

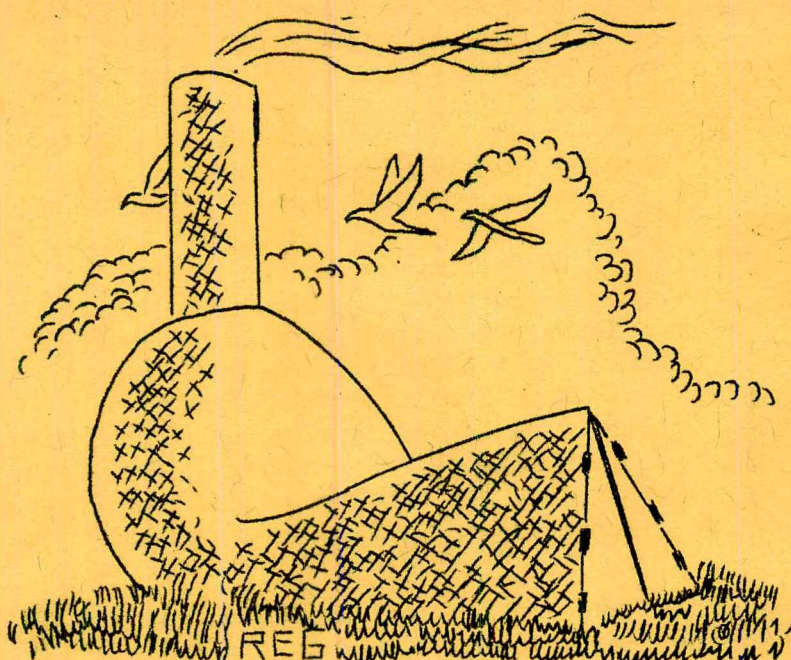
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YAMBARA

No! I will not
cleverly use the
title of your zine
in a cartoon.



4/75



YANDRO

XXIII:1

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JANUARY 76

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In this Bicentennial year, Americans are supposed to turn back to survey our history; with emphasis on the founders of the American Dream. Considering that the American Dream is generally held to be Success, I would like to bring to your attention one of the lesser-known but undeniably successful figures of our history. This YANDRO is herewith dedicated to the memory of that eminently successful historical personage, General James Wilkinson.

RSC



This issue was stenciled, mimeo'd, collated, etc., in and around odd moments in working on ms -- so I know the proofreading was slipshod, and apologies in advance to the contributors whose work I may have mangled (unintentionally, honest) and to the readers who will have to decipher the goofs. I can't promise by next issue I won't be working on another ms and up against the same time-split problem, but at least the weather should be better, which ought to help. (At this stage of this issue I'm just hoping I didn't collate or mimeo anything upside down, which would really be embarrassing. The Rex, thank ghu, has behaved beautifully, static electricity and chilly temperatures not-

withstanding. Otherwise...)

I'm not yet done with the Babylon-gothic I was working on last issue, but I'm getting there. Between various members of the family coming down with flu and the outrages of the season -- yesterday the furnace was off for five hours, and the outside temperature was in the "single numbs" for a good share of that, sigh and shiver -- I keep pecking away. If I can get the viri and the weather and my penchant for nit-picking every little background detail until it's perfect under control, things will be wrapped by end of February, knock plastic.

And even more incentives come in (for plowing ahead and getting the ms accepted, and paid in full): we just received from Kelly Freas the original paintings for Buck and Gene's Laser book, GATES OF THE UNIVERSE, and my SPACE TRAP, which is Laser #20. I'd like to have the painting from my UNTO THE LAST GENERATION and Buck couldn't resist ordering the original from his upcoming Laser, TO RENEW THE AGES -- but we can't afford everything. Yet. Besides, we gotta get these framed, and that'll take more bread. Work, work, work. But I have this fannish dedication to spending money on enduring things like books and paintings rather than ephemera like flashy cars or caviar.

Chambanacon has been mentioned later this issue favorably by both Buck and Bruce and I enthusiastically concur. Despite anything the weather or car breakdowns can throw at us, Chambanacon remains a sparkling gem in the regional scene. This one even had a bomb scare -- courtesy, I believe, of some mundane drunk at a soiree held in another part of the motel simultaneously with the con. It was a very sotto voce bomb scare and came to absolutely nothing, thankfully, but I guess we join the ranks of the plagued. Chambanacon was also, as always, the host to almost a plethora of room parties. That's not unusual at any Midwestern regional, but this time everyone overdid it. Parties, parties, parties, and one room hopping like mad to try to say hello to everyone.

That's a nice situation but it creates a minor problem for filksings. The filksing, Midwestern style, is total spontaneity, but those of us who sparkplug the sings try to pick a non-exclusive and centralized spot to begin, so that as many people as possible can find the action. A room party, even when we're blocked, usually is too restricted to let all the interested audience crowd in. At Chambanacon we ended up in the front of the art/lecture/banquet room, which was nice. Lots of chairs for people who dropped in and out of the listening, lots of chairs and floor for the filkers, and muted lighting so tired-from-partying eyes wouldn't get even more blood-shot coping with the glare. It went on just long enough and everybody's vocal equipment, fingers, and enthusiasm mellowed down in unison and Anne Passovoy cannily pulled the plug before we degenerated into the dregs. Very nice. We must do that again

We enjoyed the Passovoys' marvelous hospitality since Chambanacon, too, stopping by Chi on our way back from Milwaukee over the New Year's break. (Buck and Gene had to get their heads together and plot wombats or koalas or something for an upcoming sequel to NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM..., and in and around that business there was a fine time had by all of us raiding book and record stores, etc., our own li'l minicon.) Anne whomped up a scrumptious spaghetti and Jackie and Wally Franke bopped up from Beecher and we had a miniature con, ignoring the outside wind-chill factor of -39.

It makes for pleasants, and makes me want to mutter a bit at some criticism I've been hearing on the fringes anent the Dorsai/Sca groups in Midwestern fandom. I'm a member of neither, but we bump heads a lot at the filksings and parties. And I'd like to say that when Dorsai/SCA aren't war-plotting or businesssing they go down fine with me, and the filksings have benefited enormously from their addition. I recall some years back when a horde of orcs in disguise -- pretending to be filk-singers -- moved in and crushed any other voices at regional and worldcon sings. The Dorsai/SCA, while they occasionally offer one of their private universe's songs, don't do that. They have the maturity to say okay that's enough of that and let's do something else. Maybe the old Tolkienists were just a bad example of their breed, but they left me with a sour impression of what happens when a group really gets locked into its personal preference, to the trampling of all others. As long as SCA/Dorsai share, I've got no complaints. (And it certainly gives my poor uncalledus fingers a chance to recuperate while giving my ears a treat during the trade-off filksing sessions...)

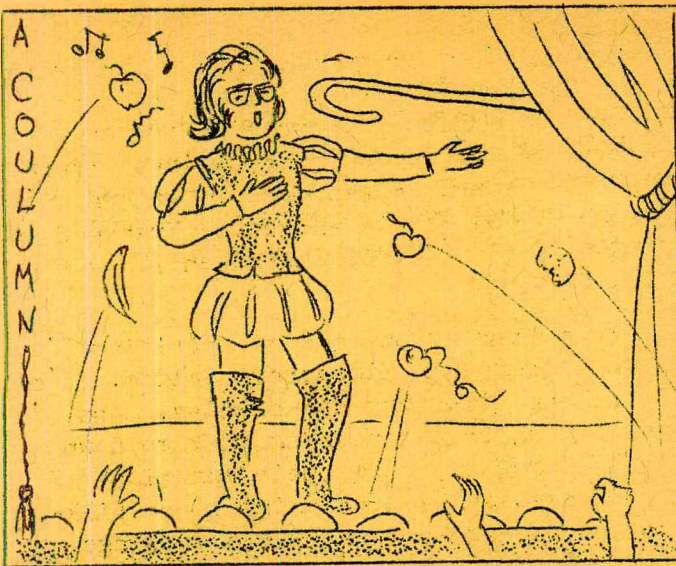
Shifting subject totally, mentioning Chicago reminded me of a recent case there where some freeb broke into a first-grade classroom and tried to rape the teacher. She persuaded him to at least go in the cloak room, lest he shock the kids, and then apparently she fought him off until he gave up and left. Several days later, while the police were circulating a facsimile portrait in the neighborhood, the guy came into the station and complained that "cops were showing his picture around", and was promptly grabbed--and I assume locked away for his own as well as others' protection.

The lawbreakers may be getting stupider, and the put-upon citizens are getting stubbornner. Several people sent up clippings about the sisters in Amboy, Indiana who foiled a bank robbery by letting air out of the tires of the getaway car and then pursuing the on-foot bandits until the men gave up in disgust. They got a lot of publicity, of course, but the general attitude of most of the populace of small towns as well as large was, of course, why not?

Maybe, just maybe, there's a little light showing. I heard Rev. Jesse Jackson is now preaching to his audiences that black parents and militant leaders should talk -- and enforce -- respect for authority and property among their children, and he's apparently getting a sympathetic hearing. The pendulum, I hope, may have reached its far swing and is starting back. If we time it right, we can restrict the reverse swing so we don't end up with an oppressive other-end-of-the-scale crushing of all enthusiasm and difference. (I've been there, too, and it's pretty appalling.) It's encouraging to learn that Jackson is taking that tack. Previously, in this region, he's been a bit prone to come into an area where the local black population has had some trouble and start sounding off at great militant length, often without waiting to hear all the details, and sometimes earning the contempt of the local blacks because of it. Moderation and responsibility aren't necessarily compromise words, though I'm afraid too many young people got that impression during the last twenty years.

I try to point out to those with -- justifiable -- complaints about how the world has gone to hell in a handbasket these last few years that the population has also grown enormously.. It requires firm leadership, but not crushing. A delicate balance, and I think the world can climb out of that handbasket, if it wants to -- even if it begins by letting the air out of a bank robber's tires.

JWC



And now it looks like we'll get this ish out in early February. If this keeps up, we may get back to the prodigious rate of a quarterly.

Chambanaccon was again a typical Midwestern regional, little programming, and a good time was had by all...well mostly all. While I was driving there, the brake started chewing itself to pieces (for the second time in a week) and we had to find a good service station to fix it. (Why do these things happen when I'm driving? It's not even my car!) Jim Hansen also succeeded in delaying our getting a room for about half an hour. After Dad had checked in, Jim came to the desk and asked whether we had gotten a particular room, so we could

keep an eye on the hucksters' room next door to it. We hadn't, and spent time cooling our heels in the lobby while Jim got things straightened out with the hotel. (He promised us half-price for the room, which is why Father agreed to the arrangement. I mean, a man who would order his son to shovel snow into the soft-drink cooler to save money on ice will take anything to be cheap.) But other than that little contretemps, things went rather well for us. (It didn't go well for the hucksters at the table next to ours; they left early, complaining that there were no "real collectors". I didn't get a chance to tell them that many fans are the realest collectors around, but they were kinda strange anyway.)

Since last couolumn I've participated in a school play, ARSENIC AND OLD LACE. I had a very minor part (The Right Reverend Dr. Harper; as if I could ever be mistaken for a preacher!), but it did give me an opportunity to glimpse our new director, Mr. Coscarelli, outside the strictures of the classroom. I didn't like what I saw. He is a very nice person who demands performances worthy of professionals from high school kids. I didn't have that much time on stage to make mistakes, so I got off rather lightly. But several others were considerably annoyed by Coscarelli's high-handed ways. If that was his only flaw I wouldn't object too much, but he also has a tendency to go off half-cocked and criticize errors in others with an air that he never makes any himself. When the school newspaper had the effrontery to omit his name in their story covering the play, his wrath was unbelievable. He was talking about going down and browbeating the paper's faculty advisor -- who didn't have anything to do with the story -- and forbidding further coverage of his plays. He didn't know that the girl who wrote the story was working backstage, and she was not amused. (I was, since my name had also been left out of the story and I was indifferent to the fact.) I suspect that the quality of the school plays will go down for a while, due to a lack of volunteers to work in them. (Most of the backstage crew said they would never work in another play under Mr. Coscarelli, and I couldn't blame them.) Fortunately, I'm getting out of the mess, by graduating.

Speaking of the newspaper, I am now an honorary staff member and columnist for the Bruinformers. It wasn't my original intention, but I was sort of forced into it. You see, I usually spend my lunch hour (which is really a half-hour, but no matter) smof-fing around in the publications room, because most of the people there have a modicum of sense. Recently, because of some difficulties, they passed a rule forbidding all non-staff members entrance during that time, which would exclude me. To get around this, I cooked up a scheme of writing scholarly little articles for them, enough so that I could claim to have a legitimate reason for hanging around.

My first offering was a critique of our Bicentennial and the People's Bicentennial Committee, formed to combat commercialism of our national heritage. (Frankly, I think they're taking an extreme view. As Dad commented, not only would it not be offensive to Ben Franklin to sell a kitschey drinking mug with a poor drawing of him on it, but if he were alive today he'd be the one doing the selling, and happily. What else would

the father of deceptive advertising do?) Personally, I feel that's there's more offense in a bad book of the time (YANKEE DOODLE DANDIES, an allegedly humorous look at our founding fathers) than there is in selling patriotism. After all, the people who supplied arms, food, clothing, etc., to Washington's army made considerable amounts of money. My stand on paying to sign the Declaration of Independence still goes, for there are some things which should not be done. (You don't see the English paying to sign a copy of the Magna Carta, even though that meant less to the common people than our effort did.)

Now I'll attempt to review the books I picked up over the holidays.

THE CON GAME AND "YELLOW KID" WEIL, by W.T. Brannon [Dover, \$3.50] What Brannon has done is to take a number of interviews with Weil, put them into coherent form and chronological order, and let the Kid tell about his life in his own words. Weil is a fascinating character, and pulled some of the slickest cons in the business. (He said he only met one honest man in all his life, which is a social comment of a sort.) Excellent reading.

THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, by the House of Representatives [Gov't Printing Office, \$1.80] Well, what the House did was to commission printing of selected extracts from the 1st Congress's reports. (With the help of some history professors.) Whether or not the House should waste its time in this manner, there are worse things to do. Though written in the dry style common to all committees, this gives you an insight into American feelings in those historic years.

FROM UNION STARS TO TOP HAT, by Edward G. Longacre [Stackpole Books, \$10.00] But I got mine at a gun shop for \$6.00. This is a biography of James Harrison Wilson, Civil, Spanish-American, and Boxer Rebellion commander, who has somehow been missed when the history books were written. Longacre suffers from the syndrome of trying to justify writing the book, when the life of his subject is a perfectly satisfactory excuse in itself. Not worth the full price, but if you can find it remaindered somewhere, it's worth a try.

THE PEOPLE'S ALMANAC, by Irving Wallace and David Wallichinsky [Doubleday, \$7.95] Unless you're just beginning to read history, this will be mostly superfluous. My father quibbled with many of the "facts" mentioned herein, and I admit that even with my limited knowledge I knew most of the material before. The book does have a few little sidelines I hadn't known, but I don't think that they, and the innovative style in which this is written, justify the price.

LOVECRAFT AT LAST, by H.P. Lovecraft and Willis Conover [Carrollton-Clark, \$19.75] Definitely done up for collectors. This isn't an objective view of Lovecraft, and Conover admits that wasn't what he was doing. It is the view of a fifteen-year old toward his hero, via his correspondence with that hero. The interior design is irritating after a while, but the method of converting letters to conversations is quite good. Good reading, and a must for the serious Lovecraftian.

VAMPIRELLA #1 BLOOD STALK by Ron Goulart [Warner PB, \$1.25] I got these because VAMPIRELLA #2 ON ALIEN WINGS by Ron Goulart [Warner PB, \$1.25] of the author. I figured that if anyone could inject some humor and literacy into Vampirella, it would be Goulart. But some things are beyond the art of man. What little humor there is is strained, and most of it is dreary alleged horror, action-adventure type stuff. The characters are on the same level as SPACE:1999 -- one mediocre, and the rest beyond belief. The plots and atmosphere are about the same, too. A waste of valuable trees.



The 22nd. Anniversary Issue. I wonder if we'll have a 25th? YANDRO is becoming an old fanzine and tired, though it's still functioning. (But I can't afford to drop it; the supply of review books would dry up.)

It's been a long, white winter here, so far. Rather like the ones I remember fondly as a child; snow on the ground almost constantly. (It isn't so much fun when the beauties of the crisp, clear, pristine white world are interrupted by \$100 fuel bills coming 3 weeks apart.) But it's been rather nice, at that. I like snow; I'm just not terribly fond of

cold weather anymore. If somebody would just invent warm snow, I'd be all set. (Incidentally, I just discovered that Juanita is a masochist; she watched a rerun of "The Weather Machine", with its postulation of another ice age, on a night when the temperature was below zero and the wind about 30 mph. Or maybe she just has more nerve than I do; I wouldn't even go look.)

Does anyone know what's going on at Lancer Books? Over a year ago, Bob Gaines asked if I'd seen any Lodestone books. At the time, I hadn't, but I later picked up one by Paul Fairman at a secondhand book store. It says "Lodestone" on the outside, and provides an address, but the copyright is Lancer. Several other Lancer titles, including Valley of Creation, are listed in the back. If I missed out on Lodestone, though, I got in on the ground floor with Magnum. One week, it seemed every store in town was selling Magnum books, at prices ranging from 3 for \$1 to 4 for 88¢, and I bought a batch. Some said "Magnum EASY EYE books are published by Lancer"; some merely had the original "This Lancer edition is.." on the copyright page. List prices had all been jacked up to \$1.50; covers were the original Lancer covers with only the list price and publisher's name changed. Authors included Bob Tucker, Ron Goulart, and Dave van Arnam (as well as a lot of authors less likely to be vitally interested in current publishing practice, like Edgar Allen Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Butler, etc.) I thought Lancer was going through bankruptcy? (I've been told that all this shuffling of books out under pseudonymous publishers may or may not be strictly kosher, depending on what sort of bankruptcy is being processed. I'm no legal expert, but the whole thing looks a bit fishy. Any lawyers out there care to comment for publication?)

Of course, it doesn't look quite as fishy as Unibooks does. These also came out last summer at 25¢ each, with no list price shown at all, and no copyright information provided. As I understand it, this invalidates the copyright, and the books are now in public domain. While authors like Conan Doyle are in no position to object, I should think that Norman Spinrad and Dennis O'Neil might make a mild complaint or two. All of these were Belmont-Tower titles.

And speaking of oddities in the book world, did any other YANDRO readers see the Award Books edition of Leiber's Conjure Wife, packaged as a gothic romance? Dumb-looking girl running away from a castle with a light in the window, and all. "Dark shadows of evil trapped her in a web of witchcraft". Yes, indeedy. It also says the book won the 8th. Annual Mrs. Ann Radcliffe Award, whatever that is. Yes sir, the people who have wanted science fiction to rejoin the mainstream of literature have finally succeeded, and isn't it all lovely?

Chambanacon was pleasant, and distinguished by probably the best folksing I've ever attended. (It was so interesting that I forgot about taping, let the tape run out, and missed recording the best parts of it.) A larger than usual group of singers, wider selection of material, and for once it didn't descend into a dirty limerick session at the end. (The first time one hears the limericks, they're fun. By the

third repetition, they're pretty boring.) The rest of the con was a nice round of conversations, broken only by having to take the car downtown to have the brakes fixed. This seems to be the season Moby Dick has decided is correct for brake troubles. One rear brake came apart the week before Chambanacon, the same brake came apart again as we entered the Champaign city limits, and the front brakes went out on the way back from Milwaukee over New Year's. Currently they're being worked on - again - at a local filling station.) Not everyone was as happy with Chambanacon as we were, though. Two hucksters left Saturday afternoon, saying "There aren't any serious collectors here - nothing but fans." (My reply was an indecipherable mumble, but I did keep my face straight and more or less sympathetic until they'd left. I do hope they enjoy themselves at SFEXPO.)

As for my own huckstering, I'm mostly building up stock recently. Got some orders off for books, ordered a batch more of the FIAWOL and FIJAGDH ball-points (I sold out of my original stock - I'm willing to sell them via mail, but not until I have some to sell again) and I'm trying a more expensive souvenir item; a deck of plastic-coated playing cards with a Jackie Franke centaur on the backs. \$2.00 per pack (plus postage which runs about 50¢ per pack if you want any via mail). None of this makes me a lot of money, but it's fun to try out. I also wangled a dealership from Doubleday - mostly so I could stock copies of Gene's and my book.

Writing going slowly at present. I finished the rewrite of a Piers Anthony book for Laser. Piers won't like the result, probably, but I was informed that he turned down the offer to do it himself (and had been informed that if it wasn't rewritten it also wouldn't be published. It had already been paid for.) Readers may not like the results, either, but they're an improvement on the original. DeWeese and I are working sporadically on The Wombat Affair, which is to be a sequel to Now You See. We're being hampered by totally different approaches to the book, but maybe that will improve matters in the end. Maybe... I think my problem is that I refuse to take all this nonsense seriously. Pro writing is fun, but not tremendously important. All this emotion some writers put out about their creativity and artistic integrity is mostly hot air; sometimes amusing, sometimes merely annoying.

New Year's was enlivened by a trip to Milwaukee, with a stop in Chicago on the way back. Major reason was to get Gene and I together to work out something for Wombat, since we got the contract without even having an outline worked out. But we also hit the bookstores. Made most of our purchases in the U.S. Gov't. Printing outlet. I've just discovered that recently; some of my observations are in the book reviews. But we also visited with Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell, Leah Fisher, Kurt Hanson, Bob and Ann Passovoy, and Wally and Jackie Franke. More fun than a convention, with the only drawback being the wending of one's way through Chicago streets to reach the Passovoy apartment. (Which is not all that bad, but I loathe Chicago with an abiding passion, particularly when I have to drive through it.)

Several fans have commented on the lack of good science fiction in 1975 and wondered about the Hugos. I haven't gone thru the magazines yet (I'm working on them now). Of the novels, the best I read during the year was John Boyd's Andromeda Gun, but unfortunately that's copyright 1974. So, of the others, the good ones were Poul Anderson's Midsummer Tempest (but is that eligible? Quick check. Nope; 1974 again, as is Edmondson's T.H.E.M. 1974 was an exceptionally good year.) Well, that leaves Coney's The Jaws That Bite, The Claws That Catch and perhaps something I haven't got to yet; there's another Coney book from Daw in the stack, Rax, and I've heard good things about Ray Nelson's Blake's Progress, from Laser. (Though since some of the praise came from Harlan, I'm skeptical.) A more detailed report next issue, assuming next issue comes out before the Hugo balloting is over.

Most recent fannishness was a visit from Gary Anderson, who was in Indiana to see about production of some electronic invention of his. He told enough funny engineer stories to jolt even Tucker's sense of wonder. One of these years I'm going to have to use my vacation time for another trip to California. Yeah. Realsoonnow. Which is when the next YANDRO can be expected.....

Difugalty

24

column
by

dave locke

If this issue is dated April, it has been about a year between installments. During this gaping interim, all sorts of strange things have been happening. Although these generally serve the purpose of enlivening my conversations, a lot of them do nothing at all good for the state of my nerves.

However, now that Buck has caught up with his book and fanzine reviews (my congratulations to him, by the way, on his capacity. Awesome, isn't it?), we can get down to more frivolous matters. Like my life.

One of the more enchanting episodes -- indeed, most of the more enchanting episodes -- have come about as the result of our moving. Those old-guard "Difugalty" readers with elephantine memories will recall that apartment life was beginning to pall on the Lockes. We were becoming satiated with things like wife-beating, sleeping-pill eating contests, and pet boas in the swimming pool; all seemingly standard fare with our apartment neighbors. We also wanted a little more room to move around, and to throw wild fan parties in, and things like that. You may recall that we were looking for a house.

Well, by gosh, we found one. It turned out to be only one step above a "Handyman's Special" (definition: save the doorknobs and rebuild everything else from the ground up), but we've grown fond of it. My fanac doesn't even have to be relegated to a corner of the kitchen table, anymore.

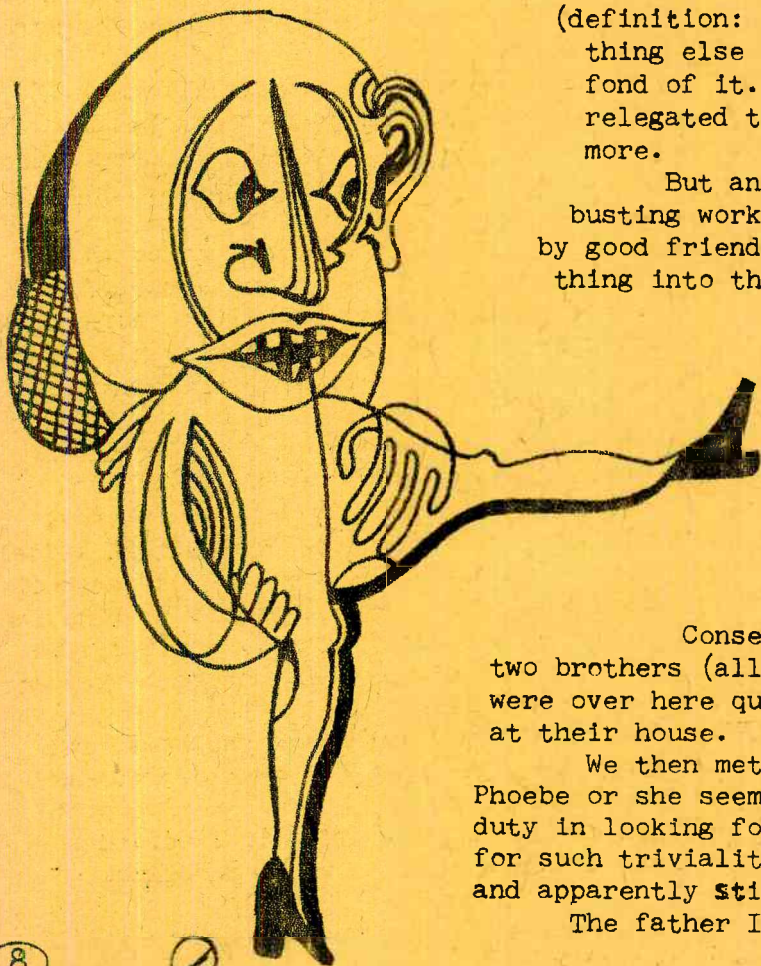
But anyway, with the usual amount of gut-busting work, and aided and abetted for six hours by good friends the Grennells, we shoveled everything into the new house and collapsed -- with every expectation that our new environs would make life more bearable.

We started out by making some new friends. Or rather, our son started out that way. Our boy had not had to change schools, and he discovered that one of his classmates lived in the house across the street.

Consequently, his friend, and his friend's two brothers (all young squirts, eight years and under) were over here quite frequently, or our boy was over at their house.

We then met the mother of these boys, as either Phoebe or she seemed to be constantly performing rodeo duty in looking for these strays and fetching them home for such trivialities as lunch. She did seem to be, and apparently still is, a quite pleasant person.

The father I met by accident. It was the 4th of



July evening, and for some reason I had to go out to the car to retrieve something. Most everyone on the street, excepting us, seemed to be delighting in burning up their money -- in the form of fireworks -- out in the middle of the street. (Edie Drive is a cul-de-sac.) The mother of the three little urchins happened to notice me, and I got invited over to help help watch the husband burn up their money. Afterwards, I got invited in for a beer.

The conversation, once inside and fortified with suds, proved to be quite interesting. Brian, the husband of the three friendly little urchins, had many things in common with me. Over only two glasses of beer, conversational barriers were hurdled quite rapidly and we kicked around a variety of subjects including, with overtones of the sophomore bullsession, politics and religion.

I was immediately happy with this discovery of a kindred spirit residing close by in the new neighborhood. It was beyond my expectations to find that the first neighbor I really talked to had a catalog of vices which included chess, scrabble, writing, table tennis, reading science fiction, shooting pool, and assorted other evils which I feel close to.

Over the following five month period we saw quite a lot of each other. We waged life and death struggles over a battlefield filled with pawns and bishops and knights, and found ourselves pretty evenly matched. We agonized over scrabble tiles, and even though he never won he concentrated and fought like a true wordsmith. In pool we found ourselves evenly matched again. In table tennis he won about two games out of two hundred, but he gave it everything he had and insisted upon coming back for more. He was a good sport and we enjoyed each other's company.

During this period it began to bother me that we never quite became friends. He spoke of friendship, but I never quite felt it. Something was wrong with Brian; something hot and bubbly that lay beneath the surface of his personality, never quite coming into focus. Sometimes you could see it in his eyes, and sometimes it tainted his words, but it wasn't coming out in the open to be recognized.

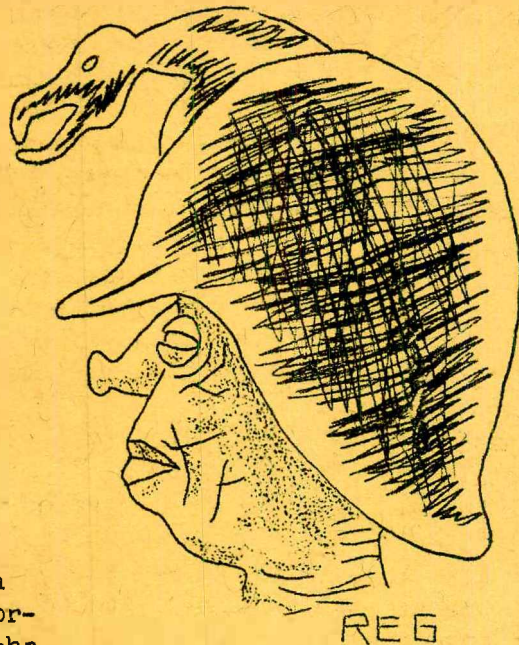
Brian had his obvious faults just like all of us, and just like all of us an association brings them into view sooner or later. For one thing he was a racist, and the focus of his attention was against Jews. For another thing he had no respect for women as people, and preferred to view them much as Richard Geis must view his plastic mail-order vagina. He lived the perfect double-standard, screwing off on his wife and agonizing that she might be doing the same thing.

It is perhaps descriptive of me that I have a high tolerance for other people's personal flaws. Probably because I live in a glass house myself (his flaws I don't have, but I have my own). I would laugh at his flaws and poke fun at them whenever he chose to display them; he would get embarrassed at this, but he couldn't be kidded out of his opinions. And up to that point, I wasn't upset by them. My own personal pet peeve is snobbishness; I can instantly dislike a person without their ever having said a word. Faults such as racism or sexism, much as I dislike them, don't set me off unless they're overly blatant. I ignore them, or ridicule them, or get angry at them depending upon the degree to which they are displayed.

Brian had money problems. He brought home \$26K a year, had money problems, and strangely enough didn't have anything to show for it. He also had health problems. Both his kneecaps would have to be removed and pins set in both legs. He had problems with his parents who lived nearby, due to having a fight with his stepfather and putting him the hospital. He had problems with his wife. He had problems.

Then he started giving me problems.

After having invited him to a fan party at my place, but before the party itself,



I learned that he was an alcoholic. His drinking took a sharp turn for the worse, and he was half-bagged virtually all of the time. He'd miss one or two days of work almost every week, and he drank for breakfast. I began to have serious second thoughts about him coming to the party, but decided the worst thing that could happen would be that he'd pass out.

I was quite wrong. He got bombed at the party, made a total ass of himself, and bugged half the people there. There wasn't anybody there who couldn't handle him, but he tainted the atmosphere nonetheless.

That blew it. I apologized to those who had been exposed to him, and I listened to his apology the next day, and then the relationship decidedly cooled.

I decided that I had had enough of Brian and from that point on the relationship would consist of a "hello-nice weather we're having-goodbye" dialog at best. He was obviously hurt, and then mad, as I proceeded to have as little to do with him as possible.

A few weeks following that worst party which I have ever held, he came over one Sunday and wanted to talk. I proceeded with what I was doing, which was collating an issue of Awry, but he proceeded to ignore the hint. The man was morbid as all hell. All he wanted to talk about was his problems, and all I wanted to do was get him out of there -- which I proceeded to do.

Then I sat down and watched a tennis game, and after that went back to the collating. Just as I was working up a good rhythm, the doorbell rang -- and rang, and rang, and rang, in quick succession.

I knew it was Brian. I felt he was probably bombed out again (on his earlier visit he had had a good start), and this time I was ready to kiss him off quickly.

It was Brian, all right. He was standing in a half-crouch, clenching his stomach, and dripping blood all over our walk.

I remember my first words quite distinctly: "What the fuck happened to you?"

And I remember his reply: "I shot myself...cleaning my gun..."

I grabbed my keys, locked the house, and hustled him into the Fiat Spyder -- which isn't the biggest and easiest car for that kind of a routine. Then I peeled rubber all the way to the emergency room of the hospital, which is something I didn't think my car was capable of.

I checked him in but didn't stay around to answer any questions other than to give out my telephone number. I realized that I had to hustle back just as quickly as it had taken me to get out there, because his three-year old was alone in the house with a loaded gun. (His other two sons were playing at a neighbor's house, and I knew they wouldn't come home until they were dragged there.)

I got back home and dashed across the street to Brian's house. I went in the door and was immediately confronted by his parents. That tweaked my curiosity for a second as to why they would be there, but I brushed past them and went looking for the youngest of the boys. He was playing quietly in one of the bedrooms. Then I instinctively headed for the master bedroom, guided by an innate sense of esp aided by the knowledge that that was where Brian kept his small-gun-collection. A Beretta .25 caliber was lying on the floor, and I pocketed it.

The discussion with his parents was most illuminating. Brian had called them and passed on the cheery information that he was going to shoot himself, and then hung up. His mother couldn't drive and his stepfather has such bad eyesight that he isn't allowed to drive, so they had to find a neighbor to drive them over.

I gained the additional knowledge that this wasn't the first time they had been called by him concerning the subject of potential suicide. Also, he had spent considerable time in a mental institution and it was their firm opinion that it was about time he got shoveled back into one.

They then left to go to the hospital and I rounded up all of the kids. I then searched the home in a fruitless attempt to find a telephone number where I could reach his wife; she was pulling down two jobs in an attempt to pay off bills and stockpile money for the operation on Brian's knees. I tried a few numbers that looked promising, but they didn't pan out. I then called her minister, who didn't know where she worked either, but he said he'd come over to help with the kids. I then herded them over to our house and sat them in front of the television.

Then I went back to collating Awry...

In about a half an hour two policemen knocked on the door. While they eyeballed the uncollated copies of Awry I answered their miscellaneous questions about the shooting. They finally wound up asking me whether or not I thought he had shot himself while cleaning the gun. My answer was that it seemed unlikely a man would put away his cleaning equipment after accidentally shooting himself, and then leave the gun lying in the middle of the floor. I presumed they could see for themselves that the trail of blood led directly over to our place, without detouring to the closet where he kept his cleaning equipment.

The next thing they wanted to see was his house, and at that point the doorbell rang. We all marched over to the door and stared at the middle-aged, well-dressed man who was seeking entrance. He introduced himself as their minister (or rather, her minister). I took him by the elbow and brought him into the house, told him to watch the kids for a minute, and led the police over to the other house.

At that point Brian's parents arrived, and we had a small convention inside Brian's house. The stepfather informed me that Brian wasn't in too bad shape, and that Brian had said his wife's phone number was in the glove compartment of his car. I left everyone inside of the house, unlocked the garage, and was searching for Brian's key-ring for his car key just as his wife drove up and parked in front of the garage.

Not particularly enjoying the turn of events which had so far been incurred on what I had presumed would be a peaceful Sunday afternoon, I did a loin-girding job on myself and walked over to her car. She had rolled down the window and was looking at me with a quizzical smile on her face.

As I explained the situation to her, her smile rapidly evaporated and she settled back into the car seat with a heartedly dejected sigh. One feels rather useless and left-footed under such circumstances, or at least I did, and in the back corner of my mind some terrible pun was being created which had something to do with the question of whether or not they still made it a procedure to shoot the bearer of bad tidings. In a soap-opera drama the whole scene would have been hard-pressed to receive a rating of Grade-B. In real life it seemed much more serious on the surface of it all, but for some reason my brain kept churning out irrelevant thoughts.

The rest of the evening was rather inconsequential. Two minor items occurred which seemed amusing. One was the look on the minister's face when I walked back to the house and found him staring intently at the Grant Canfield nudes on the cover of Awry. The other occurred when my wife and son got home from the church potluck party. Phoebe said it wasn't too interesting, and it was probably just as well that I hadn't gone. I said something to the effect of: "Tell me about it."

Obviously Brian botched up the suicide, although I suspect he shot himself more out of a desire for sympathy than a desire for death. The bullet entered his right side, went through to the left side, hit a bone somewhere, and then bounced down to lodge behind his cod. They couldn't operate to remove it, but hoped that sooner or later it would fall down into one of his nuts -- at which point they could then extract it (painfully, I presume). What did happen though, was that while he was still in the hospital the bullet fell down inside his penis just under the fleshy layer which lies under the skin. So they slit his hammer up the side, removed the bullet, and stitched it up.

I also suspect that he earned more embarrassment than sympathy.

Brian stuck to his story about an accidental shooting. Despite his parents' efforts to do the best thing for him, his wife would not go along with having him committed and consequently he was released from the hospital with no strings attached (except the ones on his penis).

I've seen Brian a few times since then. He talks freely about his previous mental problems (he thought he was a Martian in an Earthman's body), and his morbidity and drinking are deteriorating him at an accelerated rate.

The latest piece of information about him is that his wife told Phoebe she's going to pack up the kids and leave him in the near future. He doesn't know that yet. So now we're sitting across the street from a maniac with a gun collection who is about to get an added complication in his life, and merely thinking about it is slightly distasteful. The man has violent tendencies, and enough firepower to blow his house

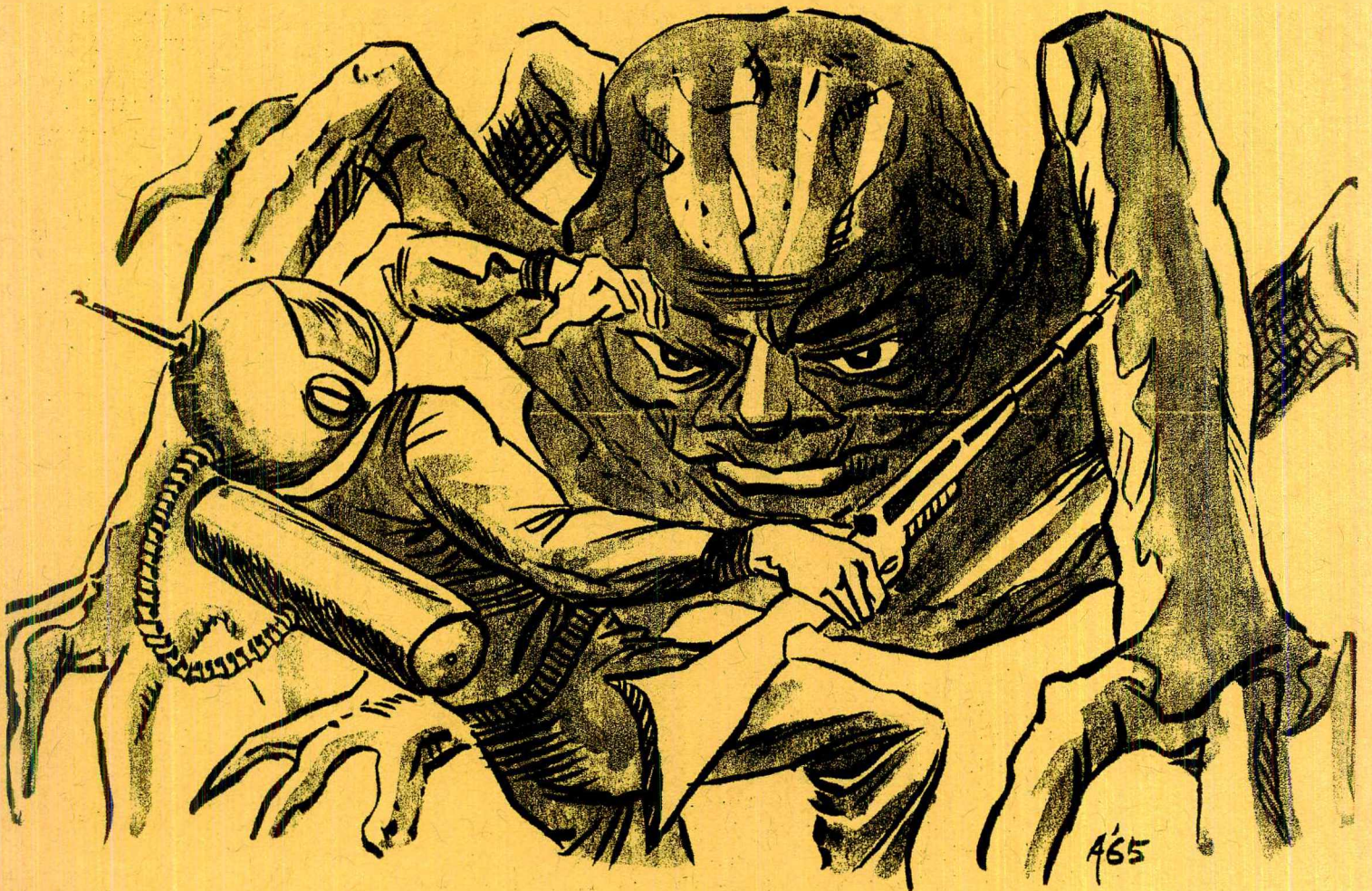
into some other part of town. He's a time bomb that needs defusing, and the only person who can see that he gets help (before it's too late) would prefer to up and leave him rather than doing something constructive for him.

Apartment life is beginning to look nostalgic to us now.

In telling this story to our friends the Grennells, while visiting their Dana Point residence, I was passed the sage but overdue advice that one should never make close friends with one's neighbors. This is not to say that one should not be friendly, but "hello-nice weather we're having-goodbye" is the best approach. Dean then proceeded to tell me two horror stories involving neighbors at one of his previous residences, just to press the point home unnecessarily (the stories would make interesting reading, but they were unnecessary to convince me of the truth of his position). Perhaps Dean could be inveigled to tell them in the pages of Yandro, just to show that I'm not the only one who has encountered excessive headache in this area.

I suppose there's a moral or two, or perhaps an illumination or three, which could be extracted from this ridiculous story if one had the proper equipment for sifting through the dross. I will stick to the opinion that I am not my brother's keeper, regardless of how sympathetic I may or may not feel over someone's predicament, and let the story stand as merely another offbeat episode along one's personal road to oblivion.

But nonetheless I'm keeping my own arsenal within reasonable reach, and have once again formed the habit of checking the real estate listings on a daily basis...



THE OPOSSUM

A big opossum with serpent's tail
I found one morn in my garbage pail
His nose was bloody from leaping up
Against the cover to no avail.

Raccoons had raided during the night
And lifted the lid till it stood upright;
And after their feast, the opossum had come
And fallen into his present plight.

For the gray raccoon is a wily beast.
If the lid falls down, he is not in the least
Disturbed; with his paw he pushes it up
And from his prison is soon released.

The 'possum has no such perceptive mind;
He's a living link with the reptile kind.
In the days when dinosaurs ruled the world,
His family tree was with mine combined.

So I dumped my cousin out of that can
And watched as across the lot he ran;
For I thought that, but for the luck of the draw,
I might be he, and he a man!

L. SPRAGUE DECAMP

THE NINE BASIC SCIENCE FICTION PLOTS

OR

MAYBE WE'RE NOT ALL QUITE AS ORIGINAL AS WE THINK WE ARE BUT WHO CARES?

article by ——— MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

One of the continuing preoccupations of writers, critics, and people who are interested in writing has always been the idea that there are only half a dozen or so basic plots, and that all others are variations of them. Someone once said that all Hollywood movies were variations off the "Cinderella" story, and while that may be overly simplistic (how do you fit in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, or CLEOPATRA?) it certainly fits an awful lot of them. (And then there's always THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY...)

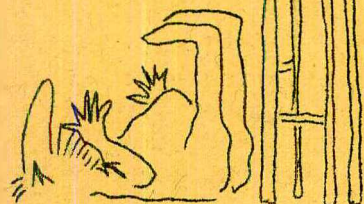
I suppose, when you really come right down to it, there is only one basic plot, which fits all fiction, whether love story, science fiction, Western, or crime novel, and everything from Dostoevsky to Arthur C. Clarke; it certainly describes everything from TARZAN OF THE APES to PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN. This basic plot could be summed up as follows; "the hero's attempt to live and do well in spite of everything harsh nature, his fellow man, or a vengeful God can throw at him." When I was just starting out to try and write s-f, and Jerry Bixby was editing Planet Stories, he was distressed at my inability to plot properly, and by my efforts to cover

up my inability to plot by lots of what I then used to think of as "good writing." He told me, in exasperation, that he'd give me one good basic plot to use until I grew up enough to think on my own, and summed it up as follows; "Joe has his fanny in a bear trap and his adventures in getting it out."

Which, of course, is a less elegant version of the single basic fiction plot as outlined above.

But within this basic plot there are so many hundreds of variations and differing themes that science fiction writers have been credited with more originality than other writers of category fiction. Recently I sat down to analyze how many science fiction plots there actually were; and I came up with NINE. Only nine, and they describe everything from Hugo Gernsback to Harlan Ellison's DANGEROUS VISIONS.

It's actually good discipline for a would-be writer, trying to learn to plot, to sit down and analyze his ten favorite -- or hundred and ten favorite -- stories, and see how they fit into these Basic Plots. So here they are:



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ONE: The world is threatened and the Hero saves it. This one has a "natural switcheroo"; a villain tries to destroy the world (or civilization, or a planet, or an asteroid base...), and is defeated.

Sound old hat? Well, there were plenty of them in the old days, of course. Almost all of Jules Verne, all of Sax Rohmer, all of Ian Fleming/James Bond (which I class as borderline science fiction), and there are some very modern versions by John Creasey under one of his pen names which deal with a Sane Scientist who saves the world several times from various science fictional paranoids or criminal types.

TWO: The Hero's personal struggle to find happiness on Mars. (For "Mars", read any alien world, planet, alien dimension, or what have you.) This is basically the Edgar Rice Burroughs theme, but it's been written again and again by everyone from Henry Kuttner to Lin Carter. This also includes some splendid "hard science" novels, for this is the story of the clash with an alien world per se; a planet boiling hot or icy cold, Jack Vance's BIG PLANET, for example or ICEWORLD, DUNE, or LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS.

THREE: The clash of human and alien, also known as The Bems Next Door. (Theodore Sturgeon does this better than anybody else.) There are dozens of variations on this basic plot, but they settle down into a few:

3a: Boy meets Bem (or, boy meets robot)

3b: Human masquerading as an alien, or alien pretending to be human.

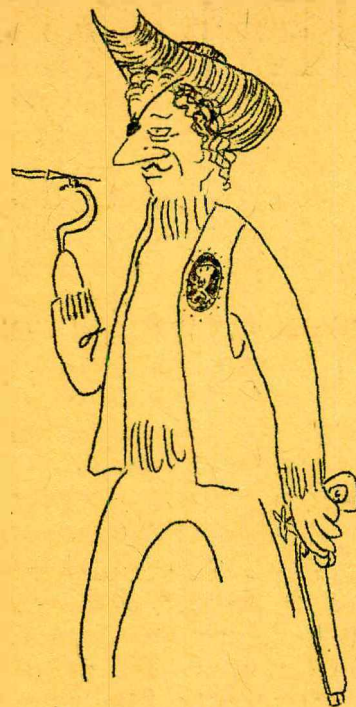
As I say, Ted Sturgeon comes immediately to mind. So does Hal Clement's NEEDLE, or my own THE COLORS OF SPACE. And when you come right down to it, 2001 AD belongs in this category.

This could be called the Charles Fort Theme. Phil Dick's EYE IN THE SKY, and L. Ron Hubbard's TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY, are classic examples. There are two sub-categories, mostly explored by A. E. van Vogt; aliens among us, surprise, I'm one (this was done exquisitely in a very short story, "Don't Look Now," by the late Henry Kuttner), and aliens among us, surprise, you're one, as in Frank Robinson's THE POWER.

FIVE: Technology will destroy the world. There are again three basic variations of this theme. One is optimistic; technology tries to destroy the world, but is defeated by the Hero, or an act of God; STAND ON ZANZIBAR belongs to this category. The story where we all get on a spaceship and go somewhere else after we've worn out this planet is one example of this kind of thing. Then there is the switcheroo, in which technology destroys the world despite the best we can do. I think the bitterest version of this one is Cyril Kornbluth's THE MARCHING MORONS. Bob Silverberg's THORNS is pretty bad, too. (I mean grim, not badly written.)

SIX: And a good case could be made for saying this is a special case of FOUR, Aliens Among Us; I call it The Alien As Hero. The simplest level of this plot is the comic strip Superman; the alien in hiding. On a more complex level it reaches philosophical heights such as those found on Olaf Stapledon's ODD JOHN. Silverberg did the "switcheroo" on this one with DYING INSIDE; instead of the mutant telepath as Hero we find him as antihero, failure, metaphor of the destruction of man. It's the most tempting of the plots, the easiest to write on the comic-strip level, and the hardest to do well.

SEVEN: "Listen, there's a hell of a good universe next door..." and this Basic Plot deals with the adventures of the Hero somewhere else -- or sometime else. On the pulp level, this is the old Kuttner plot; the Hero falls into another dimension and either spends all his effort trying to get back to his own place and time, or else discovers he likes it there and spends his time trying to carve out a niche for



himself. More recently it's been done as the TRANSIT TO SCORPIO series, Lin Carter's GREEN STAR series, and on a high level or intelligent sophistication, Daphne du Maurier's THE HOUSE ON THE STRAND. And yes, of course, this is a special sub-case of TWO, the search for happiness on Mars.

EIGHT. The quest. The Hero goes out looking for something above and beyond himself, whether a lost city, a jewel of enlightenment, or a magical lost sword. One might characterize this as the basic fantasy plot -- Sanders Anne Laubenthal's EXCALIBUR, despite its many faults, is an exciting modern example -- but it's been done in science fiction too. Try analyzing RENDEZVOUS ON RAMA, and you'll see that it follows the basic Quest-novel theme, with pure scientific knowledge substituted for enlightenment. On a slightly more fantastic level, there's J.R.R. Tolkien, Talbot Mundy's THE DEVIL'S GUARD, OM, and JIMGRIM, and Poul Anderson's fine funny THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS, though that could also be considered a splendid humorous example of SEVEN -- the Universe Next Door.

NINE, and this category includes offbeat versions of all eight of the others; this is the "gimmick" story, the paradox story, the "all done with mirrors" story, where nothing is what you expect it to be. All the time-travel paradox stories, as opposed to the straightforward adventure-in-alien-time. This story is different because in this story, no matter how many characters there are, the gimmick is the hero. It's usually a short story; I can't think of a single novel where a gimmick carries it through. I suspect a lot of the stories I start to read, and can't, fall in this category. Like the last two Heinleins...

So there they are; and if you want to boil them down into six categories, or five, or seven, maybe you're right too. Because, after all, there's only one plot.

Which is where I came in.



The Dancer

THE PROUD PROGRAMMERS

BY O ALEX YUDENITSCH

For the last ten years or so, computers have been increasingly presented and seen as threats to individual liberties, para-fascistic order-followers and, in general, goons of the Establishment. Punching extra holes in IBM cards, writing "please" in "do not write in this space" fields, and ridiculing computers for demanding payment of \$0.00 "debts" have been rather frequent reactions; the Nostalgia Book Club offers "personal service, just like 1939 -- no computers" (they possibly don't even have enough members to justify using one, but the phrasing is significant).

Most of these accusations are true most of the time, and some are true all of the time. Why is that so? The answer, as I see it, lies in the very nature of our present-day computers: they are machines that cannot program themselves or alter their programs, so they'll blindly follow any program imposed upon them. The problem, really, lies in the programs themselves, and in those who write them. But what exactly are programs, since they're the essence of the present-day data processing.

By "program" I mean "a preset way of reacting to inputs"; not necessarily a fixed way, but one that is set before the input is sensed. Conditioned reflexes, instincts, and prejudices are programs by this definition. The main difference between computers and humans, in this respect, is exactly in the fixedness of their programs: while we can reprogram ourselves, computers can't, and so are at the mercy of human programmers' shortcomings (and, incidentally, that's not a typo: I belong to those who consider the "mm" unnecessary). SF is full to overflowing with consequences of this fact, so I don't think it's necessary to elaborate on it.

Since computers, once programed, are difficult to mend their ways, the thoroughness of their programs is very important. And a deadly sin, very common among programmers, becomes most relevant: that of "hubris" (Greek for an arrogant type of pride), or the conviction that their programs have foreseen everything that can possibly happen in their particular corner of the universe.

Finagle's First Law (or Murphy's Law, if you read management books) says that, if anything can go wrong, it will. So you can guess what happens when a computer, acting on the unwritten assumption that the unforeseen can't happen, tries to receive a \$0.00 debt. You can't tell it that this debt doesn't really exist; the only way that it can be canceled, according to the program, is by registering its payment, even if it's for the "nothing" sum of \$0.00.

Actually, it's quite impossible to foresee everything that can happen. So a good program tries to include the most probable cases, and provides some tests to know if they're applicable in each case; that way, you stand a chance of exorcising the hidden assumptions. For example if you have a \$12.99 debt with a finance company, and they ask you to pat it within 3 days, then in that period you can only:

- a) pay \$12.99
- b) pay something other than \$12.99
- c) pay nothing

That's true, and, so far, so good. But if a computer program then assumes that in the last two cases you still owe them something, it can't cope with the following (possible) cases):

- their records are wrong, and you owe them less than \$12.99
- you're generous (or ornery) and send them a round \$13.00
- you've returned the merchandise, and so consider that you owe them nothing

So, if you're in one of the cases above, you'll get rollersteamed by the program, which will merrily send you further notices to pay the outstanding debt (even if it's negative) until someone tells it to stop -- and that could take some time, if the whole system rests on the assumption that "the computer's never wrong". A complete program would have "manual overrides" at several points, letting someone correct the data if necessary; and writing such programs is accomplished (or not) by human programmers. So we must understand them to know why computers are frequently narrow -- and literal-minded, dull, obnoxious bureaucrats.

For a start, you might try considering programmers as artists rather than as professionals, because the essential problem of programming is akin to the artist's: expressing some aspects of reality in a medium with special laws and limitations. But there is one trait of this art which, for the immediate future, rules out any "new waves": a program, no matter how aesthetically pleasing, is useless unless it "communicates" fully -- that is, unless a computer can follow it to obtain the results desired by the programmer.

Another important difference is that those results aren't generally defined by the programmer, but are given him by a systems analyst or someone else. That's the rule in commercial computer programming and it means that the poor programmer frequently isn't responsible for the program's shortsightedness. The buck, as usual, rises (please not: lower case "b").

But how is that different from the traditional bureaucracy, where anonymous minions receive "programs" from up high? As already discussed, most bureaucrats have at least some common sense, and a general idea of the purpose of the "programs" they have to follow. On the contrary, a computer programmer is actively discouraged from putting in a program anything that isn't in the original specifications. This means that the computer, lacking any in-built common sense, becomes more rigid than the most inflexible human clerk.

This explains why most computer systems have an "inhuman insensibility," even tho they have been programmed by human -- and sometimes very sensitive -- programmers. Of course, computer programmers, as a group, are as varied as most, and there is a significant portion of them that seem more related to Frankenstein's Monster than to any human being -- or even to the average fan! That is, fortunately, most irrelevant since the significant factor isn't their human awareness, but that of the System for which they work!

Please note: the System, and not the computer! Because you could have some sort of "common sense monitor" in computers, even present-day ones, but that would involve great changes in the way Business Data Processing is generally viewed and implemented.

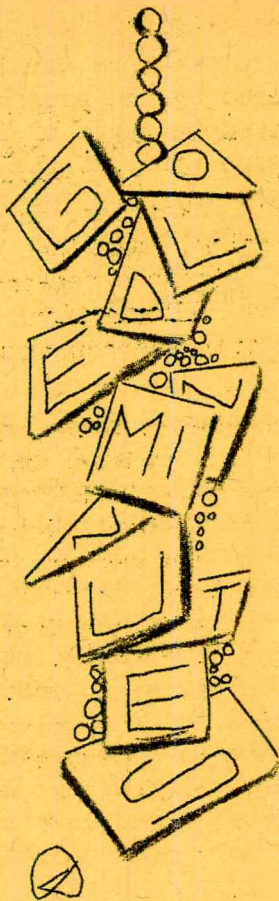
If we want computers to be more aware of human needs, we don't need Ted Sturgeon (or even Dick Geis) as a programmer, but we would have to be willing to have higher overhead costs in order to equip computers with common sense -- and if that way we got self-conscious computers, I'd say it was worth it.

 "Your mood ring is beautiful when you're angry." . . . Bruce Coulson

NOTICES

Robert M. Allen, 33 Howland Ave., Toronto, Ont. M5R 3B2, Canada, is liquidating his fanzine collection. He can supply most issues of YANDRO from #120 thru 205, in good condition, for 50¢ each postpaid. He also has other fanzines from the 1940s thru 1960s, including some apa mailings.

Mike Banks, P.O. Box 312, Milford, OH 45150, sent us a flyer on NONCON I, featuring such items as the Hacko Award for the best non-writer of the year (I have several nominees in mind....) and the Loulou Award for the best unpublished story of the year. (God, but Ohio fans have long memories; Tabakow is never going to live down "Sven".) Registration fee is 20¢ in stamps or coin to Banks, and it gets you a copy of THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE NONCON, whatever they may be. Or may not be. Or something.



ALTERNATE WORLDS: THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION, by James Gunn [Prentice-Hall, \$29.95] Science fiction now has its own coffee-table book. This is a 9"x12" volume, 256 pages, lavishly illustrated. The color work is primarily devoted to magazine covers, while there are hundreds of black-and-white photos of magazine and book covers, authors (most of the well-known authors are included), movie stills, and old book and magazine interior art. The photos of authors have one drawback for the neofan in that they are undated. Most of them are reasonably current, but one of a clean-shaven Andy Offutt should be a collector's item, the one of Ray Palmer must have been taken forty years ago, and a couple of others aren't too recent. Mostly, though, it's an excellent assortment. Much the same can be said for the history. There are numerous minor errors. (James Schmitz is constantly referred to as "Schmidt", invention of the rifle "bullet" is given as 1849 -- the bullet was invented before the rifle was; (what Gunn refers to is the self-contained cartridge), Don Bensen's name is misspelled, the reference to "six issues of Fantasy Book should have been eight issues, TAFF is described as a fund to bring European fans to US cons instead of a two-way exchange, commercial hardcover interest in science fiction is described as "the end of the specialized presses" which I'm sure will be news to Advent, Mirage Press, Don Grant, Owlswick Press, Nesfa Press, Shroud, Carcosa, Odyssey, Fax, Arkham House, etc. Authentic is listed as an American magazine and Science Fiction Adventures as a wholly British one -- it began as a BRE of the US magazine and only published original stories after

the US edition folded -- Saturn's changeover to a detective magazine and then to a horror mag is not chronicled although the change from Other Worlds to Flying Saucers is, the STAR SCIENCE FICTION pbs are listed as "an annual series" -- copyright dates are 1953, 1953, 1954, 1958, 1959, and 1959 for the 6 volumes -- and Gunn is unsure of the number of volumes of STAR SHORT NOVELS published; there was one.) An additional reference to Roger Elwood as making a career out of original anthologies was apparently true when the book was written but made false by the time the book got into print, which is one of the hazards of writing about people still active in the field. Now, none of these errors is particularly important to the history of science fiction (with the possible exception of the survival of the specialized publishers). Overall, Gunn traces a quite accurate account of the course of science fiction paralleling the rise of technology. It isn't intended as a textbook, and for the outsider or neofan wanting a general view of the field it's an excellent choice (assuming you have that much money to spend). In particular, the magazine covers, chosen to illustrate the variety of published titles, are a far better survey of science fiction artwork than are those of a good many books devoted solely to s-f art. Just don't assume that every little detail is absolutely factual. (Perhaps the least important error, and the one that will draw the most fire, is the photo caption of "Captain John Kirk" of the starship Enterprise.) In sum, it's a reasonably good book -- and a gorgeous one.

CITIES AND SCENES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD, by Roy Krenkel [Owlswick Press, \$16.00] This is mostly based on sketches Krenkel did for his illustrations of De Camp's GREAT CITIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD, with some drawings of Aquilonia and other fantasy realms thrown in for good measure. Since the volume measures 10"x16", the art is reproduced in larger size than it could be in the de Camp book, which is all to the good, since Krenkel puts in a lot of details that are hard to see in the smaller reproductions. This is a skinny book -- 82pp -- for the price, and whether you think it's worth the

money or not depends on how much you like Krenkel's art. You'll about have to see the book in order to decide -- but if you know you like Krenkel, this is an excellent showcase of his work.

VIRGIL FINLAY; AN ASTROLOGICAL SKETCH BOOK [Don Grant, Publisher, West Kingston RI 02982 -- \$15] A compilation of Finlay's work for the astrology magazines. Background on all work is given, along with a short article by Beverly Finlay on his general working techniques. The covers included are, unfortunately, only sketches, as the originals were never returned. (For one thing, the various astrology magazines are still using them occasionally) Some of them, however, are very finished pen-and-ink drawings, and among his best work. I'd seen a good many of these illustrations in the magazines, but it's nice to have them in book form, and with better reproduction than the magazines provide. About 100 drawings are included.

BEYOND JUPITER, by Chesley Bonestell and Arthur C. Clarke [remaindered, \$5.98] This is, if I recall correctly, the last of the large-size (8 1/2" x 11") volumes on the planets which used Bonestell illustrations; others in the series are CONQUEST OF SPACE, EXPLORATION OF MARS, ACROSS THE SPACE FRONTIER, and MAN AND THE MOON (done with various popular science writers, such as Ley, Richardson, etc. -- but the reason for buying all of them was the Bonestell plates). All the others are long out of print. The text here is largely devoted to the possibility of a space probe in the late 1970s which could fly by all the outer planets -- Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto -- in one trip, with lots of Bonestell plates showing what the probe might find. (Since the space program's pittance has been the favorite whipping-boy of monetary outbacks, the Grand Tour fly by will only come to you via the artist's imagination.) As in all this series of books except possibly CONQUEST OF SPACE, the text is trivial but the color plates are magnificent.

MARS AS VIEWED BY MARINER 9, by NASA [U.S. Government Printing Office, \$8.15] A large-size hardcover volume crammed with around 200 pages of Mars photos. Text is pretty well limited to explaining the photos, and quite adequately done. There is also a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map of Mars (stop and think about that for a minute). An absolutely fascinating book.

PIONEER ODYSSEY, by NASA [U.S. Government Printing Office, \$5.50] A large-size paperback book covering the flight of Pioneer 10. It includes photos of the technicians on the project, some of the scientific apparatus, lots of color and black-and-white photos of Jupiter, and a few uncredited paintings which are interesting if not up to Bonestell's standards. The text tells you almost more than you really wanted to know about Pioneer 10, and does it in a very dry, dusty style. But the plates are good.

THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT, by Robert E. Howard [Don Grant, q.v., \$12.00] The second A WITCH SHALL BE BORN, by Robert E. Howard [Don Grant, \$12.00] and third volumes in the matched set of Howard. WITCH is illustrated by Alicia Austin, and while her costumes keep reminding me of Central America instead of the Near East, they're lovely pictures of a decadent barbaric court. Richard Robertson illustrates TOWER; I didn't like his style as well, but it's good work. The stories are rather typically Howard. WITCH is thoroughly implausible with our barbaric superman performing ridiculous feats of endurance, but it's good fun. TOWER is better known, having been reprinted often, adapted for comics, and so on, and is reasonably high class s&s. The volume also includes "The God in the Bowl," which is less well done but adequate. (Compared to his imitators, almost all Howard's stories are good.)

SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, Revised, by L. Sprague de Camp [Dwlswick Press, \$8.50] In the two terms I served as Secretary of SFWA, I got innumerable letters from people who wanted a book about writing science fiction. Most of my answers began: "The best book on the subject is out of print, but if you're in contact with secondhand book dealers, ask for..." I even wrote de Camp and suggested that he get the thing reprinted so I wouldn't have to go through such longwinded explanations. (He replied that it wasn't going to be one of his more urgent projects. But apparently Scithers

talked him into it.) Anyway, here, in print, is the best book on the subject of writing science fiction. Some of the interesting but extraneous material from the first edition, including biographies of selected authors, has been eliminated from this one, and notes on publishers have been updated or eliminated. What remains is a brief history of modern science fiction, notes on what sort of behavior to expect from a typical editor, author, or agent (unusual), and where ideas come from, plotting, selling, and conducting one's writing in a businesslike manner (which Sprague does and I don't -- I approve of his ideas but I tend to be too lazy to follow them). If you want to write professionally, get this. If you're even moderately interested in the "inside story" or how authors and particularly stf authors operate, get it. (And anyone who is a science fiction fan ought to be in the last category.)

INVISIBLE DEATH, by Lin Carter [Doubleday, \$5.95] In my review of NEMESIS OF EVIL I said it was a very funny book for the nostalgia-minded, but I hoped it really wasn't the beginning of a series. Unfortunately, it was, and here we have another authentic recreation of the days of the pulp superheroes, specifically The Shadow. One book like this is funny; two books are dull.

A TIME WHEN, by Anne McCaffrey [Nesfa Press? I'm not sure of the price, and it isn't listed. \$6.95?] It's a small book; the story, about novelet length, is part of her Dragonriders series. Never previously published. A limited edition; my copy is #209 of 800, and signed by McCaffrey and illustrator Bonnie Dalzell, who has done a lovely dust jacket and several interiors of the dragons. Well-done, though for the average reader it's a bit high-priced for the length.

UNDER A CALCULATING STAR, by John Morressy [Doubleday, \$5.95] Action-adventure, novel length Planet Stories, lightweight but acceptable.

THE BROKEN CITADEL, by Joyce Ballou Gregorian [Atheneum, \$8.95] A moderately good juvenile Quest story. Sibby enters an alien world, in which things like precognition and fortunetelling with a sort of alien Tarot deck are practical arts. She falls in with companions who are trying to overthrow a witch-queen, and in the end learns a few startling details about herself. The author has included some interesting characters, two separate styles of verse (the courtly chants, in blank verse, and the vulgar ballads -- well done, even if one of the ballads is suspiciously close to "Mat-tie Groves" in content), and the sort of pseudo-Christian religion common to this sort of book. The only drawback is the pacing, which is so slow as to put this reader asleep a couple of times. An interesting book -- recommended to the younger teenage girl who is getting her first taste of fantasy.

KILLERBOWL, by Gary K. Wolf [Doubleday, \$5.95] A sports story -- the old pro and tired forced to surmount the challenge of the young, obnoxious champion. I used to read it regularly in Bluebook. Wolf has translated it more or less into science fiction, by inventing a game called "street football", which extrapolates our current love of violence into the future and crosses pro football with the gladiatorial games. As a sidelight, it's one of the nastier visions of the future projected by stf writers. The game never really became believable to me, but Wolf worked it out interestingly enough. Nice action scenes.

THE WATCHERS, by Jane Louise Curry [Atheneum, \$6.50] This one hit one of my soft spots -- the mysteries of an ancient culture hidden in the Appalachians. The central character is a city boy farmed out to his relatives in a back-of-beyond village in the hills, inhabited by a very queer sort of people and menaced by strip-mine operations. Gradually, he finds that the people are even odder than he thinks, and the menace is to more than a few mountain shacks. I enjoyed it thoroughly -- one of the best books of the year -- but then that's the sort of book I like. A juvenile, if it matters.

THE STARCROSSED, by Ben Bova [Chilton, \$6.95] A farce about a future tv show which bears more than a passing resemblance to Harlan Ellison's version of his problems with the producer of another tv show with a rather similar name. The humor is trifle broader than I like, but it's there; somewhat reminiscent of the Goulart approach to science fiction, though with a totally different writing style. Recommended.

THE WAR FOR THE LOT, by Sterling Lanier [secondhand] I picked this up at Chambers, paying a higher price (\$1.50) than I should have for an ex-library copy that someone seems to have read in the bathtub. Underwater. However, it was a Lanier book I'd never heard of. Original publisher is Follatt, and it's one of those talking-animal juvenile fantasies. Not the best of the lot that I've read, but good enough. The woodland animals need the help of a human boy in repelling the invasion of rats from a nearby town dump. Recommended for the 8-10 set among fans.

KINGS OF HORROR: ARTHUR MACHEN AND ROBERT W. CHAMBERS [Shroud Publishers, 5652 Vine-land Ave., North Hollywood CA 91606 - \$1.00 each] These are odd-sized 80-pp booklets on slick paper, with good interior illustrations in KINGS and variable ones in ISLAND] They are also Fantasy Readers #6 and 7. ISLAND is a horror story which could also be classed as early science fiction. Not well written, but some quite interesting ideas. KINGS is a collection of short stories; "The Inmost Light" by Machen, "The Mask" and "The Yellow Sign" by Chambers. The Chambers stories are also available in THE KING IN YELLOW from either Dover or Ace (assuming you can find either edition); the Machen is harder come by. These are grotesqueries, and I abhor the lack of logic shown by the characters, but they're well done of their type.

THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES READER, edited by Peter Haining [Doubleday, \$7.95] Emotionally, I dislike the idea of putting science fiction into an anthology aimed at occult readers, but I suppose it makes money for the writers. The fiction selected is at least interesting in the main. For "subterranean worlds" we have Poe's "Ms. Found in a Bottle," and "The Coming Race" by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a pair with more historical importance than entertainment. For "prehistoric man" we have "The Grisly Folk" by H.G. Wells and "The Mound Builders" by Lafcadio Hearn, the latter an allegedly non-fiction occult article. (I suppose de Camp's "Throwback" would have been considered frivolous by the editor.) Then the contents improve. For "mythology" (what's mysterious about that?) we have "The Shining Pyramid" by Arthur Machen and "The Call of Cthulhu" by Lovecraft, recognized classics. The "lost races" section has "The Moon Pool" by Merritt, and "the Terror of Blue John Gap" by Conan Doyle; not the best representatives, perhaps, but good enough. "Ancient civilizations" provides "The Valley of the Sorceress" by Sax Rohmer, and "A New God Was Born" by B. Traven; lesser-known but quite good stories. For "legendary continents" we have "The Lost Continent" by Geoffrey Household, which I enjoyed when it was first published in the Saturday Evening Post, and "An Offering to the Moon" by Clarke Ashton Smith, one of his lesser but interesting stories. "Mysterious monuments" provides "The Secret of Stonehenge" by Harry Harrison, and "The Bald-Headed Mirage" by Robert Bloch, both good. (Bloch doesn't take all this nonsense seriously; his hero mutters things about "a mirage of convenience" spaceships powered by the sex-drive and "libidough", and "fate accompli".) There there are "monsters"; "The Creature of the Snows" by William Sambrot, and "A Convenient Monster" by Leslier Charteris, both good, though I'd have liked to see Arthur Clarke's story about the Loch Ness monster wearing a diving helmet. And for "gods from the skies" we have "The Cave of History" by Theodore Sturgeon (which I first encountered under the title "The Sky Was Full of Ships") and "Men Without Bones" by Gerald Kersh. The last isn't a good example of Kersh's work, but since he's one of the most skillful writers around, it's still good.

THE CHAOS SPAWN, by F.C. Adams [Shroud Publishers, address above, \$1.00 each]
THE DEVIL GROUND, by Ted Pons These are volumes 2 and 3 in "The Library Lovecraftian" -- 32-page paperbound pamphlets in a sort of large digest size. SPAWN is a quite good horror story, even if the price is high. Presumably horror-story readers, facing a shortage of readable material, will be willing to pay for it. GROUND tries too hard to imitate Lovecraft, and doesn't quite make it. Better than stuff I've read in horror fanzines, but not really pro quality.

THE EXILE WAITING, by Vonda McIntyre [Fawcett, \$1.25] The first chapter reads like a Clarion short story, one that didn't quite make the grade. But once you get through that, the book is an outstanding novel; read it before you vote on next year's Hugos. (Not eligible for this year's, though it might make the Nebula ballot.) Basically an

adventure story, but with characters much better drawn than usual. (The background, which I generally enjoy, is sketched very hastily, but with the rest of the book so well done I can overlook it; one can't have everything in 224 pages.) Get this one.

RENEGADES OF TIME, by Raymond F. Jones [Laser #1, 95 cents] Laser books are not intended to make you think; they aren't really intended for fans at all, but for mundanes with no knowledge of science and not much interest in it. Heavy science or philosophy is taboo; these are a sort of modern Planet Stories. I always liked Planet, so... The Jones book is acceptable lightweight adventure: current-model human entangled with future time-travelers, who by dint of American pluck solves all the visitors' problems. Ed Hamilton used to write them much better than this (so did Jones) but I've read a lot worse recently. Okay.

HERDS, by Stephen Goldin [Laser #2, 95 cents] I keep thinking this started out in life as a detective novel, with the alien watcher added to make it science-fictional. The sfnal elements are the weakest, but overall it's an acceptable time-waster if not great writing.

CRASH LANDING ON IDUNA, by Arthur Tofte [Laser #3, 95 cents] This one is expanded from a short story that wasn't all that good, either. (I note Lester del Rey scoffs at the idea that Tofte is an "old pro"; Lester didn't do his research. Tofte wrote for the 1930s Amazing Stories; unfortunately he hasn't improved all that much in the interim. He's a thoroughly pleasant man to know, but not all that great a writer.)

WALLS WITHIN WALLS, by Arthur Tofte [Laser #5, 95 cents] A fairly cut-and-dried adventure, with characters I couldn't get interested in.

SERVING IN TIME, by Gordon Eklund [Laser #6, 95 cents] The usual convoluted time-travel story, which I've never found terribly interesting, unless it's by Heinlein making fun of the genre. No worse than most, but certainly no better.

SEEKLIGHT, by K. W. Jeter [Laser #7, 95 cents] The premise kept bothering me, because the author never bothered to make it believable. (I don't think he could.) But otherwise, it's a quite good adventure novel; the best of the lot so far. (Excepting #4, of course...) If you dislike the idea of Laser, try this one. If you don't like it, you certainly won't like any of the others.

CARAVAN, by Stephen Goldin [Laser #8, 95 cents] A nice premise and a good beginning, but it begins to fall apart in the middle. Somehow the characters quit being interesting and start going through the motions. And there are no surprises and very little suspense.

FALLING TOWARD FOREVER, by Gordon Eklund [Laser #10, 95 cents] This is another time travel story, more varied than Eklund's first. There are some good ideas, but there are also places where the author legislates the hero out of trouble. I enjoyed it more than the earlier one.

UNTO THE LAST GENERATION, by Juanita Coulson [Laser #11, 95 cents] After hearing Juanita talk about this, and reading Virginia Kidd's comments on it, I was surprised to find it as good as it was. No award-winner, but acceptable; probably more acceptable to non-fans than to fans, who will find it slow and not very exciting.

ICE AND IRON, by Wilson Tucker [Ballantine, \$1.50] The ending has been revised from the hardcover version, to provide more of an explanation. Major change starts with Chapter 13, which is not the last chapter in the pb version. (From the end of Chapter 12, the hardcover was 14 pages; the pb has 31.) Actually, however, I don't think the new ending was all that much of an improvement; I thought the original book was pretty good. Recommended, whether or not you have the hardcover.

FERAL, by Berton Roueché [Pocket Books, \$1.50] This is not only a very good book, it carries a valid moral for city people. But then, I suppose most of the culprits can't read anyway. The cover blurb compares it to "The Birds," which is unfair; "The Birds" is more dramatic and pure fantasy. FERAL just might, under the right conditions, happen. (Though it's hardly likely.) A genuine horror story. Recommended.

ANDROMEDA GUN, by John Boyd [Berkley, 95 cents] For some reason, I put off reading this, which was a mistake. Boyd's tale of a do-gooder alien melding itself with a third-rate outlaw of the wild West is the funniest sf book I have read in years. It recalls Eric Frank Russell, or perhaps a collaboration between Lee Hoffman and Robert Bloch. Johnny Loco's alien-assisted vengeance on Col. Blicket (wanted for murder, robbery, horse-theft, arson, rape, and pillage) is an epic.

THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR, by Marion Zimmer Bradley [Daw #160, \$1.50] A good thick volume for your money. Ordinarily I take a dim view of series books that go back to fill in the gaps for the edification of devoted fans, but Marion makes an excellent novel out of it. One of the better books of the year; get it.

THE COMING OF THE HORSECLANS, by Robert Adams [Pinnacle, \$1.25] More Planet Stories; Earth is reduced to barbarism, except for a few immortals who remember the old days. Fairly typical. Adams has done much better than usual with the background, though; one feels that his various societies might actually work. This is presumably the first of a series. Recommended for sword and sorcery fans.

STAR, by C. I. Defontenay [DAW #167, \$1.25] One more antique unearthed; this was first published in 1854. It isn't a novel at all; it's a description of an alien society. The astronomy is ridiculous and probably was in 1854. The society is a utopia, but Defontenay gives it some conflict by providing a history of how it got that way. He also provides samples of his society's poetry, drama, and mythology. An interesting concept. Recommended to academics; a bit dull for the average reader.

SHERLOCK HOLMES' WAR OF THE WORLDS, by Manly Wade Wellman and Wade Wellman [Warner, \$1.25] Since Sherlock was operating in London during the Martian invasion, he obviously was involved in it, right? This details the exploits of Holmes and Professor Challenger during the dark days of the invasion. Good fun, and highly recommended.

SEVEN STEPS TO THE ARBITER, by L. Ron Hubbard [Major Books, 21322 Lassen St., Chatsworth CA 91311, \$1.25] Originally published by FPCI as "The Kingslayer". It's a short novel combining a maximum of action with a minimum of intelligence on everyone's part. A bit creaky, these days, though it was acceptable enough 30 years ago -- not good, but acceptable. There are two short stories also included. "The Beast" is an African white-hunter story translated none too plausibly to another planet. "The Invaders" is a lovely ironic little yarn.

THE STAR-CROWNED KINGS, by Robert Chilson [DAW #161, \$1.25] One of the problems of having a minority with psi talents. Fairly ordinary story of the hero-discovers-he-is-a-superman type, until the conclusion, which is very well done.

BRAINRACK, by Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis [Pocket Books, \$1.50] Typically dull British science fiction, mad scientist type. (Mad industrialist, in this case, but it doesn't make all that much difference.) A bad imitation of Alistair MacLean.

THE SECOND BOOK OF FRITZ LEIBER (DAW #164, \$1.25) One novelet, "The Lion and the Lamb"; three short stories, "Trapped in the Sea of Stars," "Belsen Express," and "Scream Wolf"; one play, "The Mechanical Bride"; and six articles, on such varied topics as tidal power, Ingmar Bergman, H.P. Lovecraft, and the background of the Fafhrd and Mouser series. "Trapped" is a Fafhrd and Mouser story written for this volume and not very good. The other fiction is excellent. The articles vary, but are generally good. Overall, worth getting if you haven't read them all before.

VAR THE STICK, by Piers Anthony [Bantam, 95 cents] 1973 publication, but I just got around to reading it. Sequel to SOS THE ROPE; another barbaric-future novel. Adequate, readable, but not as vivid as Adams' HORSECLANS.

SWEET DREAMS, by Michael Frayn [Doubleday, \$1.50] Our hero drives into a world where everyone's wishes come true. Farce is not my favorite form of humor, but this one is well enough done. If you like that type of humor, by all means try this one.

THE TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS, by Richard Cowper [DAW #158, \$1.50] Cosmic radiation from a nova makes mankind sterile, and then other odd developments occur. Writing is good;

Cowper is one of the few British sf authors who can produce characters. I found the conclusion totally unbelievable and more than a little sticky, but you might not.

THE EDEN CYCLE, by Raymond Z. Gallun [Ballantine, \$1.25] Two hundred pages of adolescent rebellion against utopia are a bit much for my taste. Gallun has developed his protagonists so well that they are real enough; I know fans who sound just like them, and I don't like them, either. A philosophical novel; try it, if that's your bent.

EYE OF THE ZODIAC, by E. C. Tubb [DAW #163, \$1.25] #13 in the Dumarest series. A good enough adventure if you like series.

SPACE:1999 -- THE SPACE GUARDIANS, By Brian Ball [Pocket Books, \$1.50] Even if you like the series, this one is pretty bad.

EXPENDABLES #2 -- THE RINGS OF TANTALUS, by Richard Avery [Fawcett, \$1.25] Another ship on a mission to the stars. An acceptable adventure if you like series; Avery is competent. (He probably writes spy novels for a living; he has the pseudo-tough action style down pat.)

BEYOND THE GALACTIC LENS, by Gregory Kern [DAW #176, \$1.25] This is Cap Kennedy #16, I guess; it doesn't say so on the cover. Wollheim is experimenting, maybe. This is developing into a sort of Interplanetary Fu Manchu, with Kennedy as the brave, clean, reverent, and not too bright hero opposing Dr. Kaifeng's inscrutable villainy.

FRANKENSTEIN UNFOUND, by Brian W. Aldiss [Fawcett, \$1.50] What amounts to a rewrite of Frankenstein, using a modern time-traveler as protagonist. I'm not sure what Aldiss wanted to prove, but what he did prove is that he can't write as well as Mary Shelley.

TIME SLAVE, by John Norman [DAW #169, \$1.50] I reviewed something of Norman's awhile back and said his readers were sick. I got some objections, so when this appeared, I read it thoroughly, all 380 pages of it, to get a good view of his writing. It isn't in the Gor series, so my bias against series doesn't operate. So? John Norman's readers are sick. He's improved as a writer, though. He now is an expert at combining the turgid Burroughs style with sadistic pornography -- the whips-and-chains stuff. It seems an odd combination to me, but it's apparently popular. Even as a logical extrapolation of the he-man barbarian syndrome, I would have thought that Norman's sheer verbosity would repel readers interested in the goodies, but it doesn't. Maybe they like his pretentious and half-assed philosophy.

THE JARGOON PARD, by Andre Norton [Fawcett, \$1.25] The most recent in the Witch World series. Somehow not as vivid as most of them, but acceptable. Romantic -- in both senses -- adventure.

FIRE TIME, by Poul Anderson [Ballantine, \$1.50] An alien Rome menaced by the barbarians, and the human outpost must decide if saving it is worth breaking the ban against interference in native affairs. Fairly good.

THE BOOK OF ANDRE NORTON (DAW #165, \$1.25] Reprint of THE MANY WORLDS OF..., reviewed here a while back (along with the two just above). About 50 percent of Andre's output of short fiction, two articles, (one by Norton, one about her work), and a bibliography. I don't think the shorter stories are as good as her novels, but if you like one you'll probably like the other.

OF MEN AND MONSTERS, by William Tenn [Ballantine, \$1.50] Mostly, this is a far better than average adventure story. But the conclusion, revealing the Ultimate Destiny of Mankind, puts it into the classic category. Every fan should read it.

THE LONG SLEEP, by John Hill [Popular Library, \$1.25] Strange. Neither the title nor the author rings any bells, and there is no previous copyright given, but I've read this before. (I thought of Ace Doubles, but a quick check didn't turn anything up.) British? Anyway, it's the plot of a man without a memory, battling his way thru various elaborate illusions. All explained in the end, neatly if rather disappointingly. A rather good adventure novel.

HALF PAST HUMAN, by T.J. Bass [Ballantine, \$1.50] Bass's two novels of the far future
THE GODWHALE, by T.J. Bass [Ballantine, \$1.50] clashes between the barbaric "true
men" and the hive-dwelling Nebishes. (I suspect Bass of having a lower opinion of
cities than even I do.) They've been reprinted fairly soon after original publication,
but if you didn't get copies originally, get them now. They're both excellent books.

THE PLANET BUYER, by Cordwainer Smith [Pyramid, \$1.25] Reprint of one of Smith's
novels. I never liked Smith's writing much, but it's attained so much fame that you
really should read some of it, and this is as good a place to start as any.

NOT WITHOUT SORCERY, by Theodore Sturgeon [Ballantine, \$1.50] Reprint of Sturgeon's
first collection of short fiction. It's been out of print for 14 years, according to
the copyrights, which is too long. These are some of the stories that caused me to
rate Sturgeon as one of my five favorite writers when I was just starting to read stf.
(Since then my list of favorites has expanded, but Sturgeon is still close to the top.)
"It" has what I consider the best first line in stf history -- and there's no letdown
in the rest of the story. "Poker Face" is a quite simple story of time travel, except
for the way it's told. "Artnan Process" is a fairly unmemorable space opera with a
nice twist at the end. "Ether Breather" and "Butyl and the Breather" are humorous
bits of fluff about an alien who can interfere with tv transmissions. "Brat" concerns
a changeling; the plot is idiotic, but the characters are excellent. "Two Percent In-
spiration" is a nice gimmick story. And "Cargo" is a lovely little fairy story. (On
checking through them, I find that some of my enthusiasm seems to have been nostalgia,
but they're still pretty good stories.)

PANDORA'S PLANET, by Christopher Anvil [DAW, \$1.25] Reprint of a fairly amusing alien
invasion tale. Eric Frank Russell imitation, but a pretty fair one.

ALL THE MYRIAD WAYS, by Larry Niven [Ballantine, \$1.50] An excellent assortment of
short stories, articles, and what-have-you? My personal favorites are the oft-reprint-
ed "Not Long Before the End," which converts magic into science fiction, and Niven's
dissertation on Superman's sex life, "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex." But there's a
lot of other good stuff in here. Recommended if you haven't read it previously.

SLAVE SHIP, by Frederik Pohl [Ballantine, \$1.50] Fourth printing since 1957. An anti-
war novel, based much too obviously on Vietnam. It's fair; Pohl is a good enough writ-
er, and his description of animals used for military purposes is interesting, But it's
also totally forgettable. (And it depends on the Outside Menace to end man's inhuman-
ity to man, which is the easy way out. Or maybe Pohl is as much of a cynic as I am
and thinks it's the only logical way out.)

WARRIOR OF SCORPIO, by Burt Akers [DAW, \$1.25] A reprint of #3 and an original
AVENGER OF ANTARES, by Burt Akers, [DAW #173, \$1.25] of #10 of the Dray Prescott ser-
ies. Imitation Burroughs; if anything, I find it a trifle superior to the original,
which makes it almost readable.

THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES, edited by Lin Carter [DAW #166, \$1.25] Or the two
year's best, according to copyrights. It must have been a bad two years. De Camp's
"The Emperor's Fan" is amusing, and Pat McIntosh's "Falcon's Mate" is interesting.
Jack Vance's "The Seventeen Virgins" is as good as any of his Cugel series, which is
not very. Marion Bradley's "Jewel of Arwen" is interesting Tolkieniana, but hardly the
best of anything, except maybe Tolkien imitations. Lloyd Alexander's "The Sword of
Dyrnwyn" is a simple fairy tale; it reads like a bad imitation of his Prydain novels.
There are previously unpublished stories by Howard and C.A. Smith; previously unpub-
lished for good reason, as far as I can see. There's "Trapped in the Shadowland" by
Fritz Leiber, who seems to be wearying of Fafhrd and the Mouser and condensing their
more recent stories to bare essentials of action, ignoring both background and logic.
Apparently Mouser fans haven't noticed; I suppose I should applaud an author who con-
trives to do less work for the same pay. (Except, of course, selling to Fantastic isn't
terribly profitable.) "The City of Madness" by Charles R. Saunders was picked up out
of a fanzine, and in places reads like it. (It's outstanding fan fiction, but the best
fantasy of the year? Not bloody likely.) Hannek Bok's "Jewel Quest" is interesting

but not unusually good. And Lin contributes a Thongor story, "Black Hawk of Valkarth," which is pretty typical Thongor. Part of the trouble is Lin's restrictive definition of "fantasy"; nothing except swords and sorcery need apply. And I think that part of it is that Carter doesn't have very good taste in literature.

WANDERING STARS, edited by Jack Dann [Pocket Books, \$1.50] An anthology of Jewish science fiction. (Jewish authors and Jewish idiom; H.L. Gold's "The Trouble With Water" is an excellent story, but it could, you'll pardon the expression, happen to anyone.) Avram Davidson's "The Golem", on the other hand, is a specifically Jewish theme -- and also a good story. Isaac Asimov's "Unto The Fourth Generation" make strike Jews as poignant but it didn't do much for me. Carol Carr's "Look, You Think You've Got Troubles" is better; light humor, not terribly original, but a good parody. "Goslin Day" by Davidson, nothing extra. "Gather Blue Roses, by Pamela Sargent, is a good vignette. "The Jewbird", by Bernard Malamud, is well written, though I dislike the apparent point, because it's become monotonous. "Street of Dreams, Feet of Clay," by Robert Sheckley, is Jewish only by stretching a point into an infinite line, but it's a good, amusing story. "Jachid and Jachidah," by Isaac Bashevis Singer, is well-handled but an overly familiar idea. The volume has four original stories: "On Venus Have We Got a Rabbi" by William Tenn is slick, funny, highly entertaining; "The Dybuk of Mazel Tov IV" by Robert Silverberg covers exactly the same theme as Tenn's story, except that he takes it seriously, as it's far too old a theme for me to take seriously in fiction, so I didn't think much of the results; "Paradise Last" by George Alec Effinger is competent but unexciting, though it does offer an original idea of persecution; and "I'm Looking for Kadak" by Harlan Ellison is a typically Ellison explosion. Overall, a far better than average anthology. (Better than other recent religious anthologies, if only because it's less ponderously serious than they were.)

THE BEST OF BARRY MALZBERG [Pocket Books, \$1.95] If you like Malzberg, there are THE MANY WORLDS OF BARRY MALZBERG [Popular Library, \$1.25] available. BEST has 400 THE GAMESMAN, by Barry Malzberg [Pocket Books, \$1.25] pages and 38 stories, WORLDS has 150 pages and 11 stories, and GAMESMAN is a novel.

WHEN THE BANSHEE CALLS, by Wayne Rogers [Shroud, Publishers, \$1.50] These are ERIDE OF THE SERPENTS, by J.O. Quinleven [Shroud, Publishers, \$1.50] Shroud's Pulp Readers #1 and 2, respectively. They are small-digest size, 50-page pamphlets, each containing a novelet reprinted from Terror Tales. Appeal is to these nostalgic for the old pulps. Terror was one of the sadism-pulps; a sort of super-gothic. (The heroine could be tortured and threatened and menaced, but her pure white body had to be saved intact in the climax. Pardon me -- conclusion. Climaxes could only be hinted at in those days.) They aren't very good, though BANSHEE is fun to read. It's even more of a gothic than most of the type. They're photocopied, including the original illustrations.

WORD PLAY, by Peter Farb [Knopf, \$8.95] This is about language; from an analysis of standard opening gambits ("How are you?") to diagrams of word construction that would make an algebra student green with envy. Farb goes heavily into the structure of language. (Including proof that "Jabberwocky" is English nonsense and must be changed structurally to translate it into French or German.) Along the way, he drops fascinating facts and opinions. ("Black English," he feels, is technically a pidgin language, and thus grammatically closer to Portuguese than to English. All pidgins can apparently be traced to Portuguese, presumably because they were the first great European explorers and thus the first Europeans who needed to discuss matters with a variety of non-Europeans. And Chinese pidgin is more widespread than I would have guessed; words as different as "mandarin", "savvy", and "pickaninny" all come from it.) As for "sexism" in English, which has been the rather silly point of some Women's Libbers, he points out that there is no sexism whatever in Turkish, but very few American women would like their status in that country. ("Women and dogs and other impure animals" are not allowed to enter mosques, and so on.) Speaking of "chairpersons" does nothing for women's status except make them look a little ridiculous. A very thorough and enjoyable book.

LIBEL, by Robert H. Phelps and E. Douglas Hamilton [remainderd] It seemed like a handy book for a fan editor to have. It's even better than I thought when I bought it, since it is designed with the newspaper reporter and editor in mind. Some of the points are irrelevant to small-circulation publications such as fanzines, but the bulk of them are quite valid. (In passing, it explains the sometimes irritating habit of newspapers of making unspecific charges -- "a number of", "a certain official", etc. If the reader can't make an identification, there's no libel.)

ROBERT PAUL SMITH'S LOST AND FOUND [Charterhouse] This was a Christmas present. It's a nostalgia volume; Smith describes and reflects on various common household appliances of the past. "If you didn't have a bootjack, your wife had to help you off with your boots. If you didn't have a wife, you had to holler for someone else to help you off with your boots. If nobody answered you died with your boots on and became a legendary hero." It's a very funny book, whether the reader feels any nostalgia or not.

MARINES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1916-1924 [U.S. Government Printing Office, \$1.50] An illustrated account of one example of America's "send a Marine up their river" diplomacy between World Wars. There is a brief background to the problem, and then rather dry official reports on what happened after the Marines arrived. But it's interesting, because it's a bit of U.S. history usually covered by a sentence (or less) in the usual history books.

FAMOUS PULP CLASSICS #1 [Fax, Box #, West Linn, OR 97068, \$5.00] Photocopied reprints of six stories from the adventure pulps. Except for Theodore Roscoe's "Uneasy Lies The Head," which is fun, they're all typical, competent pulp stories, not terribly interesting to me but a fair sample of the genre. Roscoe's story is both unusual and amusing.

CARRYING THE FIRE, by Michael Collins [Ballantine, \$1.95] An absolutely fascinating book, despite the fact that in my copy pp 143 thru 174 were omitted and pp. 303 thru 334 were duplicated. Collins writes of his service career which led to astronaut training, of the training itself, and his reaction to it, and of what it was like to travel to the Moon. A good bit of his reaction was irreverent, as in his inkblot responses. ("How can I describe the blank, pure white piece of paper this year? Last year I said it was nineteen polar bears fornicating in a snowbank, and the interviewer's face tightened in obvious displeasure...") It's one of the best books of the year, and highly recommended. But you might check to make sure you're getting a complete copy before you buy it.

THE CURVE OF BINDING ENERGY, by John McPhee [Ballantine, \$1.50] This is about nuclear power. A lot of it concerns the ease with which nuclear power can be obtained by people interested in misusing it, and McPhee presents a frightening picture. This is balanced somewhat by descriptions of Ted Taylor's grandiose plans for the use of power, including a spaceship propelled by fission bombs. (This was enlarged when Dyson -- of Dyson Sphere fame -- joined the project. "So Taylor spent an afternoon figuring out how heavy Chicago was." Just like a James Blish novel.) They even had a working model, propelled by conventional explosives; it makes one wonder how close to interplanetary or perhaps interstellar exploration we were when the Test Ban Treaty forbade nuclear explosions in space and the project was closed down. Another book that's a definite must; pass up some science fiction and get it.

IN SEARCH OF THE RED APE, by John MacKinnon [Ballantine, \$1.95] Studying orang-utans in their natural habitat. Books about such studies are popular these days, it seems. This isn't an outstanding example, but it's interesting. Worth the money if you're an armchair naturalist.

THE REICH MARSHAL, by Leonard Moseley [Dell, \$1.75] An excellent biography of Hermann Goering. It tries hard to make Goering sympathetic and almost succeeds. (Goering's flaws -- even his emotionalism and hero-worshipping -- were quite human. I know people who have the same characteristics, and some of them are rather pleasant. The horror comes when this genial, unstable character gets into a position of power.) It

also contains graphic descriptions of pre-Hitler Germany. ("All Berlin has election fever, and it will be settled on Sunday. They have already begun to shoot each other dead." From a 1928 letter by Carin Goering.) An outstanding biography.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CANNONBALL KID, by Lee Hoffman [Dell, 95 cents] Lee's version of Destry, I guess. It's a very funny Western farce about the totally innocent (in all senses of the word) hero and his assorted rowdy contemporaries. It also has little oddments thrown in here and there, as when Uncle Ned is discussing the warped outlook of the hero's mother: "Actually, she witnessed something nasty in the woodshed." (Which I guess is funny only if you watch oddball PBS tv shows.) Recommended.

THE BROKEN GUN, by Louis L'Amour [Bantam, 95 cents] "Write about what you know," is the cliché presented to all beginning writers. Here's an apt illustration of it; L'Amour's hero is a Western writer doing research on an old mystery in order to write a book about it. (Of course, he finds that the mystery extends to modern times and heroically solves it, beating up several people along the way. But it's an interesting idea.)

THE WAR CHIEF, by Edgar Rice Burroughs [Ballantine, \$1.25] ERB's two related romances about a white man (of course) raised as an Apache. He is (also of course) sickeningly noble and chaste and all that. The books have all Burroughs' faults and few of his virtues (assuming he had virtues), but WAR CHIEF does have a perfectly hilarious Hildebrandt cover; I doubt if it's intentional, but it's the funniest cover painting I've seen in years.

SUN ON THE WALL, by Wayne D. Overholser [Ballantine, \$1.25] A big thick novel with a background very detailed and quite possibly authentic. Unfortunately, it's a rather dull story.

LOST WORLDS, by Daniel Cohen [Belmont-Tower, \$1.25] There aren't too many authors whose names could make me buy a Belmont-Tower book, but Cohen is one of them. As a debunker of the occult, he's second only to de Camp. This contains the facts concerning a variety of "lost civilizations," both actual (Easter Island, Stonehenge, Mohenjo-Daro, Zimbabwe, the Olmecs) and mythological (Atlantis, Lemuria, King Arthur's realm Prester John, El Dorado). Very well done.

THE SEVEN-PER-CENT SOLUTION, by Nicholas Meyer [Ballantine, \$1.95] I assume the copyrights on Sherlock Holmes have finally run out and so anybody is free to write Holmes stories without disguising the name of the principal, as earlier writers such as Derleth had to do. Basically, this one is about how Holmes solves a problem for Sigmund Freud and in return Freud cures Holmes of his mania about Professor Moriarity. It's well enough told, amusing, and, I assume, fits into the Holmes canon. Moderately recommended.

GEORGES, by Alexandre Dumas [Ballantine, \$1.50] One of Dumas' adventure-romances. It sounded interesting, but moved too slowly for me; I couldn't take the style and failed to finish it.

SOMETHING HAPPENED, by Joseph Heller [Ballantine, \$2.25] A long, ironic look at how one man succeeded in business without really trying. (And, of course, failed with his family.) I suppose it's a good look at the business world, but it tends to irritate me. (I see some of the same things at work, and they irritate me even more, because I have to live with real-life stupidity.) It's good writing. Heller has great characterization. Only all the characters are unpleasant...

A TOPAZ FOR MY LADY FAIR, by Jane Toombs [Ballantine, \$1.25] A fairly competent but uninspired gothic. Another of the successful "Birthstone" series.

GREYSTONE TAVERN, by Louisa Bronte [Ballantine, \$1.50] I wanted to see the writing of anyone with the gall to assume "Bronte" as a penname. (She appears to be Janet Louise Roberts, according to the copyright.) This is a historical romance, presumably the first of a series. It's surprisingly well done, except that the heroine is

is far too "innocent" to be interesting. (Unfortunately, a pretty good background can't save the book from this major flaw. Stupid women are not my dish.)

IMAGINATIVE SEX, by John Norman [DAW, \$1.95] Stupid men aren't, either. Aside from the purely pornographic aspects, this is for couples who are bored by their own lack of imagination; the middle-class wife-swapping crowd.

HEATHER: CONFESSIONS OF A WITCH, by Hans Holzer [Pocket Books, \$1.75] Supposedly the genuine account of a woman's experiences with esp, astral projection, etc., and her eventual initiation into witchcraft. Personally, I prefer second-rate fiction to be labeled as such. There's even a romance and they all live happily ever after. Somebody has been reading too many confessions magazines.

A CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG, by Joseph Chilton Pearce [Pocket Books, \$1.50]

EXPLORING THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG, by Joseph Chilton Pearce [Pocket Books, \$1.75] Two excellent books for young liberals who prefer fantasy to real life.

MAKING AMERICAN FOLK ART DOLLS, by Gini Rogowski and Gene DeWeese (Chilton, \$6.95)

That's for the pb; there is a hardcover edition but since I was more interested in the authors than in the subject matter I didn't even price it. The introduction to the book says the book is an introduction to doll-making. The text is simple and complete enough so that if I wanted to start doll production tomorrow I could do it, though I can think of few things I'm less likely to actually do. There are drawings and numerous photographs of various stages in the process, as well as finished dolls of yarn, dried apples, soap, leather, papier maché, eggshells, bread dough, corn shucks, clothespins, wishbones, and dozens of other unlikely substances.

FOXFIRE 3 (Anchor Books, \$4.95) There's a section on cornshuck dolls in here, too, along with details of how to make a banjo (from the groundhog up), tanning hides, plant foods, uses of gourds, and various other "folk arts". There is also an excellent introduction by Eliot Wigginton, pointing out that the idea of Foxfire was to provide an interesting and useful "laboratory" for a high school English class, and that success has its problems. (One of them being that if visitors are allowed, nothing gets done and the visitors are disappointed by the lack of anything to see, while if visitors are refused, then the class is being uncooperative and antisocial - two of the deadliest sins in current education.) Anyway, it's an excellent book for anyone interested in folklore.

AT CLOSE QUARTERS, by Capt. Robert J. Bulkley, Jr., USNR (Ret.) (U.S. Gov't. Printing Office - \$9.50) A huge 550-page book, describing the activities of PT boats in World War II in more detail than I really needed. Possibly a hundred or so photos, and good maps. Some of the cases are fascinating; such as the PT commander who put into the newly captured port of Bizerte because he was short of fuel, and a couple of hours later was asked to move the boat out of the way of photographers who were taking newsreel photos of "the first Allied vessels to enter Bizerte". Interesting, if a trifle too well detailed for the casual reader.

THE WINGS OF THE MORNING, by Louis Tracy (secondhand, \$3.00) Overpriced, but I recalled reading this at age 12 or so and being fascinated by it. Re-reading showed that 12 is about the right age for it. It's a jungle island adventure, originally copyrighted in 1903, and hero and heroine spend an incredible amount of their dialogue in things like "...we are in God's hands. I put my trust in Him, and in you. I am hopeful, nay more, confident." And so on. (I really did open the book at random to that passage.) If it wasn't for the Victorianisms it would be a pretty fair pulp adventure, but as it is I can hardly recommend it to unbiased readers. Maybe I was only 10 when I read it.....I do recall that the library had it filed in with the airplane books and while this didn't seem quite right I wasn't yet self-assured enough to correct them. (Which I was a few years later when I found The Great Pacific War in with the history.)

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WEAPONRY, by Major E.N. Hobden These were Christmas presents;
WEIRD AND WONDERFUL SHIPS, by Graeme Cook they're large-sized juveniles,
but rather interesting to a student of the outré.

GRUMBLINGS

Robert E. Briney, 4 Forest Avenue, Salem, MA 01970

I found Gunn's ALTERNATE WORLDS pretty annoying. For a big, elaborate book featuring supposedly high-quality production, it is incredibly sloppy. Not very well proof-read, for one thing. And many of the "little niggling errors" that you refer to are things which simply should not have survived into print -- such as two photos of Bob Silverberg on a single page, one of them identified as "Tom Scortia". The errors in text and captions are all small, many of them obviously typos (a photo of an April 1940 Astounding labeled April 1960), but there are just too many of them. Then there are the extensive quotations from other works (including Harry Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAYS) without adequate acknowledgment. And no bibliography at all. Finally, someone had the bright idea of making many of the illustrations all but indecipherable with those pink or lavender overlays...Bah!

Of all the recent books on sf illustration (that seems to be the Science Fiction Bandwagon for Fall 1975), the most annoying is the one compiled by Brian Aldiss. Whoever had the idea that a bad pulp cover could be made interesting by enlarging it to six times original size and printing it by a process inferior to that used on the original magazine? Some of the black-and-whites suffer the same treatment -- fine B&K and Cartier drawings enlarged to the point where they look crude beyond belief. (It was, however, pleasant to see some unfairly neglected artists represented, such as Vestal and Leydenfrost, instead of the endless diet of Paul and Morey.)

Joe L. Hensley, 2311 Blackmore, Madison, IN 47250

I'm at a loss to understand the reaction that the Elwood books are getting. I've read some of them and they seem certainly equal in overall quality to other lines. But it's suddenly fashionable to pan them. I really hope they do real well. I've no idea whether they will or not, but I hope. And when I talk about them being equal to other lines I mean those books which everyone seems to publish in great profusion -- Ace, DAW, even Ballantine, Bantam, etc., -- the normal adventure sort of thing.

[The Lasers are considerably more simplistic than those of most other publishers. (This isn't necessarily bad as far as I'm concerned, but most of today's more vocal fans grew up with the New Wave. Whether the writing is good or bad is of less interest to them than whether or not the book expresses a liberal social viewpoint. RSC]

Mae Strelkot, C.C.55, Jesus Maria 5220, Cordoba, Argentina

Things grow more costly; the black market rate for the dollar now is 16,000 old pesos, and few salaries yet pass 500,000 a month. The gelatine I bought to make cards for our boss's wife (100 cards, 6 paintings in all) for Christmas (which she requested, came to 50,000 old pesos, just imagine, for which of course she pays. I could not afford it, not one bit. I'm back to boiling bones, and that means homemade gelatine produces very few prints, so I'm cutting down on pubbing too. Why! this wretched sheet of paper (bought by ream yesterday, just one ream), come to 60 old pesos on its own per each sheet. Each sheet! It's more costly than the equivalent in gold!

[This has no particular relevance to anything else in the issue, but I wanted it in for the benefit of fans who think they're hard up. How would you like to pursue fanac in a country where a ream of onionskin paper costs not quite two days' wages and gelatine for a hektograph

amounts to three days' wages? Our inflation is bad, but it could be worse. RSC]

Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque NM 87107

FEAR STALKS THE BAYOU...let me see now, Juanita, the distraught heroine flees the decaying antebellum mansion and finds herself up to her, ah, ears in alligators? Keep us posted...or me at least...on the Babylonian one because I have a sort of special interest in that particular period of history. That cover ...let me see now, in the upper right hand corner is a dim crescent moon, on the left is the ziggurat with one light in an upper story, and in the foreground the heroine flees towards the Euphrates...anyway I'm looking forward to it and will be sure to pick up a copy provided, of course, I know what I'm looking for.

I've watched part of a couple of episodes of SPACE:1999. Out here the second half hour conflicts with BARNEY MILLER, which is one of the few things on the tube worth looking at. I can identify pretty well with Fish...

As long as you got through all those books why don't you become a reviewer for a local paper and get a little cash out of it?

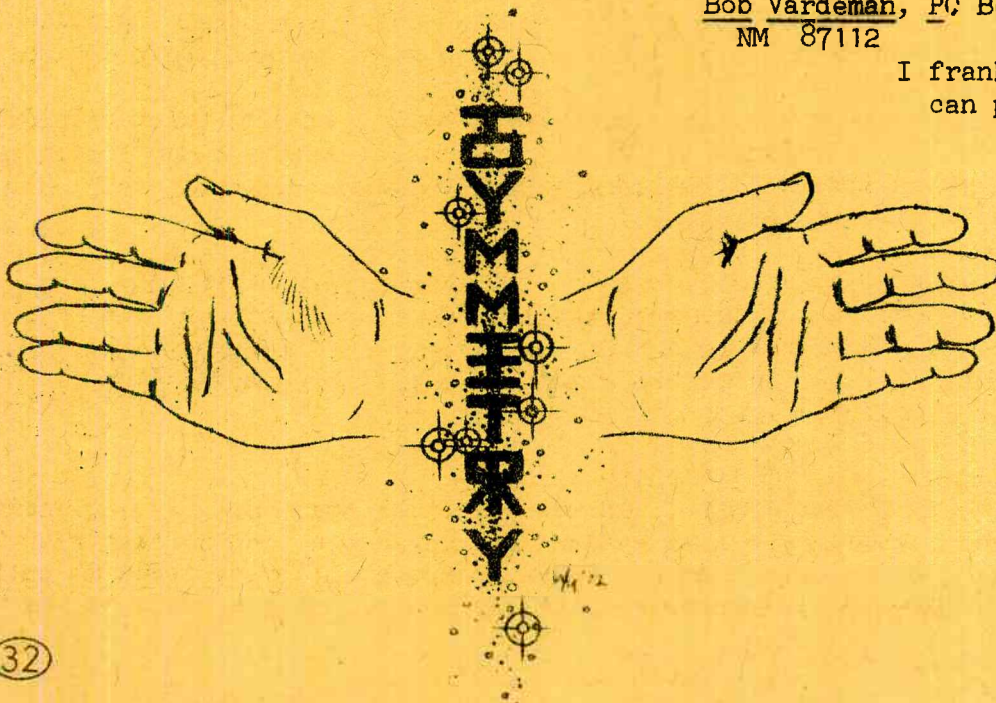
Well, I've been through as many books as you have but there is little overlap in what we've read.

Lots of goodies in the lettercol but not much I care to comment on. I'd just get in trouble if I did. Except maybe to say to Betty McLaren that if she ever thought the name of the game was anything but money she is even more naive than her letter indicates.

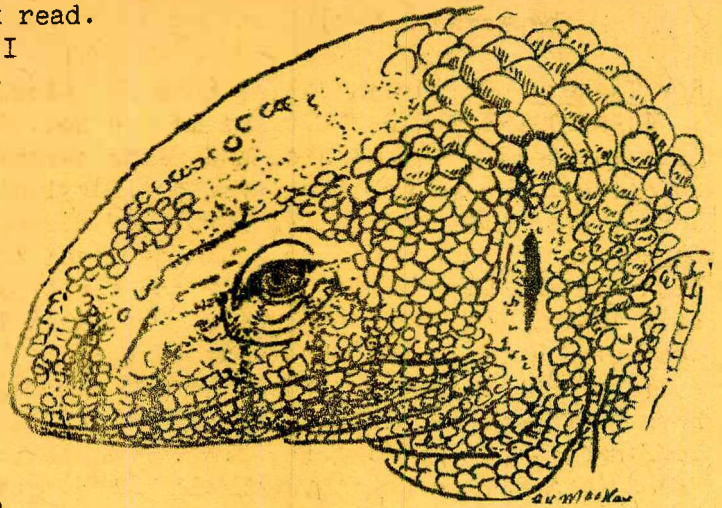
[BARNEY MILLER is the only series I watch on tv this year. You mean you don't identify with Wojo-whatever, the ex-Marine? The Hartford City paper probably pays less for book reviews than Yandro does (at least I get to keep the books this way). RSC] [Well, the planned cover for the Babylonian gothic -- when it was still in the planning stage as part of the astrology-gothic series -- the heroine (small, round faced and large eyed per Sumerian ancestry) and her father (shaven pate and white beard as befits a scholar-priest-primitive physician) in a marketplace, conducting a flaming sacrifice -- miniature size -- over a bronze brazier. No moon. No light in the ziggurat. Whether the cover was finished, and whether it will still be used when the gothic (now non-astrological) is completed, I can't say, but I can hope. Working title is DARK PRIESTESS, for what that's worth. JWC]

Bob Vardeman, PO Box 11352, Albuquerque
NM 87112

I frankly don't see how you can possibly come close to even opening the covers of all those books, much less really read them. Yet, the ones I've read (and have read on the basis of your reviews in the past) show you spend a good deal of time inside each book. How do you do



it? I'm lucky to get three books a week read. Of late, fewer and fewer have been sf. I simply can't handle a lot of the garbage being strewn around. Such as the Expendibles series. Cripes, you call that good writing? The one or two Cap Kennedy books I read were a quantum jump above DEATHWORMS OF KRATOS. The only book I can think of that approaches the abysmal depths DEATHWORMS sinks to would be the SPACE:1999 atrocities. But those I suspect were run on the following basis: Got a job for you, Tubb/Rankine/Ball. \$500 if you can get us a book in twenty minutes. Tubb and Ball are both more than adequate hack writers (to me, the term hack is not a pejorative). Given a solid plot, they turn out good, readable books. SPACE:1999 has got to be done for the exposure and/or money.



Tackett came up with the best idea in re: SFEXPO 76 type productions. Let 'em put the damn things on. We don't have to go. Personally, except for MidAmericon, I'm through with big cons. Only the smaller regionals for me.

Most of the lettercol seems filled to overflowing with dreary comment on women's lib and the like. Suppose that's another in-thing, the faidish Thing To Comment On. Stealing from another MCP, Repeal the XIX amendment and end such foolishness.

Don & Maggie Thompson: I was following the bit about discovery of the magnetic monopole with some interest. Seems that the boys jumped the gun and no fewer than two men have shown alternative schemes that would give the same result. Decomposition of a heavy metal ion seems to have occurred rather than a magnetic monopole. Darned shame, too. We could be zooting around in Dick Tracy magnetic air-cars and all sorts of fine stuff if it'd been true.

Frankly, though, I'm getting a little tired of the "Discovery of the Century" being made every six months. Face it, we're 75 percent through with the century but we've already seen atomic power, vast biological breakthroughs (seems amino acids are all left handed when found naturally), ungodly things in particle physics, etc. But there might be fusion power or artificial life or actual gene manipulation or any one of a thousand other things which might qualify. To date, my candidate seems to be the laser. Less than 15 years old and the potential seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. It might be the answer to fusion, etc.; my advice is to only take likely prospects for the "Discovery of the Century", wait till 2000, then give out with that dubious award.

As to licensing gun owners, that's about as effective as licensing automobile drivers. Better than 70 percent coming out of the NM Drivers License test don't even know what the word "yield" means. Face it, Buck, registration means one thing only: revenue/taxes.

[Of course licensing won't help, but it will temporarily pacify the liberals. Their own baby, gun registration, won't help either, and it could be an annoyance to me.// On the whole, the women who favor various aspects of Women's Lib are a hell of a lot more interesting than the ones who don't. RSC]

Jessica Amanda Salmonson, PO Box 89517, Zenith WA 98188

I finally read FORGOTTEN BEASTS OF ELD, and was struck by that rare feeling inside one gets when discovering something really magical and moving: a feeling that recurs too seldom as we become jaded in our reading. Only two books this year moved me quite this much. RUBYFRUIT JUNGLE was the other, by Rita Mae Brown. Before that, it was

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, and before that maybe DUNE or the Asimov trilogy. I almost captured that feeling toward the end of WATERSHIP DOWN and in LILITH and undoubtedly a few more if I thought about it, but not to this degree. I suppose it's that evasive thing called sensa-wunda, a term kicked around a bit, but how often do we feel it except via nostalgia when we return to the first sf or fantasy book we ever read? Patricia McKillip brought it all back without the necessity of nostalgia as a tool. If it doesn't become a classic of some sort, I'll lose all faith in the reading public.

Laurine White, 5408 Leader Ave., Sacramento CA 95841

There aren't many comments I have on Yandro for November. But you asked if anybody knew about the company making the Lord of the Rkngs figures. Last weekend at the local Star Trek convention, I was noting some huckster cards pinned to the wall. One was for "Minifigs, PO Box P, Pine Plains, New York, 12567". They make Middle Earth figures and have a catalog for \$1.25.

That SCARFACE pb by Andre Norton is worth money. I paid \$4 for my copy of it.

Derek Nelson, 18 Branard Blvd., Scarboro, Ontario, CANADA

Gee, Buck, we came within a month or so of having the same ultimate boss in the corporate chain. You sold to Laser, meaning Harlequin. They've just been bought out by the Toronto Star, meaning Beland Hondrick. The Star owns Metrospan, which owns the Mirror; from which I've just left (covering Scarboro council) for Queen's Park (provincial legislature) again for Thomson.

I don't know whether you've ever heard of Hondrick, but if you ever drop over to the yacht club on the Toronto Islands I'll show you where he docks his U-boat.

I just heard an interesting statistic. If true, there is one lawyer for every 750 people in the U.S. Sir, it's time you had a Justinian. Or a revolution. Whomever described lawyers as society's ultimate parasites is right on. Only public servants can vie for the honor.

Naturally, I can't say I agree with your review of POLITICAL MURDER IN NORTHERN IRELAND, although I don't disagree either. What you said is fine. I thought there were/are more important points, although Belfast of 1973 sounding like the Chicago of 1923 (gangsters and extortion?) is right on.

Ah well. The Protestants have finally arrived. The Ulster Volunteer Force has been banned as the IRA's equivalent for carrying out its own sectarian violence. That means the next step is negotiations with the British government...violencee doesn't pay, of course.

Buck, just listened to a debate on Canadian tv between Ramsey Clark and some NRA past president named Glassen (?). The question was total gun control. Clark won.

Not that his arguments were all that great. Rather Glassen was a dumb-dumb. The audience was 70-12 against guns before the debate, 66-16 afterwards -- but it was packed.

The one thing that came through loud and clear about guns and America is that they are as much a symbol, and a mystique, as a reality. It's almost as though those inanimate objects determine the arguments, rather than reason, analyses, or facts.

For example, anti-gun types never explain why Switzerland, with an automatic long gun in almost every household, has little gun-related violence.

Pro-gun types never explain why Canada, which rigidly controls hand guns but not long guns, has no murders by Saturday Night specials and a very low ratio of handgun deaths compared to the U.S.

So you can guess my opinion. Rigid control of handguns, no controls on shotguns and rifles beyond insisting purchasers prove they know safety rules associated with their use.

Switching topics abruptly: Juanita, I've found an easy way to reduce weed problems is putting out newspaper weighed down with rocks between the rows. A friend did it, showed me the result, and convinced me. Doesn't look great, but sure works.

The Hartford City newspaper is following a grand old tradition -- that extended to the first president according to one book -- of making money on the so-called revolution. (As a loyalist, Tory to the misguided, I'm convinced a coffee cartel caused

the Boston Tea Incident.)

Sandra Miesel's piece "The Canadian Swept Down Like a Wolf on the Fold" had me in hysterics. She obviously understands Canada, and from ~~being brainwashed~~ reading about Indiana in Yandro for so long I even caught the joke. You hoosiers can have your basketball. I'll stick to hockey.

Mike Coney's "The Psychology of Risk" was fun too, because it's so true. Getting ganged up on is what the game is all about, and smiling a lot. One comment: it's more fun to play for money, with 50 cents a province, a \$2 bonus for control of a continent, and \$5 to the winner. Pay everyone above you. It's surprising how inflamed tempers can become over the roll of two little die. One question: how can they finish a game in a lunch hour?

The best single thing about Yandro is still your book reviews. Aside from your comments, and you should have got the Analog job, I learn about all sorts of books I never would otherwise think of picking up. Mind you, it doesn't do much good with the stf, since most of the books you mention that I might like to try I can't find in the stores. But it's mainly the non-stf where I learn. My latest acquisition is Flashman. He's great. Glad you recommended it. FLASH and FLASHMAN AT THE CHARGE are superb, ROYAL FLASH less so.

Pick up Alexander Kent's TO GLORY WE STEER. The blurb calls it the successor to the Hornblower novels, and while not quite, it's good sea adventure.

The state of the American post office isn't all that bad, you know. You could have ours. Somebody figured out we've had something like 67 strikes in the past five years in the postal service, most of them illegal. (The number isn't exact, but the source was tv so I can't look it up to refresh my memory.) It's a wonder any mail ever gets through.

[I don't know if you meant it that way, but you dropped into one of the major Liberal Fallacies on gun control, Of course control of handguns reduces murder by handguns. But does it reduce murder? The anti-gun crowd presumably feel that being beaten to death with a bicycle chain is preferable to being shot to death, but I can't quite see it that way.// The comment on Canadian postal strikes was in an early letter, written before the latest major strike. RSC] [Rocks on newspapers doesn't work in this area; the wind simply rips the newspapers loose from the rocks and carries them into Ohio. Hoed-up weeds must be piled on the newspapers and distributed lavishly out to all corners and after a good alligator-drowner of a rain they'll be plastered down sufficiently into the mud to foil our unimpeded 40mph summer breezes. To do that, though, you need a lot of weeds and practically have to let the blaggards get a good start before hoeing them. It's a nasty arrangement, guaranteed to produce backache and blisters. JWV]

Florence Stevenson,

You will probably be interested to learn that the CURSE is going to be reissued in November of 1976 -- it has sold 95,000 copies in paper -- and the publishers have decided that it will probably sell more -- if released in quantity again. I must say I am pleased about that because I loved writing it, more than any of my other books, really, yes, even OPHELIA.

I wish I could write more along the CURSE line -- there is a vampire in my mind who would love to be released -- but nobody wants him. My current output is all Gothick. There's one due next month (December) called WITCH'S CROSSING, which has a totally unhumorous heroine, with all sorts of sorrows, secret and otherwise, and she spends the last pages running across a field, and yes, there is a house in the background so it will justify whatever cover they decide to give it. The one after that, coming out in the spring, concerns a more lighthearted heroine who wants to be a doctor, in the days when the lady of the house stayed upstairs and was waited on by a large staff of downstairs servants.

Currently, I am writing about a girl who goes to Egypt -- and finds a house that belonged to her aunt. It is going to be one book about Egypt that is not concerned

with ancient curses or re-activated mummies. I was in Egypt, last summer and into the pyramids, and though I am psychic I must tell you that I didn't feel a thing. I am convinced that the Great Pyramid of Geza, or is it Giza, is a tomb, and not a cryptic history of civilization. I was also in Tutankamen's tomb, and its main curse is that it is damned hot inside. You know when you get into ancient cathedrals there is a sort of damp chill to them. No Egyptian tombs. They are as hot as the proverbial hell that was in the same location only lower down. Imagine having to paint all those hieroglyphics in them. I hope they had a union in ancient Egypt, and shifts for the workers. I am not really pro-union, here, because of the difficulties that theatrical unions have made for playwrights; these days, in order to get a script produced you need one set, or rather no set, and practically no actors.

If I sound a bit bitter, I am. I started my literary life as a playwright, and in my heart, I still am a playwright. But novels pay. However, I have a play going on in January, off-off Broadway. It has been optioned for a possible Broadway airing, if they can get the money, which is a big if. It has costumes, no sets, but 13 people in the cast; it used to have 17, but we cut it down (the director and myself). It is not a Gothick, not a fantasy, it is called "The Chronicle of Nine," and it is about the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey.

By the way, you mentioned in your review (which I appreciated) of IDES OF NOVEMBER that I had paid a visit to Venice, California, for local color. Visit, no. I grew up very near to that locale and had friends who lived there. That is in the pre-hippie, pre-Manson days, when it was as I described, a battered backwater with a large case of nostalgia. Its residents kept hoping that things would start popping again. I don't think they wanted what eventually happened, but probably most of the older crowd was gone by then. I, by the way, grew up in Mar Vista, California, which was four miles from Venice and four miles from Culver City on the other side, and really nowhere. It was 40 minutes by train from Los Angeles. When I looked out my window, I could see the big neon MGM lion sign. That colonial-type house they used for Selznik pictures was not too far away. It was really a facade, you know, and behind it there was a big swimming pool. Note: on the old MGM lots they had a row of suburban type colonial facades, with sprinklers playing on the real lawns; but if you went into the houses you came out onto erector-set like constructions. In those days, I was movie-struck and I came to New York so I could get a play on Broadway and come back and write for movies. Well, I am still waiting.

[New York readers go see "The Chronicle of Nine."]

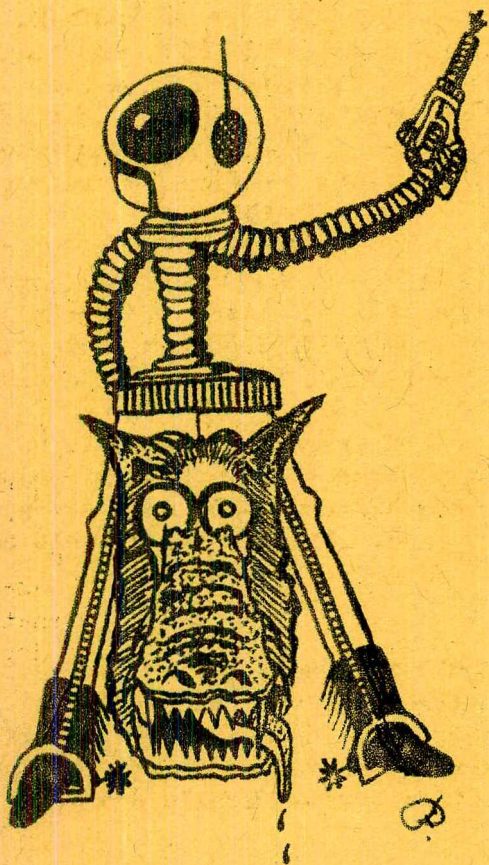
David E. Tausch, PO Box 1327, Midland MI 48640

Yeah, if Harlequin succeeds with Laser in sf, then I figure it won't be long for them to do mysteries and Westerns this way too. With romance, sf, mystery, and Westerns covered, they'd have pretty much the whole pb market sewed up.

Boy, that's how ta publish them pbs.

And I just betcha that as soon as they find out whether this sf Laser is going over, they'll start asking for exclusive contracts, too. As Harlequin is exclusive, and has been since 1966 or so. Ya won't find one of their authors moonlighting anywhere.

I wonder how this would affect the sf pulp-digest market? It's pretty much dead now, of course. The only good sf I've read lately off the newsstand has come from Playboy. Last good thing I found in pulp-digest was a Gahan



Wilson short he did fer F&SF Mag a couple of years ago.

Read yer fanzine Yandro. Ya are falling off a lot from the 60s when I first started reading ya. But then where are any of them fmzs that use to give my postman a hernia when he deliveried them?

I used to spend a whole evening reading yers, now it takes just a few minutes ta glance through it and then file with my latest catalog from SF+F BK Co so I can refer ta it when ordering my latest shipment from that gent.

Gary Anderson, 8386 Hollister St., Ventura CA 93003

While reading Yandro, I came across a bit by Bob Tucker in which he made the statement that "It has been a long time since an engineer excited my sense of wonder." I can tell that Tucker doesn't deal regularly with Government engineers. As a class, they are enough to excite anyone's sense of wonder (yours truly not excluded). I have a vast and wondrous Zap file full of strange things. A Zap file, for the uninitiate, is a self-defense mechanism of all bureaucracy, consisting of all the really bad boo-boos your rivals, superiors, or inferiors have been so silly as to commit in print. One saves these pearls, to cast them before the swine when you need something. (Give me that new power pencil sharpener or I'll ask for a copy of your memo concerning turning off all the battery operated clocks to save energy during last year's energy crisis, and send it through channels endorsed to the C.O.) Lest you think this is totally facetious, I really do have a copy of such a memo, and it really did get out of the individual's office before he tried to bury it. I just haven't decided what I want in return for destroying my copy, yet.

But to continue in Tucker's vein, remember also the engineer who wrote up, in great detail and with specific calculations, why a certain Navy ship defense system could not possibly work as advertised. Unfortunately, he did so after the Navy had already spent taxpayer bucks on the thing. Upon being told that perhaps his views were a little extreme, since as everyone knows, the Navy is never wrong, he rose up and said that he wouldn't withdraw the report. Now, where is this engineer today? Counting otters on Adak? No, indeed, he is still doing his thing at the same old station. Of course, his report never made it off base, so nobody was really mad at him. You see, in the government, it doesn't matter if you are honest or not, because somebody above you isn't. The only exceptions are things like the Gordon Rule incident, where you talk directly to Congress. Then, they try to get you.

But even in private industry, I once knew an engineer who told me what was wrong with the neatie-keen new gadget his marketeers were trying to sucker Uncle Sam into buying. He would probably be looking for work right now, too, if I hadn't kept my mouth shut about who tipped me off. No, I am not surprised to find an engineer being honest. Now, if someone told me that a manager was honest about something like his company's products...

On the other side of the coin, I have a perfectly serious report, written by an individual who should have known better, about how a gyroscope could not work because the equations were wrong. We bought him a little one from Edmund, and had a gyroscope party at his desk one Friday. Sure enough, the gyro worked. This is the classic case of the dumb but honest engineer.

Rick Brooks, RR #1, Box 268, Fremont IN 46737

I think you should take Bruce in hand. Explain to him that he's old enough to carry his share of the load and make him do two pages like everybody else.

It seems to me that I mentioned that I was going to use Joe Hensley as a character in my mundane series. Since he was still a lowly lawyer, I promoted him to "Hanging Judge Joe Hensley". This is one of my literary inventions, symmetrically staggered



alliteration.

Herb Barents of Zeeland, Michigan, sells wargaming material. I can't find much of his stuff right now, but I think that he sells Lord of the Rings figures from three different manufacturers. I think at least one company and one shoestring operation figure in this, but it's just an impression.

Elwood didn't send me a copy of THE BOOK OF ANDRE NORTON, either. I'll write Wollheim for one.

I've gotten to the point where I don't care for the gun control problem. No matter which way I go at it, I don't care for my conclusions. Basically, many people are unfit to have guns. The problems are how to classify these people, how to keep guns away from them, and how to do this without making second class citizens of them. It's true that "guns don't kill people, people kill people." But guns do make it much easier for people to kill people.

I'm a bit unhappy that you explained the Postal Service codes. I had a lot more fun making up answers for it. Next you'll try to tell me that there is no Santa Claus. But after New York City has been bailed out, I know differently.

[Ben Solon also came up with the "Hanging" sobriquet.// Awhile back on tv, there was a spot announcement for some home safety group which said "Matches don't start fires, people start fires." I laughed and laughed; every good liberal knows that it's always the inanimate object that's to blame for disaster. RSC]

James Sieger, Rt 1, Box 78, Sullivan WI 53178

Regarding that enormous pile of reviews (some hard worker you must be! I read three books in 1975) I wonder if you know that Doris Lessing's MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR is also science fiction? Narrator stubbornly Hanging On when urban civilization collapses.

Steve Simmons, 124 Carlann, San Marcos CA 92069

I tend to agree with your comment that the reason that there are fewer cons per capita in California is that there are fewer organizers. At NASFiC there were many people bitching mightily about a lack of room parties, but whenever the idea was suggested that someone start their own, they looked at me like a heretic. I suspect that California people are used to having everything right where they can get at it easily, and aren't used to making up their own fun.

Bruce, when you get to wherever you are going to college (where?) I strongly suggest that you take a Philosophy class as one of your electives. Lovely ~~arguments~~ discussions.

Leah Zeldes hits the nail on the head about general courtesy not implying vulnerability. I had a radical feminist friend of mine chew me out for opening a door and letting her go through first, and I felt kind of weird about it until I noticed that I do the same thing for male friends and don't get funny remarks. So once again I'm going to go back to my ways and be polite.

Jackie Franke, Box 51-A, RR 2, Beecher IL 60401

The highlight of this issue was, of course, Coney's tale of the putrescent cat food. I laughed and/or chuckled inanely all the way through. Pure fantasy, which as you know is not my favorite reading, but so excellently done I ignored that element. Our cats would never turn up their noses at food; at least not for the length of time Michael's did. We've set out new brands of cat food that they weren't absolutely thrilled with, but after it sat there for several hours, with obviously no other offering about to be made, they'd surrendered to their growling stomachs and eaten it. I will admit we've never hit on an off-brand that ranked with DR.BALLARD'S -- or should that be reeked? But since he is an sf fan, what else did Coney expect to find within the can? Perhaps quality does have something to do with names. Anyway, it was a funny story that I enjoyed very much, and I do hope you have a few more anecdotes from Coney's fevered mind in your files. I still remember his story about the vacation trip with grinning fondness.

I was wondering how long you'd had that drawing by Joni's daughter. You aren't apparently aware that she clenches her teeth at being called "Debby" (or "Debbie"; for that matter), but prefers the name of Deb Stopa now that she's reached her present stage of maturity. Unless this is an example of your deliberate rascality, I'd say you goofed. Short of receiving no credit at all, having the wrong name put on one's work, or having it misspelled, is the cruelest cut of all to an artist, fan or no. Somehow, though, I think it was just an oversight. I see Deb far more often than you do, and I still occasionally call her by the forbidden nickname.

I doubt that you were as affected by it as I was, but didn't you find andy's announcement at Chambanacon that they were passing up SFEXPO in favor of Midwestcon ghod news? Since offutt depends on writing for a living, I was prepared to be quite rational and understanding about it when I read his name on the list of authors who'd agreed to attend the New York affair; I mean your livelihood should always come before fannish activities unless you've gone completely around the bend. But still and yet...Midwestcon is something else than mere fanac. It's a Tradition, and I'm more than a bit hooked on Traditions. Maybe it's the Irish in me, maybe it's just a personal quirk, but I was so dearly hoping that andy and Jodie would snap their fingers at the Mass Market Methods the SFEXPO people were using to lure attendees and the sneering disregard they were showing to fandom, that I was thrilled to death to hear they were going to Cincy rather than New York. Andy had told me about it a short while before the banquet and I'd already expressed my delight, or I probably would have jumped up and kissed him on the spot.

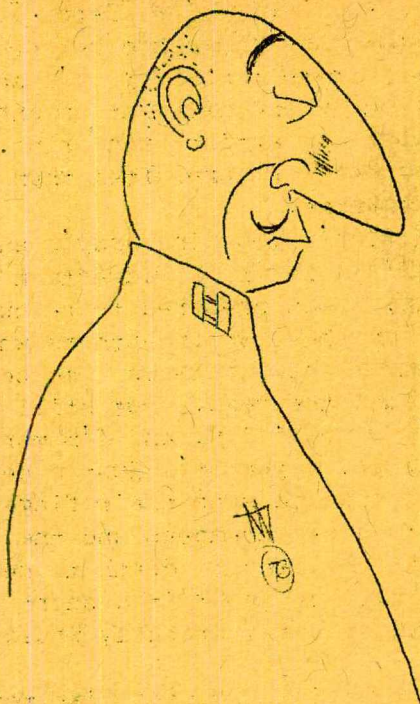
It's silly, I know, to get so excited about a relatively trivial matter like that, but excited I was and that's the truth of it. I think this upcoming June is going to be a watershed of sorts for fandom; with the Trufen congregating in Ohio, and the Fakefen traipsing off to the lights of the big city in the East.

The Thompsons' report on the water hyacinth's effectiveness as a water purifying agent was the first commendation of that pesky plant I'd heard of -- except for the fact that they're so pretty, of course. Usually all you read about are the number of municipal engineers who are going stark raving bonkers trying to keep waterways clear of them. Except for manatees, I guess they're considered as nuisances by every living critter in Florida. I also tend to agree with the pessimistic tone you expressed in your remark to the letter. Somehow I find it hard to believe that people will pick up on the virtues of the plant, and will instead expend all sorts of energy in combating their proliferation as weeds and ignore using them in a beneficial manner. Heck, if we have difficulty in recycling garbage in big cities, how can you expect the smaller areas that are affected by water hyacinths to behave any differently? Municipal workers seem to be an even dumber breed of human than the average.

I would like to modify Leah Zeldes' statement that rape is applicable to only females while seduction applies to either sex. That's not totally correct; rape can only be committed by males, while either sex can seduce other people. There are homosexual rapes, after all, though in many states the legal definition of rape makes it a not-crime even if the majority of the populations sees it otherwise.

While I find it easy to say, yes, we fen in the Midwest simply have a higher percentage of Nuts running around who are willing to run conventions than our poor brethren (oops, have to remember Jessica; sisteren) in the West, I think it goes a bit deeper than that. Putting on conventions seems to be akin to the reason why a person will host a party in an area where there's a great deal of socializing. Debts can be repaid; a party can be attended with no traveling entailed for the host; you feel it's your turn. All these and many more in various combinations can apply. Since we do have so many, no one is under any pressure to make every single one since another will be coming up RealSoonNow; quite unlike the situation in California, and people aren't afraid they'll be snowed under by too much work when they do host a con. I'd be willing to bet that if the California fen got together one year and scheduled a rash of cons, putting them in small motels instead of of gigantic inner-city hotels, they could enjoy the same situation we have. As it is, all I can do is feel sorry for all them fen out West; I weep for them.

I'm all the way up to p55 of NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM... Tried my darndest to read



it this evening, but the chilluns interfered too much. My reading a book has almost the same effect on them as my talking on the phone. They get this sudden urge to either communicate Important Information ("Brian bashed me on the bus two weeks ago.." "Sandy tripped me on the stairs last wekk..") to me or to start screaming arguments with each other. Impossible to concentrate on anything else in either case. I gave it up as a bad job when I realized I'd read the same sentence six times and still couldn't understand it. Coulson-DeWeese books are not exactly noted for the difficulty of their prose...

[We got the illo last summer from Joni, and she didn't explain the intricacies of the credit line.// Personally, I think the difference in conventions is that Midwestern fans have large numbers of small scattered groups: Chicago, Columbus, Nashville, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, Champaign, Indianapolis (though we have better sense than to put on cons), Louisville, etc. California has two large fan centers in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and what else? RSC]

Brian Tannahill, 615 East 69 Street, Kansas City MO 64131

A friend of mine who was a clerk for Marine counter-intelligence in Vietnam told me a story about a Vietnamese man who was a paid informer for them. Counter-intelligence made up "blacklists" of Viet Cong operatives, obtaining the names from their paid informers. If the person's full name wasn't known the list would say F.N.U., M.N.U. or L.N.U. for first name unknown, middle name unknown, or last name unknown.

The Vietnamese I mentioned back at the beginning was fired by Marine counter-intelligence for frequently giving wrong information. To get his revenge on the Americans, he went to Army counter-intelligence, which had a similar operation, and talked them out of one hundred dollars in return for the name of one of the biggest Viet Cong spies. The next time the Army published a blacklist, it had the name of "Fnu Mnu Lnu".

Don & Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor OH 44060

Don is mightily enjoying de Camp's marvelous HANDBOOK. A grand help -- and it would have been tax-deductible if we'd had to pay for it, which we didn't. The Gunn book is less admirable, we fear -- as we spot errors and misstatements and fudging of important data (for lack of checking a reference work in the course of writing). As a long-time list-maker, too, I'm unimpressed by Gunn's list (hope he doesn't make his students memorize it) of categories of sf (niggling difference in story type putting a story in a completely different category -- alongside major different types in the same category). And I, for one, am extremely bugged by all these studies of "important" sf illustrators which ignore or skip swiftly past Edd Cartier, the one illustrator whose pictures could persuade me to read stories I'd have otherwise not given time to. Far's I'm concerned, he was one of the top three of the 40s -- the other two being, oh, Finlay and you-pick-one. Not that there weren't other artists whose work flooded the field -- drowned it, in some cases. But Orban, for example, could turn me off a story I'd otherwise have read (and did read, in some cases, in collections later on.) Hmm, let's make Bok the third of the top three, now that I glance through Sadoul's book -- which, as far as I can tell, uses precisely one not-too-bad-but-not-

the-best Cartier piece. (Another flaw: the lack of any index in these supposed reference works...)

(I don't find any Cartier in the also unindexed Rottensteiner books...)

(Nice going, group.)

- [Agreed on Cartier, but not on Orban, whom we rather like. (Though he was never, like Cartier, one of the "top" artists.) RSC]

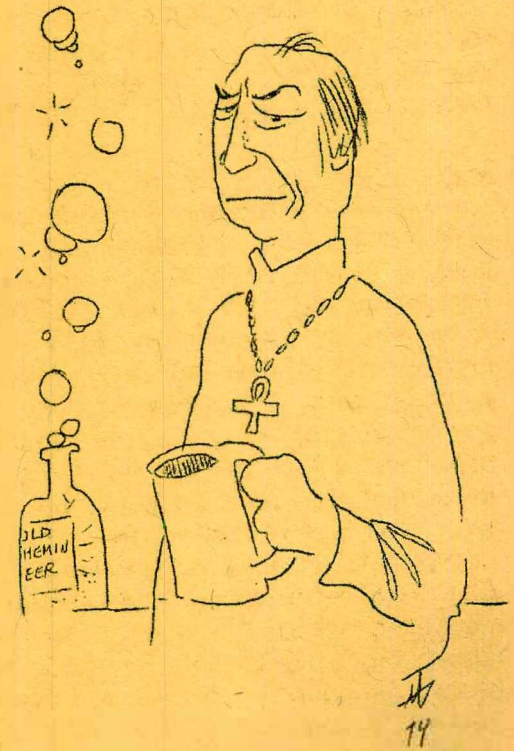
Kay Anderson, 8386 Hollister, Ventura CA 93003

Incredibly enough the idiot independent station ~~that~~ bought SPACE:1999 locally repeated the pilot in case anyone failed to tune in the first time and be repelled by it. There was also a big interview in one of the show biz trade papers, with ITC prexie Abe Mandell telling why the show is so terrific; it's because they spent a lot of money on it, and everyone on whom they spent the money told them how terrific their work was and how terrific therefore was the entire show and how Mr. Mandell had terrific taste in making this ~~terrific~~ terrific show and hiring them to work on it. I'm sure the budget, reputed to be \$6.5 million, would break down to show that \$1.98 had been spent for scripts and concept. That Mandell interview is the best sf of the year. Mr. Mandell looks like a sharpie himself, with his sneaky little smile.

Gary called yesterday and told me not to try to call him. His branch is going to move to another building fairly soon, and during the previous night the base phone people had come and changed all the phone numbers, evidently thinking the move had already taken place. Then they left with leaving any hint what they had changed the numbers to. My thought was that they could patiently wait till someone called, then ask them what number they had dialed. Gary said they'd thought of that too, but it didn't work; the number you dial does not necessarily have any relation to the number you get. Their phone system was taken off a WWII destroyer, and hasn't gotten over the shock since. About once a month I call and a recording informs me that there is no such number or it is not in service, and when I hang up the connection isn't broken and my phone remains tied to theirs.

Gary says this is even more fun when they are hooked up to a time-share computer via phone line and the lines get stuck and neither can hang up as the seconds roll by in dollar signs. Once he was talking to the computer that lives in San Diego and it refused to break the connection, repeating "Wait." He finally went to lunch and returned an hour later, signed on, and the computer, still there, said "Wait." That computer is also the one that refuses to recognize their account number about once a week, saying it's an invalid number and sounding an alarm that it's being used by illegal people. I've also seen printouts in which it tells someone that whatever program he wants has a new name -- which the computer decided for itself -- and when he asks for that program it smugly says "I have nothing to say."

Another example of military thinking: out at the base they had a street barricaded while a building was being constructed and trenches dug across the street, with temporary phone and light wires strung on low poles. Supposed completion date came and a gang of sailors came in a truck and removed the barricades. Never mind that it was clearly visible that the building was nowhere near done and the street was full of ditches, an unpaved hogwallow, or that there were lines running across it about 10 feet off the ground. It said right here it would be completed by...and we are not to reason why. Four innocents/naïfs, feeling that if the Navy said the building was done, it was done, and the street was repaired, too, drove off into ditches or got stuck in the mud.



THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE MAILBOX

I recently got an ad from Calhoun's Collectors Society, Inc. for a set of 23 solid gold stamps to be issued by Staffa Scotland and authenticated by the Laird of Staffa. At \$20 per stamp, with an Official Collector's Album thrown in. Right. I notice that on the brochure, the statement "Member, American Philatelic Society" had been blacked out rather inexpertly. Membership revoked? // There was a recent Sydney Harris column about an "autographing-party" for his new book. He mentions the sensation of sitting there feeling foolish while people file by and stare at him, but says it's worth while because "Writers...rarely meet their audiences" and such displays are one way to do it. The advantages of science fiction; nothing I've had published will have the sale of Harris's book (or the quality, for that matter), but even without any autograph parties I've probably already had more feedback than he'll ever get. And signed damned near as many autographs. The difference is remarkable. In our "Man From U.N.C.L.E." paperbacks, which weren't even science fiction, Gene and I got exactly two letters of comment written in care of the publisher - and I still get half a dozen or so comments every year from stf fans at conventions, 10 years after the books went out of print. // Andy Zerbe sends along an identification verse ripped from the inside cover of a Red Rose Romance: "This book belongs to Janet Tucker So don't steal this book for fear the shame cause Janet Tucker isn't your name and when you die Dear God will say, where's that book you stole that day and when you say I do not know. Dear God will say, please step BELOW". Andy didn't say how he came into possession of the volume, but if I was him, I'd Watch It.//The Mie-sels send a couple of clippings about the little silver men seen on a road near Hartford City. The second clipping mentions that the "little" men turned out to be quite large high school students. I don't think the local paper even mentioned the incident. // The Thompsons send one about the Brunswick City Council, which has regulated the height at which bees may cross residential property lines. How one hands a traffic ticket to a bee wasn't noted.//I think it was Alice Hopf who sent the one about the New York lawyer who stole over 15,000 library books. His comment to reporters was "I like to read". I think we can all agree with that, but...Lawyers are a little weird, sometimes. Right, Joe? Larry?//Thompsons again; the study made by Anheuser-Busch that rather conclusively proves that beer drinkers can't tell one brand from another except by the name on the can. (I mentioned this at work and several people immediately said that THEY could tell, right away. Sure they can.) //Chris Walker sends an ad from a Chicago outfit that's making money off selling pure water - as opposed to the city variety, one assumes. // Chris also sends a con report on Windy-con, written by a Pat Clinton and published in an "underground" paper. One very penetrating comment: "Science fiction is in trouble these days, and self-consciousness seems to be a big part of it." // Alan Dodd sends several cuttings on the British postal service, which seems to be in worse shape than ours, and a lovely little bit about a British housewife who was a bit overawed to discover that the used vacuum cleaner she had called about had been used in Buckingham Palace. (It had also been sold before she called.) One just doesn't envision Buckingham Palace selling off used vacuum cleaners. After a diet of fairy tales, it's a disappointment to find royalty required to be logical.//Also also sends one on a pub owner who is tossing oldsters out of his pub because they don't drink fast enough. He wants younger, sturdier customers. (And maybe wealthier?) And they keep telling us that such crudities are restricted to the boorish U.S.// Derek Nelson sends a long article from the Toronto - I guess - MIRROR, on Harlequin Books. It emphasized the blandness which is one of the less pleasant aspects of Laser Books (it's not Elwood's fault, it's company policy. "No sex, no violence, no swearing and no reference to controversial social or political issues". I guess that's why my earthquake outline got rejected as "too socially conscious". I rather like the idea of a socially conscious earthquake myself, but there's no accounting for tastes.//Mary Schaub sends several clippings. One concerns the professional career of a feather judge. Then there's one about the auction of the estate of Mrs. Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge, with such items as an armored horse mask and a solid bronze cast of the right hand of the Manx giant. (That last is the sort of conversation piece one just doesn't see everywhere.) Then there is one on the annual tree-sitting contest in Cohocton, NY. (Everyone in the world but me and thee...)