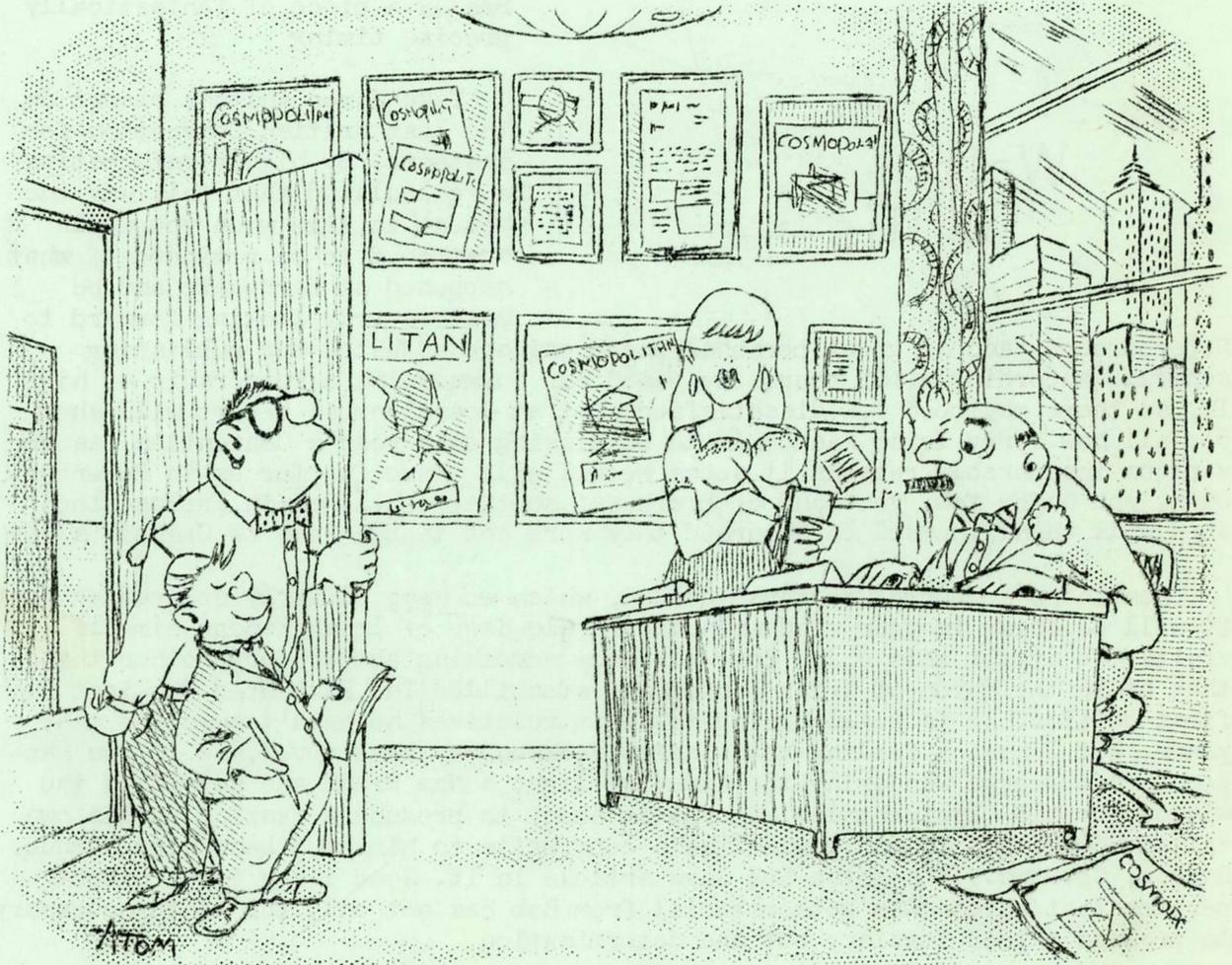


HYPHEN

NO. 32

MARCH

1963



"He's been commissioned to do a mixed article about us,
but he'll try to be fair "

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INSIDE COVERAGE

Walt
Willis

If this were just an ordinary crummy old fanzine, you might be pardoned for thinking we were a bit late with this issue. But of course it isn't. It's a very special crummy old fanzine, produced by layabouts of superior intelligence and its publication at this juncture is really a piece of fantastically precise timing.

Take James White's report on the last British Convention for instance. By higher mathematics we calculated that this was the moment in time when you would most need to be reminded of what happened at Harrogate and be most eagerly looking forward to

Peterborough, and at great personal inconvenience adjusted our publishing schedule accordingly. Of course we based our formulae on a readership of high IQ, so there may be a few dissatisfied, but at least James' report will show you all how sorry Irish Fandom is to be missing this year's Convention, as for various insuperable reasons it seems we all will. Have fun for us in Peterborough, you happy few, you band of brothers: so that gentlemen in Ireland then abed will think themselves accursed they were not there; upon Ed Crispin's Day.

Then there's George Charters' column, which we have cleverly delayed so that it will be fresh in your mind when the Purple Sage of Irish Fandom himself visits the States this July. You will know something about George other than that he is the doyen of Irish Fandom and stencilled The Enchanted Duplicator first edition. He is really going to visit relatives he hasn't seen for many years, but I have a feeling this Andrew Jackson may have moved, so if you happen to see George wandering the streets, light a Max Brand and set it in the window for him. Incidentally, George is about to produce a fanzine of his own called SCARR, and if you would like a copy write to him at 3 Lancaster Avenue, Bangor, Co. Down. It's got a Bob Shaw article in it. Need I say more, except perhaps that anyone who gets material from Bob has not only the taste necessary to produce a good fanzine, but the determination.

The Ted White article was delayed for quite different reason. So solicitous are we about the accuracy of everything that appears in Hyphen ever since the unfortunate incident when I announced a London fan's wedding several years before it took place...jumping the shotgun as it were that (inside bacover)

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THE GLASS BUSHEL

TOMMY JOHNSTON VERSUS SCIENCE FICTION



AT THE AGE OF TWELVE I OBTAINED my first copy of *Astounding*, read it, was hooked, and for the next five years never gave a single serious thought to anything but science fiction. This monomania gave me a lot of personal pleasure and satisfaction---in fact I was deliriously happy for those five years---but it had an unfortunate drawback in that by the time I was old enough to start work I was virtually unemployable.

During my final years at school when I was supposed to be working for matriculation it had never even occurred to me to listen to a lecture or do a homework. I drew spaceships in my class notebooks, in between times publishing a carbon-copy magazine full of bloodcurdling stories and pictures. Occasionally, during a mechanics, physics or chemistry class, my interest would be aroused for a few seconds---but only until I had made a note of a new word which looked as though it would be of use in my latest space opera.

Looking back on it, I can be amused by the spectacle of a younger Shaw, his mind literally sapped by science fiction, looking cautiously over the world of industry and commerce for a safe, out-of-the-way niche wherein he could devote his life to his bundle of *BRE Astoundings* and *Unknowns*. My father, however,

Failed to see the joke. As far as he could see, a lifetime of supporting a pulp magazine maniac stretched before him, unless he could find some unsuspecting captain of industry who could be persuaded to take me on. Several weeks later, just as my father was on the point of a nervous breakdown, a small structural engineering firm agreed to start me as an apprentice draughtsman.

My salary was to be fifteen shillings a week. This was very low, even for 1946, but I didn't care---there wasn't much science fiction being published in those days so I really only needed a few shillings a month to be able to buy all that was going. As you can see, I simply wasn't wise.

The firm I was going to had its main and drawing offices on Sydenham Road, but they decided to put me in a small office attached to the works on the Castlereagh Road. This was actually only about two hundred yards from my home. It was a tiny brick building only eight feet across by about twenty feet long at the entrance to an incredibly mucky yard in which the company had one or two sooty-looking workshops. Inside the office was an assortment of tables and chairs along one wall, a drawing board for me, no less than three gas heaters, a monstrous cupboard in which I later found a rusty six-shooter, and a line of malodourous Wellington boots belonging to the ditch-digging squad. The smell of those rubber boots alone would today be regarded as sufficient justification for an office workers' strike.

Reigning over this assortment of junk I found Tommy Johnston, the general foreman. He was a small old man with watery eyes and a tiny row of brilliantly white false teeth, and he looked like a gypsy. This effect was helped by the deep brown colour of his face and the number of wrinkles in it, but it was mainly due to the fact that he always wore a red handkerchief knotted round his throat to keep his collar and tie clean. No matter where he had to go during the working day, no matter how important the people he had to see, no matter how neat the rest of his clothes---he always wore his red hanky at his throat. In my eyes it made him look like somebody a man with many years of history behind him, a hard-tough man. But Tommy wasn't hard or tough. He sized me up and immediately, very gently and very kindly, set to work on the task of my rehabilitation.

I probably seem to be exaggerating the state I was in in those days (and no doubt I am a little, though trying not to) but I definitely was not a commercial proposition for any employer. I cared for nothing but science fiction, knew nothing but science fiction, was bone lazy and utterly without ambition. Into the bargain I was tremendously proud---I was the only sf reader I knew and really reckoned myself one of the star-begotten.

Tommy never got angry with me the way other people did. When everybody else got peevish it merely served to convince me that the mundane world was no fit place for one of the star-begotten. But when I bailed up a job for Tommy, as I frequently did through carelessness or taking too many short cuts, he only smiled and carried the results of my handiwork sadly away as though I had failed him in something big. This never failed to produce in me such a violent pang of remorse that, almost without my realisation, I began to feel that I ought to try harder when given an assignment. Tommy defended me from the worst knocks, taught me a bit of engineering, and when he wasn't too busy listened tolerantly to my fantasies, his watery eyes shining and little white teeth

gleaming in his gypsy brown face. He had begun to bring me round: but there was the question of the dust.

Two of the directors came up from main office for half an hour every morning to read any mail that had come in, and for the rest of every day I had the office to myself. Tommy was usually down in the workshops. Workmen going in and out for boots or special tools out of the cupboard were always plastering the floor with brown mud out of the yard. In the heat of the office this mud quickly turned into dust and, shortly after my arrival, Tommy told me that I would need to brush it out every day or two. I proudly refused to do this job, saying that I was an apprentice draughtsman and had more important things to do than brush the floor.

When I think over what those "more important things" were I marvel that even Tommy Johnston was able to keep his temper in check. Under my drawing board, supported on an elaborate arrangement of cup-hooks, was a home-made crystal set which I listened to for several hours a day. Under the same board, tucked into a disused gas radiator, was my science fiction collection, parts of which I was rapidly getting to know by heart. Coiled on a shelf behind me was my betatron ray. This was a fine oxy-acetylene welding nozzle which I had stolen from stock and fitted into the metal-coil tube of the gas ring in which we made tea three or four times a day. First thing every morning I would get out this instrument and light it, with the gas turned very low so as to produce a thin flame about an inch long. A sudden flick of the gas tap would cause the flame to leap out about two and a half feet and, armed with this devilish weapon, I daily hunted down and incinerated every fly, mosquito and bluebottle that entered our doors. The office walls were covered with the scars of my near misses.

The smell produced by this last operation was indescribable. One of the directors, an ancient and senile old boy known to everyone as Oul' Davy, was convinced that it was the smell of some kind of low grade liquor. "Are you sure," he would say to me, sniffing furiously, "That that oul' bugger Johnston doesn't drink some kind of hard tack out in the toilet?" I always replied that I was sure, and blamed it on the row of rubber boots.

It was easy to fool Oul' Davy, but Tommy knew my every move. Sometimes he came in through the door with his arm flung up before his face as though to ward off a careless blast from my raygun. When he was lifting a sheaf of docketts down off the wall and found them brown round the edges he would give me one of his tolerant little smiles and glance around for flies I might have overlooked. I really liked him...but I wouldn't brush up the dust.

After some weeks had gone by the floor of that office was literally heaped with soft brown dust. Once or twice Tommy seized a brush and pushed some of the dust out of sight. The brush head had only to travel a couple of feet along that floor before it piled up a great crest of dust which actually made it difficult to move the brush forward. There was more dust in the office than I ever saw anywhere else in my life, but Tommy didn't use his authority to make me clean it up. He simply waited patiently for me to come round.

One morning I was dozing quietly at my board when the two directors came in to read the mail. Oul' Davy picked up the phone, dialled the main office and said to the switchboard girl at the other end. "Tommy Johnston died last night. Put my calls through here for the rest of the day." (Ctd. foot of p.10)

FAREWELL to the VILLAGE

Ted White

A chapter is ended. HYPHEN 31 arrives with "107 Christopher St., New York 14," crossed out and rudely pencilled over it "339 - 49th St., Bklyn (squiggle)" When I open it I find Harry Warner's statement that "Ted White is fonder of "The Village than I am." Yes ("sob").

Just this evening at the barely respectable and dreadfully early hour of 10:30 I noticed that my larner was bare of Pepsis. "Oh damn!" I said, and stomped out into the night, a carton of Pepsi cruties in my hand. The small Spanish grocery a couple of doors down the street was closed, although the neon beer sign nearby had me fooled. The delicatessen a block and a half in the other direction was also closed. The "Consumers Green Stamps" neon sign was on, though. Finally I returned, nearly beaten, and told Sylvia, "Come on, let's go for a ride. Maybe I'll find a place open which sells Pepsis."

Twenty minutes later I maneuvered my car back into the same parking space in front of the house, and wearily trudged back in, Pepsis triumphantly in hand.

It was a triumph of Fan over Brooklyn.

Buried in this sad tale are many clues to the different life we now live, now that we have left the Village, and if you think that I am sad to have left that area, you are quite right. For all the "conformity" Harry Warner seems to see in New York's Greenwich Village, I found it a marvellously diverse place in which to live. The rents were ungodly high for crummy little walkup flats, the parking situation was impossible, and there were always the crowds of rubbernecking, behatted tourists with their cameras and eager cries of "Hey Maude, I found a Bentnik, look!"

But the people were friendly (most of them) the shopkeepers accommodating, the store hours very close to 'round the clock, and nobody batted an eyelash if I slept days and worked nights. It was an informal sort of neighborhood, and--oh rarity!--one of the few really "safe" areas left in Manhattan for unescorted females lat at night and all like that.

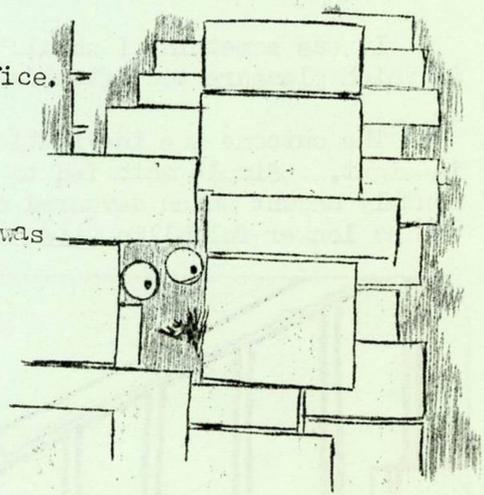
So why, you are asking, did we leave? Why did we close up the Tower Hall mimeo shop and the Christopher St. Twonk Tower, bid sad farewell to Terry Carr and Bob Stewart (NYC fandom's last remaining Villagers) and vanish into the mysterious wilds of Brooklyn-- the borough which Hurlan Ellison has described as The Land of the Walking Dead?

I suppose it goes back to my lust for possessions. I come from a family which saved. We saved anything which if I had like it might someday become again (or for the first time) a Useful Object. Our motto was "Don't throw it away, because if you do you'll need it the next day." This worked pretty well, because we had a lot of land, two houses plus assorted sheds and all, and when things got filled up there was always another section to add to the house or another basement to be dug out, and when I later began getting interested in old provinces, mimeographs, typers, and like that I took one whole section of the basement over. I see things are still the same despite the vacuum my marriage and removal must have caused, because on my latest visit back "home" to Falls Church I discovered a new "afterthought" had been added to the shed which was tacked on to the "playhouse", expressly for a small tractor my mother had somehow acquired. "We needed it to plow the snow out of the drives," she said. Virginia seems to be having harder winters these years than New York City...

I'm a Collector. I've never played this part of my fnaac up, partly because it's not somehow as fascinating to my rare audiences to hear about the latest old issue of DOG S-VAGS, or ALL-STAR COLICCS as is news about topical subjects like lawsuits and who I've bitched at lately. But, as my wife could gladly tell you, I Collect. And despite the fact that two small trailers carried all our worldly possessions from Baltimore to New York when we moved here in 1959, by the beginning of 1961 our five room apartment on Christopher Street was crowded. Into one room I'd crammed two desks, a mimeo and table, a couple of other tables, some storage files, and a wall full of pear boxes filled with prozines, books, and comic books. Something threatened to burst, and I feared for the safety of the building if another HABAKKUK arrived in the morning's mail.

So I did a very stupid thing. I rented an office.

My original idea was to go into mimeographing full time again. When I wasn't thus gainfully employed I could be writing record reviews and taking care of the other professional obligations I was then building. A nonfan wanted to find some space to store a coin press, and he had a friend who was an importer of elastic luggage straps (for motor scooters and automobile tops), and who also needed storage space. The idea was that I'd rent an office, and split the rent with them for their use of storage space.



I found a place, a quaint ex-restaurant last run by a pair of lesbians who'd been using it as a call house. The non-fan put up the first month's rent and security, and I called up some friends to help repaint the place. This was the Metropolitan Mimeo shop born.

We were sitting around the shop one night after doing most of the painting, taking turns on a couple of bottles of wine, when the door opened, and a man and woman peered in. "Is this the pizza shop?" the man asked. It seemed a remarkably stupid question, under the circumstances, but Richard Wingate was equal to the occasion. "No, but come on in," he said, eyeing the young woman. "We've got some wine, and..." Bob Stewart added his encouragement while Sylvia and I watched,

more or less spectators. The girl seemed interested, but the man said, "Uhh... when I was here, um, before, this was a pizza place." Since I'd just briefed the others on the short lurid history of the establishment (which had never sold pizza), they regarded the fellow somewhat closely. He squirmed, but the girl had sat down next to Bob, and for the next ten or so minutes the fellow had to stand ill at ease in the doorway awaiting a good exit cue.

I should've guessed the pattern from that brief episode, but somehow I didn't.

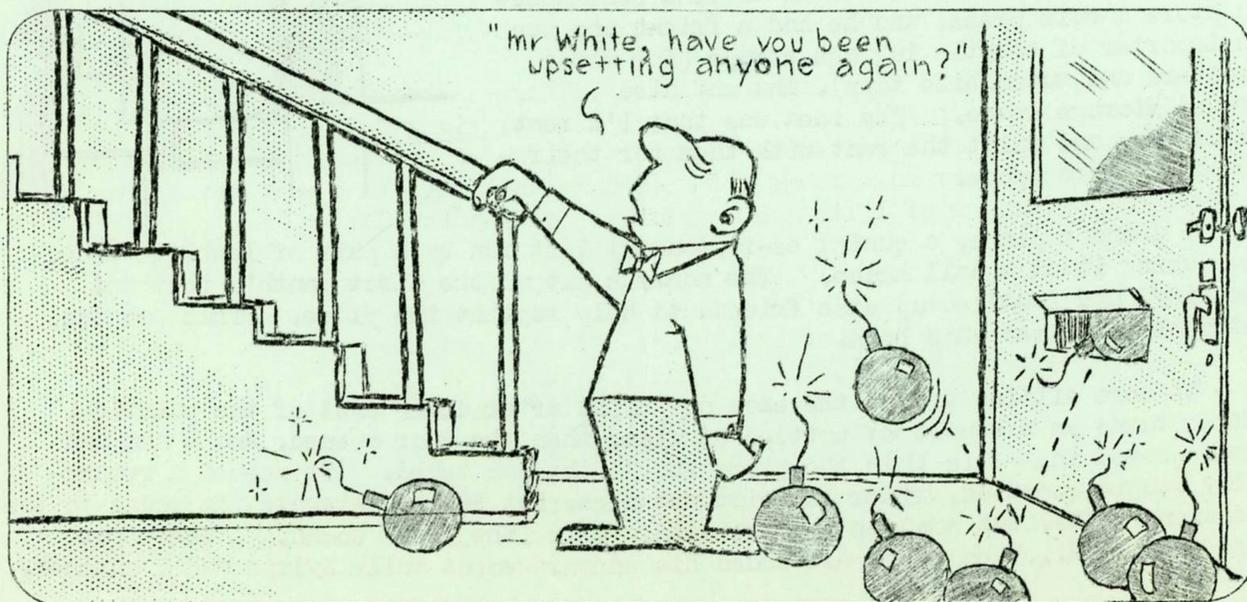
The next six months witnessed, in sequence, the retreat of my two co-tenants from their part in the agreement, the marginal success of the business, sky-high phone bills, Terry Carr's arrival in New York, and the gradual transformation of Metro Mineo into Towner Hall—the focal point of New York fandom. We held Francoist meetings there, published fanzines there, held many a riotous party, slept in visiting fan from out of town, and had, I guess, a ball.

And I lost money and lost money.

The rent was heavy from the start, and without a tenant to split the rent with it was all I could do to make each month's rent in addition to my apartment rent. Then there were the added utility and telephone bills. What really tore it though was that the place had become so popular a hangout for every fan in the area that I no longer had any spare time to myself there. I can't write with a lot of distractions, and good fanzine is a powerful distraction in any circumstance. I found myself missing deadlines, cutting my writing output, and worse: losing interest in my professional writing.

It was something I should've foreseen: a conflict of business and pleasure in which pleasure too often destroyed all discipline.

The outcome was inevitable: an increasing mound of bills past due, and no end in sight. Simple math led to the deduction that regular bills would add to a monthly amount which devoured nearly all my income, and what was more, the office was no longer fulfilling its function in the major respect of paying for itself.



One conclusion remained: give up the office. Despite its popularity as a meeting place, few fans were eager to volunteer their meagre funds to keep the rent and bills paid on Towner Hall. And fanish though I might be, I could no longer afford to maintain this expensive charity for my fellow fan.

One day, after Walter Breen had relinquished my typer to Terry Carr, who typed five stencils for LIGHTHOUSE and then began another short story for F & SF, while I pattered around wondering what the hell I was doing there anyway, I opened my mouth and said "I think I'll move to Brooklyn."

It produced the desired effect. After fully 56 seconds of silence, somebody asked, awestruck, "Brooklyn? Whyforghodsakes?"

Why indeed? Well, since moving the mimeo, a desk, several tables, a mimeoscope, chairs, and other paraphernalia out of my apartment and down into the Hall, and filling the gap in the apartment so fast that I never did figure how it happened, I'd added a couch, a couple of beds, more tables, some sets of shelves, and about thirty reams of fanzines, crudsheets and manuscripts to the Towner Hall. It was a cinch I'd never get everything back into that apartment again. Those five rooms, so huge and empty when we'd moved into it with our few sticks of inherited furniture, were now beginning to represent a series of cluttered closets (perhaps because the apartment contained no actual closets at all). And the thought of carrying my mimeo back up those five flights of stairs was Too Much.

A new place was the only answer. "Consolidate" was the word. Consolidate rents, bills, apartment and office, all into one single location. Simple? You bet. And just about impossible.

Manhattan is filled with people. They all live in apartments. Once they lived in decent-sized apartments of anywhere from three to eight or more rooms. Now, what with rent control, one of the loopholes landlords have seized with a feindish fervor is that of "remodelling" apartments. You remodel one eight room apartment with a fixed rent of 120 dollars into two three room apartments at 80 dollars and one "1½" room apartment for 60 dollars. And you're ahead by 100 dollars a month, while your tenants are behind by the loss of about five rooms.

This is particularly true in the Village, where apartments were never huge to start with. 200 dollars will still get you five or six really large rooms up on Riverside Drive or West End Avenue (although all the ads I saw wanted better than 250 dollars for five or more rooms), but who has that much to spend each month, just for the privilege of living on the fringes of Spanish Harlem?

In the Village there simply aren't any really large apartments at any price. We thought of getting a loft when I first started thinking of moving here in 1959, but that was before we knew that it was (a) illegal, and thus (b) expensive in terms of graft to live in a loft. I didn't want to get into that now. The answer was to move into another borough. And for a number of reasons, most of which weren't very rational anyhow, I ended up deciding on Brooklyn.

Almost a year after taking the office on West 14th Street in the Village, I quietly slunk out, my last trailerload of junk on its way to Brooklyn. The

superintendent, a very nasty old woman, was bitching at Les Gerber and me as we loaded the last item onto the trailer. "You going to put that lock back on the door!" she screamed at me. "Ummn," I said. The lock had cost me \$20.00 and that was more than I was willing to leave behind for her to steal anyway. "Listen, Les," I told him. "I'll go out to the car and drive away, while you stand out front and act like you're watching the place. After a bit you just walk away, and don't pay any attention to the old bitch. I'll wait for you round the corner." And that's what we did. It was the last I ever saw of the old Towner Hall.

When Les rejoined me at the car, we headed out of the borough, over the Manhattan Bridge, and down Flatbush Avenue through downtown Brooklyn. It was very strange, thinking of this as my new "city". I would take the BMT subway now instead of the IRT.

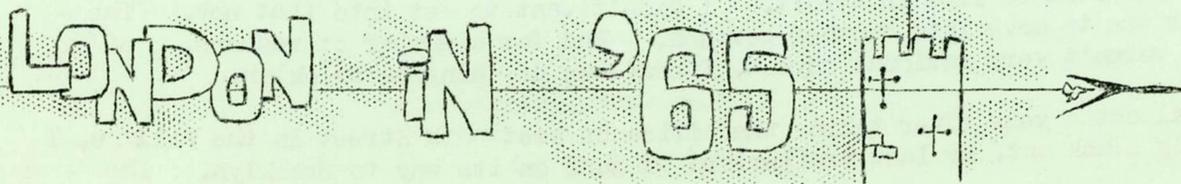
At Fourth Avenue we turned right, and then drove past block after block of simultaneously green lights, until finally all of them as far away as one could see suddenly turned red. After perhaps a half dozen pauses for red lights we turned right again onto 49th St., facing downhill towards the bay only a few blocks away. There were lots of parking spaces, and I pulled to the curb in front of 339. A three-story row-house, with a furnished basement, it would be my new home for, I hoped, many years. "Most of this stuff goes downstairs," I said, gesturing to the steps leading to the basement door. "The stuff over here goes upstairs."

And then we began moving all my fannish albatrosses into the new seven room Towner Hall II.

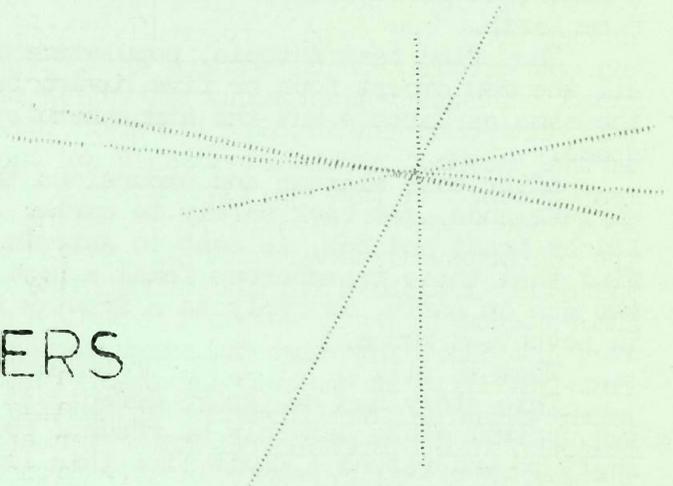
THE GLASS BUSHEL, BOB SHAW (Ctd. from p.5)

I froze on my stool, thunderstruck, unable to take it in. I hadn't even realised that Tommy was sick. I sat there for about ten minutes listening to the two directors matter-of-factly discussing the day's letters as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened; then I realised I had to do something. I got out the brush and swept all the dust out of the office, determinedly ignoring Oul' Davy's startled protests as the great choking brown clouds enveloped everything in the place.

Later I dismantled my crystal set, broke up the betatron ray, and took my science fiction collection home. I had a feeling that my apprenticeship had just begun.



ALL THE WAY



GEORGE CHARTERS

S. O. S.

Ten months ago I bought a car. (For those interested: it is a Morris Minor 1000; 958 c.c.; weight 15 cwt.; 37 m.p.g.) Having driven only a few miles previously I found the motoring world a new and delightful and unnerving experience. But now, with 10,000 miles behind me, I am getting quite blasé: city traffic does not terrify me any more, and I have even driven OTHER makes of cars. However, the brake, clutch and accelerator pedals seem to wear holes in my shoes rather quickly, so the other day I bought a pair of rubber soles (smallest women's size) and stuck them on the worst places. In a future column (broken into splinters like this one, of course) I will report the success or otherwise of this experiment in autobiography.

LOVE THINE ANEMONES

During the last couple of years I have been experimenting in flower-growing. With little success: my thumb is a nice shade of pink. The only things (not counting weeds) which are a success are montbretia and iris, but as these would grow in profusion in the middle of the Sahara I cannot take much credit for them. But queer things happen in my bloomin' garden: where did the tiny sycamore tree come from? where did the cowslips come from? and who planted the single, solitary poppy which bloomed one year and then disappeared? Perhaps (as Tom Hood said) there really is a garden angel.

GET YOUR SENSE OF WONDER HANDY

"Uncharted Planet" by V. Ranzetta tells about two men, Grant and Bob, who are in a giant rocket on a pre-moon-flight. The rocket behaves oddly sometimes: "Once, it seemed about to turn a somersault, then righted itself with a jolt." But it goes on at a terrific speed and, five hours after leaving Earth, enters some sort of orbit where they do not need their canned oxygen and so they can take off their space-helmets. This arouses Grant's sense of wonder, but Bob has anticipated it, although he confesses he does not know where they are. Suddenly the instruments, which have ceased working, begin winking and gyrating madly, the rocket gives a violent lurch

and then plunges through space at an incredible speed. It twirls round and round, throwing them against the walls and floor, and causing the oxygen cylinders to crash on the instrument panels with a soundless violence. With a final, terrific jolt it crashes on the planet Antopia, 60,000,000 miles from Earth.

They find that Antopia, population 20,000, is run entirely by women, all the men except four or five having been liquidated. The gravity is about the same as Earth's but the atmosphere extends many millions of miles into space.

After some alarms and excursions they manage to escape, and, with two girl-friends, get back safely to earth. A giant rocket, carrying 200 soldiers led by Grant and Bob, is sent to Antopia to wipe the Amazons out, only to find that those treacherous females have all taken off in rockets to wipe out the men on Earth. In reply to a frantic S.O.S. from the home base they return in seventeen hours.

That is all.

This story has one grave defect: it does not explain why the window in the control cabin can only be reached by climbing a rope ladder. It is difficult to understand a fault like this in such a well-constructed story.

I FEEL QUITE A TOME IN A LIBRARY

I am a book-worm. With seven tickets I visit the local library once a week and that is just enough to keep me going. (I am not as fast a reader as Lawrence of Arabia who for years averaged over twenty a day.) But this voluminous reading has given me an idea of some of the other queer characters who read books. For example, there are O-fillers, who take one page of a book and carefully fill in, in ink, all the O's and o's. There are the corner-folders, who mark their place by turning down a corner of the page. When this happens often enough with the same page the corner drops off, and, presumably, that reader scores one point. Then there are the people who use strange book-marks such as post-cards or bacon rind, but I have never been lucky enough to read a book after an individual who uses five-pound notes. The cream of the crop must be those who write comments in the margins, and are backed up or contradicted by subsequent readers. I have counted as many as five different hand-writings in this type of book-parliament.

An unusual case concerned a book I read recently. The hero was a particularly stupid clot who was taken in several times by the "villainess." This seemed to annoy one misogynist so much that he underlined the words very heavily every time this happened, and added his initials in the margin. This intrigued me to such an extent that I asked at the desk who he was, but after a search the librarian informed me that they had no borrower on their books with the initials "B.F."

BUT THE BIRDS STILL SAY "CHEEP, CHEEP!"

Jack Bennett, who works in the same aircraft factory as I do, is a genius at slaughtering the King's (or Queen's) English. He reported that when he came to work one morning he found that somebody had entered his office during the night and ramshackled the place. He moaned that the expense of running his old Jaguar was hanging like a loop-hole round his neck and he was going to trade it in for a stationary wagon. His latest effort is very neat. The price of blotting-paper, he declared, is absorbitant.

THE LONG AFTERNOON OF Harrogate

JAMES WHITE

In many ways this column resembles a time machine, in that with it Time and even Reality become subject to change without notice. It is possible to go from the month after next right back to childhood and, as with physical time-travel, subtly alter the whole fabric of reality in the process. In the matter of Conventions, for instance, it is very easy to make like one of Leiber's Change War characters so that oneself or one's friends show to better advantage in certain questionable situations, or that certain people's capacity for beer is judiciously glossed over and that the juiciest bits of dialogue go to people who deserve them.

Not that I would tamper with reality in such a fashion -- anyone who knows me would tell you different with no hesitation at all. The foregoing philosophical jazz about Time is merely leading up to an apology and an excuse. Any inaccuracies in this short report on the Harrogate Convention are not due to me wilfully altering the facts so as to save, or at least salvage, someone's good name, they are due to my usually eidetic memory going on the blink. The apology is called for because of my jumping seven years in my memoirs after reaching the early evening of the first day of our honeymoon, and I don't like leaving people with their tongues hanging out.

We got to Harrogate on two planes and a train. The first plane was crewed by three men and a girl all of whom we should see with our own eyes eating fish sandwiches, and to anyone who has read or seen "Flight Into Danger" I need say no more. The second aircraft had nothing wrong with it per se or with its personnel, but it left without Walter and Ian's luggage. Nobly and with great personal bravery it offered to stay behind in rainswept Manchester for several hours until the missing luggage arrived -- Manchester, several hours rain . . . ! so that us young ones could get to the con without delay. We noticed that the train kept going slower the nearer we approached Harrogate, although this might have been a psychological thing.

When Ian and I arrived eager and soaking wet at the West Park we thought for an awful moment that we were witnessing the final scene of a fannish "On the Beach." All the usual appurtenances of a con were present, the advertising posters, the "Ethel for Taff" notices, the fan and pro artwork and Ken Slater's

bookstall, but no people. It was like the beginning of a Don A. Stuart story before he became John W. Campbell; some brooding menace had obviously taken them all away. The first brooding menace we thought of was Burgess and we were examining this hypothesis in hushed tones when a voice, a human voice speaking English with a slight Californian accent, from behind us said, "everyone is in the other hotel. You haven't been reading your programmes (pardon me, programs) gentlemen."

It turned out that the voice belonged to Ron Elik, who went on to display his high intelligence and literary perception by saying that he liked the "Sector General" series. Later we were to discover that a fine brain beat behind that high, bespectacled forehead, although this was to be the first and only time that he referred to Ian and myself as gentlemen.

By hearsay we learned that we had just missed the address by E.R. James. Previously I had heard of people doing everything but stand on their head to hold the attention of an audience, but it seemed that E.R. James had started by standing on his head and going on from there. Was his face red, we wondered.

At the Clarendon the Guest of Honour, Tom Boardman, was addressing a hot, airless, crowded room-full of con members, and as we were far too hot already we stayed outside chatting with Ron, E.R. James and a German fan called Thomas Schlueck, and some other German fans whose faces I can remember but whose names I am afraid to spell. Why is it, I wonder, that foreigners can't have nice, simple easy to pronounce names like Aloysious Xavier O'derlihy instead of Tom Schlueck? From what we could see Tom Boardman's speech must have been very good, because everybody was looking at him and not at Brian Aldiss kneeling in the upper half of one of the windows with his face and hands pressed against the glass. It was said that he was trying to get the window open so as to let some air in, but my own feeling was -- judging by the odd, intent curvature of the spine and the juxtaposition of his various limbs -- that he had been successful in gnawing away some putty and was breathing through the crack between glass and sash.

Brian Aldiss is very resourceful and has ways of dealing with things like Ian Mac Aulay, Spanish restaurants and criticism regarding cobwebs to the Moon which are peculiarly his own. Later, when Tom Boardman had finished I was privileged to witness him in action against Ian. It went something like this . . .

Ian: "Aldiss, what d'you mean having men with diode valves in their heads . . .?"

Brian: "I know, I know. Totally implausible. Terrible story."

Ian: "Absolutely no technical verisimilitude! How could the vacuum be maintained . . .?"

Brian: "Worst story I ever wrote. Got sent out by mistake. Thought I'd burned it."

Ian: "Full of scientific boners . . .!"

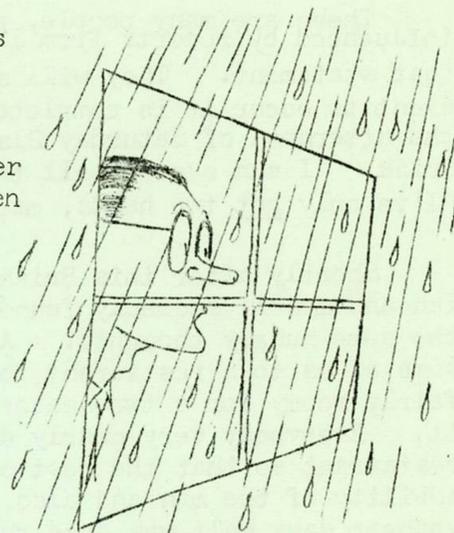
Brian: "I agree entirely. A horrible story. Lousy, should never have seen print. I feel terrible about it, Ian."

Ian: "It wasn't a bad story. As a matter of fact It was pretty good idea-wise. But for the one small scientific inaccuracy . . ."

Brian: "Can I get you another beer, Ian?"

I can't remember exactly what Ian's reply was and, not wishing to give a false impression: . . . regarding his drinking I have chosen to omit it.

As the first day of the con happened a longer time ago than the second, I seem to have forgotten most of the details. During the part of the programme when everyone was supposed to be out seeing Harrogate everyone wisely stayed inside - it was raining buckets and buckets are even more painful than cats and dogs when they fall from a great height. I met Ethel Lindsay again, one of the nicest people I know even when she isn't heaping me with egoboo. And Ella Parker, who is something with which my four-letter alien classification system is not equipped to deal.



When Ethel introduced us I was particularly impressed by the way she said "I've heard about you . . .!" and while still holding my hand twisted part-way up my back went to greet Ian with "You ----- -- --- stinking stinker!" to which Ian replied "Aaargh!"

There have been times in the past when I have thought that there might be something between Ian and Ella. I've seen him get suddenly flustered when her name came up in conversation, seen his face redden and generally act as if he was in the grip of some strong emotion. He had spoken of her in somewhat derogatory terms, of course, but we all know how love is akin to hate. Bearing in mind the fact of his approaching nuptials in July I had come to Harrogate expecting to see Ian take a tender, noble farewell of Ella -- like the lovers parting in "Prisoner of Zenda" only more sloppy -- but I must say that nothing like this happened at all.

All during the afternoon the rain beat at the hotel windows, but inside, to me at any rate, the script was straight out of Kubla Khan -- sweet words and soft music all the way. The music, dealing as it did with my many fine qualities as a writer and my extreme modesty as a person, was repitious but never boring and the libretto contained such thoughtful, perceptive passages as "The Sector General series is the greatest, man" and "You must continue the series, please, Mr. White" and "Are you a medical man yourself, Mr. White, the technical details . . .". When I'd read the blurb on the advance copy of Ballantine's HOSPITAL STATION where they had said that I could only be compared with Hal Clement I'd thought that my cup had run over until it filled the saucer but the way this egoboo was pouring in it looked like flooding the whole tea-tray. I was getting so much egoboo even I began to feel that it verged on the vulgarly ostentatious, and after one particularly pleasant chat with one of my public -- a girl who just adored my stories and whose husband, who didn't read s-f at all but promised to try some now that he had met an author -- Ian asked me in somewhat withering tones if I was enjoying the Con so far?

I ignored the sarcasm, because I was feeling very good just then, and instead offered to buy him a drink.

He refused it.

There are many people, particularly those who may have been at or been influenced by reports from last year's Con, who will doubt the veracity of that statement. They will say that it is not only impossible for such an event to occur it is completely ridiculous. But Ian Ross MacAulay did on the afternoon of Saturday 21st April at approximately 1715 hours, refuse a drink. I can even recall the actual words used in his refusal, which were, "I've only got two hands, mate!"

Shortly after this Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Margaret Manson, Walt, Ian and myself suddenly found ourselves in the same corner of the room thinking the same hungry thoughts. As it was still raining Margaret offered to drive some of us to a restaurant for dinner in her two-seater car. The car is fairly roomy for a two-seater, and Brian insisted that everyone would fit in it. Everybody very nearly did, too. Then Walter elected to walk to the restaurant so that the rest of us could ride. To me this proved the inherent nobility of the man and also, I think, his instinct for survival. In his younger days Walt was once run over by a bus, and at one stage there had been some talk about breaking his and Harrison's legs to make them -- Walt and Harry, that is, not their legs -- fit into the boot.

I was sitting in front beside Margaret Manson, who was driving, and thoroughly enjoyed the trip. The only odd thing I noticed about it was the way our headlights seemed always to illuminate the base of the rain clouds rather than the street ahead. Brian, Ian and Harry, however, kept grumbling all the time about not having room to breathe and then proving that they could by going into long, grisly descriptions of their internal injuries.

The moment we walked into that Spanish restaurant I had the feeling that we were not wanted. It was something about the way the patrons looked at us, I think -- we were obviously so full of life and witty conversation, happy, well-adjusted, while they . . . Well, they reminded me of a tin of biscuits I'd once seen after it had been dropped from a third-floor window -- outwardly polished and shining but all twisted and broken up inside. They also ran heavily to green suits with red beards or dinner jackets with the obsolete DB lapels and lines of asceticism or maybe ulcers around their mouths. Our own party was dressed with casual elegance -- Brian in a dark bronze shadow check number which made me feel envious, Ian in sober charcoal grey with a yellow sweater, which denotes that he is a physicist and not an advertising executive, Harry Harrison in a hand-woven Harris tweed jacket of excellent cut and possessing extremely long-wearing properties -- I recognised it from the Worldcon in '57; and Walter and I (who patronise the same tailor, me) elegant in casual but well-cut tweeds. Margaret looked terrific, but as I don't touch ladies I am unfamiliar with the terminology to describe her outfit. The patrons had, therefore, no right to raise eye-brows at our dress nor could they object to our conversation, which was quite clean and moreover scintillated as only can Con conversations between people who have been saving up their best and worst puns for years and don't want to waste a second of talking time. On reflection I think maybe it was the puns which made them not like us.

The waiter who came forward also showed that we weren't wanted, although

in a more polite way, by refusing to speak anything but Spanish at us. But by some strange coincidence we happened to have two spanish speakers with us, Margaret and Harry, and he retreated towards the kitchen to further register his disapproval by making us wait a long time for our huevos revueltos. Considering the fact that I hadn't had anything except three potato crisps given me by an admirer at three o'clock, to eat since leaving Manchester seven hours earlier, I thought my eating with just one knife and fork showed commendable restraint.

Meanwhile back at the West Park a Fancy Dress party had been going on, and after severing diplomatic relations with the Spanish restaurant we joined it. Here Ethel Lindsay, bless her long white cotton socks, bestowed upon me the ultimate in egoboo by winning the Fancy Dress contest, as one of my characters. I decided there and then that this was the best con I had ever been at. Nothing, even the smell of the Harrogate water which John Roles, Horst Margeit and Brian Jordan were quaffing in an attempt to win death and/or glory in the spa-water drinking contest, made me change my mind.

About the same time someone came up and started developing the argument that aliens in s-f weren't truly alien, that authors cheated by making them so very human when they should have been making them unhuman with completely alien motivations and thought processes. He said that Hal Clement and I were serious offenders in this respect. I thought that this was the second time that I had been compared with Hal Clement, and what a really good con this was. At the moment I can't remember this critic's name, only that he was an Oxford man, sensitive, intelligent and a mean climber of drain-pipes.



There was a certain amount of alcoholic drink at Ethel and Ella's party that evening. They had stocked up more than adequately and I had helped Ian bring in some beer -- each of us taking an end while bringing the crates from the van downstairs to the room. On entering the party Ian displayed no signs of inebriation, although I had seen him holding a glass in his hand for hours, or sometimes two glasses. However, as all glasses look similar -- sort of shiny and transparent and with brown stuff slopping about inside -- I would not like to say that he drank continually all day. However, to scotch once and for all the rumour that Ian is a compulsive alcoholic I decided to count the beer he took.

Approximately three point two five seconds after entering the room he had his first beer, to be sociable, he said. This was at ten-thirty. At ten-fifty three I made it six beers. At eleven-five it was nine beers, and counting. Eleven-twenty came and it was thirteen, and holding . . .

Apparently somebody had pinched his glass when he had been in the process of re-distributing his mass on the bed to let Walter take his elbow out of Ella Parker's ear. A substitute receptacle had been discovered nearby, but Ian refused to use it on aesthetic grounds. Finally Ethel saved him by producing

a plastic tooth-glass.

The count resumed.

At seventeen and counting I made a pun and Ella threw a whiskey bottle at me. It was an empty bottle -- she knows I don't drink -- and it missed. Then she kicked me out of bed, her reason being that I was giving her a cramp in the leg as well as a pain in the neck. So I moved to Ethel's bed which just had Ethel, Ron Ellick, George Locke, Archie Mercer, and part of Brian Aldiss on it. Here Ethel gave me three whole, full bottles of tomato juice. All this caused me to lose count.

I am very sorry about this as I was and still am anxious that no exaggerated rumours should be noised abroad regarding Ian's drinking, but I must admit that there is a fairly high probability that between the hours of twelve midnight and four o'clock when the party broke up he had another beer, maybe even two. However the facts as we know them, verified by a sober, unbiased observer name of myself, are that between ten-thirty and twelve he had a very moderate seventeen beers. Any count made after this time is sheerest conjecture and should be discounted as such.

I can also state that, although the clarity of his speech left something to be desired at times -- this was due to southern Irish environmental influences rather than beer -- the incisive clarity of his intellect remained at all times unimpaired.

Ethel, Ian, Walt, Ron Ellick, George Locke and myself were on Ethel's bed -- the party had begun to thin out by that time -- discussing the existence or non-existence of the square root of minus one, and Ian was with it. For all of three minutes he had me seeing the square root of minus one as a living, breathing thing instead of a piece of mathematical sleight-of-hand. (Other people in the room were no doubt seeing things, too, but the square root of minus one isn't pink). From there I steered the conversation into less esoteric channels by asking a question which had been bothering me for some time, namely how, if Space is curved, even negatively, in the fourth dimension is it not possible for a person travelling far enough to return to his starting point?

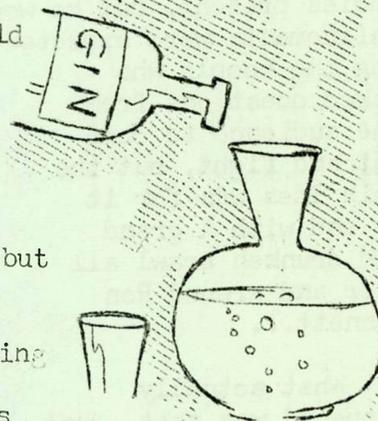
There was silence in our bed for a few minutes after this. Ron, who is very clean cut and intelligent, looked slightly fuzzy -- nine cans of root beer by two-thirty -- and pensive. Then suddenly his eyes lit up. Obviously he had the answer, or at least an out. With throbbing voice and flashing spectacles he demanded, "What is Space, what is curvature, what is a person? Define your terms!"

Next morning we attended the BSFA AGM. Ian said that he wouldn't drink that day but save his small capacity for the party that night. He looked like Death warmed up. and from my First Aid and Nursing lectures I decided that his symptoms could be ascribed to one or all of a number of conditions which included malaria, morning sickness, jaundice, alcohol poisoning or rigor mortis. In the interests of fairness and because he is a friend of mine I would not wish to state the one I thought most likely.

After the serious constructive business was out of the way -- Peterborough having won the 1963 con to the surprise of everyone including the people who had voted for it -- came the Professional's Panel. This was something which I had been dreading because I don't speak well and prefer to write my spontaneous witticisms using approximately twenty minutes polishing on each one. Somehow I didn't think the panel could wait that long for a lousy White-type pun. I prepared to take my place feeling scared and not a little envious of people like Brian and Harry and Tom Boardman who could talk off the tops of their heads as if they had never used the tops of their heads for doing anything else. But the Professional's Panel wasn't too bad after all, I didn't have to say very much and what I did say I said too softly for anyone to hear or object to it; and there were certain undercurrents of intrigue which very few people suspected which kept my mind off my tied tongue.

Sometimes I wish I lived in the probability world where that Professional's Panel went exactly the way we professionals had planned it - . . .

Harry Harrison possesses, among his many other fine characteristics, a diabolical brain. Brian Aldiss's brain is such that it can contemplate mile-long spiders without qualms -- spiders have six feet but no qualms anyway -- and they both remembered that my brain, together with its necessary locomotive appendages, had taken part in an unscheduled gun-battle during the '57 con. Tom Boardman joined in the plot immediately it was mentioned, being a person with boundless enthusiasm for practically everything. I don't know if Steve Hall was in on it or not -- it was a last-minute thing and there might not have been time to tell him. E.R. James certainly wasn't in on it, he being the person indirectly responsible for the whole thing.



E.R. James, a quiet-spoken, likeable and shy individual had, despite their characteristics aroused feelings of envy within the breasts of certain pro authors by lecturing the convention membership on Yogi while standing on his head. In an effort to reassert themselves in the public eye the diabolical, peculiar, enthusiastic and big brains of Harrison, Aldiss, Boardman and White respectively devised a little treat for the convention which, they hoped would be rather more spectacular.

The way it was supposed to go was for Tom Boardman to keep filling the water carafe with water from a large gin bottle. He was to do this surreptitiously, but in such a manner that the audience would see him. It was a very warm afternoon and the other members of the panel had courageously agreed to drink water for the hour given over to the panel. As an added touch I, whom everyone knew was a confirmed water and/or tomato juice drinker, was to grimace slightly every time I knocked back a glass. The idea being that I thought the water tasted peculiar, but not knowing what gin tasted like was drinking it anyway. Then gradually the polite answers to questions from the Chair and audience were to take on a more caustic edge. We would become less than polite about each other's stories and graduate to criticisms of personal habits. Not knowing much about each other's personal habits we planned to

invent some as we went along. Some of these were to be a trifle on the bizarre side, but as vile pros used to engendering the suspension of disbelief we thought we could make them sound plausible.

At this stage we expected E.R.James to step in to try to calm us down, or at least aid Ron Bennett in the chair in doing so. This would be the signal for us to start coaxing E.R.James to show us how to stand on our heads, and the Chairman would be politely but firmly restrained if he tried to stop us. We did not foresee any trouble in this, as Ron Bennett without his elephant is at a disadvantage. We would start to stand on our heads ourselves, singly and in unison. Naturally we would topple and fall against one another, and say "Sorry" to each other in loud drunken voices, or phrases like "Who d'ye think you're shovin' mate?" And Harry Harrison would start using horrible language on all and sundry---actually it would be quite clean language, out of deference to the ladies present, but he would speak loudly and with feeling in Danish. Various refinements were expected to suggest themselves as we went along, such as asking the people who asked questions from the audience to come out and fight, but the main idea was for it to end with a grand old drunken brawl all over and around Ron Bennett...

What actually happened was that, just as Harry Harrison was becoming impassioned in his replies to questions, and Brian Aldiss was waving his arms more than usual and I was breaking in on him---and the audience had gone quiet, possibly because they suspected something but more likely because they were beginning to hear us properly for the first time---Ron Bennett wound us up. Looking at his watch he said it was time for the auction and thank you gentlemen for a most interesting discussion.

All I can say is he should have waited a bit. It would have been much more interesting.

Up in Brian's room later we sympathised with each other and wondered how we had all had the idea that the panel was to last a full hour. When the half hour had finished we had just been warming up. It was during this meeting that Tom Boardman launched his idea for an sf authors' choice anthology which would not pay the authors anything but which would finance a British and/or Internat-



ional Hugo, the rest of the proceeds going to the BSFA. When I think now of how we all promised to donate stories to this anthology for free, hardened pro that I am I get a certain sense of unreality. And it was also during this meeting that I saw Ian drinking whiskey out of a cut glass vase. In all fairness, however, I must add that the vase was eighteen inches high and there wasn't very much whiskey in it.

Because we had been talking about something or other during the time everyone else had been out to lunch, we missed the auction and TAFF address by Ron Ellick through having been overtaken with a strange alien craving for food. But everywhere in Harrogate seemed to be closed, it being Sunday, except a dank, noisome, first-floor cellar whose air was solid with the smell of very old fried fish. We wasted nearly an hour before we finally discovered a Chinese restaurant which was open. I think it is a very odd thing that people who we once considered dirty foreigners are the only people capable of serving clean food.

It was late afternoon when we returned to the hotel. The rain had stopped and the street and park outside were drenched with warm sunshine instead of cold water. It really was a fine afternoon and we went into the hotel feeling happy and eager to meet anybody we hadn't met yet and talk until it was time for the film, which was one I had wanted to see for about ten years and still want to see again.

There were other film shows not mentioned in the programme. Ron Ellick displayed some stills of a warm-blooded oxygen-breather called Joni Cornell and after "A Matter of Life & Death" the Cheltenham Group showed old con movies and Tarzans. The only other things I can remember about this party are that everyone seemed to be enjoying himself, that at one point there was a loud splintering crash from somewhere, and that everyone watching the movies had either to sit or lie on the floor because the screen rested on a chair little more than a foot above floor level. This horizontal rather than vertical distribution of bodies made walking and talking remarkably difficult.

Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison were in the lounge feeding meat pies to a crowd of emaciated fans. Brian had been charged 2/6 the previous night for one sandwich so tonight he had imported his own food. I heard later that he had grilled them in a metal wastepaper basket, but when they arrived they were going like---dare I say it---like hot cakes. I managed to get one just before Brian Burgess took off with the last dozen with some idea of auctioning them at the other party. Hearing that there was another party, in Ethel and Ella's room, I went looking for it and met Walt and Ian doing the same.

This was a very quiet party at first. Until people began breaking away from the other one there was only a handful there. We talked seriously about a great number of things fannish, and listened with awe to the sound of a typer coming from the next room where some fan was already bashing out a con report. Then gradually more people came in and it became impossible to sit less than eight to a bed. About five o'clock people had begun to drift away again until just Walt, Ian and myself were there and Ethel stated her intention of going to bed. Ella also said she needed her sleep otherwise she'd be a sight in the

morning. I had a choice of replies to this, but refrained from making them and merely said that in my opinion anyone who went to bed at all on the second night of a convention was sissy and effeminate. Oddly enough, neither of the girls objected to being called effeminate.

We were all hungry again and went down to the kitchen on the off chance that the staff had forgotten to throw out some crusts. I don't know how the others felt, but I was hungry in italics. In the kitchen we found the walls, ceiling, floor and fittings streaming with water and clouds of steam hanging in the air. Obviously there had been a recent catastrophe with the hot water boiler. We waded out carefully and went to the small lounge, where a group containing Ron Ellik and Ron Bennett were playing cards. Ron Bennett stopped long enough to reassure us that the slight dampness in the kitchen was nothing to worry about and that the boiler had been unco-operative the first few times he had handled it, but now it knew who was boss. He also said he knew where there was some instant coffee and offered us boiling water prepared personally by the hands of the Convention Chairman.

While we were drinking this glorious, warm stuff Ron Ellik gave us the details of how the other Ron had tamed the boiler. Not wanting to steal his thunder---boilers make an explosive, hissing noise when they blow up in any case---and in an effort to avoid puns with "highest steam" in them, I will not repeat them.

Ron went back to his brag and we began debating whether or not we should go to bed, deciding finally that we were all too hungry to sleep. Walt, Ian, the fan who climbs drainpipes and compares me with Hal Clement and myself were beginning to brood about the injustices of the world and society in general, our thoughts being strictly from hunger. Then Ian, Walt and the drainpipe-climber from Oxford left me in a last desperate attempt to find food....and stumbled on an unlocked refrigerator.

After we had made a large dent in the contents of the refrigerator and left some conscience money behind to cover the cost, we all felt more like ourselves. But still we were not completely happy. Possibly it was a sense of loneliness ailed us, because we had been used to large crowds of people and now we were only four. The fans playing brag at the table a few yards away were in another world, and didn't count. It didn't feel right being able to talk without raising one's voice, or walk from one end of a room to the other without saying "Excuse me" six times. In any case someone, possibly me, suggested that we wake up Harry Harrison or Brian Aldiss and somebody, me again, thought it was a good idea. We batted it about for a while, discovering that we weren't sure of Harry's room number and that there would be an element of risk attached to waking the Harrison up, and that we had a rough idea where Brian's room was and that he was the type who was invariably polite. It was 6.45 when we left for the other hotel to wake up Brian.

His hotel was locked but there was a drainpipe which led past a half-open window which, according to our calculations, opened into Brian's room. The fan who compared me with Hal Clement said that he climbed drainpipes all the time at Oxford and started to scale this one. But drainpipes in Harrogate are made of softer stuff than in Oxford and it began to wobble alarmingly, so he came

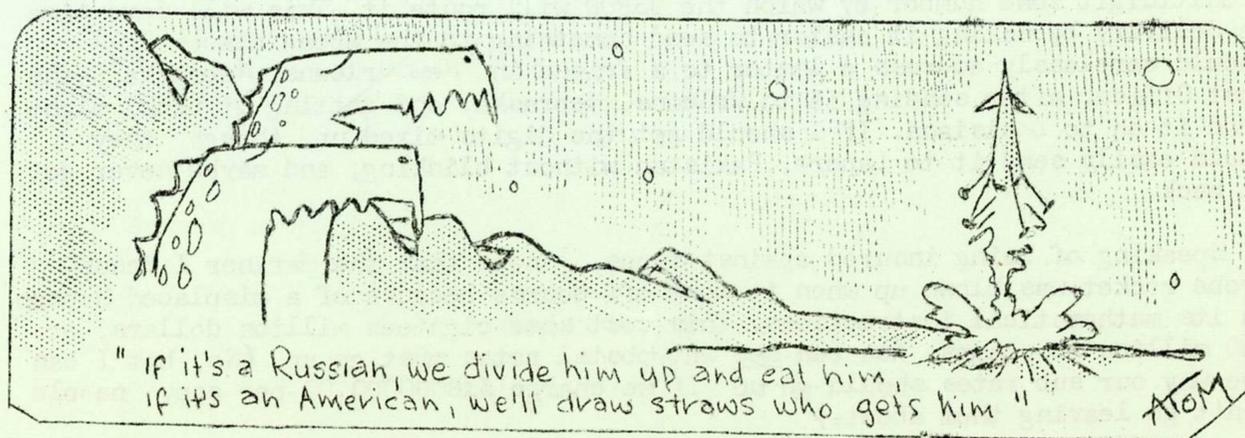
down without accomplishing his mission. Which was perhaps as well, since we were told later that it had been Margaret Manson's room.

Gradually we became resigned to the fact that we would be unable to wake anyone up to join our party and we headed back to our own hotel to freshen up before breakfast. The sun was still shining down warmly and the sky, trees and grass had a newly minted look. I think we were all feeling a little poetic and philosophical about things, because it was suddenly borne upon us that when we had gone into the West Park Hotel to see A Matter of Life and Death the local meteorological phenomena had been identical with the conditions around us now. It made us wonder where Sunday night had gone, even if there had been such a thing as Sunday night. We had all been so busy enjoying ourselves and the time had passed so quickly that we began seriously to doubt Sunday night's existence.

After breakfast we returned to the two Con hotels and spent the morning waking people up and saying goodbye. Our train did not leave until mid-afternoon and so I was able to watch the convention dissolving around me---the Germans piling into their station wagon and driving off; Ken Slater, his wife, portable bookshop and lovely little daughter pulling away in their van; and the others who staggered away with suitcases so loaded with auction material that toothbrushes were carried in the breast pocket. There seemed to be a lot left unsaid to an awful lot of people and I expected to feel sad at coming to the end of such a wonderful convention, but somehow I didn't.

Then we all lunched with Ethel and Ella, who also left us to the train where we were joined by the Bentcliffes, and sat talking in the sunshine outside the station for a long time. Ethel said "See you in Peterborough, James" and Ella was rude to us all again, but even I could see that her heart wasn't in it. All this time I was still half convinced that it was yesterday afternoon and wholly convinced that it had been the nicest afternoon I had ever known. And so it was, when the train entered one of the long tunnels on the other side of Leeds with a roar that woke me suddenly to pitch blackness, that I reached across to touch Ian and Walt and yell that Sunday night had caught up with us.

Symbolically, and rather dramatically, the Long Afternoon of Harrogate had come to an end.



Post Scripts

Thom Perry, 1130 Garfield St., Lincoln 2, Nebraska :: Now that US postal rates have quieted down, I must write you thanks for your Christmas card, since it was longer and funnier than the one I sent you. It didn't arrive, of course, until after Christmas proper, but that is hardly your fault. An Irish life has given you a bright picture of postal promptness---I remember one piece where you had an American character getting his mail before breakfast. To be sure, this is possible, but only for people like me who eat breakfast at 2pm and go to work about 5 No, if you had wanted the Xmas cards to arrive by Xmas, probably the only safe thing would have been to have brought them across with you and posted them in Chicago

Nor can the United States Post Office Department be blamed. You must remember that they have other things to do besides deliver the mail. Thousands of magazines have to be scanned for obscenity. I don't know how things are in Ireland, but in the US everyone would go wild and become depraved if he could get his hands on obscene art, photographs or writing; people would stay home from work to slaver over it; production would fall; gold would outflow, the economy would waver; stocks would crash; Russia's GNP would exceed and surpass ours, and you know what that would mean! and things generally would go to hell. So the Post Office must make sure no obscene stuff is available.

And of course there are other things. Thousands of employees are employed thinking up new reasons to raise the postal rates. Hundreds, I'm sure, are busy daily putting up WANTED posters on top of the WANTED posters on the bulletin boards. New stamps are being designed, misprinted, and sold in quantity to collectors for sheer profit (since the collectors don't use them) And a select few think up things like the new ZIP zone system, which will give every address a multidigit zone number by which the USPOD will route it. This will save time in delivery by making it easier to send something to the wrong place. If I should carelessly address a letter to a friend in "New Orleans, Nebraska", the Post Office, after sending it to Orleans, Nebraska, and getting it back, might send it on to Louisiana. If I should get the digits mixed up, though they could easily send it to Lahore, Pakistan without blinking, and maybe never get it back.

Speaking of being insured against typos, I note that the Mariner I Venus probe rocket was blown up when it went off course because of a misplaced hyphen in its mathematical instructions. This cost some eighteen million dollars, or 360 million 5c stamps. You can see why postal rates must go up (No, but I can see why our sub rates should go up. If we charge \$18000000.00 per copy, people won't go leaving them about.)

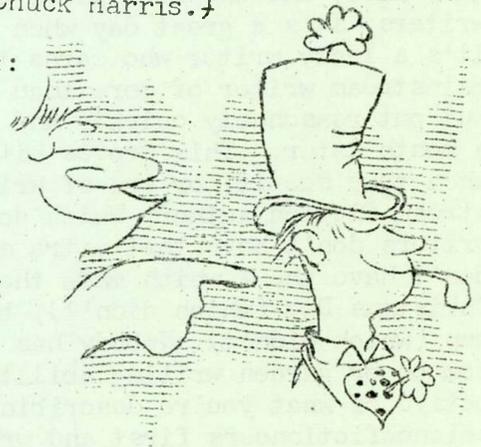
Several years ago in Hyphen there was a discussion about writing down those brilliant ideas that occur to one at night while sleeping. One product of this system became a byword between me and a friend: when you woke up in the morning to find that the brilliant idea you'd noted down was, "The obvious is not necessarily untrue." Reason I bring this up is that some weeks ago I ran across another story in this ^{year} in an offbeat edition of the notebooks of da Vinci. It seems that this genius also was having these bursts of brilliance and forgetting their substance by the time he woke up. He tried several systems: one, I recall, was cementing the idea in one's memory by placing a boot on a bookshelf. When you woke up you would be sure to notice the boot, and then you would remember what you had thought of. (A sort of footnote?) But even this didn't work. Finally he placed a pad and pen and ink by his bedstead. After several mornings he awoke with the foggy memory of inspiration during the night. He turned to the paper beside the bed. Sure enough, something was written there! He looked eagerly, but the scribbled nonsense caused him to laugh out, and ever afterwards he derided the notion of nocturnal inspiration. He had written "e = mc²".

Jim Caughran remarks that Hyphen has been a victim of postal censorship. Has it. (No, it hasn't.)

What the devil was that baquote-in-bad-taste that started "When you've been a faned as long as I have..."? (And it's not going to be.) While I've disliked some of your baquotes I can't imagine anything in very bad taste following that dependent adverbial clause. (You underestimate Chuck Harris.)

John Baxter, Box 39, King St. PO, Sydney, NSW. ::

TV in Ireland? Oh well, it had to happen, I suppose. A pity though. You were about the only unspoiled fan we had left, the only man to whom we could point proudly and say "dere is one of nature's gentlemen, a true natural philosopher of the old school, a man who lives life to the full with nothing more than a handful of shag and a pot of stew for his comfort. Here is a man who does not need television, unlike those etc etc." Of course we never actually did point like that, or say any of those nice things, but the thought was there. Now, sadly, we won't even have the opportunity. No doubt any visitors to Upper N^ords Rd will find the whole Willis family sitting around in the familiar gloom, eyes like last night's ice cubes, snarling at each other as they cross the field of vision to answer the calls of nature. Even now you can see the signs. Fighting with Madeleine before the aerial is even up...what a sad thing to see you defiling the fair Irish tongue like that. Of course I am probably being unfair. You may have used a completely different dialect for your cursing...an Erse of another choler, as it were. (Dag...help!)



Johnny Hautz's letter. As damon knight pointed out in his examination of Heinlein, "Heinlein's characters tend to seem commonplace simply because they're all healthy, physically and mentally, except for an occasional psychotic villain. Heinlein isn't interested in neurotic people, perhaps because he feels they are obsolescent." If you go back through Heinlein's novels, especial-

By the juveniles and semi-juveniles, you'll find a lot of evidence to support this point. All the people in *Have Spacesuit Will Travel*, *Star Lumnox*, *The Rolling Stones* etc aren't especially memorable, but they are real in that they be have almost exactly as you or I would under the circumstances of the story. Valentine Michael Smith is something else again. I'll be very interested to hear whether Knight cares to revise his description of Heinlein as "the one sane man in science fiction" after reading *Starship Trooper* and *Stranger In A Strange Land*.

Hautz has a point when he says "very often modern sf seems to be attempting seems to be attempting stories for which it has not the literary ability." This is, I think, worth examination. As I see it the biggest trouble with sf, modern and ancient, is that it is too big for its boots. It is continually attempting things for which it is ill equipped and often quite unsuited, with the result that the field and its adherents fall into disrepute. Science fiction tries social criticism, blithely assuming that because it writes about the future it has the ability to guess correctly what the future holds. The presence in the social extrapolation business of men like Lewis Mumford, Arnold Toynbee and Will Durant is ignored. These men can eat science fiction alive when it comes to the extension of social trends, but nobody realises this and to date none of them has felt it necessary to pin back the sf writers' ears. But it won't be long. Similarly a number of sf authors try to write good artistic prose, but again they are competing against people who have been around a lot longer than they have, and who work under conditions far superior to those available to sf writers. It's a great day when somebody publishes a science fiction novel and it's a lucky writer who earns top rates for his work. On the other hand any mainstream writer of more than aboriginal ability can depend on his work being put out reasonably quickly and at a high rate, even if the thing is remaindered a month later. This proves either (a) book publishers don't recognise quality when they see it, or (b) sf writers can't compete with even the poorest mainstream fiction author. Which do you think it is? As far as I'm concerned, sf writers don't have that extra something that makes a worthwhile author. They don't have the X which made the difference between *Alas Babylon* (which sold) & *Christmas Day* (which didn't), between *Earth Abides* (which sold) and *Sixth Column* (which didn't). Nobody has ever analysed X, but a large percentage of it is common or garden writing ability, the knack of stringing words together irrespectively of what you're describing with them. Most sf writers are trying to be sciencefictioneers first and writers second. That's no way to run an artform

Strange to see so much science fiction in Hyphen's letter column. Years ago I remember sanctimoniously proclaiming that the latest issue of Hyphen didn't mention sf anyplace, and wasn't that a crying shame? Later I began to realise that the reason I liked Hyphen so much was because it didn't dirty its feet by paddling around in the cesspool with all the other vulgar fans. I really don't know what to think now, now that the mag is starting to read like 1945 *Brass Tacks*. It's all very confusing. I'm glad to see sf coming back into Hyphen, if only because it gives everyone, myself included, something to write about. Gone are those dreadful days when I would sit for hours before the typer, fracturing my brain muscles in an attempt to say something funny. Now all I have to do is put paper in the machine and pow! ---in half an hour I've insulted all your contributors, cast aspersions on the morals, literary ability, religious affiliations and general hygiene of half fandom and, in short, made myself pretty objectionable. Hoping you are the same.

(Continued from inside front cover) we spare no effort to check the ver-
acity of every item. So we went over
to inspect Greenwich Village and Brooklyn to make sure they were exactly as
Ted describes them. After all we didn't want to be sued by two Metropolitan
Boroughs---everyone knows you can't fight even one City Hall.

We were relieved to find they were exactly as Ted says. In gay mad exotic
Greenwich Village you can indeed buy Pepsis at half ten at night. In fact you
can buy bread, butter, bacon and eggs there half an hour after midnight. I
know, because Madeleine and I bought some there in a gay mad exotic super-
market, for breakfast in Brooklyn later that morning.

And it's true that Brooklyn is different. The first time we went there it
was by the dusty and desolate New York subway, which we were already quite
familiar with having lost our way in it three times. After a few miles the
subway emerges into the open air, broadens out and becomes Brooklyn. The main
difference is that you can now smoke. Though to be fair (and to explain Arth-
ur's little drawing on the back cover) we were in no mood to appreciate the
beauty of Brooklyn, the Greyhound Company having just lost our luggage. At the
moment of writing (28th March) it is still somewhere in the States, and anyone
finding himself in a bus station with time to spare is invited to ask after a
brown dufflebag and a blue fibre suitcase, probably tagged KE 452 192 & 193.

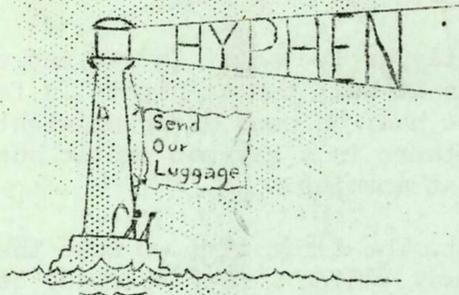
Another thing we've lost is a co-editor, Ian McAulay having gone back to
Dublin. He seized a moment when he happened to be slightly ahead in the Great
Scrabble Championship to steal off and get married, to an auburn-haired fellow
graduate of Trinity called Olivia. Personally I think he was lucky to get her
but when I found they kept the list of wedding guests in a "Which?" envelope
I asked Ian was this how he selected his brides. "Yes," said Olivia "and
those Performance Tests were terrible." They're now settled in a house called
"Illyria", Sandyford, Co. Dublin, of which Ian writes:

"Illyria is gradually taking on that lived-in look with stacks of
books, papers and magazines covering all available floor space.
Some day---carpets! Most days, when I come home from my arduous
labours, I stagger in bearing an armload of drills, hacksaws and
screwdrivers and spend a couple of hours using the aforesaid
implements to drill, hacksaw and drive screws respectively. The
house is beginning to show the results of these labours, and if
you like a house covered with drill, hacksaw and screwdriver
marks, this is it."

Not that Ian's going to Dublin means that I am entirely bereft of ~~the~~ bene-
fit of his advice and encouragement. This still arrives, in the form of post-
cards reading "When is the next H,phen coming out?" Meanwhile Madeleine has
taken his place (she looks more like a co-ed than he ever did anyway), has
been cutting stencils and has even bought a new old typer for it. (She wants
to apologise for those she cut on my old portable.) With this we hope to pre-
sent more legibly and more frequently some interesting new style material,
now the backlog has been cut down

All artwork by Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London SW2

Eavesdroppings



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Walt & Madeleine Willis
170 Upper N'Ards Rd.,
Belfast 4
N. Ireland

PRINTED MATTER
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TALKING TO HIM, YOU'D NEVER THINK HE HAD A WOODEN LEG.....ALDOUS HUXLEY WRITES LIKE A SORT OF EDUCATED JOHN W. CAMPBELL.....YOU DON'T WANT HIM TO BE GOING ABOUT WITH A NAKED DUFFLE..... NEVER FEED A DRUNK COFFEE---ALL YOU GET IS A WIDE AWAKE DRUNK.....I GOT MY WIFE THROUGH THE N3F.....APART FROM THEA SITTING ON MY FACE I HAD A VERY NICE CONVENTION.....I'M GOING TO HAVE A BITE TO EAT BEFORE DINNER.....I READ IT AT ONE SITTING AND STILL HAVE SEVERAL PAGES LEFT OVER FOR NEXT TIME..... TOGETHER, WE GAVE UP PLAYERS.....ALL YOUR TASTE IS IN YOUR MOUTH.....A MAN LOOKS FOR MORE THAN A PRETTY FACE, AS THE SAILOR SAID TO THE MERMAID.....BISEXUAL, IT'S BEST.....SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR YOUR PHONE INSTANTLY REMOVED.....FILL ME IN ON GOD.....WHAT'S THE GOOD OF BEING FAMOUS IF NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT IT?.....SO WHITE IS FEUDING WITH ENEY TOO.....WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY WHICH PAYS MORE RESPECT TO A GUNNER'S MATE THAN TO A WHORE.....AS SOON AS I COULD MANAGE IT, I WENT TO BARANA AND EXPLAINED ON BOTH LEVELS ... THE STARS LIKE DUST BUT I DON'T.ON FILMING THE BIBLE DO YOU REALISE THAT THOSE PORTIONS WHICH ARE DULLEST TO READ WOULD BE THE MOST INTERESTING ON THE SCREEN?.....PROPHYLACTIC IS BETTER THAN CURETTE.....THE MOST DELIGHTFUL FEATURE OF MARRIED LIFE IS THE DEEP DEEP PEACE OF THE DOUBLE BED AFTER THE HURLY-BURLY OF THE CHAISE LONGUE.....david frost, waw 2, BoSh 4, ron ellik 2, don thompson, ethel lindsay, pat kearney, clive jackson william danner, james white 2, seth johnson, lenny bruce, jane ellern, sid coleman, harding & baxter, mrs patrick campbell

Dr. David P. Hartman
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An X here means your sub took a dive