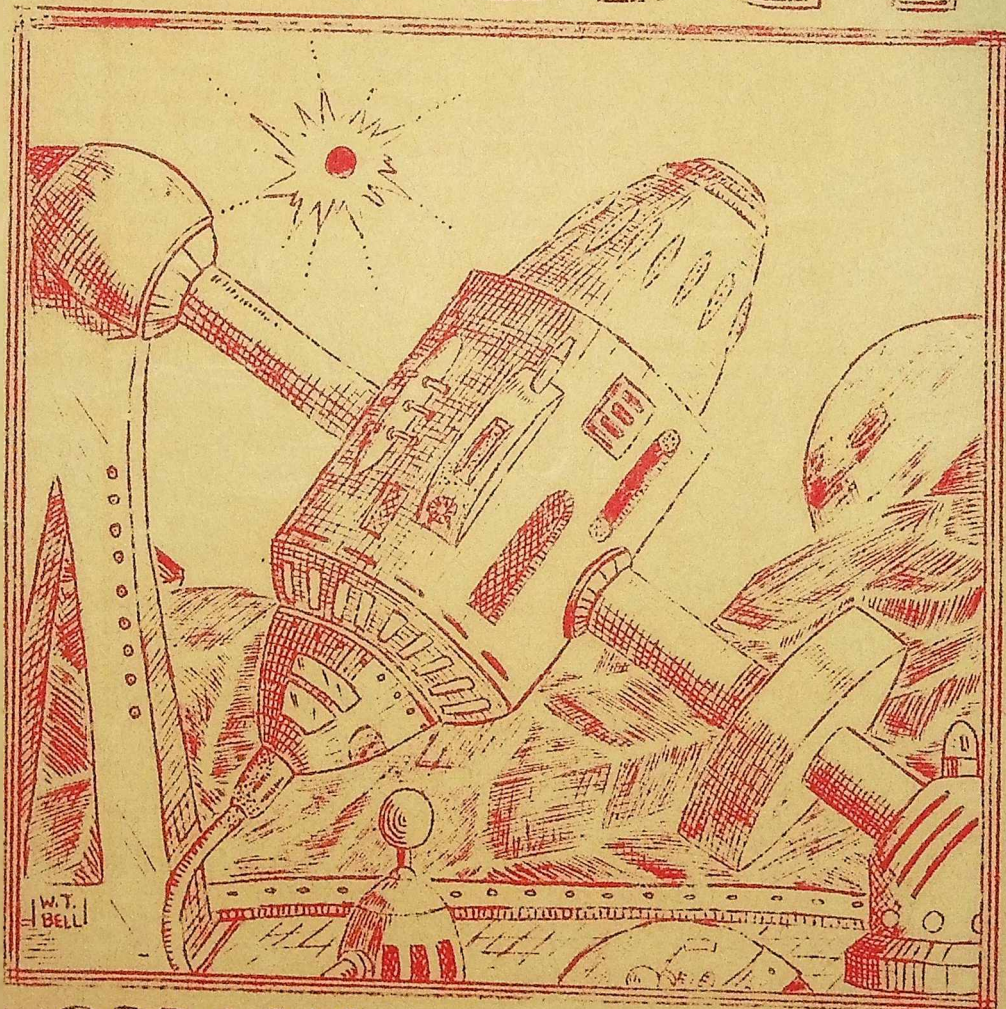


THE

MAY-JUNE  
1940

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# COMET



HORROR'S CELLAR by HARRY WARNER, JR.



# DAWN!

What is it? Why it's the annual companion to THE COLLET and MERCURY!  
How big? Over 65 large size pages!  
How much? Only 25¢!

STARLIGHT PUBLICATIONS takes great pleasure in announcing **DAWN!** the largest fan mag ever to appear. Over **65** big pages! Not just pages of junk either, but the finest material possible, great novels, a great feature length article, a photo-stencil cover of a magnificent drawing of a future city, photo-stenciled photographs of all the famous fans, complete with autograph and short autobiography, a merit award that comes to \$5.00, and that ain't all, there are many more features too numerous to mention.

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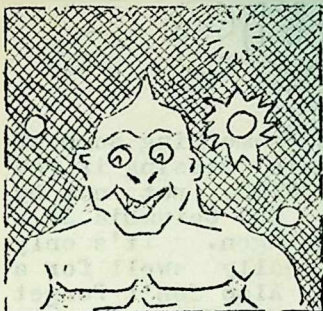
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Maybe you can't afford a large ad, but how about best wishes? Think what you're getting!

Also needed is good material. Further details on this and the mag in general will be in the next issue. Send any questions to either me (Tom) or Joe Fortier.

DAWN will be copyrighted! Help make it a huge success!

WANTED! \*LE SOLBIE! Your cozy home by MELVIN C. SCHMIDT\*life is not complete with- R. F. D. #4, Mount Vernon, #out a Universal Robot and a Indiana. COLETT #1, POLARIS\*subscription to LE SOLBIE! #2, SWEETNESS AND LIGHT #2,\*The only publication Hitler NEW FANDOM #2, AD ASTRA #1.\*still allows in Germany!! Will buy first copies off-\*(It keeps his people punch ered to me. Don't send mag-\*(drunk!) LE SOLBIE..Fandom's azine before hearing from \*biggest bargain...\$ for 10¢ me. HURRY! \*Box 260, Bloomington, Ill.



# The COMET

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STARLIGHT PUBS - VOL. 1 ~ NO. 3 \* 10¢ ~ 3 for 25

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5¢  
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THE COMET is published bi-monthly by Tom Wright at R.D.D. #1, Box 129, Martinez, California. 10¢ per issue, 3 for 25¢. 5¢ extra brings on slick paper & copy of fan autobiography with paste in photo. Contributions of any sort welcome, just make it interesting...



# THE NUCLEUS ~

First I want to say to all you new readers that I hope this issue lives up to your expectations though I doubt it, after these glowing comments Bob Tucker handed out (Thanks a lot Bob). This issue is my first experience with a mimeo, and it takes a little while to catch on, notice the difference between some of the pages. Just bare with me everything will be hokay next issue.

The drawing on page 5 is by a new Oakland artist, Bob Thorsen. I want to apologize to him for the mess I made stenciling it. It really was a good original, but when it was printed. (!)

Next issue will see an entire revision in policy of THE COMET, it will revert back to its former 24 pages, will have more art and fancy titlings, there will be standard headings for the cover and regular departments. The policy will be as loose as possible, there are no restrictions on type, just so it's interesting, there may be a long story (as this issue) or none at all, perhaps a lot of poetry, or none at all, and so on. So send in what you have, it will probably fit the policy of THE COMET! Especially I would like a column of news like Spaceway's Stardust, but maybe I'm asking too much???

By the way, if your one of those kind of fans that never read fan fiction, I'm telling you you're missing something if you don't read HORROR'S CELLAR, it's definitely proish, and packs a real punch at the end! Most articles were crowded out of this issue, due to the length of HC...

I'd like to have special comments on the departments we have this time, which should we continue, which should be dropped?

Say, there's something some of you fellows are missing if you haven't seen SNIDE, put out by Damon Knight, 303 Columbia St., Hood River, Oregon. It's only a dime and really swell for a hectoed pub. Also don't forget our companion, MERCURY, a nickle from J.J. Fortier, 1836 - 39th Ave., Oakland, Calif. And of course DAWN, and that which is advertised on the back cover... (above, official plug department)

Thanks to Walt Daugherty for stenciling the back cover, and also for his offer to stencil anything I wanted. Again Thankx.

So far not many nickles have come for the photo extra, but I guess I'll mail 'em to everybody this time, you can send me the nickle if you want, and I hope you want to, 'cause 'em photos cost dough.

On hand for next, or future issues are two fine articles by Harry Warner, Jr., one, Samplers will probably appear next issue, then there's a piece of poetry, "MAN OF HELL" by Bill Hamling, and you know how Hamling can write poetry. Also a Reit-rof story, Correction on Avery's Article, and more besides the regular departments. And DAMON KNIGHT CARTOONS! Watch!!

A couple of questions: First, what color of ink do you prefer, red or black, or both? Second, do you like the pages in two columns, or across the page??

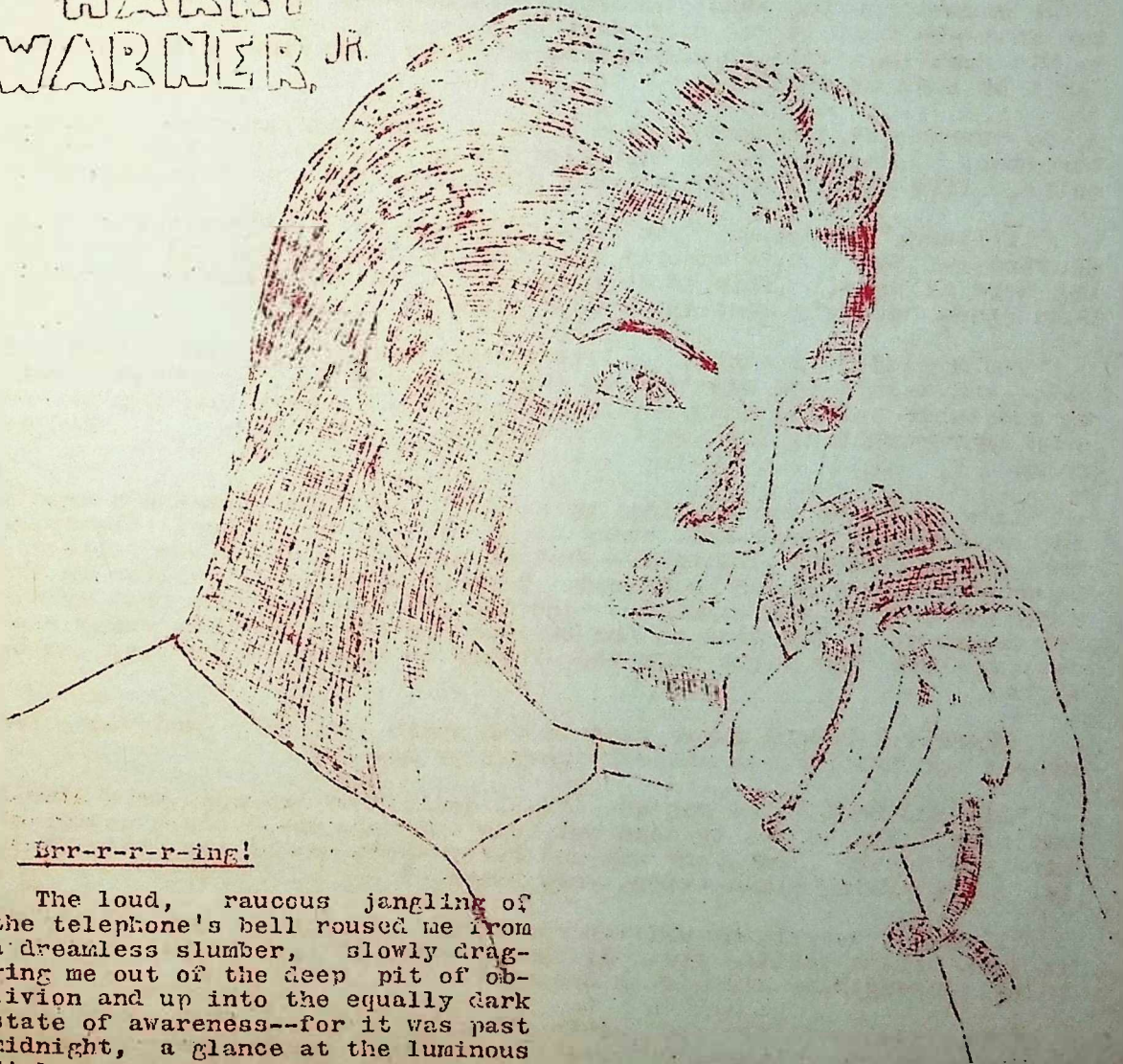
I don't think I said it before, but THE COMET will be only to glad to exchange with other fan-mags, and also ads.

THE COMET will be out the second Saturday of every other month... On time!

TOM KNIGHT

# HORROR'S CELLAR

By  
HARRY  
WARNER, JR.



Brr-r-r-r-ing!

The loud, raucous jangling of the telephone's bell roused me from a dreamless slumber, slowly dragging me out of the deep pit of oblivion and up into the equally dark state of awareness--for it was past midnight, a glance at the luminous dial on my wrist watch assured me.



## --HORROR'S CHILD--

Mentally cursing the fool who would wake me at this time of night, I groped about beneath my bed for a moment, searching for my pair of slippers. Being unsuccessful, I snapped on the light at the head of my bed, and finally discovered them, under the chair where I had deposited them a few hours previously. I put them on, slipped into my night-robe--for it was a rather cool night--and hastened to the hallway of the room which I am pleased to call the "parlor" of my small apartment.

Lifting the receiver, in the meantime laying myself odds that it would be a wrong number, I spoke into the mouthpiece. I was answered at once by the voice of a man whom I had not seen for years----Sydney Morton!

He seemed excited about something--incoherent, even. He was talking fast--so fast it was difficult to understand him, and I broke into his ramblings with an admonition of "Take your time, old man---it can't be that urgent!"

He paused for a moment, and I could sense him gathering himself together. When he began speaking again, it was in a low tone of voice, like that of a man who was struggling to keep from hysteria.

"Williams," he began, "you've got to help me!" God knows what I've started---I don't know what it is---but whatever it is, you must come out here at once! This is urgent---don't you understand?---urgent!! He's dead--but he's crawling around down there!"

"Who's dead?" I asked, a little impatiently. I knew Morton of old, and wasn't too surprised at this outburst. He had always been an excitable sort of chap, well meaning, but with a tendency to become overwrought at the least provocation. "Who's dead?" I asked again.

"It's he!" he shouted into my ear. "I've killed him--he's crawling around down there--and every night he's coming closer! Closer, I tell you---closer! Tonight---what if he---?" His voice faltered. Somewhere nearby a car backfired. Despite myself, the muscles in the upper part of my arm twitched, jerking the receiver away from my ear for a moment. The line to the bell-box on the wall made funny shadows against the floor from the feeble radiation of the tiny hall-light.

Suddenly I became aware that he was again speaking, and ridiculed myself for letting his anxiety unnerve me so.

"Listen, Paul," he rasped. "I--I don't know how much more time I may have. You've got to come out here and help me---it's a matter of life and death. Get your car and hurry---you may be too late as it is. It's coming close--very, very close--"

"I've got everything written out here. I wrote it out and signed it just before calling you. If you're late, it'll explain everything. Everything else is in order--"

"What the devil are you talking about?" I said. "What will 'explain everything'---what's there to explain? Are you sure you're in

## --HORROR'S CELLAR--

your right mind?"

Rather brutal tactics, I'm sure, but they were the correct ones, I thought at the time. Knowing him as I did, I was sure that this was merely a product of his imagination--possibly even a night mare. And I didn't believe his reason had snapped, either---if it had, it was unlikely he would spend time standing talking to me. Maybe he was just a little irrational at the moment, however---

"Well, if you insist, I'll be right out." I snapped at length. "Whom do you want me to bring along--a doctor?"

His reply nearly deafened me. "No!" he screamed, with his every ounce of strenght. "No one--don't bring anyone. No one must know--if you're too late, a doctor won't do any good, and if you get here in time you might be able to save me--to let me get away--"

"No--I'm still here, Morton," he muttered. "But I know what I'll do! I'll go and break the door----I'll see what's there! You needn't drag yourself into this---" his voice began to become very shrill-- "you stay out. I don't want you here--I began this and I'll have to see it through! Just forget that I ever called you----just forget--it's best you do--or else you might come out here and find--"

There was a thud.

I stood looking dumbly at the 'phone, a little frightened. Either Morton's reason had snapped completely, leaving him raving like a wild beast---or else something too horrible to think of was occurring. I knew then, for the first time, that no sane man could become so terrified by a mere nightmare of ever-excited imagination. That final monologue of his had been too intense--too real--

And what was the meaning of that thud? Had Morton dropped over unconscious? Or had he gone to carry out his sudden wild resolve, whatever it might have been, and--and what?

I knew the house he lived in. An old, rambling structure, set back from the road by a good two hundred yards, and completely free from all dwellings for possibly a quarter mile. Whatever was happening there was happening unseen by any intruding eyes--that was almost sure.

I'm not certain just how long I stood there. It might have been but a second or so; with these wild thoughts flashing through me, or again it might have been full minutes. From later discovery, it seems likely it was at least sixty seconds, and in all probability longer, until I heard--

It was another thud--or more than a thud--a crash. I know that a crash over a telephone just simply isn't---or at least it would seem

His voice had been rising in a steady crescendo of terror--and now it suddenly broke off completely. There was silence for an instant--for a long instant, until I began jiggling the hook, believing myself cut off from him. He must have heard me, for his voice came back over the wire, low, and with a violently suppressed emotion.

NOTICE: THIS PARAGRAPH WAS LEFT OUT FROM WHERE THE ARROW POINTS.....

SORRY.... -Editor..



## --HORROR'S CELLAR--

so from any ordinary person's experience. Take your own case---have you ever heard a noise over a 'phone that seemed anything more than a plop or thud in the background, like a small heavy object falling near at hand, no matter how loud you know it to be? But it was different then.

The crash almost split my head asunder, it seemed. I now know that the mouthpiece of Morton's 'phone was at the time lying on the floor, and the boards undoubtedly carried the vibration exceptionally well. And when you consider what made the crash---

Yet it was the scream a tenth of a second later that was the worst.

It still haunts me in every waking hour, and often in the middle of my sleep I wake sweating at every pore, still hearing that terrible, Hell-spawned cry, ending in a sort of throaty gurgle.

A thousand thoughts flashed through my brain. The reason for this came clearly to me---at least I thought so at the time. Morton had killed himself. His nerves, strained by something to the snapping point, had given way, and he had dashed to get a gun. He had probably blown out his brains, with the muzzle of the lethal weapon close to the telephone. That accounted for the first crash--and his scream was explainable--his last agony. Still, I could not be certain---and I hesitated to call the authorities immediately. The final thud would have been him falling to the floor--still, what was the significance of those last words of his? Surely there must have been something else--something odd, something that was completely out of the ordinary.

Morton's last wish, furthermore, had been that I should not go out there. For one moment I was almost decided to replace the receiver on the hook, go back to bed, and forget the whole thing. I was sure there had been a tragedy, and there was little reason for me to become involved in it. But even as I thought that, I knew I could not bring myself to do so--Morton had first wished me to go to his place, and that I would do--alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Half an hour later, my old Chevvie was creaking along the dark and rough road out to Morton's place. The night seemed actually to hold some strange, alien menace in it; it beat down from all sides, seemed to close in upon me. Once I tried to lighten my spirit by humming a fragment of some tune--but at the third or fourth bar that awful last shriek of Morton's came back to me, and I caught my breath, shuddering. It seemed like a voice from the grave, beating in on me from all sides--that last, horror filling, terror-ridden cry of anguish, torn loose from his very being by some wild horror.

Suddenly checking my thoughts, I found myself almost past the little lane which turned off the larger road and led up to the old house. In another moment I had reached it, swung the car to the friendly light cast by my headlamps the night appeared darker than before, even, and I felt once more that sense of menace in the air--that brooding horror.



Once I slammed on my emergency brake at what I took for a body lying in the road a few feet ahead--and then cursed myself for my foolishness when I saw it was only an old tree trunk, evidently recently fallen. But lying there by the side of the little pathway it had given me a jolt; after that, my senses seemed a little clearer, a little sharper, and what I went through a few moments later did not affect me so much as it might have otherwise. Why this was so I have no explanation to offer; some psychological quirk, no doubt, that helped to relieve my pent up emotion. Perhaps, up until that moment, I had been, subconsciously, hoping for something to happen--something that would tell me something, something I could use to relieve my tension. It seemed to clear the atmosphere somewhat, like a flash of lightning clearing the static electricity between two clouds.

In another moment I was up to the very porch of Morton's house. Lights blazed throughout--the sight of them sent a little quiver of fear through me, for Morton, in his natural senses, would have never left so many on at one time. It made me think more and more that he must be either dead or unconscious. And yet, what had the reason been for that awful scream--had it been his imagination, or--something else? And why had he not wished me not to come? It hardly seemed likely that he would have warned me to stay away if he actually was mad--a twisted mentality could hardly conceive such a notion. And yet, there was ever that damnable uncertainty--and the most pressing uncertainty was the ever present question; was Morton dead, unconscious, or--what? Might he be violently mad--waiting in there to pounce upon me?

Locking the car, I walked up to the front door of the house, up the creaking porch steps. The windows made it shine like a light-house in the darkness. Trying the front door, I found it to be locked--my ethics there might have been questioned, but in that state of mind I was ready to commit house breaking to determine what had happened to Morton. Rapping produced no response, the windows grinning back at me as if with an unholy glee, and I picked my way cautiously to the back door.

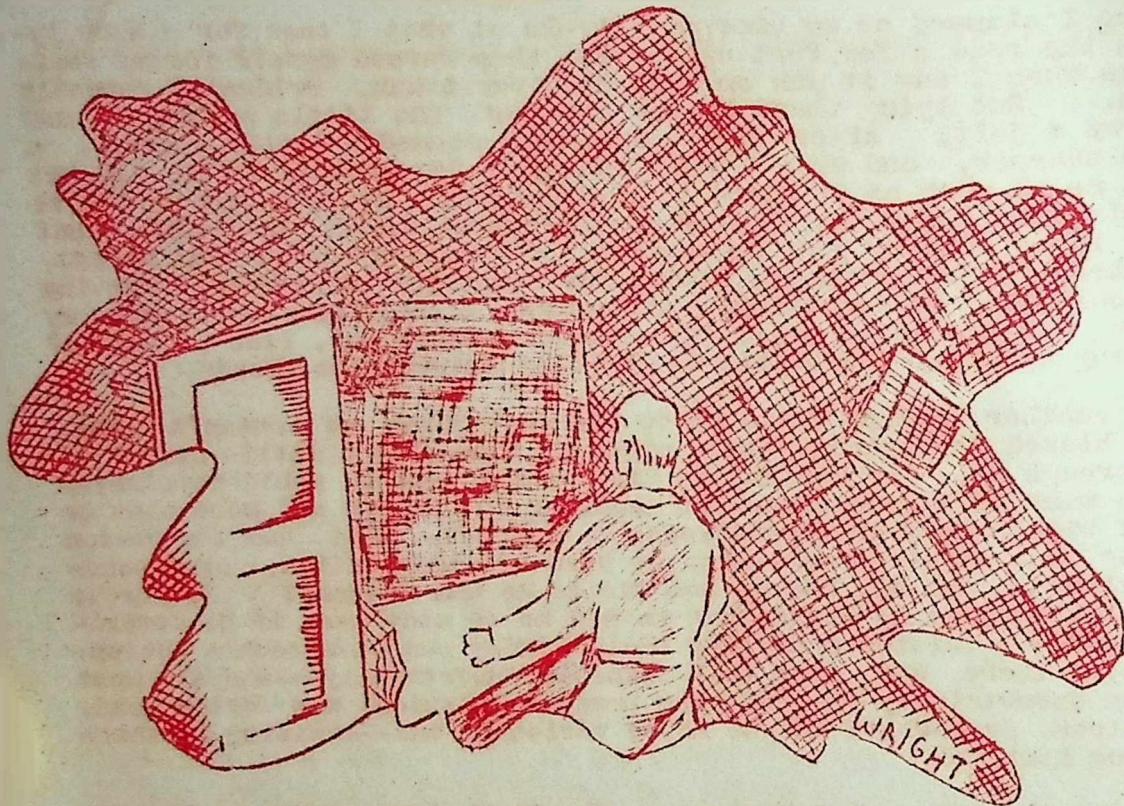
I might make note of the fact that Morton was, by profession, an author--or rather had been. For a goodly number of years his output in various lines--mainly fiction--had been tremendous, and he had by this time practically retired on his savings. No one knew, not even I, just how much he was worth. But estimates in the town ran high. His owned this old house--its tax assessment was nearly nothing, due to its run-down state and distance from desirable property. His living expenses, since he stayed by himself, were a mere pittance. Besides, he still wrote at times, and it was likely that he was not forced to touch his savings. My own opinion of the matter had always been that he had worked too hard in previous years--and now he was paying for it, by his eccentricity.

I reached the back door safely enough. To my surprise I saw it standing agape, the illumination from within shining out and lighting the surrounding ground like daylight, so bright was it. First calling out, I walked into the house and saw no one. On the floor lay the telephone, with its receiver off the hook.

There on the table sat Morton's typewriter, and beside it several



## --HORROR'S CELLAR--



sheets of paper. He was nowhere to be seen---but then I happened to glance at the cellar door. There was but one outlet to the cellar; this door. I remembered that once, when I had spent a day with Morton, he had mentioned the fact that he had never opened the door nor went into the cellar. It was damp and dirty, he said; illy ventilated, and he had no use for the basement anyway. There was ample space in the house for his belongings--and futhermore, there was a huge garret to the place, if he should ever need storage room.

So the open door struck me as strange. On a sudden impulse I went over to it, and looked down there. Nothing was to be seen--there was no light.

But a searchlight lay on the floor near me. What use Morton could have ever had for such a light was unknown to me, and still is; nevertheless, I made the most of my opportunity. Flashing it on, I cast the powerful beam of light into the dark abyss--and shrank back at what I saw, Morton's body!

From that distance, at the position I occupied, ten feet above, I could make out, by looking closely, the odd angle at which his head lay, and I knew him to be dead. The eyes in the corpse shone out, it almost appeared, from the light of the search, with malevolence. But I also saw--

But that can wait.

Quickly I closed the door, to shut off the awful sight. A sudden



## --HORROR'S CELLAR--

desire to be sick seized me, and the room seemed to reel around. Groping for support, I leaned on the table, and chanced to notice again the typed sheets lying there.

I need not burden this with a verbatim copying of them. It is easier to state that these pages, rambling though they were, were sufficient proof that Morton had, in a moment of unreasoning anger, killed a man--one Carl Quigley. Why, I know not, and probably never shall. But he had killed the man--and had thrown the body into that dark and awful cellar.

If I were to copy those pages it would be clear to you what happened next. For a full thousand words--perhaps two thousand--Morton rambled on there, in black and white, about the scrapings he had heard after the crime, coming from the cellar. To one reading the pages it was clear how the thing had developed in his mind. A rat, probably, had gotten down there somehow; had begun gnawing on an old timber each night when the house was still and dark.

Morton's mind had magnified that--his conscience had begun to trick him. He had, in his terror, driven heavy nails through the door the next morning, locked it, and thrown the only key to it away. That next night he had lain awake listening for it---and that night he thought the scrapings came nearer. They seemed to drag themselves up the steps each night--first it was one small thud, and then a louder one, as though something down there had crawled up one step and fallen back.

The next night he had believed the process to be repeated---but this time there were two smaller thuds before the louder one! And the following night three---until he had begun to wonder how many steps there were to the door.

It was pitiful. According to the typed confession of the murder, it had occurred two weeks previously. At first he tried to flee the house---but something held him there. Something he could not break free from, despite his every effort. About the fourth night he nailed shut the door; by the twelfth he became irrational. Heaven alone knows what he did for food during that time--for from the message, he had not left the house.

and on the fourteenth night he remembered that there were only fourteen steps; and the thing clambered to the thirteenth that night.

All of the next day he had worked up his madness to an almost unendurable pitch; when the darkness fell, he was near raving, it was evident; at midnight his reason had snapped.

That was as far as the manuscript went---but it was far enough. What had happened then was clear enough--Morton had listened to the clatter down there, imagining the rat to be some awful undead zombie that had once been Quigley; and, when he could no longer hear it, he had phoned me. While rambling, finding no comfort in my rather angry response, he decided to end it once and for all.

The log with which he had battered down the door to the cellar still lay beside his body down there. He had rushed out into the

## --MORTON'S CELLAR--

might like some haunted thing, and gotten it. Either in the darkness he took a heavier mace than he thought, or the door was more frail than he believed. At any rate, he had crashed into the door, with the log like a battering ram, with every ounce of his strength. It had given way---and he had plunged headlong down the steps and broken on the bottom of the hard cellar floor.

A guilty conscience.

But it does not explain why I burned the house to the ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

Down there in the cellar there was dust--dust, lying like a smooth-brown carpet on the ground. Dust that hadn't been disturbed, save in a few places, for years. Dust that lay thick except where Morton lay in it; except on the steps, and except in a few other places--where the log had struck the ground, and here and there. But there was no refuting the evidence that dust mutely gave. The places it was disturbed brought forth their testimony. The tale became known to me in full.

In the last look with the searchlight I saw something else down there, too. Or rather, it wasn't down there at all---it was at the top of the stairs.

As I have said, there is not the slightest chance of refuting the evidence the dust gave out. The marks on the steps, quite distinct from the bare spots where Morton's tumbling body had bounced; the bareness of the ground at certain places near the bottom of the stairs. It all spoke of the truth.

For Morton, you see, hadn't broken his neck from losing his balance because the log was sturdier than he'd supposed, or because the door was weaker than he'd thought. He had broken it by tripping--tripping and falling.

And what he had tripped over was what made me rush out to my car, drain all but a little of the gasoline out of the tank, and pour it carefully over the kitchen floor. The thing he had tripped over made me drop a match in the pile of papers under the sink; stand there until it was a blazing inferno no man could stay near and live, and then go home, somehow quite calmly and collectedly.

The place burned to the ground that night from an undetermined source, the papers said. The police were puzzled at the finding of two charred skeletons in the place of one. One they knew to be Morton. Never did they learn the identity of the second's--to whom the frame-work of the body had belonged in life.

And I was thankful for that.

Thankful because of that last thing I had seen back there---that ultimate.

As I said, Morton did not die in any manner other than tripping. The thing over which he had tripped was the awful, grinning, puttre-



# BAFFLING VERISIMILITUDES

I am not going to quote Mr. Sousa word-for-word, but give the gist of what he has told me and what I have found in factual records. This case may seem absolutely with-out reason, and impossible, but I can assure you that if there were a man connected who had the "guts" to say what he knew, we, as a nation, would be completely dumbfounded. Each issue I expect to bring you another in this amazing series and herewith I present the first.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mr. Sousa is quite a learned man, a man who has traveled, a man who knows what life is, who knows life as it really is -- stripped of the outer clothing -- a life that is corrupt, evil, and entirely baffling. Mr. Sousa has been through many occupations and is now connected at the head of Radio Center. He has served as a magician for 12 years and is now president of The International Magician's Society of America. He knows every trick of the trade and has told me some. But that will come later on. I have a story that is astounding in scope, factual evidence contained, and in its very baseness of monopoly seekers.

While traveling over Europe for the first time, he became re-acquainted with an old school-mate. He was on his way, as was Mr. Sousa, to America for the first time. He had a tremendous invention that actually sounded like some science-fiction dream. It seemed like sheer fantasy, and had the appearance of some city slicker's scheme. But this was a scheme that was true, a plan to be presented to the United States War Department.

This man appeared with Mr. Sousa as a guest at the secretary of War's request after hearing from him. Believe-it-or-not, to quote an oft-used expression,

by this man, whose name I am not at liberty to tell, SAID HE WOULD RUN AN AUTOMOBILE WITHOUT GAS -- ON WATER WITH THE USE OF ONE OF HIS PILLS!!!

Now anyone knows that the Secretary of War is not accustomed to making interviews with inventors who promise such things as this, and the one-before-last would not have done so excepting the fact that the inventor OFFERED HIS LIFE IF THE DISCOVERY DID NOT WORK.

An hour later, Mr. Sousa witnessed the man go into the garage, completely unclad, with one pill in his hand. The Department Officials had prepared the car with a tank of water and nothing else in the garage! Our friend proceeded to walk calmly to the car, drop the pill in, step in.. .BACK THE CAR OUT OF THE GARAGE AND DRIVE OFF, AROUND THE BLOCK, AND BACK INTO THE GARAGE. After this the Secretary invited the inventor to see him the first thing next morning to draw up papers and to bring the formula.

The inventor (now this seems like some serial plot) insisted he had noticed a man following him ever since his feet first hit the soil of the free country.

At any rate the inventor went to his hotel, with a government official "on his tail", who waited in the lobby all night, and went up to his room. The next morning, after receiving no word, the Secretary informed the "tailer" to go up and discover what was the trouble. The room was ransacked...the formula was missing, or could not be found..and the inventor was lying in a pool of blood, blood that had gushed from his own slashed throat!

\*\*\*\*\*

Is this the clue that gave writers, joke makers, the hint for

(continued on page 19)



# REVIEWS



by WALT SULLIVAN

After spending a lot of time investigating in the library of the University of New Mexico, I have unearthed quite a few articles dealing directly or indirectly with fantasy and science-fiction in magazines in which you would not usually expect to find them. The following are reviews of a few of them.

**SCIENTIFIC NOVELS** -- Saturday Review of Literature July 24, 1937. This appeared as a regular department written by Amy Loveman. In this issue, she answered someone who had asked her for a list of scientific novels. In doing so, she mentioned: **ARROWSMITH**, **THE UNDAUNTED**, **THE SEARCH**, Leonov's **SKUTAREVSKY**, and books of Wells and Verne. She also discussed **SUGAR IN THE AIR**, **THE LOST WORLD**, **LAND UNDER ENGLAND**, **THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE**, **BRAVE NEW WORLD**, and **FRANKENSTEIN**.

**WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO?** Fletcher Pratt Saturday Review of Literature April 2, 1938.

In this article, Mr. Pratt, who is well known to most fans, discusses the various plots used by writers of fantasy. He characterizes **WHEN THE SLEEPER AWAKES** as "the ancestor of that family of future stories which now gives birth to four American pulp magazines a month".

He considers the invasion from Mars, the mad scientist trying to subjugate the world, and the time machine as merely ideas for stories and nothing more. He mentions that writers of this form of fic-

tion, especially those who write for magazines, must be up on their details if they do not wish to hear from indignant readers. It is his belief that most pulp writers believe that barbarism will be the outcome of the next (this) war.

He goes on to discuss the other ideas used by writers of fantasy and mentions many stories that have appeared in Stf mags. He mentions the idea used in **THE STOLEN SKYSCRAPER** as one recommended to young writers who find it hard to find an original plot. He believes that **R.U.R.** is second only to **WHEN THE SLEEPER AWAKES**.

**THE UTOPIAN NOVEL IN AMERICA** - Robert L. Shurter South Atlantic Quarterly - April 1935.

Mr. Shurter believes that this type of fiction records popular discontent. According to his views, this type of novel appeared in America after the disappearance of the frontier as a safety-valve for the discontented, which was followed by the encroachment of industrialism on personal liberty. He believes that there are two schools of Utopian writings, that of George, Howells and Bellamy, who appeal to the educated and literary class; and that of Donnelly, Chavannes and Schindler, who's reforms are secondary to fantastic adventure. These conditions did not exist in England, and according to Mr. Shurter, it did not produce many of this type (don't on page 16)



"I SENT A MESSAGE TO A FISH"

-as translated by Jim Tillman-

"In winter when the fields are white,  
I sing a song for your delight."

Once, long ago, man was much greater than he now is. He was almost Godlike in his knowledge, and could control many of the powers of nature. But that was long ago. There is an ancient legend telling of these powers and how the race of men lost them.

"I sent a message to the fish.  
I told them, 'This is what I wish'."

In his greatness men thought themselves the only beings on earth gifted with intelligence. But they were not, for in the depths of the ocean dwelt a race of creatures, fishlike, but not exactly fish, almost, but not quite equalling men in wisdom. And, it is told, that these fishermen emerged from their watery home, and came to the surface of the earth. The men who dwelt thereon were amazed, and frightened, and sought to limit the advance of the sea things. The council which ruled the world---for in that time men were united---a message to the fishermen, saying that they must stay within certain restricted areas.

"The little fishes answer was,  
'We cannot do it, Sir, because-----'"

The creatures from the ocean depths refused to abide within the area designated by the council, and expressed their intention to occupy certain much more desirable lands.

"I sent to them again to say,  
'It will be better to obey!'"

and again sent their terms to the fishermen saying that although men no longer fought with men, they had not lost the secrets of their weapons.

"The fishes answered with a grin,  
'Why what a temper you are in'."

The sea things remained firm in their plans.

"I told them once, I told them twice.  
They would not listen to advice."

There was a further exchange of notes, but no progress was made. Man refused to give up any of his land, and the fish things refused to stay within the areas desired by the council.

A commission of scientists was appointed, and a germ culture -- whatever that may be -- was prepared which would be deadly to the fishermen.

"I took a kettle large and new,  
Fit for the deed I had to do."

A huge container was prepared, to hold **enough** of the culture to wipe out the greatest city of the fishermen.



My heart went thump.  
"mm."

## REVIEWS

It did, however, produce William Morris's socialistic A DREAM OF JOHN BALL (1388) and NEWS FROM NOWHERE. It is his opinion that the ideas expressed by the American writers could not be traced to the European reformers, such as Marx. He also thinks that all other American writers derive their ideas from Bellamy and mentions Bellamy clubs still exist.

He goes on to discuss various means of economic and social reform used by authors. He states that today only Bellamy and Howard remain known and that the novel is significant only when it is studied in conjunction with American economic history.

THE DEVIL IS NOT DEAD - Basil Davenport Saturday Review of Literature - February 15, 1936

According to Mr. Davenport, modern stories of the supernatural

I SENT A MESSAGE TO A FISH (con't)

The container was filled, and preparations were made to transport it to a position over the depths on which lay the metropolis of the sea things, and there to lower it into it's depths.

"But someone came to me and said,  
'The little fishes are in bed'."

But news was brought to the World Council that the fishermen had covered their city with a huge dome, so that the culture could not penetrate.

"I took a corkscrew from the shelf.  
I want to wake them up myself."

An expedition was outfitted to pierce the dome, so the deadly culture could be used. A huge submarine was outfitted with a giant drill, and sent into the ocean.

"And when I found the door was locked,  
I pushed and pulled and kicked and knocked."

But the cover was strong and resisted the efforts of the surface men to penetrate it.

"And when I found the door was shut,  
I tried to turn the handle, but——"

At length a huge door was found on the side of the dome, and the expedition attempted to open it,——

"There was a long pause.

'Is that all?' Alice timidly asked.

'That's all.' said Humpty Dumpty. 'Good Bye.'

-----THE END-----

are far superior to those of the last century. He mentions that ghosts are more important in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe (the reason possibly being the climate and atmosphere), and so it did not appear in English Literature until the end of the Eighteenth Century (altho Shakespeare used it much earlier). He believes that in the novel, it should be used for "purely personal fear of what might happen if ones door were to open slowly." He discusses DRACULA, and the terror of Dr. M.R. James's COUNT MANGUS. This is followed by a discussion of the gothic novelists and Poe and the flaws in FRANKENSTEIN. He states that "the terrors of mind and soul are far worse than anything physical", and believes that Poe was on the right track in his TELL TALE HEART, and also Blackwood in some of his tales.

This is a very excellent article and I recommend it to all fans.



# Comments

Cheerio Champ,

I don't know whether I ought to write you or not. In fact, I am seriously debating refusing to comment and rate the material in the latest issue of THE COMET. Wanna know why? I'll tell you! You know how I love publicity don't you? Oh! the joy of seeing one's name splashed around in vivid ink! And dammit, NOT ONCE IN THE LATEST COMET DO YOU EVEN MENTION MY NAME!

Except for about 36 times.

People might get the idea that not only am I Jim Tillman, but I am Tom Wright too, putting out COMET to bolster my ego.

In a way, I am rather sorry to see you get a mimeo. For COMET (with this issue) is one of the few superb hecto mags left, and if you go mimeo, into a field where there are five thousand mimeo mags, how can you stand out? This issue of COMET is one of the most---and perhaps my copy was the most---beautiful and extremely legible hecto mags ever! I actually prefer COMET done as this second issue was done, to any mimeo efforts you can turn out!

((Ratings followed))

You can easily see that this issue is ace high! In your second issue you have hit a top seldom made by old and established mags with months and months behind them!

((Gosh! Thanks a lot!- ed))

I choose Knight's as the best in the issue: being the wittiest, Avery next with an interesting item in an interesting style! The contents page rates the same high as being about the neatest, and eye-catchingest I have ever got caught on! Keep it that way!

"Revelation Actuary" both pleases and displeases. He (or "it") sounds like Fortier and Wright to me; and is obviously

wet on some statements: I have met Coccie Train. Or I think I did.

I note that some liked Hoy Pickup Stix' item, and some didn't. Well, I want neither blame nor credit for it, for I am one who didn't like it. Will thou be kind enough to make it clear in the next issue that I did not write that piece. Thanx.

((Is this clear enough? -ed))

And have the chap answer one question. I am breathless to know: Just what name does Bob Tucker write under for the Pros? And don't tell me that "Actuary" is going to pull that old wheeze that the Campbell who appeared in ASCENDING up to 1936 is the brother of John W. Jr. !

On top of everything; ten plus ten for the photo of Knight!  
Bob (Tucker)

Dear Tom

Just a note regarding THE COMET. Sorry, didn't care for the cover. Contents page; Swell, well balanced and the sticker idea is super. Editorial; well rounded chat of pleasing briefness. The Discerning Eye Illustration; not so hot. Story; big words don't fit this type of story. Tail piece drawing of test-tube; fine. Necessitated Return is all around disappointing including illustrations. Avery article; interesting, well spaced and well written. 4sj; O.K. Autobiography; marvelous, best idea regarding fans that I've run onto. Keep it up WITH THE PICTURES. Rebirth Retold; good piece of work. Slanted toward the newcomers to fandom, therefore appreciated by me especially. Most letter departments have a high mark to head for as set by 4sj and Lorojo since their revisions in the new copy but yours is up in the running.

Hoy Ping Pong; just the amount of humor needed to set up mag. Anybody Got A Rope -- Quick?; something to think about. Holiday Page is evidently a space filler. Too bad about the back cover but I can tell from the set up that it's a good job in the original. I am really looking forward to your work on a stencil, results are so much better so three cheers for the next stenciled issue.

Incidentally yours is the first fan-mag I've read thoroughly from cover to cover.

Your pal,  
Walt (Daugherty)

Dear Tom-

10¢ for COMET #3

I enjoyed Avery's article, and here are some additions. Gernsback held an earlier cover contest in Amazing, December 1926. John Pierce (who may or may not be the cover contest winner) had stories in Wonder June 1934 and Astounding, March 1936, and several letters. Victor Endersby has had six stories in Wonder, Amazing, and Astounding, from 1929 to 1936, as well as numerous letters. Arthur G. Strangland (no "r") had twelve stories in Wonder from 1929 to 1933.

((Editor's note: Avery evidently made a bad slip when he wrote this article, so next issue there will be a page article correcting all the mistakes.))

I thought Damon Knight's Autobiography most interesting and vote for more of the same. Some of those Knight drawings would do you good too. ((Cartoons coming up next issue by Knight)) The rest of the features were all passable and the mechanical work excellent. Now let's see what you can do with a mimeo. Count on me as a subscriber to DAWN...

RD Swisher

Dear Tom:

I recieved THE COMET yesterday and I would like to congratulate you on the splendid job you have done. It is rarely that a hekto-

graphed magazine reaches the standard that you have attained.

Especially do I congratulate you on your splendid art work throughout the book. I suggest that you submit a few drawings to STARDUST, maybe something can be done.

I have a suggestion to make about THE COMET. A suggestion that has never been tried before. Why not mimeograph the magazine, and hektograph the art work? This way you could have a neat, legible, and distinctive magazine, with colored art work thrown in. I believe it's worth a trial anyway. What say?

((Maybe later when things get to rollin' smoothly.))

Tucker, as usual, stole the issue, both with his Pre-Vue, and Rope Trick. The fiction was below par, but fair reading anyway. Reinsberg's article was good, except that he made it a little one sided -- a little too much..

Ackerman was, as usual, masterly. Avery was passing. Knight was interesting. The cover (s), and interiors, were exceptional. I like your idea of adding little scenes after articles, etc. It adds spice and variety.

Thanks for the nice write up you gave me. And, before I forget it, you may use THE HORROR HE DIDN'T SEE for DAWN, if you so desire. When will the mag appear? ((This summer -ed))

I believe you ought to make THE COMET a monthly. It is fairly easy with a mimeo or hekto job. We need a regular mag from the coast. Any chance?

((Anybody want a monthly??))

If there is anything I can do for you in the line of literary work, let me know; and write soon.

With kindest regards I am  
Yours sincerely,  
Bill (Hamling)

Dear Tom

Your makeup and legibility on second issue of COMET is aces high. I can't remember any fan



mag in my day that reached such a height in its second issue.

Have only one complaint to make. Be sure that the articles you print are correct before you stencil them. Have somebody in the fan field about whom you are sure knows his stuff to proof-read all your articles. I'd be glad to help you myself or so would any active old time fan.

Now take Avery's article. Altho' Avery is a very nice chap he doesn't know his STF history. He only guesses at it as most of the new fans today do. For instance Gernsback's first contest was in Dec. 1926 in Amazing. It was a cover contest such as in Nov. '29 Wonder. The Sept. '28 Amazing had a slogan contest - a SYF emblem contest. The first W. Quarterlies ((guess it's quarterlies, can't make out the word)) had essay and plot contest. Also both Pierce and St. Angland had stories published in STF mags after they were in that Nov. 1929 Wonder Contest.

Yours,  
Julius (Unger)

Dear Pal Tom,

No tym to waste--in terrible haste. Trying frantically to get Vom done for Sun (stencil-cutting etc, that is, so whole can be mimeod. A little surprise for U in this ish, incidently).

Passing on praise to U from Paul Freehafer & Morojo on your second COMET - & I think it's swell! Happy over the heading in my mailman article & particly pleased with the Paid Page. & what a hecto job! & that pic of Damon! "Gosh! Wow! Boyohboy!" Tis a joy. Longer letter later.

Cordially,  
4e

Now for the poll results:

In first place at 9.2 we have the photo of Damon Knight! 2nd place, altho only a few voted for it is the Paid Page at 8.6.. Third is Damon Knight's Autobiography at 8.5....Fourth is Pong and his Pre-Vue of the Convention at 8.4....Next the outside

back cover at 8.2....Then at 7.7 the letter section...Despite the mistake Avery rated at 7.8, which is not bad at all...Eighth is the Contents Page at 7.3....Ninth is A Revelation Actuary Sneaks @ 7.2...Then we have a three way tie between Rebirth Retold, What Must the Mailman Think?!, and the cover at an even 7....The Fiction Piece The Discerning Eye came in next at 6.6....Then the Editorial at 6.5...Next Nessesitated Return at 6.3...At an even 6 is Anybody Got a Rope --Quick? ...And way down in last place is the inside back cover at 4.5.... Thanks to all those that sent ratings in, but I want far more next time....tom

#### BAFFLING VERISIMILITUDES

(con't from page 18)

the "gasoline pill" stories? Why did it take ten years before this appeared in a national syndicate? Why have we never heard of it? Why did not a big search start, as would have happened had a gasoline king been found with even a cut finger? I won't drop beliefs held by myself and a hundred thousand more, but you can draw your own conclusions.

In closing, if this seems too fantastic, look over the confidential government records -- if you can!

#### HORROR'S CELLAR (concluded)

sent, two-weeks-dead corpse of the man whom he had murdered---- and it lay on the top step of the cellar stairs.

"The End"

FANFARE IS BACK! After its first ill-fated attempt, it reappears with the financial backing of the entire STRANGER CLUB (14 members, & more on the fire) so it's bound to go places! Second issue contains material by Avery, Chauvenet, Singleton, Bradbury, and detailed results on Widner's poll. Cover contest & other features. Send a dime for a single copy, or a quarter for three to: Francis Pare, 125 West 6th Street, South Boston, Mass. Trades & material wanted.....

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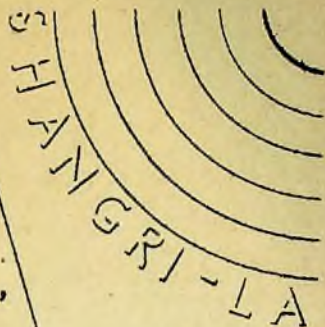


THE  
ROCKET

Due to the popularity of THE ROCKET with those outside of fandom, and the fact that SHANGRI-LA has become an INDEPENDENT mag to rise or fall in my hands, they will appear at the same time, but will remain as individual publications. SHANGRI-LA will contain all things that are of pertinence to fandom, and THE ROCKET will contain the stories, poems and science fact articles.

Both mags will be mailed together. Next issue out in the early part of June, so send all material to:

Walt Daugherty  
1039 West 39th Street,  
Los Angeles, California.



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