

FADEAWAY #22 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. 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 is generally bi-monthly, but I might step up the schedule whenever I feel the urge. This is the April-May 2011 issue. This issue will also be distributed thru the Southern Fandom Press Alliance mailing #281.

AND WHAT A MARVELOUS AGE WE ARE LIVING IN! A quote, more or less, by Phillip Hazard, hero of those Napoleonic Wars era sailing stories by V.A. Stuart. The sentiment continues to ring true several hundred years later in This Year Of Our Lord 2011.

My friend Roger Anderson who owns Music Quest, a comic shop in the Worcester area where I buy most of my comics these days, now that I am no longer in the retail business myself, just passed on the information that Diamond Comics will begin selling digital comic books thru their retail store base. The price of each comic download will be \$1.99, and thus far a number of prominent independents have signed on for the program, but it is also worth nothing is that the big four comic companies (Marvel, DC, Dark Horse and Image) have not made the digital commitment, at least not yet.

Well, I was certainly intrigued by the announcement that Diamond is going to be selling virtual comics thru their store base. I expect most if not all the comic retail stores will sign up to participate, because digital sales will only mean bunny money to them. Diamond mentions each account must have a computer in the store with an Internet connection, and a printer attached. I am not sure if the store operator will have to print out something like a customer coupon or a receipt of some kind, but probably it would not involve anything as complex as a full color comic cover or the like.

In my opinion the \$1.99 price is too steep. Customers are going to balk and will probably prefer to buy a physical comic at that price, since physical comics sell in the \$2.99 to \$5.95 range. When the price drops to 99 cents each, yeah, then a lot of people are going to buy the digital image because they don't care that much about the actual physical comic books. There will always be hard core collectors, mostly young people, who want to amass a collection of physical comics, but at a lower price I think the comics industry might (with the right promotional effort) be able to regain that chunk of the market they lost back in the 1980s, the group I always referred to as six pack buyers.

These were the guys who bought a stack of comics and a six pack of beer on a Friday evening and made a comic book night of it. When comics rose above a buck a copy, and then above a buck and a half, almost all those

guys bailed out. They were never serious collectors, they just enjoyed reading the comics. At .99 for a download they (or their younger kindred souls) might well come back to the fold.

On the other hand the competition is going to be fierce. Every digital comic book sold means one less physical comic gets bought. At what point does it become no longer economically viable to physically print a comic book? This may well be the beginning of the end of printed comic books, not because people don't want to buy them, but because it costs too much to print comics based on the actual numbers of physical comics being sold. Traditionally when sales drop below a point where they are profitable, the comic title gets canceled. Selling digital images will probably accelerate that process.

To me the most interesting, and disturbing thing about this whole announcement was the mention that Diamond is selling product to 2,700 comic stores. That sent a chill up my spine. Back when I was running my own retail science fiction book and comic store, there were over 20,000 retail comic shops. The comic business these days has declined to the point where there are fewer than three thousand stores left. And that's not just stores in the USA, that's fewer than 3,000 stores on the entire planet!

Can you say imploding industry? Can you say comics are dying? I thot you could. I'm glad I'm no longer operating a comics store.

RATTLING THE CAGE

Time to talk tuff. In the past I have been happy to send out copies of Fadeaway to many people. I have been happy to accept the traditional fannish coin of the realm in return; namely, a letter of comment, or a physical fanzine in trade, or a contribution of art or an article to be run in the fanzine.. As a last resort, readers can also send in subscription money.

I am in the process of moving the mailing list to a data base so I can print self-stick labels out instead of having to write out about a third of the mailing addresses by hand, and I have noticed that there are a number of people who are not responding to these issues.

While I am happy to send this publication out to anyone who expresses a serious interest in receiving it, unfortunately there are people who are not holding up their end of the bargain. There are people who are not making any response at all or who may dash off the occasional short post card, or perhaps a brief email telling me how much they enjoy the zine and to please keep sending it.

Folks, that does not qualify as a letter of comment. If you'd like to know what does constitute a letter of comment, flip the pages over to the end of this issue and peruse the letters section. Those are the kinds of letters of comment I want to receive. Short notes, gushing hype and pleas for the next issue are about to fall on deaf ears. While the circulation of this fanzine continues to expand with each issue, I can no longer afford to carry deadwood. As mentioned in the first revival number of this publication, Fadeaway is an effort to open lines of communication among people with interests related to my own. I am doing my part, and I'd like you readers to do your part too. It costs a lot of money to produce this fanzine, and I can no longer afford to send it out to people who don't offer me something back in return.



What I would prefer to get back are relevant letters of comment. Or your print fanzine. Or how about writing an article for this zine, or using your artistic talents to create some illos to grace these pages? But if you can't do any of those things, then you need to subscribe, because time's up for a lot of folks who've just been coasting along, and that includes a number of pros in the biz as well. I can't afford to send copies out to people who do not respond. If you still want to receive future issues of Fadeaway, then think about subscribing. Do it now. This is the last issue for a number of people. You know who you are.

KINDLE-ING THE FIRE

by

FRANK MAZZARELLA

By now you may have heard that Kindle e-books are outselling paper and hard back books in some genres. Yes, it seems that the romances and the best sellers are doing 70% of their business in e-book format, and why not? If you can buy the latest supermarket hit for three dollars instead of eight dollars, or pick up a hardback for nine dollars instead of twenty-four bucks, it makes sense. Once you start using these devices it does not take long until they become second nature and reading a complete novel or book becomes effortless and even sometimes preferable on a Kindle or it's rival.

But for guys and gals like us, with a taste for the unusual, the boy's book, sci-fi, pulps, horror, B-movies and cliffhanger serials, there's gold in them thar' hills to mined and for very little investment.

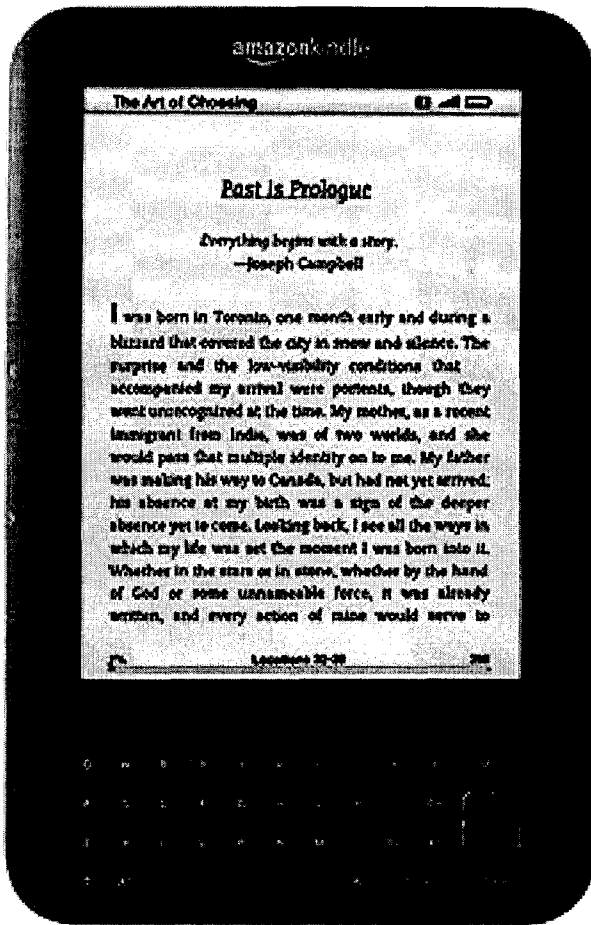
For starters, if you enjoy the boy's series books, say, the Rover Boys, or Stratemeyer books like "Fortune Hunters of the Yukon" or "The Ship and Shore " series or a hundred other titles, then run out and buy a Kindle or Nook because Google books is loaded with these titles in e-book form and for the wonderful price of "free". If "The Boy Ranchers" series turns you on, this is your lucky decade, because for the \$150.00 cost of a Kindle you can stuff yourself on these books until you explode. And where the Kindle holds 1000 or so books, you can carry the whole library of multiple series wherever you go.

I know for us geezers we aren't going many places and the e-book reader would have been great when we were in college and waiting at bus stops and subway platforms, but how about the back yard, automobile or any other place we might like to read outside of our homes.

Then there are the Tarzan books, the Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers types, and other adventure series books for the same price, free! If you want to spend money, Amazon will sell you any one of these books for a buck or \$1.99, and format them for you so that navigating the book is easier than pie. If you Google Book your favorite pulp writers you will find a plethora of their writings, gratis. Westerns are all there for free---Max Brand, Zane Grey and many, many more. Again, for no charge at all. The complete works of H. P. Lovecraft are all yours without payment, and again, if you want them formatted in a fancy way, you can pay a couple dollars to Amazon or Barnes and Noble for the upgrade.

I rarely spent money for any of the 600 books currently on my Kindle, however, last night I went for the \$1.99 to purchase 50 stories by Robert E. Howard, containing almost all the Boxing Stories and many of the westerns and sword and sorcery tales along with the Horror stories. Derleth, Ashton Smith, Machen and Algernon Blackwood are all there, in black and white and for free. Some enterprising gent is issuing less famous pulp story reprints in e-book form for a dollar. There are jungle tales and air war stories and all the other kinds of pulp stories in this series of reissues.

How about Dime Novels? They are all there for no cost. There is a *Beadle Library For Boys* that is bouncing around out there for no charge. I found this series on archive.org, a great source of free Kindle Books that even Amazon does not carry. If you buy the Kindle and set up a free account with Amazon, your books will be



sent to your machine, for free, in an instant. You also can sample any Kindle book that Amazon has by pressing the "sample" button and there are lots of great books that you can peek at. I had the first chapter of a non-fiction book about the Bowery Boys sent to my Kindle and the information I received for free was incredible. "The Border Boys in the Canadian Rockies" is my current read and I am enjoying the heck out of it. It combines two of my top enjoyments, Boy's Books and the Canadian Winter.

I have discovered the works of James Oliver Curwood, all for gratis, and the railroad stories of Cy Warman, again for free, and I am loading up on all of their works. The Frank Merriwell books are all there as are the westerns of Peter Dawson and "Ruth Fielding at Snow Camp". The original Hopalong Cassidy stories and novels are all yours as is "Four Weird Tales" by Algernon Blackwood. I have to say it again, they are all available for free! I am currently looking for Railroad stories and I am finding many more than I ever imagined.

You can read any of these books on your computer or smart phone but the e-book reader, especially the Kindle, has the best looking print. The e-ink system unique to the Kindle is the cream of the crop but you will do need some kind of light to read it in, since the screen is not back-lighted. You can read it comfortably in sunlight, but at night you will need a reading light or overhead light (or even a flashlight) to see the screen. For geezers, you can adjust the size of the letters. No longer will you need an oversized print edition that costs big bucks,

simply go into the test menu and adjust the size of letters to giant size or anything in between humongous and small.

As I mentioned, you can read any of these books on your computer, but try taking the computer to bed with you. The Kindle is lightweight and very comfortable for reading while lying back on a pillow. The smart phones are just too small and do not have the adjustment features of a dedicated e-reader.

Oh, the Kindle also reads books out loud. The Kindle will also allow you to listen to mp3 files while you read and if you enjoy computer voice, (which I am not crazy about) the Kindle will even read the book to you. Fast or slow, with both male and female voice adjustments are available. The voices are limited and are not very life-like, but it is interesting. You can also load the Kindle with podcasts and old radio shows and music, since it plays mp3's and does so very nicely.

If you want contemporary newly released science fiction or westerns or any other genre, the retail paperback prices go from \$3.99 to \$6.99. You get to put the novel on your Kindle, read it in private, and when you are through, there is no paperback to store away or throw away. Example: "A Storm of Swords" (A Song of Ice and Fire, Book 3) by George R.R. Martin is \$7.99 in paperback from Amazon, but \$5.99 if you buy the Kindle version. If you choose the Kindle version you can click on a button which leads to your account and the book will magically appear on your Kindle. You saved two bucks and there is no messy clutter to deal with in storing the paperback. The e-book stays on your machine forever unless you decide to delete it. The new Kindle software allows you to make notes as you read and share those thoughts with other Kindle readers. It also provides for page numbering that coincides with the paperback.

I have only touched on a small amount of what is out there. Take any bibliography of genre writers and search Google Books and you will be busy for hours both searching and reading what you find. The most encouraging sign is a trend to release pulp fiction through the ebook method and for one or two dollars per compilation. There are large sci-fi anthologies out there of pre-1960 material for free. Most of us know that Gutenberg carries hundreds of freebies and in multiple formats, as does the Baen Free library and archive.org.

On a personal note.....I have used both the Kindle and the Apple iPad. The Kindle wins hands down in my opinion. The iPad is heavy, reading causes dizziness and getting books both freebies and paid-for, is a hassle. I

will cheerfully admit that when it comes to reading comic books, the iPad is the King. But that is because the Kindle has yet to even delve into comic book reading. But it will come and in my opinion it will come quickly. E-book readers are calling for Comic Book capability and other features. Amazon is listening and the Kindle will evolve way beyond what is out there now.

Last year there was a flap when Amazon electronically deleted a version of the George Orwell novel "1984" from all Kindle readers. There was a lot of public comment on the matter, but an important fact too often overlooked was that the copy of "1984" which was recalled and taken off everybody's Kindle was a version involved in a copyright conflict situation. Most of the stuff I have on my Kindle is free to me and there would be no person or company who would have a right to retrieve it or change it in any way, while the rest are books fully authorized by Amazon to sell in electronic versions with no copyright or ownership issues involved.

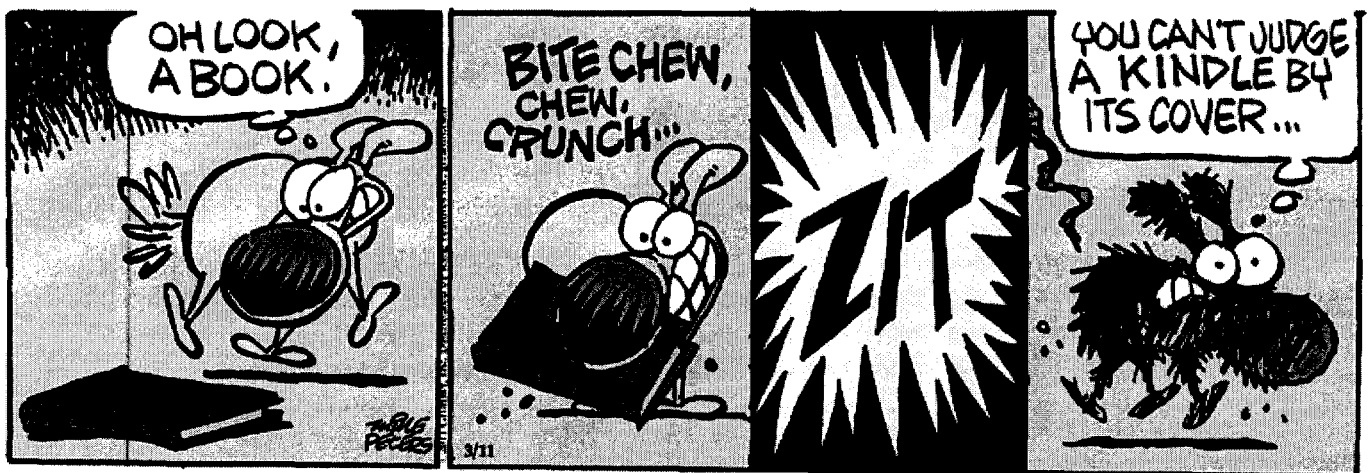
In addition there are software "apps", or computer applications which allow you to run Kindle books on your Sony or Nook and vice versa. One of those apps allows you to lock your material into your Kindle, or any other e-reader, so the material can never be edited or removed. The most popular is the interchangeable app. With that you can still patronize the Amazon Kindle store and buy books despite not actually owning a Kindle. The app makes your Sony, or Nook, or any other brand of e-reader recognize and read the Kindle book. Amazon has well over 80% of the e-book market and the market will apparently continue to grow in their favor. Something is happening with Kindle users and there does not appear to be any turning back. I am involved in making recommendations to people regarding which e-reader to buy, and it is not unusual to see a thread of 30 or more people all recommending the Kindle. Then there might be 1 or 2 who like the Nook.

Another interesting thing is that the NY Times has added an e-book best seller list to their ratings. So if you go the Books section of the Sunday Times you can see what is selling on the electronic market as well as the world of hard print. E-book sales often reflect the same best sellers as the other lists (James Paterson, romance and mystery novels and the para-romance novels that are so popular these days.)

I am now looking into how I can use the Kindle to keep my little legal arguments on and to store legal opinions and briefs. There is no limit to the uses imagined for the little e reader. There are multiple Kindle blogs and sites that compile new uses for the reader. The other thing about the Kindle is that it has satellite internet on it. That comes free. No matter where you are, you can go online and check email or read websites or books online or do anything you can do with your home computer. That alone is worth the price of admission. I pay for internet access at home, as do most of us. But the Kindle gives you free access to the internet 24/7 for no additional charge and no monthly fee.

That Kindle is one of the best bargains I have met up with in a long long time. I worry tho about longevity. I don't want to be buying a new one every year. When I think back, the Kindle may be the best of all the recent innovations in technology. The smart phone is the real big money maker and it seems like all the young un's have a smart phone and are abandoning their desktops and even laptops, but I vote for the Kindle.

So buy a Kindle or Nook and knock yourself out mining the net for free fun books. The entire run of Boy's Life appears to be on Google Books and you can put them right on your e-reader and read them at bus stops and airports. There does not seem to be an end to the fun. When the Kindle perfects the comic book for it's reader I will have reached Nirvana and then if they let you take your Kindle to jail, maybe a nice long prison sentence would allow me to catch up on all the books and stories I have accumulated.



BOOK BENDER



...so last Saturday we took all those trashy old pulp magazines out and burned them

THE PHANTOM: The Complete Newspaper Dailies--Volume 2 1937-1939; strip by Lee Falk and Ray Moore; published by Hermes Press; 268 pages; 12x8-1/2"; hardcover, \$49.95 retail price---review by Robert Jennings

This is the second volume of a reprint of the Phantom daily comic strips, a volume I was at first reluctant to purchase until I sat down and did a little basic math. My problem was that this book only presents two strips per page, whereas with only a minor adjustment the size could have been increased slightly and three strips per page could have been featured, which would have made this volume a far better value.

In addition to that, almost all of these stories have already been reprinted, not only in comic book form, but most recently by Tony Raiola's Pacific Comics Club in a series of trade paperbacks quite similar to the format of this hardback. The Pacific Comics Club editions feature three strips per page on good quality paper, saddle stapled trade paperbacks, and each of those editions sells for \$9.50.

When I was operating my retail store I made sure we stocked all the Pacific Comic Club editions, but I don't think very many comic stores do that today. Altho copies of those old comic books from the 1940s and 1950s might be hard to locate and pretty expensive these days, all the Pacific Comic Club editions are still in print.

What makes this hardback a better value is the fact that it contains six complete adventures. Six adventures from the Pacific Comic Club editions would come to \$57.00 total, plus whatever postage it takes to get the books shipped to you direct, whereas this hardback only costs \$49.95, and many locations offer a courtesy discount on these kinds of hardback comic strip reprints. As additional volumes come out (vol #3 is due out any minute), featuring stories not covered by the Pacific Comic Club the value will become even more economically viable.

It is interesting to see the Phantom during his early years. Some of these earliest adventures are quite impressive, but others are not. The simple fact of the matter is that Falk was most interested in his premiere strip Mandrake the Magician, into which he poured most of his creative talents. The Phantom was a second thought and although he created a brilliant opening adventure, he often turned away from the Phantom during the 1930s, apparently believing the strip would not survive very long.

He had lots of other irons in the fire besides his comic strips. According to Falk himself his true love was stage plays, of which he wrote, produced and directed a large number. He was quoted often as saying "I give 100% of my time to theater, and what's left over goes to comics."

Comics were only a part of his creative interest, and during the 1930s it sometimes seemed that the Phantom was not really very high on his list.

Some of these stories clearly show that. Tales like "Adventure in Algiers" and "Fishers of Pearls" are pedestrian time markers that helped establish the persona of The Phantom but offer little of the kind of involved action and thrills the readers came to expect from later stories.

On the other hand, there are excellent stories here, including "Little Toma", about a white boy disguised as a native and being raised in an obscure native village for unknown reasons, or "The Shark's Nest", which starts out in a slow, even predictable manner, but quickly takes wings when Falk turns his full creative attention to the plot. With multiple twists, and plot shifts, this kind of story spread out a strip a day over the course of a many weeks would certainly have held the rapt attention of the average newspaper reader.

This is the kind of material Falk had already mastered with Mandrake, and during the latter years of the thirties and onward, when he finally gave closer attention to Phantom, these kinds of involved plots would propel the Phantom to the top of the adventure heap.

This volume allows readers to get a sense of the character at his beginnings, when the legend of the Phantom is known but not believed, a time when the Phantom is none too sure of his own prowess or even his resolve to confront the evil he had sworn to oppose. There are pirates, thieves, con men and ruthless murderers, and during this decade the legend of the Phantom grew with each story, until he became a world wide success in the comics, with hundreds of papers running his adventures around the world.

If you haven't already gotten these adventures elsewhere, then you should pick this book up. It's a fun read. The strong stories are very strong, and even the weak stories offer some interesting insights into a developing comic legend during his formative years. The price may seem steep, but it's worth the investment for a permanent record of a legendary comic strip, adventures you can enjoy, and reread over the years with a fresh perspective each time.

ROY CRANE'S CAPTAIN EASY: THE COMPLETE SUNDAY NEWSPAPER STRIPS---Volume 1 1933-1935; Fantagraphics Books; edited and with an introduction by Rick Norwood; 132 pages; 11-1/2x15"; hardcover; \$39.00---review by Robert Jennings

This is an impressive piece of work. Rick Norwood, long time comics and science fiction fan, publisher of *The Comics Revue* a magazine devoted to reprinting classic comic strips, has produced a number of impressive collections over the years, and this is one of the very best. Some of his offerings have come out thru his own Manuscript Press, but this book is being produced by Fantagraphics Books, presumably to get better national distribution

Less impressive is the physical makeup of the book. The book has hard covers, but they are pressed board, with a couple of full color appliques front and back, and book tape stripe binding for the spine lettering. The





corners are rounded-cut and there is no dust jacket. Buyers of the book will want to store this volume flat, even if they actually have a shelf tall enuf for the 15" tabloid height of the book.

However none of that really matters. Roy Crane was a pivotal figure in the creation of the American comic strip. He was a pioneer in the development of the adventure strip, establishing many of the perimeters and approaches that became the standards for the form. In addition he injected humor, satire, and irony into his comic strips, so that they were much richer and provided more detailed characterizations than the work of his contemporaries (or of most of the cartoonist creators who followed in his footsteps).

Rick Norwood provides a detailed and interesting look at Crane's early years, his problems at the University of Texas, including his abrupt departure due to gambling debts, and his development of Captain Easy as a spin-off from the Wash Tubbs comic strip. Tracking down the source material for this volume is a story all of itself, one Rick touches on briefly at the introduction and again in the final pages of the book where he offers some additional artistic material.

It is often said that the fire burns brightest when the flame first strikes the tinder, and it would be tempting to say the same about Captain Easy based on just this volume, because these are truly

wonderful adventures with truly wonderful art. But the simple fact of the matter is that Roy Crane was a genius, a man who once he began drawing and writing comic strips, found his true mission in life and never slowed down. All of his stories, all of his adventures were superb, and this volume of the early adventures of Captain Easy merely verifies that.

When World War II began Hearst Syndicated made Crane an excellent offer to move over to King Features and create a new comic strip centered around the wartime adventures of a hero in the military. Crane left Wash Tubbs and Captain Easy to his assistant and lifetime friend Leslie Turner while he devoted his efforts to creating Buz Sawyer, the strip for which he is best known.

Some of these Captain Easy strips were reprinted in the Flying Buttress hardback volumes that reprinting the entire Crane years on the Wash Tubbs strip, but those reprints were in black and white, and not all the strips were included.

This book rectifies that. Every Sunday strip from the very beginning is reprinted here, all in full color, all in full tabloid size just as they were originally created. It is wonderful to sit and watch the mastery of Crane's art and story telling unfold. In ten to twelve panels he tells amazing adventures that move along very rapidly, yet keep the reader involved with the personalities that are part of these plots.

Crane stressed very strong involved story telling, but he also was adapt at creating the human beings that populated the strip. They weren't cardboard characters; they were real people with real fears, hopes, and weaknesses. The humor and the sense of strangeness is also present as Crane sends Captain Easy on a long voyage thru Asian, meeting isolated tribes, warring kingdoms, pompous rulers, scoundrels, bandits, lost treasures, and shifty weaklings as well as an amazing assortment of beautiful women.

When I first bought this volume I sat down read it thru cover to cover. Then I read it again. Then a month later I read it again. Then I read it two more times over the course of a snowy weekend. As I was writing this review I opened the book and wound up reading all the strips again, start to finish. Every single time the stories seemed fresh and new. The art is spectacular, and I was swept along with the talents of one of the most gifted and influential creators to ever grace the comic pages.

I recommend this volume without hesitation. Go out and buy this book. You will never regret it. I can hardly wait for the second volume to come out.

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.

MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES; November 1938; pulp size, 128 pages; Martin Goodman, Editor and Publisher

by

ROBERT JENNINGS

The 1930s were difficult times for the science fiction field, yet by the end of the decade things had changed for the better. As discussed in previous installments of this series, all three of the major science fiction magazines had failed and had been sold to three heavy-duty publishing houses who had hired new editors with clear visions for their magazines. As a result the science fiction field was slowly being reborn from the near destruction of the genre in the middle of the decade. *Astounding* was being published by Street and Smith with John W. Campbell in the editorial chair, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, soon to be joined by *Startling*, was being published by the Standard Magazines empire with Mort Weisinger as editor, while *Amazing Stories* (soon to be joined by *Fantastic*

Adventures) was being published by Ziff-Davis with Ray Palmer directing the magazine's destiny.

Sales of the major science fiction magazines had recovered to the point where other publishers were beginning to take notice of this very odd corner of the fiction field. In addition, by the end of the decade several science fiction comic strips were appearing in the newspapers, more science fiction novels were being published, science fiction motion picture serials and feature movies were showing up in the theaters, and there were even a few science fiction related radio programs on the airwaves, altho in truth most science fiction on the radio was shoe-horned into the weekly offerings of general anthology series, or, more commonly, aired as part of supernatural creep shows

such as *Lights Out* or *The Witch's Tales*. Still, by the end of the 1930s the public at large was considerably more familiar with science fiction than it had been at the beginning or the middle of the decade.

It was into this changing mix that a brand new science fiction magazine titled *Marvel Science Stories* was launched, cover dated August, 1938. The editor and publisher was Martin Goodman, most famously remembered today as the publisher of *Timely Comics*, which in later years became *Marvel Comics*. In late 1939 he launched *Marvel Comics* (which almost immediately changed its name to *Marvel Mystery Comics*), home of the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, two of the more successful comic characters of the 1940s. After a few dead-end comic book titles that tanked almost immediately, in 1941 he added Captain America and had a winning trio that helped to define the decade, and whose memory helped to launch the *Marvel Comics* empire in the early 1960s.

However, before any of that happened, Goodman was a publisher of pulp magazines.

For a person so prominent in the field of magazine and comic book publishing relatively little seems to be known about Martin Goodman. He was born in 1910 in Brooklyn, New York, and then the next thing we really know about him is that in 1931 at the relatively young age of twenty-one, he formed a partnership with Louis Silbertkeit, and Maurice Coyne to create *Columbia Publications*, a pulp magazine

publishing house. Persistent rumor has it that he used borrowed money to join that partnership.

Whether he did or not, the partnership did not last very long. In 1932 Goodman broke away to form his own company. A few years later, in 1939 Silbertkeit and Coyne joined John L. Goldwater to form MLJ (using the first initials of each partner's first names) which became *Archie Comics*.

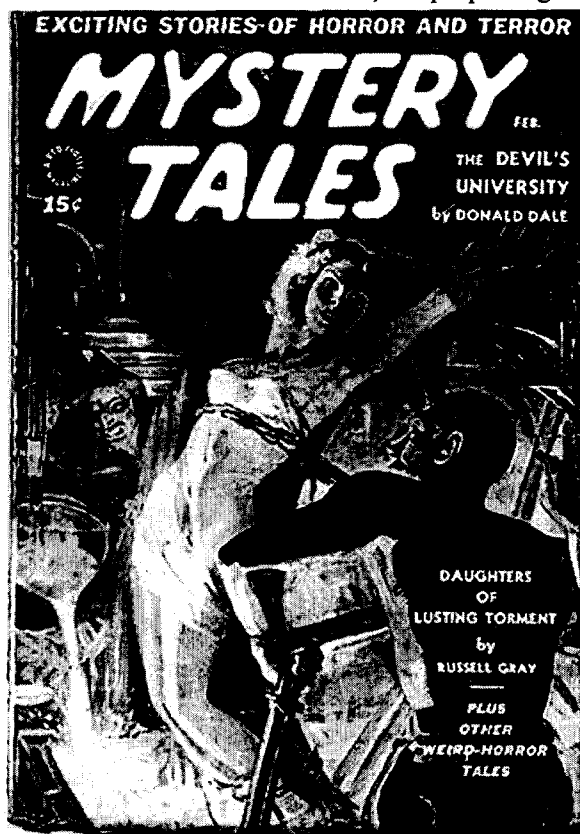
The first pulp Goodman published was *Western Supernovel Magazine* in 1933. Almost immediately the title was changed to *Complete Western Book*. The sales gimmick was that each issue featured a full length novel backed by a few short stories to fill up what remained of the page count.

He branched out adding other westerns, a few detective titles, a few sports titles, and some general adventure pulps. These were all relatively safe fields to expand into. By the middle of the 1930s Goodman was successful and confident enuf to employ the Red Circle seal as an identifying emblem on most of his pulp magazine titles. He continued to add more and more pulp titles to his publishing empire, still playing it safe with well explored popular genres.

Then in the middle 1930s Goodman identified the weird menace segment of the pulp market as something with real growth potential and he jumped into the field feet first. For those who might not know, weird menace stories featured supernatural or horrific menaces usually directed at or somehow involving young women, and featured a generous mixture of sexual sadism, female nudity and vicious brutality under a veneer of the fantastic which may or may not actually have supernatural causes as the stories developed. Covers and interior illustrations featuring beautiful young women about to be tortured or dismembered were a hallmark of this material and it sold very well, at least up until the end of the decade when the public became alarmed at which point the magazine publishers and distributors were forced to curb the format in a hasty effort to avoid censorship and a crippling of the distribution system by legal action.

The Spicy line of pulp titles had blazed the way by adding sex into their stories and scattering semi-nude art thruout their issues. The weird menace category had simply expanded the concept. Goodman was a very fast learner when it came to figuring out popular trends. From the mid 1930s thru the end of 1940 Goodman added several weird menace titles to his line and changed a number of other titles they may have originally started out as something else.

All Star Adventure began in 1935 as a straight adventure pulp but very rapidly became a weird menace mag. *Complete Western Book* was cancelled



THE SEAL of APPROVAL for READING ENJOYMENT



The Red Circle emblem on a magazine cover guarantees that you get top-notch fiction for your money.

The policy of Red Circle editors is to give their readers **FICTION OF QUALITY** by recognized authors of good writing.

Red Circle magazines are the fastest growing group of fiction magazines on the market. Read this list and remember the names when you buy a magazine for complete reading enjoyment.

Complete Western Book
Star Detective
Adventure Trails
Complete Detective
Sky Devils
Star Sports
Complete Sports
Best Sports
Wild West Stories & Complete Novel
Two-Gun Western
Detective Short Stories
Marvel Science Stories
Top-Notch Western

Western Short Stories
Western Fiction Magazine
Six Gun Western
Gunsmoke Western
Best Western
Real Sports
Sports Action
Western Novel & Short Stories
Modern Love
Quick Trigger Western Novels
Mystery Tales
Top-Notch Detective
Cowboy Action Novels

ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE  RED CIRCLE ON THE COVER

and *Star Detective* took its place. *Star Detective*, despite the title, was a weird menace pulp. *Mystery* was added in late 1939 and underwent several name changes. Goodman's weird menace pulps were always the most lurid and the most graphic on the market. In addition, he began adding more sexual situations into many of his other pulp magazines because sex was selling lots of magazines.

In order to minimize his potential economic loss in case of a sales failure or other unseen problems Goodman created a separate company for each individual title. He may not have been the first publisher to use this gimmick, but he was certainly the most prolific. This method allowed him to keep very

close tabs not only on each magazine's expenses, but also compartmentalized each magazine's profits. That aspect could help minimize both his corporate and his individual income tax burden.

Somewhere along the line he also established his own primary distribution system, directly moving his magazines from the printing plant to the regional newsstand distributors. This was an important and profitable step adopted by most of the very large magazine publishers. The distribution company was also set up as a separate self-contained independent company.

The only successful category which Goodman ignored was the pulp hero market. It would be

interesting to discover why he skipped over this potentially profitable field. True, it might have been difficult finding worthy competitors for heroes such as Doc Savage, The Shadow, the Spider, G-8 and His Battle Aces, Dusty Ayers, Secret Operator #5 or the many other ultra heroes and sinister super villains regularly being featured in the detective and anthology pulp magazines (*Weird Tales* even had one), but Goodman had never been shy about jumping onto a trend before. His only experimentation in this field came in 1940, when he published a single issue of *Ka-Zar*, a Tarzan imitator. *Ka-Zar* showed up most often as a back-up feature in *Marvel Mystery Comics* and other Timely comic books.

By 1938 when he decided to publish a science fiction magazine his Red Circle line listed a total of twenty-five separate pulp magazine titles. *Marvel Science Stories* was a major departure for him. In the past, except for the weird menace fad, he had carefully avoided any genre which had not proven itself widely accepted and popular with the reading public. So while there was only one Red Circle air war title, and only one Red Circle romance magazine, there were no Red Circle war story magazines, no Red Circle gangster or true crime titles, and no Red Circle railroad or sea story titles.

Marvel Science Stories was Goodman's first major step into a relatively risky arena. More than that, he listed himself as the editor of the magazine, something he had not done with his other pulp magazine titles. For the other magazines in his company Robert O. Erisman and James Randall served as editors

The first question that arises is why? Why a new SF mag? Also, why then? Why launch it in the middle of 1938? Sure the field was recovering, but it was recovering slowly. Except for a single issue of *Flash Gordon Strange Adventure Magazine* in 1936, there were no new science fiction or fantasy titles added during the years of 1936 or 1937. Yet early in 1938 Goodman decided to start a brand new science fiction magazine with *Marvel Science Stories*.

And he didn't fiddle around with it either. He was determined to make this a successful science fiction magazine, so he went directly to the top writers in the field. It is very likely that he also contacted literary agencies in New York and specifically asked for name authors and a first look at new material. His rates were a penny a word, equal to the rates *Astounding* was paying, and there is some evidence that he may have offered more than that, perhaps the standard rate plus a ten percent bonus to get first crack at top material from the top writers in the field.

He got the results he wanted. Many of the top professionals in the science fiction and fantasy field submitted stories to him, and their names were featured prominently on the front covers of every issue, sure to attract the attention of the hard-core science fiction reader.

In addition to that he established his cover price at fifteen cents a copy. This gave *Marvel Science Stories* a strong edge on most of the competition. *Astounding* was selling for twenty cents a copy, while *Amazing* had been twenty-five cents since the very beginning. But the minute Ray Palmer took over as Ziff-Davis's new editor in the middle of 1938 he dropped the cover price of *Amazing* to twenty cents. *Thrilling Wonder* was selling for fifteen cents a copy and at that same fifteen-cent price *Marvel Science* was undercutting two of its competitors. That low cover price was certain to create a favorable reaction on the part of potential buyers.

The November 1938 issue is the second issue of *Marvel Science Stores*. Initially I was going to review the third issue, but I had to restrain myself because, quite frankly, that third issue happens to be one of my all time favorite pulp-sized SF magazines, with Jack Williamson, one of my all time favorite writers featured in the lead slot of the issue presenting one of my all time favorite Jack Williamson science fiction novels. To prevent the article from degenerating into a gushing love fest I had to reluctantly set aside that wonderful third issue and go with this November number instead.

The cover by Frank R. Paul is clearly a winner. Using Paul's signature abundance of bright reds and a medium long focus on a central point, he successful blends a bizarre sense of futuristic menace with good old fashioned pertinent interest, as a naked young lady (clearly nude, but tastefully pictured with her back to the viewer) is under the control of a vicious looking dome-brained futuristic being directing a trio of robots while a mob of human slaves kneel down watching the scene from the background. Looking for an instant Sense of Wonder? Here it is! The impact shines clearly down thru the years, and in 1938 it must have blown the socks off the teenagers and young men who were the primary buyers of science fiction during that era.

Inside the stories begin with a bang. *Marvel Science Stories* billed itself as featuring two feature length novels in each issue. In actuality of course the stories were closer to novelettes than full book length adventures. In fact for this issue the "novels" come in at between forty and fifty thousand words each. But editor Goodman clearly recognized the lure of longer

"EXODUS"

thrilling book-length sequel
to "SURVIVAL" by

ARTHUR J. BURKS

MARVEL

15¢

NOVEMBER

SCIENCE STORIES

THE TIME TRAP

complete novel by

HENRY KUTTNER

also

Jack Williamson
Stanton Coblenz
David Keller



epics as a means for attracting the hard core science fiction fan.

"Exodus" by Arthur J. Burks is the lead "novel", and happens to be a direct sequel to Burks' novel featured in the first issue of *Marvel Science*, titled "Survival". This was written, according to the magazine "In Response To Your Insistent Demands."

Arthur J. Burks was a prolific writer who churned out a lot of horror, fantasy and science fiction. He also wrote straight adventure, sea stories, weird menace and detective adventures. His detective stories often feature more than a hint of the supernatural in the plots. His specialty was the weird and fantastic. *Weird Tales* was one of his first and favorite markets, but he wrote supernatural material for a wide variety of magazines. He also wrote science fiction, and during the middle 1930s he seemed to specialize in weird menace stories.

Burks had originally been a career military officer, serving in World War One, rising to the rank of Colonel, but around 1920 he began writing fiction. By 1928 he was so successful at it that he resigned from the military and took up writing full time. He was one of the so-called million-word-a-year men because of his prodigious output. The only genres he did not write for were romance or westerns, but everything else was open, altho his sports output mostly revolved around boxing and the sordid criminal element associated with boxing.

During the early 1930s he was the first president of the American Fiction Guild, an organization primarily made up of pulp magazine writers seeking to improve working relations with publishers and put an end to plagiarism. The New York chapter held weekly lunch meetings with guest speakers for several decades.

He was noted as having an extremely fertile imagination and once bragged that he could write a salable story about any object, any idea, any concept anybody suggested to him. A few fellow writers took him up on that boast and made a wager when they suggested he write a story about a common dime-store folding fan. Burks immediately sat down and turned out a weird menace thriller based on a cursed sacred folding fan which had been brought to this country, complete with a crazed oriental cult seeking its return.

Burks reentered the military when WWII broke out and stuck with it until retiring with a military pension after the hostilities ended. In his later years he became heavily involved with psychic phenomena and wrote mostly non-fiction exploring the possible realities of supernatural and occult events. He also lectured on the subject.

Unfortunately "Exodus" is not one of his better stories. Created as a direct sequel to "Survival", the 50,000 lead novel he had written in the very first issue of *Marvel*, this story has a very rushed feeling to it.

In fact, "Exodus" is pretty much an after thot. The original hero of "Survival" had died at the end of that novel, so this sequel obviously couldn't feature him. Instead Burks uses his brother as the stalwart hero. David Haslup is the hereditary ruler of the United States of Sanctuary, an underground future civilization which has been living beneath the Earth in hollowed out caverns from thirty-nine generations; close to eight hundred years.

The original inhabitants were chased underground by 'Mongols', regarded now as some kind of monsters of superstition. During their decades under the earth the people have achieved a near Utopian existence. They have conquered anti-gravity, they use telepathic communication rings, they have rays that permeate the caverns and automatically create water and nutrient inside the bodies of the inhabitants so they never feel hunger or thirst, while all work is done by machines. Artificial suns light the caverns, with large reflectors reaching every part of the underground civilization. Naturally disease is unknown, and the average human being lives well over a hundred years but never appears to age much beyond their early thirties. In this situation the people have plenty of time for art and thinking, altho life seems rather dull to many.

Burks immediately sidesteps any potential story plots that might be built out of this situation. It turns out our hero's younger brother Frank, hero of the previous novel, had discovered that there is a vast outside world, a cavern of unlimited space with a strange central sun instead of controlled atomic orbs in each of the Sanctuary series of caverns, and populated by other beings with strange arts and strange building. Unfortunately, he was branded a traitor and his ashes are entombed inside the Black Columbarium in shame.

David Haslup decides to do something about that, and doing something about that means getting together a crew of hearty followers and checking out the surface world and taking actions that might help them regain their ancient heritage.

After assorted maneuvering, against lots of resistance on the part of everyone, including the council of elders, David manages to get together his exploring force and makes his way to the surface, where the group encounters a large futuristic city populated by the 'Mongols' and their descendents complete with surface vehicles, soaring arched roadways and towering buildings reaching hundreds of feet into the sky.

Dave and his buddies decide that they must take back the surface for their own people, and what luck, they have the means to do that in the form of disintegrator ray guns, small, compact, really nasty weapons that are unknown on the surface.

Dave and his friend spy on the surface city, and decide a little demonstration might be in order, such as slicing a sky scraper in half and killing all the people inside (not to mention those who will die in the crashing rubble). There is a tiny bit of hesitation on his part. After all, this is wholesale murder without even a word of advance warning. But, "They destroyed our people in the long ago, by millions, according to the ancient records. Why then should we have mercy? They are barbarians! Their destruction will not rest on my conscience."

He gives his friend the go-ahead, who proceeds to wipe out not just the sky scraper, but an entire city block as he sprays the whole area with his disintegrator gun. The destruction is horrific.

"I'll wager I got thousands of them, David," says his pal, "I look for vast excitement."

'Vast excitement' is exactly what they get. Countless flying globes rise and began to search for the attackers. When they locate the Sanctuary force, red and white pencils of light flash down from the globes killing any man they touch. Dozens of the cavern forces are slain, while even more globes rise above the area. Dave decides that discretion is the better part of valor and telepathically tells everyone to retreat back to Sanctuary.

I always had a major problem with disintegrator ray guns, that staple of space opera and the Buck Rogers comic strip in the twenties and thirties, because it seems to me that nobody ever got this gimmick thru very well. For one thing, I'd like to know where the hell the power comes from that can produce a disintegrating ray. That is not explained here, and explanations never seem to be high on the list of need-to-know information in any of the other science fiction stories using the gadgets I have read.

Then there is the matter of how the thing actually works. Skipping over the science of how a beam or ray or force might be able to break apart objects so completely that they seem to disintegrate, another practical problem that always struck me was how do you determine the range on this thing? In this story Burks says the ray is effective up to two miles.

Does that mean after it disintegrates its primary object, it keeps on going, vaporizing everything in its path until it reaches the maximum range, or does it mean that when it hits a big object of some kind the ray is mostly used up and doesn't go farther on? How does that work? Would hitting a

building use up the rays, while a mere man, an enemy soldier or perhaps even a squad of them, merely be blasted to nothingness and the ray keep right on moving, with the human foes being sort of a minor speed bump in its full range?

Then there's the matter of the air in the way of the ray. A disintegrator ray by definition disintegrates everything in its path, and that includes the molecules of the air. They would be wiped out too. And if the air is suddenly wiped out of existence, wouldn't that create a tremendous thunder clap, thunder so powerful and loud that it might do as much actual damage as the ray itself? What would happen to the surrounding air pressure when an entire building is vaporized? The air pressure clap might be enough to level half the city. Nobody in these stories ever bothers to cover these points.

Meanwhile, David manages to steal one of the Mongol globes, and also manages to make it fly without knowing a thing about it, then after a few more trifling adventures returns home to the underground caverns.

Dave decides that what they need to conquer the outside world is invisibility, so in a few paragraphs the scientists of Sanctuary whip up invisibility rings. Don't ask. Just don't ask.

At this point, it should be clear to even the most naïve reader that Burks is plotting this story while he is typing it, that he really has no firm idea of how this whole story should be constructed or where it might end up.

A new invading force sets out with David leading the way back to the Mongol city, but by now Burks is having second thoughts, and so is his hero. By page 24 it has occurred to Burks that the civilization he is describing is hardly composed of "barbarians", that the people are almost as advanced as the cavern dwellers. He is also having a lot of qualms about murdering vast numbers of unarmed civilians, so David decides to go it alone, reasoning that one invisible man can cause many disruptions to prove his power without having to slaughter all those people to demonstrate his superiority.

He accomplishes many small triumphs and manages to single-handedly terrorize the entire city. After wandering around for a few days he develops horrible pains in his middle, extreme dryness in his mouth, and a strange weakness before he finally manages to be rescued and returned to Sanctuary where he learns he has experienced "hunger" and "thirst" in his days long excursion. The miraculous rays inside the caverns naturally provide water and nourishment directly inside each person's body artificially, but not so for the outside world

By page 27 the thot of what he is doing is weighing heavily on David (and obviously, on Burks as well.) "He moved along just above the spires of this vast inland city, which reached north and south as far as he could see, and stretched endlessly eastward ahead of him. It was a beautiful thing, that city, but it held the millions of his enemies. And they were, he thought, helpless against him. He could not escape a feeling of compassion at thought of destroying them all."

He decides that instead of killing everybody, he should merely conquer the surface civilization. The Sanitariums must be the new recognized leaders and aristocracy.

Then he meets a beautiful and intelligent Mongol girl and begins to befriend her, especially since she is harshly questioned because of her initial contact with him, one of the savage invaders. A light romance begins to develop until Burks abruptly remembers that he described the Mongols as having conquered and inter married with all their conquered peoples. Horrors, the hero is falling for a mixed breed Mongol girl! Well, that is certainly unacceptable, so then Burks conveniently has the hero remember that he is married. Married? Oh yes, absolutely, so of course he can't possibly become involved with this beautiful half-breed mongrel.

The conquest continues almost single handedly. Dave manages to locate the rulers of the vast surface empire, and naturally overcomes these inferior non-Caucasian rulers with his powerful weapons and strong will. There is some resistance by others of the Mongol council, but all ends well and Dave returns home to the arms of his wife, mission accomplished. The long banished Americans are now in full control of the surface world and the Mongols are their willing vassals.

This was not one of Burks' best efforts. Altho parts of the story move right along, there is a notable lack of genuine story plot development and a heavy reliance on super scientific gadgets whipped up on the spur of the moment to meet problems that really needed some thot and concentrated plotting efforts on the part of the writer to solve. It was a clear romp for the protagonist, and sort of dull for the reader.

Burks was a much better writer of shorter stories, and short stories accounted for the overwhelming bulk of his fiction output. Altho serviceable enuf, this was not an auspicious beginning for the issue. I think it worth noting that while many of Burks's fantastic stories have been reprinted thru the years, this one was not.

Luckily the second story in the issue is by Jack Williamson. There may be a few bad Jack Williamson

stories out there somewhere; after all, no writer is perfect, but this is a good one. Titled "The Dead Spot", this story has been reprinted several times over the years.

This is a fast moving thriller that packs a lot of action into a limited number of pages. This story would have benefited with an additional thousand or so words to round out some of the details, but it is likely that Williamson was writing with a specific suggested word count assignment here, so a lot of plot gets crammed into ten printed pages, plus a large title illo by Wesso.

In 1940 a huge Dead Spot appears in the middle of the United States. One second all is well, the next there is a flash of purple light and everything within a vast radius has turned to gray dust. Nothing lives within, nothing can penetrate this ghastly region, and there appears to be no way to eliminate the dead spot. The edges of the Dead Spot are sharply defined, but even the winds do not stir into or out of this zone of death.

The hero of the story is a super science type named Ryeland Ames, appointed by the President to set up a Special Secret Service task force to deal with the problem. This is not easy. It is learned that the Zone may have been the result of an experiment gone wrong conducted by a rogue scientist named Dr. Hope who was trying to create an artificial life form. His assistant, Dr. Grissom Rathbone is discovered outside the Zone, at death's door in a nearby hospital. He is saved by a miraculous medical invention Ames has perfected, and joins the SSS team, but he remembers very little of what Hope's experiments were about. The months turn into years as the SSS team works to unravel the riddle of the dead spot,

Nothing can enter the zone, not even robot planes, yet it seems that within the zone movement has been observed. Ames believes these are life forms, of some sort, and he himself has observed what appears to be a flying woman in the skies near the edge of the Spot. It appears there are also metal robot-like creatures on the ground.

Then in late 1950, the Dead Zone begins to expand, and something must be done. Ames devises a risky method of entering the zone, determined to find an answer. He finds more than he expected. There is indeed artificial life within the zone, two separate types, each type battling against the other for survival. The robot types are intelligent mechanical tech men, the other type a fairy-like ethereal flying people who have essentially lost the war with their metal opponents, and who are about to be exterminated. Time moves at a much faster rate inside the Dead Spot,

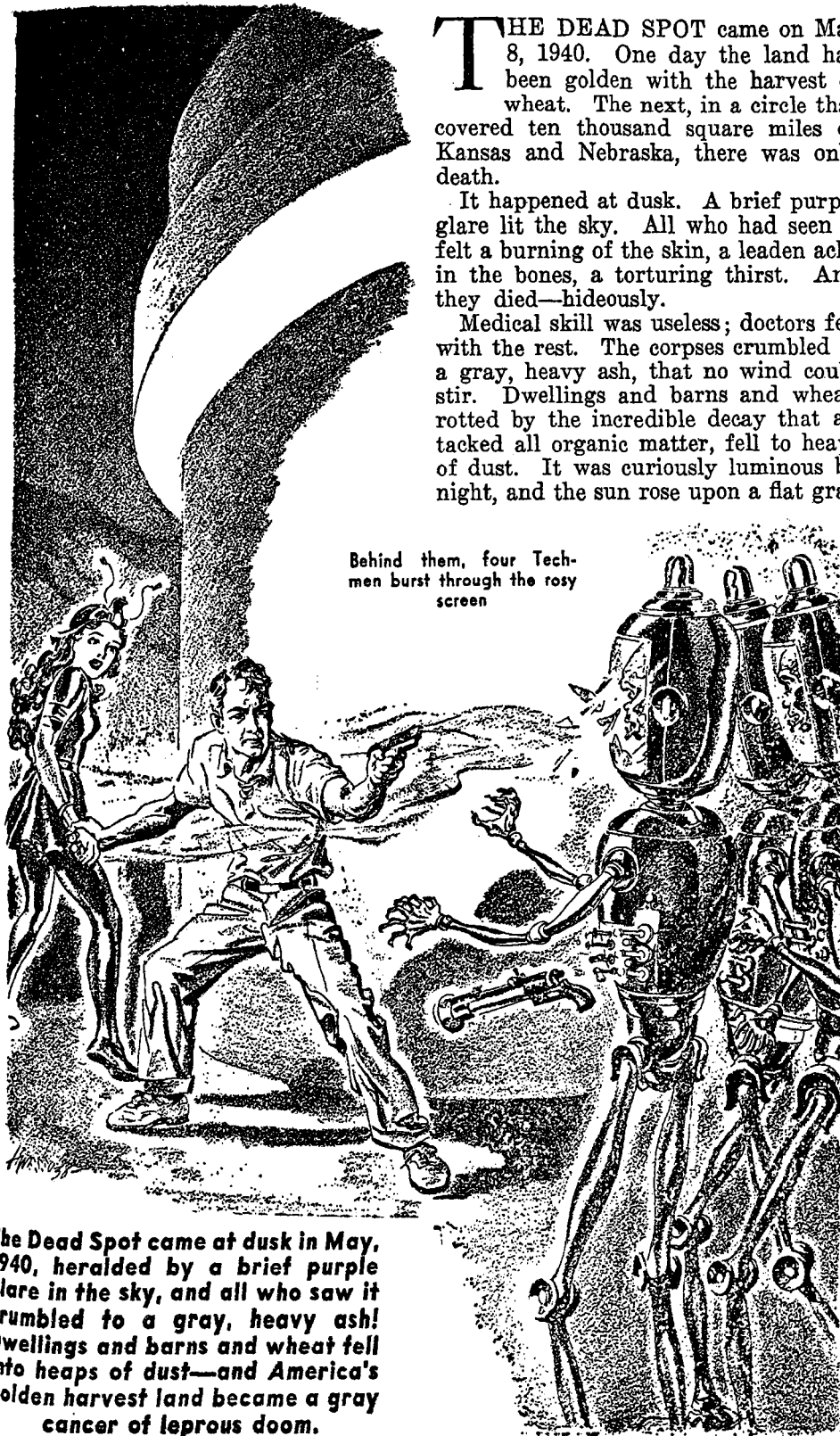
THE DEAD SPOT

by JACK WILLIAMSON

THE DEAD SPOT came on May 8, 1940. One day the land had been golden with the harvest of wheat. The next, in a circle that covered ten thousand square miles of Kansas and Nebraska, there was only death.

It happened at dusk. A brief purple glare lit the sky. All who had seen it felt a burning of the skin, a leaden ache in the bones, a torturing thirst. And they died—hideously.

Medical skill was useless; doctors fell with the rest. The corpses crumbled to a gray, heavy ash, that no wind could stir. Dwellings and barns and wheat, rotted by the incredible decay that attacked all organic matter, fell to heaps of dust. It was curiously luminous by night, and the sun rose upon a flat gray



Behind them, four Techmen burst through the rosy screen

The Dead Spot came at dusk in May, 1940, heralded by a brief purple glare in the sky, and all who saw it crumbled to a gray, heavy ash! Dwellings and barns and wheat fell into heaps of dust—and America's golden harvest land became a gray cancer of leprous doom.

and the approaching end of this war between species seems to be the cause of the Zone's expansion.

A survivor of the flying race of people, a beautiful girl named Arthendne, rescues Ames when his special aircraft crashes. She feeds him a strange liquid to ward off, at least temporarily, the destructive forces within the dead zone that will kill him and turn him to gray dust. Determined to find and somehow stop the cause of the Zone's deadly powers and expansion, he and Arthendne struggle against bitter odds to reach the center of the Tech Men's city before he dies.

The adventure reaches a climax with a twist ending, and I'm probably not ruining the story by mentioning that altho Ames is triumphant, both he and Arthendne his true love, perish in the final successful attempt to wipe out the Dead Spot, and die happily in each other's arms.

Its not too often you come across a super science adventure that also functions as a social commentary- detective mystery-romance-action thriller all wrapped up in one tale, but this was one, and it was a good one at that.

Williamson continued to write for *Marvel Science Stories*, appearing in most of the issues, usually under his own name, but sometimes using the byline of "Nils O. Sunderland."

The short story that follows is titled "Rout of the Fire Imps" by Stanton Coblenz. Coblenz had been a contributor to the professional science fiction magazines since 1928. He primarily regarded himself as a poet and a historian, but is best remembered today for his science fiction stories. Many of his longer stories tended to be satirical examinations reflecting the foibles of human beings and human civilization. He continued to write science fiction, particularly novel length science fiction, turning out a new novel every three or four years almost till the end of his life in 1982, and altho those novels showed up in both paperback and hardback, mostly he is remembered for the material he turned out in the 1920s and 1930s.

By the time this story appeared Coblenz was an author with a smooth polished style considerably eclipsing most of the professional science fiction writers of the period. Unfortunately his imagination was somewhat limited, and nowhere is it more evident than in this particular story.

The story begins well. It turns out the human race has made a successful space ship trip to the planet Venus, and the pair of intrepid voyagers have returned. Unfortunately along with Tom Sprangue's tales of the jungle-like Venusian planetscape, he has also unknowingly brought back the tiny eggs of Venusian insects. Those eggs are dispersed by wind and human

accidental effort and the insects develop rapidly in the lush environment of planet Earth. Within a few months, the first of the adult insects are spotted; very hard shelled creatures about an inch long, with a vicious sting that paralyzes any limb it strikes. The insects have a voracious appetite, particularly for animal protein, dead or alive.

The fire imp insects also have social habits and after the first hatchings emerge and began to spread, they mass together like terrestrial army ants to seek out food. Farms and the countryside are being destroyed, insecticides are useless against this alien life form, and they breed rapidly.

As months go on the human race is forced into cities with closed apartments and sealed houses, since the fireimps can only crawl along the ground and have a difficult time climbing anything, but the insects hoard is slowly winning the battle and also the hoard is breeding constantly. Then, they develop wings, and even the cities and sealed buildings are no longer safe. The human race is on the verge of being extinguished by an insect plague from the planet Venus.

This story is well written, and Coblenz does an excellent job of detailing and explaining the creeping horror the insect plague creates along with the sense of utter futility as the humans slowly lose the battle against the growing hoards of alien insects.

The problem is that Coblenz has written himself into a corner. A story that develops a menace this forcibly demands something unique from the writer in the form of a solution. This bizarre menace which threatens to exterminate the entire human race from the face of its native planet must be countered by something clever, something unique, a spectacular twist ending, and Coblenz can't deliver anything like that.

What he does is have the original Venusian space explorers Sprangue and Rooney sneak back to their ship and take off for Venus again without anyone noticing (just stop and think about that one for a minute). Back on Venus they quickly discover that the fireimps have a natural enemy in the form of a similar insect. They bring some home, and thus the problem is solved, as the new bugs and the old bugs battle each other and devour each other with unrelenting fury. The human race gets saved. The End.

This is a major disappointment after the tremendous detailed buildup Coblenz created, and this inept ending pretty much negates any of the wonderful writing and the great story telling menace he generated with the rest of the tale. Considering the enormous let down I'm surprised the editor bought this story at all. I believe the editor had written to Coblenz personally and asked for submissions to the new magazine, which

ROUT OF THE FIRE-IMPS

by STANTON A. COBLENTZ

Author of "Through the Time-Radio," etc.

Without taking time to seize
so much as a hat or coat,
he fled with his wife and
family



**From Venus, on the wings of Tom Sprague's
interplanetary rocket-plane, came the seed
of the Red Scourge whose pestilential
hordes would level the whole world to a
barren waste!**

would have placed him in an embarrassing situation had he actually rejected this story. Unfortunately, well written or not, with this lame ending, the story certainly deserved to be rejected.

"The Thirty and One" is a short story contributed by David H. Keller. Keller was a medical doctor and a psychiatrist who was interested in writing poetry and fiction. Born in 1880, by the time he had reached his early twenties he had written some short stories and poetry, social fantasies mostly, but then

there was a long gap, presumably while he settled into his primary medical trade. He is known to have served in the Army Medical Corps during WWI, but there were no further efforts by him to write anything until the late 1920s.

Then in 1928 he sold "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" to *Amazing Stories*. Editor Hugo Gernsback was quite impressed with this story. He reportedly invited Keller to New York to discuss

science fiction and the possibility of turning out more material for the magazine.

Keller wrote with a clear unconvoluted style and framed his plots with a great deal more sophistication than most of the people trying to sell stories to *Amazing*. The fact that his plots centered around human conditions and potential human conflict arising out of science fiction situations rather than relying on slam bang action or alien invaders from outer space or pseudo scientific super inventions also made a good impression. According to SF historian Norm Metcalf, Gernsback paid Keller premium rates for his stories, and during the next seven years quite a lot of Keller's output appeared in the Gernsback science fiction magazines.

The rest mostly turned up in *Weird Tales*. Keller was an accomplished horror and fantasy writer, and many of his fantasies outshine his science fiction. He was also quite friendly with science fiction fandom, contributing stories, letters, articles and encouragement to fans producing amateur zines of every caliber.

By the end of 1935 his output had ground to a halt. He was more involved in his medical practice which was expanding, while the depression had killed off *Wonder Stories* and the rest of the Gernsback fiction mags. Meantime *Weird Tales* during this period was multiple months behind paying its authors for material that had already appeared in print, with no signs they were ever going to be able to catch up.

So the appearance of a Keller story in this second issue of *Marvel Science Stories* was a bit of an accomplishment. Again, I believe the editor specifically sought out Dr. Keller and asked for a submission, promising prompt payment if he would contribute to the new magazine.

"The Thirty and One" is a moody fantasy story, not even remotely science fiction. A fearsome fighter, a veritable giant of a man, has built a castle on the only usable path of trade into or out of a small mountain kingdom, and has barred any passage unless the King's beautiful daughter is given to him in wedlock. Many mighty warriors have tried to kill the foe, and they have all been slaughtered.

The King is opposed to sacrificing his daughter to this brute, her true lover is vehemently opposed, yet the kingdom will wither and die unless something is done to solve this problem. There is a very wise man living in a cave in the kingdom, and it is determined that he has created an elixir of synthesis, whereby the bodies and souls of as many as thirty people can be absorbed into the body of one person. The Princess volunteers to take the elixir, assimilate thirty fighters, musicians, mystics and others who will be needed to overcome this super foe, and then goes to the fortress

castle of the rogue and at the right moment, drinks the potion that will unleash all these thirty to attack him.

The plan works, and the battle is a fierce one with many casualties. But there are complications when the survivors of the intrepid thirty who are not killed in the melee are reabsorbed into the Lady's body. The complication turns into a tragedy, a tragedy which cannot be undone. So the story subtly asks the reader if this tragic sacrifice is any better than the sacrifice had the Princess wed the Giant and made him a willing ally of the kingdom.

It's an interesting story, well written, but it left me oddly unsatisfied. I guess I just don't appreciate this kind of ironic pathos in a fantasy story.

The issue also features some assorted science features, a question and answer science forum, a brief science quiz with expanded answers, and a different kind of science department called "Excursion to Possibilities". The science features are no better or worse than any of the short science bits included in other science fiction magazines of the period. The information is slightly more detailed than you could glean from the back pages of a newspaper, but not by much. True feature length science articles, including some speculative projective types did not show up until the third issue of *Marvel Science*.

"Excursion To Possibilities" conducted by Donald Dale, is a bit different. According to the blurb "This department is going to run a series of excursions to all the remarkable places you read about in science stories. In a sense they will be expeditions, for notes will be made on the probability of the things done and the wonders seen. Since you won't want to miss these excursions, here's your communication ticket. We will travel to places near and far in space, and in time, and before we are done we shall make an even stranger journey that will bring us face to face with ourselves. But we will start now with an easier trip."

What Dale does is write a typical science fiction story situation, in this case a trip to the planet Mars, complete with canals, a race of advanced Martians with strange weapons and a super civilization, and then, at periodic breaks in the sketch, make comparisons between the Martian super science and what is being accomplished right then by human science in 1938.

It's a clever premise, and Dale is able to note that many things which might have been regarded as "fiction today, fact tomorrow", have actually been developed right then in 1938. However he is forced to reluctantly admit that while many of these advances, including solar power, colloidal metal cellular revitalization and many other things have indeed been created, they are so expensive or so experimental that

their actual practical use is likely to be many years in the future. He was dead right about that. Most of the scientific breakthroughs and marvels he cites still haven't come into practical use in the world of 2011, but this was still a well researched and entertaining science feature, considerably better than the other science bits offered this issue.

The final story of the issue is the second novel, "The Time Trap" by Henry Kuttner. At this point the young author has only been writing professionally for about two years. His first published story had appeared in *Weird Tales* in 1936 and immediately attracted favorable reader attention.

"The Graveyard Rats" was an instant horror classic which generated a considerable amount of attention from WT readers, and has been anthologized numerous times over the years. He was part of the so-called Lovecraft Circle composed of friends, correspondences and acquaintances surrounding and influenced by *Weird Tales'* writer H.P. Lovecraft. This association led Kuttner to meet his future wife C.L. Moore, whom he first assumed was a male writer until she signed her return letters Catherine.

Kuttner turned out a constant stream of stories for *Weird Tales*, including several that expanded the Cthulhu Mythos, all well received by readers. By 1937 he had branched out to other publications, mostly fantasy and horror magazines including the weird menace titles, before venturing into the science fiction markets.

Kuttner had a novelette in the first issue of *Marvel Science*, but "The Time Trap" is only his second full length novel, and it's a good one, a novel that has been reprinted in paperback.

What Kuttner brought to his writing both for the weird and the science fiction genres, was a smooth modern story telling style that relied on crisp description and a narrative flow that developed the plot with few diversions. Unlike many other science fiction and horror writers of this period, he made free use of dialog between characters to advance the story and flesh out his protagonists, and his dialog was clear and natural. His modern writing style was a sharp departure for the science fiction field which had featured, and continued to offer up some pretty crude and stilted phrasing.

The story deals with archeologist Ken Mason, whose search in the Arabian desert for a fabled ancient lost City of Science, Al-Bekr, results in his being catapulted back thru time to the city in the far distant past where he discovers there are also other travelers who have been snatched out of time. Chief among them is as being known as Greddar Klon, The Master, a futuristically evolved person who has conquered the

city and holds its inhabitants in a grip of terror with his steel robots and futuristic weapons. Greddar Klon's mission is to somehow repair his time traveling devise to escape this ancient location and return to his own future where he will conquer time and rule as supreme tyrant thru the ages. Also in the city is Selene, a strangely erotic and beautiful, but inherently evil woman from the year 2150, who keeps a pair of intelligent panthers as pets. She was flung back into time by the same strange circumstances that ensnared Ken Mason, but has ingratiated herself to the ruthless Master.

Ken Mason is determined to get back to his own time, and forms an alliance with Erech, a native warrior of the city who wants to see the Master expelled and Alasa, the rightful queen, restored to power.

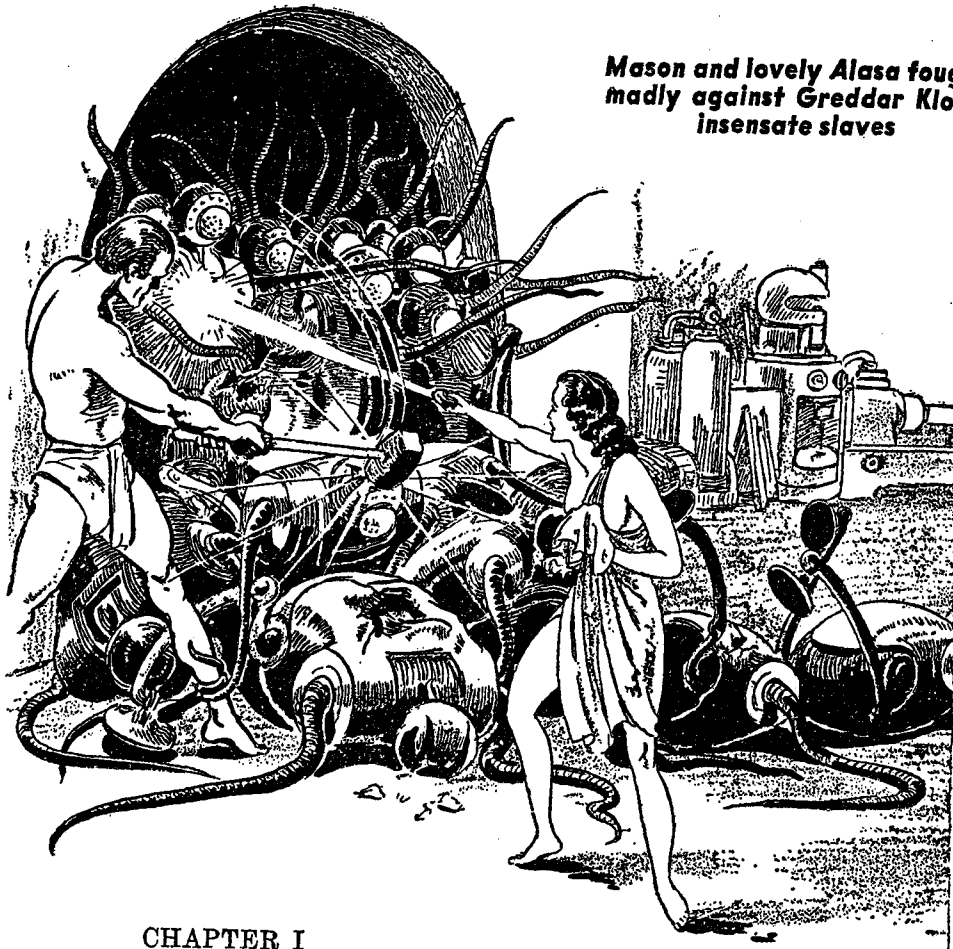
There is quite a lot of action as the story develops. Mason initially comes into The Master's good graces because he needs Mason's intelligence and more modern knowledge to help with the equipment Greddar Klon is developing to get back to his own era. There is another man from the far future, Mordach, who is held captive in the dungeons of the city, but thru the secret efforts of Erech, he manages to provide some help in their subversive plots to escape The Master.

The interaction of the characters as they all work for their own individual goals and what happens when those goals conflict with those of the other characters creates a long series of somewhat hectic adventures. The action focuses primarily on Mason and Alasa as they encounter relentless danger in a lot of different locations with the action flashing thru time into the far past and the far future. The story is finally resolved in the distant future with a double twist ending that finally leaves our hero and the beautiful queen Alasa alive and prepared to live happily ever after. Considering all they went thru, they deserved it.

The cover for this issue was an illustration for "The Time Trap". This was the first science fiction cover Frank R. Paul had done for any science fiction magazine in several years. After *Wonder Stories* was sold to Standard Magazines, Paul did illustrations for Gernsback's science magazines, but he did no science fiction cover artwork for any of the established magazines until this issue of *Marvel Science Stories*. The editor of the magazine has a short blurb on the contents page mentioning that they were proud to have secured the services of this notable artist, a long time fan favorite, especially for this issue.

What I think is more interesting here is that the editor not only solicited a brand new cover from Paul, probably with the inducement of a better than expected

Mason and lovely Alasa fought madly against Greddar Klon's insensate slaves



CHAPTER I

THE GREEN MONOLITHS

payment, but it seems to me that Paul created the cover on his own, and then Kuttner was hired to write a novel based on the illustration.

This is a technique most notable among science fiction magazines in the 1950s, but it was in use in earlier decades as well. In this case it is pretty clear that the cover came first, and the story came afterward. For one thing Kuttner's villain, Greddar Klon is shown on the cover being transported in a metal half octoid shell, but in the story itself Kuttner only makes use of the device twice, one time specially to correspond to the scene in the cover.

Also clearly following the dictates of the cover illo, he obligingly makes his villain a shrunken big domed dwarf-like creature, even tho all the other people from the far future are described as being very much like humans of our present day. In addition Greddar Klon can move along very well on his own feet, and does so with no problems thruout the story.

The actual scene on the cover is detailed in the middle of the story, and Kuttner goes to some length to

make sure that the actual scene is a part of the ongoing story plot, but it still appears to be shoe-horned into the flow of the action. Also worth mentioning is the fact that in Kuttner's novel the city is laminated by heavy green lighting, not the bright red tones shown on the cover. Red backgrounds were practically a Frank Paul trademark, used quite frequently in his cover paintings.

The other interesting thing about this particular story is the fact that Kuttner injects quite a lot of sexual situations into the action. "Time Trap" features not only an action filled adventure, but also covers the course of true love between the hero Mason and Alasa. It also spotlights the sexual lure of Selene the dark semi-villainous Other Female, who tries to seduce Mason in the early pages of the story with a graphic display of her feminine charms. A little further on there is a near rape scene with Alasa being menaced by a humanoid monster, not to mention long descriptions of clear passionate desire on the part of the hero for Alasa and his appreciation for her alluring female body which creates strong urges. Thruout the story the

heroine in almost all cases manages to have her clothing ripped off in the ensuing action, with her lush young body fully described and also fully exposed to the gaze of the monsters/beasts/human adversaries she and the hero happen to be battling at the moment.

This is the kind of graphic sexuality one might expect to find in a weird menace thriller. For this kind of frank sexual titillation to show up in a science fiction magazine was a radical leap forward. Up till this point in time most science fiction literature had been extremely prudish. Some of the magazines may have depicted beautiful young women in abbreviated costumers on the covers, but there was almost nothing sexual in any of the stories inside beyond the purest innocent romance.

It seems obvious to me that when Goodman contacted Kuttner to write a novel around the cover he must have also specifically requested that he inject a lot of sexual titillation into the story as well. Clearly influenced by the strong sales of his weird menace titles, he must have felt that adding sexy scenes to this story would have increased the readership of the magazine, since he knew very well that the overwhelming majority of science fiction magazine buyers were young males.

How well did this turn out you may wonder. Well, it sent a shock wave thru the science fiction community. To check on reactions to this particular story, and the rest of the material in this magazine, we need to step forward and look at the third issue of *Marvel Science*, the first issue to feature a letter column.

Altho the editors tried to maintain a careful balance between readers who liked and disliked parts of the magazine, the reader reaction to "Time Trap" was less evenly divided. Several people liked it, while one thot there was too much "romance" in the story, but several others who mentioned this story described it as "trash". In fact "trash" was the adjective of choice among people who did not care for the novel, with almost nobody saying much about the plot, the action, the imaginative use of time metaphors or any of the other strong points of the story. "Trash" clearly referred to the use of sexual titillation thruout the story, and it clearly did not agree with a fair number of readers, as represented by the choice of letters that were printed in this third issue.

Did Kuttner care? Maybe. There is no record. We do know he continued to write stories for Goodman's magazines and the novel was reprinted in paperback later on. I personally thot the novel was excellent, even with the abundant sex scenes.

It is also worth noting that the Kuttner story in the first issue, "Avengers of Space," also has some

racy scenes, but not on the scale of this novel. It is tempting to speculate that these stories may have originally been intended for *Uncanny Tales* or one of the Goodman's other weird menace pulp titles, but that seems unlikely to me. For all of that it seems that Kuttner was the only *Marvel Science Stories* writer being pressured to spice up his writing.

There were some other interested reader reactions to the stories in this issue. The very first lead off. comments in the letter column came from James V. Taurasi, editor of the popular *Fantasy News* fanzine, who was enthusiastic about the cover and inside artwork of Frank Paul as well as the black and white art by Wesso. He raved about the Burks story, and pointedly ignored the Kuttner novel. Most of the other writers liked the Burks story as well, and a few didn't care for Frank Paul as a cover artist. Most people liked Paul's black and white interior art, which frankly, was considerably more polished and professional at this point in time than it had been in the early thirties. Almost nobody liked the Coblentz short story, but Coblentz had already established himself as a *Marvel Science Stories* regular, with another story in this third issue and additional material appearing in the following issues as well

Two other interesting points emerge from the third issue: first that sales of the magazine must have been satisfactory, because a companion title, *Dynamic Science Fiction* was added immediately.

More significant is the little box on page 128 that provides the required legal notice information about who the owner and editor of the magazine were. Nowhere else in any of the issues of *Marvel Science Stories* is the actual editor listed, not on the masthead, not inside, not anywhere. There are no editorials and the editor seems to have restricted himself to very brief comments made on the contents page only. But this legal requirement information confirms that Martin Goodman is both the owner, the publisher and also, ta da, the editor of the magazine.

How much of the actual editing Goodman did is open to debate. It is obvious from looking at the magazine, particularly the early issues, that whoever created and developed *Marvel Science* knew a lot about science fiction, and was probably a long time science fiction reader. He knew the history of science fiction, who the popular writers were, who the popular fan favorite artists were, and how to set up a magazine that would appeal to the hard core science fiction fan. Whether this person was Martin Goodman himself or not, somebody sure knew how to produce a magazine that science fiction fans would enjoy.

The editor of Red Circle's other SF magazine, *Dynamic Science Stories*, was listed as Robert



O. Erisman. Goodman was the publisher of a whole string of magazines, a miniature magazine empire, and in 1939 he was about to jump into the comic book business, a brand new field with huge profit and loss potential, an area which may have demanded a lot of personal time and attention.

I can only make guesses at this late date, but I think that Goodman may well have been a science fiction fan and reader himself, but probably so was Erisman. Goodman may have provided the initial input to creating the magazine, picking out the likely writers to solicit for stories, setting up the format, establishing the science features and the rest, but as time went on I suspect he left most of the actual running of the magazine to Erisman.

When the comics came along Goodman was responsible for hiring Frank R. Paul to create a dynamic new cover for that first issue of *Marvel Comics* that introduced the Human Torch, but after the explosion in the comic field that followed, I suspect he left most of the actual operations of the science fiction magazine to Erisman, with perhaps some supervisory oversight and control. However it is worth mentioning that in the April 1941 issue the required legal ownership information still lists Martin Goodman as both publisher and editor, so perhaps he did maintain a hands-on relationship with the magazine. Unfortunately at this late point we can't get solid answers to these questions.

Marvel Science started out with a cautious quarterly schedule. But response may have been good,

because with the second issue the schedule shifted to bi-monthly. In early 1939 *Dynamic Science Fiction* was added as a companion magazine with the first issue dated Feb 1939. By the middle of 1939 the competition was heating up with many other new science fiction magazines entering the field, and the schedule switched back to quarterly with the fifth issue dated Aug 1939. *Dynamic* only managed to produce two issues all total, the second and final issue was dated April 1939.

With the sixth issue, dated December 1939, the title of *Marvel Science Stories* had changed to *Marvel Tales*, and in a disturbing sign, the page count dropped from 132 pages down to 116 while the size of the printing was increased. In 1940 only two issues were produced, dated May and November. The 1940 issues started volume two of the series. In 1941 only a single issue hit the stands, dated April. That April 1941 number was the final issue.

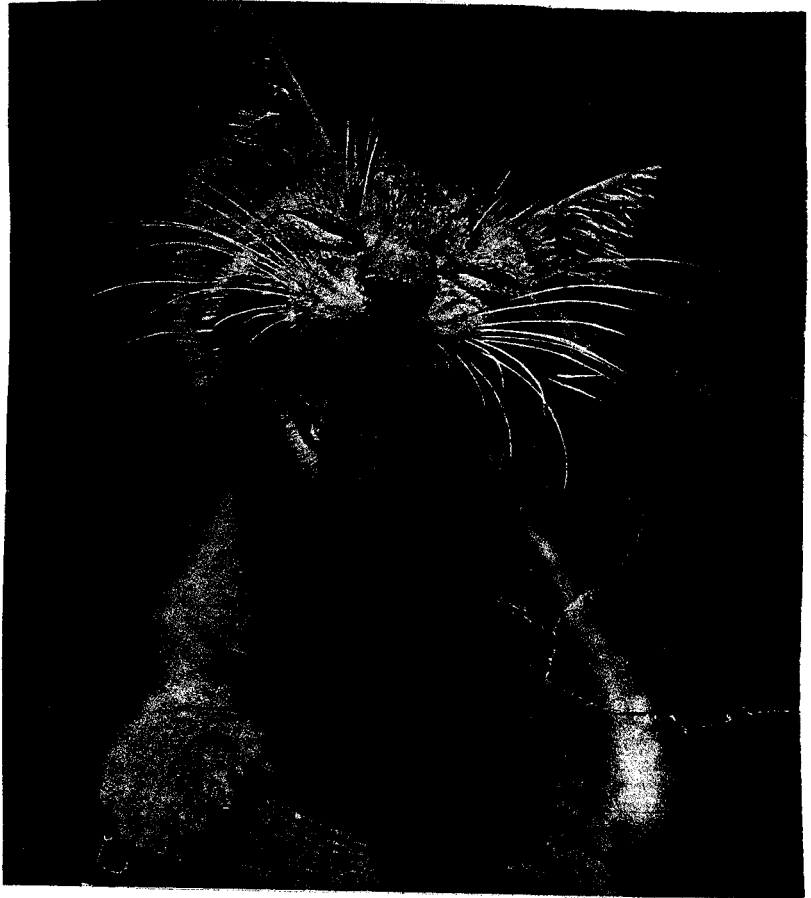
But Goodman did not forget *Marvel Science Stories*. In 1950 the magazine was reborn as a pulp dated November and stating a volume three numbering. The 1950s version rapidly shifted to digest size, with R.O. Erisman listed as the editor. It happens that I have an almost complete run of *Marvel Science* in all its incarnations, so we may examine the digest series at some point in the future.

Nine issues of *Marvel Science Stories* were produced between 1938 and that final April 1941 issue, nine mostly excellent science fiction magazines.

When *Marvel Science Stories* hit the newsstands it created a minor tidal wave among the science fiction fans of the era, and more than that, the new magazine's success launched a science fiction boom which lasted thru the early 1940s and saw the creation of no fewer than seventeen new SF/fantasy titles by the time World War II rolled around. The boom of the late thirties and early forties was created by *Marvel Science Stories* and it created that boom by attracting lots of new readers to the magazine, enuf to be noted by the distributors and magazine sellers, who in turn notified the other publishers of pulp magazines that something was happening in the field, something worth paying attention to, something that might be worth imitating.

Marvel Science did all that that by publishing outstanding stories, backed by good art. It published fiction that was generally far better written than the stuff being produced for the other three magazines. *Marvel Science Stories* raised the quality bar, and in so doing it raised the expectations for the rest of the field. It is worth remembering for that alone. But mainly *Marvel Science Stories* is worth remembering because it was a damn good magazine.

READER REACTION



California Chris; from somewhere in the wilds of the Left Coast

Got back from CorFlu and found Fadeaway waiting in my mailbox! Nothing better than getting back to work and finding a zine waiting for me! It made the transition much easier.

Growing up in Northern California, I didn't get much winter as a kid unless we decided to drive to it. Winter was just the time when we got most of our rain. It snowed when I was 2, and again when I came back from Boston to visit after I moved there in 1998. Those are the only two times during my lifetime that it's snowed in beautiful Santa Clara, California. Of course, I left Boston in early 1999 after going through a couple of storms in Beantown. Lucky for me the museum I was at had an outpost in Silicon Valley so I could get back home to warmth and regular accents.

By the way, that's an awesome cover! Smacks of 1930s Pulp covers at the same time as the fan art of guys like Terry Jeeves and early Ditmar stuff. Just a great piece.

Same thing goes for the John Cody piece on Page 3. There is a theory among librarians that the best way to organize a collection of books is by size and have an extensive and frequently updated database. We've organized our books with an intellectual system instead of a logical physical system. The modern 'By Subject' system saves some time and allows for topic-browsing, while a system by size would require an interface with some other piece (card catalogue, database terminal, a collective Hive Mind...) to allow access, which would add a step, but would also allow for the storage of more books in a space which would help those doing research by being able to stock more on more topics... though they'd probably just buy more copies of Twilight. Does it show that I'm the son of a Librarian?

Community, my favorite TV Show in the whole wide world right now, just did an episode where they had two characters competing for the same lovely young librarian. It was a good one.

Always loved Lena Horne. One of the loveliest women who ever lived and my Dad was a security guard at the Mountain Winery and met her once. He really liked her, though no matter how much you talked about anyone who had performed at the Winery, he'd end up talking about Sarah Vaughn, who he became friends with during her many performances at the winery. Stormy Weather is on the National Recording Registry, though it's the Ethel Waters version. The Lena Horne version is what I consider to be the finest of all of them. "Cabin in the Sky" has



always had a place in my heart, but alas, I've never seen it on a big screen. They played it at the Stanford Theatre, but I missed it due to going to a WorldCon. Where are my priorities?

I love old radio. I've bought a few CDs of old programs like *Stroke of Fate*, *The Blue Beetle* and some *Jack Benny*, but I've never managed to find the one that I really want: *Flash Gordon*. The modern successor, in a strange way, to *Kay Kyser* as the guy who doesn't play an instrument in the band but is the key in today's music are the guys who are a part of the band but don't really play. Mostly, they're there to dance around and add to the atmosphere. The *Mighty Mighty Bosstones* had one of those, a member whose instrument was listed as *Bosstone*. I know I've heard *Isch Ga Bibble*, a recording from the 1920s can be heard in the background of the film *Schloride*, in fact, but I had never heard of *Ish Kabibble*, which is a fantastic name for a comedy performer. I know I've seen "You'll Find Out"; I was on a big *Peter Lorre* kick in college. *Gorgeous Georgia*? I wonder if *George Wagner* was using the name *Gorgeous George* already at that point or if he took his famous wrestling moniker from it? I'll have to find out! His widow is still alive and has all her marbles!

///Thanks for your comments on *Fadeaway #21*. My editorial comments about winter were made before *Mother Nature* turned her full wrath on us. We had blizzards moving thru mid week every single week since Christmas. The *January Thaw* finally hit, in mid February. This was the second worst winter I've ever experienced in my life. Not fun. I envy you guys out in sunny Calif, at least until I read about another earth tremor in the back pages of the newspaper last week.

Around here the only way libraries can keep on top of things is to keep pruning out the slowest lending titles, whether they happen to be a classic or not. Apparently there is some sort of magic tipping point at which the library decides such and such a book has to go. Trying to shelve by size might work with a business or academic library where the patrons submitted requests to the front desk and the librarians pulled the volumes. But for a library where the customers wander around looking at the shelves, classifying by subject matter seems to be the only workable system.

The radio shows of the *Flash Gordon* radio program are readily available. However, I think you will discover that it is a pretty bad program. The program was a weekly fifteen minute show devoted to dramatizing that week's comic strip adventure. The series was distributed by the *Hearst Newspaper Syndicate* to promote their comic strips and newspapers.

The problem is that quite a lot happens in the weekly *Flash Gordon* Sunday strip, much more than can be adequately covered in a fifteen minute radio show, or even a half hour show. Subtract the three minutes for openings, and closings, and the promo commercials, and you've got twelve minutes to tell an adventure in which a great many events take place. It's an impossible situation and the radio show is really poor.

Much better is the *Jungle Jim* radio show, also a fifteen minute *Hearst* weekly offering. The situation with *Jungle Jim* was that it was a three panel topper for *Flash Gordon*, and not a whole lot happens in those three panels. That means the radio show can really expand on the story plot, add pertinent dialog, build characterization and generally explore the whole situation. There are tons of *Jungle Jim* shows available and they're mostly excellent.

If you would like to check on either of these shows you can buy discs in MP3 format from OTRLAND.com or OTRcat.com for very modest amounts of money, or download some episodes for free from places such as radiolovers.com and freeotrshow.com///

Jeff Allen, 267 Belmont St., Worcester, MA 01604

Thanks for the copy of *Fadeaway #21*. I couldn't have said it better---your opening piece echoed my thots to a "T". I too that winter was great fun when I was a kid, but now it's just a big inconvenience/nuisance, and a public one at that. I clearly recall the ice storm of 2008, and the response by the power companies, which had the

speed of a constipated sea turtle. As far as moving to a warmer climate (say, Florida), OK by me if you don't mind hurricanes!

The review of the James Gavin's Lena Horne biography nearly brought tears. Up to now, the only time I ever saw her was in the final scene of "The Whiz", the all-black version of the "Wizard of Oz" in which she played Glinda the Good Witch. I knew nothing else about her until I read this review, and what a painful read.

I've read few tales of abuse, exploitation and tragedy as deep as this. The worst aspect of it all was how she was so hurt by the blatant racism of the era she lived and worked in. That and the way she was cruelly used robbed her of the right to enjoy the success she finally earned. She was so embittered and filled with hate that it twisted her entire life.

Paul Robeson, the great black singer, was mentioned and it was stated that he was an "avowed communist". This is no surprise. Both he and Marion Anderson toured the Soviet Union where they were warmly received, and did not receive any of the racial persecution they had endured in the USA. It was great propaganda for Stalin, and a black eye for the red, white and blue!

Bob, the article about Kay Kaiser was another eye opener. I knew practically nothing about him until I read it. The first time I heard of him was in a Warner Brothers Porky Pig cartoon when I was a boy. I'm convinced he provided one of the voices.

Your article painted the picture of a great showman, but also a great patriot, and a man with a great and generous soul. He also was someone who gave a start to the careers of a number of talented people. I remember Harry Babbitt; in the 50s; he hosted a program called "This is Show Business" on Sunday nights. I also have fond memories of the music of the King Sisters.

Kyser's appearance in a Batman comic story was a unique badge of honor. I really regret that this particular Batman issue is unavailable to me (at the current going price anyway). It would be an interesting addition to my own collection.

//Well, as a matter of fact, that story has finally been reprinted along with a number of other Batman in a DC Archive's hardback edition, Dark Knight Archives Vol

Fred Lerner, D.L.S.; 81 Worcester Avenue; White River Junction, Vermont 05001

Many thanks for *FADEAWAY* #20, which I enjoyed reading. your account of the Cliffhangers club's December meeting brought to mind the showings of old Republic science fiction serials that enlivened many a gathering of the Evening Session Science Fiction Society back in the early 1960s. That club, which met on Friday evenings at City College of New York, was my introduction to Fandom.

I'm still in touch with some of the people I met there nearly fifty years ago. We were not nearly as rowdy a group as the Cliffhangers seem to be, though I do suspect that your account contains a few exaggerations. The most exciting thing that I can recall from our serial viewings was the foursome who rushed to the front of the room during each change of reels, to play a hand or two of a bridge game whose continuity must have been maintained even more precariously than the plot of "Flying Disk Man from Mars".

In your account of F. Orlin Tremaine's "*Comet*" magazine you wonder what the point of "The Spacean" might have been. I can't help thinking that this column of "bits of future news" from 2008 might have been modeled upon the trick employed by Rudyard Kipling in "With the Night Mail" (1905). As the subtitle of the 1909 book publications proclaims, it is "A story of 2000 A.D. (together with extracts from the contemporary magazine in which it appeared)"; these consisted of news bulletins, weather forecasts, advertisements, and other material intended to enlarge upon the world of 2000 in which this story of transatlantic dirigible aviation took place.

John Campbell was fond of citing this as an early example of a



science fiction writer providing supplementary material that (though extraneous to the plot, strictly speaking) helped to build up the background against which his tale was set. During the Golden Age writers like Heinlein mastered the technique of providing this material between the lines of the story.

I must congratulate you on the number of ways in which you managed to spell "Tremaine" in your article. He may have invented the "thought variant", but you've got a good claim to inventing the name variant.

///Thanks for your comments on *Fadeaway* #20. I am shocked, shocked I say, at your suggestion that my write-up of the Christmas meeting of our Cliffhanger club might have been in any way exaggerated. We who are associated with *Fadeaway* always strive to be Fair & Balanced in our reporting.

Movie serials used to be a regular part of science fiction and comics conventions back in the old days. Not very much at all now, due to the popularity of VHS tape and DVDs. It used to be a point of honor for us hard core serial fans to sit up till three in the morning making sure we saw all the chapters of the Captain Marvel serial or the first Flash Gordon cliffhanger. I recall at one convention somebody had a really crummy dupe 16mm copy of the first Captain Video serial. My God was that awful! People began bailing out in the middle of the second chapter, and by chapter four I think there were only four of left in the room, and one of those people was the guy running the projector.

I actually remember watching that particular serial as a child in a theater in the mid 1950s, and it was so bad that my friends and I all abandoned it around chapter six and went to a different theater so we could watch the Captain Kidd serial instead.

You know, the idea that the "Spacean" feature in *Comet* might have derived from the Kipling "Night Mail" book never occurred to me. Of course it's been at least forty years since I actually read that novel, but you could very well be right. Even so it struck me as being very incongruities and out of place in the magazine.

Heinlein seems to have been the guy most responsible for the style of dropping background information casually into the ongoing flow of the story. Altho there were others before him who used the technique, none did it as well as he did in those 1940s *Astounding* stories.

Today everybody is using the technique, some more successful than others. In my opinion there are too many new SF novels that toss the reader headlong into the middle of a bizarre future society without a word of explanation and expect him to swim upstream thru forty or fifty pages until he somehow gets his bearings and figures out what is actually going on.

Hey, misspelling words and names is an art form with me. In SFPA, the science fiction apa I'm in, the name of my apazine is "The Typo King". In the days when I was running off fanzines by mimeo I was known as the king of typos, and even with the help of computers and Spellchecker (the greatest invention of the 20th century in my opinion), spelling errors will slip thru. Think of it as part of the innate charm of *Fadeaway*, because I'm sure even more will slip thru in future issues despite everything I do to try and correct them.///

Bill Schelley, PO Box 27471; Seattle; WA 98165-2471

I enjoyed your account in *Fadeaway* 20 of the serial club Christmas party. Sounds about par for the course for most fan gatherings. That is, if they are the ones related by John Stockman in his erstwhile fanzine *Tales of Torment*. I hadn't been aware of *ToT* or Mr. Stockman's tales of crazed ERB, comic book and pulp fans when they came out in the 1960s and 1970s; after I discovered them about 10 years ago, I contacted Stockman and he sent me a complete run of the zine. These stories of greedy dealers, comic book thieves, and the denizens of seedy used book stores were hilarious. I reprinted one of them in my *Comic Fandom Reader* book ("Armand the Terrible") but surprisingly it elicited no comments..... These stories are truly beyond the pale, and I think would make any long-time fan laugh. There are, I believe, 16 issues of *Tales of Torment* plus a couple of specials.

Since you are an authority on movie serials, perhaps you can help me. Like many comic book fans, I got into watching serials of the comic book adaptations. It didn't take me long to realize that *Adventures of Captain Marvel* and *Spy Smasher* are anomalies, serials with production values and attention to detail that approximates that of many "A" pictures. Yet I found that I enjoyed the form, and kept adding serials with Superman, Flash Gordon, Batman, the Phantom, Green Hornet, Dick Tracy and Zorro. My favorites among the 2nd tier serials are *The Crimson Ghost* and *Daredevils of the Red Circle*. But along the way I have been sorely disappointed by many others. (I know the Dick Tracy serials are popular, but they have left me cold.) So my question is, has there ever been a list of the serials in some sort of approximate order in terms of quality? I can't just go forward buying them hit and miss, but I am interested in getting more of the best ones. Of course, I realize that once you get to 1950,

they become horribly cheap and from then on, forget it, and that Republic serials are generally the best. At any rate, I'm asking for your guidance and recommendations. Or maybe even a whole article in *Fadeaway* on this subject.

///There are some excellent serials out there and then there are some real stinkers. Unfortunately a lot of this happens to be personal taste. For example, I, and most people, find the first three Dick Tracy serials to be excellent. The fourth one is good, but Tracy completely fails to accomplish his mission, which is to keep the members of the Crime Commission alive and catch the Ghost before he can kill more people. You say you don't like those Tracy serials, which creates a problem right there.

A few serials that I consider excellent include---
Daredevils of the Red Circle, Fighting Devil Dogs, Zorro's Fighting Legion, Son of Zorro, Jungle Jim, The Green Archer, The Phantom, Daredevils of the West, Hurricane Express, The Whispering Shadow, Red Ryder (republic version based on the comic strip, not the other one), King of the Royal Mounted, Phantom Empire, New Adventures of Tarzan, The Spider's Web, SOS Coast Guard, The Shadow, Mysterious Doctor Satan, Adv of Smilin' Jack, Drums of Fu Manchu, The Green Hornet (1st one, not the 2nd one), King of the Texas Rangers, Adv of Captain Marvel, Batman, Don Winslow of the Navy, G-Men Vs the Black Dragon, The Masked Marvel, Crimson Ghost, Secret Service in Darkest Africa, Captain America, Raiders of Ghost City, Great Alaskan Mystery, The Tiger Woman, Manhunt of Mystery Island, The Purple Monster Strikes, Chick Carter Detective, Daughter of Don Q, Jesse James Rides Again, Superman, G-Men Never Forget, King of the Rocket Men, Zombies of the Stratosphere, among others. This is my personal opinion. Some people consider Hurricane Express to be hopelessly outdated, but I like it a lot. There are many others I consider good but not outstanding.

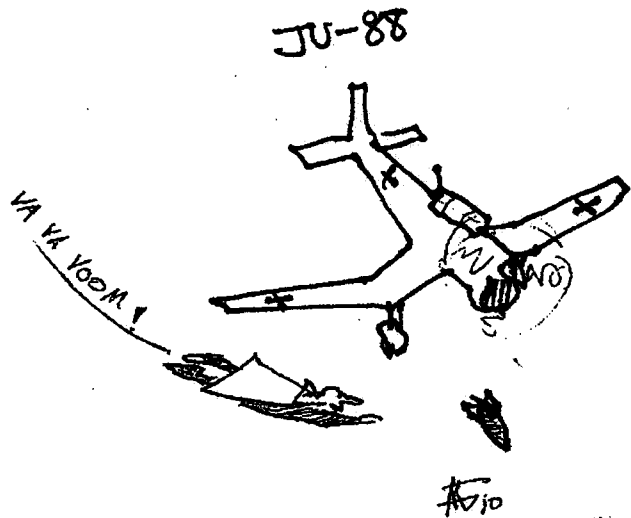
You have to realize you are dealing with serials here, stories designed to be viewed a chapter a week, not all at once. Watching a serial three or four chapters at a time works better than trying to watch six chapters or an entire serial at a setting. In addition, after the 1920s, serials were no longer made for adults; they were clearly aimed at youngsters. You have to give serials the same kind of latitude you might give to comic books. There are some great comic books out there, but many of them were aimed at youngsters and you have to accept that emphasis when reading them. The same goes for serials. It's easy to pick holes in most comic book stories using a brutal adult rationale, and you can do the same with any serial. But if you are looking for fast moving enjoyment, serials can offer a lot, with larger than life heroes, lots of action and larger than life plots which have to be dealt with by the heroes instead of say, doing the logical thing and calling up the local police.

I might consider an article or two on serials for *Fadeaway*, but probably not in the immediate future.///

Brad W Foster; PO Box 165246; Irving, TX 7501

Issue 20 of FADEAWAY was waiting in the po box for me this weekend. Must have been caught up in some kind of science-fictional-like time-warpy thing, since it has arrived a month after I got #21. Cool!

I liked the comment in from Clemmons in Kent McDaniel's article, regarding the difference between R-rated and X-rated erotica being that the R-rated has "got plots". That was the same point I brought up years ago to a writer friend of mine when we were both doing "erotica" to help pay the bills. He was writing short stories for the men's slick magazines, and I was doing whole novels for the one-handed paperback market. He pointed out to me that he was actually being paid much better, on a per-word basis, for his short stories than I was getting for my novels. But I had discovered that the novels didn't actually require the use of anything like a "plot" if you didn't want to. The readers just wanted sex scenes, whereas the short story editors were, indeed, requiring some sort of framework of an idea to hang the sex scenes on. Since he was a MUCH better writer than I, he had tons of ideas. I told him if I ever actually did come up with a good plot, I wouldn't want to waste it on a sex story, so I found the



novels were perfect for me. I just kept a long list of adjectives by the typewriter for different body parts and movements, and knocked out a half dozen or so of those things over the years to help cover the bills.

Plot? We don't need no stinkin' plot!

Oh, but speaking of -good-writing: in regards to my own loc in this issue, I got lucky and got some bookstore credit for filling out some surveys, and was able to pick up a copy of "The Windup Girl" without having to wait for a copy to slowly work it's way to the used book stores, my usual source of reading. A great read, so full of ideas, plus a plot that moved along nicely, building to a fast-moving ending that meant I couldn't put it down until done at the very end.

Let's see, although this came through a time warp, it seems you now might only have a single fillo on hand from me. And since my LOCs are maddeningly puny, I've attached another here, to double my fannish-currency, at least for the moment.

///No time warp involved here, just a foul-up with the printing. This just graphically demonstrates the perils of having friends handle your printing. #20 was supposed to be printed and mailed out by the middle of January. Unfortunately my friend who has been handling all the printing for *Fadeaway* was unable to get the job done in time. He expressed some doubts about the future situation as well. That being the case, I had finished up issue #21, so I called in a big favor from a friend and used his super-duper office printing equipment to run off #21. #21 was sent out even tho issue #20 was still in limbo because an issue of *Fadeaway* was due and I figured as long as I had #21 done I had better send it out. Then I saw my buddy and he still hadn't gotten issue #20 done, and expressed serious doubts that he would be able to print any future issues. So I paid a printer to run off issue #20, which got sent out on the time frame that should have been for #21. Confused? Me too. I'm buying my own printing equipment end of this month so the problem will hopefully not occur again.

I found your comments about writing porno novels quite interesting. In ye olden days I corresponded with Ron Haydock who made most of his living by writing soft and not so soft core porn while hammering out and trying to sell screen plays for low budget movies and TV. He also editing monster mags and wrote a lot of nostalgia articles about old serials and pre-1950 science fiction movies. He said it was not hard writing for the porno novel market, but he insisted on having some sort of plot to tie the sex scenes together. His view was that this kept him in demand with the publishers, but frankly I think the reason he kept getting assignments was that he wrote very fast and his stuff was pretty readable. He sent me a couple to sample, and I actually did read them, but they were certainly not great literature, or anything even in the same neighborhood as great lit.

A friend a few towns over has a female friend who aspired to be a great short story writer, but then discovered that writing porn was steadier pay for a lot less work. Her gimmick was to have heroines of the stories actually act like real women, except they managed to be planked every chapter or two, often in strange places. I don't know if she's still writing that stuff or not.

I'm curious as to how you ever got involved in such a situation. I mean, was there a want ad posting out somewhere that said, we need writers to do sex novels, apply to Phil Sleeze, at Box 1234? It would also seem to me that with the explosion of skin mags in the last twenty-five years, not to say the rise of the Internet, that the market for sex novels would be pretty slim these days.

PEOPLE I HAVE
MET ON GALAXY
TOUR.



Not to linger on this subject, but the discussion reminds me of one of the most bizarre deals I ever got while running my science fiction book store. I got a call from an acquaintance to come over to his house and make an offer on his science fiction collection. I don't recall whether they were moving to new digs, remodeling, planning to have a baby or what, but the guy and his wife had decided most of his science fiction collection was going. I looked everything over, mostly a lot of paperbacks and some comics, and was about to make an offer when the wife points me over to a big stack of boxes against the wall, ten crates tall. "These go too".

I took one look; all the boxes were full of sex novels! I was stammering, trying to explain that I didn't carry this kind of stuff in the store, I had no way of selling it and I had no interest in it. No, no, she said, they go. Either you take these with the other stuff, or you take none of it. Wow, what a spot! I just decided to offer the amount I had originally decided on. If they took it, fine, and if not, much as I'd hate to lose that collection, I'd walk away without a second thought.

Well, they accepted the offer, and I was suddenly stuck with ten crates of sex novels. And let me tell you, this was not your simple basic lust, this was some really weird stuff. I was doing the occasional Sunday flea market to clean out the crap that always comes along when you buy collections of any kind, but this was stuff I would be ashamed to even display locally where anybody I knew might see it.

Finally I took my flea market act out to Springfield, quite a ways from my store in Worcester, and tried to sell the things at a buck each. I sold a bunch, oddly enough mostly to large, overweight women, but even after a couple of good Sundays, I figured out it was going to take months, if not years, to clean this stuff out.

That's when an even stranger thing happened. I was glancing thru a current issue of *Locus*, when I happened to see an ad for a book seller down in Washington DC. He wanted signed hardback science fiction editions, and porno books. Really. I read the ad three times. I called the guy up, and he agreed to buy everything I had left, a crate at a time, at a buck a book, because he said he had a ready market for that stuff in his store, as much as I could get my hands on. Every three or four weeks he would send me a check for another crate of those books and finally they were all gone.

Every collection you buy has a bunch of oddball and weird stuff in it, but that's about the strangest add-on I have ever encountered.///

AND THEN BRAD WROTE---

Regarding the porno books. I recall reading an article in the early eighties about a girl who had paid most of her tuition to an ivy league school by writing porno. It was funny, and made it sound like not something hard to do. I think I had had the same reaction to the first porno paperback as most people- "Damn, even I could write this crap!" (Indeed, you noted your reaction to reading the work of your friend as a more polite variation on that phrase.) I think I then just picked up a couple of different paperbacks at the local dirty-old-man shop and wrote to the publishers, asking for their submission guidelines.

I tried to actually have plots and such at first, but learned very quickly that it really wasn't needed. I had to call the publisher to beg for a copy of the first one that was printed---evidently most writers didn't care if they got one or not. I thought it was hilarious that I had actually written a book of ANY kind and wanted a copy. Was surprised first that they had assigned a pseudonym (again, most authors didn't want their own name, I had to fight to get my real name on at least one before was done.), and second, that they had completely cut the final chapter. Just gone. Turns out, since I had no sex scene in the last chapter, they had taken it out. Forget wrapping up plot. So, I learned very quickly how this was done. By the seventh and final novel, I tried an experiment: Followed the female character through the day, purely as sex scenes. No plot of any kind, she just has sex with different people in different ways from when she wakes to when she goes



back to sleep. It sold just as quickly as any of the others. I tried to keep the tone light- everyone who had sex was happy, and had sex with other happy folks. Nothing dark or painful. I think it's a Vonnegut quote something like "pornography is an image of an incredibly hospitable world" that I tried to live up to.

And you're right, I doubt there is much market for this stuff anymore. I haven't looked in ages, but I don't think they even print porno-paperbacks anymore. Someday I'll have to do a little memoir on all this, just no time now. But, it was a hoot, and helped to pay some bills for a while.

Your story of acquiring the boxes of porn was interesting, and glad you were able to find an audience that would appreciate it. I figured when started reading you would end up simply pulping them. Probably your core respect for print that even THAT stuff had to find somewhere to live, right?

John Thiel; 30 N. 19th St.; Lafayette, IN 47904

Having been to three Windycons in the past, I was interested in Kent MacDonald's report on the latest one in *Fadeaway* #20, partly to see how the Windycon people are making out these days, and partly for the opportunities for comparison.

After reading his impressions of the con, I found the convention to be exactly the same as the three I attended, and the photos with the article give further evidence of this, altho they also establish that it wasn't the exact same convention being recycling. However, his description of the art display, with its rule against picture taking was very much what I encountered at my first Windycon back in 1976. With those same ancient rules in place I'm, wondering if the exact same pieces of art were being shown this time round. Bob Tucker was the feature speaker at that one. He and three consorts took a shot of Jim Beam up on stage and in unison pronounced it "Smoooooth!" This was the opposite of "Tough Enough" or "Cruel" I presume.

Among the guests Kent mentions, I remember Mike Resnick on a panel at the Hoosiercon in the '80s. Sometime soon I'm going to have to go thru old issues of my fanzine and re-read my own convention reports.

One thing different was that multi-storied building where this latest convention was held. The first one I was at had three stories, and the last one I was at had only two, being mostly a horizontal convention. Perhaps after the big World Convention being in Chicago only having a hotel of a similar size would suit the Windycon people.

It's good to find a science fiction history in this issue. This is profitable reading. I had not even known that a magazine called "*Comet*" existed. I didn't see it in any of the dealers' catalogs I read, nor find it mentioned in any of the histories of science fiction I have encountered. It seems to have been appropriately named--a flash phenomenon appearing briefly in the heavens. Here there is irony, because I doubt that Tremaine intended to discontinue it after only five issues. I find the descriptions of the magazine stories fascinating. It seems to me there is a sense of wonder to be found in contemplation of the existence of the old science fiction magazines themselves, as well as in many of the stories they published. Thanks for a good look into science fiction's past.



OUR ESTEEMED ART STAFF & WHERE THEIR WORK MAY BE FOUND HEREIN:

D. Bruce Berry--Page 1

John V. Cody--Pages 3, 30, 32

Brad Foster--Pages 26, 27

Alexis Gilliland--Pages 2, 29, 30