

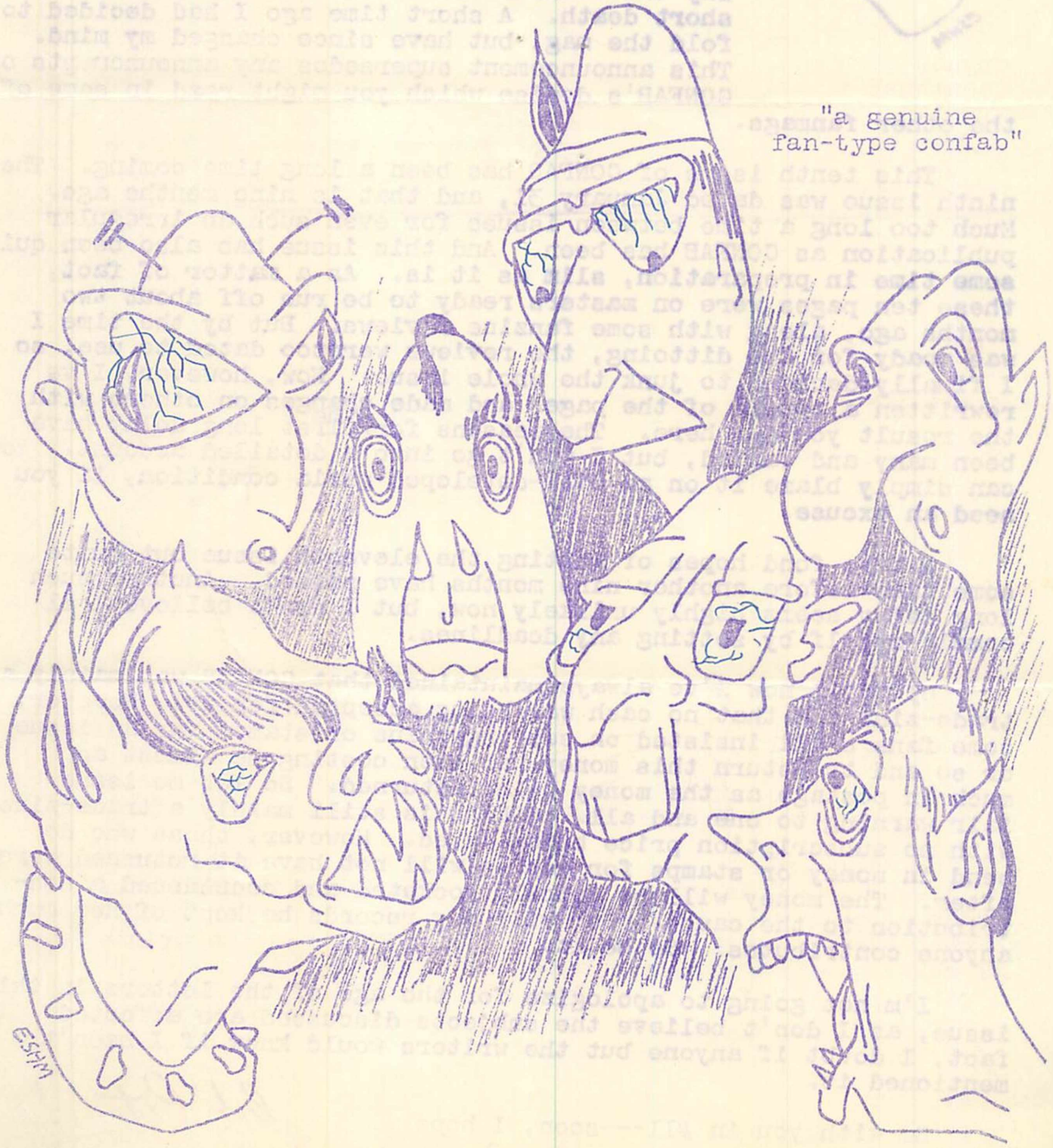
CONFAB

October 31, 1955

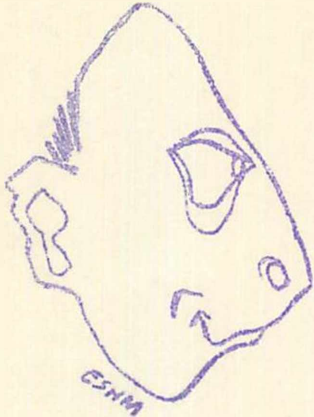
#10



"a genuine
fan-type confab"



ESHM



CONFAB is a sometimes-zine, published by Bob Peatrowsky, Box 634, Norfolk, Nebr. It is intended mainly as a trade-zine, although anyone may get on the mailing list merely by writing. No subscription price is asked although contributions will be accepted.

Despite any information to the contrary which may have been spread recently, CONFAB is not dead. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that CONFAB has been resurrected after a short death. A short time ago I had decided to fold the mag, but have since changed my mind. This announcement supersedes any announcements of CONFAB's demise which you might read in some of the other fanmags.

This tenth issue of CONFAB has been a long time coming. The ninth issue was dated January 31, and that is nine months ago. Much too long a time between issues for even such an irregular publication as CONFAB has been. And this issue has also been quite some time in preparation, slim as it is. As a matter of fact, these ten pages were on masters ready to be run off about two months ago, along with some fanzine reviews. But by the time I was ready for the dittoing, the reviews were too dated to use, so I finally decided to junk the whole issue. Now, however, I've rewritten a couple of the pages and made changes on others with the result you see here. The reasons for ^{the} first long delay have been many and varied, but I won't go into a detailed account. You can simply blame it on an over-developed gafia condition, if you need an excuse.

I have fond hopes of getting the eleventh issue out quite some time before another nine months have passed. Another such long delay seems highly unlikely now, but I don't believe I'll commit myself by setting any deadlines.

Up until now I've always maintained that CONFAB was mainly a trade-zine and that no cash was being accepted for it. However, some fans still insisted on sending coins or stamps for an issue or so and to return this money had been costing me almost as much in postage as the money being returned. So let me issue fair warning to one and all. CONFAB is still mainly a trade-zine with no subscription price being asked. However, those who do send in money or stamps for copies will not have it returned hereafter. The money will be quickly pocketed and considered a contribution to the cause. Nor will any records be kept of how much anyone contributes. So be it.

I'm not going to apologize for the age of the letters in this issue, as I don't believe the subjects discussed are affected. In fact, I doubt if anyone but the writers would know if I hadn't mentioned it.

Be with you in #11---soon, I hope...

Bob Peatrowsky

THE READERS RETALIATE

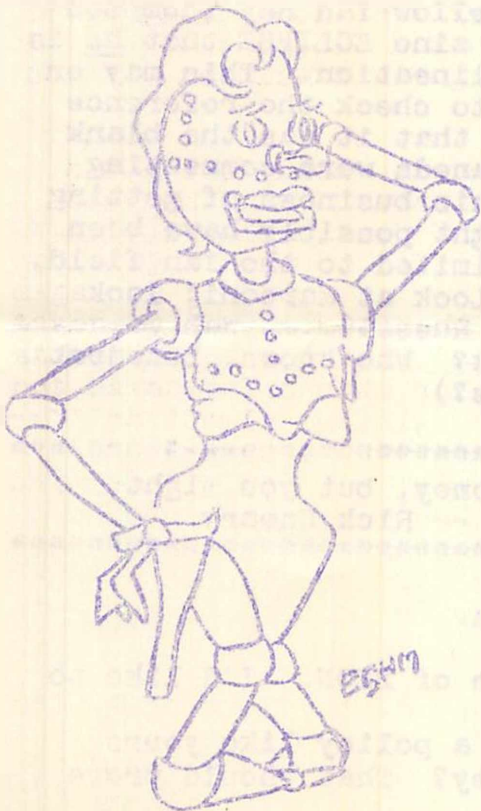
ERIC BENTCLIFFE, 47 Allids St, Great Moor, Stockport, Cheshire,
ENGLAND

...Fans aren't equipped to comment on the promags??? Sorry, I don't agree. No one is "equipped" to comment on anything. The professional critics who get paid for commenting on current literature by the Daily News are not "equipped" to comment on s-f promags, or s-f books. But they comment just the same and notice is taken by the general public of their comments. A comment is just a statement of opinion. A review is an essay of opinion. One does not have to be "equipped" to write either. A review in a pro publication is an attempt (generally) to keep the reader in touch with what is being published, and what (in the reviewer's opinion) is the best of that published. It should be the same in a fanzine. Sometimes it is; sometimes not. I have known fan-eds to publish reviews because they have been deliberately provocative, and because they have expected them to bring in scads of letters for the letter section. Apart from the deliberately provocative type, reviews in a fanzine are usually intended to be a serious statement of what the reader thought of a particular mag or story. If the reviewer's taste is similar to the majority of readers of the zine, his reviews

will be praised and he will be remembered as a good reviewer. If his views are different--in the minority--he will be panned because he isn't "equipped" to review. It doesn't really matter if he has never read s-f before. If his tastes are similar to the mass he will be liked.

I read a review to find out the opinion of the writer, to find out whether he liked or disliked a story I had read. So do most fan, I think. I am interested in comparing other folks' tastes with my own but I never let the reviewer be the dictator of what I read or what I buy. I have been gypped this way before. . . .

(I'm pretty much in agreement with you on the subject of reviews and reviewers, Eric. I usually settle on one or two "favorite" reviewers myself, whose tastes seem to run fairly similar to my own, from past experiences, and follow their recommendations to some degree. This is by no means infallible, but I think it does save me from wading through a lot of crud. You'll notice



"the ESHM girl"

though, that I said I followed their recommendations "to some degree". Occasionally, I'll read a book or story which has received a bad review just to see if it could possibly be as bad as the reviewers said. And it most times is.)

"I admit complete ignorance of projectors, fast lens and such, but I did once know an usherette." -- Eric Bentcliffe.

ROBERT BLOCH, P. O. Box 362, Weyauwega, Wis.

CONFAB #9 has a brilliant idea...this business of blank interlineations. What a master-stroke! And it occurs to me that you might go down in history as a Fannish Genius if you carried affairs one step further to their logical conclusion. Blank interlineations are fine, but what about a blank fanzine? No title, no illos, no text at all. Let everyone fill in his own contents; thus you satisfy each taste perfectly. Every reader is guaranteed the kind of material he personally likes; every voyeur can have his own brand of artwork to look at; every fan can gain endless egoboo by filling the letter columns with correspondence referring to him in terms of high praise. This, I feel, is a Big Thing. It may Revolutionize Fandom. Let's all get behind it and push! Make sure it's on the edge of the Grand Canyon first, though. Hoping you are the same --

(Luckily, I wasn't. # It seems that several faneds have made mention of the blank interlineations I used in the last issue. And this has prompted fellow-fan Ray Thompson to state in a recent issue of his zine ECLIPSE that he is the true inventor of the blank interlineation. This may or may not be true; I haven't bothered to check the reference he gives. However, the fact remains that it was the blank interlineations in CONFAB that the faneds were commenting upon, and my "invention" thereof. This business of getting "recognition" from something that might possibly have been someone else's idea at first isn't limited to the fan field, by any means. Check your history. Look at Marconi; look at the Wright Brothers; look at Jane Russell...yeah... What did Jane Russell invent, you ask? Who knows, but just look at her. So who needs inventions?)

"If your mag has folded, keep the money, but you might send me a bit of black crepe." -- Rick Sneary

JAMES BROSCART, Rural Route 1, Towanda, Pa.

Read the review of CONFAB in an issue of PEON. I'd like to get a copy...

I have never heard of a fanzine with a policy like yours. Nothing but commentary from the readers, hey? That should prove both interesting and informative.



Seems like too many fanzines are becoming "little magazines", concentrating almost entirely on publishing stories and articles. This is all very well, but it can be overdone. To me, a fanzine should be first of all, designed to unite and inform the fans, telling of each other's doings, ideas, activities, etc. Too many fanzines are getting away from this purpose. Sure, stories and articles are necessary and good, but they should not be utilized to the extent that a fanzine loses sight of its primary reason for publication.

And, from what I hear, your zine is in keeping with my views more than most other fanzines. But perhaps I shouldn't jump to this conclusion until I have actually seen COLFAB.

(Perhaps you shouldn't have, Jim. At least, the following is a letter received shortly after I'd sent the copy of CONFAB requested.)

Received the latest CONFAB the other day. Couldn't write this letter 'til now because I had to let my eyeballs recover from the strain of straining to read hekto.

Gad. I heartily agree with one D. Mason; to heck with hekto.

Soho, a letterzine! Saves writing material, doesn't it? Frankly, what you have done in nine pages, zines like GRUE, ferinstance, do so much better in twice as many pages. Plus having an equal amount of other material to round out a nicely balanced issue. Now, I'm not trying to tell you that you have to put out a fifty page fanzine to be effective, but I am saying that a letter column is not sufficient in itself. After all, sooner or later fans are going to get tired of having nothing to comment on but other letters. And if one depends upon previous letters to base his letter on, some discussions will drag on and on and on...

"But I wanna be different!" you say, "I den't want my zine to be just another run-of-the-mill fiction-article-editorial-letter section publication."

All well and good. You are different, to certain extent. Not too many letterzines around. But do you feel that you are being effectively different by just running letters? As Mason says, a great many fans don't give a hoot (a typical fannish sound) about 'Joe Schmork's opinions on Alvin Schmalvin's last letter.'

Re the discussion on motion picture processes: unfortunately, I'm more of a science-fiction fan than a movie fan, and it was as a

stf fan that I bought your zine. Imagine my wonderment upon finding most of the zine occupied with a movie discussion, and comparatively little of it devoted to topics of a science-fiction nature. If I had wanted to know about the movies, I'd have run downtown and bought some movie mags.

The most thoroughly interesting letter of the ish was the extremely apt commentary on interlânations. Very informative. More of this sort of stuff, plus controversial editorials by you, would greatly improve the contents of your zine.

(Now how is the poor faned supposed to win?)

"I realize that an added subscriber will add another straw to your back-breaking task, but I can hope." -- Rick Sneary.

RICK SNEARY, 2962 Santa Ana St., South Gate, Calif.

...Letterzines have always been favorites of mine. I even tried one myself. It lasted all of two issues. After that I decided to let others do the editing and I would write the letters. It worked fine, as long as the zines lasted. VoM, Fandom Speaks, Dawn, Postwarp, etc. But then I passed over the line myself...

Now, as a result of germs, I'm back for a while, and would like to see who's who and what's going on.

(Thanks for those kind words, Rick. You've bolstered my ego, and my opinion of letterzines, considerably after that last letter. But I hope that sentence about "...as long as the zines lasted" isn't going to turn out to be a sort of dire prophesy about CONFAB's future.)



"I used to be one of his rabidest fans, but I've been innoculated."

Sgt. JOAN W. CARR, Clearing Wing, Cyprus Detachment, R.P.O. Middle East, British Forces Post Office 53

...I've seen quite a lot of letters and articles recently, mainly concerned with the different outlooks of various fandoms etc, which seem to say that more people nowadays read and enjoy science fiction. Which is true in a way, but not the way the writers mean it. Perhaps I'm mistaken in this, but it seems to me that the attitude generally adopted by most fans is that early fandom was

devoted to the cause of spreading the "gospel". Now, (they say), it has succeeded in that task, and the result is that nobody feels too happy about it. Because of this, modern fandom has deliberately renounced the crusading spirit and is becoming more esoteric. A sort of "last stronghold" against the masses of readers. All very well, but in my opinion, early fandom never did succeed in spreading the gospel at all. The type of story that was known as sf in those days could never command a larger audience than the one it had then, no matter how much crusading took place. All that happened was that sf itself changed, and the new type of story was designed for a larger readership --- and got it!! Mind you, I don't mean to decry the efforts of early fandom but I still think that their kind of sf hasn't spread - it's just disappeared. And modern sf, or at least a large percentage of it, isn't more mature by any means. In writing for a larger audience one has to write down to the average intelligence of that audience. Fans are fairly intelligent people but the mass readership isn't. Thank Ghu they seem to be slacking off. All this might be painfully obvious to most fans, but if it is, it certainly doesn't show up in the stuff I've been reading.

...When I first became embroiled in fandom about two years ago, the UK fanzines seemed pretty esoteric to me. Naturally. At that time I hadn't even the baguest idea of what went on. After about a year, I became used to the UK fanzines and then I ran into USA fandom. I was back where I started! Nowadays I have a fairly good idea of the outline of fannish development on both sides of the Atlantic, tho there are still some pretty large gaps. I only learned through exchanging FEZ for as many USA fanzines as I could. It is, in fact, the only way for anyone to really learn what is what. If this exchange of fanzines can be increased I think we would all benefit. But take my case. I have been left rather high and dry by some faneds, and I have a bit of a grumble coming up. Do you mind if I weep on your shoulder for a few minutes? When I first started FEZ I picked as many faneds as I could find and sent them sample copies to see if they would exchange. Most of the people I contacted in this way sent me their zines straight away. But one or two didn't do anything. Now, I know that some faneds put out their zines on a "sub only" basis and don't go in for exchanges (tho I don't know why) and I also realized that some faneds, for reasons known only to them, perhaps decided that they didn't like FEZ (tho again, I don't really know why). But surely they could have taken a few minutes off from labouring on their dream child to drop me a postcard saying "sorry, no exchanges" or something? It isn't really much to ask, is it? I don't mind spending money on FEZ, I expect my hobby to cost me money, but I do dislike the idea of sending the zine into a void. I won't give you any names or anything because that would be something like a "black-list" and I'm a hundred percent against that, but I really ought to mention that this business isn't limited to USA faneds. There are a couple on this side of the Atlantic from whom I've never heard a word. Ah well... You can go change your jacket for a drier one now if you like!

Oh yes, one thing I meant to ask you. Since the yearly Con in the USA is called a World Con, why not "LONDON IN '56"?? Hmm?

(This business of science-fiction and fandom is a



rather interesting and intriguing series of concentric "inner circles", through which a fan must work himself. First you join a comparatively small and esoteric group by becoming a reader of sf itself. Inside this circle is a smaller and more esoteric one called Fandom. Still smaller groups are various degrees of active fandom, working to the BNF and the "ghods". I don't know what smaller circle would fit inside the "ghod group" but there probably is one. At any rate, regardless of where in the circles you might place yourself, there always seems to be another still smaller and still more esoteric group into which you can work yourself in time. There are no "commissioned" fans;

each one must work himself up from the ranks. Even the sergeants, eh?)

 "There was a recent issue, but it seemed more like a dying gasp than a sound of recovery." -- Dick Lupoff.

STAN WOOLSTON, 12832 West Ave., Garden Grove, Calif.

A few years ago, in a minor grade, I read a story titled (I believe) "The Gift of the Magpie" who was telling a bunch of birds how to make a nest, but every so often one or another specie would fly away, thinking hiser partial knowledge was the whole thing. Reading certain letters brought that thought to the fore of my punkin head; humans seem to think just like the birds in that story.

It's easy to think that the experiences we have, or the words we overhear, are the key words and suitably complete for us to make a decision and state conclusions. But maybe I'm meek tonight. I won't jump on the statement George Wetzel gave that fantasy is being discriminated against by fans. In a way everything--every side of every problem--is discriminated against by fans and everyone else who gives opinions. Judgement involves making decisions, which is discrimination.

Personally I consider myself a fan in several "layers" of fandom, from the mild collector (or accumulator, which is a more accurate term in my case) to the fan editor, member of FAPA, and officeholding in N3F. When I became a FAPA member it was to extend and slightly change the emphasis of my fanactivity, to make it at once more personal and more wide-spread than even a score of personal letters would be. To a certain degree it also extended my correspondence, another "fan-area" I didn't mention above.

Every decision I made to move into a slightly different fan-sphere snowed the variance in viewpoint between fan and fan. Some seemed content to be primarily fan editors and sometimes put out a "serious, constructive" publication which was often quite specialized and sometimes reflected quite an insight into that specialization. Other fan editors liked to rub minds (if elbows, etc. were too distant)



with others in a more intimate way, using both the zñne and the mails for this aim. Perhaps this combination was the more pleasing to me; it was more relaxed and perhaps in some instance less discriminating. But certain of these editors and writers seemed to me to be the type who liked to pick fights or be stubbornly aggressive primarily to uphold their ego.

Now, after all this gab, you may wonder what this has to do with anything I said above. It's just this: a person has an ego which is bound at times to bump into his fellows. Also, a fan provides for himself a common ground for self-expression. Like most people, a fan can be as unreasonable as any other human (and I suppose I wouldn't be taken amiss by most fans if I said some fans outdid themselves). Fans can jump to conclusions, can stand up for their inalienable right to be silly. And they will.

A human being is a prejudice-machine. However, in growing up many of the more mountainous ones are buffed at by the contact with others. Besides being a stupid creature, a human has brains. He can learn, sometimes. So as the mind becomes more cultivated the areas of prejudice may become finer ground, or maybe even deeper set.

I believe that the dark-age prejudice against science is not so apparent today, nor is prejudice between one "race" and another. Note that Mohammedans once went out to kill all non-believers in Allah (but maybe I'd better not get started with examples; they're long-winded things). One reason races (sic) are more friendly now is that they've been tossed together for centuries and the edges of their prejudices have been worn down. Quite often this has been by intermarriage, blending of "racial" strains.

Note how the American and other ex-European invaders of Japan have left behind many blonde babies. This has "weakened" a strain that was more pure than that of China, Turkey, or any South American country. With the children, every invader has brought in ideas from outside, have blended cultures and in the day of fast transportation this is an accelerating thing.

So maybe it's natural that science fiction may tend to push at fantasy, not only in the minds of fans but in actuality. I've noted quite a few blēndings of the two--an attempt to "explain" myths and fantasies that in the past would have been considered magical or fantasies and nothing else. And I think this is natural. Ghosts get boring in time, so we might try to be logical and see what a ghost might do in a certain future environment, how it will influence the crew and "supercargo" of a faster-than-light, centuries-long trip to the other end of the Milky Way, for example.

On blacklists as an effort to solve gripes, I think it is a poor term to use. No fan editor can blacklist a single fan; however, beyond the term, I think that publicity in this respect might do a good deed for fans as a whole. Some fans have been careless in the past. Years ago I printed, from hand-set type, a single issue of a fanzine called FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, in which I gave no price nor asked for subscriptions. However, I said I would like to put out three a year, so several fans wrote in with a coin or so.



I wasn't prepared for subscriptions, so I laid the letters aside to be "worked over" later. About that time I became more active in fandom, joined a few clubs (including N3F, where Len Moffat and I started a project titled the FAN DIRECTORY). So the printed zine has so far been a one-shot, and though nobody has jumped down my throat I wonder if I've returned all the coins or not.

This is an example of an inexperienced fan running into something that well might have caused much ill feelings. Incidentally, as another cause of ill feelings, I've a few articles that have been contributed for a second issue, material that I fully intended to use within a brief time. At this time, though my salary has increased, I've less money to put in fanactivities and much less money as well. Some material was written especially for the mag. Every time I think of it, and the time reason tells me I don't have, I cringe. Guess I've a guilty feeling that time alone will heal. (And by time I mean time to put the mag out. However, will the writers protest me using their stuff which today may not be their considered beliefs?) Enough of this.

(I can readily understand your statement about laying letters aside to be "worked over" later, and what can happen then. This letter of yours is a prime example. I'm not going to admit the date you wrote the letter, but I will say that I just recently dug it out of a stack of stuff here after looking for it for months. Nuff sed?)

"I wonder if the uncertainty principle could be applied to fanzines?" -- Stan Woolston.

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