

SPRING STRIKES AGAIN!

Eastern winters are a frustrating bore, and they can be expensive too. But Spring is something else again, well worth waiting for. And at last Spring is arriving here.

The earliest indications were extremely vague, and seemed likely at any time to disappear before a new onslaught of cold winter weather. But somehow the suspected trend became an undeniable change for the better. Encouraging signs included melting snow, geese flying over on their way North and small green shoots appearing in sunny corners and under bushes.

Latest reports are that robins are very much in evidence and the cardinals have been whooping it up for several weeks. The diehard winter enthusiasts (if there are any) can still find some snow around, I think, but I haven't noticed any recently except for some flakes blowing in the wind today. They melted promptly upon reaching the ground. Also noticed tiny green leaves appearing on some bushes, and several early forsythia branches showing first traces of yellow in the Heaps' apartment.

Now that winter is over, I can do some traveling. Chances are I'll be attending most conventions held locally, and a few very far away. Hamfests, too, will have to get some attention because after all when I'm not working in the SF field I am finding things to do for the amateur electronics enthusiasts. Looks like a busy summer coming up once this very fine Spring is sprung.

SPRING ASHEAP REPORT

This Spring's Asheap wasn't a candle to earlier and much nicer events. It was the best we could do under the circumstances, and it consisted of Jim Ashe visiting the Heaps at their place in Rochester over the weekend of 30 & 31 March. Myron and Joni Rapkin dropped in briefly.

One item on the agenda was an investigation of the Cult (very stylish to investigate cults, you know) with some thoughts about writing up this remarkable activity for CINDER or PHOENIX. I'm not sure which. The Cult is definitely the nth degree of something, but my investigation was not carried out in a very workmanlike way and so I cannot judge what the something is. Defies description.

We also worked our way through assorted smaller meals, and two whopping big mighty good dinners, specially appreciated here after a few months of living on restaurant cooking. You get food in restaurants, yes, but it isn't a candle to real cooking.

Game report. Drums beat in Africa, and watch out for Black Power! But don't underestimate the power of a woman.

STAR TREK NOTES

I have not been following the Star Trek situation very closely, but some material published in the newspapers is suggestive. Evidently the reason STAR TREK is still with us is its affluent audience. Maybe the TV industry is not as interested as I had believed in mere numbers of watchers.

Previous estimates of audience size at the receiver where I usually watch STAR TREK were rather low. This show seems to be Cornell's favorite, if attendance and audience enthusiasm are indicators. This is certainly an encouraging sign, and I wonder if and how it influences STAR TREK.

Fandom needs a SAVE STAR TREK special committee. We know pretty well when it has to be most active, and can spend the rest of the year making preparations for the predictable Nielsen agonies. Why not?

Enjoyed "Mudd's Planet," rerun on April 5th. The humor went over very well, and was far more successful than some heavier themes I can recall.

CINDER whole number 6, this issue. Fan and personal items and all that from Jim Ashe. Published monthly, this issue finalized on 6 Apr. 1968. Copyright James E. Ashe, 1968

C & P PUBLISHING NOTES

This month I've reached the goal of about 8 fannish pages. For a while now, I will be making few revisions in format, and those of you out there who are thinking about contributions of art and writing can look at this issue and see what the visual appearance of your work will be.

Here are some pointers. The original is made up on a 16.7" x 25.8" piece of white bristol board by preparing the original material in nice strips and pasting them in place. A nearby printer makes a pair of 11 x 17 paper offset masters from these originals and runs off an appropriate number of copies. This seems to average 20 more per month; 200 this run.

Each column is 3.5 inches wide in original makeup, and there are six lines of type per vertical inch. 42 characters per line. For now, I would like contributed material arranged to plug directly in this geometry. Artists please note, no halftones. Line copy only, good black on white and 3.5 or 7/8 inches wide. I hope you'll write first.

Maybe I'll continue this simple scheme, because variations will increase the work required to get an issue out and I have to do this without assistance.

WRITING NOTES

March has been a good month, and I expect April will be better yet. Strictly speaking, this April issue of C & P is a March product and so I cannot include it in the April work, but then there's May on the way at 24 hours per day. These days, that's a pretty high velocity.

Work out included some writing I did not like very much, but wrote anyway. And it sold, too. That is one of the things I've noticed which appears well established yet puzzling: work that does not hold a certain satisfied feeling while under preparation seems to sell about as quickly as other work which feels good while in construction. That's experience speaking, I guess.

So some ideas have been set aside, and the general emphasis is on more magazine work I can get out without benefit of a lab setup. Fortunately, there is a stock of previous circuits and bench experience I can draw on, and it has turned out much richer than I thought.

The theme I'm working on is that electronics isn't so complex, after all, if you choose the right ideas and the appropriate simplifications for them. It's important to realize the electronics hobbyist has a very large latitude in his requirements, and if a circuit doesn't do quite as expected he can fudge in something else or change his requirements and get by. The professional engineer cannot do this, and he has to live in a special environment of reliability, function, cost problems, and other matters which simply have nothing at all in common with electronics as a hobby.

There is another interesting point. I have recently made a surprising discovery. There are many people around whose awe of electronics devices is more suited to a medieval religion than it is to people who live in a world full of such things. Not recognizing TV and telephone gear as electronics, they react very strongly indeed to a bare chassis with some tubes sticking up and neatly wired components inside. I have never noticed this before. It kind of touches off some thoughts I haven't fully realized yet. Hey, out there! Any ideas on this non-technical people theme?

CACOTOPIA?

While visiting the Heaps, I came upon food for thought. I do not recall where it appeared since I did a lot of very relaxed reading during the visit, but I discovered a fascinating and extremely valuable term.

CACOTOPIA: a word which may not be accepted as part of the English language by some perfectionists. It does not appear in the Unabridged Random House Dictionary, but its prefix appears there with the definition, 'bad.' Looking at the more familiar term 'utopia,' we guess it might mean something like 'opposite kind of a society from a utopia.'

Now, it hasn't appeared in any writing I recall that there could be a sort of negative utopia, bad rather than good. But I think all will agree there is some use for this term somewhere, perhaps in the case of certain aspects of Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, or Communist China.

Yet I feel such applications of the term deny a certain relevance deserving careful thought. We ought to try fitting the idea against things we see and read about right here in the good old US of A. Our government has been telling us this here Great Society (by golly, when did I last hear that?) is a great step forward toward a utopia or something like it.

Maybe there is a better word. Cacotopia. Have you ever stopped to think about those people feeding a parking meter, avoiding a cop, filling incomprehensible forms, performing certain yearly rituals with religious regularity? It happened one day that a very appropriate thought came to mind: I think we are going into a new feudalism. Try that one for size. I guess technological progress isn't to be confused with social progress yet.

GROCERIES AND SCIENCE FICTION

What's wrong with mass-production marketing? Nothing, if you are selling to a mass market. But I think science-fiction does not go to a mass market, and compared to the sliding scale of real mass markets for any given time it never will.

Fred Pohl has reduced costs to the limit in publishing GALAXY magazine, and that is apparent to me in a certain reluctance to purchase copies. I express my feelings by sorting through the newsstand collection trying to find one copy that is infinitesimally better than any of the others or at least is securely stapled. Is this an answer to the costs problem? From what I have seen of real life in publishing the answer is not clear. Good luck, Fred.

I think another part of publishing may deserve more attention than it is getting. Who needs more customers, if they are dependable? Knowing the market is reliable, a smaller margin of profit could be acceptable, and market reliability may not be all that hard to achieve. The key tool, perhaps, is letter columns.

Letter columns can make science fiction magazines different from groceries. Maybe the difference can be made large enough to develop a large group of people for each magazine who feel they are doing something meaningful simply by reading the magazine and thinking about it. Like fandom, isn't it?

I recall reading letters in the distant past which gave this impression. But then Campbell went on his Dianetics and Psionics kicks, and it seems about that time letter columns in general fell into disuse. Maybe that economy backfired badly, and I wonder what hindsight tells us.

Unfortunately my large collection of SF magazines is in storage, and I cannot research the question of what happened to magazines and letter columns in the fifties and early sixties. Still, I believe there's something to that.

FIAT REPORT

I think foreign-made cars are more practical than the huge American variety. Last Fall in California, I drove a large sedan several hundred miles, and it was an informative experience. I never did feel secure in the thing (something big car drivers also say about small cars) but now I have more sympathy for the driver who simply cannot handle his big car accurately no matter how safe he may feel inside it.

Sometimes I have found big car drivers very frustrating, but I think I have allotted them less consideration for other cars than they actually feel. Trouble is, those huge machines simply cannot be driven well. You simply point it, press down the throttle pedal, and fortunately everybody around understands fairly well what your predicament is and they tend to stay out of your way just as you try so stay out of theirs.

I feel good about purchasing a Fiat. Its weight of just under the limit so that I purchase the yearly registration at the lowest price offered by good old New York State. It can be driven all day at 65, but I think I can be satisfied with thruway travel at 60 mph with a slightly larger margin on reliability. It feels good at all speeds, and its fifth door opening into a tiny but very usable room is just the thing for moving materials over the countryside. There is something else about the fifth door, though.

That's the chance that, during a drive through a city some unwanted visitor may enter by it and being in the back of the car he would have a considerable strategic advantage. I have less reason than some people might to be concerned about this, but when traveling I keep that door locked as well as all others except my own.

My careful running-in program has gone well and according to the book the car is completely run in. Another few thousand miles and I'll accept that. Being carefully treated, this car should have a long and useful life indeed, but a couple bugs remain yet. One is the carburettor problem, noted now as a loss of power upon depressing the throttle at low speeds, and the other is a noise problem which I hope to solve with some well-placed carpeting material.

ADDRESSES*ADDRESSES*ADDRESSES*ADDRESSES*AD

How hard is the addressing problem for mailings of fannish size? Not as hard as I had believed, and there are two very good ways to deal with it.

The first, simplest way is to maintain a dual file of names and addresses on 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 cards. One file is in alphabetical order, and the other in zip-code order. Comes mailing time, the addresses can be typed from the zip-organized file onto a long roll of perforated labels, and this work is done at some convenient time several days before mailing. When the issues are ready to go the labels can be applied rapidly to give a zip-ordered set ready to mail.

Maintaining a dual file is a lot easier than it sounds. And the hard part, getting your collection of names and addresses on the cards and the cards sorted, isn't that hard after all if you will just sit down and get at it. This system is working very well for me, and not the least of its good points is easy conversion to a more elaborate machine-addressing system.

A slightly more ambitious system should be available at low cost from a used office equipment supplier, if you are active and patient enough to look till you find it. The Heaps have a simple silk-screen-plates plus manually operated printer system which cost very little and must have amortized itself several times in the past

few years. You put a stack of 100 little plates in one side of the machine, push a little lever to feed the plates and pull a large handle to stamp the addresses. Feed the work, and continue in a non-automated but fast enough and highly reliable way until the work is done. I was very impressed by this system.

None of the other addressing systems I have seen compare in simplicity and return per dollar cost, with these two.

STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING...

Here are some of the fanzines I've received recently, and I've included a few comments which may reappear in more detail somewhere else. If you sent me a zine and it isn't here, well it's somewhere in the room but you should see the room!

ARIOCH! #2. Doug Lovenstein, 425 Coolville Ridge, Athens, Ohio 45701. 35¢, 8/52 or LOC, contribution, trade by agreement. Quarterly. Doug is learning by doing, as I am, and I think I detect a healthy Geis influence there.

COSIGN #14. Rod Goman, 160 Chittenden Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43201. 35¢, 8/52.50, LOC, contribution, trade. Bimonthly. Black mimeo on blue paper is hard to read. Nice editing but I wonder about devoting lead article and 10.5 pages to Spider Man.

DYNATRON #35. Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, N.M. 87107. 25¢, trade. Quarterly. I like the cover, and enjoyed Roy's typically sound thinking and comments on new SF and on fandom.

DOL CIRITH UNGOL #2. George Heap. A fantasy rotator, and even now I am confused by the activity and other activity of the Cult. Someday I'll understand what that is all about.

THE FANTASY COLLECTOR. Camille Cazedessus, PO Box 550, Evergreen, Col. 80439. Sub. \$1/bulk to \$6 1st Class. Monthly. Opens with editorial section titled CAZuals dealing with the zine and need for review material. Most of the rest of it is a very complete collection of ads from dealers in comic, fantasy, and SF fandoms. I'd like to see a more prominent issue #, just noticed a 111 tucked in a corner.

KALKI #6. Jim Elish, Apt. 630, 5021 Seminary Road, Alexandria, Va. 22311. Subscription \$5. Monthly. This is a literary rather than a fan zine but should be very interesting to many fans looking for good reading. Devoted entirely to the work of James Branch Cabell, who wrote a rich and varied kind of fantasy not so many years ago.

NEWFANGLES. Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Rd., Mentor, Ohio 44060. 10¢/copy, or usable news. At least bimonthly. Isn't that a nice title? Comics news, from an adult viewpoint. Why not? Some comics are very adult. And I have a special weakness for Alley Oop. Newfangles #8 contains some comics circulations figures demonstrating a weakness in the market. Other interesting notes. Very readable.

THE PROPER BOSKONIAN #1. Cory Seidman, 20 Ware St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 25¢, contributions, LOCs or other special goodness. Enjoyably chatty and fannish, with a special plug for NESFA. Some book reviews and a short on The Hypercat which will be appreciated by those interested in math and cats. A Man vs. Machine bit you can only appreciate if you have tried to communicate with a machine. Many other good items, almost quite proper.

PSYCHOTIC #24. Rotsler Appreciation Issue. Dick Geis, 5 Westminster Ave., Venice Calif. 90291. 25¢, trade, LOCs. Monthly. If there is a secret master of Fandom he's identified clearly in Psychotic. I'll accept that. This issue is thicker than ever and if anything better written. More on DANGEROUS VISIONS, this time by Norm Spinrad, who writes approvingly.

SCIENCE FICTION TIMES #452. Ann F. Dietz Box 559, Morris Heights Station, Bronx, N.Y. 10453. 30¢, \$3/year. Monthly. Picking up again after the confusions following Ann's move to New York City and her marriage to Frank Dietz. SFT is published only by members of the Lunarians. Lots of commentary, but collectors may find its miniature format hard to store.

SERENADE #6. Richard Bergeron, who feels intimidated by the grand pile of WARHOONS stacked on his desk. I think he can meet the challenge.

TANSTAAFL #2. John Godwin, 2426 Belvedere Drive, Wilmington, N.C. 28401. 20¢, 12/52, LOC, contribution. Monthly? Good start, practice required. 5½ x 8½, hope you guys will go to 8½ x 11.

ZARATHUSTRA #10. The Grape strikes again or Joni Rapkin, 67 Albert St., Johnson City, N.Y. 13790. 25¢, LOC, trade, contributions. Irregular. Very enjoyable.

Well. That's a much longer list than I expected, but I think it's not complete yet. Surprising how those things pile up over a few weeks.

HARD COPY

I'm expecting a letter any day saying my writing style is tight and hard to read. It should be opened out a bit, the writer will comment. I do not disagree strongly, but my purpose in publishing C & P, taken with cost pressures and a few thoughts about the publishing operation in general, incline me to continue in about the present style.

Since I am interested in writing, what could you expect other than a fanzine full of it? In my mind, C & P are particularly addressed to others who are interested, too, in writing. Pictures are supplied by the mind, and years ago I used to be very frustrated by books that provided illustrations. The pictures were invariably unlike my own quite clear imagery, and the conflict detracted from pleasure of reading the book. Later, I learned to accept illustrations provided with the writing, and perhaps my turning point was Cartier's fine illustrations in ASF and some of Finlay's fantastically precise and evocative work.

Yet the basic inclination to regard pictures as secondary to text remains, and a solid page of written material is not at all intimidating. I see it as hard work brought to a satisfying completion.

Well, there will be pictures anyway, after a while. I do like art, and on another side of my personality visual effects are strong and exciting. I once tried oil painting with little tiny spatulas, and I enjoyed some success in that. The latest ODD, published by Ray and Joyce Fisher, made a tremendous and lasting impression, and although it is as different from my own style as night from day, I would feel quite satisfied if someday I could put out something of comparable quality.

So if you think my writing style can be improved you have good company right here in my own chair. And if you want pictures or revisions in the layout (particularly, introduction of section headings), just wait a bit.

JOURNALISM, AND WRITING

How many writers started in journalism? I think many good writers started in journalism, and at least Mark Twain's writing shows the influence. I like Mark Twain's work, and I privately suspect there must have been some comparable experience at Shakespeare's disposal. Maybe he was an active member of a large group of writers and critics. I don't know about Heinlein, and at the other extreme I understand some SF and fantasy writers have been near recluses who worked purely to their own pri-

vate standards. I incline to the idea that journalistic experience is very valuable at the start of a writing career.

I'll have to get by without the journalistic experience or maybe I can make some case I have already done so. But I've had comparable experience, and that is my exposure to fandom, pulling S F Times out of its doldrums, and now this C & P operation. I started it with the idea it would improve my writing, and it certainly has.

This writing business is something like climbing a mountain in the fog. You cannot tell what percentage of the mountain you have scaled, but it is clear enough what exertion has been required up to now. Seen from that perspective future prospects are quite awesome, but I seem to have the usual human tendency to rationalize all that away by saying 'so far so good.'

And that's what a certain conservative old Irishman was heard muttering, as he passed the tenth floor of the Empire State Building after falling off the roof.

The key part of experience in journalism is probably the journalistic experience. There are rules to be mastered, and you have to learn how to type. There are so many different ways you can do things, organize and keep things. Finally you have to learn what constitutes workmanship, and develop the ability to ignore that certain distracted feeling that comes when you realize you aren't achieving it. And at the end of all this you have to send your work out to confront a not very interested, and possibly unsympathetic world which frankly might never miss it.

How is all this different from fandom? It seems the same in nearly all respects, but less hazardous.

But then I haven't received any collect phone calls from California.

EPIC #1, CONTINUED.

I guess I could write for months on end, simply inventing strange, fascinating new characters for Epic #1. But if I were conscientious I could be hoist by my own petard trying to put them all together into a story. Too many characters might be a disaster. Yet several remain in the basic list and because I hope for comments on some of them I think I will bring out one or two new ones each month.

Computers are fascinating machines, but one significant philosophical problem has not been solved yet. Maybe we must have the 3 Chocly Bits look into this when they have come to the end of their present adventure. The question is, where do used computer bits go? Are they somehow transmitted into another universe whose inhabitants, eventually becoming tired of the chattering bitfall, will one day transmit them all back upon us? Or do they simply vanish into a dim entropic cloud, losing all meaning and practical reality? Yes, by all means this point deserves serious research.

All engineers have noticed glitches, at one time or another. Normal glitches are short-lived, and they come and go and are not very effective at getting around filters and other specially provided traps. Other glitches, evidently of some superior kind, are more lively and travel for their own mysterious purposes wherever there are power lines, electrical, and electronic circuits. I think I have detected a group of five, by careful research, and it is upon this remarkable study I have based one group of participants in the Epic.

These fellows evidently escaped from a large experimental computer installation one day, and I believe the system was appropriately named MANIAC. They have been traveling around ever since, with a notable correlation between electrical trouble spots and their chosen meeting points.

They aren't malicious, and they have explained that after all you have to eat and find things to do! Their names are P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. Etymology unknown.

Sometimes they are very closemouthed, and it is hard to find out where they have been or may be going. Once when I had managed to trap one in my scope I asked him where he was on a certain fall evening a couple years ago. He turned a little green and mentioned something about a big convention. As I was reaching for a pen to take notes I heard a sharp splat! inside the scope and he was gone. The Glitches don't to me as much as they used to.

Oh yes. Some questions have been raised about BTU, and also there are several new readers since I introduced him in CINDER #4. Well, we must have a power-behind-the-scenes. His character is distantly based upon E. E. Smith's Mentor, but BTU has about ten times as much work on his mind. Do not be awed by his blustery ways, none of the characters are. He is the General Manager of Things, and very interesting once you get to know him.

Last month the 3 Chocly Bits were made very intelligent by BTU, who had noticed they seemed rather dull for kittons. Hastily correcting this fault in reality, he overcompensated and then failed to keep an eye on results.

The kittens immediately set out to investigate a suddenly interesting world, and shortly later they locate an alien explorer who takes one look and pushes the Panic Button on his spacesuit. He vanishes but leaves his ship for the kittens.

Since the weather has been blustery and is getting rainy the kittens seek shelter in the spaceship. Besides, they are curious. Once inside, they quickly learn the alien's language, read the manuals, and decide a long trip should be interesting and a good way to avoid BTU's anticipated attempt to correct his mistake.

At first, the kittens thought they might use the tiny spaceship to hunt mice. "An approach from the air would be very different from our usual style," said Filbert, "so the mice wouldn't notice us coming." Peanut, who was becoming the leader of the group, looked thoughtful.

"There are two things I can see against that," she said. "I recall an experience I had with a hawk, once, upon the hill. The Big Ones went up there and I followed in the grass. But I got tired of walking and went to sleep in that patch of small trees just above the spring, and it was early afternoon before I woke up. So I went out to look for some fresh mice, and suddenly I thought I heard something behind me. I crouched, and a huge bird hit the ground so close to me his tail brushed my head. I made better time back to the trees than any rabbit you ever chased, Filbert. Well, those hawks are looking for mice too, and I expect the mice are looking just as hard for hawks. Can you imagine us raiding a mouse nest from a spaceship? Too cumbersome, wasn't built for it."

"And the other reason is BTU. Once he realizes his mistake, if he thinks of it soon, he will look back for us to set it right. Now, the amount of looking he has to do increases as the cube of the distance we've travelled. I propose we stop talking about mouse-hunting and get several light-years away from here."

Cashew spoke up. "I think we should lay in some supplies. I've had enough of Kenel Rations--you know, that dog food the Big Ones serve--but do you suppose we can find a few tins of evaporated milk?" "You and your evaporated milk!" said Filbert. "I remember what happened several hours after you had your fill of it, one day. Pheew! we'd better make do with what's a-

board now. We can eat it, can't we, Peanut?"

"Yes, we can eat it. But we should stop the debating society bit and clear out of here. After all, we've got to get on with Epic #1.

The ship had been rising slowly, controlled by its computer which the kittens had set in an autopilot mode. Now the kittens returned to their kitten-on-the-keys act at the control board. Their first idea was to do some local investigating.

"It says in the books this planet turns on its axis at one rotation per 24 hours," said Filbert. "I'd like to see that axis. Why don't we go up there?"

"Stupid! This planet doesn't turn on an axis. It turns on an axle, like a wheel. BTU didn't do the job on you he intended, Filbert."

"Now you look here, Cashew..."

"Alright you two. I think we've got company." Peanut was looking at the central display screen over the control panel. A dot with a red circle around it was following a dim green line to the screen's center. The ship's computer commented, "You three kittens are at least 27.1828 times worse than Pan-red was. Now, the approaching dot is circled in red because it's on a collision course and I think it has evil intentions. What's to do? Think quick, or I won't wait for instructions."

Peanut, Filbert, and Cashew had the same thought at the same instant. "A fight! And maybe we can catch it and use it. What is it, and how fast can it go?" They fell into a heated discussion about possible uses of spent missiles. Peanut pointed out that maybe, all things considered, they could use more information. She turned to the control panel to ask the computer when the missile would arrive but at that instant the lights flickered and went out. There was a rising whine, followed by an odd, heavy concussion. Cont'd. next month.

Part of the fun of writing this is winding things up tight for next month. I'm not sure right now, what will happen next, but I have all kinds of ideas what might take place. But who's this?

Spock! It must be these late hours. He isn't there. Ouch! That Vulcan nerve press really works. Alright, Spock. What in the blazes are you doing here?

"I'm waiting for you to stop reacting, Jim"

Now look here, Spock. You're copyrighted so go back to STAR TREK. You stay out of my EPIC. Roddenberry may not approve of this. I'm sure he won't. Dammit, I'm hallucinating. Well, since you are here, what is your business?

"Think, Jim. It's perfectly logical."

You mean I already know? Let's see. Now what would you be doing in a writer's work room? ...My Ghod, NO! I've got too much to do now!

Well, how about that? Maybe it's not a bad idea after all. I can use some new experience. It's off to the salt mines. Oh, goodbye, Spock. Come again, sometime.

CONTRIBUTORS WANTED

Long hours of hard work, and maybe you only get your manuscript back. High standards but no pay. Chance of honor and recognition in case of success. Jim Ashe, 301 Dryden Road, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

AD SPACE AVAILABLE

Send me an ad which arrives before the end of the month, and you'll see it in the next issue of C & P. Typewritten copy only please. It should fit into my 42-character wide columns, and a maximum of 20 or so lines high. The price is one dollar. Jim Ashe, 301 Dryden Road, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

THOSE SIGNALS FROM SPACE

A distant waltz, or perhaps a primeval jazz of orbiting atoms? Nobody knows yet, but that distant beep has fired men's imaginations, elicited some guarded statements, and fertilized several millions of variously conservative or lurid newspaper paragraphs.

The signals are strong enough to be audible in a conventional short-wave receiver, if it is a very good receiver attached to a better antenna than is available to most people. A skilled radio amateur might be able to assemble the gear required to hear the signal, but the rest of us will have to get by with tape recordings. I hope to have a tape recording with me at the Lunacon.

Reports seem to vary, but here is what seems to be definitely known about these signals, so widely reported the weekend of March 11. Firstly, the signals do not originate on earth, and almost certainly do not come from anywhere in the solar system. The signals come in from certain very definite directions (there are at least four sources, similar in nature but different in detail) and to the best of the radio astronomers' ability to measure such things the signals appear to emanate from regions at most a few hundred miles wide. The signals are repetitive, at rates in the order of one per second (period of one source is 1.377 seconds) and this rate is constant within the ability of the hearers to measure it. The signals are coherent radiation, that is, they come from something that sounds like a radio transmitter rather than from a familiar kind of natural source.

Some reasonable astronomical mechanisms have been proposed which could generate signals like those being heard. The matter is being investigated very enthusiastically by radio astronomers the world over, and has aroused considerable interest in the Cornell community. Yet an answer may not appear very soon. A key point that is not mentioned in the news reports is the radio astronomers' certainty the signals they are hearing are not much like those actually transmitted.

Short-wave listeners know how much can happen to a signal in the under-one-millisecond of time between its transmission and reception between two stations on the surface of the earth. These signals have been traveling through space for years--perhaps for 200 years. The radio astronomers listening to these signals really are faced with two basically different problems: What are the originally transmitted signals really like? Knowing the answer to that one, can we guess if they have an origin in intelligent purpose? It seems to be generally believed an answer should emerge in a year or so of hard work.

ABOUT PHOENIX

This is the publication I am starting to take the place of SCIENCE FICTION TIMES in my writing work. News policies will be the same ones I applied then, with benefit of additional experience.

My key idea is, science fiction is important literature. As with other writing, some of it is good and some not so good, a little bit is excellent and it rests on a wide foundation of much that is not excellent.

Science fiction has been accepted only slowly and with visible reluctance by the general reading population, and some critics seem to feel this is because SF is a limited or juvenile style of literary communication. I do not accept this, and I maintain the difficulty probably lies in a certain prevailing narrow-mindedness. This subtle shade afflicts many people who seem to feel the future will tend to itself and

 PHOENIX, Vol. 1 #4, April 1968. Monthly news and views of science fiction writing, publishing, fandom, and reading. I believe Science Fiction is Literature! This issue *****Copyright James E. Ashe, 1968*****

in any case will not be very different from the present. I have noticed a certain tendency in such thinkers to be excessively interested in the past.

I hardly feel we should ignore the past, but will we ever live it again? I think the curious art of writing in terms of a future that might come to pass offers us, in this violently changing world, a new reality we may come to require for good lives. And what if some writer is interested in a world which could never happen? Experience tells us something useful about such writing. We cannot tell which world could never happen.

The actual kind of news published will vary depending upon what I can find to print. I hope there will be a lot of it, though, in a few months. Here are three key points I use in choosing material.

Fannish material will appear here, because of the strong connection I perceive between the turbulent ferment of fandom and the vital, vigorous life of science fiction literature.

There is nothing so important it must be stated roughly. Loaded words have their place in society but not in PHOENIX. The facts of a situation, and a man's good ideas, can speak for themselves. Accessory labels are not needed, and will be very unwelcome.

Finally, I have no axe to grind. If some critic wants to attempt a crushing blow at my pet theme, 'science fiction is important,' he is invited to publish his timely, relevant, and meaningful comments here. I do not expect to receive such material, but there are enough other matters in the field which are sound and yet controversial enough to experience difficulty in finding print. All workmanlike commentary and news is welcome here.

ACCORDING TO HARRIETT

The first matter is, how about the flexibly worded motions that were made at the convention? Three of them were reworded by George Scithers and do not serve the purpose originally intended for them.

George Nims moved, "I make a motion that every third year the con. bid be awarded to some small community in the USA that

otherwise would not stand a chance for a convention bid." This was reworded to read "I make a motion to award the convention bid to some small community or to some foreign country every third year." Thus it is understood that this would be the year the bid would go out of the country and has already been put to work by a committee as such. It still does not set the opening for the small community in the USA which would not stand a chance with a regular large community bid.

The second was the bid made to allow for more fan awards at a convention. The motion was, "I make a motion to add three more Hugo awards to the present number to be awarded for some best fan endeavor. The motion was reworded by Scithers to, "I make a motion to add 3 more Hugoes to the now standing number." This allows them to go either to fans or pros, and fans stand to lose prestige at their own convention.

And the third was Elaine Wojcieowski's "I make a motion that all future convention committees be requested to obtain a room for the use of the NJF as a hospitality room, located not too remotely from the convention rooms and with the proper facilities." The motion was reworded to read, "motion to ask all future committees to try and obtain a room for the use of the NJF hospitality room."

Many people seem to feel confusion about differences between the NFF (National Fan Fund) and the NJF (National Fantasy Fan Federation.) Differences are numerous.

The NJF is a social group providing entertainment and relaxation to fans not interested in a part of a program, a place to talk with friends, etc. The NFF is dedicated to offering advice, assistance, and if necessary small loans to fans who, having arrived at a convention, find they need friendly help or money.

CONTRIBUTORS WANTED

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