

HYPHEN

No 38

SPRING

1999



HYPHEN COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

HYPHEN TRIBUTE, created for Corflu Sunsplash, April 30 - May 2, 1999. (\$5.00) put together by Shelby Vick, 627 Barton Avenue, Springfield, FL, 32404, with extensive assistance by rich brown. To be distributed at Corflu Sunsplash (April 30-May 2). Much thanks goes to Joe Sidani, without whom this would not have been possible He laboriously Xeroxed many copies of "-" and sent them to me to chose from.

This is meant to be a happy occasion -- celebrating Sixth Fandom by printing a special issue of one of its greatest zines, *Hyphen*, in an issue dedicated to its genius of a creator, Walt Willis. Willis was, for those few of you who do not know, a mainstay of fandom in those days. Then -- and later -- his humor was legendary. Since Corflu Sunsplash is dedicated to Sixth Fandom, a *Hyphen* (also known as "-") reprint seemed like a great idea. "-" and *Quandry* were the focal points.

"-" and Q were very different, yet alike. Q was strictly a US product, while "-" was undoubtedly UK. Both were full of humor, but Q was light and casual, while "-" reflected the intense drive of its editor. Both were great, and acted as talent magnets.

Having to choose between them was easy, because "-" was a direct offshoot of my "WAW With the Crew in '52" campaign. Walt couldn't continue his printed fanzine, *Slant*, and help with the drive to get him over, so he went to mimeo reproduction, which is much easier and faster to do. *Quandry* was closer to me, and easier to contribute to, but I had very little to do with its success. Therefore, as I am indirectly responsible for the death of / and the birth of "-", it's up to me to do a "-" memorial issue. Thus Tribute to *Hyphen* was born.

Here's hoping this is completed in time for Walt to recognize it for the compliment it is meant to be. Or, at least, for it to stir a flicker of recognition.

NOTE -- Any Tables of Content included herein are reproductions from the original, not accurate tables. Wish they were; wish there was time and money enuf to reprint it all. Unfortunately, both are limited.

Sorry 'bout that.

HYPHEN

No 1

MAY

1962



"We are the builders of brave tomorrows,
We are the dreamers at last awake...."

IN THIS
ISSUE

BILL TEMPLES '51 CON REPORT

THE BRITISH

HYPHEN

AMERICAN FANMAG

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HYPHEN is produced between issues of SLANT by Walt Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Rd., Belfast, Ireland and Chuck Harris, 'Carolin', Lake Avenue, Rainham, Essex, England. Art Editor Bob Shaw. Editorial Assailant, James White. This is issue No.1, May 1952. The sub rate is two issues for one US sf promag or 1/6 payable to Willis, or deductible from subs to SLANT.

INCLINATIONS

Walt Willis

To beguile subscribers to SLANT during the fleeting interval between issues I've entered into a symbiotic relationship with Chuck Harris, my best friend & severest critic (alternately) to publish this new international fanmag. Chuck's other qualifications were that he is one of the few English fans not already working full time for Ken Slater, and that he has acquired a very striking duplicator. However the duplicator insisted on staying on strike despite heroic efforts by Vince Clarke--see opposite--so I've run off the mag myself on a machine I picked up the other day at an auction in an effort to get Bill Temple's last convention report out before this year's. Blame all mistakes on me.

When we get over our labour pains we might bring out this thing quite often. We'd like to make it a sort of link between British and American fandom, which is one of the two or three reasons for its name. I've always thought it would be a good thing if world fandom were better integrated, if only to raise the standard of fanmag material and increase its circulation, and we're in a good position to bring that about since the 300 odd subscribers to SLANT are scattered all over the civilised world--not to mention parts of Los Angeles.

The present issue, though, is mostly repercussions from the last issue of SLANT, and I hope you new subscribers won't feel too much as if you had come in in the middle of something. If you aren't interested in getting further issues of '-' just send this one back and I'll restore your SLANT sub credit.

Further issues of '-' will have material by Harris, Clarke, Shaw, White and me. Also readers' letters and lots of other informal stuff we were never able to print in a 'stuck-up mag like SLANT, so let's hear from you readers and writers. I guarantee, no typos. When we get the standard of reproduction we want we'll be running a series of special features too long for SLANT, starting with the serialised memoirs of Forrest J. Ackerman, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HAPPY FAN.

HYPHEN

No 37

AUTUMN

1987



"Lost what innocence?"

FORTY YEARS OF IRISH FANDOM

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Cover by Vina Clarke

Interior illos by Bob Shaw

Subscription two issues for 1/6 or 25¢ or one US prozine or a-f pocketbook. Exchanges welcomed. If an X appears after your name on the mailing wrapper it means either that your postman is in love with you or that your subscription has expired.

This issue has been edited and published by me, Walt Willis, of 170 Upper Newtownards Rd, Belfast, N. Ireland, in an attempt to encourage fandom to face the grim fact that I'm not dead and to try out an idea for using vertical interlineations in page format. In the continued absence of SLANT, due partly to an illness in the spring and partly to the reluctance of this typer to cut a good enough stencil, some SLANT subbers are receiving the compliment of being sent this less formal rag in the hope they will appreciate its ineffable beauty. If not please return it undecorated for restoration of sub credit.

The better part of this issue is, like its author, devoted to Bea Mahaffey; or at least to her epic-making trip round Ireland. At about 6.30pm, Eastern Standard Time, on Wednesday the 13th May she boarded a TWA Constellation at New York Airport for the 3000 mile flight to Shannon, on the West Coast of Ireland. Almost a whole day earlier Madeleine and I had left Belfast in an 8hp car to meet her. We drove on round the West, North and Eastern coasts of Ireland, picking up James White in Donegal town, and spending a couple of days in Belfast before sailing for England and the Convention.

While Bea was still in Europe... steaming up the Rhine instead of James' glasses... I asked him to make a few notes of anything he remembered about the trip in case we might write a report about it. But when he brought up the notes, all 12000 words of them, I realised he had put his heart into the work. There was nothing for me to add, all my internal organs being spoken for, or at least nothing to justify adding my own to his. All I have to do is publish the work, hoping you'll enjoy for its own sake this moving chronicle of the Accent of Errigal, the Weird Shadow Over Portballinacree etc. and to write a prologue to this fan-log.

The BEACON

by

JAMES WHITE

introduced by WALT WILLIS

Stopping only for the usual reasons, and to send a postcard to Robert Bloch from Birr, Co. Offaly, reading simply "It's cold", Madeleine and I arrived in Limerick by nightfall. Next morning, having bought some postcards for Bea to send to her limerick collecting friends, we set out for the airport.

We were a little late because I'd had trouble manoeuvring the car safely out of the hotel garage—I'd only just learned to drive and the car belonged to my father-in-law who knows the history of every tiny scratch on the paintwork and keens over them individually every night—but we arrived in time. Only to find that my baleful influence over all forms of American public transport extends to their transatlantic airlines—Bea's plane would be two hours late. I went back to park the car properly in case one of the big ones ran over it, and we hung about hoping desperately that the weather would clear so that Bea would have a good first view of Ireland and that we'd be able to see her plane coming in. At about one o'clock, as we were scanning the sky keenly towards the West, a fitful sun came out and an aircraft landed from the direction of Constantinople. On the distant tarmac an apparently endless stream of people got out of the Constellation, as from a taxi in an early Mack Sennett comedy, but none of them looked like Bea though we waved at everyone just in case. Even when she came into the arrival lounge I didn't recognise her. She had changed. She was wearing a blue costume instead of the black dress she'd worn in Chicago. Also she had put her hair up and was wearing glasses. Furthermore she had an American accent I'm sure she didn't have the last time I was talking to her. But it was Bea all right—I recognised the little marmoset she has of extending her left hand daintily in front of her palm upwards as if she were petting a very large dog or gently repulsing the advances of a very small fan.

THROUGH DARKEST IRELAND CARRYING A TORCH FOR BEA MAHAFFEY



Over coffee we talked nervously in the atmosphere of tension that pervades airports and railway stations--people feel they are missing something all the time--and then we led the way to the car, warning Bea not to trip over it. I drove assuredly along the broad concrete road and past a notice marked ALL VEHICLES TURN LEFT AND STOP. Unaccustomed to being a vehicle or to obeying notices for which there seemed no obvious reason I kept right and went straight on. There was a frenzied wail and a customs policeman dashed out of his hut like a sabre-toothed tiger out of its cave. I stopped the car, switched off the engine, and listened miserably to his stern reproaches. Useless, I thought to myself, to explain to Bea that this little corner of easy going Ireland must have been contaminated by foreign efficiency seeping from the airport--she must be terribly disappointed. However as we drove off again Bea, always the soul of tact, said happily, "He was MUCH nicer than a Chicago policeman."

Things hadn't gone very well so far, but the sun came out as we neared Ennis, Co. Clare, and we thought we might have a picnic. We bought a couple of pounds of steak in Ennis and stopped at the entrance to the grounds of Loughcultra Castle a few miles further on. I got out the primus stove and started to light it. Ten minutes and twenty matches later I declared that the resources of modern science had been defeated, and began to gather wood. I had a nice fire going and the tender promise of steak was beginning to pervade the air, when it started to rain. Almost immediately afterwards it began to pour. The fire was obviously losing ground. We put every back in the car except the fire and the steak, donned raincoats, and sallied forth again to fight our existence like primaevial man. Madeleine cooked, I prowled about looking for dry fuel, and Bea crouched gallantly on the grass holding an umbrella over the fire. Well, I thought ruefully, at least it must be a change from New York.

However she seemed to enjoy the experience nearly as much as the steak, and we set off again. It was really raining now, with a determination worthy of a better cause. Nothing was to be seen but an occasional picturesque ruin by the side of the road. With vague memories of a hastily leafed-through guide book, we authoritatively identified as gazebos all the ones that weren't big enough to be monasteries or castles, until Bea was tactless enough to ask what a gazebo was. After that we merely pointed them out as picturesque ruined Things.

From Galway we took the road into the wilds of Connemara through Oughterard and Maam Cross, and at Recess branched off on the mountain road by Lough Inagh to Kylemore. It was not a good road, even by Irish standards, though sometimes we hit up to 20mph. Many of the most scenic roads in Ireland are like this, and I suspect it's a deliberate policy of the Irish Tourist Board's. Ireland is a small country, and they have to spin it out.

The clouds were lifting now, and we could see the lower slopes of the mountains towering dramatically into the mist. About nine o'clock we reached Kylemore, a feery-like Gothic castle on the brink of a sheltered little lake. (The grounds also include two more lakes, a mountain range, and several hundred acres of woods.) I slowed the car on the entrance drive at the point where you see between the trees the castle mirrored in the lake and, just as I'd been subconsciously blaming myself for the rain, took as much pride in the fabulous thing as if I'd built it myself. I'd wanted to get Bea here for the first night after her long and hectic journey because it's the most restful as well as one of the most beautiful places in Ireland. Admittedly the bus from Galway now passes the gatelodge twice a week instead of once, but in spite of this hectic onrush of civilisation the people seem to have all the time in the world. As we waited for them in the huge pillared entrance hall with its great oak staircase and gallery it occurred to us, being fans, what a wonderful place it would be for a convention; and after we'd been shown to our rooms Bea called us delightedly down the corridor to look at hers. "Look," she said, pointing into the enormous interior, "Four beds!" It was the clincher. We decided to start a campaign for Kylemore in '54 and next morning sent postcards to Tucker and Bloch pointing out among other things that they hadn't really lived until they'd dropped bags of hot water from a battlement.

But I'd better get on if you're to meet James on page 5. Actually nothing much happened during the next two days except that we had a lot of fun and saw a lot of scenery. We toured through Leenane, Westport, Cattlebar, Ballina, Sligo (with a detour to Lough Gill to show Bea the Lake Isle of Innisfree), Bundoran and Ballyshannon, and at noon on Sunday we were parked in the market square of Donegal Town looking out for James' bus.

While we're waiting for him maybe I'd better explain a couple of the allusions in his report.

First, all this talk about people trying to poison him doesn't mean that he's got a persecution complex. The fact is that many years ago in an over enthusiastic endeavour to emulate R.G. Wells he acquired a mild form of diabetes. The result is that sugar doesn't agree with him. As Bob explained it once, soon after James takes sugar his temperature drops and he gets stiff all over. This is known as rigor mortis.

Then there's the reference to the 'guilty secret' under the bonnet of our car. I should explain that the designers of the Morris Minor Car have in their infinite wisdom provided a space among the intricacies of the engine just large enough to accommodate a tea-kettle. However surprisingly few people know what this space is for. This ignorance of the finer points of automobile design extends to the garage attendant in Collooney, Co. Sligo, where we stopped for oil. The youth opened the bonnet and stood for a moment transfixed with astonishment. You could see him reviewing in his mind all his knowledge of the various types of internal combustion engine and associated machinery. This apparatus did not seem to be connected to anything, but he thought he knew what it was. Coming to a decision he sidled round to my window and dropped his voice confidentially: "Do you know," he asked tactfully, "that you have a kettle underneath your carburettor?"

"Yes," I admitted with marly frankness, "I do"; and drove off amid giggles and a flood of jokes about mavericks, stray kettle, and steering.

But here is James now....

"He thought it was a Model Tea Pot."



Unlike some people, busses don't break down under me, so I arrived in Donegal Town exactly on time. It was raining heavily, which wasn't surprising as according to the bus conductor it always rains in Donegal town. I alighted with a splash and looked around quickly for a maroon Morris Minor No. MZ5975 before the rain ruined the refractive properties of my glasses. I saw one. Madeleine was standing beside it, holding the door open with one hand and an umbrella up with the other and urging me to get in quick before she drowned. I didn't want to drown either, so I sprinted towards the car, slung my stuff in ahead of me, and dived neatly after it. Doors slammed, engines revved, horns tooted, and we started off with a jerk. (I resent that last word, whether it refers to me or my driving. —WAW)

After the two of us in the back seat untangled ourselves I took a look at Miss Mahaffey. I saw dark hair framing a rather blurred face with three or four nice dark brown eyes. She was rubbing gently at the ankle on which I had landed with my chin. I held out a hand and said "Pleased to meet you." She did likewise and said "Likewise." Her voice reminded me of the Boston Symphony working over the Overture to Romeo and Juliet—and remember, the car hadn't got a radio.

Some time later, after she had managed to pull her hand free and counted her fingers, I thought maybe it would be a good idea if I wiped my glasses. I did, and took another look at Miss Mahaffey.

Wow!

Just then Walter, who was up front with Madeleine, introduced us formally. He said, with typical old-world courtesy, "James, this is Bea. Bea, That's James." Adding by way of helping to break the ice that OTHER WORLDS was now paying 3¢ a word. I reeled my tongue in and told him we'd already met but that I didn't mind shaking hands again. Then I enquired politely about the journey from Shannon Airport. As I remember, the way I phrased it was, "Why aren't you all lying dead in a ditch?"

I gathered that the fair face of Ireland had been wringing wet most of the way from Shannon and that the only thing that had kept Bea from catching the first plane homewards was the prospect of meeting me. It seems he had told her I could control the weather—apparently reasoning that if I could sell one of my stories to ASF I could do anything—and that there was bound to be sunshine when I joined the party. He wanted me to start working on it rightaway.

First I tried the sunshine of my smile but this, Bea informed me, was not quite what she had had in mind. She wanted to photograph a thatched cottage, and for that she required a sun, a blue sky, and a few alto-cumuluous arranged artistically for effect. A girl of simple tastes I thought, little knowing what was to follow, and I directed my attention to the weather.

The rain stopped and the sun dried the water off the road. It got so warm that Walter had to open the windows. There was some cirro-stratus among the alto-cumuluous in the sky, but I don't think anyone noticed it. After making sure the sunshine

*"The Scavengers", ASF Oct '53

"In this country, vile pros ride in the back seats."

would stay put, I lay back in my seat and just enjoyed the beautiful scenery, talking to it about work-rates, Robert Bloch, and the scenery outside the car.

There was some language difficulty at first, but once I understood the distinction between 'cute', 'real cute', 'George' and 'George all the way' it ceased to be a problem. It was a very beautiful section of country we were driving through, and every lake, mountain or wave-lashed headland was given a high George rating by Bea. There was a blurb three paragraphs long by the Irish Tourist Association about Donegal Bay which she neatly condensed to 'real George' and still made it sound worth coming three thousand miles to see. But somehow I got the impression that she was a little disappointed—I couldn't produce a thatched cottage which measured up to her specifications. I pointed out that the Donegal County Council were inclined to frown on thatched cottages nowadays..birds nested in them and they were in constant need of repair. . so they were busy replacing the thatch with horribly modernistic roof tiles. I tried very hard to sell her on the new look in cottages, but as far as she was concerned, tiled cottages just weren't George. She was very nice about it though, she told me not to worry and she wasn't blaming me personally, and she patted me on the head.

Just about then somebody began to sing—me, I think—and we all joined in. The song was 'I Want To BEA Near You' and nobody knew all the words except Walter, and he only knew the French version, so it was a rather interesting choral arrangement. Bea kept watching Walter with a sort of horrible fascination—it was the first time she'd heard a song sung in French with an Irish accent. The noise was monstrous, and lasted until we pulled into some town or other for lunch.

There were no fans in that town, at least nobody noticed the s-f mags propped up in the car's windows. During lunch I taught Bea a smattering of Gaelic and Russian. Mostly the words for 'yes' and 'no'. She already knew these words in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, having learned them for her trip around Europe, but de Camp hadn't told her how to deal with Irishmen or Russian spies. (Bea by this time knew all about the incident in the London Underground during which Evelyn Smith was accused of being a foreign agent.) Before the meal was finished Miss Mahaffey had said 'No!' to me three times in German, once in Spanish, and seven times in Gaelic.

All I wanted was a lock of her hair.

Of course I hadn't got scissors with me, but I could easily have pulled some out if she'd only have let me. I'm stronger than I look. I think she was just playing hard to get.

Half an hour out of town Walter discovered that his tanks were almost empty. We all lifted our incredulous eyebrows at each other and said 'Hah!' But he was serious and began consulting maps. In an aside to Bea he told her that he was looking for a 'Filling Station' to get some 'Gasoline'. (Walter has been to America). Bea, in an aside to me, said, "He's looking for a 'Garage' to get some more 'Petrol.'" (Bea goes to a lot of trouble to learn the language of the natives). I told Madeleine that the vehicle required a further supply of reaction mass in order to continue its journey. (I am a member of the British Interplanetary Society). Madeleine relayed this to Walter, and Walter said, "Luh-h-h???"

After we'd found a garage, and somehow kept the attendant from uncovering our guilty secret concealed under the bonnet while we were being refueled, Walter consulted a few more maps and told us he was taking us towards a breath-taking vista on the north west coast of Donegal. Off we went again.

We were travelling through wild, rugged country now. The scenery was real George, but the surface of the roads wasn't even cute, and they climbed and twisted all over the place. We were going fairly fast, and every time we turned a corner, Bea

"I wish this car had a gear for sideways."

and I would be plastered against one of the inner walls. Walter seemed to take a fiendish delight in throwing us together at all the sharp corners. I was delighted, too. Once I was flung violently into Bea's side of the car when we were on a perfectly straight section of roadway, and I had to talk about Newton's Third Law for about ten minutes to convince her that I was a perfect gentleman. After that we murdered 'Frankie and Johnny' until the neighbourhood of the breath-taking vista was reached.

This vista, we were informed by Walter, could only be seen properly from the top of the small mountain ahead of us which overlooked the sea. There was a sort of fishing village built on the lower slopes of this mountain, and we parked the car here. After piling rocks against the back of it to keep it from sliding into the sea, we started climbing.

It was a fairly easy climb—there were stretches when the precipices were several degrees from the vertical—but Bea was handicapped somewhat by high heels and a pencil skirt. I had to help her over the difficult spots . . . There were difficult stretches of cliff. It was great fun—a person hasn't really lived until he's helped Bea Mahaffey climb a mountain.

When we reached the top, the vista was everything that Walter had said it would be, and more. It was George all the way. Its breath-taking qualities were helped considerably by an invigorating breeze which blew in from the sea. Occasionally this breeze would die down to a mere forty-miles-per-hour zephyr, and when one of these lulls occurred, we took shelter in a nearby hollow to try to take our breaths back off the vista. The hollow was carpeted with a rare form of white heather, which costs a fortune back in civilization, and was as comfortable as any fakir's bed. We lay for a while just soaking in the sunlight and listening to the wind howling by above our heads, and talking mostly about Robert Bloch, but not for publication. After a while I said a few appropriate words to Bea and presented her with a bouquet of wildflowers, with instructions to stick them in her hair and save one for her mouth to give it a sort of exotic touch as I wanted to take a photograph. I then climbed out of the hollow and took two photographs. While I was doing this Bea took one of me standing on top of a rock taking her. She later explained that she'd hoped to get an action shot of me being blown into the bay by the gale, and that that would have been even better than a thatched cottage. But I didn't get blown more than a few yards, so I fooled her. A few minutes later we tore ourselves and our clothes away from the heather-covered mountaintop and headed back towards the car.

A person hasn't really lived until he's helped Bea Mahaffey down off a mountain.

Later, in the car, Walter told us that we hadn't seen nor done nuthin' yet. That that mole-hill back there was merely an appetizer for the REAL job. He was, he announced with an imaginary flourish of trumpets, taking us to Mount Errigal! The second (by a few yards) highest mountain in Ireland. As we were all expected to climb it, Walter and I began talking shop.

Experienced mountain-climbers that we are, we realised that Bea might be in need of some helpful advice and encouragement, so we discussed the many ways used to negotiate a glacier, as well as about aid measures and how to keep the rope from jiggling when somebody fell off. We also touched upon the egoboo which would accrue to the person who got herself a nice romantic unmarked grave in some foreign strand. But Bea seemed strangely unmoved by the thought of an unmarked grave, and as Errigal loomed ever higher and closer above us, she became actively disinterested. I even offered to carry her oxygen tanks, but she declined politely, saying that she'd letters to write and that she'd stay in the car. When we started coaxing her to come, she said, "No!"

"It's not a firm mountain--it's highly conical."

I should say that the climbing of Errigal would make an epic in itself, but E.E. Smith has said the same thing about the taking of Onlo, so I won't. I will merely say that Madeleine, Walter, and myself climbed it, said some corny but very sincere things about the view from the top, and came down again. I broke away from the others and got back to the car first—I wanted FOOD. Besides, I wanted to break the sad news to Bea that I'd left my camera somewhere on the upper slopes of the mountain—I'd left some of the skin off my shin up there, too—and that it had contained the two pictures which I'd taken of her earlier. To soften the blow, however, I told her about the fannish slogan I'd written on a flat stone at the top, which may be read only by true fans willing to make the pilgrimage to Errigal for the recovery of my two exposures of Bea Mcchaffey.

She took this tragic news well, like a true fan. She even forced herself to laugh at it for about ten minutes. I was so relieved that I went and got a freshly-dug lump of peat and presented it to her as a memento of this great occasion. The bit of peat weighed about eight pounds, and was fresh and brown and nice and sticky, but it wouldn't fit in her handbag so she was forced to refuse this gift. I could see that she was profoundly moved, though. For a long time she was speechless.

Walter and Madeleine returned and we began building a turf fire for a picnic. The sun picked that moment to go down behind Errigal, and so the usual sunset gale started trying to blow both us and the fire into a nearby river. But the cooking was finished by this time so the grub was carried into the car and polished off there. While the wind rocked the car they all sat snugly inside feasting on an interesting mixture of fried sausages, soda bread, and sweet biscuits (Oops, sorry, I mean COOKIES). Several times Bea tried to poison me.

When we'd driven out from the shadow of Mount Errigal the wind dropped again, and we discovered that the sunset wasn't for two more hours yet. Walter said he was taking us to Dumfanaghy to stay the night with some people he knew there. Madeleine who was navigating, began telling him how to get there, and Bea and I started talking about leprechauns, word rates, and Robert Bloch. Bea had wanted to see some Little People and Walter explained that I was the biggest of the Little People in the whole of Ireland. Bea didn't believe this at first. She wanted proof. She asked for a green sunset.

Green sunsets are difficult. They require time to prepare, and the mix has to be just so. Besides, the sun was almost touching the horizon when she made her request. I pointed all this out to her, and added that I was tired from holding the rain off all day, but she looked reproachful and just said, "Oh, well, if you're too tired to show me a green sunset . . ." I started working on it.

I was still working on it when we passed through Dumfanaghy on the way to the people Walter knew. Bea kept watching me expectant-like and muttering little words of encouragement. "Have you gone to sleep?" and "It's still orangestriped, are you colour blind?" But finally I did it. There was a lot of blue mixed in with the green, of course, but it was a decidedly green sunset. I lay back and received my egoboo.

The people Walter knew were remodelling their house, so they couldn't take us in. We found this out just as night was falling, so we retraced our steps across a mile or so of hills, bogs, and low stone walls to where we'd left the car. By arrangement with Arthur C. Clarke there was a beautiful crescent moon, and somewhere along the way nightingales or something began singing. Bea and I tried a duet with "Listen to the Mockingbird" but I don't think anyone could do justice to a song while walking in their sleep. We were all rather tired by this time, and I seem to remember someone asking whether we should go back to some ordinary old hotel in Dumfanaghy or just fall into a fannish type haystack in the next field.

"They have a moon in America too, you know."

Breakfast next morning lasted two hours. We just sat around sending postcards to people—and one to Harris as well—until the waitresses began rattling dishes discreetly, then we left.

It was a fine morning, though I say so myself. The sun shone from a cloudless sky and everything was in glorious technicolour. It was real George. The car seemed to spend its time crawling around the steep sides of mountains, with Walter pointing out breath-taking vistas to us—split seconds before the vistas vanished behind the stone walls lining the road. Once all us passengers had to leave the car while Walt took it across a bridge that was under repair. When the car didn't go crashing into the bay, we followed it across. Walter looks rather distinguished with white hair.

Bea kept complimenting me on the weather; she was very pleased with me, she said. She patted me on the arm, and my glasses fogged up. But this unrelieved joy didn't last. I spent an anxious ten minutes while she toyed with the idea of asking for a small rainstorm so that there'd be a rainbow and she could get the pot of gold at the end of it.

I was inexpressibly shocked. A True Fan like Bea Mahaffey shouldn't think about things like that. I wondered if perhaps she hadn't become tainted with vile professionalism. Her work does bring her into contact with such people. I changed the subject and we stopped on the shore of Mulroy Bay for another picnic.

The meteorological conditions then obtaining were eminently suitable for the holding of picnics. While the womenfolk unpacked the grub Walter started the fire and I went to look for more fuel. When I came back I told him I had made a dogged search and had found some pieces of bark. He said, "Ah well, every little helps," and threw it on the fire. When it had assumed the aspect of a conflagration we went down to the shore and threw stones at empty tin cans. Ah, the fannish way of life. When we got back, Bea pointed to a corner of the rug and told me to fall down. It was probably an accident that this corner was laid over a heap of flinty rocks, so I didn't say anything. We lay around the fire, the second one..the first one, which had got out of control, was some distance away..juggling plates and ripping fannish reputations to shreds, while birds sang in the trees, butterflies flitted in the bushes, and a local farmer went by with a load of old seaweed. Twice Bea Mahaffey tried to poison me.

A person hasn't really lived until Bea Mahaffey has tried to poison him.

When all the plates had been licked clean, and the others were nerving themselves to the effort of getting to their feet, I was overcome by a sudden urge to climb a tree. I mentioned it aloud. Madeleine looked incredulous, Walter asked if I was going to open a branch office of OTHER WORLDS, and Bea went for her camera. (I found out later she wanted to take a photograph to give to Harris.) I gave a few Weisuller yodels to warm up, then sprang into the lower branches.

The tree fell down.

It was quite a big tree, but the trunk had been rotten. The effect was rather spectacular. While the others were standing around making cracks about my fine white frame, I dashed the couple of hundred yards to the shore, snatched a couple of hard-shell sea organisms off a rock, and ran back to proffer them to Bea, asking if she'd like to foal my mussels. Bea looked faintly ill, Walter held his nose, and Madeleine groaned. Altogether it was a most satisfactory reaction. It pays, I think, to put a little extra effort into one's puns. After this we drove off again. Nobody would talk to me for a long time.

Things went smoothly for a while—too smoothly, I wasn't thrown to Bea's side of the car once—until we approached the frontier. About half a mile from the Eire Customs Post, Walter pulled up behind some trees and told everyone to hide their contraband. At the customs post he left the car to get a signature on something

"Don't sit in my seat."

called a triptyque, and a man in a blue uniform came out to talk to us. He glared at Madeleine and roared in a soft brogue "Anything to declare?" Madeleine shook her head. He continued, "Any cigarettes, nylons, foodstuffs, jewelry, ornaments...." He went on for a long time. Madeleine looked as if she'd never heard of any of these things. At last, apparently satisfied, he turned to Bea. Madeleine heaved a sigh of relief and the cellophane round her three pairs of nylons crackled loudly, but the man didn't hear it. He looked at Bea and said: "Anything to...to...er, ah..."

Now Bea had concealed in various recesses of the car about two thousand American cigarettes as well as other odd bits of contraband. But when the customs officer asked her the question, she looked at him wide-eyed and innocent and said, "By, no!"

The man wasn't used to the Mahaffey wide-eyed innocent look. He couldn't take it. He hadn't any spectacles to get steamed up, but as he backed away, aqueous vapour spurted gently from his nostrils. An impressionable type, I thought. He staggered back to his post and after a few minutes Walter came out and we drove away. The man hadn't even seen me apparently.

The next stop was at a signpost which said H.M. CUSTOMS INSPECTION POST, FALT!! We did what the notice screamed, Walter got out with his triptyque and we went through it all again.

The second man was in civilian clothes—probably he was an M.I.5 Special Agent or some relative relieving the regular man while he went for a smoke. This one didn't even look at Madeleine and Bea—no appreciation of the finer things in life, I suppose—but concentrated on poor little me. He kept asking was I concealing alcohol. Me! Alcohol! Then he went to the boot and we heard Walter and him arguing for a few minutes, then Walter slipped in and we were off again. Half a mile down the road we slowed to a snail and everybody averted their eyes while Madeleine fished for her three pairs of nylons. We had arrived in the Province of Northern Ireland.

For the next fifty miles or so I lay back and talked to Bea about such subjects as the prison sentences given to smugglers, word rates, and Bea Mahaffey. I made the discovery that she much prefers volcanoes to snakes—we have neither in Ireland, thanks to St Patrick—and that, given the choice, Bea would much rather be run over by a car than by a railway train, because the wheels of a locomotive are sharper. This shows a firm grasp of the fundamentals of life, and it's little things like this which makes Bea different from ordinary women. How many others have ever really given thought to this vital problem? Very few, I'll warrant.

The next time we stopped there were long Atlantic rollers breaking on one side of the road and tall, beevling crags on the other side and we were hungry again. There was some trouble finding water for the tea, but eventually the picnic was held in the back garden of a deserted bungalow overhung by cliffs. We sat and ate and watched the sea-gulls carefully. When Bea asked us why, we told her that when all the sea-gulls flew off the cliff at once, it meant that an avalanche had started and we would all be killed. She seemed sorry she asked. Later on Madeleine and Bea both tried to poison me, but Bea's attempt was an accident, I think, because I hadn't tried to make a pun for more than ten minutes, and she let me light her cigarette afterwards.

As we were going back to the car she gave me a whole book of matches to use on later occasions. Sometimes it's worth getting nearly poisoned. A person hasn't really lived until he's lighted one of Bea Mahaffey's cigarettes.

When the journey had been resumed I noticed that Bea was looking thoughtfully at the horizon. I wondered how many cents I should offer for her thoughts, but she spoke first. "Tonight I'd like," she said, smiling sweetly, "A polka-dotted sunset."

"I put her knee into third gear."

She paused, then, so's there'd be no semantic confusion about this request, she amplified, "Purple with pink polka-dots."

For a while I toyed with the idea of giving back the book of matches and breaking off diplomatic relations. I mean to say, a polka-dotted sunset. I'd be run out of the union for sure. Still, being the Custodian of the Mahaffey Matches was worth something, too. I went to work. I was still muttering incantations, or something, when Walter stopped the car at a granite parapet. We had arrived at Dunluce Castle.

Dunluce Castle is a fairly well preserved Norman castle on the northeast coast—you can read about the Normans in Russell's "Dreadful Sanctuary" (Play)—and is

set on top of a sheer mountain which becomes an island at high tide. We climbed around the battlements and walked about on the grassy courtyard where the Knights used to joust. A couple of sheep had got in and they kept going "Maaaa" at us, and once Bea dropped the trapdoor on me while I was exploring a dungeon. It was very damp inside, but the spiders were the worst. Walter came along later and let me out.

A person hasn't really caught pneumonia until he's been thrown into a dungeon by Bea Mahaffey.

It was about this time that people began to notice the sunset. I yelled and pointed a few times and soon everybody noticed it. The sky was turning a deep purple, and there were lots of tiny clouds

in it. The clouds weren't all pink, and they didn't look like polka-dots because the colours had sort of run, but the effect was terrific. It looked just like the cover for SLANT 6, except that there were three coal boats steaming dramatically across the horizon instead of a blue fountain pen hanging at three thousand feet. Madeline said, "Oh!" Walter said, in a voice charged with emotion, "James, you have surpassed yourself." Bea patted me on the head and said huskily, "Youse is a good kid." She pulled out a cigarette and waited for me to light it. The sheep said "Maaaa." They must have been faaaans.

Back in the car I lay back and just basked in the warmth of Bea's cigarette smoke and regard. We all admired my sunset and spoke in hushed tones about my sensitive farmish soul. After a decent interval of time had elapsed Walter announced that he planned to stop at the next town or village, dump our bags, and just walk around until bedtime admiring the scenery and looking for birdbaths. I don't care much about birdbaths, but I like walking and admiring Bea Mahaffey. And so, in the still of a beautiful evening in early summer, singing and laughing and talking about Robert Bloch and Bob Tucker we drove all unknowing into that hotbed of alien intrigue, that roaring, wide-open seaport, that BRE Babylon, Portballintrae!

We left our luggage at the Bay Hotel and came right out again. It was a lovely evening. The sunset was so proud of itself that it wanted to hang around all night, which was all right by us. We wandered down to the little harbour and along the sea wall. It was one of those periods of idyllic calm before the holocaust, and it lasted until we felt hungry again and went back to the hotel.

"Do the sheep look after the ramparts?"



hall was festooned with various implements of destruction, ranging from assegais right up to flintlocks. In a clearing among the potted plants there was a glass show case containing a shapeless hunk of metal, billed as part of a shell fired at the heroic hotel by a German submarine in 1916—a shock from which the residents had obviously never fully recovered. There were also a television set, a radiogram, and two radios. None of them was working. Perhaps at some time in the past some rash soul craving for new sensations had impulsively switched one of them on, only to find to his horror that it made a noise. Since then they had remained as mute as the residents, all of whom had obviously been switched off long ago.

There were two lounges, one of them marked "Adults Only." We tiptoed in and sat down. It was at once obvious that the term "Adult" has a very special meaning in Portballintrae. It is not used to describe any young thing of less than eighty, however long his beard. The lounge was inhabited . . . or at least occupied . . . by six of the elder Things, all either reading copies of the Financial Times or decomposing quietly behind them. So much of their skulls as was visible through their paper shrouds had the brown patina of great age and their clutching fingers were the delicate hue of old bones seen through cellophane. They did not move; neither, Bea asserted later, did they breathe. We wondered to ourselves whether they were stored in some vault at night or merely draped in dust-sheets.

The silence was sepulchral, at least. As it dragged on, Walter produced a pin and dropped it solemnly on the carpet. At the earsplitting crash Madeleine covered her ears, Bea winced elaborately, and I, tripping over the threshold of audibility, muttered "Shhhh!" But They had heard. There was a low rumbling sound like the sound of distant thunder as They cleared their throats, a frigid alien wind blew momentarily from outer darkness, making us shiver with the sense of impending doom . . . and then it happened. One of them lowered its Financial Times by several centimetres, and rustled it at me.

We all ran out into the porch.

There we survivors discussed our soul-searing experience, speculating on Yog Soggoth and the Elder Gods and whether the Financial Times should not be outlawed as a weapon too terrible to be used. Walter was just urging Bea that it was her duty as an American to cow them by going right back in there and rustling some cattle at them, when the waiter announced that our supper was ready. We followed him into the dining room and discovered that there were more of Them in there—no doubt enjoying a cheerful nightcap of embalming fluid.

It was murder. Every time somebody tried to eat something, somebody else would whisper something and the person trying to eat would either have to choke to death or spew bread-crumbs over a twenty foot radius—they daren't laugh, not out loud. After a while we gave up hope of ever being able to eat in that place. Bea gripped the sides of her chair and stared at the ceiling, Madeleine covered her eyes, Walter put the corner of his scarf in his mouth and chewed at it, and I stuck two fingers in my mouth and bit. But it was no good. The pressure kept building up inside us. It was actually painful, to me anyway. We staggered away from our table and reeled out into the into the night to laugh before we exploded and messed up the Bay Hotel's dining room floor.

When we got back we found that the Arisians had gone from the "Adults" lounge and we had the place to ourselves. Bea kept urging me to get up early next morning so's I could go for a swim, but not too early because she hadn't any flash-tulbs. She'd been very keen for me to go swimming ever since I'd told her that I'd made an error during my hasty packing for this trip and brought a black beret instead of my black bathing trunks. She's always trying to get photographs for harris—maybe she's sorry for it or something. I like swimming, but I had to decline. Even though Walter offered me the loan of his beret to make a two-piece. After all, as a vile pro, I have certain standards of dignity to maintain, and bathing in black berets just isn't

"The whole area may still be radio-active."

done--ever by Tucker. A few minutes later I told her that she could pat my forehead and steam up my glasses all she wanted to, but I still wouldn't do it. Somehow I think my voice lacked conviction.

Walter saved the situation by saying that I could swim all I wanted to tomorrow morning, after I'd helped him wash the car, so that was that. We started talking about the inhabitants again. Every now and then someone would whisper some outrageous speculation and we would stick our heads in the cushions and make muffled snoring sounds.

A person hasn't really lived until he's heard Bea Mahaffey make muffled snoring sounds in a cushion.

A little after midnight a porter came into the room, and I inferred he thought it was time we went to bed. In Fortballintrae the porters don't switch the lights off and on. They do not even cough discreetly. A discreet cough, in that place, would rouse the neighbourhood for miles around. Instead, their method is to wiggle in, stand quietly, and raise their eyebrows. The faint rustling sound their eyebrows make in that awful, ever-present silence attracts the attention immediately. Then they switch on a pained expression and the crestfallen wrongdoers retire discomfited. We went up to bed.

Now, the next thing that happened is one of those events which people will distort. Already Walter has begun to garble it in his oral versions, and I'm terrified at what Bloch will make of it if Bea tells him. When people start relating it as second hand..... As the person most concerned in the incident, I will state briefly the facts.

Shortly before one o'clock in the morning of May 16th, 1953, while I was lying face downwards on the corridor floor passing a note under Bea Mahaffey's bedroom door, a chambermaid walked on me.

After I got the footprint off the back of my jacket I went to bed.

(Editor's note; The text of the note is understood to have been as follows: "Remember, don't snore!")

Next morning the sky was overcast and there was a gale blowing up. Walter and I finished washing the car in rain and we went in for breakfast. Bea was late in coming down so I went upstairs to roust her out. I slammed my door, which was opposite hers, a few times, and then pounded on her door with my fist shouting "Is Tucker there?" This had been quite effective the previous morning in Dunfanaghy, and it worked here too. She came out on the run. On the way down to breakfast I told her about the incident the previous night, lest she would overhear some of the servants talking and misunderstand, and begged her not to breathe a word about it to Walter.

Hah!

Madeleine said "What!" and Walter's eyes gleamed and he began pressing for details, fishing out a postcard and addressing it to Harris. I tried to cover my confusion by dropping one of Bea's cigarette stubs into the coffee dregs from an altitude of six feet. It hissed nicely and made an interesting black mess, but three waiters and a porter rustled their eyebrows. I looked reproachfully at Bea. She said "Quien sabe" which was completely uncalled for no matter what it means, and patted me on the shoulder. My glasses didn't steam up as much as usual; I was terribly, terribly disappointed in her. After all, it was supposed to be our secret.

After breakfast we reasoned ourselves from the hotel and drove off. The weather was awful. High wind, lashing rain, and great grey waves battered at the seawall we had been sitting on last night. As we left Fortballintrae we all turned round and shouted 'Boo' at it to relieve our feelings, and then Walter asked his Navigator for directions to the Giant's Causeway.

But the weather was unsuitable for inspecting rock formations, so we merely gave

"I didn't give the chambermaid a second hand on me."

Bea a vivid word picture of what she would have seen ('a lot of funnyshaped rocks') and drove on through Bushmills, Dunsferrick, Portbraddon and Ballintoy. Bea mentioned the weather a few times, but I don't think she really expected me to change it. Portballintrae and the polkadot sunset had shot my finely-co-ordinated nervous system to pieces. But I felt better after Bea had smoked a few more cigarettes and we blundered through 'Stormy Weather' a couple of times. Madeleine and Walter kept talking in low voices and occasionally scraps of dialogue like "Flat on the floor..." and "Can the maid sue?" would drift back to us. Bea would comfort me by saying I had done nothing at which I should be ashamed even if nobody would believe it and I would smile bravely and wipe the steam off my glasses.

The weather still wasn't suitable for climbing around on rocks, but we left the car at Carrick-a-Rede and went down the steep cliff path to the famous rope bridge. This bridge connects the mainland to a high rocky island which can't be reached by any other way but parachute. It is about 500 feet above the sea at both ends if a good deal less in the middle, and it sways in the slightest breeze. That day there was a gale blowing which Bea judged to be about three times as invigorating as the one that nearly blew us off Errigal.

Madeleine went out on it first, a brave glorious stupid thing to do. I began to console the imminent widower, but she came back without falling off. I went next, feeling gloriously stupid too. A merciful blank covers the memory. When I got back, Bea plied her high heels and Walter made some lame excuse about being completely lacking in moral and physical courage. The rain suddenly became heavy and we decided to go up the cliff by a short cut instead of the more circuitous path, and we started climbing again.

As I said, I wasn't feeling so good. A lot of things had been happening to me. I was in a bad way. This time I didn't help Bea up a mountain.

A person hasn't really lived until Bea Mahaffey has helped him up a mountain.

Eventually we poured ourselves back into the car and took off again for Ballycastle, Cushendall and the Antrim Coast Road. When the coast road was reached, spray as well as rain began to run down the windows. Walter pointed out where Scotland would be seen if it weren't for that row of tidal waves. We talked to Bea about the cars that got washed into the sea here every month and the ones that escaped that fate by being pinned down by landslides from the cliffs. Bea just lay back nonchalantly and smoked five cigarettes in a row.

At Ballygally Castle where we stopped for lunch, Walter tried for twenty-five minutes to phone Bob Shaw to let him know we were nearly home again. But he couldn't get through. The lines were down, or at least some telegraph poles had fallen into the sea. Madeleine and Walter were inclined to worry a little about what had happened to the road alongside the poles, but not Bea or I---we can swim.

Bea began to talk about artificial respiration and lifesaving methods generally. We had a most interesting discussion. Bea favoured holding their heads under until they calmed down before towing them ashore, while I plumped for the rabbit punch. Madeleine and Walter didn't say anything.

In Belfast I said a tearful farewell to Bea and went home to tell my mother look who was back. Two hours later, in Oblique House, while Walter and I were trying to



"I'm Tensing with tears in my eyes."

fix the flashbulb attachment on Bea's camera, Bob Shaw came in. It is a measure of Miss Mahaffey's multilingual proficiency that she understood the very first words he uttered. They were, "Welcome to Ireland."

I felt like kicking myself, or him. Walter felt the same way, for the one thing we had forgotten to do was to welcome Bea officially to Ireland. Her sensitive Irish soul must have been hurt at this even though she complained not, and there must have been times when she may even have felt....not wanted? Mary a time and oft, as she along by her fingernails to some cliff in a howling gale, she must have thought she should have stood at home—all because we had forgotten this simple ritual. I was a cad. However to try and make it up to her we conducted her around the GLAFF press-room. We showed her the printing press, the waterpistol used in the Hite-harris encounter of '52, Walter's Honorary Swamp-Critter Certificate, the waterpistol used on harris this year, the duper, and the waterpistols to be used on harris next year. Then we all went downstairs again and began to tell Bob about Portballintrae, with actions.

When Madeleine wheeled in the food a couple of hours later, however, Bob and I were talking about 'High Noon.'

'High Noon' is a wonderful subject for discussion. That film had something. It was tense. At that time Bob and I were the only people who had seen it but though the others begged us not to trouble ourselves, we didn't mind explaining about it. Especially that bit where the guy rides over the hill... That picture was—tense.



... WAS TENSE !

there would be room for Bob beside Walter. But strangely enough, Bob didn't want to sit beside Walter. After Bea got in there was quite a bit of jostling for position, but it was finally agreed that if Bob gave me three new plots and let me keep the rear view mirror trained on him all the time, then he could sit beside Bea. e blasted off.

Just outside town it was discovered that the car horn had lost its voice. It is a punishable offence here to drive without apparatus to give audible warning of one's approach but Bob, Bea and myself solved the difficulty until we reached a garage by leaning out of the windows and yelling "Honk" at anyone that got in the way. After the horn was fixed we headed for the Mourne Mountains but seeing when we got near them that they were covered in cloud we turned off to Downpatrick to show Dea St. Patrick's grave. Even there Walt and Bob continued the ceaseless barrage of puns and jokes that had started when Bea commented as we left Belfast on how clean it was and Bob explained it was because the 'Mountains of Mourne sweep Down to the sea'. During no sequence about snakes as Bea was as usual alternately saying she should go home



... RIDES OVER THE HILL ...

we got so good at talking about it that we could do it in sign language. That means that Bob and I could talk about our latest masterpiece, wordrates, and how nice it was to have a pro editor partaking of our hospitality—and still be able to talk about 'High Noon.'

A person hasn't really lived until he's seen Bea Mahaffey talk about 'High Noon' in sign language.

When I went up again next day the weather had changed again. It was the hottest day yet and Walter planned on driving us around County Down. Madeleine wasn't coming this time so

"Of course it's a rare road--Walter's a white lion running down the middle."

and that she should have brought her tape recorder, Bob remarked that is was indeed something to write home about. How is it one can never remember any of the good jokes made on these occasions. I should have noted them down as I said then.

We made a stop once at a little bridge on a byroad and sat in the sun playing a game we have invented called 'Moon Base.' (In this you prop up a cigarette butt in the middle of the road and throw pebbles at it.) But we had to hurry back because after tea there was going to be a full scale convention. As well as the present company of vile pros and fans, ^{Edgar Allan Quinn} a pro artist on "New Worlds" would be coming, and that legendary figure, George L. Charters, the Bangor bibliophile who had gotten his name in HARD COVERS and who likes to talk about it the way normal people talk about "High Noon," would also appear. We got back just in time to keep them from welcoming us instead of the other way around.

The next thing which happened will live in my memory till my dying day--and probably haunt me for centuries after that. It was, sort of, a pun. We were all going in to tea, with Bob several lengths in front and moving fast, when he suddenly stopped, turned round and said to Bea, "Bea, you look good enough to eat." A harmless enough remark of the sort that hungry wolves say to Miss Mahaffey as a matter of course. As Bea sat down she said, sort of off-hand, "I do--three times a day." Bob said, "Glumph."

It had happened at last, we thought. Shaw caught without a come-back. History had been made. But no.

All during tea he gazed abstractedly at Bea--she must be used to this, too--and he didn't speak at all except for a few monosyllables like "More tea," "More bread," and "More salad." While the rest of us demonstrated the proper way to rustle a paper, and waved our hands through the opening sequences of "High Noon", he was in some horrible world of his own. Finally, after approximately three quarters of an hours silence, he spoke.

He said, "What other newspapers do you take?" and began to laugh for about ten minutes. He really appreciates his puns.

When we had recovered somewhat, Bea thought it would be a good idea to take some pictures of the SLANT pressroom with the staff draped about it in characteristic positions. She took a picture of Walter, Bob, George, and self standing in a characteristic pose, then sitting in one. After this, by a majority vote, the camera was taken away from Miss Mahaffey and we photographed her--once sitting in the Editor's Chair, twice sort of lounging against the duper, once operating the press (she isn't really a negress), and once standing on the Art Ed's Chair--a sort of Statue of Liberty shot, but with a more scientifically accurate stratospheric beanie.

After we'd used up all her film we let her have the camera back again. Bob was still acting up. Every few minutes he would guffaw and shout out, "What other papers so you take? Papers, Times, "Financial Times," three "Times" a day--Hee-hee-hee--Get it? Times." We did, but there should be a law. At nine o'clock he left, still loudly deriving amusement from its subtleties.

Shortly after midnight Madeleine made more tea. Another downpour had started and I'd a four mile walk home ahead of me, so she wanted to give me one for the road. Both Walter and Madeleine had been urging me to stay the night, but I'd declined with thanks. I think all they wanted was to get flashlight pictures of me pushing notes under bedroom doors.

We dawdled a little over tea, mostly because Walter, Madeleine, and I had decided that "Other Worlds" should bring out an anthology. We told her what stories, other than "Dear Devil," to use, what authors to approach for new stuff, what stories to reprint from SLANT, what author we'd all like to see in the book and how good I was. We were all very helpful. With the anthology disposed off, we made other suggestions. 1

"Let's try a weird shot--a sort of Edgar Allan pose."

"We could publish a BRIEF OF AUTHENTIC?"

One of which was that "Other worlds" publish a LIFE from an office in Belfast, and to make sure that the venture would succeed, one of the editors would run this office in person. We discussed at some length the qualifications this editor would need to have. It was a straight, one-on-one fight. Bea got the job, we went on to tell her how the / staff could assist her by writing stories around spaceship covers, paint spaceship covers around stories, and do spaceship interior illos. Walter could advise her on which of my stories to print first, and conduct the fan departments. We didn't know what Bob could do, though a lot of rather bizarre suggestions were put forward. Things were getting really interesting when suddenly I noticed it was three o'clock in the morning. We had dawdled, but good.

Regrettably, I had to tear myself away. I'd a long distance to walk and my mother might be annoyed if I was late for breakfast.

I awoke bright and very late next morning and after checking my symptoms to make sure I still hadn't caught pneumonia, saashed off to / House. It was a disorganised sort of day. We were due to sail to Liverpool that night, and many and varied were the preparations that had to be made. Every few minutes the brilliant fannish discourse would be interrupted by someone dashing off to pack something she'd forgotten, or somebody else deciding that they'd some last-minute shopping to do— Walter and Madeleine turned up later with a pound of sugar and a television set— or me wanting to run some more tests on the water-pistols. Mostly we talked about "High Noon" and read the weather reports. When Walter and Madeleine left on their shopping spree they requested that the remaining fannish population keep their eyes on the garden and baby sit.

It was a warm day, and Carol Willis and a horde of her six year old insurgents were holding a convention in the front garden. There was heavy traffic on the road outside—mostly buses and trucks—and we were supposed to keep them from overturning any of it. We did, too, though there was one bad moment when they all suddenly disappeared from sight. But they returned a few minutes later sucking lollipops. Between intensive bouts of packing, Bea talked about Portballinroe (I don't particularly like talking about Portballinroe), gave invaluable technical advice on baby-sitting (She's an aunt yet), and made with the entente cordiale.

This last, which is a French word, consisted of her looking regal and gracious and exchanging polite diplomacies while Carol Willis presented each of her friends to Bea in turn. Carol had been telling them about the legendary figure visiting / House, and they wanted to see. (Who could blame them?) Carol performed the introductions, and one by one they came forward and shuffled their feet, said "Hello," or said nothing, according to age and temperament. Bea put them at their ease at once. Such charm, such tact, such delightful informality. When Ninth Fandom emerges, it's going to be solidly behind Bea (Call Me Madam) Mahaffey. What an ambassador she is.

A person hasn't really lived until he's seen Bea Mahaffey deal tactfully with an offer of a very sticky, half-eaten lollipop which a young and earnest admirer is waving in her face.

After that incident I remembered that I'd packing to do, too, so I hurried home. We had arranged to meet at the quayside at seven-thirty. Madeleine's father was going to take Bea, Madeleine, and Walter Himself down to the boat in the car while I was supposed to proceed independently on my dogs. About ten minutes to eight I began to worry. At five to I was running my half-eaten fingers through my beautiful silvery hair. At eight o'clock I was standing at the gangplank sort of staring down a stevedore who thought he was going to cast it off. At five past they arrived dramatically in a cloud of dust and scorched rubber fumes. Bob Shaw had kept them late waving goodbye and talking about "High Noon."

To all who have read Mr. Willis's Con reports, the operation of—and the various items of equipment carried by—ships on the Belfast-Liverpool run is old stuff, but

as this was Bea's first trip we had to tell her what the different things were for and why the chimney was tilted and the front end sharp and so on. There was also a slight mix-up with the berths we'd booked which made it necessary for Walter to pose as Bob Shaw (who'd found at the last moment he wouldn't be able to come) and for Bea to masquerade as Walter A. Willis. (What an actress that girl is, but I still think it was lousy casting.)

This was the third time we'd watched the cranes and anchored ships and the South Antrim mountains slide past us as we headed towards another Convention, but I think we get a bigger kick out of it every time. There's something about starting off for a Convention, with the same old sun setting behind Cave Hill, and the lights of Bangor and Donaghadee still shining away as if they'd never been turned off from last time, that makes one wonder if there really are such things as time warps and wish one could only keep on doing this for the rest of one's life.

When night began to fall and the sea roughened up a bit, I showed Bea how to get into a lifejacket so that her head would stay above water even after she'd died from exposure. But it was getting chilly—my glasses hadn't steamed up for more than five minutes—so we went below.

The cabin which was supposed to belong to Mr and Mrs Willis held four people uncomfortably. There was just enough room for their heads to rattle against the walls and ceiling when the boat lurched. But to fans who'd lived through Portballintrae and Carrick-a-Rede this was nothing. Besides we were happy. The environment was suitable for close harmony and we sang several songs, frequently simultaneously. After a while someone croaked that they were dying for a cup of tea. Walter organised the operation from a commanding position near the ventilator and finally I was able to get the door open.

The floor of the corridor was beginning to fill up with prostrate Air Force men. They hadn't booked berths, and the spray was making the deck upstairs uninhabitable, so they had seeped down here to sleep. Trying to avoid stepping on anyone's face, I waded across the yielding mass to the restaurant. Soon I was back with four steaming half-cups of tea—the sea was roughening up—and the party continued.

I never realised until then that Walter and Madeleine knew so many seditious and revolutionary Irish songs. When Bea had eagerly learned the words there was a marked increase in volume and I began to worry about the regiment of Englishmen crept out in the corridor. We moved on to more peaceful songs, trampling soulfully on The Rose of Tralee.

Just as I was winding up for my beautiful top note two teacups fell into the wash-basin and Walter suggested there might be some people on the ship, or maybe another one close by, who wanted to go to sleep. We decided we'd turn in before we were turned out, but first we'd go up on deck for some air. The corridors were by now covered with a fitted carpet of airmen, and it was interesting to watch Bea and Madeleine negotiating them with spike-heeled shoes. The men who were deeply unconscious muttered querulously in their sleep, sighed, and dropped off again. Those who'd been merely dozing said 'Aaargh!' and came fully awake, and those who were awake already said... (How does one spell a long low whistle?) The stairs were heaped with men too, and when we got outside we realised why. The wind had grown to invigorating proportions. This did not stop me however—science must be served. I had seen a musical once in which two dancers waltzed round the deck of a ship in a gale and I hadn't believed it was possible. In the interests of science and with her help, I told Bea I hoped to prove it was impossible. We found a relatively sheltered spot on 'Assembly Deck B' (how fitting!), Walter and Madeleine hung onto a sort of ladder and screamed 'Till I Waltz Again With You' above the howling of the gale.

Landing on the deck of a stormlashed ship is impossible. Still, it was quite an experience. A person hasn't really lived until he's waltzed down a heaving and shuddering deck, tripped over a life-raft, and come to a sudden halt against a ventilator with Bea Mahaffey.

"Is anybody here Gene Kelly?"

After this I think we all retired, but I can't remember. Conclusions play many tricks sometimes.

The girls must have got behind the boat and pushed most of the way because Liverpool was reached about an hour ahead of schedule. It was an unbelievable sight. It looked completely alien. It wasn't just the Coronation decorations or the bright green trams (we'd never known before what colour they were supposed to be) or the cleaned-up buildings. These were extraordinary enough, but on top of all that the sun was shining. It just shows what these English fans are capable of when they want to impress someone. Previously we'd been welcomed with the normal rain, fog and soot, but this time we had a distinguished visitor with us and they laid on sunshine. They must have been saving it up for years. I went down to tell Zen about it.

The corridor looked unfamiliar with the floor visible. I beat on the cabin door as usual and yelled for Tucker. The steward who was picking odd socks, playing cards and empty bottles off the floor looked askance at me, but I ignored him and shouted again for Tucker. The door opened, a face covered in shaving soap looked out. "Go away," it said soopily, "He isn't here." Walt said "She must have brought Shaver with her," but it turned out to be just the wrong cabin. When I took a good look round I found I wasn't even in the right corridor.

We went up on deck again to wait for the girls and leaned over the side marvelling at the Liverpool sunshine. Shortly it occurred to us that it was still very early and the English fans who were to meet us wouldn't have arrived yet. We got off the ship and waited at the end of the gangway. Shortly Bob and Madeline, looking fresh and pretty in the Spring morning, came walking down it:

"Welcome to England," we said.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, THIRD SERIES, Bletler & Dikty. Published by Grayson and Grayson at 9/6. 15 stories, 256 pages. To the avid reader most of the stories in this anthology are at the awkward age—not quite old enough to be re-read and too old to be instantly recognisable. But they do provide a pleasant hour or so of reading and skipping and an investment for some rainy day a year or so hence. The most notable are: Kubilius' **THE OTHER SIDE**, a grim after-alien-conquest story marked only by a Lily-gilding last line; Bester's neat timetravel twist **OF THE 4TH AND THIRD AVENUE**; Kombluth's provocative **MARCHING MORONS**, based on the proposition that the general standard of intelligence is declining because the stupid breed more rapidly than the clever (a problem for which **SLANT** once suggested the remedy was to distribute free pornography to the intelligent); Tucker's **TOURIST TRAP**, a tour de force; Temple's philosophical thriller **TWO SHADOWS**; Idaris Sanbright's poignant **BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR**, whose title was the subject of a competition in **PSY**; Peter Phillips's **AT NO EXTRA COST**; and Leiber's unusual **APPOINTMENT IN TOKYO**. Altogether an excellent collection with not a single bad or even poor story in the lot.

AUTHENTIC No. 37, Hamilton & Co., 142 Melville Court, Goldhawk Rd., London W.12. 1/6 or 25/- per issue. With this issue **AUTHENTIC** emerges from mother of the bewildering series of vicissitudes which has characterised the history of this magazine: the practice of printing or reprinting stories by American authors so much criticised by fans is now formally abandoned and we are more or less promised original stories by British authors. Just to teach us a lesson, one of them is Jon J. Leagon. However the principal one in this issue, Bryan Barry's **THE ADAPTABLE MAN**, is quite a good thriller in the **SLANT** tradition. Best among the shorts is one by C. E. King which improbably succeeds in breathing some suspense into a rather-duplicator plot every element of which is familiar. The less said about the other stories probably the better. Redd got review copies of this magazine month after month until one day he was rash enough to review it.

"BOOYS AND GULLS COME OUT TO PLAY."

GRUNCH

A. VINCENT
CLARKE

FOO to Hercules, who had to clean out the Augean stables and similar pre-WPA work, and Foo to Laney and Watkins who undertook a similar task in U.S. fandom. Also to Richard Farnsworth, intrepid interstellar investigator who rescued a bug-eyed monster from a ravening horde of blondes. I...I have to write a column in a 'zine of

which the Bhoj Himself is co-editor! *

I can feel the Willis eyes on unpleasant little stalks, peering over my shoulder
I can hear the Willis mind, squeaking away with great rapidity like a hat-full of eager mice, ready to pounce.

Harris is waiting round the corner. He has a bucket of acid. He got it by boiling carbon copies of his letters.

Am I scared?

Yes.

This style is extremely useful for filling columns at enormous speed. I borrowed it from Shelby Vick. (CONFUSION). Not only does it cover paper with the speed of a Keasler cartoon, but you could probably make obscene silhouettes with the blank spaces if you were clever enough.

I hope Shelby doesn't mind me using his style, but I have one of those plastic-chameleon (?) minds. It absorbs whatever matter it was last reading and gets impressed into similar shape, like Campbell's red-eyed un-narcable in 'Who Goes There'. Of course, when reading s-f I'm rarely affected, as there are only half-a-dozen authors who can be said to have enough of an individual style to impress one with, and has everybody noticed how 'Charles Harness' has dropped out since Van Vogt started to draw a steady salary in Dianctics?

The book version of 'Who Goes There', with the additional shorts, was recently reprinted in London as a pocket-book, with 'Solution T-25', 'Vanguard To Neptune', and 'Typewriter in the Sky'/'Fear'. They've retitled WGT as 'The Thing', cashing in on the present record-breaking run of the picture on its first London showing. I wouldn't have thought RKO would be pleased at the comparison between their botched up job and Campbell's minor masterpiece, but I suppose it's the same old publicity racket...anything goes.

(I'm rather worried about this plastic-chameleon business. I've been seeing a lot of Bob Shaw, Ireland's Gift to English Fandom, recently. Well, you know that occasionally you come across a passage in a book that you don't understand at first reading, and on going back over it hear a little voice in your mind repeating the words? I did it the other day, and the little voice had an Irish accent.)

It's my belief that HYPHEN is in a rut. Nothing but funny stuff, without a thought for the more serious things in life, like...well, compassion, for instance.

Further on in the 'zine, (if you get any further with it), you'll find an article on James White (and if ever there was a misnomer, that's it.) It mentions the attempted drowning of what I have recently heard called our "purr woe pussie", Trixie. (See accompanying art-work). Aside from an occasional difference of opinion as to whose chair was whose, he used to like me. (Why he was called Trixie is a rather long story involving short-sightedness, which I won't go into here). If he caught a mouse he'd always offer me half.

PTO

* I don't HAVE to, but the ugobco is nice.





Since James came, he's been a changed cat. (See plot.) He hides in corners and barks at me. He's got hydrophobia, claustrophobia and agoraphobia (I admit that the last two are difficult to have together, but now Trixie doesn't like being anywhere.)

I'm thinking of starting a Save Our Trixie Society..it'll be a nice racket if Trixie's got guts enough to string along. The very least that White can do is to send the dough that he's getting from his NEW WORLDS story. Supports the SOTS!

My conscience just gave me a sharp nudge...after all, it's possible that you're not interested in Trixie, I'm just feline my way around, and I mustn't be parochial. That's a nice word going the rounds of British actifandom, meaning any humour not likely to be understood by 40% or more of the readers. For instance, a remark by a certain HYPHEN editor, C--- H---, that a certain US faned must have 6 'I' keys on her typer. and the last pocsarced from Willis before he sailed..." I'm sailing at 3pm today, and I feel a bit like Wolfe setting out to scale the Heights of Abraham. In fact I may very well stay behind and write Gray's Elegy. But then I remember with pride the words of General Lafayette: "J'avais une grunche, mais le plant d'oeuf la-bas!" British readers, as yet unacquainted with the Bible of Avoidism, Price's 'In One Head and Out the Other' (Simon & Schuster '51) may surmise at each other with wild stares, until they learn about Clayton Slope..."He had developed the limp, repulsive handshake to a point of perfection seldom reached by any of us today. He had a clever trick of saying any conceivable sentence so that it sounded like, "I had one grunch but the eggplant over there." And for years he had avoided changing his socks (he just put Sen-Sen in his shoes.)"

The next GRUNCH, the educational column, will feature 'Tucker..Man or Zombie?'

"You see that man with one head over there?"

S-f publishers have lemming blood. Lemmings amongst my readers may dispute this, but how else do they explain the mass hysteria for changing 'zine cover-designs? During the last year every major publication in the field has altered its style, the latest being the 'Zine of Fantasy & S-F with the October issue. In my by-no-means humble opinion, the MoF&SF is the best for consistently excellent, well-written material, but to wash out a fifth of a Bonestell super-scene with a distracting row title-logo' and contents-blurb box for no apparent reason.....!

If these cover changes are a desperate attempt to catch the fleeting public eye, the passing representative of what my editor (hah!) Mr. Harris has referred to as 'the inchoate masses who can't read without moving their lips', I'm all ready with suggestions for some really eye-catching covers. Most of them involve a large banner heading, UNEXPURGATED, stretching across the top of the 'zine, the title in very small print, and a drawing combining as much sex and sadism as the police will allow...any thing as long as there's plenty of flesh and blood. The fans won't like it, but who cares about the fans? We've got to sell the 'zine to the public, and as long as the stories are half-way good, they'll do. No reason why the cover should have any connection with the contents.

Of course, after buying the thing once the man-in-the-street will probably avoid doing it again...better ask Don Wolheim and the Avon people about that...but you can't have everything, and there's plenty of mugs around.

"Miss Preddie...take an advertisement...EXPERT WANTED...Expert wanted to explain flying saucer phenomena as mass-hallucination, spots in the eye, ball-lightning, loc weather balloons, Venus, jet-smoke, meteors, targets, secret-weapons, publicity hunting, blimps, aircraft flares, boyish tricks and reflections of headlights. Apply, etc. etc. Get that down and send it to the principal advertisement columns. That's all, Miss Preddie, thank you....Miss Preddie! MISS PREEDIE! How many times have I got to tell you to walk out of here, by the door!"

A. VINÇ CLARKE.

THE CORONCON

OR THROUGH DARKEST ENGLAND BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

Walt Willis

Halfway to the dock gate we were met by Dave Gardner who had been up since six and lost no more time in celebrating Bea's arrival by presenting her with a complimentary copy of the Liverpool group's newly published symposium SEX AND SADISM. Bea gracefully accepted this bouquet of neuroses, opened it casually at one of the lewd-est illustrations ever published in the fan press, and quickly closed it again. Shortly an enormous black car loomed up driven, appropriately enough, by vile huckster Frank Milne of SFService. We found later, however, that it hadn't been bought with the money bled from us poor fans but had merely been hired to take half the population of Liverpool to the Convention. We all got in and strolled about the interior, avoiding the dangerous overhanging slopes of SEX AND SADISM, until we arrived at a sleazy cafeteria which was all Liverpool had to offer at this hour of the morning. Breakfast was over and the waitress was polishing the table with a dirty rag and a black look, when Eric Frank Russell made his entrance. He stepped immediately into his natural niche as life and soul of the party, greeting Bea with the remark that while in his writing career he had often said what he would like to do to pro editors, he'd never imagined it could be a pleasure; and proceeded thus outrageously to skate on the thin ice on the brink of bad taste without once putting his foot in it. Larger than life and a great deal more interesting, he manages to set the standards in any company in which he finds himself. But at one point he took time off from goodhumouredly insulting everyone present and warning Bea against the Londoners to tell the plot of an as yet unpublished story. It was one of those warmly human short stories of his which show Russell, beneath his bluff exterior, to be one of the most sensitive writers in the sf field and he told it so well that we all felt we only needed to have learned shorthand to be sure of a GALAXY cheque. Even the people at an adjoining table stopped talking to listen and when he had finished there was the moment of silence which is the supreme tribute to an artist.

After breakfast EFR drove us to Chester, passing through about ten feet of Wales just so Bea could say she'd 'done' it, then back to his house for a magnificent lunch, and then down to the station where we said goodbye to the hospitable Liverpoolians. It was a relief train and we had a carriage to ourselves for the whole of that golden journey to London. We talked and laughed and sang the whole way, except when we were reminiscing nostalgically (already) about the trip round Ireland. James found the key of his room at Portballintrae which he'd forgotten to hand in, and carried out an investiture of Bea with the number-plate as with the Legion of Honour not forgetting the most trivial detail of punctilio, and, carried away, proposed to her several more times. Next time she'll know to bring a suitcase of rejection slips.

Shortly before the train got into Euston, where 'harris' was to meet us, James filled his waterpistol and began to hum 'High Noon'; but when we got out Chuck was nowhere to be found. James suspected an ambush and began to talk wildly of erecting barricades, but I finally ran Chuck to earth at the wrong platform. He had a girl with him whom we took to be his sister; however he later turned out to be Rita Krohne whom as a friend of our idol Robert Bloch would have been ready to welcome with open arms. In the taxi we proceeded to let our old friend Chuck in on all the fannish

"Can the enginedriver marry people?"

...sense we'd had so much fun with it. The trip round Ireland, until it's pointed out that the expression 'George' which poor Bea had taught us was actually quite passé. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they are evidently right up to the minute on these matters, George went out over a year ago and had been superseded by other expressions which we can't remember now, possibly because we couldn't feel the same affection for them as we had for the now discredited George. Mourning the dear departed, we finished the journey to the Bonnington in sober silence; then on to the White Horse where our spirits were lifted by the warmth of the London Circle welcome.

The Convention next morning was due to start at 11am, and we took care and a taxi to arrive shortly afterwards so that in the event of its actually starting on time we should be on hand to carry out those who had fainted from the shock. But all was well. At 11.30 Ron Buckmaster was still asking everyone if they had seen the microphone. Evidently someone, probably a Northerner, had taken the mike out of the Convention already. Someone suggested he should call for its return over the PA system. While the Committee were mulling over this we all milled around to the strain of Stan Kenton records.

At 11.43 precisely Chairman Fred Brown apologised for the delay. He offered no explanation, and nobody expected one. He also announced the last minute cancellation of the showing of 'Destination Moon', due to the London County Council's unexpected objection to the showing of inflammable 35mm film in unlicensed theatres. Evidently the Government had sneaked through the Cinematograph Act of 1909* without informing the Convention Committee.

He also read a postcard from Peter Hamilton regretting that he might not be able to be present. Since Peter was actually standing just under the Chairman's nose, it looked as if he had delivered the postcard himself to save postage. Fred also announced the cancellation of the Junior Fanatics play, adding rather tactlessly that something better would be substituted.

This, incidentally, was the first Convention I've been at where there was a special item listed in the official programme as "announcements of unavoidable changes". A wise precaution, and one which I hope portends a new era of more realistic programme booklets. Perhaps we shall one day have a really accurate printed programme scheduling such normal features of the average Convention as 'unavoidable delay', 'breakdown of PA system', 'confusion', 'collapse of Chairman', 'utter chaos' and 'Committee blind drunk'.

After all this excitement we adjourned for a nice restful lunch interval, during which we watched James and Chuck trying to trap one another in a wildly revolving door, James and Chuck having a running gunfight with water pistols in Southampton Row, and a film company shooting a crime melodrama in a side street. James and Chuck were much the best, we thought. Then back to the Bonnington for the introduction of notables. The London Chairman was much gentler than Korshak, Bea and I agreed; all he threatened to do was 'run over us quickly', and he hadn't even got a bicycle on his horse to do it with. There was warm applause for Bea, and also for Chuck Harris attending his first convention.

William F. Temple then led off the pro authors panel. He began by saying he was supposed to speak about the future of science fiction, but he never read the stuff himself and he didn't believe it had any future whatsoever. Instead he would talk about the friends he had made through sf. He had a list here of 23 of them, 20 crossed out and the remainder trying to live down the film of 'The Foursided Triangle.' One of them was Honest John Caswell, the man who had made more undeclared money out of sf than anyone since H.G. Wells. We shouldn't hold HIS HORSES against Ted—he took the job as a mistake, being under the impression that it was paid. Ted had come a long way since then and he, Temple, hoped he was going a long way. The second was G. Ken Kesey. Fantasy was still Ken's first love, apart from beer, his favourite story

"Were it you waiting in the bus station?"

being Algernon Blackwood's 'The Tree That The Dog Loved.' Referring to Ken's appearance, he said he was very much of a middle-man, having beaten most of his contemporaries to the punch. He always thought of Ken when he heard Cabal in 'Things to Come' calling for 'an ugly spectacle of waist.' Finally there was Arthur C. Clarke, the 'C' in whose name stood of course for 'corn', the same corn we had stood for so long. Arthur was one of those people who know everything, including the fact that they know everything; though even Arthur had his moments of self doubt and could be sometimes heard saying to himself "I wonder if I'm really as good as I know I am." Of course we all knew his books—'The Exploitation of Space', 'The Man Who Sold the Moon' and so on. He had recently found some excuse to go to America again and was now underwater fishing in Florida, engaged in submersive activities. After his experience of editors and agents he should be quite capable of dealing with sharks. In fact Temple was sorry for the sharks.

The main defect of Temple as a Convention speaker, in fact come to think of it the only defect, is that he doesn't like speaking (extraordinary in one who does it so well) and insists on being put on early, with the result that everything else is something of an anticlimax. However Tubb kept the standard high, cynically advancing the theory that the reason for the bookshops being loaded with sf was that nobody would buy the stuff, and disposing competently of an inane interruption about flying saucers from a character called Burgess, who resembles nothing so much as Ed Shapiro's conception of Ken Beale. (Other parallels which occurred to Bea and me were Bill Temple=Robert Bloch, Peter Phillips=GOSmith, and Dave Cohen=Henry Cornell. America doesn't seem to have any equivalent to Norman Wansborough.)

Other pros who spoke were John Brunner ("I predict a rosy future for sf—I have some more stories in my drawer"), Vince Clarke ("as half author of two books"), C.S. Youd ("No time to read sf"), and Frank Edward Arnold ("Haven't read anything new for 12 years"). Apparently nobody in the London Circle reads anything but their own stories. Cornell then invited questions and inevitably Spillane was brought up, as indeed he must be by anyone with a sensitive stomach. Frank Milne took his opportunity and rose up from the body of the Hall to flog a copy of SEX AND SADISM to Cornell, who had been talking about it for ten minutes without having read it. Someone in the audience who had heard of semantics asked for a clear definition of 'bad'—a subject which might have kept everyone talking until well into the Supermoon had not George Day got up and disclosed that different people had different ideas as to what good and bad were. Youd said It wasn't As Simple As That. It was a difficult point, but he knew what it was when he saw it. Helen Winnick said coyly that she hadn't read the Spillane story in question because none of her men friends would lend it to her. An unidentified voice from the audience, who sounded like Havelock Ellis, said that all forms of literature were substitute activities for sex. However science fiction being more unstructive was, he stated astonishingly, more likely to produce an orgasm. Coated by the Mystery Voice, Youd said sarcastically that it must get a different thrill out of sf than he did, and for no apparent reason then went recklessly on record with the opinion that Bester's 'The Demolished Man' was "just Spillane on a lower level". Fred Brown said he thought the Spillane story in FANTASTIC was 'jolly good' and he'd pay 35p for it any day, adding equally gratuitously that he wouldn't give tuppence for a Youd story. Someone in the audience whom we only know as Sidgwick and Jackson then said something inaudible in a refined accent and Cornell asked him to speak up. Sidgwick and Jackson, in a near shout, then announced that their sex life was satisfactory (I almost left the Convention Hall to send a cablegram to Francis Towner Lacey) and resented the charge that sf was a substitute activity. George Day, obviously determined to go one better than anybody, declared that sex itself was a substitute activity. So, he added sweepingly, was science. Proceeding into even higher realms of thought he said profoundly that it was a matter of opinion what was essential and what was not essent-

"I have no intention of living until 2000 A.D.... I like to catch authors in inaccuracies." — Sidgwick & Jackson

ial. The human being selects his effective field. He wondered if he had made his point clear.

Obviously perturbed lest the Convention spend the next few days bringing itself in to a nervous breakdown over what sex could be a substitute for, Carnell hastily closed the discussion and made a belated introduction of another visitor from America, a Mrs Sollieback of Seattle, Wash. (In fairness to Mr Kay, though, I think I should say that in my opinion he was actually working towards a very sound theory first propounded by another Deep Thinker, name of me, when in last year's conreport I accused Ken Culmer of sublimating his fan instincts with a woman.) Mrs Sollieback from Seattle was, Carnell revealed, a member of N3F. Suitably impressed, we applauded warmly. However I am sorry to say that Mrs Sollieback seems to have detected a note of insincerity in our tribute, for in a letter published since in McCarr's GEMMOLS she reports that "the N3F is not popular among the fans here. Presumably we should have bowed our heads and stood in silent tribute to the noble organisation, firing the British representative over its grave."

Carnell then made the first public mention of the Fund that had been started by an American fan group to bring a certain English fan to the Philcon. The fan in question had been unable to go after all and Don Ford and the Cincinnati group had generously thrown the offer open to any other British fan we chose who could risk having to pay most of the cost himself. Carnell didn't disclose the English fan's name but I see no harm in saying it was Norman Ashfield, who hasn't been active in fandom for quite a while but who has evidently kept up his correspondence with his friend Don Ford. (For more about the Fund please see inside bacover.)

After this came the play by the Junior Fanatics, the Committee evidently having been unable to get something better after all. The production suffered somewhat from under-rehearsal, the hero living in Lancaster and the heroine in Bournemouth and neither having very strong voices, and it rather lacked the polish and brilliance we have all come to associate with Seventh Fandom. There were also some slight difficulties at first due to them having forgotten their own lines, but with a fine spirit of co-operation they soon overcame this by reading each other's. The heroine was a new fan called Shirley Marriott who looks like a brunette MS of Lee Hoffman. She has the same first name too, but I'm afraid I never found how much further the resemblance went, these younger fans keep very much together and don't mix with us old has-BFs.

Dave Cohen followed with an address on what was wrong with the London Circle and was so convincing that Chuck Harris changed his London Circle badge to a Belfast one before he had even finished. One of Cohen's accusations was that the Londoners didn't support the last Mancon and in his speech of rebuttal Brown promptly put his foot in it right up to the neck by saying he didn't know about the Mancon. Since the last London Convention had been virtually knee-deep in Mancon propaganda, this was an unfortunate defence. Bentcliffe asked with deceptive politeness whether Brown hadn't seen the notices. Brown pulled the ground in on top of him by saying, too credulously, that he hadn't been up to the White Horse much during that period. Bentcliffe patiently pointed out that the notices in question had been in the Convention Hall and that Northern speakers there had publicly asked for support and been given to understand they would get it. Angry murmurings from Northerners in the audience confirmed this. At this point Bert Campbell came in and poured oil on the burning waters. He apologised for being late, he said disarmingly, but he had been up until four in the morning discussing sex with some visitors from the United States. The Northerners, he went on, couldn't expect celebrities to come to their Convention. ("Well, I'm a celebrity, aren't I?") unless they made it attractive and publicised it properly. He further endeared himself to Northern fandom by pointing out how well the Londoners publicised their conventions. (I remembered the time Alan Hunter wrote to me in Belfast but says before we '52 Con to ask did I know whether it was well on the aid

"We're only running half an hour over in the first hour and a half."

I know where it was.) You couldn't go wrong, said Campbell blithely, if you followed the London Circle. They didn't just stick something on the wall in the hope someone would notice it. Fred Brown rubbed salt into the wounds by saying that the London Circle didn't have to pay anything at all for their publicity. (One wondered whether this meant the Mancon Committee could also expect free advertising in NEW WORLDS, SCIENCE FANTASY and AUTHENTIC.) As illustrations of their ingenuity he instanced the fact that they wrote to Eagle Comics (apparently without result) and designed a poster for a showing of WAR OF THE WORLDS (which was not accepted). One felt his examples could have been better chosen.

During the tea interval which followed copies were handed out of the Harris/Slater 'Looniecon' one-shot, a supremely funny production. I seem to have spent the rest of the Convention explaining regretfully that I had nothing whatsoever to do with it and that it came as a complete surprise to me.

(TO BE CONTINUED, PROBABLY)

"The trouble with Howard Brown is that he just doesn't like science fiction."

NEWS

SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS will cease publication with the coming issue. In its place Vinç Clarke will take over responsibility for part of HYPHEN.

The RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST has suspended publication.

Fred L. Smith of 613 Gt. Western Rd., Glasgow .2 announces a new printed fanmag to be called HAEMOGLOBIN (presumably from the Scots song "Roamin' haemoglobin, on the bonnie banks o' Clyde"). They propose to pay for material at the rate of 11 per thousand words. I thought Smith wasn't a Scottish name.

One of the projected items on the Supermancon program is that Bert Campbell should be put on trial for his 'bloody provincials' remark and other capital charges. Bert is said to have agreed. Ted Tubb will defend. Eric Bentcliffe has resigned from the Supermancon Committee. Dave Cohen is the new Secretary. Harry Turner (9 Willow Bank, Church Lane, Koston, Manchester 9) is o/c publicity.

Colin Michael Parsons, 31 Benwood Court, Sutton, Surrey, announces a new multilith fanmag called (provisionally) AMAZINE. Photolith cover "not unlike the non-colour pictures by Bonestell in 'Conquest of Space.' Uh-huh.

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT, the BBC's outstanding tv sf serial, is to be rebroadcast some time this winter as a complete play.

PARI is folding. Pete Taylor will publish a London Circle fanmag.

Two more nominations have been received since the article opposite was written—both for Ken Slater. Financial report on the Fund next issue.

Bob Shaw has made his first sale, to NEBULA.

Lee Hoffman is producing a Third Anniversary Issue of QUANDRY.

Rogers has had a cover rejected by John W. Campbell.

Sam Merwin is the new Assistant Editor of GALAXY.

FLASH! Denness Morton is not a 70year old spinster.

In response to humorous requests Oblique House Publications announce a startling innovation for their winter publishing schedule. Watch out for the special SCIENCE FICTION ISSUE of 'Hyphen'! Every article in this revolutionary issue will be devoted to science fiction! Among the features will be a scholarly review of the October ASF by noted bibliophile Charles R. Harris entitled THE DECLINE OF ASIOUNDING. A single sentence from this monograph will suffice to show its high standard of literary criticism... "James White! unspeakable foulness fostering on the fringes of fandom!"

Also scheduled for publication this winter are Rich Elsberry's Philcon report and Bea Mahaffey's impressions of English fandom, and Shawillis's THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR.

All previous issues of HYPHEN and BLUNT are out of print.

Acknowledgements for the name 'Beacon' are due to Shelby Vick

"It's now settled that '54's convention won't go to Frisco" — C.T. Beck

RANDOM

CHUCK HARRIS

"My advice to you," he said, "you cringing neofan without the courage of any Seventh fan-ed, is to sit down at that new typer of yours, drink a glass of whiskey, beat on your breast a few times, and write the first 2000 words that come into your head about the things you dislike most in sf and fandom."

This is typical Willis cunning. He knows perfectly well that my Dad runs the local Temperance Guild, and he deliberately omits to mention which breast I should beat..... still, if that's the way 'Harps' get written, I'm quite willing to have a go. I shall beat both breasts, but if I finish up as an Alcoholic Fanonymous, remember it was Willis who made a fannish martyr out of me.

I don't really know that I can write 2000 words about my Black List. Apart from the Rev. Calvin Thomas Beck, Ed Wood, Eva Firestone, Derek Pickles, Brian Burgess, John Russell Fearn, Howard Browne, Ray Palmer, Ken BeAle, Kay Tarrant, Dr. E.E. Smith Ph.D., Bert Campbell, Dave Cohen, Howard Frobisher, Alan Henderson, G.M. Carr, Mrs. Nellie Sollieback, Richard Shaver, Micheal Spillane, Philip Duerr, (who owes me half a crown), Mr and Mrs Rog Phillips, Mr. Ziff, Mr. Davis, Vivian van Damm, Bill Venable, E.E. Evans, The Medway Mob, The Manchester Group, Cast. Blater, (when he's writing fannish reviews), John Gunn, and the whole of Seventh Fandom en bloc, misse and in toto, ---- apart from these I think I like almost everybody else except Willis and James White.

Naturally, with even a small list like this I can't spend much time on each personality. Besides, the laws about libel and slander are far stricter in the U.K. than they are in the States.

RAP is one of my betest noires, and it's a sort of fannish custom to crucify him before getting down to the hoi-polloi. The Shaver Mystery is the usual reason --and I see no point in getting all original and thinking up something else. At a distance he seems quite a nice guy, but every time you pick up his zine, there he is yakking away about deros again. Sometimes I even think that he actually believes in them. The last time I read OTHER WORLDS he was carrying on about how 'he even goes to the Caves' in search of plots. He 'listens for Voices.' From RAP's usual style, I would have thought the boudoir was more of his stamping ground.

The logical thing to do here would be dismember Lemuria and Dick Shaver. The hell with it, --- I'd much rather write about somebody who's going to read my stuff afterwards. There's always a chance of goading them into Writing A Letter To The Editor.

I think Beck is on the subscription list. If not, perhaps we can send him an uncomplimentary copy. Once upon a time he used to try to impress us by calling himself The Rev Calvin Thomas Beck, but either he's been unfrocked and cast out into the wilderness, or else he's got all democratic enough to drop the handle. He writes a mediocre column for ASFO. His news is usually history, his forecasts are all..... well, incorrect. At present he's trying to peddle his brand of Xtianity to fandom, andorganise an anti-Catholic crusade.

Next.

F.C. Davis once offered some valuable advice to Eva Firestone. In the letter column of "Incinerations" he said, "Eva, don't be so goddam sincere." Unfortunately, she ignored him.

Burgess..... is, I think, part of my fate. He is also a serious constructive fan, and wears a cloth cap to show that he belongs to the proleteriat. He reads Good Books and political autobiographies in the intervals between prozines,

But I prefer

and he sold me a SLANT 1 & the Boncon. Burgess is even lower than a professional bookseller. Trusting fool that I am, I believed him when he said it was a Mint Copy. I paid him 9d, --- the full cover price --- and didn't bother to examine the magazine. After all the excitement had died down, and Bea had fled to France, I looked through the mag before filing it away in my collection. There, halfway down Page 5, was the biggest, dirtiest, damn thumbprint I've yet seen. BURGESS, YOU TOLD ME THAT WAS A MINT COPY.

That's not the only reason you're on the list though. You remember when we held the first BRE type smokefilled room in 146, (and nyaaaaaaah to the Northern Rustics who boast that their room was smokier or earlier than ours),? It was a nice sociable little crowd, and everyone was on their best behaviour because Bea, Rita Krohne, and Jesse Floyd were there, and we all wanted to give them a good impression of Anglofandom. Burgess, why couldn't you make whoopee quietly with that thimblefull of sherry and water that you were sipping? Haven't you any decent fundamental instincts? Whatever possessed you to start talking about science-fiction of all things, when everyone else was happily telling dirty jokes or quietly discussing sex.

Vivian Van Damm is really only a fringe fan. He is producer at the Windmill Theatre near Piccadilly Circus. This is a nonstop revue and burlesque house whose motto is, "We Never Closed". This refers to the way they kept open right through the blitz, when every other theatre in London closed down. One of these days the Hays Office of the theatrical world is going to push Vivian's motto right down his throat.

The piece de resistance of the current show is a scene with a fantasy bias, in which a beautiful nude virgin, (or so it says in the programme), is sacrificed to Ghuecr some other pagan ghod. Naturally, as a Fan, I was interested in all this. It's the sort of newsy item I could use in a column somewhere. I'm not a regular patron of girlie-shows, --- especially when the admission ticket costs 14/-, ---but I thought this would be really regular fanning in just the same way as stencil cutting is, so I went.

It's a very small place. There are only about 200 seats downstairs, and the whole lot are all at the same price. The clientele is exclusively male, and completely uninterested in conjurors, trick-cyclists or anything else except the dancing-girls. Everyone seems to suffer from astigmatism, and the management have barred telescopes and binoculars. Consequently, all of the customers are determined that they will sit in the first two rows or die in the attempt. The performances are continuous from noon to midnight, and are punctuated a glorious informal game of Musical Chairs. Climbing over the seats is strictly forbidden by another house-rule. The usual procedure is to take any seat, no matter how far back it is, just as long as it's on the aisle. Then, when somebody ahead of you leaves his seat, you quit yours and rush to take his. If you're a slow-poke, and somebody beats you to it, you find that somebody even farther back has taken your original seat, and you get stuck in the centre, and have to start all over again. Also, the other customers and even the resident comedian, are liable to make crude remarks about your state of health.

(You may ask what all this has to do with SF. That would be a very pertinent question, and one that I would rather not answer. I can only suggest that if you are really more interested in science fiction than in girlie shows, you ask Willis for your ninepence back, and take Operation Fantast or some other high-class fanzine in future.)

I got to the third row in 20 minutes, polished my glasses and settled down to watch the show. It was all unfannish stuff, -- just dancing, and living statues, but I stayed awake because I didnt want to miss the sacrifice thing.

It was a swindle.

This blonde girl was spread-eagled on the alter in front of a volcano whilst a gang of wenches wearing G-strings and great big smiles danced a Polynesian fertility rite. The High Priest was in the centre of them doing a sort of sword dance with an Army surplus machete. After about five minutes of this stuff, the orchestra hotted it up, and the Priest bloke started waving his chopper over the blonde. This was really something, --- she looked as scared as a Bergey cover girl, and you could see that any minute now he was going to chop her open right down the middle. He began spinning around as if he was the late H.G. Wells finding out about Astron Del Martia, and throwing the blade in the air. He always managed to catch it just before it went in the girl's tummy, but it was pretty exciting. The orchestra cut out except for a long low rumble on the drums. All the other girls fell down, the priest grabbed hold of the machete and very slowly raised it above his head. He gets right up on his toes and then, just as the dissection should get started, Vivian van Darn brings down the curtain. I tell you, I was never so disappointed in all my life. Darn you too Van Damm.

Lots of the other people on my list aren't worth talking about. It just isn't worth re-hashing Spillane or complaining about the way Doc Smith's heroines remain so irritatingly chaste throughout the whole eight volumes. But briefly, Mrs. Sollieback seemed patronising, G.M. Carr likes McCarthy. Frobisher is mercenary, and Ken Slater called "Hyphen" a frothy fanzine. John Gunn had the nerve to publish an Anglofandom directory that didn't even mention me. Dave Cohen associates with Vargo Statten, and Phillip Duerr never paid me for a prozin so that I let him have on tick. Seventh Fandom look ridiculously self-conscious in their first long trousers, and Bill Venable plagiarises from Stephen Leacock. (Don't worry Bill, --- I disliked the original "That I know about the Cow" too.)

Willis is an egoboo maniac with delusions about putting "Hyphen" on a monthly schedule. He spends most of his time nattering about how unenthusiastic I am and if you dare criticise him, he accuses you of race prejudice. Is it my fault he's a dirty Orangeman? Occasionally he seems almost tolerable, but I have always found that the most attractive thing about him is Madeleine. In fact, Tucker, Keasler, Ving, and I, are starting a Madeleine Willis Fan Club. I'm afraid membership will be restricted, -- Bloch will definitely be barred. After all, ---- Gentlemen prefer blondes. Walter Alexander is the exception that proves the rule.

I think that must be around 2000 words, -- the unmentionables will probably keep until next issue. If they don't,..... well, I can always review fanzines.

Before I finish though, I want to make one thing perfectly clear. I don't want you to come fawning around me, and buying me beers, just because your name isn't on the list. That is just an incomplete list. Perhaps you're one of the lugheaded nonentities whose names escape me for the moment. Possibly I shall publish a supplement sometime..... providing I can find a publisher.

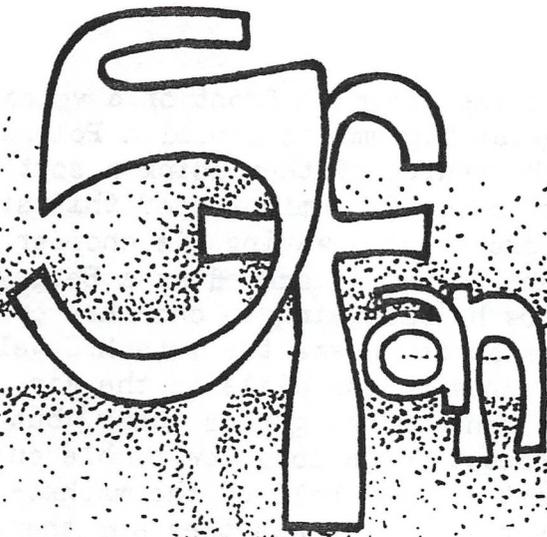
Anyone like to secede with me to found Eighth Fandom?

ADVERTISEMENT

To My Public. In future My work will appear under the Byline of Chuck Harris. I am responsible for the efforts of the New York Harris or of the Medway Harris or any of the other Harris's who seem to be springing up underfoot. I definitely do not draw programs of reaction motors or publish a hectored fanzine. Please do not even mention these people to me, they are Vandals, Philistines, and blots on the family escutcheon. Dist on the genuine article (name of me.)

Signed,
Chuck (the old original) Harris

I tell you, Varley is a man to be feared.



SFAN

Bob
Shaw

The fan ran until his mouth was filled with thick salt saliva, ran until he felt that to run on was to die. But he knew only too well that to stop was surely to die.

Somewhere in the darkness behind him a rifle cracked, but the angry slug came nowhere near him. Nonetheless, a feeling of dread settled on the fan---they were really determined to get him if they were using one of the earth's few remaining firearms.

Panting heavily he sped through the narrow alleys that separated the square one-storey buildings of New London. He slowed down to pass a lighted doorway, straining his ears for the sound of enemies.....

Creak--click--swish--creak--click--swish.

Good Ghu, thought the fan, astounded; a duplicator! Somebody inside the yellow limed doorway was using a duper! He stood for a moment undecided. There was something wrong somewhere---nobody had followed fan pursuits so openly since the great massacre in '63. Again, the rifle cracked, and this time the fan heard the vicious whine of a speeding slug. He staggered through the door.

Strong arms caught him as he fell and a few seconds later with gentle firmness a cup of hot tea was applied to his lips. He drank deeply, noting as his vision cleared that someone had closed the door and drawn a curtain over it. There were three men and two women in the smallish room, in the centre of which stood a table carrying a duplicator and untidy heaps of paper.

"Are...are you fans?" he gasped, feeling the strength return to his body.

"Yes, of course we are," answered one of the men. "What on earth has happened to you?"

"The World Stability Corps caught me spelling 'quandary' without the second 'a'. I did it without thinking," he added. The lean man who had first spoken looked puzzled.

"But why would they hunt you for that?"

"Have you never heard of Quandry?" asked the fan, fighting down a surge of pure panic. Too late he noticed the prints depicting tramcars that were hung here and there on the wall. There was a subtle change in the expressions of the five listeners. The fan stood up to move to the door.

"Get him," somebody whispered. "He's not a trolley-car fan. I think he's a science fiction fan!"

As they closed in on him the fan made a desperate attempt to break away, but the hand chase had sapped his strength and they held him with ease. A crushing blow landed on his skull. As the mists of oblivion closed around him the fan just had time to see that he had been struck with a chromium-plated trolleyhead.

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Even before the fan opened his eyes he knew he was in the arena.

The bestial screaming of the death-hungry crowd, the smell of blood and sand, and the despairing cries of those unlucky enough to lose their battle were things he would like to have forgotten, but never had. Too often he had had to watch his friends---fans that had been discovered---torn to pieces in brutal organised combat.

When the third world war had finally come it had been the last straw as far as the man in the street was concerned. In spite of the fact that scientific defences had reduced the toll to one fifth of the world's population, science was taboo. To invent had become a crime punishable by death. The world turned its back on science and its pot of gold that lay at the end of a rainbow coloured by atomic fires and human blood. The human race was only too glad to sink down into semi-savagery....all except the fans.

They too had no desire to be blown to tiny pieces but, being fans, they were unable to conceive of a world that was not working its way, however precariously, towards the stars. So they rallied and began to campaign against the burning of the books, not to say the scientists.

They fanned harder than ever, inspired by the fact that for the first time fandom really had a purpose. So intense did their efforts become that the aggrieved populace rallied in return. Their action was more decisive than that of the fans.

In 1962 they killed every fan on whom they could lay their hands.

A few fans remained, however. These fans carried on their activities in secret, but every now and again one was caught---just as Edgar had been.

He lay very still for a moment knowing full well that his days of secret mimeo cranking were over. Then he sat up. He was alone in a bare concrete cell except for a huge guard in heavy armour who stood near the door. Through the rough opening he could see a section of the arena floor. He didn't get time to look at it closely for, as soon as he had perceived that Edgar was awake, the guard caught his arm and propelled him out into the open.

A deafening roar went up from the crowded tiers of spectators. Dazed and still weak and sick Edgar was pushed out to the centre of the sunlit circle of yellow sand. His lips moved in silent prayer as he was made to kneel before the box containing the chiefs of the World Stability Corps.

"Ghu help me, and may the spirits of Ackerman and Tucker, Willis and Hoffman, Slater and Clarke lend strength to my slip-sheeting arm." With the time-honoured words on his lips the fan turned to face his opponent, whose entry had been announced by yet another roar from the crowd.

He knew from his first glance that his defeat was certain, for his opponent was easily six feet three as compared to Edgar's five six. Furthermore, the giant was armed and clad in the bright armour of the Free American Peace Army. The letters FAPA emblazoned on his chest seemed to strike a responsive chord in Edgar's mind, but this was no time for futile brain searching. With blind courage he tightened his grip on the short sword that had been thrust into his hand and advanced on the giant.

With contemptuous ease the other brushed aside his feeble sword thrust and in a second had Edgar disarmed and helpless on the ground. As the giant knelt on his chest with his sword raised, he tensed for the final agony that would be his exit from fandom.

"When I bring this sword down give a scream," a soft voice said. Edgar opened his eyes, numb with surprise. He saw with wonderment that atop the other's golden helmet a small propellor shivered and spun.

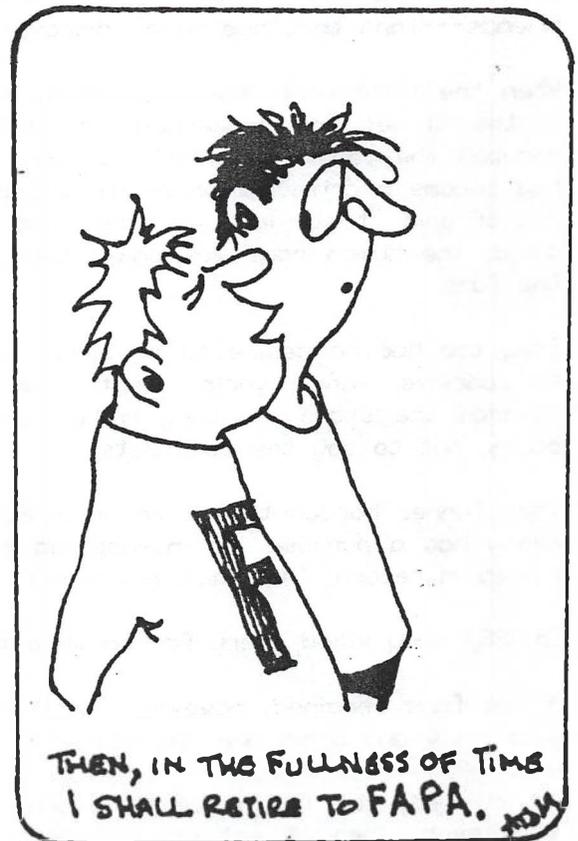
"My name is James White...yes, the James White. I have come to rescue you, the last fan in England, and transport you to New Fandom."

"But the fans are all dead," stammered Edgar.

"Nonsense. Willis and Hoffman and the others fan on yet---every fan you thought was killed in this arena is with them."

Edgar fainted, and the crowd gave a noisy, shuddering sigh of ecstasy as the golden sword glittered on its downsweep.

A few seconds later the last fan in England, bathed in red mimeo ink, was on his way to New Fandom, hidden deep in the Okefenokee Swamp.



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It is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan. --Ken Baile: Hyphen 2
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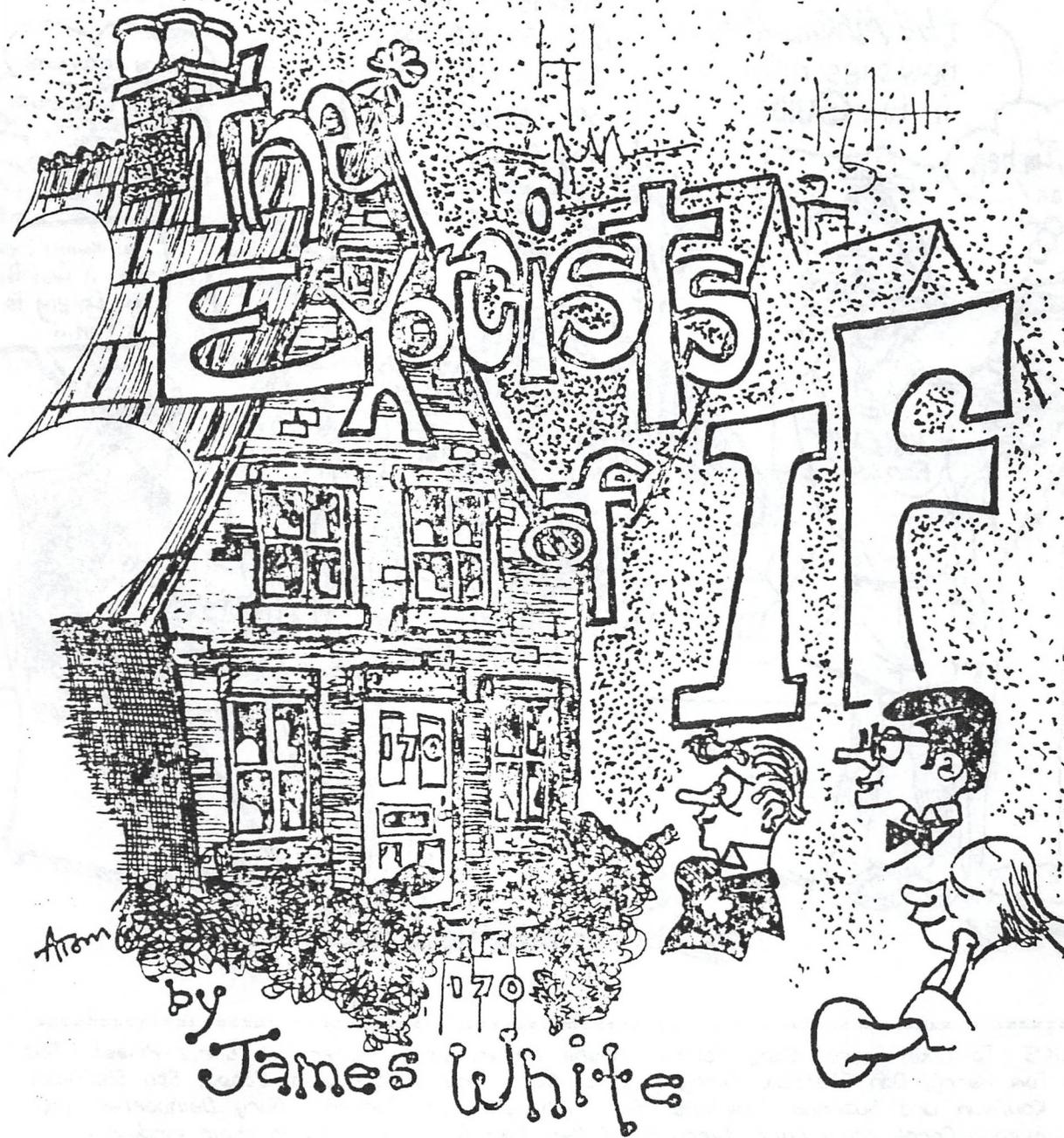


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To Terry Hughes for commissioning James White's elegaic Exorcists of IF, possibly still the greatest piece of faanfction ever written, and Andy Porter and Terry Jeevas for previously reprinting it. (This version is slightly revised.)

To Richard Bergenon for a new life.

To Patrick & Terasa Nielsen Hayden for the vital ingredient so long missing from fandom, the catalyst NH₂. Their TAFF visit was as if Vince Clarke had visited me in 1950, bringing The Epicentra with him. § To Alan Sugar for bringing into fan publishing the sense of wonder missing from science fiction. To Eric Mayer for Babylon IF, and to Brian Earl Brown for first printing it. (Come back, Eric, we miss you.) § To Terry Hill for Atom's Go For Your Goon (Microwave 5). And most recently to David Hartwell for Age of Wonders, wonderfully perceptive about both sf and fandom. (Happy Anniversaries).



A large and vulgarly ostentatious station wagon with the name of a local estate agent emblazoned on its flanks pulled in and parked outside the garden gate of 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. Within a few minutes the Villis MG, the Charters Morris Minor and the White Fiat, which happened to be red, pulled in behind him. The estate agent introduced himself to the three drivers, then paused while four Saracen armoured cars whined past in low gear.

"It was very good of you to come," he went on quickly, when they could hear themselves think again. "I know there should be five of you, but Mr Shaw has moved with his family to England and Mr Berry recently retired from the police fingerprint department to do the same. But I hope that you three, Mr Willis as a former tenant of 170, and Mr Charters as frequent visitors to the place, will be able to help me. You're my last hope, in fact."

"You weren't very informative on the phone," said Walter. "What exactly is your problem?"

"And if we're your last hope," said James, "who or what did you try first?"

"I....I couldn't go into details on the 'phone," the estate agent replied nervously. "And the first person I tried was Father Mallon from the chapel down the road."

"I know of him!" James broke in. "He's a member of the British Interplanetary Society and he's got a private pilot's licence and a 12-inch reflector on the presbytery roof which the Army thought at first was a SAM 7 missile system and, although he doesn't read sf, he's a very---"

"Well," said George, "nobody's perfect."

The agent gestured towards the three-story red-brick building which was 170, then went on, "I told him about the voices and...other manifestations, and he agreed to visit the house for a preliminary reconnaissance prior to briefing himself on exorcism procedures. But he couldn't do anything. Apparently the bell, book and candle bit works only against manifestations of evil, and these particulars were noisy, hyperactive and almost palpable but not, so far as he could ascertain, evil."

"When he left he was talking theology, I think," the agent went on, "and he said something about the questionable efficacy of a Holy Water sprinkler against an Opponent armed with a spectral water pistol."

Walter and I looked at James, who tried to look innocent.

"Anyway," said the agent, "he agreed that there was something there all right, but he said he couldn't get into the spirit of the thing."

"A priest," said James solemnly, "could get himself excommunicated for a pun like that."

"Please be serious, gentlemen, the agent went on. "People, potential tenants or buyers, even I myself, have heard the laughing and shouting and thumping noises. But I have never been to make out what the voices are saying or shouting. There has always been something strange about that house since you left it, Mr Willis, and since the Troubles started it has become steadily worse. It's a good, well-built house, but nobody will live in it for more than a week. That is why I contacted you, gentlemen. I hoped that you could do or suggest something that will rid me of these awful ghosts."

Walter inclined his head, but he was looking at the well remembered house as he said, "We'll do what we can, of course. May I have the keys?"

They left the agent pacing the pavement alongside their cars, where he would be able to reassure the Army patrols who might otherwise decide that their vehicles were possible car bombs and blow them up, and went through the garden gate and up three steps to the lawn. The gate still creaked and the lawn was covered with the same irregular

patches of clover and/or shamrock, and the distant clattering of an observation helicopter merged with the buzzing of insects both actual and spectral.

"It all comes back, doesn't it?" said Walter.

The voices from the past were saying things like "Let's not collate today---we can discuss broad matters of policy and get sunburned" and "I'd rather lie on shamrock than real rock, which is why I like champagne too" and "Nonsense, George, shamrock only grows on Catholic lawns" and "Well, I'm not one to worry over trefoils."

Walter said, "Let's go round the back."

It was much quieter in the back yard. A ghostly Bonestell-type spaceship towered all of 8½ inches above the tiles while the misty figures of an impossibly young Walter, Bob and James and a slightly less elderly George Charters crouched over it, discussing a technical problem.



According to the youthful ghostly James, who even then had been a lapsed member of the British Interplanetary Society, the trouble lay in the fact that his balsa wood spaceship weighed ¾ ounce while its motor developed a maximum pre-Brennschluss thrust of only half an ounce, which caused the thing to just sit there hissing and straining upwards. The answer which had been worked out was one of breathtaking simplicity. A length of thread had been attached to the vehicle's nose cone, and passed over the Willis clothesline; a small bunch of keys---weighing just under ¾ ounce---was tied to the other end. Phrases like "It's an old trick but it might just work" and "It beats the Dean Drive" hung in the air.

"Pity," said the contemporary James, "there weren't more clotheslines in the lunar insertion orbit."

They passed through the oblivious figures and into the kitchen before the phantom spaceship took off and set fire to the spectral clothesline.

"Surely," said Walter, "you were never that skinny, James. But you, George, haven't changed a bit. You must have been born old and venerable."

"Not true," said George, "I got like this in primary school, from carrying little girls' tablets of stone home for them. That's why I had to give up work on the pyramids."

The remembered smell as they entered the kitchen was a culinary effluvium describable only by Ray Bradbury in his homespun period, and the air was made even thicker by conversation like..."I hate to see you slaving over hot dishes, Madeleine, can I give you a hand?" and "Go sit in the front room, Harris, you're not going to



slaver over my dish." and "Farmhouse soup clogs water pistols" and "It happens to be a diabetic apple tart riddled with visually loathsome masses of undissolved Saccharin" and "Sorry, we're fresh out of eyes of newt" and "No newts are good newts."

They shuddered in unison and moved into the dining room where a ghostly double-dished light fixture---which Peggy White had once called a candle-bra---shed a warm effulgence (light having already been used in this sentence) on a dining table groaning with good things and bad puns provided, respectively, by Madeleine and all the fans who had visited Oblique House over the years---Lee Hoffman, Vince Clarke, Ken Bulmer, Chuck Harris, Mal Ashworth, both Ian McAulays and dozens of others.



The noisiest spectre of the lot was Chuck, who at that time had recently gone completely deaf and had not yet learned to modulate his voice properly. He kept shouting for everyone to write it down because he couldn't lipread Irish accents, then surreptitiously pocketing the scraps of paper for use in his monumental fan work *Through Darkest Ireland With Knife, Fork and Spoon*. The leanest and hungriest ghost was that of Bob Shaw, who complained of having hollow bones and a fifth-dimensional gut.

"Yes, I did try the gingerbread; and found it not guilty" they were saying, and "Nobody asked me if I wanted a seventh cup of tea" and "Why do English people speak English with that terrible English accent?" and "White lions running down the middle of the road mean it's a mane road" and "We're using grief-proof paper next issue" and "We'll assemble the mag on the dining room table and invite people to a small collation" and "People laugh at the funniest things."



In the front room a ghostly John Berry, on tiptoe and with his arms flapping up and down like a pterodactyl, was describing the preliminaries to lovemaking in his house. The idea was to display one's ardour, physical fitness and aerodynamic control by launching oneself off the top of the wardrobe to make a semi-crash landing into the eager arms of one's mate. All that was required was a fiat-topped wardrobe, a solidly sprung bed and a steady diet of water-cress.

In a series of temporal overlays the other fannish conversations and incidents proceeded over and around the flapping figure of John, including one involving George surrounded by exploding fireworks, a box of which he had inadvertently ignited with the ash from his cigarette. The other occupants of the room had hurriedly evacuated the area and were watching from the lawn, but George had been trapped by the Willis settee, whose upholstery was as soft and yielding as quicksand....

"Surrounded by all those sparks and glowing balls," said Walter, "You looked like a Virgil Finlay illo, George."

"And if it happened now," George replied, "we would probably be interned for running a porno factory."

A slow, clanking sound---which mundane folk might well have mistaken for the rattling of chains---grew louder as they mounted the stairs towards the box-room. Apart from the noise made by the Manly Bonister printing press turning out one of the later editions of Slant the room was quiet; except when one of the fan composers accidentally dropped a stick of type on the floor and felt the need to relieve his feelings verbally; or when Bob and James were trying to decide whether an illos was crude or stark; or when Madeleine arrived with the tea tray; or when a ghostly Walter dashed into the room, immaculate in tennis whites, to set a few lines of type before the next match in his club's tournament, to dash out again looking like a less immaculate Dalmatian.

Respectfully and almost ashamedly they backed out of that tiny room and its ghosts, the scene of so much energy and enthusiasm, to climb slowly and thoughtfully to the front attic.

There, the ghosts of people and things were almost palpable.

Ranged around the bare plaster walls were the spectral shapes of bookshelves bulging with promags and fanzines; the Bannister press which had been moved up when the box-room became a nursery; the big wall mirror with the transverse crack which Bob had painted over with a rocket-ship trailing a long tail of fire; the Marilyn Monroe Calendar; the ATom illos, in colour; the St.Fantony statuette; the Berrycade, which was a strong wooden frame covering the inside of the window to prevent John from pushing his posterior through it, as had been his wont during games of ghoodminton. And across the table and the net in the centre of the room raged the game of Ghoodminton itself: a game which was part badminton, part all-in wrestling and part commanoo assault course.

"Face! Face! You hit my face, our point!" the players were shouting, and "Take the shuttlecock out of your mouth then---you'll warp the feathers", and "It went into the bookcase, out, our point!" and "It's not in the bookcase. It must have gone into hyperspace" and the attempted promulgation of a new rule, "Hyperspace is out".

But it was the other voices which sounded stronger and more insistent. There was the southern brogue of Ian McAulay, who often motorbiked the hundred-plus miles from Dublin on Thursday nights, to play ghoodminton and talk before leaving early across the border before, as Bob put it, the Irish Republic was closed for the night. And there were the ghostly faces and voices of Big Name and small name fans from the US and the UK who had come and been so affected by the ghoodminton or Madeleine's cooking or the unique fannish atmosphere of the place that they, too, had left something of themselves behind to take part in the haunting.

"We can remember," said Walter quietly, as the three of them stood in the middle of the attic with the conversation and the laughter beating insistently at them from all sides. "But why should it affect ordinary non-fannish people who don't even---"

Suddenly a savage crashing detonation rattled the windows and a misshapen finger of smoke poked slowly into the night sky. Very faintly came the chatter of automatic weapons, the snap of a high-velocity rifle and the distant braying of an ambulance. But the voices from the past were there too, and louder than ever.

"Sounds like your side of town, James," said Walter in a worried voice. "It will be dark in an hour, and you would be safer back across the Peace Line before--".

"The fuggheads", said George, still watching the ascending column of smoke.

"Yes," said James absently. He gestured, the jerky movement of his hand taking in the room, the house around them and the scene outside, then went on quietly. "I think I know what is going on here. Think for a minute about a haunted house. It is a place where something so terrible and evil has happened in the past that the very structure is imbued with it, and it lingers and frightens the ordinary people who come into contact with it."

"But now," he went on, pointing towards the window, "It is the city and the country that has become so terrible and evil that they frighten the ordinary people, with bombings, ambushes, sectarian murders, widespread intimidation. It is the outside that is haunted, and in here...well, remember the people and the kind of place this used to be. It wasn't just the fan group or the awful puns or the fanzines we put out. No, we were fanatics too, in a quiet way, about other things too. Like toleration, racial equality, lots of things. But now we are scattered. Even we three can't meet very often, things being as they are, and the people we used to be are reacting to this present ghastly situation all around us by haunting the place."

"I think you're right," said Walter. Very seriously, he went on, "But remember, James, despite our religious and other differences and everything that has happened, we three haven't changed."

"No," said George. "we haven't changed."

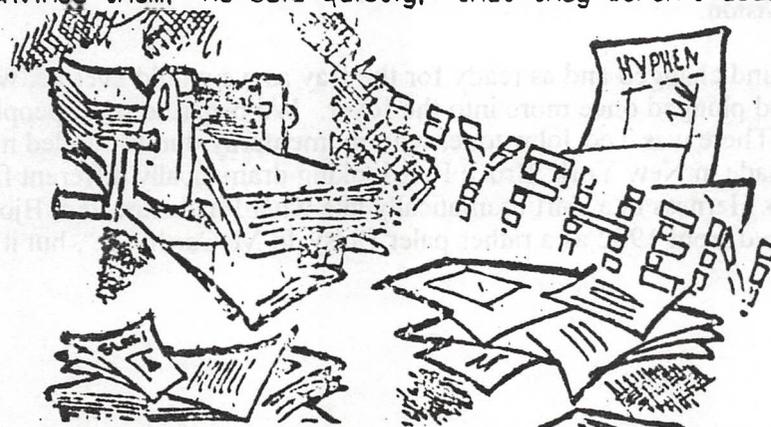
"That's right," said James. "we haven't."

They stood together for a long moment looking out over the city, then they left the bare and utterly silent attic and walked slowly downstairs past the boxroom, where the ghostly clanking of the Banister press was stilled, past the kitchen, dining room and lounge which were likewise silent, and across the lawn which buzzed only with this evening's insects.

The estate agent hurried forward to meet them, then he saw the expressions on their faces and went past without speaking. For several minutes they could hear his feet clumping about on the floorboards and stairs of the now empty house; then he returned.

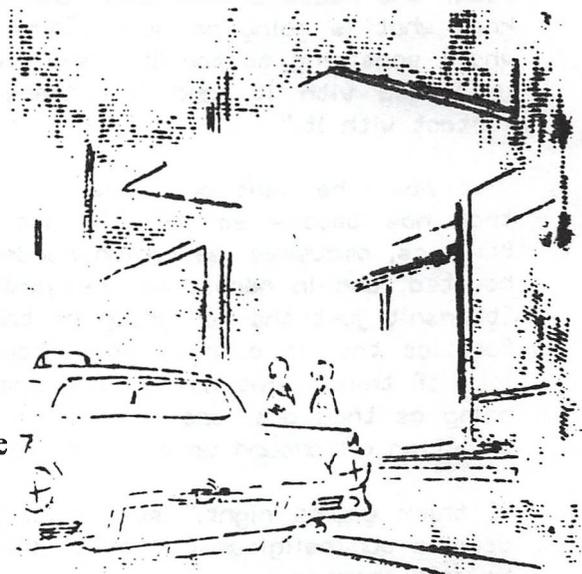
"You've done it!" he said excitedly. "It, they, whatever it was, has gone. Thank you gentlemen, very much..." He paused, studying their faces for a moment, trying to analyse the expressions; they were not sad, exactly, and not exactly triumphant, but seemed to reflect a peculiar mixture of both those feelings. Hesitantly he went on, "If you can tell me, how...how did you get rid of those ghosts?"

The three old-time fans looked at one another, and nodded. James cleared his throat. "We were able to convince them," he said quietly, "that they weren't dead yet."



Picking up on WAW's conreport (Chicon^{III}) just as he reaches Chicago --

I don't remember anything about that taxi ride to the hotel. In fact, I doubt if I saw anything, until the big white facade of the Pick-Congress, and the cool foyer all black marble and leather, and strange faces we should be recognizing. Until suddenly we were both trying to grab each other's arm and saying, "There's Forry!" And there indeed he was, big friendly familiar Forry, a breath of home all the way from LA. As he beamed towards us I thought that of all the ways we had met, London and Belfast in 1951, Chicago and Los Angeles in 1952 and London in 1957, this was the strangest and most wonderful of all.



Talking excitedly to Forry, insofar as it's possible to talk excitedly in the presence of that reservoir of relaxation, we drifted to the reception desk and signed in and in a moment of sobriety, looked round for our luggage. We saw it being lugged away by an elderly bellboy and, pausing only to ask Forry how much to tip, set after it. On the way to the elevator we met Bob Briggs, whom I remembered from 1952. Then he had told me in the course of conversation that New York would rather be the dirtiest city in the world than the second cleanest, and I had made a note of this epigram and said I would write it. But somehow it had never found its way into *The Harp Stateside*, lying instead for ten years on my conscience. I was glad to tell Bob that I would keep my promise, however belatedly. Satisfied, he returned to Washington immediately. At least, I never saw him for the entire remainder of the convention.

Holed up in Room 642, in a strange intense mood of mingled eagerness and apprehension, like a rather diffident Napoleon just in from Elba, I showered while Madeleine made up her mind what to wear. Then I paced about the room while she showered and changed. It wasn't a very large room, but large enough to pace in and luxurious by the standards of the hotels we were used to. I had a private bathroom (an awesome convenience we could easily come to regard as a necessity), an air conditioner, a radio-intercom, a dressing-table-desk thing, a double bed, and various other gadgets whose purpose Madeleine was able to explain to me out of the arcane knowledge women have about these things. There was also a television set which I turned on because I dimly remembered that in some previous existence I had wanted to see American television. There seemed to be about eight channels available but how many different programmes this represented I wasn't able to concentrate enough to determine. Suddenly I seemed to have lost every vestige of interest in television.

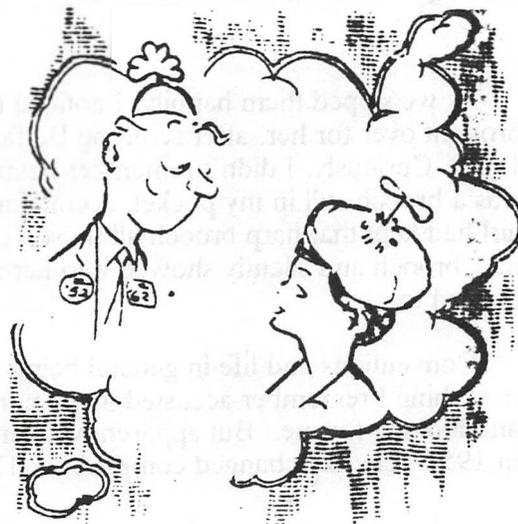
Showered and changed and as ready for the fray as we would ever be, we took the elevator down again and plunged once more into the foyer. We began to meet people at the rate of about ten a minute. There was Ted Johnstone, who momentarily dumbfounded me by referring to a joke I'd just made in New York, Bruce Pelz looking dramatically different from everything I had expected, Jack Harness in a shirt dramatically like what I had expected, Bjo whom I would I have easily recognized from 1952 as a rather paler Betsy Jo McCarthy. . . . but it would be misleading

to give impressions of people now as if I were calm enough to make assessments at the time. Actually to give you the right state of mind I'd have to employ some sort of action writing technique, like telling you to tear these pages into fragments and throw them into the air like confetti, reading them as they shower round your head.

Besides one's impressions of people may change as one knows them better, so let's wait until we have parted with them and recollect them in tranquility. Unfortunately one of those people we were now about to part with was Theodore Sturgeon, and there was no tranquillity in which to remember him for three days. But then there wasn't much to remember. He came up to me and said how glad he was to see me and that we must have a long talk later. He then disappeared, with a characteristic agonised smile, I never spoke to him again. Nevertheless I felt that my long standing friendship with Sturgeon had ripened since our last meeting in 1952, when he addressed six words and smiled to me without I think knowing who I was. I felt that another few decades Ted and I would be regular buddies. I was satisfied I don't mean to sound snide: sincerely admire Sturgeon's writing so much I'm quite happy to worship from afar lest any clay become visible or closer inspection of the junction between his legs and pedestal on which I have placed him.

A seventeen-hour bus journey is not the best acclimatisation for a convention and after some indefinite time we felt the need of some peace and quiet: yet we hated to miss anything. Forry and food seemed the ideal answer, so we separated ourselves out and strolled along to a shop window restaurant. There we calmed down enough to eat and to listen to Forry fill us in on what had been happening in the last few years at the other end of the unbreakable but tenuous line of communication between him and us. This had started when we asked him the time, having remembered the existence of that property of the continuum. He consulted his wrist watches. We asked with interest though without surprise why he wore two, and he explained that he liked watches and since he had plenty of room on his wrist he wore two, one on local time and the other on his publisher's time in New York, usually four hours different. Thus he knew instantly where his publisher was likely to be if he wanted to telephone him. It seemed quite logical to us, and if I had two such nice watches and a publisher in New York I would do the same, but Forry confided that this was one of the things about him which had annoyed Wendayne and led to their divorce. She objected to unconventionalities like this, while he saw no reason to change since he wasn't doing anyone any harm. A woman, he thought, should accept her husband as he was and not try to make him into someone else. They were nice watches, he explained and indeed he had another dozen strapped to the arm of a statue at home. "I wouldn't wear just any two old watches," he said wryly.

Back at the hotel Forry was instantly apprehended and taken into custody by a movie-house of monster fans. Abandoning him to his fate we turned away and there to our delight was the welcome face of Dick Eney, now ranking as an old friend from back east, and beside him another one from even further east, the tiny but indomitable figure of Ethel Lindsay. That Ethel and I should be together at a Chicago convention was quite incredible, and we both knew it. "You know, Walt," said Ethel, "if I really believed we were here I would just go into that corner and have hysterics. The only thing that saves me is knowing the alarm clock will go off any minute."

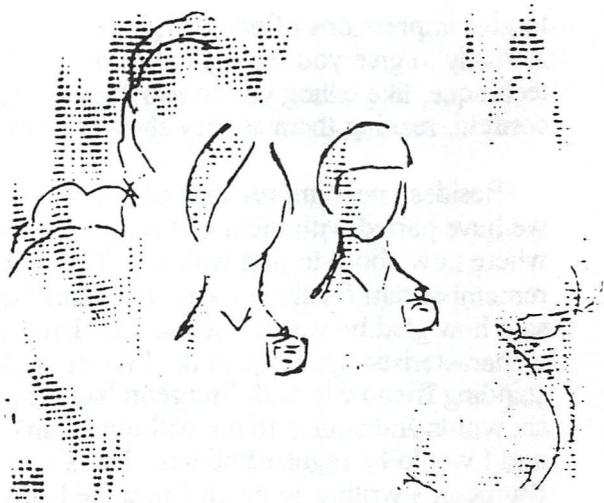


"You should worry," I said. "Let me tell you about This recurring dreams I seem to have. . . ."

Just then I almost came to believe I really was dreaming, because I noticed some young women wearing strange name-badges and Eney told me with a heroically straight face that they were Catholic girls. Catholic girls again, it was too much. Instantly I thought of the one person in the world with whom I could properly share the wonder of this, and like magic there she was. "Lee," I said, "there are Catholic girls again."

"I know," she said simply. "Korshak finally got them out of the Convention Hall."

"Lee," I said wildly, "let's go up on the roof and look for Max. Or go along to Wimpy's and talk to Sam Moskowitz. Nobody else is talking to him these days."



"Walt, you are forgetting something," said Lee. "Rich Elsberry is watching us."

"Well, all right." I agreed, "but let's go and have a chocolate malt anyway. I've still got that cow on my shoulder."

"So that's what it is," said Lee, with her uncanny gift for the esoteric illusion. "I thought it was the hamburger you promised to wear in your buttonhole."

I couldn't match that---why I still can't remember the context in which I wrote it eleven years ago---so I just went over and extricated Forry and introduced him to Lee all over again, as I had done in 1952, and took everybody to the hotel drugstore and bought them chocolate malts.

As we sipped them happily, I noticed Lee was already wearing the little harp brooch I had brought over for her, after scouring Belfast all over for one exactly like the one I brought her in 1952. Curiously, I didn't remember having given it to her yet. I felt in my pocket. I hadn't. There was a brooch still in my pocket, accompanied now by a warm glow in my heart. Why, the dear girl had kept that harp brooch all those years and brought it out for this occasion. I took out the new brooch and silently showed it to her and we just smiled at one another: there was nothing we needed to say.

Conventions and life in general being what they are, this idyllic interlude didn't last long. The next thing I remember accosted in the corridor with the gleeful news that Jim Webbert was here and looking for me. But apparently a very different Webbert from the brash youth I had pilloried in 1952. He had changed completely. The new Webbert was adult, mature, strong, and had



studied Judo and Karate, so that he could kill a man with one blow of his cigarette lighter. Terrified, I retreated to the protective darkness of the bar, where I cowered behind Bill Donahoe with a loyal bodyguard comprising Lee, Forry, Ted Johnstone, Andy Main, Dick Schultz and reinforcements which arrived from time to time. Actually, I did meet Jim and found him indeed a different person, so that I regretted even more blackening his name on the assumption he had left fandom for good.

The bar was a most peculiar place called The Highland Room. The drinks were served by pretty girls in short kilts and charged for by a strange system which must have originated in Aberdonian hostelrys frequented by rich and guileless English tourists. Every drink ordered at a table throughout a session was put on a single bill which was presented to the last to leave, so that to buy a single round at a time everyone would have had to go out and come in again. I could see that this would make for a quick turnover of clientele but it was singularly unsuited for conventions.



However, on this occasion I was only too happy to play Casablanca. As I left to follow the others to the registration room we were invited to dinner by Jim Warren with Forry, John & Bjo Trimble, Bob Madle and Jock Root. I accepted with pleasure but also with secret relief at the fact that we had to register first. I wasn't hungry, and I knew if I ate now I would regret it. At times like these I'm prone to nervous indigestion, from which the only protection is fasting. So I waited quite happily at the end of a long line talking to Dick Schultz and others, while Forry hovered about impatiently. I think this was almost the last I saw of Dick Schultz. Next morning someone told me he was supposed to have been 'monopolizing' me (maybe Rich Elsberry was there) and though I indignantly denied it I'm afraid someone may have said the same to Dick. It was true he had been with me for some hours, but by no means unwelcomely; indeed I appreciated his sensitive understanding of the nostalgic mood of that first day, evidenced in his cartoons in the current Bane. The only criticism I could possibly make of him was that he appreciated some of my jokes more than I did, and that's more an accomplishment than a fault.

It was while standing in this line holding a sort of unofficial audience with various people who came by, that I realised what a boon my special convention-attending suit was turning out to be. As you know, James White works in the tailoring department of a multiple store, and this suit was his own particular contribution to TAWF. It had been specially designed for attending American conventions being of a strong but light-weight Terylene mixture and having no less than ten pockets. Including one for holding American size fanzines, unfolded, one for the programme booklet, one as a sort of quick-draw holster for a notebook, and one in the waistband of the trousers for an American size billfold, so strategically placed that anyone wanting to pick my pocket would have had to seduce me first, and at least I would have got something for my money. This last pocket was quite a contribution to my peace of mind during the trip. In 1952 I had carried all my money in my hip pocket and for years afterwards I found myself in moments of stress tapping my bottom with the knuckle of my thumb to make sure it was there. Which of course it wasn't, and I hate to think of the effect on my subconscious of these multiple shocks.

But the use I was making of the suit now was one neither James nor I had envisaged. When you meet someone you have been looking forward to meeting for years, there is so much to talk about that you sometimes don't know where to start. There can actually be incredible frustrating moments of silence while each searches for some remark not too unworthy of such a climactic

occasion. It helps to have something trivial, but immediate and comprehensible, to start things going. I broke a lot of log-jams with that tweed ice-breaker.

After half an hour or so Forry lost patience and following a whispered discussion with members of the Convention Committee at the registration table brought Madeleine and me to the front of the line, and when we had registered started to shepherd us in the direction of the dining room. But there was one little thing I had to do first. I pinned on my name badge, and then took out of my pocket something I had kept for sheer sentiment and could now, incredibly, use again. I pinned on the other lapel my 1952 name badge.

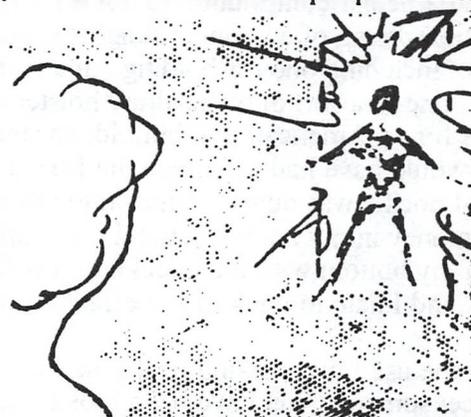
In the dining room I realised worriedly that I still wasn't hungry, though it was now quite late, But I couldn't sit there and fast, with such a congenial host and such pleasant company. And maybe I would be all right by the time the food arrived. So I ordered. But the service was too good, and now I faced an even worse problem. I couldn't leave the food my host was paying for, and it looked so delicious, and maybe I could chance it. So I did, only to realise almost immediately I had made the same mistake I had made with a certain hot fudge sundae in Los Angeles ten years ago. I listened dully to the scintillating conversation going on around me, wishing I could join in. But all I could do was sit there like a Buddhist monk contemplating my navel, or what was going on beneath it. John Trimble was wearing a badge saying "Repeal the 19th Amendment", the effect of which would be to strip women of their franchise, and outlining his programme subsequently. Forry advanced a rival slogan, "Repeal the Liberty Bell." It was, he explained innocently, not all it was cracked up to be.

At this point I whispered to Madeleine to apologise for me, and left hurriedly. I had of course been exposed to Forry's puns before, so I knew he wouldn't feel guilty. By the time I got to my room the wave of nausea had receded, but I knew it would be back. I tried to make myself sick, but failed miserably, so I lay down to see if I could sleep it off. But neither my stomach nor my mind would settle---here in Chicago I couldn't just lie there---so after a while I got up again. I had a shower and felt a little better, so I went downstairs again and found the dinner party over but Madeleine still bravely flying the family flag in the corridors. We met the Busbys, the Grennells and Boyd Raeburn, who had just arrived. That alone seemed achievement enough for one day, and we decided to go to bed and conserve our energy. It was only about half ten, but after yesterday in New York and the night in the bus and the sort of day we'd had since, it seemed to us we must be exhausted if we only had the sense to realise it. So we stole away to our room and found it was so, and drifted off to sleep thinking happily of all those wonderful people around us whom we were to see more of tomorrow.

Saturday 1st September

So we were up bright and early next morning at the crack of 9:15, winding up slowly for the day buying postcards in the hotel drugstore and strange American breakfasts and endless cups of coffee with the few others who were alive at this hour. This peaceful prelude ended when I caught sight of the man some of you know as Robert Bloch. I whispered tensely to Madeleine, "There He is." The brave girl tidied her hair, adjusted her clothing,

and we went to confront him. I must say he rose to the occasion with all the old world gallantry one would expect from a member of the older generation. He gave Madeleine a lecherous look,



whispered his room number in her ear and added as a further inducement that he knew what I had done with Max Keasler. "How are you going to ditch your husband?" was the way his suave advances continued.

Fortunately the Programme was now about to start, with the Introduction of Notables. As we passed the sign to the Florentine Room where this was to take place Bloch commented that they mustn't know yet what fans were like, or they'd have called it The Quarantine Room. Inside we sat about two thirds of the way up on the right hand side and looked around us. We had, I found, Forry Ackerman on one side and Dean Grennell just behind us. It seemed too good to be true, but

"Forry," I whispered, "have you ever met Dean Grennell?" He shook his head and looked around interestedly. "Dean," I said, in quiet triumph, "May I introduce Forry Ackerman?"



What greater honour could fall to a fan all the way from Ireland, I thought, than that of introducing Grennell to Ackerman? As if in answer, Doc Smith asked for my autograph, an accolade marred only by my good memory. . . I knew he collected autographs for his daughters. As I passed the book back I noticed the man directly behind me was wearing a name badge saying he was Harry Stubbs. I introduced myself and told him how James White had regarded it as the ultimate in egoboo when he was recently compared to Hal Clement. On behalf of Clement, Stubbs said he liked James' work too, and I fixed the last three events firmly in my mind. All in all it was a couple of minutes guaranteed to impress the striped pants off James.

At 11:50 Dean McLoughlin and Howard Devore began to perform their own introduction of notables, taking the fans and pros neither respectively nor respectfully. Larry Shaw, introduced amongst the pros, stood up and said simply "I'm a fan", for which I admired him all the more. Many of McLoughlin's more willing candidates for professional honours were not there, including Fred Pohl and Cele Goldsmith. Nor was Vernon Coriell, though I carefully examined the chandeliers.

As the introductions went on and on and my hands got too sore to clap any more an uneasy thought struck me. Now that I had introduced Grennell to Ackerman the stage was set for that Ultimate Pun, the one which would bring the world to an end. But I refused to have the world end now; I was enjoying it too much. So after all the notables had been duly introduced to one another we whisked Dean & Jean up to their room, ostensibly to discuss the panel that evening. The centrifugal forces of the convention had swept Forry safely away, so nothing worse occurred that afternoon than a small earthquake in Iran. I tremble to think what might have happened if Forry had been in that room with us Dean showed us one of his guns and then combined all his various interests by taking a photograph of Madeleine holding it and by saying casually that since this was a Mickey Spillane type shot he would take it with "Mike Hammera". So you can see how narrowly the world escaped extinction.

What has gone before . . .

. . . was, of course, parts I, II, III and the gooey-eyed, romantic and thoroughly unfannish part IV, which ended on 17 May 1955 with Peggy and I flying off to London on our honeymoon. Among the other exciting events that were happening for the first time, we went boating on the Serpentine -- where Peggy, not knowing that it was only eighteen inches deep, wanted a life jacket; visited The White Horse where the London fans gathered every month and among them met John Wyndham, Bill Temple and Arthur Clarke who now has a handle to his jug -- a Northern Ireland expression meaning that he has been whacked on the shoulder with a sword and is now a "Sir" -- and the Tower of London with that once and future lecher Chuch Harris, and to see "The King and I" with Chuch Harris and "Kismet" with Chuch Harris. At the time getting tickets for these two shows was next to impossible, but Chuch managed to get very good seats up front even though he insisted on trying to sit between Peggy and I. But Peggy patted his head and said that she would rather sit between two tall, handsome men rather than have to contend with both of them attacking from the same flank. We have had a great fan feud going with Chuchie for a long, long time (he gave me the idea for this column title when, after my first pro story appeared in NEW WORLDS in 1952, he accused me of being a vile pro and fakefan and a foulness festering on the fringes of fandom). But we thought then, and still do, that a man who is completely deaf and who, as a honeymoon present, could take his friends to two musical shows that he himself couldn't even hear, is no goat's toe. That another Norn Iron expression, m'lud, meaning a person of true and uncommon worth, and one who doesn't have to stand up twice to cast a long shadow.

But these things happened 44 years ago and much else has happened since, good things and bad, sad things and joyful. The arrival of children and grandchildren, the sudden appearance of those empty, unfillable spaces where fan friends and family have passed on, the 80-plus stories that have, according to Chuch, made me a permanent fakefan festering on the fringe, and the number of fun cons attended, including the one last weekend which was great fun and even though one incident was terribly embarrassing for me. But most of the times have been very good.

Isn't it funny how time passes when people are enjoying themselves, which is probably the reason this installment of the column is 44 years late. Now read on.

Fester on the Fringe, Part V

by James White

For the past nine years Peggy has been too unwell to travel to conventions by planes, boats and trains, but when the Octocon '98 committee invited us to be Guests of Honour and said that they would transport us door-to-door -- Portstewart

on the north coast to Dun Laoghaire south of Dublin -- each way in a big, comfortable Volvo, she said they were making her an offer she couldn't refuse.

The con hotel was once again the Royal Marine which has food you could kill for and staff and management so friendly and helpful that they can't possibly be paying them enough, and they laid on dawn to dusk sunshine for the three days we were there. Our GOH suite was opulent, with a king-size four-poster bed, acres of marble tiling and gold fittings in the bathroom and a fabulous view over the grounds of the hotel to the ferry port, Howth and the Irish Sea beyond. We were both thinking about the ferries at the bottom of the hotel's garden, but neither of us dared mention them aloud to the committee members who entertained us to dinner on the first -- and second, and third -- night because GOHs can be changed at short notice.

During the first dinner it was explained that due to the recent demise of the ISFA, the Irish Science Fiction Association, the newly-formed SFI, Science Fiction Ireland, invited me to be their President, and I was pleased and honoured to accept. Apart from writing a yearly inspirational Christmas message to the troops, or a con report or something, the deal they proposed was exactly the same as that offered and accepted by the Queen's University of Belfast SF & Fantasy Society, which is every time I buy a round of drinks I get to be called "Mr. President." Peggy was very pleased for me but wanted to know if any of the SFI fans were called Monica.

Peggy had to rest for a good part of the day but made it to the GOH interview when she did some heckling from the floor, like asking the interviewer to ask me how she constantly inspires me to write ("Five hundred words before supper, buster, or you don't get any") and "Tell him to tell you what he did when the grandchildren came up for a visit on his 70th birthday and gave him a Star Wars' light sabre that lit up and made noises, and he snuck it into bed that night to surprise me." Sometimes I think she forgets to give me the reverence due to a serious literary figure. That interview was fun, except when the subject of the new TV series and Sector General rip-off, "Mercy Point," came up and Michael Carroll, the interviewer, got worried because my face had gone red and he said steam was coming out of my ears.

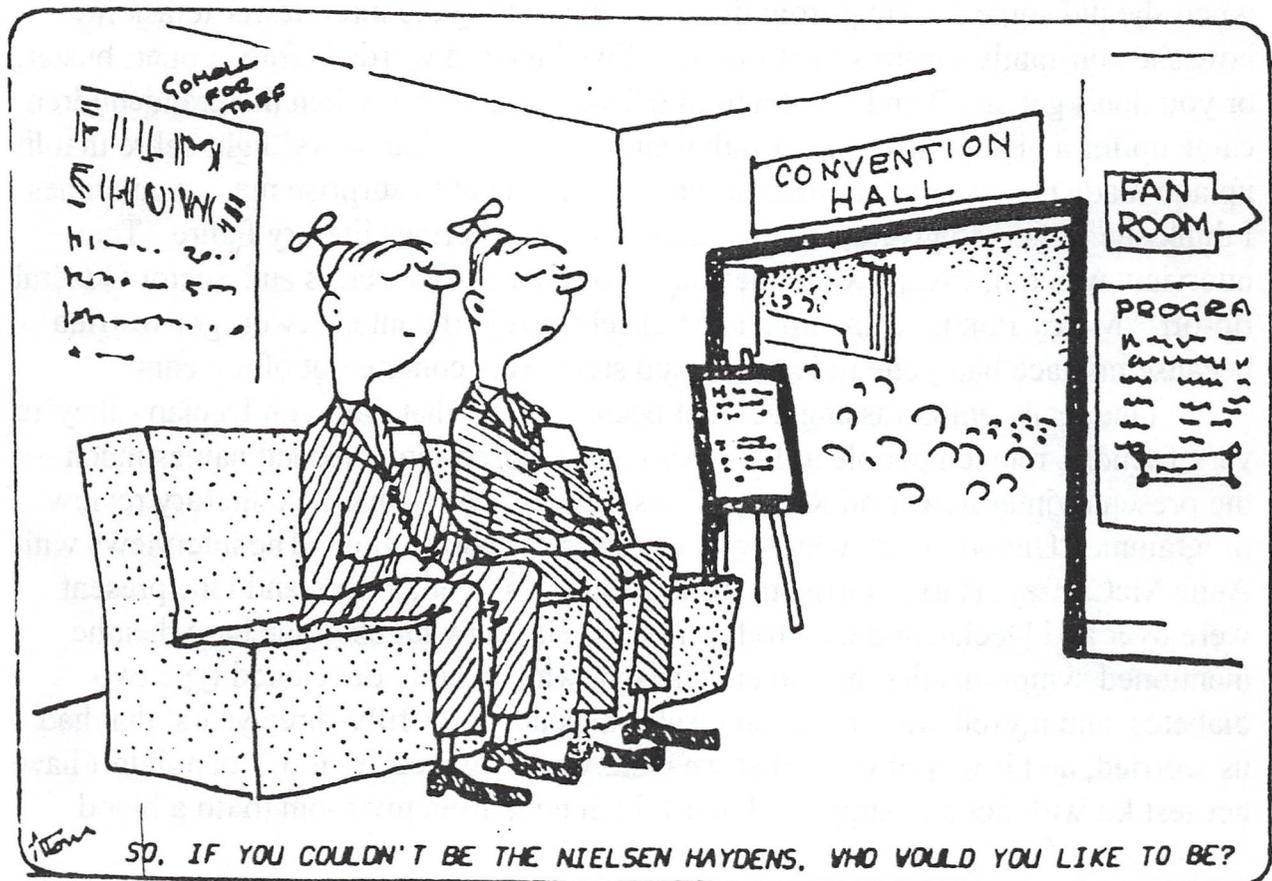
One really embarrassing incident occurred later that day with Declan - they're very friendly, relaxed people at RTE who don't worry about second names much -- the presenter/interviewer on Radio Telefis Eireann's Network Two literary review programme "UnderCover" which was covering the convention. The interviews with Anne McCaffrey, Harry Harrison, Robert Rankin and other pros and fans present were over and Declan and his producer were relaxing with us in the bar when he mentioned symptoms that had Joan Harrison, who recently developed type two diabetes, and myself who had been insulin-dependent for fifty-three years, that had us worried, and it was obvious that we were worrying Declan, too. Joan didn't have her test kit with her and suggested that I fetch mine from my room to do a blood

sugar level test on him right away. Happily it measured 4.6, which was absolutely normal for a non-diabetic, and we were all greatly relieved, especially Declan.

Highly embarrassed over my attempt to play doctor and wishing that the floor would open up and swallow me, I apologised profusely and explained that while I never missed a bet while diagnosing extra-terrestrials, I sometimes goofed where Earth-humans were concerned. He is a really nice man, he accepted my apology and his producer laughed and said that he'd always thought that Declan *was* an extra-terrestrial.

The con ended officially that night with lovely presentations to Peggy and myself, but it continued unofficially the next day at The Flying Pig book shop which was celebrating its first birthday with an all-day party which had no food but bottles or casks of everything including poteen wrapped in brown paper -- I mean, the poteen bottle was wrapped in brown paper -- because it is a highly illegal beverage. When the book shop floor and pavement outside began to wobble underfoot, I was driven back to the hotel for a quieter dinner with committee person Dave Stewart, next year's co-Chair with Pdraig O'Mealoid, who nearly fell asleep face down in his apple strudel.

Next day James Bacon and his father, Ken, drove Peggy and I, tired but happy, back to Portstewart. For all the conversation they got from us in the back seat, their nice, comfortable Volvo might just as well have been a hearse.



Inside Coverage



This is where the editor apologises for the issue being late. Well, it was like this. First we moved house, and then I crashed the car and wrote a book and then I survived a small civil war, got ill and retired from work. (That was a summary of pages 55 to 58, which you don't have to read now.) All this took time (22 years to be exact), and my correcting fluid dried up.

Why now? Well Amstrad solved the conflu problem with the PCV Word Processor. Eric Mayer wrote a story I thought you'd like, and a Worldcon was arranged in Britain on a date which I realised was the 40th Anniversary of the first meeting of Irish Fandom.

It seemed as if Fate was trying to tell me something. Namely, pub your ish.

Obviously the first thing to do was to try and reproduce the illegibility which had done so much to preserve the reputation of Hyphen down through the ages. So I phoned the Gestetner shop in downtown Belfast and enquired about spare parts for the Gestetner 26. There was a long silence and then a man came on claiming to be the Manager. "What," he enquired, "is a Gestetner 26?"

"I will have you know, my good fellow," I said, or words to that effect, "That it is the vintage machine on which I published a literary magazine for which connoisseurs in the New World are vying with one another to pay \$50 a copy." He was impressed, but still could not supply a vintage silk screen. Nor did he even have a modern version of the homely 26; even his 2nd hand dupers were now electric. Handle turning had become something for cranks..

That seemed to be that, but Roscoe works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. Our central heating system (bought with advice from Dean Grennell and money from Terry Carr and therefore the second most fannish thing in the house) had to be converted to another kind of gas. The technician who came to do it was a congenial chap (and was being paid by the Government) so we had an interesting conversation; in the course of which he suddenly asked me if I would be interested in a Gestetner duplicator his neighbour was trying to get rid of from his garage. I enquired the price and was told it would be nothing; my new friend would even deliver it. It seemed a reasonable deal.

Next morning the machine turned out to be a 4605, identical to the reconditioned models in the shop at £400.

So you can see that you and I are fated to be here in this fanzine today. I hope you like it. It starts with five pieces of faanfiction. Everyone might have different views as to what they have in common, but to me they represent the life of a fan group, from birth to myth. The first story, from Hyphen 3, is the one that I think began this whole genre. It conveys the feeling of persecuted brotherhood which was once our bond.

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