

ARCTURUS
Vol. 1 #1

ARCTURUS is written and paid for by Rick Sneary of 2932 Santa Ana Street, South Gate, California, and is interred in the December 1947 mailing of the S.A.P.S. This copy is being mimeoed ((and edited)) by Tom Jewett, a charming fellow, always willing to help a fellow fan (if he can make a pound of flesh or two). ARCTURUS is dedicated to the belief that all men are equal and that Palmer should be divided among them.

Interlineations is the real name of what most fans call beardmuttering, says Speer

Well, here we go again -- the second mailing. I would have been in the first, but would you believe it -- I was stupid enough to think that if I made 50 carbon-copies it would be the same as printing. Ha. Just shows how much you can learn in six months. Well, this mailing ought to make up for the rather thin one last time. We have a lot more members, and I know of a number of them who are planning mags. ((Dost thou lookest at me, master?))

An interesting question was raised in the last ((FIRST!!)) mailing: What should we let in, and what should be counted. Now I suggest we work it this way: We let in anything (within Postal laws, of course) from anywhere, like FAPA or VAPA, but only count those zines put out purposely for SAPS. It would be alright, of course, if the editor wanted to then use them in another apa. I suggest after this that the mags be marked as to which apa they want credit in, and that the Mailer check with the other apa mailers. ((Sneary, I hate you....))

Speaking of FAPA, I am putting out a two-sheeter in the February mailing, but as so many of you are in it I'm not going to send SAPS copies. However, any member not in FAPA wanting a copy should drop me 3¢ for postage and I'll be glad to send them as long as extra copies last.

Here's where I take off the gloves and start a fight, but this is a free press.

By now only a person living in a vault could not have heard of the fan-column to be started in AS. And only one made of stone has failed to take sides. And only one that is blind doesn't know that I'm against it. Well, here is what I want to say. C. ((for Charles)) Burbee, O-E of FAPA, has, despite the protests of many local FAPA members, sent the last ((Fall)) mailing to be reviewed by Phillips. No matter what the members think, it was unjustified, as it is not according to the constitution. He should have found out what the members wanted first. Well, that is beside the point. I only want to say it must not happen here. I here openly tell Lloyd ((Alpaugh, I suppose.)) he has no right to send the SAPS mailing without a poll. Of course, if such a poll is taken and the members are for it I will say nothing.

I'd like to point out, though, that this column will not be the great thing it is being called. Oh, it will no doubt be fine for fans, but for getting new fans, I'm not so sure. After all, it is not going to be a letter dep't, and I ask you, except for the few fans that by chance meet other fans, aren't most new fans brought in that way? Personal contact has always been the keystone. I came in after writing Kennedy, not after hearing of the NFFF or reading a review of Shangri-L3Affaires. And I'm sure you did too. So you see, when you balance up the gains and losses you come out about the same. ((I only edit the stuff -- I don't claim to understand it.)) And to me it is heavy on the losses side, ((he continues)). After the things I have said, and still believe, I could not stand to do business with them ((Palmer, et al)) I've written Phillips telling him so. And a note to you eds.; if you are going to have your personal zines reviewed, please do not use or ask for anything by me, letter or article. I will gladly subscribe, but like Ackerman, and I hope, by the time you read this, many others, I will not support zines reviewed in AS. I do not want my name in it, no matter what.

I REMEMBER FLASH GORDON

Not really, of course, but I do remember the comic strip bearing that name as well as anyone, and with the exception of Alex Raymond, the creator, as far back as anyone. At least, I can still remember the first chapter that appeared in our Los Angeles Examiner. The exact date I have forgotten but it must have been about 1933 or 34. The first picture showed a crowd of people around a poster that told of a giant meteor that was headed toward the earth, which would destroy it. The next was a picture of the meteor in all its fiery greatness. The third showed the inside of a plane in which were two passengers, Flash Gordon and Dale Arden. The next scene showed a small meteor knock off a wing of the plane, and the next Flash and Dale as seen parachuting to the ground. In the next we meet Dr. Zarkov, on whose land Flash and Dale have landed. He was pictured as being the usual mad scientist, and he told them he had built a space ship in which he planned to stop the meteor by running into it. And at gun point he insisted that they go with him. My mind clouds slightly at this point and I cannot remember if they took off then or in the next issue. At any rate, in the second issue Flash overpowers the mad Doctor and turns the ship from its course of doom, only to crash on the planet Mongo.

Thus started what is possibly one of the greatest series of adventures ever to appear in the comic-weeklies, one that has lasted over 14 years, and shows only slight signs of not going on forever.

As a whole, the comics are scorned by fandom, and it is justified as they are now a poor and cheap lot compared even to the plotting of Cummings. But we should not blind ourselves to the good there is. There are things worth looking into, many things of worth that cannot be laughed off. So let us look at the history and the changes, not so much of Flash Gordon as a man, but as a series of stories and pictures.

There are roughly three periods of change in the story and I will handle them each in turn. The first reaches from the very beginning to somewhere around 1937-38. This was, I think, the great age of Flash Gordon. The artwork outstripped any in its field at that time, and even now only Harold Foster, creator of Prince Valiant, has been able to equal the life-like drawings and the imagination of scenes and settings. Raymond followed no one -- he was a leader, a master of shadow and lines. He gave with a few lines his hero's rippling muscles and his heroines lovely curves. He made his drawings come to life and have depth and color beyond that given by the printed page.

Nowhere was he like anyone, except for a few struggling artists in a few stf magazines that never could or have equalled his first greatness. Not only were his pictures human looking but there were others quite inhuman. There were the Lion-men, the Hawk-men, and countless others, all well-formed and yet seeming the alien beings they were. The colors helped in this for there were no white men like those of Earth. For the most part the people seemed to be a clear yellow, and with the exception of King the Merciless, Emporer of all Mongo, they did not look Oriental. Too, there were the Lion-men who were orange, with bushy manes and tails. There were Hawk-men with chocolate skin and wings, and there were black, red, blue, and many other shades of men.

Possibly the most noticeable difference was the clothing which the people wore. They were unlike anything. Mongo seemed to have a warm climate, and part of the time the men were bare to the waist. When in full dress most of the men wore chest armor but left their legs bare. Although they had ray-guns of all kinds they usually wore swords and small knives. It was thus a cross between the romantic days of knights and the far off future. As for the dress of the females a lot could be said. They are much like the cover girls of our own later-day prozines but surpassed both in daring and beauty. Being designed for beauty and to show off the wearer rather than to conceal or keep warm. The females too were unlike anything ever seen outside a science-fictionists dreams, and were also of many colors.

The stories themselves were simple in plot, as any such type of story must be.

But this was made up for in ideas, like the city of the Hawk-men that was supported in the air by beams of force; the cities below the sea and the machine that made Flash breathe water; and the Tournament of Death, in which thousands of men killed each other in hand to hand combats of the weirdest forms, the last man alive being made a king. And there were the top-like space ships, like our modern flying saucers.

All this was summed up in the motto on the coat-of-arms that begai the series for awhile. It was beneath a shield that was divided into four parts. In one was a sun; in another the head of a dragon; in a third the head of something like a lion; and in the last a helmetted skull. The motto read: "We Sing Of Arms and Heroes." And it was ture ((Ooops, sorry there, Rick.)).

Now part Two: This lasted from the end of the first to about 1942. Let me make clear that there was no sharp line of change but a slow one that could be seen only after time has passed. If any of you can remember, I believe it happened just after Flash left the Witch Queen. It was then that the figures became larger and drawn with fewer of the fine lines so noticeable before. Other changes too were seen. The other people they ((Flash and Dale?)) met were white, and looked like Earth men. Also their costumes were not as weird and strange as before but were more showy and colorful, with gold braid and bright colors like those of European officers of past ages. Although the adventures with people living in the sea or in the snow lands were as exciting as the ones before, they lacked something. It may indeed be but a picture of our own planet untold years in the future.

In late 1941 Flash and the others returned to Earth for a short time to defeat an enemy that was threatening the United States. This was the first hint that our world had not been destroyed by the meteor. The reason, however, has never been given. As Flash was of course all but a superman on Earth, Raymond seemingly found little for him to do. Evidently unable to break away from the old pattern, Raymond returned the trio, Flash, Dale, and Dr. Zarkhov, to the planet Mongo. It might be interesting to note that Mongo must be Jupiter but with an Earth-like gravity. No world of our size could hold so many countries. For one thing, it must have four poles and a million-mile equator.

On their return the old pattern began for what may have been the last time -- that is, a beautiful queen of a land in danger and in love with Flash. Queen Desira of the Forest people was all of this, and after a long adventure her land was freed. And so, in mid-1943, the second period ended.

The Third, in which we are still in, began, and this time a finer line can be drawn. The figures became cruder and even the somewhat streamlined beauty of the second period was gone. Everything became but a poorer copy of its former self. All hope for well-planned plots disappeared. The number of pictures per issue was cut to five, and only the briefest part of the story was told each week.

The faces, always so well done before, became mere blobs of color and lines. The manner of dress became more and more like that of the Earth of our age. The truth of this was brought out in November when Dale suddenly began wearing them long. All faith in Raymond as a leader of young minds into science-fiction was then lost for me. And as it has been increasingly hard to follow the disjointed story in the last few months I have all but given up. The seemingly endless chase of Yang may never end, for all I know. And even in this I look wistfully back at yesteryear, for Ming, I feel, was a much better foe and a more cunning villain than the fat and stupid Kang. For no matter what, Ming was never stupid, something Flash has been pictured a number of times.

There are only two answers to the question, "What has caused these changes?" One: Raymond has lost his skill and imagination. Or Two: he has someone else doing most of his work. As I said, the modern Flash looks more like a copy than a man. I therefore believe that Raymond is either dead and the series is being carried on by someone else, or like so many other comic artists he has given the job to another artist, or what is more likely, anywhere from two to six others, at different times. Or perhaps of later years lost his imagination or given the task of plotting the story to someone who has none.

In closing, I'd like to add that the above-mentioned art changes affected Raymond's other strip, "Jungle Jim", though not as much. Also, out of fairness I have to say that I saw but a few of the daily paper's Jungle Jim comic strip. But it never seemed as good as the Sunday one, lack of color and size being no doubt the cause. Alex Raymond was a leader and a great artist at one time, and I will argue the point with anyone. Though Buck Rogers came first, I feel it has even yet to equal Flash in art and story, being a mere thud and blunder space opera.

Thus Flash Gordon as a series has gone from the top to, though not the bottom, a past middle position in my likes. But I can still remember the great days, and, with the few copies I still have, relive some of the adventures that laid the groundwork for my entrance into stfantasy and fandom. THE END

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Well, chums, you have gotten this far. So I'll hit you once more. How about joining YOUNG FANDOM? YF is the newest fan club. It is, as the name implies, for young fans from 7 to 70. Older fans, too. Of course, I refer to fan-age when I say young. Anyone just starting out in our hobby is a young fan. YF is a club made up of young fans to help young fans. The idea is to help, encourage, and advise. A few of us who have weathered the first storms have banded together to help others. George Caldwell was the founder, with aid from the Cockrofts, Jewett, and myself. Tom ((That's me!!)) is now President and George the Official Editor. We have been active only six months and already we have issued three issues ((Oh, Jewett, you clumsy zwilnik...)) of the clubzine, a small address booklet, given at mailing costs promag originals, started round-table letters, and formed a dep't to send free fanzines to fans who otherwise would not have heard of them. And other plans are in the mill. For a club of, at this writing, 30 members that is pretty good.

Our dues are lower than the NFFF, only 50¢ in 1947. 1943's dues are undecided but no doubt the same. If you want to join, send a year's dues to Del Grant, Box 14, Lewiston, Idaho. You won't regret it. And be sure to tell those young fans you correspond with about YF. We are here to help and advise them, but if they don't know about us we might as well shut up shop. So tell them. And be sure you tell them you too are a member. We want active fans in YF, not a bunch of hermits that only pay dues, like in the NFFF.



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Hiya. Used up all of Rick's material, so I'll shoot off my mouth awhile. Rick, you ought to know what I'm going through doing this here stenciling and mimeoing for you. Here it is our clock just struck 2:30 AM. That's quite an accomplishment for a clock without any chimes. We used to have a big old Grandfather's clock standing in the front room by a window. One windy day a shapely miss hipped by and our Grandfather's clock jumped up waving its hands, started to do a bunny-hug, and with a final BOINGGG! blew out its mainspring. Now we have heavy shades.

Now we know the ups and downs of Flash Gordon, but have any of you followed the adventures of Brick Bradford? He had many equally exciting adventures as Flash, although the art work wasn't as polished. He was allied with a scientist also, but a completely sane scientist. Brick's adventures with a size-reducer into the atom universe within the eye of Lincoln on a common copper penny simply can't be beat, in my estimation. Brick was chiefly science fiction in topic, and the deserted world within the copper atom was exceptionally vivid. To top it all, when Brick and the scientist returned to the outer world after almost a year of adventures, they found that to the outside world only a few minutes had passed. Flash Gordon has a worthy rival in my stefniastic affections in the form of handsome, square jawed Brick Bradford. And I'm sure Rick would gladly publish an article about Bradford. I don't know when Brick began, but I'll bet it was about the same or even earlier than Flash. How about it, fellows. Any Brick Bradford fans in the house?

