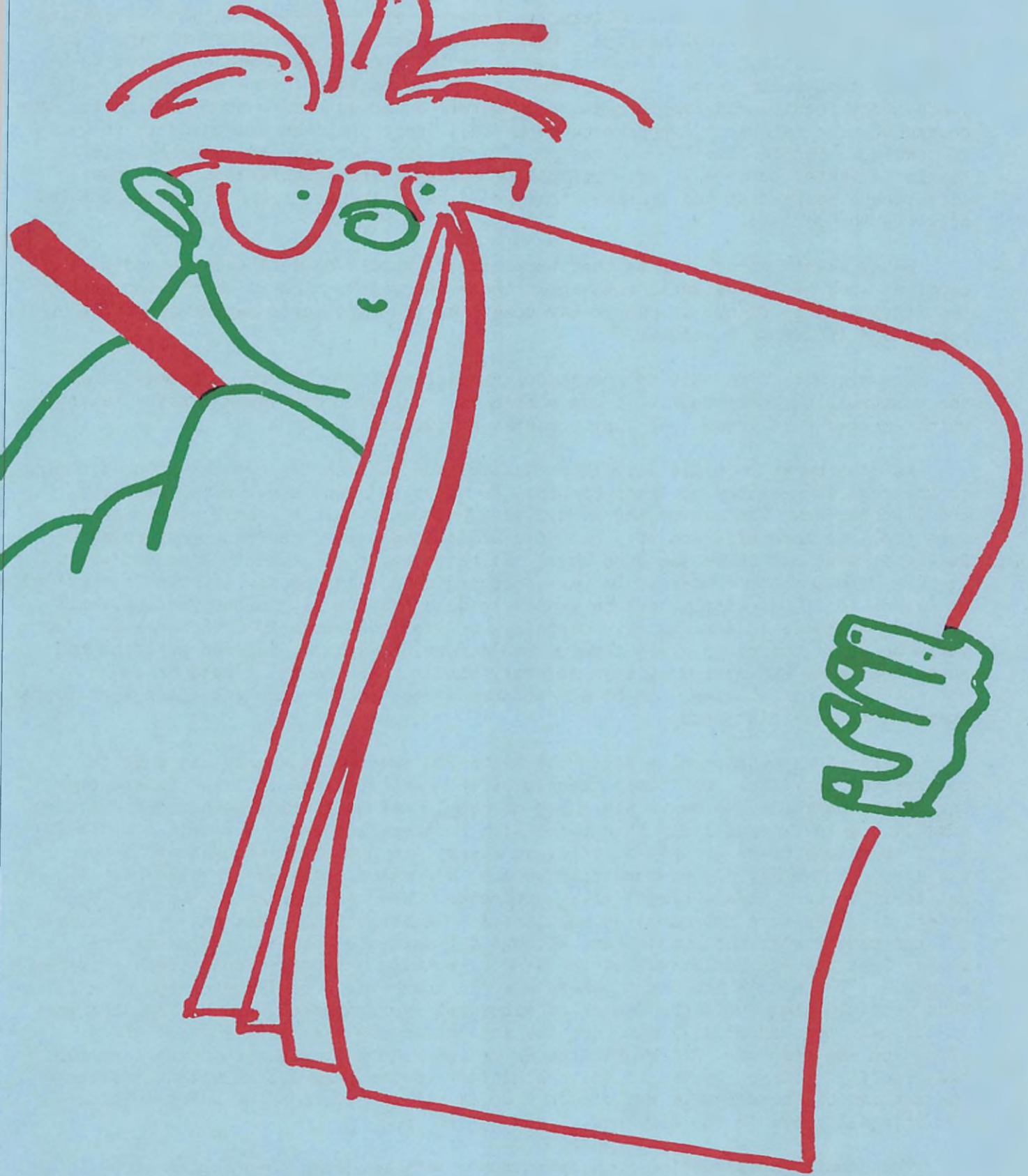
So every time I sent the stencils away to Arthur Thomson I felt very guilty about them. And every time they would come back inside the week with a note of mild expostulation from Arthur, and I would look through them with renewed apprehension. And every time I would be overwhelmed with astonishment at the exquisitely felicitous combination of text and artwork which had been contrived. How pointedly and yet subtly that little caricature exposed the pretensions of the text. Anything larger would have been overbearing: (anything smaller, invisible.) Then again how neatly those vignettes at the beginning and end of that reader's letter revealed the contradictions of his argument. Confronted with these miracles I sometimes in desperation considered the possibility that I had some clairvoyant talent for leaving the right space in the right place.

But of course it was nothing more than the concentration of Art within discipline, much as water confined to a narrow channel will create power, while left free it is merely wet.

And indeed, as the confines of an analogy like that one will show up flaws in the writer's thinking. For I have been trying to make two separate points, and am now forced to distinguish between them to avoid leaving the impression that I thought that without me Arthur Thomson would be wet. My immediate thesis was that Hyphen was the way it was because of our limitations. And behind that, in a sort of subliminal way, I was attacking the current concept of artistic freedom; which seems to me to be a sort of welfare scheme for the talent-less. In the old days I would have torn up this page and started again.

The main limitation was space, for all of us. We soon found out that a large issue attracted no more response than a small one, often in fact less; a phenomenon of numbness among the readership which I called annishthesia. So one day I took a sheaf of over-runs down to the Post Office and found on their scales how many I could send for the minimum rate. It came to 13, including ink, so from then the size of Hyphen as far as I was concerned was 26 pages. But there were 4 or 5 more or less regular contributors, and every issue was a struggle against temptation. I always resisted with the argument that it was better to have something to look forward to publishing, than risk burning ourselves out. Hyphen might have been a better fanzine without this limit, but I doubt if it would have lasted so long.

Anyway we never had many outside contributions, and I rejected a lot of them. And to be honest, even the ones I did print I sometimes didn't care for all that much.



Arthur Atom Thomson

I had started by publishing a letterpress fanzine, and there is nothing like setting type by hand and distributing it all again to put you off unnecessary wordage. Besides I always felt, though I didn't say so at the time, that I wanted Hyphen to be a fanzine that would keep. I always had this clear mental picture of some fan 20 years hence feeding old fmz into an incinerator: I wanted him to stop as a matter of course when he came to a Hyphen because he knew there would be something in it worth re-reading. People like Ed Wood used to dismiss fmz like ours as ephemeral tittle-tattle: I wanted to show it was fmz-full of reviews, and speculations about the differences between sf and fantasy, that would be in the incinerator, while ours was still on the shelves.

So it wasn't enough for us that book reviews should be well written and perceptive: they had to be worth reading in their own right. And it wasn't enough for faanfiction to be funny, it had to say something true and worth saying about the people and incidents involved.

The big strain on this editorial policy came with John Berry, who hadn't had the constraining background that had shaped us. Moreover his was a massive talent, which emerged full grown. We just couldn't accomodate it.

As John began to write for other fanzines and publish his own, he stopped coming to the regular meetings of Irish Fandom. He never said why and I often wondered, and I wonder now, whether he had felt I was jealous of a talent that was so much more prolific than mine and of a gift for comic invention I could never surpass. But if it was, and there was some way I had betrayed it, I couldn't find out about it. We were left to wonder if it was something we'd said: or if his wife disapproved of us; or if it was simply that he wanted to make his own way in the fannish world but didn't choose to discuss it. Certainly it wasn't because he'd been bored. For years he still turned up every time we had a fannish visitor, behaved as if he had never been away and obviously enjoyed every minute. And he still used us as characters in his stories, not at all inconvenienced by the complete absence of facts on which to base his plots.

There was something else about the situation which I have only now come to realise was peculiar. Obviously there were personal tensions in Irish Fandom over the years: there had to be in any group of people with differing backgrounds working closely together, especially in a place like Northern Ireland. But in the whole 20 years there was never an open quarrel: we simply did not bring annoyances to the surface of conversation, anymore than we ever discussed politics or religion. It was as if we were always afraid of an explosion. What annoyances we had with each other, and they were not many, we sublimated in faanfiction. That way we could get off our chests what was bugging us, without the danger of direct confrontation: rather like the way Hamlet got at the King by putting on a play depicting his father's murder. ("The play's the thing, wherein we'll touch the conscience of the King".) Thus we could also avoid the danger of emotional overstatement, and convey what was in our case the essential truth that the accusation was made in a context of affection and respect. So faanfiction as we understood it was in a sense more real than reality. If you wanted to write a history of the personal relationships among the members of Irish Fandom you couldn't do it with a videotape of every meeting: but it's all there in the fanzines.

The John Berry situation from my point of view was in a faanfiction story in Hyphen called "The Only Way" a desperate attempt to communicate with John at that level. But it evoked no response: we were just not writing the same kind of faanfiction.

The idea of the re-readable Hyphen extended to the back cover, where I believed

that the secret history of fandom could be read by anyone with enough patience to ascribe all the names to all the quotes. But in fact, many of the early ones came from the correspondence of Eric Frank Russell, and had little relevance to fandom. EFR never subscribed to Hyphen, that being against his principles he said, but every time he returned his copy for resale and enclosed a ribald letter of comment and half a page of quotes, most of which were eventually used. He also sent an occasional article, even after a rejected one. He was a real pro, and a Great and Reasonably Good Man. He was of course the original of Profan in "The Enchanted Duplicator", the second character from there to make his appearance in this article.

The ideal baquote was rare. It had to be interesting in itself, and yet obviously full of mischievous implications, so that while everyone would read it with suspicious glee it would detonate like a grenade in one particular quarter. There were quite a few like that, but to give an example would require detailing the story of some obscure feud. A more obvious type was the self-declaratory statement, like Chuck Harris's "I ain't half bloody suave myself," which was a one-sentence piece of faanfiction, or one of Bob Shaw's aphorisms, like "When you read a book and then forget it, you're left with a different kind of ignorance," which contains an entire theory of education.

And then of course there was the topical, like "This is the communications satellite. Your three minutes are up: Kindly Deposit eight billion forty two million nine hundred thousand dollars and twenty cents." The fact that this was from Hyphen #35 appalls me with the mental picture it conveys of a greybeard quavering about the past: next thing I'll be remembering Lindbergh. So enough of reminiscences. I am not an old man, and next time I write anything for a fanzine it'll be about the present.

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THE APA AND THE SURVIVAL OF CIVILISATION

(rb: The mind that had considered the problems of seeking The Enchanted Duplicator was, by November 1, 1975, wondering about the viability of the social system itself in an article circulated through Lilapa mailing #237:)

The first motor vehicle I ever had was a two-stroke third-hand Vespa scooter. The man in the shop demonstrated that it was in working order with a virtuoso display of motorised agility which so over-awed me that I just wheeled the bike home. I was so proud and nervous of this god-like machine with its 125 c.c. of uncontrollable power that I resolved to clean it up and master its complexities before attempting to ride it myself.

So I spent a week or so taking bits off, cleaning them and putting them back. I bought a new windscreen and various other replacements and embellishments. I even repainted the frame, with a Flit fly-spray, which left me with blistered fingers, a bike which looked almost second-hand, and - because of an unfortunate domestic misunderstanding - a metallic green kitchen window and several angry enamelled flies.

Finally, there seemed no further scope for propitiating the monster, so one evening I wheeled it out into the alley behind the Upper Newtownards Road and pushed down on the kick starter. To my astonishment the engine came to life. I weaved

nervously along the alley in first gear, chugged with increasing confidence along Clonbe Drive in second, and in a few minutes was hurtling along Belmont Road at 30 m.p.h. in top, my spirit set on far horizons.

At which juncture the machine died and would not be revived. I wheeled it ignominiously back home and checked it over. There was fuel reaching the carburettor and a spark at the plug. I cleaned the jets and to my relief she started again. Obviously I had left a piece of fluff in some narrow fuel passage.

At almost exactly the same place on the Belmont Road she stopped again. I now diagnosed water in the fuel, trudged to the nearest filling station for a gallon of petrol and a pint of oil and wheeled the bike home again.

With guaranteed clean fuel she started perfectly again, and this time I leaned her against the alley wall and watched her tick over until the engine would in my judgment have taken her to the utmost reaches of the Belmont Road. Then, confident that calm human intelligence could master any problem, I set off again.

Marooned for the third time on the Belmont Road, which now began to have for me something of the significance the Sun had for Icarus, it became clear to me that I was the victim of a particularly obscure intermittent fault in the electrical system.

I needn't bore you with the time I wasted before I found how wrong I was. Except to say that in a sense it included the period it took Thomas Pirsig to grow up and write his book "Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance".

Until I read Pirsig, the lesson I had taken from this episode was "if it's working, leave it alone". This was against all my natural inclinations, but it seemed to me undeniable that I had bought a motor cycle which was working, and by a combination of arrogance and ignorance converted it into a motor cycle that was not working. And, seeing the destruction produced in Northern Ireland by a similar approach to society, I was being tempted to draw the obvious analogy: that attempts at social reform being likely to be equally counter-productive, there was no moral distinction to be drawn between those who try to improve society and those who want to leave it alone.

There are several levels to Pirsig's book, each of which interests me. Much of the journey it describes, from Minnesota to California, I have made myself. The philosophical quest it parallels has something of the science-fictional quality of Josephine Tey's "Daughter of Time", a detective story which impressed me greatly, though I have forgotten much of the details of the plot, and may not even have the title right. The heroine was a historian engaged to a Scotland Yard detective who was laid up in hospital, free only to read and think. She lends him some history books and he exposes the real murderer of the Princess in the Tower from clues hitherto unnoticed. In the same way Pirsig's hero tracks down the villain among the Greek philosophers responsible for the fatal contradictions in our civilisation. (Aristotle dun it.)

The real story line however is: Philosopher finds Answer, Philosopher loses Answer, Philosopher gets Answer. Can the philosopher hero find his way again to the answer he lost in the nervous break-down the first discovery caused? He does so by approaching the problem from below instead of from above, on the mundane and practical level instead of that of abstract reason. This is, when you come to think of it, the Cinderella plot. Cinderella discovers her answer at the ball, but loses it because her approach is not based on reality. The Fairy Godmother is Inspiration, the Pumpkin Coach and the ball gown are Untested Assumptions. Only when the problem is restated and answered in practical terms, by the field experiments with the slipper

- the only concrete fact emerging from the situation - does the answer become real and stable. Cinderella is a parable of the intellectual process.

Pirsig's hero has forgotten his equivalent of the ball because of the trauma of his departure from the scene, but the slipper is there in the form of his motor cycle. It is his only remaining connection between philosophy and reality, and on it he gradually rebuilds from the ground up the same theory he developed in his previous personality.

The process starts from his bewilderment as to why his travelling companion does not maintain his motor cycle, although he is completely dependent on it. Pressing him, he finds a fear and hatred of the machine and the technology it represents, which seem increasingly significant as he analyses them. The dichotomy they represent is he perceives, the fatal flaw in our civilisation and is related to the splits between classicism and romanticism, the arts and science, idealism and materialism, humanism and religion, and western and eastern philosophy.

"The real cycle you're working on is a cycle called yourself" postulates Pirsig. In the case of my Vespa, I am sure you have already appreciated the significance of the fact that the engine performed perfectly as long as I was not riding it, more like an untrained horse than a properly domesticated motor cycle. What was wrong was this. The fuel tank was attached to the sprung seat, so that when I sat on the saddle it sank closer to the carburettor, just enough to kink the rubber fuel pipe and cut off the supply. Of course when I got off to see what was wrong there was nothing wrong, a classic example of the observer influencing the experiment.

The symbolism seemed quite striking after I had read Pirsig. There was nothing wrong with my motor cycle: the fault was in my relationship with it. In Pirsig's view the relationship between men and his artifacts is the crux of our problems.

Given he's right, the problem that interests me is, what are we going to do about it? Pirsig's answer seems to be simply, maintain your motor cycle, as Voltaire's was, cultivate your garden. The main difference seems to be that a motor cycle is a garden you can drive hither and thither through the world, setting an example.

I'd prefer to consider the sort of practical changes that need to be made in the way we run things and see how they could most rapidly be brought about. If you say this is treating the effect rather than the cause, I would argue that we are treating a cyclic process which can be broken at any point.

Consider the main example Pirsig adduces of technological alienation, the English Professor baffled by the rotisserie assembly instructions. This is because the instructions are a series of disjunctive commands, without any sense of underlying purpose: whereas, Pirsig suggests, rotisserie assembly should be regarded more like a long-lost branch of sculpture. As an example of another type of assembly instruction, he cites an Oriental example which begins: "Assembly of Japanese bicycle require great peace of mind."

Two things interest me about this example. The first is that while the rotisserie assembly instructions were no doubt the result of the philosophic error behind technological alienation, they were also the cause of alienation among people who wouldn't know a philosophic dogma if one came up and bit them on the legma.

The other thing that interests me is Pirsig's account of how these types of assembly instructions come to be written. He says that what usually happens is that when the product is ready for marketing some junior executive is sent along to the factory to ask the foreman how it is put together, and sets down more or less what he's told.

What seems significant to me is that this is a middle management decision, and increasingly typical of the sort of decision which determines the nature of our daily life, at the interface between technology and humanity. The more complex society becomes, the more data is necessary for decision making. The more the data, the lower the organisational level at which it is assembled, and the more likely it is that the decision will be effectively taken at that level by selection of the data assumed to be relevant.

In the case of the rotisserie, for example, there are no doubt dozens of different methods by which it could be put together, and an infinite number of ways in which each could be described. But the foreman reduces the methods to one, and the junior executive normally forecloses most of the options of alternative descriptions.

What is supposed to happen, of course, is that the Marketing Manager throws the assembly instructions back at the junior executive, without being able to suggest an alternative himself. I would suggest however that it is inherent in the nature of large organisations that he will not do this, the fundamental reason being that there is inadequate incentive for him to do so. This is because the larger and more complex the organisation, the weaker is the communication of feed-back from the consumer. In the old days, if a blacksmith made you a roasting spit you couldn't put together, you could go along and dump it on his anvil. Nowadays major design faults, whether in manufactured goods or public services, may persist until the consequences are serious enough for consumer feed-back to manifest itself politically. A notable example is the effect of high-rise flats in working class areas in Britain.

Ideally, all organisations should be broken down to units small enough for personal consumer contact to restore a sense of personal job responsibility, and there are some interesting developments in that direction in the automobile industry in Europe. However, the same aim might be achieved to some extent if the people in middle management realised their power. The first requirement for the responsible and efficient use of power is to realise that you have it, and the main cause of all administrative inefficiency is uncertainty as to the areas of personal power and responsibility; when those areas are not only undefined but incongruent, disaster cannot be far away.

There is an unconscious conspiracy to hide the facts about power. Politicians claim they are in charge because it makes them seem important, and people believe them because it makes them feel secure. Every century or so someone comes to suspect "with how little wisdom the world is governed", but by common consent the veil is hastily drawn back over the alarming prospect of a world in which there is no one in charge at all. In which we are all, as artist-philosopher Ray Nelson put it once, "floating down a river of piss in a blue-enamelled bed-pan".

Usually the information media are part of the conspiracy, partly because they are large organisations themselves and partly because it is easy for them to have a well-known personalities to praise or blame for everything. But recently the veil has been drawn aside and glimpses of reality have appeared.

One example was Haldeman's disclosure that his suspicions of Coulson were based on the latter's regrettable tendency to do what the President told him, contrary to established administrative practice. Another was the TV documentary on the Cuban Missiles Crisis, from which it was clear that Kennedy had more trouble with his own staff than with Krushchev. A third was Crossman's disclosure that in his view Cabinet decisions were "rigged" by civil servants.

It is my suggestion that these decisions which the nominal rulers found it so difficult to overthrow were effectively taken at, or just above, the administrative levels at which the relevant data were amassed, selected and presented: and that

a similar state of affairs exists in large-scale commerce and industry.

The situation reminds me of the old story of the man who explained that there was no doubt as to who was the boss in his house. His wife made the minor decisions, like where they should live and how the children should be brought up. He made the major decisions, like what to do about Vietnam.

To sum up, our nominal leaders may have the power to destroy the world, but it is doubtful if they have the power to save it. That knowledge is power is a statement even truer nowadays than when Engels made it, because more knowledge is required for the operation of modern civilisation. The more knowledge required, the lower the administrative level at which it resides, and that is where power lies. It is not being used effectively or responsibly because people do not know they have it.

The conventional information media cannot bring them this message because they are themselves part of the problem, not of the solution. They are vertical channels belonging to the system, whereas what is needed are horizontal channels, like the photo-copied manuscripts which circulate among the dissident Russian intellectuals.

Or like this.

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THE REVENANT (ManCon, 76)

(rb: In April, 1976, Walt Willis appeared at an event at which his face had been more familiar in times past. The Manchester Convention resulted in the following report and an invitation to Tom Perry of whom more was heard in the days which followed:)

People kept asking me, with tactful assurances that the question implied no dismay, how did I happen to be at Mancon 5 after 11 years' absence from such scenes. The only answer I could give was that two other people were to blame: James White, who had, after every convention I missed, made me feel like a bowman who had overslept for Agincourt; and Chris Priest, whose "Inverted World" told my wrinkled nose that the true spirit of science fiction was again being distilled.

However as I arrived at Manchester I was still fervently wishing I had stayed at home, playing golf and painting the house. (I have this very long-shafted driver with a hairy head.) It was obvious I would know nobody there, for the few I remembered I would not recognise: I would have nothing to talk about and nobody would want to talk to me: I would seem staid and feel bored, and spend the whole wet Manchester weekend brewing coffee in my lonely room and contemplating the folly of trying to bathe twice in the same ship canal.

Well, it wasn't like that. Within minutes of our touching down at Manchester the Convention reached out for me with friendly warmth, in the form of a message that Dave Kyle was coming to meet us. The name and then the familiar face unlocked, like Terry Carr's skate-key, year after year of half-forgotten happy memories, beginning with the picture of Dave with his head caught in the baggage rack in Lee Hoffman's room at Chicon 11 in 1952. It was exactly the same face now, except of course for the baggage rack, and from that point I never looked back. At Owens Park the process of

absorption continued and accelerated. My mundane life, all-important a few minutes ago, receded into insignificance. I was a fan again.

One perpetual question was, what sort of a fan? To one person I was just an old friend. To the next, some sort of unknown celebrity. To most, just another new face, another neofan. But the abrupt role-switching required was itself stimulatingly evocative, involving the recapitulation in minutes of the 20 years of my previous incarnation. I was all three, alternatively and at once, and each with equal pleasure. I enjoyed meeting old friends and finding we recognised each other at once, and just carried on where we left off. I enjoyed listening to incredible stories about de luxe editions of "The Enchanted Duplicator" and the prices old Hyphens fetched. And I enjoyed, with a more subtle and partly vicarious delight, tagging respectfully behind James White and Bob Shaw as they held court and made speeches, and generally bore the load that had oppressed me for so long. I tell you, friends, it's soft at the bottom.

In fact the only flaw was the realisation that I had left behind a small but vital baggage called Madeleine. She was missed.

Apart from that everything was just right, instantly and comfortingly familiar, even down to the traditional complaints about the programme and the accommodation. Both seemed to me reassuringly normal.

The programme for instance was in every respect, foreseen and otherwise, exactly the sort of thing I was accustomed to. There were of course a few developments, as was only to be expected. The print of "Metropolis" had apparently finally worn out completely, to be replaced by a variety of highly coloured modern plastic substitutes. And in my day professionals did not dare to read extracts from their works instead of making a speech, not even John Russell Fearn. I assured Harry Turner that the title of Silverberg's turn was just one of Bob's gags, and told the author himself that I was looking forward to his readings from selected editorials of Spaceship. But, lo, Bob actually did hold the audience transfixed with readings from his own pro works, just like Charles Dickens used to wow the Victorians. (You understand I don't acutally remember that.) All except me, that is. I cannot bear to be read to, finding it rather like walking with one's shoelaces tied together, and left the hall as inconspicuously as possible while Bob was pausing for breath.

As for the accommodation, it was quite adequate for us simple Irish peasant folk, and there was the additional and unparalleled luxury of having one's own coffee-making arrangements to hand. The fact that everything was actually there as promised impressed me with its awesome efficiency. Had fandom changed that much? However the presence of unmistakeable crottled greeps in the dining hall fare reassured me, as did the traditional complaint from an American about the lack of showers. (It seems they have finally given up asking for iced water.) The fondness of Americans for washing in running water is one of the characteristics they share with the Russians (though the absence of washbasin plugs in Russia was invariably ascribed to technological ineptitude), and one which I acquired myself in 1952. However I ran down a shower in my own building, using my patent Howard finder, and thereafter had no complaint to make about the residential accommodation.

It did seem to me however that the concourse was too small and there were too few seats. If I stand for a long time in one place it sometimes happens that I fall down unconscious, causing consternation in the vicinity and interrupting in most cases the conversational flow of the person I was talking to, and it is one of the few characteristics I have in common with Guardsmen. Several times I had to leave interesting groups to find a seat, hoping someone would follow me.

It also seemed to me that the rooms were too small for the sort of room party

which most people like, and that they led accordingly either to the formation of a Black Hole or to an uncontrollable expansion of the space-time continuum. It's interesting how the nature of a convention is determined by the physical configuration of the environment, as the layout of housing developments affect community spirit and vandalism, and the way things are nowadays it's only a matter of time before some lucky post-graduate gets a research grant to study the phenomenon.

As for the fans themselves, it was clear that they were more prosperous nowadays. It also seemed to me that in general they were more literate, more congenial, more courteous and more homogeneous. I noticed no signs of the old polarisations of North/South or fan/pro or any of the other cleavages which used to be so noticeable. It also seemed to me that there was more contact with US fandom, which was something I had always tried to bring about, and I was delighted to see TAFF still going strong. I was pleased to see that they had got such a fine delegate as Roy Tackett and thought how strange it was that I had never met him before.

It was even stranger and more poignant that I had to go to Manchester to meet for the first time two young Belfast fans from opposite sides of the barricades.

Finally, I was struck by the fact that Convention bidding had become so polished and sophisticated, like a Presidential nomination convention, and more so than I had seen in America itself. I wondered if, once again, British fandom had unwittingly outstripped the Americans. This happened once before, the first time British fandom ran a convention in a hotel, with room parties and everything. On that occasion British fandom tried to imitate American fandom, but what they imitated was a convention as idealised in fanzine convention reports, with the result that they had a convention better than anything ever seen in America.

To sum up, it was like being home again. I met a lot of old friends, I made what I hope will be new ones, and I'm glad I came. Thank you, James and Chris.

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A FAN AT SEA

Here I am near the bottom of the Irish Sea -- this berth of mine is way down in the bowels (if Russ Watkins will excuse the expression) of the ship, so far down that if there was a porthole I'd expect to see Professor Picard any minute. I would go up on deck only there's a cold wind blowing. Three people who stayed up there too long already had to be chopped down and the rest give a tinkling noise when tapped. In the restaurant there is a rowdy group of English soldiers coaxing a Dublin man who is slightly less drunk than they are but only if you don't count the start that Dublin people have on everyone else from birth. They are coaxing him to "sing an Irish song." He obliges with "The Cruiskeen Lawn" in Irish. This is not what they wanted. They express their dissatisfaction. Seemingly they meant one of those fine old Irish ballads like "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling", written by stalwart Irishmen with names like Levin-sky and Higginbottom. They accuse him of singing in Russian. He is very indignant.

Here in this cabin the scene is one of the ultimate in human misery. On my left is a man holding his head and groaning softly. On my right someone is being sick at the top of his voice. In front there is a man reading Fantastic Adventures. I feel sorry for them all. For a moment I toy with the idea of telling the man in front about the finer things in life, like Amazing, but he doesn't have a sensitive fannish face. Besides, for all I know he may be reading FA because he prefers it. I hope I'm not shocking anyone by talking of such subjects in mixed company but I have been assured by a well known psychiatrist that such people exist...

THE NIGHT I WENT TO BARCELONA
BY WAY OF DONAGHADEE



Tom Perry

"Wait a minute, Tom!" called the Englishman named Wilson just as I was leaving the office to catch my plane to Belfast. "One last thing before you go."

"What is it," I said irritably. I put my suitcase down by the door.

"Just one thing," he said, coming up to me and smiling. "Which do you prefer -- lilies or roses?"

My office in England was only minutes from Southampton Airport, so when the taxi dropped me off I was still thinking about my answer. I had said, "Lilies, of course -- the rose is a symbol of England." But I hadn't been able to offend Wilson because he was still going haw-haw-haw over his own joke.

Still and all his attitude wasn't that different from my own in April 1976 at the Eastercon in Manchester when Walt Willis had first invited me to visit him at his home in Northern Ireland. My manners had vanished in a gulp and I had blurted, "Isn't it dangerous?"

"A little," Walt had said with a quick rueful smile that forgave everything, "but do you know, in all the time I've lived there, I have yet to witness an act of violence. Oh, I've heard of gunfire in the distance, or an explosion, but I've never seen anything firsthand."

Seeing the color return to my face, he had added one further reassuring thought: "You know, it's rather like worrying over being mugged if you visit Chicago."

Gulp! Bad example, Walt. The one time I'd been in Chicago I'd wound up in Reese Hospital with a stab wound in my side. When I saw my blood coming out I knew for the first time that I could die. Before that I went anywhere.

But that summer Walt and I had arranged for a visit some weekend in the fall, and I had made it the first weekend in October because it blended in with a trip I had to make to Barcelona. It cost the same to fly from Belfast to Barcelona as to fly from London to Barcelona. This was true despite the fact that to fly from Belfast to Barcelona you first fly to London and change planes.

Besides the savings, combining the trips meant only one leavetaking from my family. If I wasn't worried my family was. But I couldn't return home from our European assignment without having visited Ireland. I had dreamed of visiting Willis for over 20 years. Is love worse living if you can't risk your dreams?

I checked in for the British Inland Airways flight to Belfast. My clothes were packed into a carry-on piece of luggage that I had bought in America after the worldcon in September -- a little closet that folded up to resemble a suitcase -- and my work papers and reading matter were stuffed into my attache case.

British Inland Airways took it all away. There was no carry-on luggage on flights to Belfast. It all happened before I realized I would have nothing to read on the plane. I had planned to finish "The Dream Millennium" so I could tell James White how much I liked it.

Also in my luggage was a book named "Trinity", by Leon Uris. I had bought this in America in hopes it would help me understand Northern Ireland and its troubles, but it had turned out to be little more than a recital of all the elements of what Conor Cruise O'Brien calls "the blood-myth of the IRA" and its hero, Conor Larkin, might have stepped right out of a comic book: strong, handsome, witty, wise, an

athlete and a poet and an artist and a lover and a fighter all rolled into one. The book had just come out in America and I was carrying it along as a housegift for the Willises. In the back of my mind was the thought that it might make Willis consider writing another book about Ireland to answer it. His first book, "The Improbable Irish", had been written before the fresh outbreak of "the Troubles" in the late sixties; the book concludes with great hopes for the conciliatory moves of Prime Minister Terence O'Neill, but by the time it was published the growing violence had forced O'Neill to resign.

The trip to Belfast started with a flight to Exeter in a small propellor-driven plane. When I tried to take a seat near the front, hoping to watch the pilot through the open cockpit door, the stewardess asked me to sit further back. Because the seats at the front were taken? No, she said, because sitting too far forward would unbalance the aircraft.

We flew low along the coast from Southampton to Exeter, where the passengers going on to Belfast switched to another plane. We were herded into a small shed for a thorough frisking and an electronic search. From the window of the shed I could see our luggage standing in the rain. No bag was loaded until its owner came and identified it. The flaw in this scheme showed up when I tried to find my attache case. Someone else had identified it and it was already stowed in the hold.

This plane was full, and I got to sit in front next to one of those huge windows they have in small planes. A thin quiet young man sat next to me and a dignified middle-aged couple sat across from us, in seats that faced backwards. I had lived in England for a year then, and knew that I could not slip easily into conversation with my seatmates, so I retreated into that speechless world of travel I had come to know. It is like being in a country where you don't know the language.

When we descended out of the clouds over Ireland, an hour or two later, I looked down at the island from which some of my ancestors came and -- despite the warnings against mysticism -- I couldn't help murmuring "Ireland!" The couple across from me broke their silence. Was this my first visit to Ireland? I must not leave without seeing this sight and that museum -- they brimmed with information. Unlike everyone in England, they talked as it were quite natural for a tourist to visit Northern Ireland.

The plane made a long, low approach over the waters of Lough Neagh and landed at the airport west of Belfast. The plane taxied to a stop and people got their coats and bags and waited for the door to open. I happened to glance out the big window beside me.

There outside was a British soldier in full battle gear, carrying a rifle with a bayonet mounted. He was a far cry from the guards outside Buckingham Palace. He meant business.

What had happened? Was there a gunman aboard? "Excuse me, Miss," I said to the stewardess, "there's a soldier out there carrying a rifle. Is there some kind of trouble?"

The stewardess stared at me. The couple across from me looked away. The young man beside me spoke up. "It's routine here," he said. "In fact, most of us on this flight are soldiers returning from leave."

I glanced around the cabin. Young men met my eyes and nodded. They had been strangers here once themselves, and understood. Somehow all my reading hadn't pre-

pared me for the reality.

There were more soldiers outside the plane, along with an armored personnel carrier, and more inside the terminal. No one met the flight in the huge hall where you get your luggage -- no Willis waiting for me, no one waiting for anyone. There was a notice saying only passengers were allowed there. When I had my bags I walked through a passage to another building that was filled with people waiting. I was still in the passage when I recognized the tall man with the large eyes. Walt Willis recognized me, too, despite the beard that I'd shaved off since seeing him last.

He carried one of my bags out to the parking lot. "Trouble getting your bags? Sometimes they're slow getting them off the big jetliners. Did you see Mairead Corrigan? She was on your flight."

"She was? No, I didn't see her." I tried to remember any passenger that might have been the organizer of the women's peace movement. "Was she coming from Southampton, or Exeter?"

Walt glanced at me. "No -- from London."

On the ground only a few minutes and I had been late getting my luggage, had missed seeing a celebrity, and apparently didn't even know where my flight had come from. Willis was too polite to comment, but I could imagine how he would write up the incident for a fanzine. I turned the conversation to how I had tried to board with my new carry-on luggage in Southampton. The polite reserve melted from Walt's features. "Oh, you flew here from Southampton? You know, I didn't even bother to check the flight number you gave me -- I just assumed you were on that jet from London. No wonder you didn't see Mairead Corrigan!"

Walt manoeuvred his car through the bumper-to-bumper traffic caused by the many cars leaving the airport through its tightly restricted exits -- one instance, I might point out, of politicians having managed to provide jam today -- and I asked him about a story Terry Hughes had told me. Had George Charters really come to the Discon without telling anyone and left after an hour or so without meeting anyone?

Walt touched on the complications of that visit and added, "Of course, you wouldn't understand going to a convention without meeting anyone."

I caught the allusion to the Manchester conreport just published in Mota. I had missed connections and spent the first few hours of the con trying to introduce myself to people who didn't care to meet me before finally managing to link up with my oldtime fannish friends.

"It's occurred to me since I wrote that," I said, "that the people I was trying to talk to must have found me just as rude as I considered them. I'm beginning to understand how wars start."

Willis only nodded. We drove into Belfast on the Crumlin Road. "This is one of the most violent areas," he commented as we drove down the narrow road past tiny houses and boarded-up shops. The rain seemed to have washed out all their color. "It's an interface area."

"Interface?"

"It's an army word," Walt explained. I had always thought the word was unique to computer programming.

Minutes later we were in downtown Belfast. At one point traffic had to detour because a department store had been bombed. I craned my neck as we went by and saw the hole in the facade of the store, three or four stories up. As we crossed the bridge and drove east towards Bangor, Willis commented wryly that the bombings in Ireland represented the equivalent of the American program of urban renewal. I connected this with remarks I remembered in "The Harp Stateside" on the way Americans tend to tear down buildings before they have a chance to become dilapidated, and told Walt about an American businessman I'd met on a train to London from Southampton. We chanced to share a table at breakfast, and this American had announced loudly that England would be better off if German bombs had done a better job of destroying her factories so that now she would have modern ones like Germany's. The businessman had been impervious to the stares of the other diners and couldn't understand why I kept dropping my napkin and leaning down out of sight to get it.

"Yes," Walt said, "America makes progress because you enjoy the destruction without the necessity for any political overtones."

He went on to expound his own theory of Northern Ireland's troubles. The people living in the Belfast area, he said, have felt close to the Scots for centuries. This closeness goes back further than Cronwell, and has a very simple explanation: they are close. From his house in Donaghadee, on a clear day, he could see cows grazing in Scotland. On the other hand, Belfast is separated from the southern part of Ireland by ranges of mountains. These geographical facts are seldom realized because of the tendency of mapmakers to omit Ireland entirely from maps of Great Britain.

In Bangor we stopped off to see George Charters. George didn't feel well enough to eat with us, as Walt had hoped, so Walt and I went to a French restaurant where we shared a meal of meat and wine. From somewhere deep inside me the 14-year-old who had first relished Hyphen marveled at the plausibility of my disguise as a grownup -- why, here I was dining on French cuisine in Northern Ireland with Walter Willis! What couldn't I get away with?

I asked Walt about the story of how he and Madeleine had discovered that they both read SF. Harry Warner says they both reached for the same copy of ASF, but I remembered another version by Willis which says she went into the shop while he waited, and emerged with the magazine. I could imagine burning feuds between schools of fanhistorians if this question went unresolved.

Willis was quiet for a moment. "Do you know, I can't really remember any more? I've told that story so many times that I no longer have a real memory of the incident." He took a sip of wine. "I find that when I write something, I lose it forever. That's why it's so important to get it down as honestly as possible." (Later I asked Madeleine, and she says she went in and came out.)

Walt talked of how his own fanwriting style had been influenced by the necessity to set type for Slant by hand. "Handsetting every word you write yourself is a sure cure for verbosity." Setting type had also given him an early insight into textual analysis of writing styles. "I always ran out of lowercase i's halfway down the page -- not capital I's, mind you, lowercase i's -- and I could never work out why this was so. We tried things like changing words such as 'insipid' to others such as 'tasteless', but to no avail. My style used up all the lowercase i's. So we finally had to mutilate lowercase j's by chiseling off the tails so they looked like i's. If you look through a copy or two of Slant you can spot them." (There are also some shortened l's serving as i's in the issues I own now.)

He went on to talk of Max Keasler, the Sixth Fandom fanned whose zines were

famous for typos. "Do you know, he's the only fanned who's ever published my work without any errors at all. Everyone else has committed at least one typo, however small."

I thought back. "Were there typos in the Harps that appeared in Quark?" For the life of me I couldn't recall any.

I had interrupted Willis in the middle of a story he had obviously told many time. He blinked, then backtracked. "Sorry, Tom, my mistake. I should have said everyone until you started publishing the Harp."

I looked Walt in the eye and bit my lip. I didn't care if I had made typos. It was only a matter of curiosity to me. But whether I had or not, he wouldn't tell me. There was between us an unbridgeable gulf of politeness and manners. This was, as I reminded myself, the man who had failed to meet Laney because he didn't want to embarrass Forry Ackerman, with whom he'd been staying in Los Angeles. And who ten years later had allowed a young fan named McQuown to intrude himself at a meal the Willises had shared with Robert Bloch rather than tell him flatly to get lost. How many of us would make such substantial sacrifices simply in the interest of courtesy?

And yet Willis had returned from his trips to write frankly of those two incidents. Ackerman and McQuown had almost certainly read what he'd written. How did these two conflicting ideals -- honesty and courtesy -- resolve themselves differently in different fields? I couldn't grasp it.

But there are typos in the Quark Harps. I checked.

Willis's talk of fandom that night was all in the past tense. His brief Mancon report in Maya that summer had expressed a desire to keep in touch with fandom -- but as he'd told me at Manchester, he was now involved in something that took as much time as fandom and used many of the same skills but was much more immediate and important. That's the attempt to unite peaceful Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland against those on both sides who prefer violence. It's a tough job because it takes only a small minority who are willing to bomb public places and shoot defenseless people to disrupt a modern technological society, and there are people outside Ireland with an interest in the outcome or in simply prolonging the violence. And even if that interest is as mild as wanting to see some action on the news or to read a book like "Trinity" and take sides, the number of viewers and readers in countries like America and England is so much greater than the population of all Ireland that even a tiny indirect contribution from each is enough to fuel the fighting for a long time.

In a way the problems Ireland faces now are those of the entire human race in a microcosm. (The only thing missing is the influence from outside, and we can get a taste of what that might be like if we imagine Arcturians and Betelgeusians making a spectator sport out of our arms race and circulating propaganda based on the philosophies of Adam Smith and Karl Marx.) As Carl Sagan suggests in "The Cosmic Connection", the real conflict is not between armies, but between militarists and humanists. Unfortunately such issues do not condense easily into headlines or TV screens.

It struck me though that if Walt's quarter century in fandom did nothing else, it may have prepared him ideally to participate in bringing peace to Ireland. As a former member of the Walt Willis Correspondence Commandos I can attest that fandom itself is guerrilla territory. Anyone can arm themselves with typewriter and mimeograph and let fly in any direction. With such equalizers ready to hand safety

lies in such qualities as goodwill and finally -- since each of us will do something fuggheaded at some point in our lives -- the ability to laugh at ourselves.

I don't think it is generally recognized the extent to which Willis and his friends transformed fandom. You can't call forth the flavor of fandom in the late forties and early fifties simply by reading reprints in fanhistorical anthologies: they concentrate on the bright spots; you have to look through the actual moldering crudzines and turgid sercon journals like Rhodomagnetic Digest to see what Willis and Hoffman were up against, the hostility they engendered in the dull relics of the older fandom. The fannish genius of Willis was to suggest and then show that true fandom -- true appreciation -- lay in emulating creativity, in creation itself, and not in mere dumb admiration or straight imitation of those who do create.

In a few years of growing brilliance, the fandom of Willis developed until it was powerful enough to bring him across the ocean to America. Trufandom executed a feat of organization that sercon fans couldn't match. Willis and his crew broke the ancient stalemate and won the Staple War. Echoing down the halls of time came the cheers of other insurgents: Tucker, Kornbluth, Laney, Burbee.

In the years following 1952 Willis consolidated his victory, defending Trufandom's gains with his shield of humor and sword of wit. The revolt of 7th Fandom was quelled; sercon enough it was to have allied forces with the dinosaurs and dodos of the older fandom, but its leader had pronounced it a movement for the young and fandom's elders could not recognize their own hyperbole and bombast in a different format, so 7F died with one last, long shriek which its author does not care to see reprinted.

Now, 25 years later, the victory remains secure. Even in the age of the professional fanzine, the many pseudocampbellian entries are consistently outdistanced by the single fannish one. Indeed, it is a measure of Willis's success that so few remember that there was a battle at all, and the occasional reminder -- such as Ed Wood's outburst in the middle of a fannish panel at Suncon, when he announced that he threw copies of Hyphen directly into the wastebasket without removing the staples -- only bewilder the casual observer.

Nor have I done justice to Walt's achievement by couching it in a military metaphor. To describe it is almost to betray it. Our language itself bears a prejudice against this gentle art of winning without defeating. Try it yourself -- try rewriting the paragraphs above without resorting to some comparison with an elemental conflict. And without ignoring the radical change that took place against stubborn opposition. If you can do it, fandom needs you.

After eating we drove from Bangor to Donaghadee, where I met Walt's lovely wife Madeleine. We talked of fandom and Ireland till after midnight. Madeleine is if anything more active than Walt in Alliance, the conciliatory party in Northern Ireland. I kept confusing it with the women's peace movement that had sprung up the previous summer after three children were killed by a gunman's car. Walt explained that that nonpolitical movement would be destroyed if co-opted by a political party, and Madeleine showed me the Alliance newspaper. Gradually I began to realize that Alliance was not a one-issue party but a general humanistic movement which only starts with the call for peace. Because Northern Ireland's parliament was suspended several years ago, Alliance tests its strength in local elections.

Next morning Walt, Madeleine and I walked to a high vantage point called the Moat, where a crumbling old fortress overlooks Donaghadee's harbor. The fortress and the hill it stands upon were built in 1819 to protect the explosives used to build the harbor. At the tip of the harbor's south pier stands a white lighthouse that

looks exactly like the one that used to appear on the back cover of Hyphen. I tell you, it feels weird to stand by a magazine with Willis and look down at the Hyphen light-house.

Later Saturday morning Willis drove me around the peninsular part of County Down formed by Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea, giving me a view of Scrabo Tower in Newtownards, which served as the model for the Tower of Trufandom in "The Enchanted Duplicator". When Walt mentioned that his phone number, as dialed from Belfast, spells out W S F F A A N, I began to feel truly eerie. I expected Philip K. Dick to materialize at any moment.

We stopped for a midmorning snack and to buy such necessities as shaving cream, which I'd forgotten to pack, and a tape of an Irish comedian Walt thought I'd like. Cars cannot be parked in front of stores in Northern Ireland lest they be used as huge grenades, so we parked in a suitably distant area and walked. Every time we entered a shop we were routinely frisked. You got to expect it.

I brought up the subject of John Berry. Willis had let me look through his files of letters the previous night and I had puzzled over one to an American faned commenting on an article by Berry explaining why he had broken off with the Willises. I hadn't known that Berry had broken off, and I hadn't read the article. Willis's letter to the faned gave no hint about the content of the article. The letter just said that it was interesting to find out why Berry had stopped seeing them, and made a request: if the faned ever got an article from Madeleine Willis entitled "Why I Am Leaving My Husband," would he please let Walt know at once?

Berry is usually associated with Irish Fandom, and American fans still commonly refer to him as "the Irish John Berry" to distinguish him from John D. Berry, but in fact Berry is English. He had moved back to England sometime after his break with Willis, and I was especially curious about him because of a puzzling exchange of letters I had had with him after returning from Midamericon and before visiting Willis. Berry had written offering me an article and I wrote back saying sure, let's see it. Berry did not respond. I was annoyed. Did he think I would accept his article sight unseen?

And now I learned that Berry had broken off with one of fandom's most popular members, the faned who had published his early work and defended it against criticism. What was it all about?

"I guess I never will understand that," said Willis about the split with Berry. I learned later, from Madeleine, that Berry had simply stopped coming to the Willis house, without any explanation.

Long afterwards I read a copy of that article. In it Berry accuses the Willises of wrongly taking credit for suggesting the plot of a Berry story they published in Hyphen in 1956. Berry admits that Madeleine "was extremely helpful with clever suggestions," and that Walt invented and wrote the ending (as well as providing the title), but insists: "The plot was entirely my idea." Evidently it was this plot in which the Willises' friendship with the English policeman was eventually berried, for the article goes on to relate how -- three years later, in 1959 -- it suddenly occurred to Berry that he might not deserve all the credit for the pieces he was writing, and so, "without saying a word to anyone," he stopped seeing his Irish friends in order to find out how well he could do without their help and inspiration.

When I read that article, everything clicked into place. Walt's brief and cryptic comment to the American faned who published it flashed into a perfect contrast

of Willis's and Berry's conflicting philosophies of fandom, just as a dull flat hologram suddenly reveals a three-dimensional picture when properly illuminated. Walt's comment encapsulated precisely how he felt about the absurdity of sending an article across the ocean to explain why you'd stopped speaking to someone who lived a few miles away. It asked what someone was doing in fandom who couldn't communicate with those close to him. It asked how a writer of humor could take himself so seriously, and how a man could so distort values that a fan article meant more to him than a friend. Those few words are so tightly packed with meaning that they seem to defy the second law of thermodynamics and produce negative entropy. I would be willing to set type by hand if it meant I could write like that.

But Willis didn't want to talk about Berry -- he wanted to change the subject. So he decided to tell me what Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon had done when he discovered he was using a fanzine title that Georgina Ellis had originated.

Now, I had just returned from Midamericon, where rich brown had discovered that my nice middle western upbringing kept me from interrupting him even when he was telling a story I'd heard before. Rich knew I had heard it because I had resurrected this story from my deep hoard of fannish lore for my Mancon report and told how Calvin had written to Gina how sorry he was and how he understood that there shouldn't be two fanzines with the same name and so to rectify the situation he was changing the name. Of her fanzine.

After telling me the story about twenty-eleven times himself, rich put other fans up to it, too, and hired relays of neofans to bedevil me with it, and spread the word so that before I left I swear I could hear it all around me as I walked down any hall or peeked into any party: "Say, did you ever hear what Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon did when --"

And now here in County Down, Northern Ireland, Walt Willis said brightly: "Say, Tom, did you ever hear what Calvin W. 'Biff' Demmon did when he discovered he was using a fanzine title that Georgina Ellis had originated?"

I eyed Willis coldly. "I resurrected that story in my Manchester conreport in Mota."

"Oh, that's right, Tom, of course I remember now." Willis took a deep swig of coffee to cover his embarrassment at being caught participating in brown's conspiracy. I smiled. At last I had put a stop to it. It had nearly driven me mad.

To show Walt there were no hard feelings, I decided to cash in on some of my heavy reading about Ireland. I decided to tell him a little of what I knew about Celts. I was well along when I noticed that Walt was not coughing. He was interrupting with a word that sounded like a cough. "What say?" I asked politely.

"Kelts," Walt said. "It's not Selts, it's Kelts."

"Oh," I said, and decided to drop the whole subject. Actually I suspected that this was Walt's way of retaliating for having been caught in the brownian movement. I would check a dictionary at the first opportunity.

A few minutes later, in the car going back to Donaghadee, Walt switched on the radio just as a sports announcer was giving the results of Friday's Celtics game. I cocked an eyebrow at Walt. He flushed furiously. "Seltics is the exception," he said lamely.

I decided to let it go at that.

After all, Hyphen had been pretty good.

::

That afternoon Irish Fandom gathered at the Willis home in Donaghadee. James White came, and George Charters, and a couple of potential fans Walt knew from work -- Dave Ford and Caitriona McReynolds. (They are married but Caitriona has kept her maiden name, besides spelling her given name in the Gaelic fashion. Dave is an Englishman who was stationed in Ireland during his military service and returned to live there afterwards.) There in the big sunny front room overlooking the water, something happened that I had only read about before. Willis has described it best: "Some of these nights in Irish Fandom everyone suddenly gets caught up in the current that sometimes flows through here and we find ourselves in another dimension of living when we can spin great shining wonderful webs of fantasy, or play with the language like a toy, or throw up bright lattices of wit, and your mind is racing away with you and the whole evening flashes past in a wild torrent of laughter and after we break up you feel dazed and limp and think what a wonderful wonderful evening and then you almost weep to realize that nobody wrote anything down."

That happened.

Not for the whole afternoon, just a part of it, and probably not with the intensity it must have had at Oblique House when Bob Shaw was there too and there were no outsiders -- but it did happen. I even got off a fairly good line myself, though I figured out later that James had set it up for me.

Late in the afternoon, after everyone else had left, James and Walt got out Walt's file of Slant and gave me a guided tour through it. I saw the woodcuts James had done, alternatively described as "stark" and "crude," and discovered that Walt's famous pun that drove Rog Phillips mad is usually misquoted. (It goes: "... printing runs in my family and I have merely reverted to type.") They showed me the issue that had to be finished using stencils and tried to explain how they had modified the press to use stencils. They couldn't do it. I mean they couldn't explain it. Not to me. I'm still not sure I believe it.

James is also active in Alliance. Such is the power of the IRA blood-myth, he told me, that when he tries to explain his position outside Ireland he often finds himself dismissed with the comment, "You only see things that way because you're Protestant and live in a safe neighborhood." In fact James is Catholic and lives in one of the most dangerous areas.

After dinner I went out with Walt while he walked the dog. "Let's walk on the sidewalk, Tom," said Walt with a chuckle. "I'm limbering up my American vocabulary on you." In Great Britain and Ireland the word for "sidewalk" is "pavement," and it is the path rather than the road to hell that is paved with good intentions.

Walt pointed out a house a few doors from his own. "The maid found a bomb on the windowsill there the other day. She had just opened the window to shake out the rugs." He might have said she found a cat.

That sill bomb was still on my mind after we got back. Walt and Madeleine and I were talking in the front room -- or actually I was talking and the Willises were listening respectfully -- when suddenly it seemed too much. Not only did they have to live with this constant terror but they had to put up with foreigners talking and writing about it, foreigners with airplane tickets in their pockets. "Oh Jesus. God how can you STAND it!" I said suddenly, meaning the sound of my own stupid stupid

voice.

"Tom?" said Walt quietly.

"Mall right," I said thickly, wiping my eyes. The outburst itself had betrayed something. It was like smoking around gas fumes. Take your goddam emotional tantrums somewhere else, I thought furiously. Forget about the potato famine or the seige of Derry and think about the people down your own street. Ireland has enough problems now.

The conversation picked up as if nothing had happened.

Sunday morning the Willis family and their American visitor shared a leisurely breakfast and read the newspapers. Late in the morning it began to rain. Walt was playing in the final round of a golf tournament after lunch. The time came for him to go. "Tom, it's been good seeing you again," he said, and with a quick handshake was gone. I felt relief. The worst part of a visit is usually saying goodbye; Walt had made it quick and painless.

I talked with Madeleine and read old fanzines and the manuscript of Willis's unpublished book until it was time to go to the airport. Bryan Willis drove me; we talked about boats and motorcycles. The rain had stopped and the clouds had rolled away and everything was fresh and lovely.

The jet to London was still beneath the clouds when we passed over Donaghadee. There was no mistaking the curved pier and that lighthouse.

Tom Perry, December 6, 1977.

.....

THIS IS WHERE HE CAME IN

Still befuddled with theory and besotted with formulae the centre of much interest and speculation as to his future prompted by his unheralded arrival at said destination, the editor of Warhoon numbly turns the pages of the last 10,000 publications in his fanzine collection searching out entries for a bibliography of Willis works. A simple little list of the things Walt has written seemed like a good idea to close out this book but the shroud I had to wear to protect myself from the clouds of dust and grime from the fannish pages and the cloistered existence of the archivist life paints the perfect portrait of the acolyte who refuses to realize he should have done this in some other century. Motivation existing now only as dimly recalled tribal legend, the editor avoids wondering why he is doing all this: clinging stubbornly to an impulse which was better understood by an earlier persona -- the present one being filled with the nameless horror of seeing all these stencils decompose around him (while John Bangsund's cries of anguish are heard in the distance). The rustling dry ages turn and the weary ferret picks up the next crudzine from the top of the stack. The date is noted first -- Vol. 1, No. 1, April, 1948. Bleary-eyed I decide: Too early to contain anything by Willis and therefore no need to scan the badly reproduced two legal length sheets stapled together in the upper left hand corner. The address, 27 Woodland Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, catches my eye as I toss it on the For Sale stack and go through another 30 offerings to the Gods of Fanac. Then the befuddled and besotted mind dimly recalls the title "The Alembic". I had proofread that name somewhere recently and a mere two weeks searching reveals it on page 445 along with Madeleine Willis' famous first words "Surely you could do better than that!" I reverently retrieve the fanzine from the discard pile and the last artifact floats to the surface: the first fannish fanzine seen by Walter Willis and the miniscule

depth charge which led to all that followed.

Norman Ashfield's The Alembic was certainly an unassuming little candle in the dark -- to say the least. Its spell, though, was cast in paragraph number 7 on the first page:

"Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldren boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like hell-broth, boil and bubble."

I'm not sure whether William Shakespeare submitted anything to later issues but apparently our Eve in the garden, Madeleine, was charmed and Walter bit the apple and was cast into our peculiar preparation for purgatory. Bewitched, my eyes scan the four pages wondering at the awe-full effect even our most inconsidered efforts can have and marvelling at the unprepossessing forms taken by the magic wand named Contact.

Ashfield wondered: "Did Shaver's Dero
Activate Nero?"

And following a couple pages of fanfiction and elementary commentary hoped modestly "that this rather poor effort will encourage other fans to air their views through their own fanzine". It did and in a few years an adolescent in northern Vermont was mysteriously mailing science fiction magazines to Ireland in exchange for something called Slant.

The ripples from a little pebble of inspiration tossed into fannish waters in Surrey had reached even unto stone-age Newport and shown, in Harry Warner's phrase, "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". This example was to remain with me through the years reminding when I needed relief from mundane pursuits which sometimes become overwhelming that the Land of Woz is always here to help take my mind off running around in circles biting my own tale.

Now the retrospective echo is heard and I can once again publish an issue of Warhoon without the guilty awareness that everyone who receives it is expecting what you have in your hands.

The green hills of Vermont are far behind me in space and time but the solar system really was on the ceiling of my room and history is showing me that someday man really will reach out and touch the planets. In the meantime I am moving closer to the stars (or at least to the sun): in a few months, if all goes as planned my primary residence will be in the Caribbean and if something as unlikely as man standing on the planets can be foreseen then it might not be beyond the realm of possibility that I may start organizing the Puerto Rico.

Time has shrunk our space and changed our perspectives: infinity is less limitless. I can see objectively where I have come from and hopefully, even, where I am going. In the meantime I remember that view of Newport from an aeroplane and can mentally take the jet to London with Tom Perry and look down on the lighthouse whose rays reached a boy in northern Vermont in 1951.

Richard Bergeron, April 9, 1978.

APPRECIATIONS

Without the help of a great number of people this volume would not have been possible. Foremost among these, of course, are the editors for whom Walt Willis originally wrote most of the material reprinted herein. Originations and dates are given in the bibliographic notes elsewhere and special thanks here to:

Lee Hoffman (Quandry & Fanhistory), Gregg Calkins (Oopsla), Tom Perry (Quark), Shelby Vick (Confusion), Ted White, Greg Benford, Terry Carr, Peter Graham (Void), Ethel Lindsay (Scottishe), John Berry (Retribution), Dick and Pat Lupoff (Xero), Arnie Katz (Quip), Rob Jackson (Maya), Mike Gorra (Random, Dean Grennell (Grue), Frank Lunney (Beabohema), Boyd Raeburn (A Bas), Larry and Noreen Shaw (Axe), Redd Boggs (Skyhook), Derek Pickles (Phantasmagoria), Mal Ashworth (Bem), Vernon McCain (Wastebasket), Joel Nydahl (Vega), Dave Hale (Les Spinge), & Max Keasler (Opus).

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As were the particular contributions of Walt Willis, Bob Shaw, James White, Lee Hoffman, Shelby Vick, Arthur Thomson, Gregg Calkins, and Bruce Pelz.



"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.



NOTES FOR A WALT WILLIS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Richard Bergeron with special assistance by Bruce Pelz.

Life is too short and "The Walt Willis Bibliography" was too long so I had to shorten it to the title above. I am as determinedly bibliophobic in my personal habits as the next fan (though not if the next fan happens to be Tom Perry) so it was with a great deal of chagrin that I managed to lure myself into working on a reference guide to Walt Willis' publishing and writing -- even a little chagrin goes a long way around here. Thus the short form of this compendium. It would have added at least another couple months delay to the publication of the WASH to bring these notes to a definitive form and even in such a rush I wouldn't have been sure I had not missed listing an edition of "The Enchanted Duplicator" or discovering an obscure reprint of "Wilde Heir" in some long forgotten apazine. Therefore I submit these notes to anyone who would like to earn themselves fannish immortality by bringing them to completion and would have several suggestions to help you -- it shouldn't take more than a few months to track down all the final information and I can be of some aid. Do ask.

Articles

- | | |
|---|--|
| Telekinesis and Buttered Toast (Slant 1, November, 1948) | Fandom At 6s And 7s.....(Vega 12, 1953) |
| Gulf (Science Fiction News 5, Summer 1950) | Wilde Heir (WAWCRHBSJWGATWCMWPMSSACW, July 1954) |
| "Corn" Becomes Callous (Rhodomagnetic Digest, V2 #5, March, 1951) | The Consternation Of Orion (Orion 6, October, 1954) |
| The Mind Of Sam Merwin, Jr. (Explorer, April, 1951) | How To BNF Without Tears (Bem 1, Apr. '54) |
| Fan File.....(Quandry 10, May, 1951) | A Plea For Clemency (A True Bill, August, 1955) |
| Belfast Postscript (Slant 6, Winter, 1951) | Autobiographical Notes (CanFan 25, June, 1955) |
| Message From The Flying Ackerman (Slant 6, Winter, 1951) | Black Mail...(Le Zombie 64, January, 1955) |
| Notes By A Tributary (Mad 5, August, 1952) | Harping On The Past (Fanhistory, February, 1956) |
| In Defense Of The Pun (Wastebasket 4 1952) | Sporting Supplement (Retribution 6, March, 1957) |
| Oblique House.....(Wastebasket 4, 1952) | The Life Of Taff..(Yandro 50, March, 1957) |
| Concerning Calliopes (Quandry 26, Oct. '51) | The Discovery Of The ATom (Veritas 1, '57) |
| (with Hoffman, Clarke, & Bulmer) | Minutes Of The Meeting Of WAPPOTEESSC (Woz 7, June, 1958)(with Ken Bulmer) |
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| The Judgment of Harris (Slant 7, Winter, 1952) | Minutes Of The Wheels Of IF (Cry 116, June 1958) |
| Film Notes...Or Something (Pendulum 1, Jan 1952) | The Sterling Fanzine (Cry 125, March, '59) |
| Comes The Revelation.....(Sol 6, 1952) | From Aa To Zombie (Retribution 14, Sept. 1959) |
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 The APA And The Survival Of Civilization (Lilapa 237, November, 1975)
 The Revenant.....(Maya 11, July, 1976)

Note: "From Aa To Zombie", "The Discovery Of The Atom", "Notes By A Tributary", and "Notes On ATomic Art" appeared untitled in publication and were christened by myself. -rb) (Peri 3 -Circa 1954?- apparently contains an article by Willis. SF Parade (Len Moffat) published something by Willis on the 1957 worldcon. A. Vincent Clarke in Launching Site, June, 1957, comments on a "Willis/Mercer" piece in Archieve Between Meals.)

Fan Fiction

Willis Discovers America (1952. Originally published as a serial in issues of Fantasias, Quandry, Mad, Confusion & Oopsla. Republished as a pamphlet by Willis with annotations in May, 1955)
 The Enchanted Duplicator...(with Bob Shaw) (February, 1954)
 The Case Of The Disappearing Fan...(Bem 5, September, 1955)
 Way Of Life.....(Hyphen 17, Dec. 1956)
 The Immoral Storm (Opus 2, February, 1951)
 The Immortal Gael.....(Fantastic Worlds 1, 1952)
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 The Coroncon..(Hyphen 4, Oct. 1953, Hyphen 6, Jan. 1954)
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 Inclinations...(letter supplement to Slant 6, Winter, 1951)
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 Inphantasmagoria/combined with Scant..(Oct

1951)

Oh, The Serendipity Of It All or Roscoe's Name Be Praised (lpg. According to Harris only 4 copies were published. Mimeo. No date but sometime in the 1950s.)

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WAPPPOTED (with Ken Bulmer)... (Sept., '56)
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The Harp Stateside (Substantial sections appeared in Quandry, Confusion, and Oops-la. The final expanded version was published by Willis in February, 1957. 72pgs 8½"x11".

"...Twice Upon A Time"

- 1...Axe 34, February, 1963.....(untitled)
- 2...Axe 35, March, 1963.....(untitled)
- 3...Axe 36, April, 1963.....(untitled)
- 4...Hyphen 34, Sept., 1963...(as "Chicago Chicago")
- 5...Hyphen 35, April, 1964...(as "Chicago Chicago")
- 6...Ankus 14, Feb., 1965...(as "The Bright Land")
- 7...Ankus 15, May, 1965...(as "The Bright Land")
- 8...Ankus 16, August, 1965(as "The Bright Land")
- 9...Ankus 17, Nov., 1965...(as "The Bright Land")
- 10...Ankus 18, Feb., 1966...(as "The Bright Land")
- 11...Les Spinge 13, May, 1964...(as "A Day In San Francisco With Ethel")

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The Improbable Irish.....(as Walter Bryan) 223 pages of anecdotes on Ireland and its people. Published in paperback by Ace, 1969. pb36990. Hardcover by Taplinger in the US and Burns & MacEachern, Ltd., Ontario, Canada.

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don, 1953)

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Christmas Cards

Peace On Sol III, Good Will To Mellow Fen	
1...Dec. 1950 (inferred from later issues)	
2...Dec. 1951 4pg.....	5½"x7½"
3...Dec. 1952 12pg.....	4¼"x4½" (size A)
4...Dec. 1953 8pg..4 1/8"x5 1/8"	(size B)
5...Dec. 1954 8pg.....	(size B)
6...Dec. 1955 12pg.....	(size A)
7...Dec. 1956 8pg.....	(size B)
8...Dec. 1957 8pg.....	(size B)
9...Dec. 1958 8pg.....	(size B)
10...Dec. 1959 8pg.....	(size B)
11...Dec. 1960 8pg.....	(size B)
12...Dec. 1961 8pg.....	(size B)
13...Dec. 1962 8pg.....	(size B)
14...Dec. 1963 8pg.....	(size B)
15...Dec. 1964 8pg.....	(size B)
16...Dec. 1965 8pg.....	(size B)
17...Dec. 1966 8pg.....	(size B)

Note: 10 & 15 are actually numbered; the other numbers are inferred. Data supplied by Bruce Pelz.

Periodicals

Slant 1, Nov. 1948..6½"x8". 12pg printed.
Slant 2, Summer, 1949. 5 3/4"x7½" (as were all other issues) 24pg. Printed.
Slant 3, Spring, 1950. 26pg....Printed and final page mimeoed on some copies.
Slant 4, Autumn, 1950. 42pg.....Printed.
Slant 5, Spring, 1951. 48pg.....Printed.
Slant 6, Winter, 1951. 60pg.....Printed.
Slant 7, Winter, 1952. 68pg....Printed and mimeoed.
Total:.....280 pages.

Hyphen: All issues were mimeoed. 1-33 were 8"x10". 34-36 were 8½"x11".

Hyphen 1...May, 1952.....16pg
Hyphen 2...September, 1952.....20pg
Hyphen 3...February, 1953.....28pg
Hyphen 4...October, 1953.....28pg
Hyphen 5...November, 1953.....22pg
Hyphen 6...January, 1954.....26pg
Hyphen 7...March, 1954.....28pg
Hyphen 8...April, 1954.....30pg

Hyphen 9...July, 1954.....44pg	Woz 3...May, 1955.....8pg
Hyphen 10...September, 1954.....34pg	Woz 4...February, 1957.....16pg
Hyphen 11...November, 1954.....34pg	Woz 5...May, 1957.....12pg
Hyphen 12...December, 1954.....52pg	Woz 6...November, 1957.....10pg
Hyphen 13...March, 1955.....42pg	Woz 7...June, 1958.....8pg
Hyphen 14...June, 1955.....42pg	Total:.....70pg
Hyphen 15...November, 1955.....40pg	
Hyphen 16...August, 1956.....30pg	Gafia Recovery Administration (Mimeo. Letter substitute)
Hyphen 17...December, 1956.....42pg	GRA 1:(no information)
Hyphen 18...May, 1957.....40pg	GRA 2:(no information)
Hyphen 19...January, 1958.....26pg	GRA 3: 1960. 3 3/4"x10".....2pg
Hyphen 20...February, 1958.....26pg	
Hyphen 21...October, 1958.....42pg	
Hyphen 22...March, 1959.....26pg	
Hyphen 23...November, 1959.....24pg	
Hyphen 24...March, 1960.....24pg	
Hyphen 25...November, 1960.....26pg	
Hyphen 26...January, 1961.....24pg	
Hyphen 27...March, 1961.....26pg	
Hyphen 28...May, 1961.....26pg	
Hyphen 29...September, 1961.....26pg	
Hyphen 30...December, 1961.....24pg	
Hyphen 31...March, 1962.....26pg	
Hyphen 32...March, 1963.....28pg	
Hyphen 33...June, 1963.....24pg	
Hyphen 34...September, 1963.....24pg	
Hyphen 35...April, 1964.....24pg	
Hyphen 36...February, 1965.....22pg	
Total:.....1066pg	

Hyphen had a number of co-editors and associate editors. Chief co-editor was Chuck Harris and, later, Ian McAulay. Associates included Bob Shaw, James White, Madeleine Willis, George Charters, Vinç Clarke, and Arthur Thomson.

Pamphrey (Fapazine - mimeoed. Number "0": 7"x8 3/4". All others: 8"x10".)

Pamphrey 0...November, 1951.....2pg	
Pamphrey 1...November, 1953.....8pg	
Pamphrey 2...March, 1954.....2pg	
Pamphrey 3...October, 1956.....16pg	
Pamphrey 4.....(No evidence of existance)	
Pamphrey 5...July, 1957.....12pg	
Pamphrey 6...January, 1958.....10pg	
Pamphrey 7...October, 1958.....2pg	
Total:.....52pg	

Woz.....(Ompazine. Mimeo. 8"x10")

Woz 1...December, 1954.....6pg	
Woz 2...February, 1955.....10pg	

The Harp That Once Or Twice

- 1...Quandry 8, March, 1951: The Gold/Campbell war, Nekromantikon, Amazing Stories, and sf.
- 2...Quandry 9, April, 1951: The N3F, modern sf.
- 3...Quandry 10, May, 1951: SF in Gaelic, Redd Boggs, Howard Browne, Sludge.
- 4...Quandry 11, June, 1951: British sf, fanzine fillers, and Russell Watkins.
- 5...Quandry 12, July, 1951: Eva Firestone, Wastebasket and Amazing Stories.
- 6...Quandry 13, August, 1951: Bob Shaw, the fan diary, Chuck Harris, and general doings in Sixth Fandom.
- 7...Quandry 16, December, 1951: Fanvariety and Max Keasler, an imaginary Nolacon report.
- 8...Quandry 17, January, 1952: Bob Tucker: Home Wrecker, and Proxyboo, Ltd.
- 9...Quandry 18, March, 1952: Gernsback's Xmas Card and the new British Fandom.
- 10...Quandry 19, April, 1952: First anniversary of the Harp, H.J. Campbell.
- 11...Quandry 20, May, 1952: H.L. Gold, George Wetzel, Machiavelli in Maryland, and Proxyboo's Booful! (a fanzine).
- 12...Quandry 21, June, 1952: Rhodomagnetic Digest and literary criticism.
- 13...Opsla 12, March, 1954: Leeh, Quandry, Graham, Slant, and Annishthesia.
- 14...Opsla 13, May, 1954: The Fen Commandments.
- 15...Opsla 14, September, 1954: Preparation for SuperManCon - Operation Armageddon
- 16...Opsla 15, November, 1954: Postscript to the SuperManCon.

- 17..Opsla 16, February, 1955: Vorzimer, Campbell, and old shoes.
- 18..Opsla 17, May, 1955:.....EasterCon.
- 19..Opsla 18, August, 1955: Harp State-side.
- 20..Opsla 19, November, 1955: Harp State-side.
- 21..Opsla 21, June, 1957: Columns, Muzzy, and the pleasures of Feuding.
- 22..Opsla 23, December, 1957: Dawning of the Space Age, and the LonCon.
- 23..Opsla 24, February, 1958: Christmas morning fanac, fannishness and respectability.
- 24..Opsla 25, November, 1958: The end of a fan, Orville W. Mosher III.
- 25..Opsla 26, May, 1959: Prozone titles, garbage and sf, boilerplate and Bob Silverberg, the Bible as a fanzine.
- 26..Opsla 28/29, October, 1959: Perfectionism and Redd Boggs, Campbell, John Berry's return, and Fenaissance.
- 27..Interim 29/30, February, 1959: Analog and the burial of Prosser.
- 28..Warhoon 10, January, 1961: Heinlein, Calkins and the survival of the fit-test.
- 29..Warhoon 11, April, 1961: Life at Oblique House, technological obsolescence.
- 30..Warhoon 12, July, 1961: Analyzing the creative process.
- 31..Warhoon 13, October, 1961: Ireland and interlineations, nudity and credibility, analyzing the creative process.
- 32..Warhoon 14, January, 1962: Improving the species: Eskimoe style.
- 33..Warhoon 15, April, 1962: Ireland and the oldest doodle in the world.
- 34..Warhoon 16, July 1962: The Cosmic Pun, love of country, and feedback.
- 35..Warhoon 18, January 1963: The American Word, and the Age of Indestructible Garbage.
- 36..Warhoon 19, February, 1964: Amateur vs Pro, Bloch, the Decline of the West.
- 37..Quark 7, Spring/Summer, 1964: Things that crawl in the night, bomber pilots and James Blish.
- 38..Quark 8, Fall, 1964: The new British fan, and Barry Goldwater.
- 39..Quark 9, Spring, 1955: An encounter with a Negro, election returns, the London transport system.
- 40..Quark 10, Fall, 1965: Fandom vs. the Greyhound Bus Lines.
- 41..Warhoon 23, May, 1968: Memoirs and the trap of Creeping Perfectionism.
- 42..Warhoon 24, August, 1968: The strange world of Flann O'Brien.
- 43..Warhoon 25, November, 1968: The Rats That Ate A Railroad.
- 44..Warhoon 26, February, 1969: Personal philosophy and the Irish dilemma.

Fanorama Observations and fanzine reviews in Nebula, the Scottish prozone. The first 12 installments were entitled (by editor Peter Hamilton) "The Electric Fan". The last four appeared in Zenith, a fanzine, edited by Peter Weston. One installment appeared in Lichtman's Psi-Phi.

- 1...Nebula 1, Autumn, 1952: Defining fandom by parallel.
- 2...Nebula 2, Spring, 1953: Chicon II and the ManCon.
- 3...Nebula 3, Summer, 1953: Operation Fantast, Stigwort's Disease, Space Times.
- 4...Nebula 4, Autumn, 1953: The British Convention.
- 5...Nebula 5, September, 1953: Astroneer, Zenith.
- 6...Nebula 6, December, 1953: The Philcon, Space Times, and Orbit.
- 7...Nebula 7, February, 1953: Taff, Space Diversions, Space Times, and Fission.
- 8...Nebula 8, April, 1954: Orbit, Orion, and The Medway Journal.
- 9...Nebula 9, August, 1954: Bem, SF News.
- 10..Nebula 10, October, 1954: "i", Orion, The New Futurian, The Medway Journal.
- 11..Nebula 11, December, 1954: Operation Fantast, The Immortal Storm, Alpha, Phantasmagoria, and Bem.
- 12..Nebula 12, April, 1955: Triode, Feminine, Satellite.
- 13..Nebula 14, November, 1955: Seeing Ken Bulmer off to America, Hyphen.
- 14..Nebula 15, January, 1956: Quatermass, Taff.
- 15..Nebula 16, March, 1956: Dated technology in sf.
- 16..Nebula 17, July, 1956: The Simple Life and its complexity, Alpa, Retribution.
- 17..Nebula 18, November, 1956: Alien no-

menclature.

- 18..Nebula 19, December, 1956: Triode and Ploy, trouble with smoke.
- 19..Nebula 20, March, 1957: The Sense of Wonder and what happened to it, Eye.
- 20..Nebula 21, May, 1957: The truth about the spaceman, Camber, and The New Futurian.
- 21..Nebula 22, July, 1957: Contact with extra-terrestrials.
- 22..Nebula 23, August, 1957: The weather, Triode, The New Futurian, Retribution.
- 23..Nebula 24, September, 1957: Ted Tubb in action, Ploy.
- 24..Nebula 25, October, 1957: Simplifying science fiction.
- 25..Nebula 26, January, 1958: Handling the space age.
- 26..Nebula 27, February, 1958: Making sf fascinating, Ackerman, A.C. Clarke.
- 27..Nebula 28, March, 1958:.....William F. Temple.
- 28..Nebula 29, April, 1958:.....Who owns space?
- 29..Nebula 30, May, 1958: Sabotage at the ManCon, Perihelion, Camber.
- 30..Nebula 31, June, 1958: SF in reality.
- 31..Nebula 32, July, 1958: Mail delivery by balloon.
- 32..Nebula 33, August, 1958:.....Cinema.
- 33..Nebula 34, September, 1958: Representatives of the space age and how to handle the problem.
- 34..Nebula 35, October, 1958: Ken Bulmer, Satellite.
- 35..Nebula 36, November, 1958:....Inchmery Fan Diary.
- 36..Nebula 37, December, 1958: James White in search of fans.
- 37..Nebula 38, January, 1959: Behind The sf plot.
- 38..Nebula 39, February, 1959: Word rates.
- 39..Nebula 40, May, 1959: The Man Who Interrupted Quatermass.
- 40..Nebula 41, June, 1959:....The big bang theory of sf.
- 41..Psi-Phi 5, March, 1960: Do It Yourself psionics.
- 42..Zenith 5, June, 1964:.....Beyond.
- 43..Zenith 6, September, 1964: Alien, The Scarr.
- 44..Zenith 7, December, 1964: Link, Beryl

Henley, and a question of humor.

- 45..Zenith 8, March, 1965:....Beryl Henley

The Immortal Teacup

Notes and clippings for a history of British Fandom.

- 1...Science Fiction Digest 4, November, '51 Arthur C. Clarke and an article about him by William F. Temple.
- 2...Science Fiction Digest 5, January, '52 The Immortal Storm, aims, and Temple's letter from VOM on what fandom means to him.
- 3...Science Fiction Digest 7, September, '52 Walter Gillings and Novae Terrae.
- 4...ASFO 1, January, 1953: An article by Francis Arnold on Ted Carnell.

Plinth

- 1...Confusion 2, 1952:....Willis taken ill with paragraphs and puns.
- 2...Confusion 3, 1952: How to write a column.
- 3...Confusion 4, 1952:.....Fanticlimax!
- 4...Confusion 5, March, 1952:.....A Death worst than Fate!
- 5...Confusion 6, 1952: Willis Visits Chicago! (A Nightmare)
- 6...Confusion 7, April, 1952: How I Write My Columns.
- 7...Confusion 8, 1952:....Willis Discovers America. (1).
- 8...Confusion 9, 1952:....Willis Discovers America (3).
- 9...Confusion 10, June, 1952:.....Off to a Convention and Willis Discovers America (5).
- 10..Confusion 11, August, 1952: Peter Graham and Willis Discovers America (7).
- 11..Confusion, Special pre-Chicon Confusion, 1952: Willis Discovers America (10).
- 12..Confusion 13, November, 1952: Back in Ireland.
- 13..Confusion 15, May, 1953: Part of The Harp Stateside.
- 14..Confusion 16, February, 1954: Part of The Harp Stateside.
- 15..Fanac 58, May, 1960: Fandom for Mundania and Prosser's artwork.
- 16..Fanac 59, May, 1960: Wrhn, Heinlein & IFen.

- 17..Fanac 61, June, 1960:...Who Killed SF?
- 18..Fanac 65, September, 1960: A visit by Andy Young.
- 19..Fanac 67, November, 1960: Campbell and IFenotes.
- 20..Fanac 70, January, 1961: Campbell and some questions by a Mr. Helgesen.
- 21..Fanac 72, April, 1961: Have Fund, Will Travel and The New Shaw.

The Outpost

- 1...Phantasmagoria 1, Winter, 1951: First visit to the Epicentre and Fandom Radiations.
- 2...Phantasmagoria 2, Spring, 1951: Twilight over Utopia and Fandom Radiations.
- 3...Phantasmagoria 3, Summer, 1951: Convention notes.
- 4...Phantasmagoria 4, Spring, 1952:....Authentic SF, Gold and Campbell and the war betwixt.

Comebacks From Erin

With James White and Bob Shaw.

- 1...Straight Up 2, March, 1952:...News and Quandry poll results.
- 2...Straight Up 3, May, 1952: News briefs.
- 3...Straight Up 4, July, '52: News briefs.

The Warier Bard

- 1...Axe 25B, May, 1962:....American Tourist Propaganda.
- 2...Axe 28, July, 1962: Name calling without naming names, Synthetic Feud.
- 3...Axe 30, August, 1962:.....Piper on the Beam, Last Year At Marionbradley, and Goggle Box.
- 4...Axe 33, January, 1963: Relaxing after The Trip.

The Perforated Finger

- 1...Wassaw & Ossabaw Backwater Journal, Spring, 1952: Mailing comments, Fapa.
- 2...Fen Crittur Comical Books, Autumn, '52 Mailing comments for Fapa.
- 3...Pamphrey 1, November, 1953:....Mailing comments for Fapa.
- 4...Lighthouse 5, February, 1962: Explaining the title, notes on a wedding.
- 5...Lighthouse 9, August, 1963:...Vacation observations.

- 6...Lighthouse 11, November, 1964: Reducing pressures and medical problems.
- 7...Lighthouse 12, February, 1965: Matters of morality.
- 8...Lighthouse 14, October, 1966: Strathclyde and how things are in Glockamorra.

I Remember Me (Autobiographical Notes)

- 1...Pamphrey 3, October, 1956 and Woz 4, February, 1957: Beginnings.
- 2...Pamphrey 5, July 1957, and Woz 5, May, 1957: (variant title: I Remember Walt Willis): Slant, Vinç Clarke, Ken Bulmer, Clive Jackson.
- 3...Pamphrey 6, January, 1958 and Woz 6, November, 1957 (variant title: I chose Fandom or I Was A Fugghead For The N3F -- The Willis Memoirs - Part III, 1949-1950.) Slant, Vinç Clarke, Chuck Harris.

Warblings

- 1...Scottishe 20, March, 1960:....Taking a bath with Queen Victoria.
- 2...Scottishe 22, December, 1960: I Remember Me (4). Chuck Harris, EFRussell.
- 3...Scottishe 23, March, 1961: I Remember Me (5). EFRussell.
- 4...Scottishe 24, June, 1961:...I Remember Me (6). The Epicentre.
- 5...Scottishe 25, September, 1961:...I Remember Me (7). Vinç Clarke, Ken Bulmer, Lee Hoffman, and Quandry.
- 6...Scottishe 26, December, 1961: I Remember Me (8). Lee Hoffman, J.T.McIntosh, "Fandom For The Highbrow".
- 7...Scottishe 27, March, 1962: I Remember Me (9) The LonCon Report, The Quannish and Lee Hoffman.
- 8...Scottishe 29, September, 1962:...I Remember Me (10). Lee Hoffman, Kuttner, and J. T. McIntosh.
- 9...Scottishe 30, December, 1962: I Remember Me (11). Chuck Harris.
- 10..Scottishe 31, March, 1963: I Remember Me (12). Pre-Chicon, Bloch, Richard Elsberry.
- 11..Scottishe 32, June, 1963:...I Remember Me (13). Richard Elsberry.
- 12..Scottishe 33, September, 1963:...I Remember Me (14). Clarke & Harris.

- 13..Scottishe 34, December, 1963: I Remember Me (15). Clarke & Harris.
 14..Scottishe 35, March, 1964: I Remember Me (16). James White.
 15..Scottishe 36, June, 1964:...I Remember Me (17). A. C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, Robert Bloch, and more on Harris.
 16..Scottishe 37, September, 1964:...I Remember Me (18). Harris & Ackerman.
 17..Scottishe 38, February, 1965: I Remember Me (19). Wm. F. Temple, The Enchanted Duplicator, The Great Mackenzie War.
 18..Scottishe 39, January, 1966: I Remember Me (20). Letter columns, Bloch.

Dusty Answers

- 1...Quip 11, January, 1969: (Apparently a continuation of I Remember Me) Ellison and the Fall Of Sixth Fandom.

Mailing Comments

- Woz 1.....OMPA 2, December, 1954
 Woz 2.....OMPA 3, February, 1955
 Woz 3.....OMPA 4, May, 1955
 Woz 4.....OMPA 11, February, 1957
 Woz 5.....OMPA 12, May, 1957
 Woz 6.....OMPA 14, November, 1957
 Pamphrey 0.....FAPA 57, November, 1951
 Pamphrey 1....FAPA 65, November, 1953 (The Perforated Finger)
 Pamphrey 2,.....FAPA 67, March, 1954
 Pamphrey 3.....FAPA 77, October, 1956
 Pamphrey 5, FAPA 80, July, 1957 (Half Open Letters)
 Pamphrey 6.....FAPA 82, January, 1958
 Fen Crittur Comical Books, FAPA 61, Autumn 1952 (The Perforated Finger)
 Tangent 1, FAPA 58, February, 1952 (This Column Has No Name)

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial:.....Slant 1, 2, 7. Hyphen 3, 16
 On The Level:.....Slant 3, 4
 Off Course:.....Slant 1
 The Prying Fan:.....Slant 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
 Corn Exchange:.....Slant 1, 2
 The Amateur Editor:.....Slant 3, 4, 5
 Lesser Known Fantasy:.....Slant 3, 4
 Competition:.....Slant 3
 The Good Old Days:.....Slant 4

- Fanfile:.....Slant 4, 5, 6
 The Things They Say:.....Slant 4
 Authors!:.....Slant 6
 Inclinations:.....Hyphen 1, 2, 3
 Final Footnote:.....Hyphen 19
 The Quartz Quintal.....Hyphen 23
 Random:.....Hyphen 18
 News And Reviews:.....Hyphen 13
 Inside Coverage:...Hyphen 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33.
 Readers Letters:.....Hyphen 5, 6, 7
 Postscripts: Hyphen 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36.
 SF Trends:.....Slant 1
 Advertisement: The Fanyper (with Bob Shaw Hyphen 13, March, 1955)
 Advertisement:....Nirvana Guild (with Ken Bulmer - Woz 7, June, 1958)

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Impending erratum? Walt gives 1951 as the date for the first Christmas Card from IF. Pelz lists one for 1950. Now you see why I changed the title of this thing?

Note: An additional 100 copies of this bibliography have been duplicated for students, collectors, and connoisseurs of the art and are available from the editor for 25¢. I urge anyone who intends to use this as a working bibliography to avail themselves of an extra copy.

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