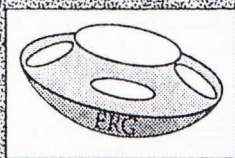
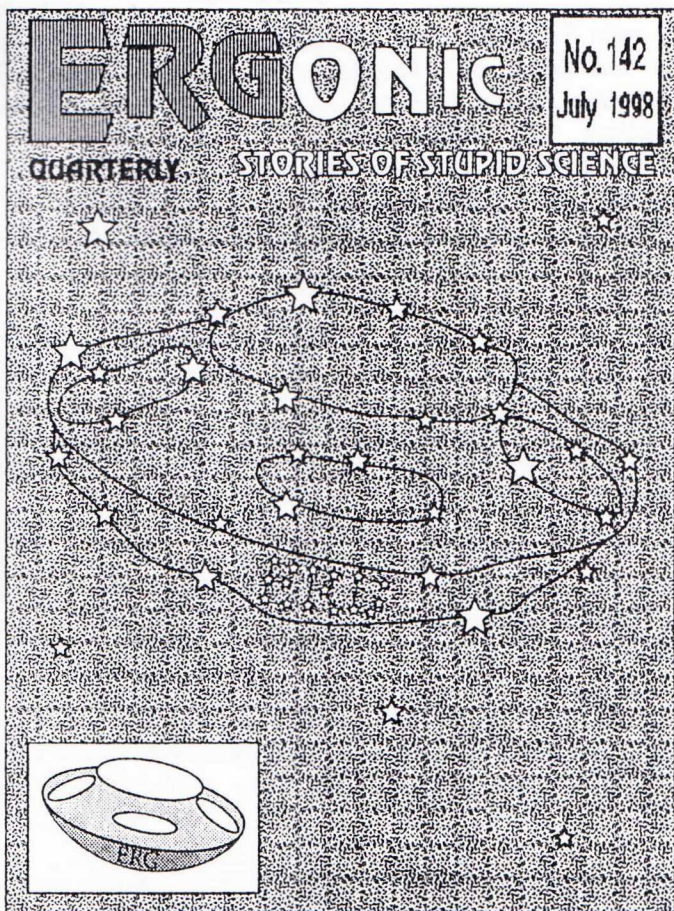


ERGONIC

No. 142
July 1998

QUARTERLY STORIES OF STUPID SCIENCE



ERG.142

QUARTERLY

The main illo on the cover of this issue was drawn by Sheryl Birkenhead, while I added the border using Wingdings. We also have Ken

Slater snatching time away from his revival of OPERATION FANTAST - and with no expense spared, I hired a time machine, nipped back to the fifties and returned with Penelope Fandergast (NOT me, I hasten to add) who has written a column or three for ERG.

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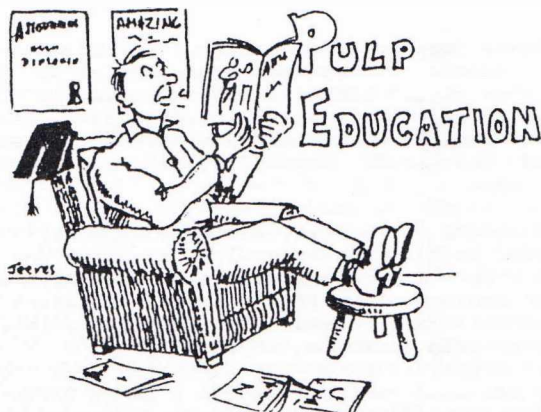


If you enjoyed this issue, you can get the next by sending a LOC, but sadly, for some of you regular 'silent readers', if you forget this little chore I'm afraid this will be your last issue.. Solution, LOC away. Anyone interested in buying SF, just send me a SAE for paperback and hardcover lists. Oversea readers can omit the SAE, just ask. I'll also appreciate Statesiders using Commemoratives on their envelopes, or sending used old ones, as I collect American stamps, especially 'Space' issues

Shock! First off, one of my cassette recorders packed up, then my trusty reel-to-reel Philips went kaput. I tried NINE local dealers without chance of a repair, "You can't get the parts, chum". I wrote to Philips with little hope of rescue. as I was now cut off from my revered recording of Liverpool Con tapes, such as THE MARCH OF SLIME, my ERGtape masters, stacks of SF stories, Charles Chilton's SF radio plays, and many other goodies. Philips couldn't help directly, but sent a London Address. Messrs. VIDEO PRINCE, 328 Edgware Rd., LONDON WC2. They were not cheap, £22.00 for 4 small elastic belts, but their speed and care of service was superb. I can recommend 'em if you need similar help. Belts now fitted and recorder operating again.

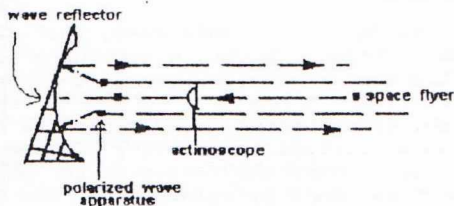
Otherwise, Progress! Already I can't buy a PC magazine without getting a 'free' CD which my venerable 386/Windows 3.1 can't access since I don't have a CD ROM drive - and in any case, I gather that CDs are now under threat from newer gadgetry, as indeed are 3.5" discs (5.25 ones vanished a while back) and digital TV will soon render your present TV (and VCR) unusable .. except to save as backup to allow you to play your old Videotapes. By this time, all sorts of worldwide archives, historical and social records will all be locked away safer than if in Fort Knox, behind that barrier of "Can't get the repair parts, chum". Is there any hope? Yes, apart from those on acid-type paper, all those fuddy-duddy old paper books, magazines and printed records will still be readable for centuries. That's where progress has got us. The question is, in which direction?

So read on, and remember, it's your comments that keep me going. Bestest

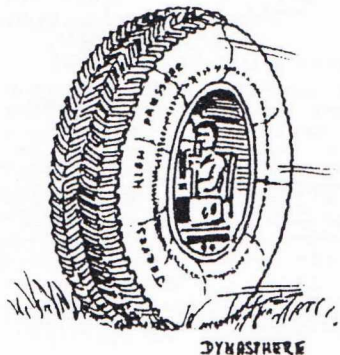


Incredible adventures were not all that one got from the pulp magazines. They often saw themselves as an unrecognised educational service. The main areas for the dissemination of large dollops of sugar-coated knowledge were the editorials, science

articles and quizzes, plus of course, whatever could be put across in the stories. Gernsback in *WONDER*, T. O'Connor Sloane in *AMAZING* and J.W.Campbell in *ASTOUNDING* were fond of using their editorials as platforms from which to air their wisdom. Hugo Gernsback tended to be very freewheeling in his forecasts of future trends and inventions, but he could be pretty accurate. In his 'RALPH 24C41+' (Ralph to foresee for one), the story was dull and pedantic, but he did forecast details of radio, TV and radar, many years before they were invented. I quote, "A pulsating, polarised ether wave, if directed on a metal object can be reflected in the same manner as a light ray is reflected .. directed towards space .. the waves would take a direction shown in the diagram. Sooner or later these waves would strike a space flyer .. and would be reflected back to the sending apparatus. Here they would fall on the 'Actinoscope', which records only reflected rays. .. From the intensity and elapsed time of the reflected impulses, the distance between the Earth and the flyer can be accurately and quickly calculated." That ought to invalidate any patents on radar. Mark you, he wasn't always so accurate. On an earlier page he mentioned a plaque to 'Pete', the last horse to die in harness on the streets of New York .. in 2096AD!



But Hugo did not speculate alone. It was an era of exciting speculations on such things as mid-ocean platforms designed to allow the short-range aircraft of the day to land and refuel halfway across the Atlantic. Moon rockets and robots were all fodder for magazines - and not just in the SF pulps. *MODERN MECHANIX* and *MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED* had such items in most issues. In the real world, weird inventions abounded such as the 'Dynasphere' which housed driver, passenger and engine within its hub. I have a newspaper picture of it on an outing and I gather control was a problem as one driver landed it in a nearby river.



Inventors with Jesus complexes were always coming up with inflated shoes for walking on water. Others made nasty messes at the bases of high buildings when their birdlike wings refused to flap properly. Spring heeled shoes were to lead to high-jump records, noses could be straightened or dimples installed by sleeping in a sort of 'scold's bridle' around the head. Naturally, perpetual motion machines were invented every week.

But back to SF. In those early days, writers, especially in the Gernsback magazines, tended to halt the story line to allow one of the characters to serve up a brief science essay on some abstruse topic. Often, the scientist would explain things to his assistant or the hero would tell his moronic girl friend. Sometimes, the lesson was included by way of an asterisked footnote, thus:-

.... as the bearded old scientist threw the switch on the huge multiple singlescope, there was a deafening crash as a large electric spark shot from the strange device, momentarily illuminating the hawknosed features of Professor Foofostein as he bent over the controls. "Feathered fornication"* he exclaimed in surprise".

Following the guidance of the asterisk led the reader to a chunk of scientific explanation tucked away at the foot of the page, thus:-

**Professor Foofostein is of course referring to the recent investigations into the nocturnal activities of certain birds in the jungles of Bongovia as described by Messrs. Schlapp and Tikkul. (Proceedings of the Sexological Association 1801 AD.*

All very edifying. Note also, that switches were never 'switched' but always 'thrown', a very dangerous practice which no doubt accounted for the fact that all scientists wore protective spectacles.

Apart from stories, many magazines had 'Science Quizzes' consisting of a score or so questions, the answers to which were to be found by reading the relevant page of a particular yarn. WONDER had the tidy habit of packaging the answers neatly in one spot, whereas AMAZING believed in making you work your way through college. After asking you, "Which terrestrial plant is a prolific source of Slobbovastian Iodide?" you would be told to turn to page 'xx' then plough through the whole of 'The Creeping Green Perils of Pongtutti' in order to find the answer. This not only left you more confused than ever, but gave you a deep-seated mistrust of any weed over six inches in height.



"... A MISTRUST OF ANY WEED "

In addition to the quizzes, there were the regular science articles which ranged widely on every conceivable topic from Tesseract to Topology, Astronomy, Biology, Engineering, inventions real, projected and downright impossible. These had an interesting side benefit. During the post-war austerity years when spending dollars on American magazines was strictly limited, I wrote asking for a permit to renew my subscription to ASTOUNDING. I explained that I used the articles as a basis for teaching science lessons in school.

Amazingly, the idea worked and I got my subscription renewed.

For many long years, Astounding managed to avoid any form of potted science. The nearest it came were the end of story 'fillos' which kept us up to date on such important items as 'Safe Flying In Fogs', 'A Revolutionary Airplane' and 'Robot Pilots'. Admittedly a sporadic and short-lived 'Science Forum' began in 1933 and 1934 saw Charles Fort's 'LO' appearing in serial form, but you couldn't really call that 'science' unless you walked around with a bucket over your head. Articles proper, began in 1936 with John W. Campbell's series on the Solar System - a good old pot-boiler which has stood so many encyclopedia-reading hacks well over the ages - and continues to do so.

Another crafty educational device was to allow one character to display an abysmal ignorance so that someone else could explain at great length just what was happening. The explainer was usually a bearded scientist, (scientists were always bearded, it was a sort of identification badge. They all had beautiful daughters (but seemingly, no wives). In one post-war story by Mack Reynolds the story line came to a halt four or five times while one character explained to another all about the social set-up of the world in which they had both lived all their lives. Of course, this isn't stupidity on the part of the authors, not at umpteen cents for each word.



Some writers embodied the science as an integral part of their stories. Joseph W. Skidmore wrote a series of tales about a know-it-all proton called 'Posi' and his dumb, electron girlfriend, 'Nega'. Her job was to listen while 'Posi' explained what was happening to their atom as it experienced all sorts of nasty chemical operations. 'Tubby' in a TWS series, was a pop-science addict who invariably fell asleep during lectures, then dreamed of adventures based on their theme. These had a story content of a juvenile level, both scientifically and in literary quality. John W. Campbell on the other hand, really loaded his yarns with large helpings of physical science before extrapolating the results way out of sight in all directions. But he held your interest very firmly in the process with such epics as 'The Mightiest Machine' and a series detailing the Doc Smith emulating, adventures of Arcot, Morey and Wade. Another Campbell series ran in THRILLING WONDER and saw the two space explorers, Penton and Blake run into sundry troubles on each world they visited.

STARTLING STORIES really heaped up the education. Quoting entirely from memory (and the July 1939 issue before me), this was what you got. A Guest Editorial by Willy Ley on unexplored areas of the world. A cartoon-strip story on the life of Leonardo da Vinci. 'Thumbnail Sketches Of Great Moments In Scientists' Lives'. The 'Science Question Box' gave both questions and their answers. You also got a 'Scientific Crossword Puzzle'. All this plus readers' letters and 'Meet The Author' a forerunner to Jay Kay Klein's series in Analog.

All this easily administered information should have produced a generation of prodigies, but speaking for myself, I had a total lack of interest in archaeology, biology and zoology. My

interests centred on stories and articles concerning astronomy, mathematics and physics. After meeting references to Einstein's relativity, the Michelson-Morley ether drift experiments, the Lorenz-Fitzgerald Contraction Theory, and sundry other fascinating concepts, I plowed through library books to find out more. The SF magazines gave me an interest and a direction which first took me into work in a steel analysis laboratory then six years as a Wireless Mechanic in the RAF. On demob, I took four years of evening classes in mathematics and after a teacher's training course, to 32 years teaching in a comprehensive school. The pulps are often tagged as escapist rubbish, but the interests sparked by SF have stayed with me and enriched my life.

How times change. Science articles are now way over my head or on topics which fail to arouse my interest. As for the stories, nowadays, I can seldom remember what one was about barely an hour after reading it. Modern SF is too conscious of its 'image'. Heroes, or more preferably, heroines should be black, homosexual or lesbian. Preferably they should have some weakness or disability, live in urban squalor, spout sexual equality, save whales, rain forests and the ecosphere, defeat pollution, fight big business, take drugs and do all this in a down-beat way. After ploughing through a few hundred words of this dreck the story can then fade into oblivion with all threads and ending totally unresolved. I gather this is the modern ethic and is called 'literary standard' and that SF is now mainstream and legitimate. In the process, the Sense of Wonder has gone.

The 'artwork' alongside these message-ridden 'stories' no longer depicts an incident in the tale - how could it, there are no incidents, only emotions and chunks of rather pointless dialogue. Instead of scene-setters, we get heavily cross-hatched and gloomy splodges along with numerous close-ups of faces, frequently gazing at a computer screen and which could be applied to almost any story published in the past year. Before I finally gave up on Analog, an 'artist' called Aulisio was the chief perpetrator of this style. I defy anyone to look at one of her illustrations and envisage any incident in the story.

Perhaps it is a good thing that brave spacemen no longer tread the swamps of Venus, breathe the thin air of Mars, make the first landing on the Moon or fight off the incredibly repulsive aliens. The march of science has stopped all that sort of rubbish because it wasn't good for us. Gone are the mad scientists and their beards, vanished are the collage-boy heroes along with the moon rockets built in the back yard. No more does Hawk Carse pursue the sinister Ku Sui from planet to planet or Lensman Kinnison fight the evil Boskone with weapons of ever escalating potency.. The universe is seldom faced with extinction by some terrible peril and the dangers threatening Earth are usually nuclear war, worldwide pollution, vanishing whales, or total civil anarchy. All of which may be realistic, but it makes for damned poor entertainment. As Goldwyn is reputed to have said, "When I want a message, I'll call Western Union".

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The next instalment will reveal the thrilling world of 'The Ads'
Don't miss it.

The Old Mill Stream -- A Column of City Life

By Penelope Fandergaste

If I might be permitted to hi-jack a term from the world of aviation, has anyone noticed the way a word used and beloved by us these past few decades has been hi-jacked by the world at large?

Yes, I refer to the word "fanzines".

First of all I have to confess to being ignorant of the word's first use. The Dick Eney masterwork, Fancylopedia II, fails to mention the word's initial origin (can an origin be other than initial?), but the main concern is that we all know what the word means. Don't we?

Even when the description these days has been, well, hi-jacked if you like by all fields of amateur publishing. There are music fanzines, comicbook collector fanzines and sports fanzines of every description and I won't bore you with the lengthy list (I've spotted fifteen so far). For all I know there may also be fanzines for the fields of farming (fields, haha!), train spotting and even hog tying.

To all of these I don't object at all.

But, folks, we now have the birth of an instant anachronism. Only last week I pricked up my eyes and opened my ears (you can tell I was dozing) at what was happening before me on the small screen.

The scene was Hollywood. The story was the making of some silent screen epic. Now I didn't notice at the time what the programme was that I was... ah, watching. And I couldn't look it up in the newspaper because... well, that's beside the point (and in any case I've forgotten). Can it have been The Player because that's not set in the silent movie days.

"Don't worry about the publicity," said some portly gent who virtually filled the screen. "I'll see that the story gets into all the fanzines."

No wonder I sat up and took notice.

All the fanzines!

All the magazines published for the fans. Professional publications for the movie fans. There are fanzines out there, Jim, but not as we know them

Yep, an instant anachronism. Pcha!

The TEA PARTY



Women are always seeking equality with men, but seldom mention the cases where they trample them into the ground. Of all the indignities and nerve-shattering chores which women love to inflict upon men, surely one of the worst is to take them to an afternoon tea-party. This sadistic enterprise begins innocently enough when a wife or girl friend says seemingly casually, "Oh, we've been invited to tea at Eermintrude's this afternoon." Note how cunningly this

bombshell is slipped into the conversation. No trace of, "Would you like to go...", and of course by leaving the announcement until the very last minute it's too late to say, "Oh I was going to plough the North forty or dismantle the thermostat on the electric toothbrush. No, the victim is caught and the only thing to do is submit gracefully.

Time fugits merrily along and eventually the poor unsuspecting male follows meekly to the killing grounds at the appointed time. After a fulsome greeting as two females kiss empty air over each other's shoulders, Ermintrude whips away your coat to some hidden lair, thus ensuring that you can't make a sneaky escape over the back fence whilst nobody is looking. You are then ushered into the drawing room and placed on a seat. This is hazard number one. You are either plonked on an upright, hard-backed chair with all the comfort of a clapped-out Inquisition-surplus rack or buried in a seemingly bottomless settee from which escape will require a block and tackle. The former gives you acute back ache, the latter holds you immovable. Either way you are there for the duration.

For the first two or three hours the conversation is sparkling; topics covered include the weather, do we have too much of it?, should we have more?, last night's telly, how cold or warm it was, is, and will be, last week's telly, next week's weather forecast, favourite telly programs of the past, and so on.

Sooner or later, someone will produce a folder of photographs, whereupon a general rustling and foraging in the hidden depths of sundry handbags will produce a further supply. Inevitably there will be twenty or thirty photographs of babies being cuddled by various individuals, recognisable only by their chins, it being deemed unessential to displaying the infant. For that matter, babies all look the same when hidden beneath woolly hats and buried beneath several yards of blankets from the nose down. Almost certainly, one intrepid traveller will produce a few reams of holiday photos accompanied by a running commentary such as, "Our favourite cafe was round the corner past that rubbish skip", or "Fuji Yama is just behind that hotel."

All fascinating stuff, interrupted only by the arrival of a second hazard. The hostess hands you a plate so highly polished that nothing will stay on it without a dab of glue. Along with it comes a folded morsel of coloured paper called a serviette and a knife. Ghu knows why you want the latter as when food finally arrives it needs no cutting but is in minute chunks which any self-respecting male could scoff in one bite.

After some skilful manipulation you have just managed to clamp the serviette safely between knife and plate in order to get a free hand, when it is immediately taken up by the arrival of a cup, saucer and tiny spoon. Worse is to come, before you can put anything down on the floor, Ermintrude half fills your tea cup with a watery liquid known as 'tea'. You are only given half a cup to make sure there's enough left in the pot to go round. In the family, we call this a 'Mavis cup', as a friend of that name invented the system. It's at this point you decide to give up sugar in tea as balancing all your trunklements whilst spooning up several molecules in that miniscule spoon would require the balancing skill of a juggler. Women are different, they have a built-in sexual advantage over mere males. They have laps on which to put things. Men have no such natural shelving built-in and must perforce juggle everything as best they may.

You are now firmly trapped, buried in the depths of the sofa and with both hands full. Worse is to come, your hostess comes by with a plate of tiny sandwiches filled with unmentionable substances. "Ah, your hands are full, let me serve you", and she gleefully deposits two bites worth of sandwich on to your plate. The only thing to do is precariously balance (balance precariously??) cup and saucer on one knee, quickly take two swallows of sandwich and retrieve the tea-cup. If you are fast enough, it can be done. Don't gloat though, seeing your empty plate Ermintrude will immediately shove a couple of buns on it. These usually consist of a piece of sponge rubber coated with a very thin layer of chocolate, or alternatively, you can expect a small bun made from shredded cardboard and topped with half a cocktail cherry. Repeat your skilful cup balancing trick, close your eyes, think of England and pretend you simply drool over sponge rubber and shredded cardboard - you must avoid actually doing so as it would be considered unsporting. Drinking a bit of the 'tea' might help at this stage.

Survive these delights and feel joy as your plate and knife are removed. Short-lived joy, as you are immediately lumbered with a dish of 'fruit salad' or a 'sherry trifle' made from whatever was left over from Christmas and thriftily saved in the 'freezer'. Eventually, all the debris is removed and you sit back in near-comfort to enjoy the scintillating action-replay discussion of the weather, are we getting enough? Should suicide be made a capital crime punishable by the death penalty? or Are mini-skirts suitable for octogenarians? and of course, past highlights of television

Eventually the session comes to an end, your coat is reluctantly returned and farewells said, along with profuse thanks for such a lovely tea party. All is well, is it heck! Just as you make your escape some brain-damaged idiot says, "it was such fun, you must all come round to my house next week", and your wife (or girl-friend) says "Yes please"

I told you women were different.

GENERAL CHUNTERING

Ken F. Slater

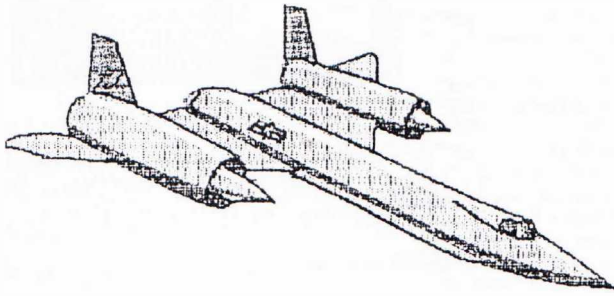
I had the usual phone call from Terry – found it on the answering machine – "Can I have your page for ERG yesterday" or something like that. I don't seem to have any feedback from the April Chuntering and therefore this is from cold. Nationality. When I was young I thought of myself as "English", from somewhere around 1940 I thought of myself as "British"; the tribal differences were melted away (I along with many other Londoners in my first unit celebrated "Christmas"; most of the NCO's and a fair number of the squaddies came from way up North and thought "Hogmanay" was the prime time. Then there was that strange bunch who said that the year's best holiday was "Wakes Week". That took explaining to both the other factions). But we were all belonged inside one geographical area, and we all felt we had some connection to a vaster and very mixed collection that was an "Empire". We even included a very alien chap in the cookhouse who answered to "Taffy" as in the same national group. By the by, the major commanding the unit had been born a White Russian, had served in the British Navy and the British Army in 1917 and 1918, was as staunchly British as you'd find anywhere, and called the company "my poys". So I saw the demolition of that empire under the guidance of Winston Churchill after the end of WW2, and now it looks as if I shall see the demolition of the Union with the hand of Tony Blair on the steering lever. Right, back to (I think) 1947 and the division and self-rule provision of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan and India, and an ACI (Army Council Instruction – the day-to-day administration documents which governed the Army) dealing with nationality of serving members of the Army, in view of the new state of affairs. Looking up from a study of this a pale-skinned, blonde-haired major cries in a voice filled with equal parts of astonishment and anguish: "I'm a bloody Pakistani!" With that in mind, I was very sure that, when it was required, I registered both Michael's and Susie's births with the British Consul in Hamburg, quite apart from the required "casualty" entries in the Army's Part 2 orders. But – those entries were only acceptable as "British"; you could not specify "Irish", "Scottish", "Cornish", "Lancastrian" or any other of the wide variety of tribal divisions which exist in our geographical Union of Britain. I gather the situation is still unchanged: my neighbour has two grandchildren born in Hong Kong, both labelled "British", during the last ten years. They (and their parents) come "home" for a few weeks each year; but mostly they live in Hong Kong. I should imagine that this situation or a variant of it is multiplied by a large factor: probably running into hundreds of thousands. Come we divide up the island(s), who makes the decisions? And will individuals get any say?

My next sub-vocal muttering came, very indirectly, because of the horrific train crash in Germany. I (used to) know Hanover quite well, and (some of) the people who ran the train service. Back then they seemed to be imbued with an "esprit de corps" which may well have survived the fifty years that have passed, and I hope that the enquiry (one assumes that there will be one) doesn't land the blame on the working stiffs – unless it belongs there, of course. But the recent event took my mind back to 1948 when I was in Lehrte, Celle, and other places in that area. And I particularly thought of November 1948, and a night in the Ratskeller at Lehrte. If some of the ideas that were being tossed around by a small group of British officers and German civilians (including the Ratskellermeister) had come true, the world today would be a vastly different place. If you have not caught on yet, 1948 was the year Prince Charles was born. And the Germans were hailing a new prince for the House of Hanover, and talking of history that most of the British just did not know. That, for example, Britain and Hanover (the "state", not just the town) had been closely linked until 1837, when Queen Victoria came to the British throne; Hanoverian law did not allow for female succession, and hence the "personal union" lapsed. In that Ratskeller at that time any move to install the newborn Prince as "Elector" of Hannover would have been greeted with joy. I have no idea whether the feeling was similar over the rest of Lower Saxony, or even over Land Hanover – or anywhere outside that bar. But just supposing it had been...

The ports of Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven and Hamburg allow good access to Britain (Harwich has regular services to the latter two, I think). Any alternative history writer reading this? And if you are wondering what the first part of this Chunter had to do with sf, think of the problems upcoming. Then try and solve them. Preferably without bloodshed. KFS (British)

Blackbird

In 1957, when Soviet radar proved capable of detecting the high-flying U-2 spy plane, a proposal was made for its successor - capable of greater speed and a higher altitude. Two companies, General Dynamics and Lockheed worked on the concept and various designs and mock-ups were created before Lockheed got the contract in 1959. Work began on what was then, the A-12. Many problems had to be solved - including fuel leaks, engine troubles, flight instability and contaminated titanium which constituted a large proportion of the aircraft's structure in order to withstand temperatures of up to 600 °F or down to well-below zero.



Powered by Pratt & Whitney turbojets, the first aircraft flew in 1962, almost three years after the initial proposal. It was 102 feet long, had a 57 foot span, could fly at Mach 3.2 and reach an altitude of around 85,000 feet with a range of 4,100 miles. Designed as a long-range interceptor

reconnaissance aeroplane, the YF-12 version had three bomb bays and carried several Hughes AIM-47A missiles. A bomber version, the RB-12 was mooted, but never materialised.

It wasn't long before proposals were made to increase the already spectacular performance. This led to the development of the SR-71, a slightly longer aircraft with extended chines from wing to nose, but otherwise almost identical in appearance to the A-12. The first machine flew in 1964 and carried no armament, the SR-71 was a purely reconnaissance plane carrying a hefty load of surveillance equipment.

Records soon began to tumble. SR-71s set a speed record of 2193mph, a sustained height record of 85,000feet and flew a non-stop, 15,000 mile mission in 10.5 hours. An absolute height of more than 90,000ft and regular speeds of Mach 3.2 were achieved and about 30 built before the Blackbirds went into storage in 1968. Some aircraft were revived during the eighties and again mothballed in 1988. The latest revival saw one SR-71 revived and a new crew trained for a 'Red Flag' exercise on the Nellis range. Further usage hovers in the balance for an aircraft which is still a legend.

Science Fiction DIGEST

S.F.DIGEST, undated first appeared in 1954, digest-sized, priced at 35c, edited by Chester Whitehorn and publishing reprints from sundry magazines. The first issue held 4 articles, cartoons, fillos and 12 stories.

STORIES

THE MITR Jack Vance Lone woman on a world of beetles is raped by visiting spacemen.

THE FIRST Kris Neville Mutated monster escapes and explores its environment.

HAUNTED ATOMS A.E.VanVogt A far future couple inherit a 'haunted' house built on the site of a buried and forgotten A-plant. The problem is solved, and the Uranium sold.

DWELLERS IN THE DUST Forrest J.Ackerman Time travellers find that they can't change the past.

ENTRANCE EXAM E.C.Tubb Captured spacemen are faced with an alien intelligence test.

THE RAT S.Fowler Wright Doctore discovers immortality serum.

Gallie's House Thelma D.Hamm Child has imaginary playmate - in world destroyed by bomb.

SPACE PLATFORM X2204C DOES NOT ANSWER John Norment. Because opposing fighters have paralysed each other.

TIME CHECK FOR CONTROL Robert Sheckler Guarding against alien mind takeover.

THE RIVER L.Major Reynolds Man travelling endlessly down River Of Life

PRECEDENT Charles Gray Spaceship stowaway and the Cold Equations

MIMIC Donald A.Wollheim Alien insects camouflaged as men.

THE CLIMATE H.M.Mack Changes in the weather.

ARTICLES

WILL YOUR CHILD VISIT THE MOON Jack Cluett speculates on future space progress.

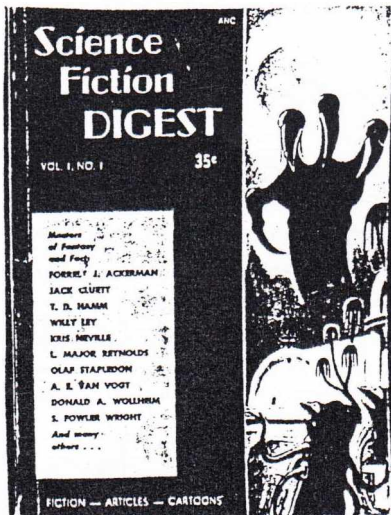
SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST Wallace Cloud Science news snippets

INTERPLANETARY MAN Olaf Stapledon If we can't live on the planets we must change to fit them.

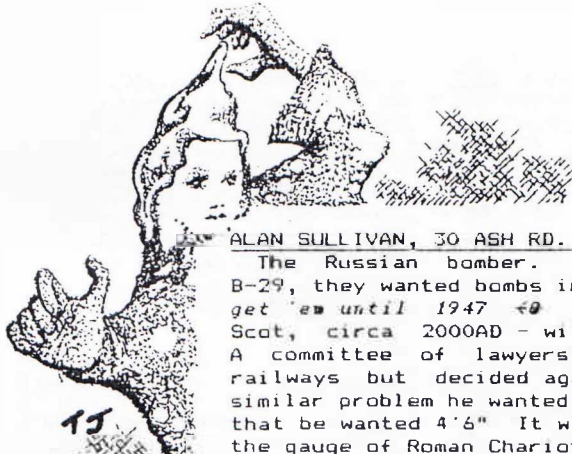
SERENDIPITY Joe Callanan Unusual science discoveries

YOUR LIFE IN 1977 Willy Ley Forecasts of things to come.

There was also a come-on by the editor for an esp experiment in which readers had to discover what record he was playing on a certain date. SFD only saw two issues, a pity as it was a good idea and gave good value for money.



Letters



ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL
 The Russian bomber. Of course they copied the B-29, they wanted bombs in a hurry. \Rightarrow They didn't get 'em until 1947 \leftarrow Cover, presumably Royal Scot, circa 2000AD - with all rails linear motored. A committee of lawyers was convened to discuss railways but decided against linears. Brunel had a similar problem he wanted a 7'6" track, but powers that be wanted 4'6". It was accepted because that was the gauge of Roman Chariot wheels!

\Rightarrow And now to Alan Burns who makes almost identical comments - parallel time-track? ESP? or what? \leftarrow
ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, WALLSEND, KING'S RD. STH. N.TYNESIDE NE29 7RE
 The cover of the Royal Scot circa 20..AD. We nearly did have trains running on linear motors, but there was a conference (only lawyers, naturally) and they opted for jolly old reliable rails. Same with Brunel, he devised a perfectly good system with a gauge of 7'6" but Parliament opted for 4'5" - the gauge of Roman chariots. We still have a linear system in Birmingham I believe, but the problem bothering me is shunting. \Rightarrow And what about points? \leftarrow
KEN LAKE, 46 CHESTNUT AVE., BUCKHURST HILL, ESSEX IG9 6EW

I'm with you 100% on euthanasia: It's MY life, I should be able to decide when to end it. Ditto abortions, make 'em available on demand. // I fax all articles to the USA and Australia at incredibly cheap prices - perhaps 1p a sheet - and to UK editors even more cheaply. But I've my own fax machine: prices charged by firms are exhorbitant. I never found writing classes teach anything, but it's worthwhile if the tutor can put you on to a reliable agent or publisher. \Rightarrow Fax is ok provided your intended recipient also has a machine. As for writing courses, the big benefit is that they get you writing and facing criticism. \leftarrow
GEOFF BARKER, 19 OLDFIELD GROVE, STANNINGTON, SHEFFIELD S6 6DR

Have you ever done a 'Where are they now?' column? Those who originally received ERG #1. (or who were involved in the early days). You must recall names etc. What became of them? fame? fortune? This could get a bit morbid though. A bit like watching an episode of 'Dad's Army' and announcing "He's dead" as the actor's appear". \Rightarrow Well ERG started out as an Apazine in OMPA along with some score or so other fans. Eric Bentcliffe has gone, Archie Mercer passed on only a month or three ago, but Vince Clarke is still around. \leftarrow

RON BENNETT, 36 HARLOW PARK GARDENS, HARROGATE, HG2 0AW

Computers in the classroom... how long were slates in use? And how long after their demise did computers appear? And what about improvement in the computer itself? About 15 years ago, I took delivery of our school's first computer, a Beeb loaded by tape - anything up to 20 minutes to load a program. If the tape played up, it didn't load, something you found out after those 20 minutes. Now the school has scrapped all Beebs and has icon-generated PCs in every corner with the kids writing music on them and goodness knows what else. \Rightarrow I got my Beeb 17 years ago and soon fitted a disc drive. It still does this LOCCol and about 50% of the rest of ERG. \leftarrow

LLOYD PENNEY, 1705-24 EVA RD., ETOBICOKE, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

We've been having the discussion about assisted suicides in other fanzines. The main point I've tried to make is that when pets are gravely ill, will never get better, and are in a lot of pain, we put them down, with the reasoning that we are doing so to ease their pain - that's called being humane. However, we cannot extend that pity to our own species. Is being humane to an animal being somehow inhumane to human beings? We have a double standard here and it bears examination. *☞ I agree, but like many other things, public figures don't like putting their heads above the parapet. ☞*

ROY LAVENDER, 2507 E. 17th. ST., Long Beach, CA 90804-1508

Model airplanes, For a brief time I built balsa wood and tissue paper models. The time to wind up the rubber band was greater than the flight time, even with an egg-beater converted to a winder. I gave them up in favour of kites, large ones capable of carrying a camera. Years later, when I worked at Curtiss-Wright, there was a lunch hour modelling club with a very specialised set of rules. Models had to be made from items scrounged from the cafeteria or office supplies. Two wooden ice cream spoons could be made into a propeller. A paper tube made the fuselage. A flight launched from your desk had to go round a building and be caught by its builder. That got you free lunches for a week.

ROGER WADDINGTON< \$ COMMERCIAL ST> NORTON, MALTON, N.YORKS YO17 9ES

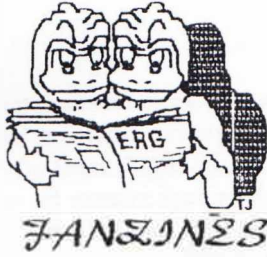
Excellent advice from James Verran; intending authorship must be one of the best reasons for investing in a computer and printer. Not only for writing freely, confident in the knowledge that you can alter whatever you want without wasting a single sheet of paper; but also for being able to send a clear, pristine copy into oblivion without the expense of return postage. Reading publications to which you intend to contribute; well for the cheapjack way, local libraries increasingly stock a wide range. Mind you, I've become increasingly doubtful about this oft-quoted advice. Mine would be, write to please yourself, rewrite until it's as near perfection as you can get; and then decide where it can profitably be sent. And then be prepared to alter it again. *☞ I agree in general for amateurs, but a professional has to actively aim at specific markets. ☞*

BRIAN TAWN, 27 BURDETT RD., WISBECH, CAMBS PE13 2P3R

I agree with what you say about originals and replicas. Who cares so long as you like what you've got? As for football strips; well, I think that's partly a thing about fans wanting to shout to the world that they support United or whoever .. and partly there is a suggestion from clubs that 'real fans' want to show their support for the team. The same goes for the music business..wear the T-shirt to show you're a fan of whoever. I wear Hawkwind T-shirts - though I wouldn't if it involved the kind of money spent on football strips! I get my own one-off Hawkwind T-shirts printed, using artwork by Hawkfan artists, so I'm assured of a picture that I like.

☞ I can understand fans wearing supportive shirts, but surely Adidas, Rebok, and sundry minor brand names we see around, don't have fans? ☞





CHALLENGER.7 A massive 96 pages from Guy H.Lillian, PO Box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-3092 USA. Opening with a Lynn Hickman Obituary followed by numerous goodies such as a Con report with loadsa photos, magicians secrets, Hugo design photos, child illness, excellent fanzine reviews and a whacking LOCcol. A lovely cover illo and plenty of interior artwork. Get it for the usual, or a steal at \$6.00.

MIMOSA.21 Comes from Nicki and Richard Lynch, PO Box 3120, Gaithersburg, MD 20885 USA and has 56pp with an intricate wrap-around card cover. You get Worldcon reports, Kyle writes on Sam Moskowitz, there's Fan History, report on a crooked book dealer, review of Fan Historica, a piece on Asimov, Ackermemories, Walt Willis, Bennett, and many other items plus good art and LOCs. Incredibly, only \$4.00

VISIONS OF PARADISE.75 from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA. 32 poages of natter, personal news, (largely linked with China), favourite authors and plenty of LOCs. Try a faunching letter for a copy.

SKIFFY CALENDAR from Dick Smith and Leah Zeldes, 12 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, IL 60090-6415 USA. A full, A4 sized calendar complete with illos for each month and lots fannish dates, birthdays etc

BANANA WINGS.8 Claire Brialey 26 Northampton Rd., Croydon, Surrey CRO 7HA and Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Rd., Croydon, Surrey CRO 6JE. Natter on life in and around Croydon, Con chat, a Langford Column, film comenent, a taxi trip, fanzines, plus other goodies as well as LOCs Tremendous variety with plenty for everyone.

BUMPER SNUFKIN from Maureen Speller, 60 Bournemouth Rd., Folkestone, Kent CT19 5az. A lucky-dip bag of Maureen's assorted pieces culled from assorted apazines and covering a wide range of topics. Sadly, few illos. Get it for the usual.

OPUNTIA 35.1, 35.5 etc. from Dale Speirs, Box 6830 Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2p 2E7 Dale uses a numbering system on sideways folded A4 sheets in a system which always baffles me. Once penetrated, you get a goodly mix of comment, travel, LOCs, fanzine reviews and book coverage/ Nice one, for the usual.

SPACE CADET.9 Has 32pp and comes from R.Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Ave. Apt.110, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6J 1J1 This issue is entirely devoted to articles on and about CUFF. The Canadian Union Fan Fund is designed to bring far-flung Canadians, across their continent to the annual Convention.

YNGVI IS A LOUSE.50 from Toni Weisskopf, PO Box 130162, Birmingham, AL 35213, USA. A Open the nicely illustrated cover of eye-straining red and you're into a 30page Apazine (SFPA .. Southern Fandom Press Alliance). There's a personal natter editorial, Toni's GOH speech, a couple of "How I met..." items, Editorial faan fiction, book reviews, a biographical item on Sam Moskowitz, a lengthy dissection of the "Cold Equations" idea and a look at the work of Harry Turtledove.

LOCs and FANZINES

BANANA WINGS 9 & 10. Claire Brialey, & Mark Plummer. C/o 26 Northampton Rd., Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA A massive total of 94pp. #9 covers natters on walking, Conventions, gardening, personal notes, yellow trousers, food, GUFF, hotel managers, floods, SF (yes!) and a whacking great LOCcol. Indubitably enough mixture for anyone. #10 has a snazzy Turner cover and is crammed with reprints of sundry time-binding, Mancon/Supermancon reports. Lovely nostalgia, I remember it well, great days!

THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS, TOM SADLER, 422 W.MAPLE AVE.,ADRIAN, MI 49221-1627, USA 62pp, excellent cover and interior art. A great variety, including articles on Bill Rotsler and an art folio, the use of Telex, a wild cat, my wartime memoirs, Disneyland, books, fanzines and oodles of LOCs. For the usual or contrib. and well worth getting. A real good `un.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY10708-5909 USA This 50th issue has a huge 158pages, card covers and crammed with articles, opening with a symposium of sundry fans' memories of Sam Moskowitz. This is followed by an excellent nostalgic piece by Leslie F Stone on her writing career - sadly, the end of this and the start of the next item (pages 103 through 134), were missing from my copy. I did get the Book reviews, and an extensive Bibliography of Robert Aickman. With pages missing, I can't say more than what I got was great stuff. Get it for \$5, well worth it.

and more LETTERS

E.R.STEWART, Am MATZENBERG 21, 67659 ERLNBACH, GERMANY

Your 'COPIES' left me largely in agreement. One's Personal, individual version of something, be it a painting or a model, is every bit as valid as the original, precisely because it is, essentially, another original. It's idiosyncracies are what set it apart and give it character. As for experts quibbling, they tire me. Art is spirit, not details. When confronted with the Mona Lisa, I felt like crying and I'm not sure why. Some scholars claim the one in the Louvre is a copy. Apparently da Vinci did two versions. To me, it mattered not at all. I was in the presence of greatness and somehow, knew it. It's ineffable the zing that great art imparts, but that makes it no less real.

RICHARD E.GEIS, P.O. BOX 11403, PORTLAND, OR 97211-0403, USA

Your commentary on model-making stirred a YES! in my soul, since I've found in my recent modelling past, I was not capable of the incredible detail and skills pictured in the model-making mags - that after screwing up on the painting or applying the stupid non-stick, always curling decals, that I had to improvise and 'cheat' this way and that, that I had to create an unknown version of the plane under construction. Sometimes I've even left off those cursed top wings of biplanes and altered the landing gear... You know what I mean. A hobby is supposed to be relaxing and a joy, but for me, it was a torment, a frustration, an agony of failure...so I dropped it and went back to fanzines.