

(fapa, January, 1946)

fantasy section

beginning with a reject, admittedly; sent to probability zero and returned account of the sad death of peeze; but still, a pro reject.

untitled

I suppose every one on Earth has heard of Apollo, the brand-new planetoid added to the Solar System only last year. Already a revolution is occurring in transportation, warehousing techniques, and the like, with the use of the inverse matter from Apollo; and chemistry is starting to make undreamed-of strides from new/old cross-compounds made from its matter. For Apollo has a negative gravity; and the whole planetoid, as well as the matter composing it, falls up. Something about a wanderer from a previously-unsuspected region of space, where the gravity equation has a negative component in it somewhere-or-other. Apollo's a funny little planet all right, and one of the greatest of all attractions to space-tourists; but what with the endless number of uses for its lift-ing matter; it seems fated to an early total absorption into the mills of Earth..

But not many people know that it was solely due to the genius of one man, one Joseph Brooks, navigator on the exploration ship Absaroka, that Apollo didn't fall back into the void whence it came. And I'd like to tell you of that flash of genius of his that fixed the planetoid in a stable orbit about the sun.

History first: Apollo was thought to be an ordinary comet, lacking a tail, when it first headed sunward from outer space. But when the orbit didn't work out at all, and the velocity dropped steadily with nearness to the sun--and the crowning insult, when perihelion point was on the same side as point of entry and probable exit--they deduced the repulsion and off went the Absaroka to investigate, packed to the hypothetical gills with power cells enough to move a major planet. "Hold it in the system, if you can't do anything else" were their instructions. "Once it goes, science and technology will lose the greatest chance in history."

The chronicle of the landing and exploration was history in itself--sitting down with a half-gee blasting skywards, to hold them on the rock--the loading of all spare space with fifty minus tons of Apollo matter to hold them down--and Genius Joe, sitting comfortably on a cushion on the ceiling of his navigator's cubicle, testing orbit after orbit, finding each one useless; knowing all the while that he had to find a stable orbit for Apollo about a sun that repelled it. Tuck it between Jupiter and the sun, and be there holding it balanced between the repulsions until his beard tangles about his ankles. No soap on that to Joe--he wanted to go home sometime.

And it was then that our Joseph had his inspiration; came out to the Captain saying: "Blast it thus and thus." The Captain did; and Apollo was first deprived of its outward velocity, and then settled in a stable orbit.

But perhaps the best way of describing his discovery would be to use his own words, that gave him the Morell prize for 1967:

"Planets form orbits. You don't have to worry about speed too much--just give it a general direction and speed and it will stabilize. The planet will fall toward the sun just as fast as centrifugal force pushes it away. Now here was Apollo, being pushed away by both forces. Gravity I couldn't fix. Centrifugal force was different. So I just swung it in an orbit about the sun--going backwards."

(And now herewith, a plot outline. Turned out one day when I was holding down the midnight shift at the Weather Bureau, found time hanging heavy on my hands, and just happened to have an idea. Never developed; nothing more done to it; so rather than let it join the limbo of forgotten things, herewith resurrected is a plot outline that is my answer to Ackerman. No changes in this, naturally; just a sample of li'l Elmer jamming with himself to pass the time...

argument

Outline of plot. Should run to about 6000. Whee. sixty dollars worth, maybe. Essential element is to be a ghost-ferrying business. Hero--let's call him Harry just for the fun of it--is psychic and scooting about interplanetary space in a special-built ship. Smithsonian on Earth once sponsored an investigation which required a completely non-magnetic ship, the Lizzie S. Borden. Charting the magnetic field of Earth, it was. So again the Smithsonian builds a space ship, beautiful Susie, all plastics and copper and bronze and stuff. No iron anywhere in it, because Susie is to chart the gravitomagnetic influences in free space, and the instruments cannot be influenced by the magnetism of iron. Hmm. At the distance of Mars at closest approach--in the order of 35 million miles--his attraction gravitic is sufficient to give an acceleration of .00035 centimetres per second per second. The gravitomagnetic attraction would of necessity be much smaller. Consider the difference between the weight of a compass needle and the force which pulls it northward. Say approximately two zeros between the decimal and the first significant figure. Look into the matter of solar attraction as well, with computations--find out how much weight the dang thing actually does have. A one-gram weight on earth is pulled earthward with an attraction of 980 dynes per second. Weight one gram. This in our own circumscribed sphere of earthly attraction. If the Earth were omitted from the vicinity, and the gram were motionless relative to the alpha beta omicron coordinates, how much weight would it have sunward?

The smithsonian would be interested, sure. A chart of the magnetic fields of space at a time when conspicuous sunspots were absent--during the low part of the eleven year period--for comparison against the fields during a period of great sun spot activity. Space is big. Samples, say; just readings of the instruments at ten-degree intervals on each of eighteen parallels of latitude, at Earth's distance; plus readings on the coordinate axis at reasonable intervals of distance inward and outward, for a basis for extrapolation; second trip to settle doubtful points brought out by investigation.

Curious points, that. The magnetic field would be rather weak, but still the sun is awfully big and the auroras are an indication that it is still noticeable at this distance. Still, no iron on board. How would del Rey fit into the picture? No hemoglobin in his blood; Johnny Campbell himself conducted the checking analysis that discovered del Rey's blood is seventy per cent activated by hemocyanin. Check on the name of the hemocyanin compound. Solarite, Amazing Stories for about February of 1930. Since Johnny used it himself, it'd be a helping point. And Well's Invisible man discovered a bleach for the hemoglobin, which may have or may not have altered the hemoglobin to a non-ferrous compound. That point is acceptable and irrelevant; Harry doesn't have to be a del Rey type.

However, we've got to figure out why he is scooting around in Susie. It's easy enough to have a fellow roaming around space in ship, but explanations as to his being in the non-ferrous ship are a sine qua non, as 'twere. He could have picked it up at auction, things being as they are, or--well, why not have him conducting this very survey on the solar magnetic field during an off-spot year? He's finished the xyz and xyz' and x' y'z quadrants--must draw a picture so the quadrants will be adjacent. . . Willy Ley would have a heck of a lot of

fun figuring out an orbit for him. If this is to go to Palmer, there's no need for an orbit; he's just got a plastic cyclotron in back to furnish power, and cuts off the magnetic field and goes into free fall to take readings. Strictly incidentally, how about a bit of a sublimax when the magnets don't kick on fast enough to bring him out of a free fall when he's on the x axis and he starts to worrying--him and the ghosts along?

That doesn't matter. So he's carrying out a survey of the magnetic fields in a non-ferrous ship. Get out Rogot and investigate iron synonyms. Iron, ferrum, and such-liké.

Opening must be forceful and interesting. "What the hell," said Harry as his left eyebrow threatened to knock his toupee off if he'd been wearing a toupee, "is the matter with the fourth cyclotron in the seventh bank counting from the left?" Stinky, isn't it?

So a cyc has kicked out, and he's got to land for repairs. He's investigating the y axis for magnetic densities, and the most convenient planet on which to land for repairs is Mars. That's not so good, because of the mountains of red dust, and the danger that a bit of dust would disrupt the absolut non-ferrosity of his ship, but Harry doesn't care for to go on with a limping cyc. Mars it is. Ferrok-Shahn, capital city. That'd slant it for Planet, since Cummings always uses that for the name of the capital city. That'd slant it for Planet, since Cummings always uses that for the name of the capital. Investigate Astounding for first slant, and find a good name. . .

So he lands, and the lads pile in, him cautioning them about dust and stuff. And enter the ghosts. Bill and Jeanie and Susie and Mr. Susie and another dozen or so! Poor ghosts! You see, there is no element more earthy than iron; and a piece of iron, preferably worked into a Mogim Dovid (sp?) is wondrously effacious against spirits of all non-alcoholic varieties. Conversation. Bill and Jeanie as spokesman implore him to carry them home. They've been stranded here on Mars for so long, and the red dust of ferric oxide is sheer torture--and the Martians' Scientists still wonder about the shape of the Martians, the last having died years before Mark Carew took off on his first journey. But Bill and Jeanie have met the ghosts--why not? The planet is packed with them--and they are unbearable. Gentle enough in their way, but their shapes! Really, it just isn't being done this year--to a little green dog with shaggy spots it shouldn't happen yet! No; life on Mars is unbearable to Bill and Jeanie, and they've got to return to Earth. There are hundreds and hundreds of ghosts on Mars, but Susie will only hold two dozen close packed; Harry will lose his privacy, but won't he please, please take them on board? They wouldn't have to beg like this, only an ordinary ship was made of iron and the torture would be unbearable. . . even the Martians were better than that. And here comes Harry in Susie, just made to order. . . .

Poor Harry. He felt sorry for them, took the stipulated two dozen on board, saw the assembled six and a half hundred gathered to wave farewell--and saw the octoplasmic shapes of the two Martians that gently came up. He almost tried to take off without first building up a magnetic field in the cycs. . . .

Now look, kids. I didn't mind the half-dozen you packed in the refrigerator. I wish you'd get Mr. H. W. Whaackenblacken out of there, tho--why did he have to die in such a messy way? I lose all my appetite when I see the pieces neatly hanging on hooks. And it didn't matter when another half-dozen of you slept in my bedroom. You don't take up any corporeal space, and I should thank you for making them all males. But what the high holy holl do you mean by putting the girl in the bathroom closet?"

Girl? No girl. . . pardon me, please." And bill vanished, to reappear a minute

later. "Sorry Harry. That's not one of us. If you'd felt her, you'd have seen that she was still living."

So Harry pranced merrily off. It was a girl. Stowaway. That is if it's to be slanted for Palmer--if all the girls that had stowed away with the hero and later married him were laid end to end, there'd be a lovely highway from here to Ziff Davis office in the Transportation building. I believe that Campbell would prefer it without the stowaway; but that's neither here nor there.

Ending. The ghosts thank Harry prettily for taking him home, and vanish. Harry curses himself out for losing so much time on the survey--so much to be completed before the next sunspot activity. Bill appears suddenly at his side. Harry is startled. Bill tells all about his poor companions on Mars, and wants them too. Harry explodes in six and a quarter languages. Bill offers to pay for it--after all, Kidd's treasure is still unfound, and there's bound to be a lot more. So Bill and Jeanie (who joined him a shade (hoh hoh) later, tell Harry that so it shall be; they find the treasures, he builds a fleet to ferry the rest of the poor ghosties back to Home.

Best ending there. If the stowaway is written in, she sneaks herself into Harry's arms, and mumbles Darling as the fadeout comes. Rejection does not necessarily imply lack of merit. . . so what? And so if you were to travel across space to Mars today, you'd find a curious fleet indeed. A fleet of shiny plastic, luxurious cabins, gymnasiums and handballs for the poltergeist--what's plural thereof?--going to Mars empty and returning the same way--at least, so it appears to the pilots, who mutter to themselves about the insanity of the boss. .

Weaknesses. No action. Palmer of amazing likes slapstick humour and in particular that which associates itself with loss of dignity. Girl unnecessary. No reason for stowing away. Does nothing to advance story in unfoldment. Doesn't appear until story half over. No action. Campbell knows about del Rey's curious--impossible--blood; no other docs. But the hero need not necessarily have hemocyanin for blood, so that's about all right.

Best ending of tale before work of building fleet, when way is seen clear. Slight prologue and ending, preferably identical and in italics--wouldn't that be fun? Let's see. . . opening.

"The Earth-Mars route is used by a strange assortment of ships indeed. Spherical water-carriers, sleek shiny passenger liners, squat and powerful freighters, one-man pleasure ships. But the strangest are the red-plastic ships of the Arthame line, that go empty and return empty. . . .

"If you were to take the luxury liner Titania to Mars today, you would probably pass a red-plastic ship on route. And if you were sufficiently curious to ask the purser about them, he'd mutter something about insanity and empty cabins and unused gymnasiums and a crew without passengers and turn away hastily. No. Repeat the opening in italics for a closure. Period.

To bad there's no villain. Palmer's been using my name--perdue--as villain in his villian. A before i. as villain in his magazine for the last three issues, and it'd be nice to call him Pelmer or something.

January 23, 1946.

Which beginneth the amateru press association section...

Today, I got my typewriter out of hook. Today, I can read the latest mailing for the first time, and with typewriter open and paperpre-inserted, can do a muchly belated mimeo'ed issue of Elmurmurings...

FANTASY AMATEUR. Amendment to bond secretary-treasurer, and make him of legal age. Hm. No. OK to make him of legal age. Yes on dues-increase.

Interlude for preparation of gin bottle.

FANTASY JACKPOT. I cannot comment. There is a lovely, an exquisite, story in it--the Stone. And I should love to read the complete, as-written, version. Ordinary fan fiction is difficult to read; this is not.

A TALE OF THE EVANS. "... (Salt Lake City)... is the cleanest and most lovely city I have ever seen." This says ~~Kirk~~ Evans. I have spent three days in said city, and say it is among the foulest I've ever been in. This says Elmer. What say you laddies? And there is nothing anywhere to compare with either Pocatello, Idaho, or Loveland, Colorado--unless maybe Colorado Springs.

Poetry department.

Wherein Elmer leans back and muses, sermonizing vaguely to himself the while, on maunderings and beauty and on the function of sound... should one enter into a mental dythramb on the way the rhythms of the spoken word influence the heart beat? Or should I quote a classic blues verse (the sixteen bar Yazoo blues form, you connoisseurs, and not the garden variety of twelve-in-a-turn-and-live-forever from the thirty-year-old John Henry Blues? Laney would love it, I know. I like Laney. He's got no carefully-developed, artificially-nurtured, "taste." He likes the stuff that is righteous and the stuff that jumps. Here you is, Laney, just for you:

Now woman you know I stopped you from bustin' them suds,
I taken your bare feet out of paddlin' in the mud--
That dress that you was wearin' was awful thin
I thought I'd rent a house just to put you in
Where you could go on, two-timin' me again.

That is what lil' Elmer calls poetry. Folk poetry, if you must hang a label on it. It's accurate, it's true, it's sincere; it's not a rose-coloured picture of life as you want it, but an upright facing of truth as you see it, and an acceptance of the most pragmatic way out--that of profiting from one's own state of cuckoldry. Cu ne?

TIMEBINDER. Evans shows muddled thinking when he says, approximately, I had never thought that atheism could also believe in pacifism or conscientious objection. Hells bells, old boy! Here's your enemy. He's human; enjoys his beer or his sake or his chianti; would like to perpetuate his own self in a child; he loves--and the child would be half him and half his beloved--a perfect fusion that he can attain but imperfectly, as in a glass darkly... there's your enemy.

A man. And there you have him, yours to kill by a trigger pressure.

OK. So the christian says what the hell, he'll just sleep a while and then rise and walk again under the bright and shining peace of our father which guideth us all. The athaist says a pressure on this little trigger here and that life is gone. There's nothing more. The enjoyment of laughter and the sound of trumpets and the hopeful happy dreams of what-might-be all gone...not for just a sleep, but forever and ever and ever.

Which will shoot first, Mr. Evans?

And which will feel the greater remorse? Which will be more likely to be conchie?

Consider Ackerman. A militant athoist. Pop this question to him sometime...

BROW ING. Ah! That Webster article again proves, methinks, that the average Britisher stands gigantic when compared with the average American--and Doug, one of my favorite overseas lads, outshines anything FAPA has seen in many a moon.

FAN-DANGO. Oppose raising membership at this time. Keep the waiting list, but doon't keep it too long. Consider. If someone doesn't fulfil activity requirements, out he goes. Well, and if there is no waiting list? He reapplies and rejoins. No penalty. Doesn't even miss a mailing. But if the waiting list is of such size that he must skip a couple of mailings, there's the activity inducement. And that would otherwise be lacking.

Jazz department.

I do not set myself up as an authority. Neither does Lancy. I remember one time listening to a beat-up copy of Ida by Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, on which Adrian Rollini takes the second best chorus of his whole damn career, and audibly wondering what combination of instruments was used to produce such a round, full tone. So I ain't too good. I know what's good--and on January 13, was held here in this youse the greatest piano session held anywhere during the past two years, when me and my boy Bobbie and my boy Syd (a character who used to be a simultaneous shizophreniac) played eighty consecutive choruses of five-chorus rotation blues piano, sometimes duet, sometimes, trio, occasionally a half a chorus of solo; but always jumping and the besta in the westa. A transcription of that, I would love to have...

For my money, New Orleans Memories, an album of Jelly Roll Morton playing piano and singing, is the greatest ever recorded and assembled under one cover. And in that album, Mamie's Blues even crowds West End Blues for best jass record of all time.

Sincere.

Moving.

And humble.

So the Laney prefers Bigard on Lulu's Mood to any side by Goodman? Christ, man,

have you ever heard the Blues in Your and My Flat? Greatest thing Benny ever made; most relaxed record ever made.

And for gawd's sake, why the enthusiasm for one Wingy Mannone? I met him, and heard him in person, and was not impressed. That was one Sunday afternoon when I was invited out to the Streets of Paris for a "Jam Session" in which Wingy participated. Oh well, maybe I'm prejudiced. I shook his (own) hand. I did not sit in. My date was there (and she was the reason I was invited) and Wingy refused to play with her, saying that no woman could ever have the New Orleans feel and he was going to have his very own boy Zutty Singleton and nobody else. That made me quite miffed. But that has nothing to do with Wingy and his playing; I just never have managed to get my kicks therefrom. For what has Wingy Mannone got that Louis hasn't got ten times more of?

MILTY. Jeez, it's wonderful to hear from Milty again. My favorite fan. Not only is there a Milty's Mag, but also a bit in Timebinder. When he comes back, there will be long beautiful discussions (his wife permitting) and reminiscences and memories and comparisons between the atmosphere of the Montmartre and the Sand Barand Fifth Street and Stamps-on-the-Delaware and the Purity Restaurant and A street and all those wonderful wonderful things that happened...do you mind, Milty, if I dedicate this issue to you?

Not one, but two Milty's Mags! My cup of joy runneth over...betcha I can guess what is space seven and the Pompeii souvenir, betcha. Why the hell didn't you get me one, you rascal?

INSPIRATION. Sure got a lot of kicks from the celestial clock concept.

LIGHT. Cut out the interpolations in the reader's section. It stinks. One letter, two thirds is Crutch and one third is letter. Pile all your comments up at the rear. Or write an intelligent answer. Half the gag lines aren't worth putting on paper anyway. And I speak as a conservative.

VOICE. Gad, and Crutch finally did it. Turned out a magazine that I read, and enjoyed reading. Decided to take the beam from his own eye before removing the mote from us others. Cancel comments in re Light, old boy; Voice makes up for it.

Of course, I disagree with one or two points--consider the all-out acceptance of the crystal pickup, for instance.

Let's take a hypothetical gander at my own record player, for instance. Two turntables, one portable, the other separately and permanently mounted. On the portable, a one-ounce pressure sapphire point crystal pickup, and a recording head. On the permanent, two pickups, both crystal; one with adjustable needle pressure and with point swinging in an arc that transects the turntable center; sixteen inch. The other, so-called true tracking, mounted so that the extended arc will be about an inch and a quarter beyond center; one and three-quarter needle pressure.

Both tables dual-speed; the permanent one also governor controlled to give an adjustable speed.

Amplifier, twenty watts. Two twelve-inch speakers, in separate corners.

Projected improvements, in order:

Magnetic head, variable pressure, also to be installed on the permanent turntable. You didn't tell the laddies and lassies about what heat and/or humidity does to crystals, did you? Or how the distortion builds in geometric progression on a crystal with heat increase?

Second. A record-reproducing amplifier, twenty watt. There are some beauties-- frequency response within a half decibel from 30 to 10,000 cps, with a measurable output in the 15,000 cps range.

Then a pair of speakers--methinks an eighteen-inch auditorium speaker, and a fifteen inch bass-reflex, in individual cabinets, should be a big improvement over the present two. (The present pair, war-models, have a high hum level.)

And then, maybe a good-looking radio tuner, to listen to Fred Allen on. Don't know whether it'd be worth the expense, tho, just for Fred...

This issue, Les, best output I've ever read from you. Congratulations.

HORIZONS. I am fascinated with the list of things prohibited by the censorship code. When, oh when, will it be possible to publish that list???

READER & COLLECTOR. Yoicks, hulloa, Buck Koenig rides again! After that long, long interim during which we were reader and collectorless, now it looks like it is with us again for good...and li'l Elmer's joy is boundless. You're right, Buck; there must be fantasy in the mags. I have erred in the past. I hope not to again.

FANTAST'S FOLLY. Lovely round-robin tale. I enjoyed the reading thereof. .

SUS PRO. I always enjoy reading this.

ALLEGORY. Far and away the best thing in the whole mailing.

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