



REDD BOGGS' RETROGRADE

Number 1: July 1959

The appearance of this magazine may evoke cries of ecstasy, indignation, and/or revulsion in divers quarters, but one reaction I'm sure of: The gleaming eye, the index finger rigidly pinning down chapter and verse, and the cackle which begins, "What was that you were saying about -- ?"

-- Damon Knight in #1,
February 1946 (VAPA mailing #6).

cogito

The emergence of this new fanzine from Gafia Press should not be taken to indicate that I have changed my mind about the "letter substitute" sort of fanzine since writing that letter to John Magnus published in Rumble #10 (March 24, 1958). I still subscribe to the views I expressed there, though I have adopted Magnus' notion (set forth in Rumble Newsletter #2) that it is "more fun to do things than not to do things," and that activity breeds more activity. It seems to me that the task of publishing this small fanzine regularly may put me in mental gear for the greater and more rewarding task of publishing Skyhook and other major projects I have in mind.

This new fanzine definitely does not subscribe to Magnus' policy in Rumble of "blathering about ephemeral doings" (Rumble Newsletter #1), and I do not consider this fanzine as "primarily a midnight letter to the Closest." I do not believe that Retrograde can properly be called a "letter substitute," though its rather wispy size, its frequency of publication, and its relative informality may confuse some fans into describing it as such.

John Magnus has the distinction of being the originator of the two waves of wispy fanzines that swept over fandom in recent years. In late August 1953 he began the Saturday Morning Gazette ("smug"), which was probably the first of its kind in the modern era: a tiny personal fanzine published on a weekly basis and circulated, not in FAPA or SAPS, but to a small circle of friends. Smug had its imitators, the best being Charles Wells' Grey, which soon outstripped its prototype.

In November 1947 Magnus launched Rumble Newsletter (later called Rumble), a similar but slightly more ambitious enterprise. This time he

had many more imitators, including White, Hitchcock, Pauls, and others, and even the Carr-Ellik Fanac stems from this movement. The presence of Fanac here has led some fans to confuse the "letter substitute" and the fanewsie. Fanac partakes more than most of the "letter substitute" spirit, but it has evolved into a fanzine in the tradition of Nebula and Tympani, which stresses fan news instead of pro news.

Other "letter substitute" fanzines -- and even this fanzine -- will publish such news as they receive. For that matter, nearly all fanzines publish news reports, but the obtaining and reporting of such news is not their raison d'etre. Even if we omit Fanac from the category, however, we are left with a bewildering variety of fanzines which have been described as "letter substitutes." These include such entries as Richard Eney's brilliant Stupefying Stories, William Rotsler's horny Kteic Magazine, Ted White's Gambit -- which is more in the spirit of Rumble than most fanzines inspired by Rumble -- and others.

The origin of these fanzines offers little help to the fan who would try to classify them. Stupefying Stories and Kteic began quite literally as letter substitutes; early issues of the former contained a paragraph or two typed in for the attention of the fan who received that particular copy. Gambit was never literally a letter substitute, but it is as deserving of the term as the later issues of Stupefying Stories, and Kteic's final issues did not deserve the term at all.

"Snapzine" has been used to describe fanzines of the Rumble type; White applies the term in Void #18 to JD-Argassy. However, this term refers to the method of distribution of a fanzine and only secondarily to its contents. Joe Gibson, who originated the term if not the method of distribution, applied it to the fanzine whose single copy is passed from hand to hand (by mail), thus reaching a small circle of fans with but little effort on the editor's part. While the term might be extended to apply to such efforts as the early Kteic which circulated in several carbon copies on a round robin schedule, it seems ambiguous as a term for mimeographed or multilithed items such as Rumble or JD-Argassy.

Of course, as we have already seen, "letter substitute" is just as an ambiguous a term. It might even be applied to the whole tradition of non-prozine-imitation in fandom. Against the example of such prozine imitations and formal journals as Fantasy Magazine, Planeteer, and the like, other fans have put up their own idea of a fanzine, Van Houten Says, Science Fiction Critic: the personal fanzine that is the editor's means of giving himself a voice and getting fans to lend him their ears. The tradition has been carried on largely in FAPA, where such important

RETROGRADE is edited and published by Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland place N. E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota, upon the third Monday of each month. Associate editor: Marion Z. Bradley. This is issue number one, July 1959. It is available for letters of comment or by trade, but not for cash. This issue is also intended for circulation in the summer 1959 mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press association. The photographs herein, snapped by my Polaroid Land camera, were reproduced on Gestetner Electraprint stencils. The paper is Gestetner Mimeo-Wove and its color is the same as the sun in the "Author's Prologue" of The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas. The Gafia Press.

examples of personal fanzines as Speer's Sustaining Program, Rothman's Milty's Mag / Plenum, and Warner's Horizons circulated. But there have always been such fanzines in general circulation as well, and their numbers have increased in the last luster.

In order to save the term "letter substitute" to apply to a small, specific area, and thus preserve its meaningfulness, we might best use it to describe only those fanzines which are "very much like a conversational monolog, in which the editor talks along, moving from one subject to another as he is reminded of it...; a few departments may be set apart, but the greater portion of the contents is the chitchat or argumentation of the editor, directed at the persons he knows are readers, with no attempt at formal or objective, timeless style." Thus the term would be the equivalent of what Speer calls (Pancyclopedia, first edition, p 47) the "individ fanzine," sub-type beta, and describes in the above-quoted sentence.

Retrograde, then, is not a "letter substitute" fanzine. Rather it is an individ fanzine, sub-type alpha: "with separate articles on unrelated subjects, departments such as reviews of pros... and artistic or controversial quotations, fillers, cover illustration, etc.; but the personality of the editor is evident everywhere..." I have published fanzines since 1947, but have never owned such a fanzine except for Hurkle (in SAPS, 1950-2) and a few oneshots (One Sheet to the Wind, Glubb-dubdrib, ktp). I'm looking forward to possessing such a loudspeaker.

This first issue may or may not be a representative number, but I intend to continue to departmentalize most of the material appearing herein. This gimmick memorializes, once again, my continuing admiration for Speer's fanzine SusPro, but was adopted primarily because I believe it will enable me to express myself on a wide range of subjects without confronting the difficulty of composing a formal, full-length article on each. It will be easier, I hope, to contribute a new instalment of an existing department than to write a new article from scratch. These departments will be recurring -- as distinct from regular -- features in this fanzine; some departments may not appear at all for several issues, and at other times one department may usurp an entire issue.

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I saw the revival of "The Gold Rush" the other day and had to look twice to discern Chaplin the artist: he has been obscured behind Chaplin the man who was harried out of the country as a despoiler of American morals and traditions. The second look, however, clouds out the man, and it is hard to imagine Chaplin being harried out of anywhere. Didn't he glance behind him only when the following grizzly had wandered off?

PARK FREE AFTER 5:30 P.M. DAILY AT THE CORNER OF 7th ST & 2nd AVE. NO.
 GREATEST COMEDY EVER MADE...
CHARLES CHAPLIN
the gold rush
 WITH MUSIC AND WORDS
 Distributed by Lovert Films, Inc.
 ★ Added TREAT! Walt DISNEY'S "NATURE'S STRANGEST CREATURES"
COOL *Downtown World* COME EARLY OPEN 9:45
 SPACE

Everything is transparent behind the mask he wears: the made-up eyes, the paste mustache, the melmac face. He can smile ingratiatingly before brute force; he can smile beautifully. He can moon. I think he can cry. But he seldom moves his facial muscles; the motions of his body express everything, and whatever his face says he never quite loses his dignity. There is always that narrow margin of victory in all his encounters with the brutal insensitive world.

Chaplin is nothing more nor less than the Hemingway hero, although he twirls a cane instead of a pistol, and wears a fake mustache instead of a bullfighter's coleta. For like the Hemingway hero this unlikely fellow has a core of the tragic and the poetic, a vein of pathetic courage that allows him to remain faithful to the end to a private ethic of dignity and self-discipline. He himself never lies in the gutter from which he retrieves the tossed-away cigar butt. Like Walter Mitty in secret life he is indomitable to the last, and against realities more formidable than firing squads.

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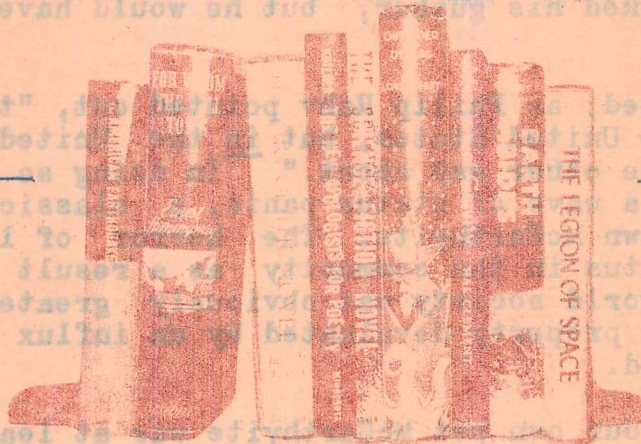
I was browsing peacefully in the new Paperback Gallery on Hennepin avenue (down the block from Shinders newsstand) of a summer afternoon while the clerk on duty was delivering a great oration. His audience was another customer -- he wasted only a single contemptuous look on me. I deduced that the other customer was thinking of buying a similar bookshop out in the wilds of Montana or Utah, and the subject of the clerk's oration was the woes of the book trade. The clerk described in horrifying terms how bad business is: nothing sells except dream books, how-to-do-it hypnotism courses, cartoon books, and sex books. The clerk spoke bitterly of the people who wander into the store just to browse. Inspired with brimming hatred of the breed, he demonstrated how these people browse by seizing a book from a shelf, holding it at nose length, and turning the pages with painful slowness. "They spend an hour pawing over all the books in the place, then buy a dime greeting card, and go out, and you know damn well the card is the only thing they came in for," the clerk said, carefully dusting his hands which had just touched a book.

I sauntered over and riffled solemnly through the paperback he had used in his demonstration -- it was James Joyce's Collected Poems -- and having thus emphasized the truth of the clerk's words by getting my eye-tracks all over the book, I walked out of the store without buying even a greeting card. But just as I went out, the other customer pointed at the display of Pogo books and, realizing that they were in one of the best selling categories mentioned by the clerk, remarked keenly, "I'll bet you sell lots of those." The clerk replied, "Yes, but the cartoon books that really sell are the Peanuts ones. Boy, I can't keep 'em in stock. I'm all sold out right now."

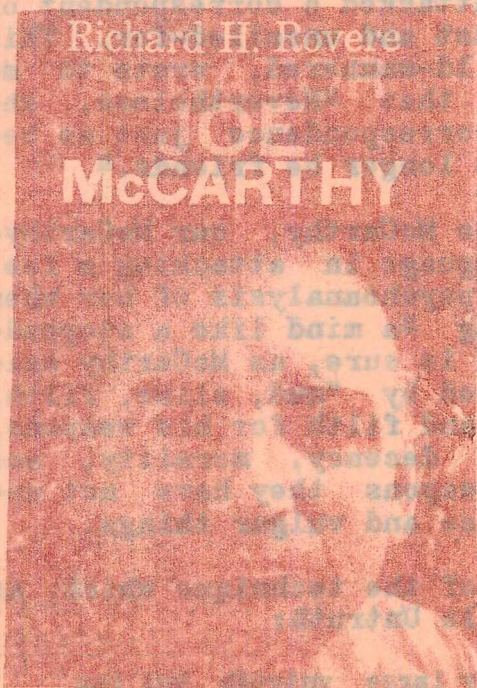
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CULTURAL NOTES: There's a new Lion Stereo record out called Space Stories and Sounds. It includes "First Men in the Moon," "War of the Worlds," "The Time Machine," and "Journey to the Center of the Earth," narrated by Bill Stern from a script "adapted from Classics Illustrated" comic magazine. # T. S. Denison of Minneapolis has published a book by Mildred Houghton Comfort called J. Edgar Hoover: Modern Knight Errant.

A FAN'S LIBRARY



Richard H. Rovere's journalistic study of McCarthy and McCarthyism* is no book for the library of science fiction fans: the events it describes are fantastic enough, but unfortunately they are not fictional. Still, on second thought, the book presents the portrait of a demagogue who, at this remove, looks far more frightening than Nehemiah Scudder and might serve as a model for science fiction writers. And perhaps we can, by reading this book, gain an insight into the character and the methods of fandom's own pet McCarthyite. It is almost as true of fan-nish literature as it is of mainstream literature that -- as Lionel Trilling says -- we have no conservative or reactionary tradition; thus, when a fan appears in whom the conservative or reactionary impulse is very strong, and whose "irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas" are very pronounced, we should pay particular attention.



Though McCarthy was "in many ways the most gifted demagogue ever bred on these shores" -- this according to Rovere -- he attained this dubious distinction without exploiting those two traditional bugaboos existing in "the dark places of the American mind": Judaism and racism. Many of his followers, being compulsive haters, were anti-Jewish, anti-Negro, even anti-Catholic (although McCarthy himself was Roman Catholic), but he concentrated almost entirely on anti-communism.

McCarthy himself was surprised to discover such potency in the subject. In January 1950, when he was casting around for "a dramatic issue for the 1952 campaign," McCarthy seriously considered advocating "some up-to-date variant of the Townsend Plan." He was, says Rovere, "a

* Senator Joe McCarthy, by Richard H. Rovere (Harcourt, Brace, 1959).

political speculator, a prospector who drilled Communism and saw it come up a gusher. He liked his gusher, but he would have liked any other just as well."

McCarthy insisted, as Philip Rahv pointed out, "that Communism was a danger, not to the United States, but in the United States, when in truth it was just the other way about." In doing so he touched off, or at least exploited, a wave of status panic, a classic case of which we can examine in our own McCarthyite. The horror of losing one's wealth and accompanying status in the community as a result of our integration into the communist world society was obviously greater than the older fear of seeing one's property devaluated by an influx of Negroes or Jews into the neighborhood.

The fact that our own pet McCarthyite was at least sincere in her status panic sets her apart from McCarthy himself, for as Rovere concludes (and others, including myself, before him concluded) McCarthy had no convictions about his "great mission." "He was the leader of a fanatical movement, and he gave his name to a fanatical doctrine, but he was no kind of fanatic himself." But in several other ways our McCarthyite resembles the portrait of McCarthy painted by Rovere.

McCarthy, however "ogreish" he might appear, was "human; he wanted to be liked," and "many of those who despised his role...were able to see him as essentially a rogue and to get along quite well with him." One hears of our McCarthyite attending conventions at which she drinks beer and zooms around in sports cars with fans with whom she has exchanged bitter words in correspondence and fanzine columns. (I do not know whether these people "regard themselves as morally flawed" for giving in to the impulse to be cordial to her, as some of McCarthy's foes did.) McCarthy was numb, says Rovere, to the sensations he produced in others, and "could not comprehend true outrage, true indignation." I remember how our McCarthyite in the NFFF hotly attacked a correspondent of mine, circa 1952, an attack he considered unjust and uncalled-for. This fan, usually so unfannishly courteous and mild-mannered, wrote to me bursting with true outrage, true indignation, that "Nevertheless, she still supposes we can carry on our friendly correspondence just as before. She seems not to realize that we can no longer be friends."

Then there is the curious fact that, like McCarthy, our McCarthyite often uses "scabrous and scatological" language in attacking a foe. Another of my correspondents once attempted a psychoanalysis of her when on one occasion she described someone as having "a mind like a stopped-up toilet." It seems paradoxical that one who is sure, as McCarthy said he was sure, that his enemies were characterized by "mud, slime, filth, and moral squalor," should choose mud, slime, and filth for his weapons, but when one's enemies are representatives of decency, morality, and lawfulness, one can but seize upon whatever weapons they have not appropriated, even if these are necessarily coarse and vulgar things.

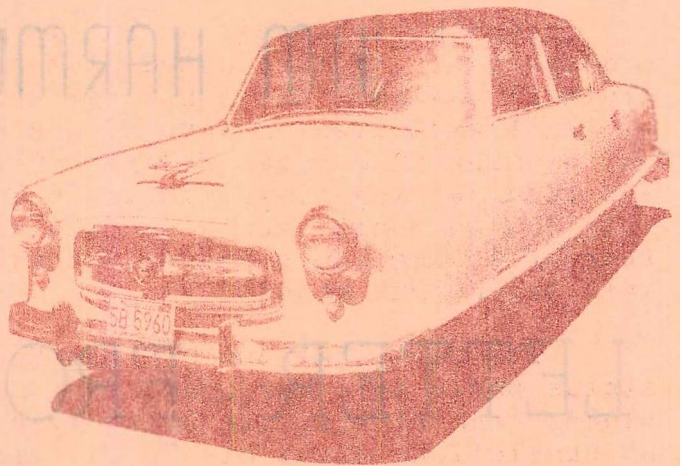
Finally, there is our McCarthyite's use of the technique which, as developed by McCarthy, Rovere calls the Multiple Untruth:

The "multiple untruth" need not be a particularly large untruth but can instead be a long series of loosely related untruths, or a single untruth

LOG OF THE HONEYBEE

The Honeybee is the name of my car (bought November 1958), which is definitely not a sports car, as you can see from the photo, but a 1954 Nash Rambler four-door sedan.

Honeybee isn't a very fannish name for a car, as Art Rapp points out. It is hardly in the same class with Stfnash, Quintessence of FooFoo, Panzerkampfwagen, or even Baby. Even fandom's newest car, Marion Z. Bradley's considerable Chrysler (vintage: early or middle Chrome Age), is cleft Lucky Seven to



commemorate the "Seven from the Stars," whose adventures made a sf novel which clicked with Cele Goldsmith, thus enabling MZB to buy the car. The original name of my car was Ootwa; however, I belatedly realized that -- as a result of "fate wilfully misunderstanding me" -- the sort of out-of-this-world adventure I might have in the car might take me literally out of this world. My sister-in-law Phyllis christened it Honeybee, a sobriquet suggested by its honeybee colors of yellow and black.

This department is intended to act as a continuing chronicle of the trips, especially those of fannish import, that I take in the Honeybee. It is an effort to carry on a tradition (I do not mean to imply that the tradition has lapsed) going back at least as far as Widner's "20,000 Leagues Over the Road" and Speer's "In Memoriam: Spirit of FooFoo." So far the Honeybee has carried me to Fond du Lac, Roseville, Mount Carmel, and -- unknown to us both -- within four miles of Art Rapp, though Jim Harmon has been the only fan so far to ride in the car. Watch this department for later reports.

with many facets. In either case, the whole is composed of so many parts that anyone wishing to set the record straight will discover that it is utterly impossible to keep all the elements of the falsehood in mind at the same time. Anyone making the attempt may seize upon a few selected statements and show them to be false, but doing this may leave the impression that only the statements selected are false and that the rest are true. An even greater advantage of the "multiple untruth" is that statements shown to be false can be repeated over and over again with impunity because no one will remember which statements have been disproved and which haven't.

Our McCarthyite's fanzines, which sometimes run to 40 pages crammed with single-spaced elite type, are a veritable Straits of Sunda for fans who enjoy the pursuit of illogic, absurdity, and fuggheadedness. But despite the awful slaughter of this whale herd of wild notions by Dick Eney, Don Wilson, and others, our McCarthyite plunges on, safe behind the blubber of the Multiple Untruth. But perhaps if we just ignored her she would sink down in silence like McCarthy did after 1954?

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JIM HARMON writes a

Mr. Redd Boggs,
2209 Highland Pl. NE.,
Minneapolis 21, Minnesota

LETTER FROM MT. CARMEL

I am afraid, Redd, that you overestimate the tastes of the average man. Most of us get pretty much what we want on television. You and a few TV critics are the only ones kicking about TV programming. I have a few minor complaints about TV: too many westerns, not enough dramatic shows, hardly any sf -- but things look better for next season, and in the main TV gives me pretty much what I want.

Of course you have to be selective in your viewing. Even with only a one-in-three choice, you can milk a lot of good stuff out of TV if you aren't afraid of spinning that dial. I read TV Guide very carefully. There is a considerable difference, a variation in quality, between different instalments of the same series. By selecting shows by the suggested interest of their plots or, perhaps more importantly, by their casts (almost all TV shows use guest stars now), you can weave a good evening's entertainment. For instance, earlier in the 1958-59 season, "The Rifleman," George Burns, and Arthur Godfrey were opposite each other. When, for example, Katy Jurado was guest star on "The Rifleman" I watched it. I might not watch Godfrey in a songfest with his troupe of "B" singers, but I watched it when he had Ernie Kovacs or Jackie Gleason on and would sit around and chat with them for half an hour. I didn't watch George Burns' usual routine canned show, but I did when he presented a live show with Abbe Lane and Xavier Cugat.

And of course the test of dialsmanship, during the Steve Allen and Ed Sullivan overlap, is to pick up both shows' big-name acts and miss all the trained seals, jugglers, and rock'n'roll singers; it is possible for the expert. You see, televiewing as a hobby is an exact science. If you plunge into it recklessly and casually, you see only the worst of it. It takes skill and practice to watch TV correctly. You even get so your life cycle is so well adjusted you practically never see a commercial. Every thirteen and a half minutes you have to get a drink or go to the bathroom. It's a way of life, you know. Don't knock it until you've tried it.

Bloch has sent me a copy of his new novel, Psycho, inscribed "For Jim Harmon, with affectionate admiration." I was really quite touched. That's a good word to apply to a book called Psycho, isn't it? After reading the book, I think what Bob meant was, "To Jim Harmon, who has been the inspiration behind this novel."

The book is really bully. It's an expert psychological novel with only a few overtures to the mystery novel. It is a deductive mystery, not in the John Dickson Carr locked room category, but in the realm of the infinitely more complex and variable cubicle of the human mind. As you may have heard, Bloch sold the movie rights to Alfred Hitchcock. He was pleased with the price he got, he said. Like Bob, I don't see how the book can be made into a movie any easier than Lolita.

The pantheism of certain philosophers irritates me. To call Nature by the anthropomorphic name of God is only an apology to traditional theists. Moreover, it seems to me a limitation of God to identify him with Nature, because Nature is not omnipotent. There are certain areas, "crazy spots," where gravity and refraction don't seem to operate correctly. Psi phenomena seem to violate not only human limitations but laws of motion and energy. Nuclear physics seemingly can violate the conservation of energy. Of course these exceptions to the rules may be part of the overall direction and pattern, but to me they seem to be apart from the pattern.

While I am no believer in the "power of prayer" to gain your special ends, I believe God, if he exists, is capable of individual response, and to deny individual response is to preclude God. One possibility of God is the sum total of all intelligence in the universe, One Will that is not the same as any member Will but which is part of all Will. I think that if this is the case persons of special Will might be able to influence the course of the All Will, as a twitching muscle flexes the knee in taking a step.

Those "crazy areas" of Nature might be proof of the variable response of God. (By coincidence -- or design -- in a radio discussion I'm listening to just now an obnoxious Catholic woman scholar asked, "How can God contradict Nature? God made Nature; it's a contradiction in terms.") Granting that God can make something perfect, is it eternally perfect? ¹ Can God set up some robot mechanism that will always function just the way he wants it to, eternally? It seems to me that Infinite Intelligence must be infinitely variable. Variability, not staticness, is a quality of intelligence.

Thanks for the favorable response to my story in the August Galaxy. As a matter of fact, characterization has practically disappeared from all modern commercial fiction. The thing to do these days is to put an essentially faceless character who could be anybody into a situation where the reader will wonder how he would feel in those circumstances. The reader superimposes his own character and paints in his own emotions. Even avant-garde writing has little use for characterization; it is all a prostitution of style into unintelligibility. Just try giving a character an unusual reaction to some situation, different from the norm.

¹ Of course. -- Editor.

The story will get bounced as "unreal."² Of course, somewhere, there is a human being who will respond to any situation with any known human emotion, from joy on hearing of a mother's death to an orgasm over being disemboweled. As Sturgeon pointed out some years ago, there are some men who will throw the woman at the electric fan, not vice versa.

As for Galaxy itself, I rather like a hefty sized magazine myself, and of course I knew that the present 50¢ price tag was inevitable for fiction magazines. Your opinion some years ago that no 128-page magazine was really worth 35¢ seems rather anti-intellectual. If we have to pay more for beer and cigarets, we should be prepared to pay more for books and magazines in better spirit. The low ebb in the sf field in general proves that I was a better prophet than I cared to be. It was ten years ago that I formulated Harmon's Law: the success of science fiction is inversely proportional to the success of actual space flight ($SF/tSPf = S$). This is based on an earlier calculation: $AWM/WWII = S$. (The success of air war magazines is inversely proportional to the reality of air war in the world.) Exceptions only test -- if not prove, in the contemporary sense -- the rule.

I suppose you heard that "Superman" committed suicide. No doubt it was the only way he could go. He used a kryptonite bullet, I presume. I wonder, though, if even as he squeezed the trigger he didn't have half a secret suspicion that the bullet would bounce? Anyway, it's too bad about George Reeves. You could almost be sure he was really a nice guy from seeing him (no doubt you have never stooped to watching the program in your life), but I wonder if he may not return to haunt the woman friend who said "Superman was as soft, helpless, and cuddlesome as a puppy dog"?

² Editors, unlike your concept of God, evidently deny individual response.--Ed.

NOTE: This "Letter from Mount Carmel" (where one may still buy a Coke for a nickel) was compiled from several letters from Harmon not originally written for publication.

THE SECRET MUSEUM OF FANKIND

9 July 47

Dear Redd:

You are a grand exalted member of FAPA. Your membership will start with the July mailing, provided I get my report in on time. If not, your mailing will be slightly delayed. It probably will be anyway, if past precedent is followed. Welcome, & I think you'll like us.

What happened to that stinky poem of mine? Rejected with jet propulsion no doubt.

Art

EXHIBIT #1. One-cent postal card from Art Widner Jr, informing me that I was accepted for FAPA membership. No return address; postmarked Quincy, Mass., July 8 [sic] 1947, 11 p.m. Gestefax Electraprint stencil from photograph of the original.