

# FADEAWAY

## #20



**FADEAWAY #20** is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email [fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com). Copies are available to for a letter of comment, or a print fanzine in trade, or by subscription at a cost of \$15.00 for six issues. Letters of comment are much preferred. Any person who has not previously received a copy of this fanzine may receive a sample copy of the current issue for free by sending me your name and address. Publication has been bi-monthly, but starting with this issue *Fadeway* is on a six-weekly schedule. This is the December-January 2010-2011 issue. This issue will also be distributed thru the Southern Fandom Press Alliance mailing #279.

**AS SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW** I am a member of a serial collector's club in the region. We hold monthly meetings in which we watch chapters of a serial and also view a feature movie, usually something modestly obscure from the distant past,. Having mentioned this from time to time, people keep asking me for more details about the club and its members.

The club is open to anybody who lives in central New England, and you don't necessarily have to attend the meetings, altho the meetings are the high point of the club's activities. We use the club dues to buy old serials, and at this point in time the club has copies of all movie serials known to exist, both sound and silent, as well as fragments of many others.

I have also mentioned that occasionally the meetings and the members become, shall we say, a bit rambunctious. Still, people keep asking about the club and the meetings. We just recently completed our December meeting, which includes the big annual Christmas party, to which members wives and girl friends are also invited, so perhaps a glance at this most recent gathering might satisfy those who are curious..

The December meeting of the Cliffhangers was held at the palatial estate of Vice Pres Jim Farina in Rutland, MA. As planned, this was the club's annual Xmas Bash. Unfortunately due to the behavior of certain members at several previous club parties and the ramifications thereof, the attendance at this year's event was somewhat smaller than usual.

I want to point out again that some of our meetings, in particular many of our party meetings, seem to get off on the wrong foot. In an effort to forestall the kind of disruptive behavior which has been the hallmark of far too many of these gatherings, I again suggested that the club strictly enforce a No Weapons policy. Events from past years have clearly shown that adopting this policy would be beneficial for all concerned. I think I speak for everyone when I say that this organization has already had more than its fair share of encounters with the local

Rutland constabulary, and their pompous hot-shot SWAT team. (Altho as one member commented, if not for us, where else would these clowns get to try out all that shinny new equipment?)

The evening's festivities started with a hearty round of double rum lime rickeys and hors d'oeuvres when a suggestion was made to brighten up the gathering with a bit of music. Altho most of us were expecting a cheerful rendering of modern musical fare such as Smashing Pumpkins or Cat Gut Gullies or The Dreadlok Lizzies or some other lite and melodious contemporary vocal group, unfortunately, for reasons unknown, the host turned the speaker system to a Sirius satellite station which was playing smaltzy Christmas music round the clock.

Now, far be it for me to point fingers, but I believe that this unfortunate choice of music was the catalyst and turning point for the series of events which unfolded later in the evening. I mean, it should have been obvious that Christmas music was not what was needed for an assembled multitude of good friends and comrades united in their love of old time movie serials.

Government research and statistics have shown that insipid Christmas music increases the base suicide rate by 32%, and it also happens to be a major contributing factor to holiday marital abuse. That's one of the reasons liquor stores and pharmacies pipe in the most maudlin Xmas music they can find during the yuletide season, and it's also no coincidence that those audio speakers are situated directly over the vodka displays and the first-aid sections, respectively.

Tempers and temperament were worn pretty raw and even the addition of some stronger and more sophisticated liquid refreshment (large tumblers of Harvey Wallbangers if I recall correctly) calmed the situation only slightly.

It was mere minutes afterwards when one of our members who shall remain mercifully nameless, stood up and sang his own Xmas carol over the background music, a song that featured some, shall we say, risqué lyrics. Not to be outdone, two other members felt they had to add to the merriment by singing "The Ballad of Eskimo Nell", all 43 verses of it. By verse 22, those few ladies who were present at our party had excused themselves and left the premises.

Again, I hate to be critical, but while the idea of adding an international flavor to the party cuisine this year with foods from different nations seemed like a good concept when originally proposed, a few of the offerings left something to be desired. In particular I felt the national dish of Brutastan or whatever the hell that postage stamp Balkan nation was called and from which the main course was drawn, was inappropriate, particularly when members discovered that the Brutastan national dish was poached wharf rats in white cream sauce. At the very least I feel that the chef should have cut off the heads and the tails before serving the portions. The fact that the white cream sauce was mostly made of pureed onions, garlic and sour cream may also have been a contributing factor to the gastric distress and the backed up sewage system which developed later in the evening.

Well, it was pretty much downhill after that. I don't think we need to dwell on this. I'm sure our club attorneys and those of the neighbors will be able to sort things out amicably. How extensive can the damages be anyway? It's not like we were the only people in town who ever went night fishing in Polly-Wog Pond using sticks of dynamite. I say let's put the past behind us and move on into a brighter and better new year.

This month we watched more chapters of "Dick Tracy Vs Crime Inc." A lot of stuff happened. Lots of action, lots of fights, lots of gun battles. There was a lot of that on the screen too. Tracy's nemesis, the masked Ghost managed to kill off most of the other members of the Crime Commission while Tracy generally ran around in circles. Much of these chapters are a bit of a blur to me, as member Jim Farina introduced a bottle of 30 year old French cognac at this point in time, and wonderful stuff it was too. I remember the level of the bottle dropping pretty quickly. Everybody had to kick back a double shot neat whenever one of the Crime Commission members Tracy was supposed to be protecting got knocked off. That's why I remember so many of those bozos getting croaked. Boy that Tracy sure flubbed this case.

Anyway, then we watched a feature film. For a change of pace it was a western titled "Code of the West", the 1947 version. "Code of the West" was one of the books Zane Grey wrote way back in 1934. What made this interesting is that there was also a movie in 1925 called "Code of the West" which was also supposed to have been based on a Zane Grey novel, except that it wouldn't have been "Code of the West" since that book was not written until 1934. So far I have not been able to figure out what book the 1925 movie was based on. To make matters interesting, this movie, the 1947 "Code of the West" was also apparently not really based on the novel of the same name; it was a remake of the 1925 movie. Got that all straight? A movie using Zane Grey's name and the title of his book, but which is actually a remake of the 1925 film, that was based on a completely different Zane Grey book which is unnamed. Right.

Anyway, this was a typical western adventure which has since become stereotyped to death. The bad guy, played with malicious perfection by Raymond Burr, owns the town saloon and hotel, and is buying up land all around the region because he knows the railroad is coming thru. He has the local law on his payroll, and has some shifty gunslicks working for him to terrorize the ranchers and farmers and force them to sell out at his price. Then, the hero, returning home after years of absence, just happens to arrive at the scene of a stagecoach ambush and rescues the heroine and her father, a banker coming to town to set up a financial institution in competition with the bad guy. Well, you know the rest of the story even if you haven't seen this movie yourself. As I said, it's pretty hacknied by now.

We were all impressed by Ramond Burr as the villain. Burr was great as a bad guy; he played villains in most of the RKO movies he made. He had done community theater, been a popular night club singer and acted on Broadway when RKO signed him to a contract in 1946. "Code of the West" was one of his earliest movie roles. He was also doing lots of radio where he played, guess what, villains and characters that might as well have been villains, such as Lt. Hellman, the vicious corrupt cop in the Jack Webb series "Pat Novack For Hire". He also played heroes on radio, including one of his best roles ever as Capt. Lee Quince, on the CBS western "Fort Laramie" which ran in 1956. This was an adult western from the same people who produced "Gunsmoke". The following year he landed the role as the star in the Perry Mason TV show. Despite his new TV popularity Burr was very loyal to radio. Even when he was doing Perry Mason and guest shots on TV all year round he found time to do radio whenever the opportunity arose, including starring in a special series set in the days of the American Revolution commissioned by the US government and broadcast only over the Armed Forces Radio Network. This 1963 series could not have paid more than peanuts for a big name performer like him, but he took the job without a second thought, and continued to do other radio dramas afterward.

Also in this movie is John Laurenz playing the role of Chito (Cito Jose Gonzales Bustamante Rafferty, his full name) the hero's Mexican sidekick who provides music and light romantic comedy. This same character was injected into no fewer than 32 other RKO westerns, including most of the Tim Holt sagebrush sagas, but get this, "Code of the West" is the only time that Richard Martin didn't play the part of Chito. What's going on you might ask? Beats me, but Laurenz was good in the role anyway.

Also good was James Warren playing the hero Jim Wade. Warren was an actor who made about forty movies, yet hardly raises a blip in the memories of most film fans. Interestingly enough he started out as an illustrator, selling art to the big circulation slick mags like Look, Saturday Evening Post and Colliers. An MGM talent scout spotted him at the Pratt Art Institute in New York and talked him into a three year movie contract. He had good looks and could act, but he didn't make much of an impression. MGM dropped him when his contact expired, but RKO liked his style and signed him up specifically to do westerns. His last film was made in 1953, after which he promptly retired to Hawaii where he resumed his real love, art, particularly water color painting using the spectacular island back drop as his inspiration. He died in 2001 almost unknown to most movie fans.



# MEANWHILE BACK AT THE CON

## A REPORT ON WINDYCON #37

by

Kent McDaniel

Man, you gotta be really careful what you say around Bob Jennings. He was gonna email me some info, and I said I might not get back to him till Monday, cause I was gonna be at WindyCon. Next thing I knew, I was doing a WindyCon con report for *Fadeaway*. Which meant I'd have to do more than swill beer in the con suite all weekend, I supposed. Go to some actual *events* perhaps.

WindyCon 37 was held at the Westin in the Chicago suburb of Lombard out in Dupage County. So Friday, November 12, I hit the expressways around two in the afternoon and rolled into the hotel parking lot a little before three. The skies were blue and the temperature was *sixty-five degrees*. Those last italics are because that's about twelve degrees above the average temperature here for the date, and a temperature thirty degrees lower would shock nobody. This was the first WindyCon I'd been to in several years, and I took the weather as a good omen.

The Lombard Westin is fifteen stories high, situated by a mega-mall, which with its scores of satellite stores and restaurants, two other adjacent hotels, and series of sprawling parking lots could probably hold a town of four or five thousand, stores, filling stations, town square, inhabitants, and all. Inside, the desk clerk was helpful, friendly, and efficient. Wow, that was almost scary. I've never been a frequent con-attende. Last world con I made, for example, was StLouis Con back in 1969. I'm no fan of hotels or crowds, so why I ever register for a con is a mystery. Seems like a good idea at the time, usually. Living here in lovely Chicago the last thirty years, I've actually managed to attend five previous WindyCons—sort of.

Two of them, I only attended the three hour Writers Workshops on Sunday morning. (Which are great. Run by Nebula-award-winner Rich Chwedyk, they offer a chance to have your stories critiqued by pros, and the critiques are penetrating—just leave your ego at home.) The three times I actually booked a room and came to the con, I left early twice. The first time was back in the mists of prehistory, when both our kids were preschoolers; the hotel put us on the party floor, so none of us slept a wink all night, and in the morning we checked out. Several years later, Dorothy and I got a room, intending to stay and check out the con, when I wasn't at the writers workshop. My workshop was on Saturday morning that year, and afterward I felt restless and wanted to go home, so we did.

Asking me to write a con report is sort of like asking Scrooge to write up the Christmas program for the church newsletter.

It's a demonstration of my wife Dorothy's infinite patience and kindness that she agreed to go WindyCon again with me, three years back. We had a good time, and we've been meaning to make another WindyCon, but something always seems to come up. That we could actually come this year was sort of a minor miracle. The Gods of Fandom must've meant for me to do this con report for *Fadeaway*.

Dorothy was driving out later, straight from work, and I rode the elevator alone up to our room on the tenth floor—the last empty elevator ride I had that weekend. The room turned out to be spacious, clean, and well-furnished—much nicer than the rooms at the hotel where the con used to be. I unpacked and went down to the con suite, which was relatively empty at

the time. I had some pleasant small talk with various people I didn't know and didn't talk to again that weekend, just discussing the economy, work, e-books, etc. After a few beers, I went back to the room, and Dorothy was there, resting after a drive through the start of Friday rush hour.

She'd volunteered to work in the con suite around six, and drew the wonderful job of sitting outside the door and checking that people actually had a WindyCon membership before they entered the suite. I went in to have a beer or two. None of the beers taps were working properly just then, except for the Guinness, and since Guinness is about as tasty to me as quinine, it was an ordeal, but I did manage to choke a couple down. Hard, yes, but as a fan, I felt it was my duty.

If you're not a regular at cons, there can be the occasional lonely moment, especially if you're inept at small talk with strangers. The suite had begun to fill up; everyone seemed to know each other and be catching up. I didn't manage to get any conversation going with anyone and just sat there sipping beer, listening to the talk at the tables around me. If I went to cons regularly, I suppose that eventually I'd be part of the gang, too.

After Dorothy—all five feet two inches of her—finished her bouncer gig, we went to the Dealers Room. A lot of people had yet to arrive, so things there were pretty slow. That's an understatement: the room was freaking dead, the dealers all looking pretty forlorn. A couple of writers were there and I bought books from them, mainly cause I know how much I appreciate it when people buy CDs from Dorothy and me when our band plays out (about as frequently as the seasons change). From Glen Cook, who's published forty-one books according to the book's front, I bought *Passage At Arms*, which according to *Newsday* "...has the impact of an eyewitness account." Jeff Vandermeer at *SF Site* calls the book "One of the best evocations of Life in close quarters onboard a spaceship..." Haven't read it yet, so I can't say if I agree or not. Then from S. T. Clemmons I bought a slim red anthology entitled *Twisted Tales*. As Clemmons—the S. stands for Sam—rang up my credit card payment I noticed that the stories comprised "An Erotic Collection." I asked him if any of his other titles were non-erotic. He shook his head. "But

they're R-rated, not X-rated." He gave me a wan grin. "They've got plots." That was very reassuring, and may or may not be true, I don't know; I haven't read it yet, either. Dorothy will probably want to read it first to make sure that it's age-appropriate: that is, can my heart stand it?

Having been up since five that morning, Dorothy was ready for bed and headed back to the room. I went up to the ISiFIC book signing party on one of the four party floors. ISiFIC, the fan group that sponsors the con, and prints a book by the literary guest of honor each year. I think that that's a nice idea, so I decided to stop by and pick up a copy. This year's guest of honor was Steve Barnes, who I'd never heard of, and his book for the con was entitled *Assassin and Other Stories*. He turned out to be a black belt in several martial arts, accomplished yogi, relaxed, articulate speaker, and a friendly guy. I got my book autographed, chatted with him about the importance of breathing correctly and departed for the Texas in 2013 Party. I'd got to talking to some of the people at their table earlier, that afternoon, and they invited me. It turned out to be a pleasant, laid-back affair, featuring pop, cookies, and good conversation. Stayed there till bed-time.

Next morning we had to pick from the scores of events, three to five going on at any given moment, in addition to the continuous activity in the two gaming rooms. WindyCon focuses largely on print science-fiction; it's old fashioned that way. Oh, there were a couple of people shambling around in Star Trek outfits, but WindyCon is not geared for the Trekkies. Of the scores of panels offered none were remotely connected to Star Trek, and except for one Dr. Who panel, none were media-related. One of the panels, which I'd loved to have made, but didn't, was "Are SF Movies Ruining SF literature?" (Curmudgeons of the world unite!)

There was a room showing SF movies throughout the con and another showing anime. There was lots of good filk music (and some not so good). There were two panels on costuming and a masquerade. The con's theme was *Travels to the Lands of Fae and Back Again*, although to my knowledge only one solitary panel related to this subject. Mainly there were many, many panels discussing books: Eric Flint's work, China Meivelle's *The City and the City*,



# WindyCon 37

## The Lands of Fae and Back Again

November 12 - 14, 2010 at the Westin Lombard, IL



*Gateways: A Tribute to Fred Pohl*, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Wind-Up Girl*, for instance. Other panels discussed "SF's Role in Pushing the Boundaries of Societal Taboos", "Putting the Science Back in Science-Fiction", and "The Origins of the Fae." There was an open group discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We can safely place WindyCon in the ranks of sercon conventions, in my considered opinion.

Quite a few authors were at the convention, too, serving as panelists, doing readings, signing autographs, hanging out: Steven Barnes, Eric Flint, Jim Hines, Rich Chwedyk, Glen Cook, Mike Resnick, Tim Akers, Jody Lyn Nye, Phylis Eisenstein, and more I'm forgetting, no doubt.

The first event Dorothy and I chose, however, was non-literary. We went to a Tai Chi class led by literary guest honor, Steve Barnes, at nine o'clock that morning. The hour-long class actually didn't end up involving a whole lot of Tai Chi, per se. Though we began with a few gentle stretches, the class was mainly a new-age pep-talk.

Which probably sounds flip, but I don't mean it as a put-down. I've been doing yoga since the early seventies and also reading stuff like *The Upanishads*, *The Bhagavagita*, *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones*, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, *Be here Now*, and *The Politics of Experience*. So I'm down with the new age (though it's hard to envision the Age of Aquarius dawning any time soon, given the evening news). This time of year, I tend to wane a little unenthusiastic about everything anyway, so a pep-talk didn't hurt me at all. And this was a pretty good one.

One of the things Barnes talked about was Stress vs. Strain. Stress, he said, is pressure and can help us grow. Strain results from knotting ourselves up in reaction to stress and can make us unhappy and ill.

He talked also about the importance of how we breathe and related that to the Stress vs. Strain concept. Breath, he reminded us, is both a voluntary and involuntary body function, and so can be helpful in developing mind/body coordination. He talked about letting the abdomen relax and expand on the inhalation and contract gently on the exhalation. He said to be especially mindful of the exhalation, and the inhalation will naturally follow. He mentioned that when we're tense or fearful, we breathe from chest, but when we're calm and at peace, we breathe from the abdomen. He said that if we can maintain abdominal breathing while we're under pressure, it will help us keep calm, help us avoid straining when we're under stress. To help develop this ability, he suggested stopping at the times of day divisible by three—9, 12, 3, 6, and 9—and breathe consciously from our abdomens for sixty seconds. Over time, this will help us to be aware of our breathing and breathe correctly during all situations. He ended the class with a few minutes of basic Tai Chi moves, and everyone seemed to feel pretty good, glad they'd started the morning with the class.

Sharon, a lady I'd met last night at the Texas in 2013 Party was there, and I introduced her and Dorothy. We got to talking, and I mentioned that we played music. Great, she said; she and her husband were hosting a singing party, the weekend after Thanksgiving. Why didn't we come? Sounded good to us. Serendipity

Outside the ballroom after class, we ran into Rich Chwedyk and chatted about things like his Saur's series in *F&SF*, the sad state of newspaper publishing, and the strong state of the writing program at Chicago's Columbia University, where Rich teaches. There are, he told us, currently four hundred students at

Columbia either majoring in creative writing or working on an MFA in it. Which I find incredible: I thought that today's college students all wanted degrees in business, marketing, or anything else that meant big bucks.

I got sidetracked to the exercise room, and the next thing on the program I made was the panel on Historical Research at eleven that morning. This sounded promising, because I have a vague idea about a Civil War novel I'd like to write, but it was a little disappointing. Most of the authors on the panel evinced little preparation for it or the ability to extemporize gracefully, and they had few actual helpful hints for researching. It was all kinda dry.

Dorothy and I'd split up after the Tai Chi thing, but I ran into her at the Historical Research Panel, and we were both ready for lunch. My editor here has forbidden any mention of where or what I ate, saying that if my food consumption was the most interesting thing about the con, I should've stayed home. I think, however, I might be permitted to speak of where I did *not* eat. When we decided to get something to eat, we looked outside. The weather had turned chilly and blustery—I mean, that cold wind was whipping across the parking lot hard enough to deck you—so we thought we'd check out the menu outside Harry Caray's in the hotel. The first meal we looked at, a steak dinner, was \$89.00!

So, braving the elements, we trudged across a

parking lot the size of a small subdivision, to the mall, which was equally humongous, and made our way to the cavernous food court on the second floor, where throngs of tight-lipped shoppers waited in line for fast food and then scanned the expanse of tables for a vacant one to latch onto before somebody else did. I doubt that I could get by with mentioning what we ate, but I'll tell you this much: it cost less than \$89.00 a meal.

Back at the hotel, the ever-stalwart Dorothy went to a panel on costuming, but I needed a nap after our trek across the wind-swept wastes of the parking lot. I woke up in time to make to the concert by Tricky Pixie, a folk trio the con had flown in from the West Coast, and was glad I did. It was quite a show. Betty Tinney, a tall dark cutie sporting elfin ears, played cello for the group. She used it to lay down solid, yet at the same time, melodic bass lines, and she swayed to the music, her face glowing with the joy of it. When it came time to solo, she moved into the higher registers of her instrument and showed off some excellent chops.

Alexander James Adams, tall, dressed in black, sporting horns on his forehead and grizzled sandy hair that fell down his back, played guitar, fiddle, mandolin, and percussion. All of them, very well. He also sang—both lead and harmony—in a strong tenor. A showman, he strode around the stage, included a lot of physical flourishes in his performance, and used facial



expressions to good dramatic and comedic effect. He also threw a lot of banter back forth with the group's third member, S. J. Tucker.

I gotta admit here that my attention tended to focus on S. J. Tucker and not just because she was pretty and dressed revealingly. She played a strong rhythm guitar, more often than not using finger-picking, and had a gorgeous voice. Plus, I liked the sly smile on her face, her sinuous moves, and her charisma, a combination of sex appeal, intelligence, humor, and comfort with the spotlight.

The trio had an excellent group chemistry that made them more than the sum of their parts. All three are songwriters, and most of their material was original. Witty, polished stuff, it ranged in style from Celtic, to Latin, to folk, to acoustic rock, their own distinct sound running through all the styles. I left the show a fan. If you have a chance to see them, jump at it. You can check them out at [trickypixie.com](http://trickypixie.com).

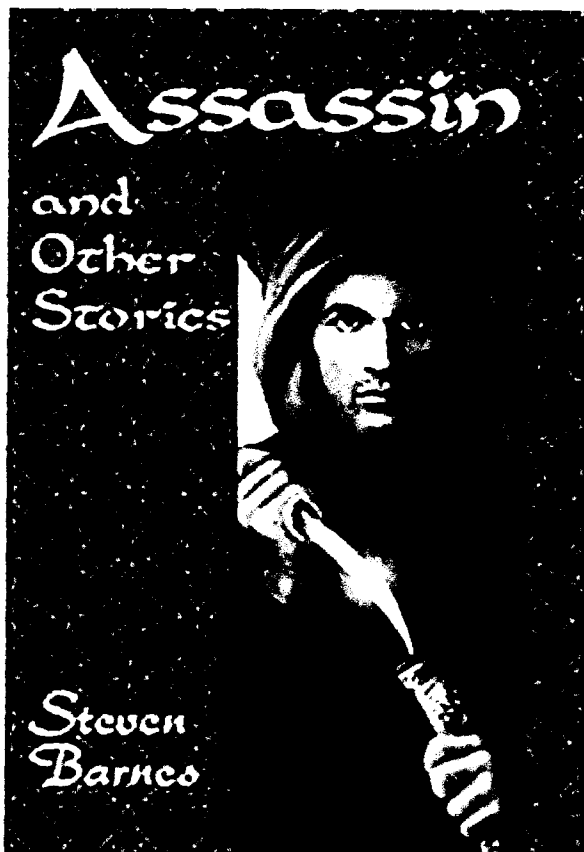
The show ended around six, and I met up with Dorothy and went out for some supper. Afterwards Dorothy was up for more events, but I wanted to just stay in the room and start on Steve Barnes book, *Assassin and Other Stories*. That I'd go to a convention and sit around reading, which I could do at home, might seem strange. Maybe it is, but at least I'm not

alone in doing that. Walking around the Westin's commodious lobby and along its many corridors, one would spy many people sitting around reading books or—less frequently—staring at computer screens. I don't know why, but I actually think that there's something cool about that. Or maybe I do know; we were all there because we're book lovers, and we didn't feel compelled to spend every moment attending events or schmoozing. If we wanted to read, by God, we could. (If this be rationalization, make the best of it.)

So, I started the short novel, *Assassin*, which led off the book and seemed to be historical fiction. At first I was enjoying it. There were some excellent chase scenes and fight scenes and a strong inciting incident to set the hero off on his quest. But my interest began to flag. For one thing, the book had an episodic quality, all incidents not tied as strongly in a cause/effect chain as I'd have liked. There were, for example, twenty pages of the short novel that you could pretty much skip without damaging your comprehension of the plot line, and to me reading that felt suspiciously like reading a padded word count. Also, I generally have difficulty enjoying an assassin protagonist, because I think assassination is despicable. The assassins in the novel justify what they do by saying it's better to kill one king than a thousand peasants. Haytham, the novel's protagonist, however, kills not royalty, but commoners, unarmed and unsuspecting, people who seem not evil so much as inconvenient.

I also had a problem with Haytham's motivation. His overriding goal seems to be, not justice or his people's salvation, but simple revenge. He burns with the desire to capture the man who murdered his parents and torture him death. I'm sorry. I can understand that, but it still seems ignoble. Finally, the novel's wider historical context and even setting seemed too sketchily rendered. After eighty pages or so, I set the book down. Barnes has written over twenty novels, some of which have garnered Hugo and Nebula nominations. I suspect that *Assassin* is less well-done than those works.

I decided to check out the art show downstairs. There was a lot of what you might expect: elves, fairies, galactic storm troopers, wizards, sultry wenches, bems, barbarian warriors, all that, most of it pretty well done. But what really caught my eye was an assemblage at the end of the room. Cameras in the art room, like information on our food consumption in this article, were strictly forbidden. Otherwise, I'd treat you to a photo of the work. It looked like the artist had begun with an old black metal cash register, then replaced its tabs with an ancient typewriter's







The Historic Writing Panel

keyboard. An antique telephone sat to the left of all this, and behind that, a device that appeared to be an old-time coffee-maker with a steam valve of some kind on top and a tube running into the former cash register. A small porcelain coffee cup sat below a spout on the coffee-maker. Several gears turned slowly on the side of the main device's black metal body. More gears turned on its top, as did a chromed turnstile with a cherubic creature holding a flag. A brown wooden clock shaped like the top a tombstone sat on top of the device, hands showing the correct time. To the device's right, stood still more old-timey gadgets. On the face of the contraption, above the typewriter keyboard, an artfully hand-lettered sign said: STEAM-POWERED COMPUTER. In this case, a picture would definitely be worth more than a thousand words, but what can I do? The art show confiscated my camera at the door.

I went back up to the room, found Dorothy there, compared notes with her for a while, and persuaded her to do a con report for my own zine, *Dumfounding Stories*. Then I picked *Assassin* back up and waded through another thirty pages, before I shut the book. Life is too short to make yourself continue a book that you're not enjoying, even if you wanna write about it in your con report. Maybe in the last hundred pages, Barnes addressed some of the issues I mentioned earlier, but if so, it came too late for me. I'd lost interest.

Next morning we went again to Steve Barnes 9:00 Tai Chi class, much of which was again a motivational talk, and again a good one. Barnes also

showed us series of Yoga poses called the Five Himalayans, suggesting we begin with three repetitions daily of each movement and increase gradually to ten repetitions a day. These exercises, along with the one-minute breathing exercises he'd suggested yesterday, would provide someone with a fairly decent daily home yoga program, it seemed to me. He again ended the class with a few minutes of basic Tai Chi moves, and everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves and felt refreshed.

Sharon from the Texas in 2013 party was there, and her husband John brought by a map to their house and the singing party. We told them we'd be there, said goodbye, and left feeling good about making a couple of new friends. We went back to the hotel room, packed up and headed for home. Once we got back, we had some lunch (the contents of which I'm not at liberty to divulge) and talked about the con. We both agreed that it'd been a good time. It was well run: Everything started on time, and Dorothy, who made it to a lot more events than I did, assured me they were all fun. Except for early Friday night, the beer flowed smoothly and freely—always a crucial factor at a con, I feel—and there was lots of good music. People at the con seemed laid back and pleasant, and it was a good change of pace and scene for everyone. We were glad we went.

We got out our guitars and played a few songs together. Then I opened Charlene Harris's *Dead and Gone*, Dorothy opened up a Robert Parker novel, and we sat around reading. Almost like we were still at the con.

DECEMBER

20c

# COMET

STF

STORIES OF SUPER TIME AND SPACE

A Startling Tale  
of SATURN'S  
Radium Madness  
"MOMUS MOON"  
by Eando Binder

— STF —

Stories by:

R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

— STF —

P. SCHUYLER MILLER

— STF —

RAYMOND Z. GALLUN

— STF —

CLARK ASHTON  
SMITH

— STF —

D. L. JAMES

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ROBERT MOORE  
WILLIAMS

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MILES T. BREUER

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"THE SPACEAN"

A powerful, new, STF fea-  
ture that gives a new per-  
spective on Scientifiction.

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EDITED BY  
OTLIN TREMAINE



# **YESTERDAY'S WORLD OF TOMORROW**

The title of this article is a direct swipe from long-time science fiction editor Robert Lowndes. He used this as the title for some of his editorials for *Science Fiction Stories* and *Future* back in the late 1950s. I have always liked the title and the concept. For about forty years or so I have been toying with the idea of doing a similar feature using the exact same title if possible. Time marches on. *SF Stories*, *Future*, *SF Quarterly*, all the magazines Lowndes edited are long gone, and alas, so is Bob Lowndes himself. I don't know if he would have approved of me using his title and his idea, but I've finally decided to do it anyway. The title should be self explanatory.

**COMET ; December 1940; pulp size, 128 pages; F. Orlin Tremain, Editor and Publisher**

by

Robert Jennings

In 1939 and 1940 science fiction was entering a semi-boom period. After an extremely difficult time in the mid 1930s when the number of science fiction magazines had shrunk down to three, and then after all three of them had failed and been bought by other publishing companies, things looked brighter. *Astounding Stories* has been sold to Street and Smith in 1933. *Wonder Stories* had been sold in 1936 to Ned Pines who had changed the title to *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and established Mort Wesinger as editor. *Amazing Stories*, the original SF magazine that started the whole business had been sold to Ziff Davis who moved operations to their home base in Chicago and hired Ray Palmer as editor.

In 1939 and 1940 a number of new science fiction magazines hit the newsstands. Among those new science fiction magazines was one titled *Comet*, cover dated December 1940, but on the stands several months before that. Its editor and owner was F. Orlin Tremain, the former editor of *Astounding Stories*, one of the most successful science fiction publications of

the period. Tremain's voyage from editor working for someone else to owner and publisher of his own magazine is worth noting. In fact, it is almost impossible to consider the publication of *Comet* without talking about Tremain's work on *Astounding*.

*Astounding Stories of Super Science* had been created in 1929 by pulp publisher William Clayton, reportedly because the colored printing sheet for the slick paper covers to his magazines had one extra slot. He initially wanted a title devoted to historic adventure, but one of his new editors, Harry Bates, convinced him to try a science fiction magazine instead. The first issue appeared cover dated January 1930, with Bates as the editor.

*Astounding* became a successful SF magazine in the early thirties, owing mostly to the fact that it paid its authors promptly on acceptance, and also because editor Harry Bates thought that most of the material being published in the Gernsback SF mags was putrid.

Bates was a man who initially knew little about science fiction, but he knew action and adventure, and

he knew what made a good story. He wasn't concerned about scientific accuracy; he was concerned about believable heroes and story plots that made sense. He once stated that science fiction was nothing but fairy tales for adults with the science added on to make it acceptable to adult readers.

At *Astounding* he began his policy of acquiring good stories by making sure he got a first look at most of the material being produced in the field. He was able to that by raising the pay scale. Initially the pay was half a cent per word, the same as the other SF mags were paying, but the difference was that *Astounding* paid for their stories on acceptance, and they paid promptly. Bates was able to increase that rate to three-quarters of a cent per word, then he upped it to a penny a word, and sometimes more for top of the line stories and novel length serials.

So in late 1932 when Bates offered E.E. "Doc" Smith, two cents a word if he would create a new novel especially for *Astounding*, Smith jumped at the offer. "Doc" Smith was easily the most popular writer of science fiction to have appeared in the genre so far, and his previous epics of super-science adventures, particularly the Skylark novels, had set the field on its ear. For *Astounding* he created a new cosmic epic titled, "Triplanetary", long in intergalactic adventure

and noticeably short on plausible science. The novel was announced to begin as a serial in the March 1933 issue.

Then, Clayton Publications went bankrupt, taking *Astounding* down with it.

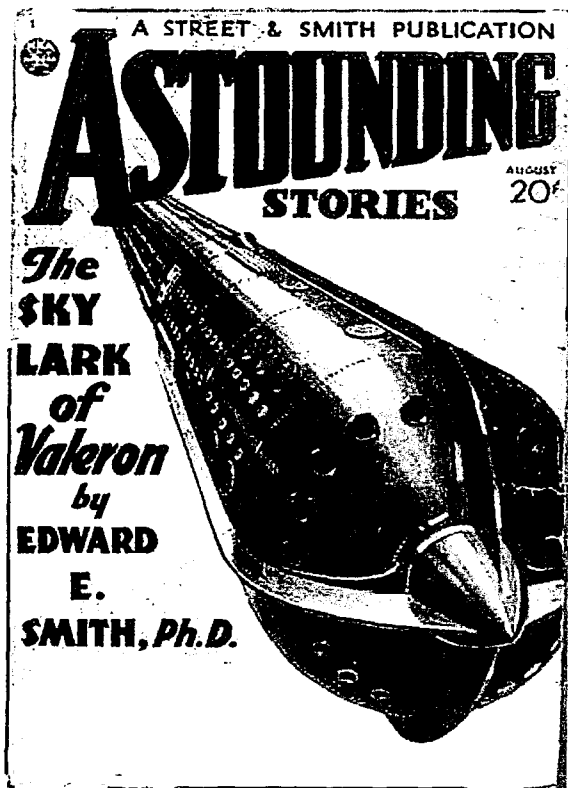
Smith tried to sell "Triplanetary" to *Wonder Stories*, which rejected it. *Amazing Stories* finally published the novel in 1934, at their usual half-cent a word rate.

Meanwhile, Street and Smith had bought *Astounding Stories*, after checking with the distributor to make sure the circulation figures were in line with what they wanted. Tremaine had been the editor of the *Clues* and *Top-Notch* pulps at Clayton, titles which S&S had also purchased, so he came with the deal. In addition to continuing his editorial duties with those publications, he was also named as the editor of *Astounding*. Desmond Hall, another former Clayton editor, became his assistant handling most of the daily operation of the magazine..

Tremaine knew a little something about science fiction and fantasy; he had written a few stories for *Weird Tales*. His brother had also written a few fantastic adventures, but his primary business was producing adventure and detective titles. He had been involved with magazine publishing as the editor of such titles as *Brain Power* in the early 1920s, and *True Story* in 1924. By the end of the decade he had landed a job as an editor of Clayton Publications handling several titles of their expanding line of pulps.

Being made editor of a science fiction magazine was something new for Tremaine but he was a quick learner, and one of the things he noticed immediately was the pulling power of popular authors. "Doc" Smith was the biggest draw on the market. He shot off a letter to Smith offering to buy "Triplanetary", only to learn that it had already been sold to *Amazing*. Undaunted, Tremaine proposed that Smith write another novel, on any subject he wanted, but specifically suggesting a third novel in the Skylark series, with an standing offer of a penny a word, on acceptance.

Smith sent in the first draft of "Skylark of Valeron", but confessed to Tremaine that the story was completely out of control and asked for suggestions. Tremaine sent him back a check for \$850 for the story as it was with no rewrites, and rushed it into print as a serial beginning in the August 1934 issue. He hyped the new novel with a full page editorial and a three quarter page ad. When the August 1934 issue hit the stands, *Astounding's* circulation took an immediate ten thousand copy jump. The magazine held that circulation, and the numbers continued to build over the following three years.



In 1936 Smith sent in an eighty-page outline for a series of novels which became the Lensmen series. Tramine committed to buying the entire series. "Galactic Patrol" appeared as a serial in *Astounding* beginning with the September 1937 issue, which resulted in another rise in circulation.

In addition to securing the writings of "Doc" Smith, Tremaine also worked with other recognized SF writers in the field including Jack Williamson and Murray Leinster and even courted *Weird Tales'* favorite writer H.P. Lovecraft. He also began honing the style of story that *Astounding* was publishing. He wasn't specifically concerned about scientific accuracy, but he was interested in new and unique concepts that would excite reader interest. He dubbed this new approach "Thought Variant" stories. It opened up vast new vistas for science fiction writers with interesting ideas who could explore those concepts beyond the level of pure action and adventure.

Another thing he did was to recognize the influence that the science fiction fans exerted, and he catered to them. He encouraged the growth of fan club, and opened up the letter column of *Astounding* for fans to use as a sounding board. He even encouraged frivolity, with the humorous 'Great Staple War' debate that ran thru the letter column.

In the middle of the thirties, *Astounding* was the only one of the three original SF magazines generating a sustainable profit, and F. Orlin Tremaine had been the man to do it because he recognized what the readers wanted.

Tramine had three formidable weapons to wield in reshaping *Astounding* to his own vision---good word rates, a low cover price and an excellent distribution system.

The pay scale for *Astounding* was pegged at a penny a word, more than *Wonder Stories* or *Amazing* paid, and *Astounding* paid on acceptance, whereas the other magazines only paid on publication. For big name writers that rate could go up. Only after the other SF magazines were sold to new publishers later in the decade did the competition reluctantly match *Astounding's* word rates.

*Astounding* was also supposed to pay promptly, but the word "promptly" was a relative concept. Pulp writer Frank Gruber in his ground breaking book "The Pulp Jungle" related how Tremaine edited his magazines. All the manuscripts were put in a big stack; one stack for each of his magazines. Once a month, two days before the deadline for each magazine, Tremaine would come in and start reading. He would start at the top of the stack and continue reading until he found enough stories he liked to fill up the issue. Then he would stop. To be perfectly fair, the following month

he would turn the stack over and start on the bottom. Of course if a story was stuck in the middle, it could be quite a long time before the writer got any kind of response back. In one case it was reported an author went eighteen months before learning the fate of his submission.

*Astounding* also had the lowest cover price of any science fiction magazine in the 1930s. Clayton had launched most of its pulp magazines with a twenty cent cover price, and S&S kept *Astounding's* cover price at twenty cents after it took over. The other magazine were selling at a quarter a copy.

In addition Street and Smith had been in the popular magazine business since the middle of the previous century. By the 1930s they were publishing dozens of different titles and had a distribution system that was a powerhouse. In his memoirs Isaac Asimov noted that by the middle 1930s *Wonder Stories* and sometimes even *Amazing* were appearing much less regularly on the newsstand at his parents' candy store. *Astounding* never had the problem of limited distribution as long as S&S published the magazine.

Tremaine's career at S&S was not entirely successful. In 1934 he and Desmond Hall had come up with an idea for a new magazine, a slick paper full sized monthly aimed at college girls and young women. The magazine would be titled *Mademoiselle*. S&S gave them the go ahead and authorized a separate office with a full budget. The first issue of *Mademoiselle* appeared on the stands dated February 1935 and that issue was such a total flop that Tremaine abandoned the project immediately and went back to editing pulps. Hall held on. He skipped a month of the schedule while reformulated the magazine. 1935 was still the heart of the Depression, yet despite poor sales S&S poured more money into it. Tremaine was still officially listed as the editor in charge but Hall was actually running the operation until he finally resigned a couple of years later in 1937. A female editor was hired in the person of Betsy Talbot, at which point *Mademoiselle* began achieving dynamic newsstand sales and impressive advertising revenue.

Despite that little blip, by 1937 Tremaine's success with his magazines was acknowledged when S&S promoted him to assistant editorial director for the whole line. That meant that he was no longer going to be the editor of any specific publication. New editors for his titles were found, and with Desmond Hall gone, the person hired to be the editor of *Astounding* was a well known science fiction writer named John W. Campbell, "Doc" Smith's closest competitor in the area of super science epics. After a period of tutorage and oversight Campbell became full editor in December

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1937, altho it was not until the March 1938 issue that all the magazine's stories were being chosen by him.

Being an editorial director meant taking responsibility for a lot of different magazines with a lot of problems mere editors didn't normally have to worry about. It was a job that apparently didn't completely agree with Tremaine. In late 1938 S&S either decided that it no longer needed the position of editorial director/editor-in-chief, rendering Tremaine's position non-existent, or he resigned from Street and Smith. S&S was often noted as being very considerate of their people, but also during the 1930s they were likewise noted for making sudden ruthless editorial changes no matter how it affected the people working for them.

Whatever the situation, Tremaine was no longer part of Street and Smith, but he had no intention of leaving the business of magazine publishing. He had an idea for creating his own science fiction magazine, something that he would own, something very much like *Astounding*. He decided to call it *Comet*.

In creating *Comet* Tremaine had anticipated that there was a boom period coming for science fiction. The signs were right. New science fiction comic strips, science fiction serials based on those comic strips, science fiction radio programs (also mostly based on the comic strips), more actual science fiction hardback novels and even a few science fiction movies had appeared by the tail end of the decade, so the public was much more aware of science fiction than it had been even a couple of years before.

Sales on the established SF Pulp began to climb. Other publishing houses began to enter the field, heeding information passed on by their magazine distributors who had first noticed the trend. Tremaine figured the time was right for him to get into the science fiction business as well.

For the first issue of *Comet* he pulled out all the stops and pulled in all his markers. He wrote personally to most of the established authors in the field, and he hyped the coming of *Comet* in the fan press extensively. He gained a special boost when Sam Moskowitz took a personal interest in the new magazine, even visiting his

office for an interview. Unfortunately Moskowitz arrived on a Tuesday, the only day of the six day work week Tremaine wasn't there, but that didn't dampen his enthusiasm. In addition to promoting the new title in his own fanzines, Sam wrote an enthusiastic letter to Tremaine which was printed as the very first entry in the letter column of that very first issue.

When that first issue of *Comet* hit the newsstands it boasted a cover by Leo Morey, and ten stories, almost all of them written by recognized science fiction authors. To emphasize that fact Tremaine cut the size of the cover illustration down so the title would be especially prominent and would not overprint the picture. There was also a yellow strip along the left side, the part of the magazine that would be showing on a crowded newsstand, which prominently listed all the writers, along with his own name as editor, and the letters STF running as dividers among all the names. As tru-fans knew, STF stood for scientifiction, the original (and some believed, the official) name for science fiction.

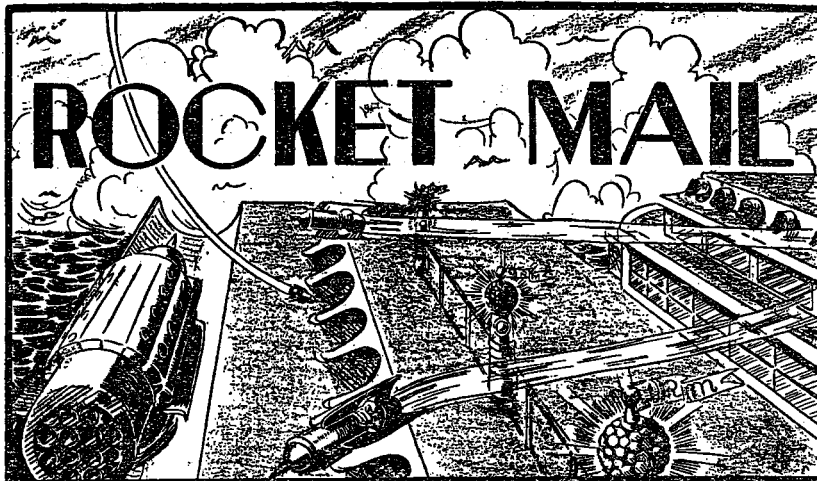
The stories inside are varied. The lead slot was held by Robert Moore Williams with a tale titled "Lord of the Silent Death". Robert Moore Williams is not one of my favorite authors, but this happens to be a very good story. Taking place in a museum, the plot revolves around a mysterious heavy metal box which was retrieved from an archeological dig in Asia, and the bizarre, not to say horrific death of the museum archeologist studying that box. It appears that a mysterious mystical force locked away in the box had been freed when the professor finally managed to figure out the complex locking device keeping it shut. That mystical creature killed him and is now loose in the city. The hero of the story is young "Rocks" Malone, a junior archeologist at the museum. The monstrous force kills again, striking down a museum director who is the father of "Rocks" fiancée, and then it wipes out an entire theater full of people, while the police are without a clue and helpless to stop the terror.

Since this is a science fiction magazine, and not an issue of *Weird Tales* or *Strange Adventures*, the

deadly murderous force has a logical scientific explanation, but that doesn't make the story any less exciting. To be frank this story could have used some editorial polishing to smooth down a number of rough spots, beginning, in my opinion, with the name of the hero. Whoever heard of a guy nicknamed "Rocks"? Why not the more believable 'Rocky' instead of "Rocks" Malone? Because it's Robert Moore Williams, that's why. He did things like that all the time with his writing.

Yet this is still a strong opening story for the issue. While I was reading this adventure I couldn't help thinking that this would have made one terrific radio drama, or even an excellent TV thriller today. It has everything needed to set the reader's nerves on edge, and the suspense builds, with the tension maintained thruout the story. Not a bad first slot for the first issue of the new magazine.

The second story by P. Schuyler Miller "The Ultimate Image" is a short piece built around a



Dear Readers:

Here's the department, ready, and waiting for your letters. The landing field is ready to receive your private rocket with its message. We expect it to be alive with letters as soon as you have had time to read, consider, and react to the first issue of the COMET.

This is my first chance to write a letter to the department, so I'm taking full advantage of it. I'm not going to rate the stories. That will be up to you. But please don't delay doing it. The weeks fly past, and the second issue will be coming. I'm hoping to have enough quick letters so that I may stick them into the second issue before it goes to press. But this will be possible only if they are mailed in within the first few days of publication of this issue.

I have received letters from many of our favorite authors—I might almost say all of them—promising to write for the COMET. Some of them say very nice things, but I felt it would be sort of anti-climactic to publish them.

Let's make this space expand and keep it alive. We can. But don't forget to tell your friends about the COMET!—FOT.

*N. B. I no sooner completed the above letter than one from Sam Moskowitz came to my desk with a fan's summation of the field today, and saying things which obviously I could not say. It is a pleasure to know that some of us remember you can well believe. Here it is:*

Dear Mr. Tremaine:

It is indeed a pleasant task to write you telling of my sincere delight at learning of

your new post at the head of a new science-fiction magazine. As usual "Fantasy News" blared the news out to the fantasy world, but in an unusually large headline.

Upon learning of your position I hotfooted it to New York, accidentally bumped into Jimmy Taurasi, and visited your offices, but unfortunately came on a Tuesday, upon which day, the receptionist informed me, you do not come to the office.

I hope you plan to do what I think you're going to do. Set a blistering pace for the other science-fiction magazines to follow as you did in 1934, '35, and '36. It seems a shame that now, when the fans have what they have been praying for for years—a practically unlimited supply of science-fiction, new and old, there should not be one, not even one, out of a score of fantasy magazines that is publishing new stories of even a breathable color.

On every side one sees hack, hack, hack. Editors so infatuated with names that stories do not count. One editor brazenly informed me at an interview, that because he pays a low rate per word he has told numerous scientification authors that when their yarns have been rejected by every other fantasy magazine, he would take them—sight unseen! ! !

But that's not all. There's more. Not content with getting the most worthless tripe some of these popular hacks are capable of turning out (stuff so terrible that fan mag fiction is beginning to read like polished material to me), he must print these stories under a pen name because the writers do not want the one-cent markets to know that they are selling their stuff at half rates or less! Now by all that is holy under heaven,

gimmick. The writing is heavy with scientific speculation that gets in the way of the story flow. The basic plot concerns a fantastic invention used to stop an evil European munitions manipulator. The story is serviceable but not outstanding by modern standards. However, considering the quality of some stories that were appearing in the other SF magazines during this same time period it's not bad.

The third tale, "The Oversight" by Miles J. Breuer, is billed as a novelette, however it isn't. It qualifies as a longer short story, as do the two other pieces billed as novelettes in this issue. Unfortunately this is one story that should have been a lot shorter, or better yet, something that should never have been written in the first place. The writing is very crude, while the pacing of the story is awful and the reactions of the hero and the other characters to events as they unfold are absolutely unbelievable.

The setup provokes some initial interest. In the middle of Nebraska, suddenly legions of Roman soldiers appear, along with Roman war galleys on the river. These Roman forces proceed to occupy the region. The hero and his girl friend stumble on the situation while out on a pleasure drive. They meet some local farmers and residents who are noticeably upset, to the point of shooting a few Roman soldiers. They commandeer the hero's car and demand he drive back to Rosale, the nearby town, and then urge him to go on to Omaha and alert the Governor about the situation. Except nobody explains what the situation is, and our hero doesn't bother to ask, or even display much curiosity after his initial surprise at seeing a Roman war galley rowing down the river. The local National Guide/State Militia gets involved, and the hero, who is a medical student at the university, decides to tag along and help a local military flyer drop dynamite on the Roman galleys.

It was hard work to push thru this piece because of the inept plotting and very clumsy writing, but I made it to the end, where we discover that all this mayhem was caused by a creature from Mars who had surveyed the Earth on a previous trip, and has now returned to take up permanent residence. He has some sort of biological culture tanks where he can grow seven foot tall dumb-as-dirt Roman soldiers in nearly infinite numbers, and he looked on the battle as some sort of sporting contest, altho he keeps saying his efforts to become a local Nebraska resident and bona fide local tax payer are all perfectly peaceful.

His Roman legions are slaughtered by the thousands when the police and military units unleash their artillery and machine guns, but that doesn't bother Mr. Martian, whose problem, it turns out, is that the Martian year is twice as long as Earth's, and Martian

life is basically static after umpteen millions of years, so gosh, he just naturally assumed that Earth civilization was exactly the same, you see, so that when he dropped down to build his private Martian mansion and health spa on local farm land, that everybody here would be exactly like the Romans were, the civilization he checked up on his last visit, two thousand years ago.

Yeah, right. Pardon me while I barf. Any traction this idea might have initially possessed was completely squandered by bad writing, clumsy plot sequences and a pathetic attempt at tying up the loose story threads which happen to be as inflexible as steel beams. I never heard of writer Miles J. Breuer, and frankly, I hope I never hear from him again.

The following story by D.L. James is titled "Tickets to Paradise". This deals with a trek into the remote reaches of Iran in search for a legendary mystical Ice Stone supposedly stuck in the side of a mountain. The Ice Stone turns out to be a trans-dimensional portal between a super-scientific civilization that existed half a million years ago in the midst of a particularly brutal ice age and the present. Our two protagonists meet up with a scientist from that civilization who invented the portal and sees it as a means of saving his people. Due to scientific mumbo jumbo which is covered in several tortured paragraphs, it turns out that this is a one way trip thru time, and it takes half a million years for anybody to pass completely thru the portal.

Bad guys from this other civilization are also on their way thru, then there is an intelligent robot, a battle in the cave system with the bad guys, then the main hero's friend and employer, is killed in the fracas, the scientist from the distant past is mortally wounded, and his robot carries his dying body back into the Ice Stone to find a future that can save his life and curse his wounds before he dies. The hero makes his way back to civilization, knowing that nobody will believe his fantastic yarn. Despite a couple of glitches this was a decent story.

One aggravating problem I found is that James seems inordinately fond of the word 'queer'. So we have a queer situation, queer apparatus, queer landscape, queer machinery, queer weapons, queer robots, queer feelings of antiquity and more. It seems like he uses the word 'queer' about thirty times during the course of the story. Of course I'm doubtless exaggerating, but the constant repetition of any one word, be it adjective, noun or otherwise in a piece of fiction can be very off-putting, and so it was with this one. Where was the editorial pencil here? There are plenty of other synonyms that could have been inserted to smooth this situation over, but Tremaine doesn't bother.



Obviously each author speaks with his own unique voice. His way of phrasing sentences may not be the way the editor phrases sentences, his way of pacing a story or setting scenes or setting up conversation is probably not like every other writer's. The editor must read a story and judge that story on its individual merits without allowing his own editorial style of writing or his own expectations of the way a piece of fiction should proceed to overwhelm and dampen the style of his contributors. But having said that, it seems to me that some basic elementary editing is also necessary to make the stories move along, to smooth over rough spots and especially to keep the pace and focus consistent with where the plot is going so the reader can comfortably read that piece of fiction. Yet in this tale and every other story in this issue Tremaine doesn't drop the editorial blue pencil even one time that I can tell. I find this oddly unsettling.

The next adventure is an interesting mix of science and mathematics. Math and I do not agree. My eyes glaze over when I'm exposed to anything more complicated than basic arithmetic, yet I still found R. R. Winterbotham's "Equation For Time" to be a fun read.

The hero's girl friend has invented a machine to essentially warp space so an object can travel many light years in about a single second. The problem as explained, is that you must zero in on the exact same time frame over there as exists right now at the origin point. Winterbotham provides a lot of mathematical information discussing and explaining the concept, and even some diagrams, with foot notes yet.

There is also a villain, a pretty inept unbelievable villain actually. The head of a huge faster-than-light space ship company, sensing that his business is about to become obsolete, tries to murder the heroine a couple of times, and almost succeeds, creating a nasty little paradox with the heroine existing half on earth and half on a distant planet across the galaxy. I find it absolutely unbelievable that Mr. Big Shot has the brains to run a huge starship company but is apparently so inept he can't hire local thugs to do his dirty work. Still, the villain is only here to create that bizarre paradox-like situation which must be mathematically unraveled. The reader apparently has a fair chance of figuring out the answer. Not *this* reader of course; my mind was on cruise control thru most of this yarn, but I liked it anyway, altho the way the lame-brained master villain was handled almost ruined the entire adventure for me, and the writing was pretty stilted thruout.

"Momus' Moon" was written by Eando Binder, and the cover painting illustrates this story, altho after reading the piece any relationship seems obtuse, at best. As mentioned previously, Eando Binder was actually two brothers, Earl and Otto Binder who combined the

first letters of each of their first names with the word 'and' to create Eando Binder.

This is a good story despite some clunky writing. The writing style is not as crude as some of the other fiction present this issue, and it is certainly as lot more polished than the work the brothers were turning out in the early part of the decade. However the brothers Binder had a tendency in many of their stories during this period to lecture the reader, or to find some other heavy-handed method to lay out the basic plot concept at the very beginning of their tales. In this case we have two heroes, spacemen on their way to a moon of Neptune. One of them plays the dumb guy while the other plays the smart guy and we wind up with a three page explanation of interplanetary astronomy, and also the setup, which is that according to "the Crile-Brady Theory", the further away from the sun you go, "the less electronics motivate your cell-radiogens" and thus, the lower the intelligence of any beings who might reside on those planets or moons. Many examples are provided, and also, by the way, the further out you go the more likely you are to find radium and other highly radioactive elements.

The partners are looking for radium. Their ship indicators show there should be plenty of it on this lone Neptunian moon, and there should be no life of any kind on something as astronomically barren as this methane ice ball, yet two previous expeditions vanished without a trace.

Then the ship lands and they discover that the surface is well lighted by a previously unknown orb which is a mini-moon of this moon, plus it has lush vegetation, breathable air, (altho higher in oxygen content), and also, living creatures including some who look a lot like human beings.

It turns out that these beings are simple beasts of very low intelligence, similar to curious earth monkeys, but they have a high pitched infectious laugh. It is so infectious that the Earthmen laugh too, which brings out more of the friendly beasts, so that soon the heroes are exposed to a group of these creatures whose laughter causes the Earthmen to laugh uncontrollably. They fall down laughing, they can hardly breathe, and they are several thousand yards away from their ship, laughing so hard they can't stand up, and can barely crawl.

This is a nifty story. After the brothers Binder deliver their setup with their lecture on astronomy and radiation, all written with a sort of wise-guy, flippant dialog style one might associate with certain detective stories or B movies from the period, the plot shifts into high gear and the writing becomes noticeably better. The solution(s) to the problem is well crafted. There is plot tension maintained to the very end, and after the

heroes finally are safe back inside their sound proof rocket ship and about to leave, we also get a completely logical, believable explanation for how this moon came to be a warm, atmosphere bearing planetoid with vegetation and animal life. Not bad. Of course you do have to wade thru the first four or five pages of the story to get to the good parts, but it was worth the effort. Clever readers versed in ancient mythology could also have figured out the plot from the story title--Momus was the Roman god of laughter.

The cover illustration however, has almost nothing too with the story. The humanoid creatures do not resemble ancient Egyptians as pictured on the cover, and there is no flying shark bird anywhere in the plot. Also the cover blurb mentions Saturn, when the tale is actually set on a moon of Neptune, and the term "radium madness" doesn't appear in the adventure at all. One has to wonder...

The following story is titled "Bratton's Idea", by Manley Wade Wellman. This tale features better writing than most of the pieces in this issue, yet it also suffers from the same problem the Binder story had, namely that Wellman has to establish his premise in the opening pages, and those pages sound something like a lecture directed at the reader. The hero of the piece is a popular stage and radio ventriloquist who decides to abandon his career and his dummy Tom-Tom when he can't work up the courage to ask the girl he loves to marry him. The 'Bratton' of the title is a looney old man, an electronic genius who works as a janitor at the radio station, and what luck, he is trying to create artificial life, a living robot as you will. (Look, you've got to buy the bit to follow the story. Trust me, this works out). Wellman casually refers to him as a mad scientist. Works for me.

Thru a bunch of meaningless mumbo jumbo and (gasp!) Electricity!!, Bratton manages to instill life into the hero's stage dummy.

Then the story actually begins, and the writing becomes much better. Bratton is found dead, murdered. Later a notorious gang leader is also found dead in his fortress apartment, but his gang is still operating, only on a more vicious and efficient level. The police manage to wipe out most of the mob, but the unknown leader escapes and reforms his operations. Yes, it turns out that the ventriloquist's dummy Tom-Tom is the evil underworld leader. The hero recognizes the situation, and decides to do something about it after the dummy kidnaps his girl friend and holds her for ransom.

What follows is a fast action, suspenseful adventure where the resourceful hero allows himself to be captured and brought into the presence of the dummy. He manages to overcome Tom-Tom's hoodlum guards thru a ploy, only to discover that the

dummy is virtually indestructible. And Tom-Tom plans on creating a miniature army of synthetic living followers, beginning with Bratton's old experimental metal robot. The hero must figure a method of stopping the life creating process and finding a way to kill Tom-Tom. He does, and the solution is clever and unexpected. Despite clumsy, (unbelievable, actually) plot inconsistencies with the setup, this was another enjoyable story. With smoother writing and something to clear up the incomprehensible nonsense used to instill life into Tom-Tom this story could stand the test of time.

"Primal City" by Clark Ashton Smith is a moody atmospheric piece about two men in search of a mythical pre-historic city in the treacherous mountains of South America. The city is guarded by cloud-like creatures who attack the party and everybody dies except the nameless hero. He somehow manages to escape, but vows to return. The End. Being a Clark Ashton Smith piece it has a few inordinately obscure and convoluted adjectives tossed in here and there, but the writing flow stands head and shoulders above most of the other material in this issue.

Altho this is well written, the piece doesn't have much of a plot, which makes it mostly unpalatable. Had the background been fleshed out with a stronger focus on the characters and more plot incidents added this would have been a block buster. Unfortunately the motivation is pretty fuzzy. We never learn much about this fabled ancient metropolis, or what the characters hoped to accomplish. This reader was left hoping to experience a fully developed adventure, but it just isn't here.

Luckily "Eyes That Watch" by Raymond Z. Gallun follows immediately and provides lots of plot and plenty of moody suspense. This is easily the best story in the issue. Not only was this crafted around an interesting idea, but it also happens to be a tale that is very well constructed, featuring a polished and professional level of writing that outshines everything else in the magazine.

The hero has returned from a very long and arduous exploration trip to Mars. He has managed to smuggle in a small artifact made by the ancient vanished Martian civilization. This odd little gadget turns out to be a teaching machine that is able to project diagrams and instruction, unlocking the science of the ancient Martian civilization. The hero immediately begins exploiting the situation, cutting himself off from his girl friend and most human contact.

Week later, searching for ways to obtain cheap energy he stumbles across a method to unlock the power of the atom, but things go horribly wrong, and it looks as tho the very force that destroyed the Martian

# THE PRIMAL CITY

by CLARK ASHTON SMITH



*Steps breast high led upward in a giant's pathway. The city towered among clouds that seemed to assume form.*

**I**N these after days, when all things are touched with insoluble doubt, I am not sure of the purpose that had taken us into that little-visited land. I recall, however, that we had found explicit mention, in a volume of which we possessed the one existing copy, of certain vast primordial ruins lying amid the bare plateaus and stark pinnacles of the region. How we had acquired the volume I do

not remember; but Sebastian and I had given our youth and hood to the quest of hidden knowledge; and this book was a compendium of all things that men have forgotten or ignored in their desire to repudiate the inexplicable.

We, being enamored of mystery and seeking ever for the clues that science has disregarded, pointed much upon those pages written

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civilization and turned Mars into a desolate wasteland is now being slowly unleashed on Earth.

Gallum does an excellent job of building a creepy sense of menace and desperate horror as the process begins to unfold with the hero realizing he has

created a force that he not only does not understand, but is also something he is absolutely unable to stop. The ending has a bit of a mystical twist, but that doesn't spoil the final effect. This is an entirely satisfying piece of fiction.

“In the Earth’s Shadow” by John L. Chapman is a short-short story which finishes off the issue. Well written and mildly interesting, it takes place on a fueling station between the Earth and Luna. The station is invaded by an escaped convict determined to steal the station’s fuel. Most of the fuel is locked down tight so the convict decides to siphon off the station’s own supply which is used to stabilize the floating island, even if that means the station will plunge back into the Earth. There is some action, with the bad guys finally overcome, but the station itself is lost. I found myself wondering what the effect of a huge space station loaded with locked tanks of rocket fuel plunging into planet Earth might be. However that aspect of the situation isn’t covered at all. The tale is pretty pedestrian, and I was also struck by how generic the background actually was. There is nothing uniquely science fictional about the tale at all. With a few cosmetic changes this could have taken place in any pulp mag, *Railroad Stories*, for example, or *Sea Stories*, or even been turned into a WWI episode.

Perhaps the oddest section of the magazine is a department called “The Spacean”, billed as “a journal of interplanetary events and gossip”. And that, believe it or not, is exactly what it is. Set in the far distant future, which turns out to be the year 2008, the column relates bits of future news as tho it were an Associated Press summery sheet, or a column in some future newspaper column penned perhaps by a future Walter Winchell or Ed Sullivan. The department even has fake ads for night clubs on Mars, pawn brokers on Venus and interplanetary employment agencies. None of this is humorous, or even very interesting.

The time frame also seems incredibly optimistic. According to the feature “fifty Years Ago”, it tells about the first successful manned rocket flight, which would have taken place in 1958. In the real world that’s off by a few years, but then, we also had a couple of major wars and a long cold war to contend with. In this fictional world “the ship returned to port this morning and made a landing with only slight damage”. It also notes that “three men were slightly injured in the bump”. The real life Russians landed their space ships on solid ground, and unfortunately they experienced more than minor damage on a few occasions.

But what makes this more bizarre is that, according to the feature, forty years ago humanity was colonizing Mars and the other planets, twenty years ago a new type of intergalactic ship was successfully tested, and by the fictional “now” of 2008, humanity has populated all the planets in the solar system and has reached the stars and beyond. Pretty impressive, and also alas, pretty unbelievable.

This feature, heavily hyped by editor Tremaine, has almost nothing going for it, except as a curiosity factor for those of us living in 2010, which readers in 1939 would obviously not have been able to appreciate. This entire feature is mostly very strange.

Tremaine uses the editorial space to talk up the new mag and begs readers to tell their friends to try this first issue, right now, while it’s still fresh on the stands. Editorial comments fill out the last of the letter column too, buttering up the hardcore SF fans, mentioning a few of the stories in the issue, and noting the passing of Dr. Thomas O’Connor Sloane, the original editor of *Amazing Stories* at age 88.

So, was it a good issue? Yes and no. There were several good stories in the issue, along with some interesting ideas, but too many of those tales were marred by clumsy writing and plot inconsistencies, not to mention mostly cardboard characters.

It seems clear that Tremaine was primarily buying concept stories to fill this issue. Unique and sometimes impossible concepts form the basis for almost every piece of fiction here. Some of the concepts are quite interesting and well developed. But some of the other ideas are half formed and fail when it comes to being either believable or being manageable in story terms.

Good ideas often triumph in science fiction, and that is clearly what Tremaine was counting on with *Comet*. Had *Comet* hit the newsstands three or four years earlier it might have been a rousing success. Unfortunately the magazine appeared in late 1940. By this point in time things had changed in the world of science fiction.

For one thing the competition was a lot tougher than it had been previously. During the time frame when *Comet* appeared, a whole bunch of new titles also hit the newsstands. In fact by 1940 no fewer than thirteen other science fiction magazines were competing with *Comet* for reader dollars, and that does not even include the explosion of weird and supernatural titles that went along with it.

But there was a much more subtle type of competition going on, one that seems to have escaped Tremaine. It was no longer enuf to have interesting story ideas. By this point in time you needed good plots, and you also needed better writing.

In the early days of science fiction everything was brand new. The readers, who were mostly very young, were blown away by what can only be described as that initial sense of wonder. But by 1939 science fiction editors, particularly editors of the major magazines, had begun to realize just how crude their form of literature was in comparison to other fiction. Good ideas or slam-bang action were no longer enuf.

You needed better writing, stronger plots and something resembling character development.

John Campbell was famous for stressing his primary axiom: that every story be told from the human standpoint, that the human characters must be the primary focus of every story. To get what he wanted he communicated extensively with writers, criticizing the stories submitted to him and making suggestions for improvements. He was also not shy about asking for rewrites until he got what he felt was a strong, readable piece of fiction.

His points about good writing and stronger characters were also being emphasized by the other major magazines editors. *Amazing Stories*, the sales leader, was being run by former SF fan Ray Palmer, who also wanted stories with polished writing, and he made no bones about heavily editing anything he didn't like, sometimes rewriting vast chunks of the stories submitted to him to produce the kind of fiction that the buyer could read without wincing. Clumsy phrasing or plot inconsistencies were not permitted.

*Thrilling Wonder* and *Startling* were being run by another former science fiction fan, Mort Wesinger, who had been a partner with Julius Schwartz in the first literary agency specializing in science fiction. He also didn't mind editing the material he got, and he used his editorial staff to personally hone and groom new talent, shaping them into writers who could turn out the type of stories he wanted. He wanted action stories, but it had to be believable action, with a strong emphasis on the believable part. In his opinion concise plotting and smooth writing were what made it believable.

Many of the original writers in the science fiction field weren't really authors; they were dabblers. They were hobbyists and readers who wanted to see some of their ideas on the printed page. The true professionals, people like Jack Williamson, Edmond Hamilton, Robert Moore Williams, Henry Kuttner, C.L. Moore, they listened to what the editors had to say, and they changed their writing styles. They polished their work, they tightened up their plots, they began emphasizing the characters in their adventures to make their stories salable to the changing market.

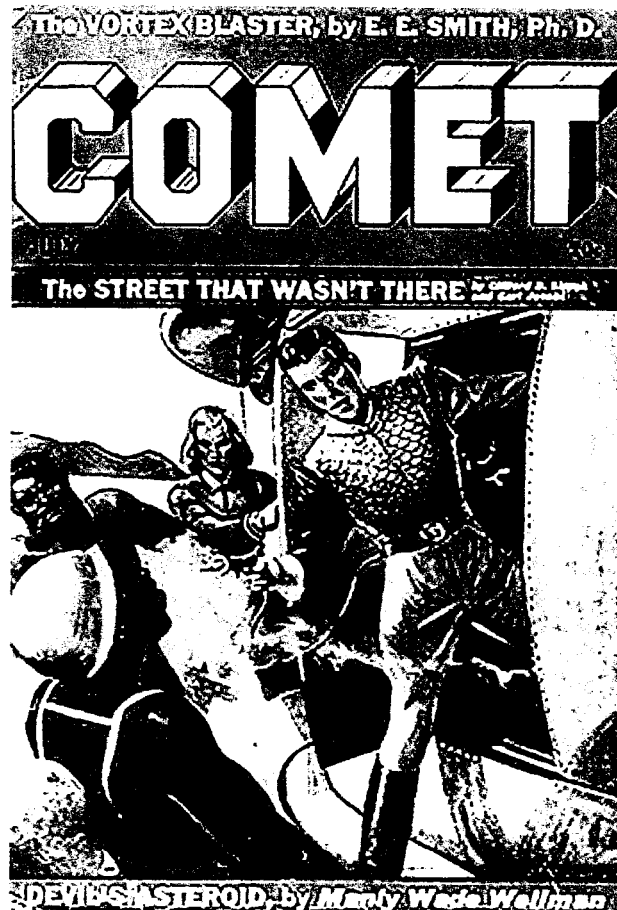
Tremaine didn't. As far as I can tell Tremaine did no editing of any kind. *Comet* was his vision, but it was a vision linked to the past. He was trying to recreate the glory days of the middle 1930s, when Thought Variant was king, when an odd twist on a scientific truism, or a bizarre leap into a new field would be enough to excite the reader and keep him coming back for the next issue. Those days were gone.

*Comet* had some other problems. Apparently Tremaine linked *Comet* with the Ace line of magazines to handle his distribution and his advertising. All the

standard pages of pulp advertising in this issue carry a line of type on the bottom of the page asking the reader to mention the Ace line of magazines when responding to the advertisements. The Ace group had good distribution, but to keep up with that distribution, sufficient copies had to be printed each issue, and if there were a lot of returns for unsold copies that good distribution could wind up costing a lot of extra money. He was probably also under financed. He was certainly facing brutal competition for reader dollars with thirteen other titles on the stands along with *Comet*.

With the January issue *Comet* changed from monthly to a bi-monthly schedule. The magazine continued to feature well known science fiction writers, with the stories still emphasizing unique concepts. The big sales Tremaine had anticipated did not come. He tried another ploy from the past, writing to "Doc" Smith, asking him to submit something to *Comet*.

Smith could not send in a Lensman story; he had already committed to selling all of that series to *Astounding*, and the Skylark stories were finished. So he created a new series, set more or less in the Lensman universe, and submitted "The Vortex Blaster", which



appeared in the fifth issue of *Comet*, cover dated July 1941. Unfortunately it was too late. The fifth issue of *Comet* was its final issue.

The appearance of "Vortex Blaster" in *Comet* did not sit well with *Astounding's* editor John Campbell. Publicly Campbell approved of new SF magazines, claiming that they helped expand the genre, but privately he seethed, telling some friends that Smith had betrayed him, selling material to a second-rate editor of a competing magazine instead of submitting it to Campbell.

From that point onward Smith sold very little to *Astounding*. *Astounding* had already committed to buying the remaining three Lensmen novels, but after the fourth and final book of the series "Children of the Lens" was serialized in 1947, Campbell didn't run another Smith story until July 1960, when "Subspace Explorers" appeared.

It may not have helped that Tremaine had been the editor-in-chief when Campbell was hired, or that Tremaine had considered *Astounding* his personal baby and had kept a close eye on it while Campbell was in training to become its new editor.

Some sources also mention that Tremaine had stated in print that he would run *Astounding* out of business. Altho I do not have all the issues of *Comet*, and almost none of the fanzines from the time period, I find that statement difficult to believe. Not only would it have been extraordinarily unprofessional, but Tremaine must have known that it would be impossible to drive any S&S magazine, especially an entrenched title like *Astounding* "out of business:"

After the death of *Comet* Tremaine went to work for Bartholomew House, a subsidiary of the MacFadden publishing empire. By 1943 they decided to break into the exploding paperback book market under the Bart House insignia. They specialized mostly in novelizations of popular movies, but in late 1943 and 1944 Tremaine was directly responsible for producing two paperback editions of H.P. Lovecraft stories. By the 1950s he was still on friendly terms with science fiction fans, giving the occasional interview, reminiscing about the old days and giving his views on the genre. He died in 1956 at age 57, leaving behind a science fiction legacy with *Astounding* and a footnote in the history of science fiction with *Comet*.



# READER REACTION



**Frank Mazzarella, 23 Cooledge St.; Leominster, MA 01453**

You timed this one just right. Nothing to do on a Saturday afternoon and the mailman brings me a manila envelope with Fadeaway #18 inside. Bacigalupi, Little Orphan Annie, Marie Wilson, and Wonder Stories, 4 great topics. Reading descriptions of old pulp tales, as summarized by old pulp fans, is my idea of fun reading. I had an old friend who loved to describe pulp stories to me. Pulp stories that he hadn't read in 60 years and I always marveled at the staying power of these stories. If I had a time machine I would make a straight line back to new release day at the newsstands, 1938.

Bacigalupi is known to me through his excellent short stories which share the same world as the novel. I can pick up "Windup Girl" for my Kindle for \$7.99 and maybe I will take the plunge. It has been impossible to get through the public library. It is the sort of book that I would prefer to read in paperback, but it is only available in oversize PB and I prefer the standard size.

Marie Wilson has been overlooked. She had such a sweetness about her and an innocence that belied her knockout body and blonde good looks. Sad to read that she died so young and in such a terrible way. There seems to be a market for Old Time Radio books and thank God for that. For Christmas I would like Santa to bring me a copy of every McFarland media book published. Their titles are wonderful, but the prices are so high.

Finally, Little Orphan Annie has shown me the power of the daily comic strip. The strip was consistently interesting and intelligent and the story of Annie was a Charles Dickens character. The old newspapers were loaded with high quality strips and the newspaper was a daily dose of new comic day. Even in the early 60's there were enough great strips to make the comics my first stop in the paper. When the Sunday Boston Globe arrived at my house, the funnies were fought over. Mutt and Jeff and Prince Valiant and everything in between held out great entertainment and those comics made an otherwise somber Sunday church going morning into fun time for kiddies.

Lately I am listening to sets of the Great Gildersleeve radio shows, some of them for the 4th or 5th time. Much to my surprise I am enjoying the fact that I know the shows and even can recite what lines are coming up at any given time. Many pop culture items are only worthy of one or two listens or reads at most, but I find myself laughing along with the characters and anticipating situations and lines. It's an odd feeling. I feel a warmth towards them that surprises me. I can remember when I first heard Gildersleeve and I gave it a B- and was not particularly crazy about hearing repeat episodes. Times change.

I don't know if you take requests, but I would love to see some of the old Boy's Book Buff articles reprinted. Ditto for your Comics World zine. I notice that Radio Nostalgia Digest has now made it's way to the bookstores (Barnes and Noble) and while it contains some good OTR articles, it cannot measure up to a copy of Fadeaway. I would think that fans of popular culture would love to jump into a copy of Fadeaway.

So, now I am going out to wait for the next issue. Make it snappy. It's getting cold out there and I am not coming in till #19 arrives.

///There are no plans to reprint my stuff from either Boy's Book Buff or Comic World, primarily because I still have back issues of those zines for sale (\$6.00 each for BBBuff #2 thru #5; \$7.50 each for Comic World issues #8 thru #21. Plus, there are special deals for anybody who wants all the CW issues or all the BBB issues in one fell swoop.///

**Brad W Foster; PO Box 165246; Irving, TX 75016**

That nice heavy black printing on the first page of FADEAWAY #18 caught my eye, and so have attached a brand new little toon I hope will amuse you enough you might like to use it. ///You bet! Your latest illo adorns page 3 in this issue.///

Speaking of that piece, love the line control that Berry shows in his work; using the pen and brush to give that feel of old etchings, incredible control!

Sorry to hear of the knee problems, though a bit confused by the time frame involved here. You note having to set up the surgery for the end of August, and since this is in the Oct/Nov issue, does that mean it won't be until the end of next summer before you get this fixed? If so, huge bummer. Or maybe the stuff written in here is written a few months before actual publication, so you've already gone through it? I get that feeling, but, again, the time-warp aspect here of the dates is confusing to my poor little brain.

I agree with your comments in the intro to the "Book Bender" section about the joys of using the library to find particular books for you. I can usually track down fiction pretty easily on my own in the used book stores, but non-fiction has always been a tougher call, as different stores will shelf those in different ways. So I used the library to help me keep up with that end of the reading spectrum when I can.

Your review of "The Windup Girl" has gotten me to add it to my list of books to keep an eye out for.

The one thing I took away from the article on Wonder Stories was how, tho Charles Horning was the editor at the time of the issue you reviewed, yet the cover has "Hugo Gernsback, Editor" printed on it. Bad enough not to be paid much, but not to even get credit? sigh. I love publishers... Oh, and I also had to wonder how many of the science-folks in that listing on page 17 actually existed or did much for the magazine, going by the info in the article about tightness with a dollar.

Little Orphan Annie on the radio was a bit before my own time, but I do still have a feeling for the premiums and such due to the movie version of Jean Shepherd's great "A Christmas Story". "Drink more Ovaltine" indeed.

Regarding the loc comments on the article on Rin-Tin-Tin on radio, and mimes. Many people find it funny that Edgard Bergen and Charlie McCarthy had a radio show, as if it was simply watching someone not moving their lips that was the draw, and not the humor of what was being said!

///Thanks for your email LOC on Fadeaway. Due to the logistics of this fanzine, I have been working three to four months in advance of each issue. Sometimes I can cut it closer, but basically a friend is doing the printing for me. I either give him the pages in person or mail them to him, and then a month later I see him at the regional OTRadio collector's club and he presents me with the finished copies. There was another delay, because Fadeaway was officially supposed to be distributed thru SFPA first. So after that deadline passed the bulk of the copies were mailed out to everybody else.

However I am stepping up the publication frequency of the fanzine. Officially it has been bi-monthly, just like SFPA, but I seem to be working mostly on a six-week actual time frame to prepare each separate issue. That being the case I have shifted the publishing schedule to once every six weeks. There was a delay this summer because I had to have the knee replacement surgery done. I went into the hospital the day before my birthday and after four days in the hospital, spent a week in primary rehab. It has taken more time after that for the pain to mostly go away and to regain full flexibility and use of the knee. This ain't a fun operation. But once the pain does finally cease and full mobility returns then it's all worth it. It's just seems like a looooooonnnng time getting to that point.

I hope you will move "Windup Girl" to the top of your must-read list. This is one of the best SF novels I've read in many a year, and I've read a ton of the stuff. Your local library undoubtedly has copies, especially after the buzz of the book winning both the Nebula and the Hugo Awards as well as a bunch of other literary prizes. As I said in the review, don't be the last science fiction fan on the planet to read this extraordinary novel.



Actually uncle Hugo put his name on the front covers of all his magazines, whether he was the actual editor or not. He did the actual editing on a lot of his electronics and radio magazines, but on others he passed the actual editing duties on to somebody else while still keeping his own name on the cover and the masthead. He felt (with some justification in the early years of SF) that being the guy who started *Amazing Stories*, the very first science fiction magazine, carried a certain amount of fame and influence with potential readers. After he basically left the SF field he kept doing the same thing with his other magazines as well. By that point it was probably custom, not to say egotism that kept the name on the front cover of his publications.

Charles Horning was a fascinating personality. He remained a fan thru most of his life and was also a lifetime pacifist. During WWII he was sent to prison for refusing to register or serve in the nationwide draft. I am not sure if he refused to justify his stand as a conscientious objector, but he did refuse to accept alternate service with the US Geodetic Service or other government branches where C-objectors could serve rather than going into the military, choosing instead to go to prison to stand by his principles.

That "Christmas Story" movie based on the writings of Jean Shepherd completely flubbed up and dumped on the Little Orphan Annie radio fan club. The LOA club NEVER sent secret messages hyping the sponsor's products, not ever. Shep never let a little thing like accuracy interfere with a good story.

Most of the science personalities listed as being on the board of the *Wonder Stories* science section actually existed. A precious few even took time to answer reader questions, but most did not. Most of the questions were either carefully picked by editor Horning so he could answer them himself, or written by himself so he could provide even more convenient answers by scanning the pages of current popular science journals. According to old time fans who lived thru the era this was a bit of a minor scandal at the time when the subterfuge was discovered.

A lot of people thought it was strange that a ventriloquist like Edgar Bergen could make it on radio, but here's something even stranger than that. When Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, his dummy, first appeared at rehearsals for his initial appearance on the Rudy Vallee program, the sound engineers couldn't get the right volume from of the act. Finally Bergen realized that the sound engineer had placed a mike over the head of Charlie, the dummy. The power of suggestion was so strong that even tho the engineers knew Charlie was a wooden dummy, they still placed a mike over his head to pick up "his" separate voice.///

**Milt Stevens; 6325 Keystone St.; Simi Valley, CA 93063**

I've received three issues of *Fadeaway* (16-18), but I haven't written an LoC as yet. This appears to have covered a nine month period, although it doesn't seem that long. So why haven't I written? It certainly isn't that I can't or don't write letters. I write lots of letters. Letter writing for me is somewhere between an instinctive response and a tropism. I think one of the things that got in the way of my letter writing response is the mention that *Fadeaway* is intended for SFFA. The idea of commenting on apazines from apas where I am not a member is foreign to me. Also, *Fadeaway* doesn't look like most genzines. If it had a cover and a table of contents, it would be immediately recognizable as a genzine and would trigger my LoC response.

*Fadeaway* has a pleasant mix of popular culture. You cover new books, old prozines, movies, radio, and comics. All of these topics appear in other fanzines, but the mixture in *Fadeaway* is distinctly your own.

Since I watch movies on TCM, I don't have to strain myself to remember Marie Wilson. I did see the "My Friend Irma" television show when I was a kid, but that was a long time ago. As of a few years ago, the movies on TCM bothered me slightly, because part of my mind was aware the young, attractive people in these movies were long dead for the most part. That probably reflects a morbid streak in my personality. For whatever reason I had that feeling, I haven't had it in the last few years.

Funnyman was the first Jewish superhero? What about Samson? He was Jewish and seemed to have all of the essential superhero characteristics. He was even supposed to be a rabbi, although most descriptions of him don't make him seem very much like a rabbi. I suppose you could consider the Golem as a Jewish superhero. In an era of misunderstood, neurotic superheroes, the Golem would fit right in. Heck, he's even as sexy as Swamp Thing.

Back when I worked for the LAPD, I used to see FBI wanted bulletins. The FBI were the only people who still issued wanted bulletins decades after we had an automated want-warrant system. The FBI bulletins were usually years out of date and involved crimes (such as theft from the mail) that didn't much concern local police agencies. For the most part, wanted posters are now just a bit of interesting historical Americana.

///Thanks for your comments on Fadeaway #s 18 and 19. Sorry if the reference to SFPA confused you. Fadeaway is indeed a genzine, with the first pile of copies going to SFPA, and after the SFPA deadline passes, lots of other copies are then sent out to other fans across the country.

So far as the lack of a full page cover and a table of contents goes, the absence of both was a conscious decision on my part. In ye olden days most of my fanzines did have tables of contents, usually positioned right after the cover. Then I decided it would be easier and save valuable page space if I put the table of contents and the masthead with the appropriate info on the back cover, which was also where the address label and stamps went when I mailed the zines out. However this time round, after considering how much postage costs, plus the fact that all the copies are going out in individual mailing envelopes instead of being folded over longways, I decided to do without a table of contents entirely. All pertinent info is in the section directly under the front page illo.

I also decided not to really bother with a full page illo front cover this time round either. This is not to say that I won't ever use a full page full sized illo front cover. If something appropriate comes along I might well go with it. However it occurs to me that having an illo on the top third or half a page with text immediately under it is more visibly impressive and also it happens to be a more effective use of limited page count in this day and age where postage costs a miniature fortune and printing costs are pretty hefty as well.

Your offhand comment about the "My Friend Irma" movie and how all those once young stars were all old or dead now reminded me of a peculiar situation with an acquaintance from several years ago. He never looked at old movie magazines or old issues of Playboy/Penthouse because all he could think of when he saw photos of the beautiful young women was how much older they were now, and what they probably looked like now. I thot this was bizarre. So did all his other friends, but it was a personal bit of strangeness he could never truly explain to anyone else. Apparently this time-morphing didn't apply to movies. The reason he gave was that movies moved, there was action happening on the screen all the time so he either didn't have time to think about how old the actors were or else the whole process of watching a movie by-passed his pre-cogs so far as photos went. I suppose the same logic would apply to old TV shows as well, where Lucille Ball was forever young as long as "I Love Lucy" was on the screen. I never thot to ask him what happened when a commercial came on.

Uh, the premise of the book is that Funnyman was the first Jewish *comic book* super hero. As covered in my article, I seriously question that premise, altho it was good to read all the background on Siegel and Superman and how Funnyman sprang into being. Actually comic books have already appropriated both the Jewish super heroes you mention. Samson, directly transported from ancient Biblical times to the modern day, was a Fox comic hero in the early 1940s. He was successful enuf to step from the pages of Fantastic Comics and into his own comic book. He was so busy fighting modern big city racketeers that he and his young sidekick Davey never got around to saying anything about Judaism or his Jewish origins. WWII paper rationing (plus probably lowered sales brought on by competition within the comic book field) killed him off along with most of the other Fox comic heroes. The Golem was a horror/hero/creature for Marvel Comics in the 1970s, running as the lead feature in I think, Uncanny Tales. The Golem as a friendly helpful semi-comedy creature was also a long running feature in a comic produced by some religious company distributed to Jewish children thru their local temples. I have some sample copies of that comic around here somewhere but I can't remember what the title actually was.

Interesting comment about the last days of the wanted poster in police circles. The concept of wanted posters is still alive in the public mind---look at all the milk carton illos of missing children and the assorted wanted websites that are all over the place. I have to agree with you that time has essentially moved on and rendered wanted posters per se as a part of history. Modern communication methods in the electronic age are far more effective in spreading the word about potential fugitives. In this area we have an Amber Alert System which is activated whenever a child goes missing and the police need the public's help tracking it down. I've noticed that every single Amber Alert I've ever heard concerned a child being snatched by one of the estranged parents. Not one single time was the system ever activated for a youngster who might have been kidnapped by some freak or ransom hungry criminal.///

#### **ART CREDITS FOR THE ISSUE:**

page 3: Brad W. Foster; page 23: Alan Hutchinson

Our next issue will appear in January. Your comments on this issue always appreciated.