

SEEK N SWAP

EARL M. MATTHEWS, 2009 Huron Parkway, Apt. 6, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104, needs I COULD GO ON SINGING to complete his collection of JDM books.

ARNOLD J. CELICK, 9153 Thilow Drive, Sacramento, CA 95826, needs THE CROSSROADS, WEEP FOR ME, and I COULD GO ON SINGING. "Have to swap: 1958 Popular Library CRY HARD, CRY FAST in excellent shape."

SPECIAL REQUEST

BILL S. BALLINGER, PO Box 4034, North Hollywood, CA 91607, needs a hardcover copy of his novel PORTRAIT IN SMOKE (Harper & Bros., 1950). Bill has one in his own collection, but needs another copy to send to the Ballinger Collection at Boston University. Will buy, but write to him first before sending the book--and remember, it must be the hardcover edition.

NEWS & PREVIEWS

BOOK NOTES On December 3, 1969, JDM wrote: "McGee #12 is about done, and is called THE LAVENDER GAME. A better book than INDIGO, I am sure."

TV NOTES From Publisher's Weekly, August 11, 1969: "John D. MacDonald has signed with National General-CBS to create a TV show to be called "Venture Bay"--adventure and oceanography in the Caribbean."

JDM did a BOOK BEAT interview with Cromie on Nov. 29, 1969. It probably appeared on NET sometime in the past several weeks. Our old TV set doesn't provide NET. Anybody catch it?

MOVIE NOTES The movie version of DARKER THAN AMBER probably finished shooting in Miami on December 17, 1969. (Production started in October.) The film was directed by Robert Clouse, and the cast includes: Rod Taylor as Travis McGee; Theodore Bikel as Meyer; Suzy Kendall as Vangie and Merrimay; Anna Capri as Del; Bob Phillips as Griff; Bill Smith as Terry; Chris Robinson as Roy; James Booth as Burke; and Jane Russell (yes, that's right, folks, Jane Russell) as the Alabama Tiger.

And, according to the Miami Herald (August 28, 1969) golf writer Ray Crawford, who had a bit part in Jackie Gleason's "How Do I Love Thee", was down for a role in AMBER. We can't testify to the accuracy of the Miami Herald's report, however, as the same article referred to JDM as "Joseph MacDonald"...

However, the rest of the cast info came from John, including the news of the switch in the gender of the Alabama Tiger. (We understand they were considering either Rudy Vallee or Jack Oakie for the role. Perhaps they couldn't get either of them and Miss Russell was available...)

The film was produced by Jack Reeves and Walter Seltzer of Major Pictures Corporation, using a production crew from Ivan Tors Studio in Miami, and will be released to exhibitors through Cinema Center Films. As far as we know, the entire movie was shot on location in Florida and the Bahamas. John spent a day visiting the company when they were on location at Bahia Mar, Fort Lauderdale. He has given us permission to quote from a letter he wrote to Knox Burger, reporting on the visit:

"I spent my day at Bahia Mar, where the company was on location. They had come in there with a whole convoy of those big silver-colored Tors trucks, and boom trucks, and portable dressing rooms, and several billion dollars worth of gear and gadgets. Because Trav has been parking his houseboat, The Busted Flush, at Bahia Mar for a few years now, I've become friendly with the manager, Irv Deibert.

Irv was walking around with a slightly glassy look and he was developing a twitch. He sort of expected the movie people to come in with some hand-held cameras and a shy smile. But there they were, laying track down a long pier, running cable

around as big as your wrist, and running monstrous generators, and turning the area in something resembling a truck depot in Newark.

My first impression was of such vast confusion nobody could possibly have it under control. But I found out that Bob Clouse, the director; Frank Baur, the unit manager; and Andy Costikyan, the cinematographer; knew what was going on all the time, and, along with Jack Reeves and Walter Seltzer, kept it all moving in the right direction. Ever see a good infantry battalion on the move, setting up bivouac, tearing it down and rolling again?

Reporters kept asking me questions. Dumb questions, some of them, like "Do you think Rod Taylor will make a good Travis McGee?"

I was apprehensive about meeting Rod Taylor. Why should an actor be expected to relate to the fellow who wrote the novel? I hadn't written the script. But we hit what is called instant empathy. I like the guy. He has a face that looks lived-in, and he projects a masculinity that can glaze the young female eye at seventy paces. But what matters to me is that he understands what McGee is all about--the anti-hero, tender and tough, with many chinks in the armor. The motion picture McGee will be, I am confident, the McGee of the novels, altered to the extent to which Rod Taylor will add his own dimensional interpretation. The final effect will be the amalgam of my McGee and Rod Taylor's McGee, and I trust Rod's wit, irony and understanding to make the whole greater than the parts.

We talked three times, totaling maybe an hour, and I think we are friends, which is a valuable thing anywhere.

He will be as right in the role of McGee as Theo Bikel is right for the role of Meyer. And Bikel is Meyer, a large hairy gentle watchful thoughtful man. Theo told me he thinks Meyer is McGee's conscience, because too often McGee in anger and impatience, will throw out the valid conventions along with the false ones.

Suzu Kendall has a fine, sensitive face, and a very clear light of intelligence in direct and lovely eyes. Do you know--had you ever realized--that all these people are awfully bright, with quick perceptions, humor, a knack for sorting out what is real and what is unreal? I should have guessed. You cannot do a good job of portraying someone else until you have discovered who you are.

Well, old friend, the rest is a jumble of vivid--and startling--impressions. It is very very weird to invent a big houseboat in your mind, write about it in eleven books, and suddenly walk onto a dock and come upon it in the flesh, so to speak. Big and solid and fast. And that bathtub aboard is...exactly what you think it would be, after editing the books.

Say, you know that old Rolls pickup truck McGee drives, and calls Miss Agnes? Well, they found an old Rolls Royce Shooting Brake, which is very British for station wagon, because I guess you tote guns out into the country in it, and come back with it stuffed with grouse. It is a great vehicle, with just the right flavor. Why couldn't I have thought of that, anyway? Should I switch over in the next book? Could I? I could have him rack up the pickup and replace it with that Shooting Brake. Let me know what you think, pal.

* * * * *

THE MCGEE SHIRT was the subject of a full-page ad in PLAYBOY's October 1969 issue (P.223)

It is manufactured (in 18 colors) by Eagle Shirt Makers (a subsidiary of Hat Corporation), Quakertown, PA 18951. As reported in JDMB #11, the colors are taken from JDM book titles (Plain Wrapper Brown, Deep Goodbye Blue, Cupcake Brass, etc.).

THE MacDONALD SUIT against the American Express Co. has been dropped. According to a report in the Nov. 6, 1969 issue of the St. Petersburg Times, in a prepared statement released by his attorney, MacDonald said:

"It has never been my intention to use a threat of suit as a cheap club to beat a large sum of money out of them. My motives were first to attract their attention, and second, once I had it, to convince them that when dialogue is necessary to resolve differences then it must be between human beings.

I have had discussion with executives of the American Express credit card division. I believe they are able and sincere men making an honest effort to achieve a personalized service in the face of vastly increased volume. The

decentralization of their computer operation, now beyond the planning stage, should make such personalized service more possible to achieve. I would hope that I have had some part in acquainting them with the imperatives of human contact and communication.

The company has expressed its willingness to review correspondence from other customers who have written me with a view toward resolving any remaining misunderstanding between the company and them.

In view of the attitude I perceived among the executive staff, and in view of their willingness to look into these other matters brought to their attention, I agreed to drop my suit against them."

The heading for this report was "Victory Claimed For Humans", and we agree.

(Our thanks to John D. MacDonald, Gilbert Rogin and Chuck Toole for most of the information in this column.)

-ljm & jmm

PWFD - 12½

(continued from page 22)

BILL WILSON, Atlanta, GA: Liked "Dress Her In Indigo" fine. It is, for my taste, much better than "Brown Wrapper". But even so JDM is by far my favorite writer. The big thing is style. Also, the book is completely believable. Many critics bemoan about mass killings as being just too much. ((Which they are--jmm)) However, they are invited to read the papers concerning the recent affair in California. And I personally worked on a triple murder that was never officially solved (we knew who did it, but couldn't make a legal case) that would be a plot molder's dream.

I think Theodore Bikel will be just fine as Meyer. He is a fine actor among other talents. He is an outstanding folk singer. I can't stand folk singers who warble a sad lament that they just wrote, but I have for long dug Bikel, Burl Ives, and the late Carl Sandburg.

H. Vernor Dixon's publisher was David McKay Co., Inc. They might be able to locate him. I understand that he is the inventor of a type of propellor blade used by helicopters.

"The Godfather" by Mario Puzo is good reading. He delineates the difference between the Mafia, Cosa Nostra and Syndicate in real instances. This is an area of misunderstanding among many law enforcement officers, not to mention writers and the man-in-the-street. What confuses people is that so often the same people are a part of all three.

Another good factual book is "The Prosecutor: by James Mills. It is the story of a DA in Queens NY district. Real factual stuff. (How's that for a redundancy?)

A record which I think JDM would enjoy is "The Music of Hoagy Carmichael" by Bob Wilber—Monmouth-Evergreen MES 6917.

LARRY SHAW, North Hollywood, CA, has suggested the following titles for future Travis McGee novels:

All Green For Seasick

Bright Red For Sunburn

A Pink Slip For Goodbye

Rainbow 'Round The Coroner

When Your Heiress Turned To Silver

I'll Tell You Where The Yellow Peril Went

THE JDM POPULARITY POLL RESULTS

- by Clarence G. "Pete" Petersen

THE LAST ONE LEFT, John D. MacDonald's 80,000-word "story about money and dying", was the overwhelming winner of an underwhelming poll.

Only 36 JDM Bibliophile readers bothered to vote, listing their five favorite MacDonald books, but among them 15 listed THE LAST ONE LEFT as their first choice, 4 listed it second, 2 listed it third, and 3 listed it fifth, for a total of 24 votes.

Tied for second was the comic novel PLEASE WRITE FOR DETAILS and the Las Vegas novel THE ONLY GIRL IN THE GAME, with 12 votes each.

THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH & EVERYTHING was fourth with 11 votes; MURDER IN THE WIND was fifth with 9; then A FLASH OF GREEN, 8 votes; THE DROWNER, 7; NIGHTMARE IN PINK, 6; and THE EXECUTIONERS (CAPE FEAR), 5.

Eight books received 4 votes each--APRIL EVIL, CLEMMIE, THE CROSSROADS, THE END OF THE NIGHT, WHERE IS JANICE GANTRY?, A KEY TO THE SUITE, THE DEEP BLUE GOOD-BY, and THE HOUSE GUESTS.

Twenty-eight others received one or two votes. Thirteen MacDonald books received none. His latest, DRESS HER IN INDIGO, was published after the deadline for voting.

A tabulation shows how the votes were distributed.

Statistical experts commented that the results of the poll were "at best, inconclusive", and they described the poll itself as "inane".

"JDMB readers who failed to respond," said one, "are to be congratulated for their mature judgment." Among those not voting were Len and June Moffatt, publishers of the JDMB, and John D. MacDonald himself.

At the pollster's request, however, MacDonald wrote: "I cannot give my five favorite books in any order, and I give them in random order, knowing that each one, in its own way, is a different kind of failure, but less of a failure than maybe other attempts in those same areas." MacDonald's list: SLAM THE BIG DOOR, THE DECEIVERS, A KEY TO THE SUITE, THE HOUSE GUESTS and THE END OF THE NIGHT.

"Writers are notoriously sappy about evaluations of their own work," MacDonald added, "and I do not figure on being an exception to the rule."

None of MacDonald's choices was among the top five selected by readers.

"That figures," said one of the experts, who added, "I can find no evidence that this Clarence Petersen person, who conducted the poll, has ever been near a course in statistics or public opinion research."

Petersen, who is television critic for the Chicago TRIBUNE and paperback book columnist for BOOK WORLD, replied "You were expecting maybe Elmo Gallup?"

TITLES (in order of publication)

VOTES CAST (5 per ballot, in order of preference)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	TOTAL
The Brass Cupcake	1			2		3
Judge Me Not				1	1	2
Wine of the Dreamers		2				2
The Damned				1	1	2
Ballroom of the Skies			1			1
Dead Low Tide	1	1				2
Cancel All Our Vows				1	1	2
All These Condemned	1		1			2
Area of Suspicion				1		1
Contrary Pleasure					2	2
Cry Hard, Cry Fast	1	1			1	3
April Evil			1	1	2	4
Murder in the Wind	2	2	1	4		9
The Empty Trap			1	1		2
Man of Affairs					1	1
The Deceivers					2	2
The Executioners	1	1		3		5
Clemmie		1	2		1	4
Deadly Welcome					1	1
Please Write For Details		2	8	1	1	12
The Crossroads				4		4
The Beach Girls					1	1
Slam The Big Door				1	1	2
End of the Night	2	1			1	4
The Only Girl in the Game		4	2	3	3	12
Where Is Janice Gantry?	1	1	1	1		4
One Monday We Killed Them All			1		1	2
A Key To The Suite	1		1	2		4
A Flash of Green	4	2	1		1	8
The Girl, The Gold Watch & Everything	3	1	4	3		11
On The Run			1		1	2
The Drowner		4	2		1	7
The Deep Blue Good-By		3		1		4
Nightmare in Pink	1	2	2		1	6
A Purple Place For Dying				1		1
The Quick Red Fox				1		1
A Deadly Shade of Gold	1	1				2
The House Guests					4	4
Bright Orange For The Shroud			1		2	3
Darker Than Amber		1	1			2
End of the Tiger and Other Stories	1					1
One Fearful Yellow Eye			1		1	2
THE LAST ONE LEFT	15	4	2		3	24
Pale Gray for Guilt		1		2		3
No Deadly Drug			1			1
The Girl In The Plain Brown Wrapper		1		1		2
TOTALS (46 titles)	36	36	36	36	35*	179

*On one ballot, the fifth choice was split half-a-dozen ways; none were counted.

INTRODUCING A NEW COLUMN...

Actually, Bill Wilson needs no introduction to most of our readers, as he has been a faithful and informative contributor to our lettercolumn for quite some time. However, so that you may know that he knows whereof he writes, we are pleased and proud to present Bill's "credentials":

During World War II, he took military police training at Fort Custer, Mich., and spent the rest of the war in a military police battalion in Europe. At the end of the war, he transferred to the public safety office of Allied Military Government. This office reorganized the German police, assisted in the investigation of war crimes and in the locating and apprehension of war criminals, and acted as liaison between the German police and the occupation police agencies. In April, 1946, he entered the Criminal Investigation Division of the US Army, and remained with this activity until his retirement on August 1, 1969.

During this time, he worked with the police of eleven countries, and in the U. S. with the various levels of police agencies in twelve states. He has been an instructor at the US Army Military Police School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, for a total of five years. His principal subjects of instruction in the field of criminal investigation were homicide and report writing. He was also, for a time, chief instructor in the polygraph section. Also, for three years (during off-duty time) he was an instructor at the Armed Forces Institute, Pacific Branch, Honolulu, Hawaii, teaching criminology and criminal investigation. He has attended the following police-oriented courses:

- European Command Intelligence School, Oberammergau, Germany - CID course
- University of Vienna, Austria (Institute of Criminology) - Homicide & Sex Offenses
- US Army MP School, Fort Gordon, GA - CID School
- US Army MP School, Fort Gordon, GA - Polygraph training course
- US Treasury Dept. School, Washington, DC - Narcotics Law Enforcement Course
- Harvard University, Dept. of Legal Medicine, Boston, Mass. - Homicide
- Georgia Police Academy, Atlanta, GA - Vice problems

In addition, he has been a guest lecturer at the US Army Judge Advocate School, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

He is a member of the Harvard Associates in Police Science.

Bill also provided three and one-half pages of his opinions and attitudes on various subjects such as Marijuana, Homosexuals, Viet Nam, the Draft, Pornography, Prisons, Capital Punishment, Hippies and Polygraphs. Rather than quote them all at one time, we ask Bill to do columns on one, two or three of these subjects at a time. In any case, we are sure that some (if not all) of these controversial subjects will come up in future columns from Bill.

We are not entirely satisfied with the title that we have given to Bill's column. We have the impression that he too would like a better title. Perhaps we are being too "cute" in trying to derive a column title from a JDM book title. PLEASE WRITE FOR DETAILS was a "natural" for the lettercolumn, but should Bill's column really be called HARD TOUCH? True, he comes on strong with his facts and opinions because he does feel strongly about his subject matter, but we know from his many letters that he really isn't a hard man in the sense of being hard-hearted or hard-headed.

So, let's have a Contest. Submit your suggestion (one to a customer) for a title for Bill's column, and if somebody comes up with one that Bill likes better than HARD TOUCH, we'll send a Prize to the Winner. It need not be derived from a JDM book title. We're not yet sure what the Prize will be, but perhaps a foreign edition of one of John's books, or perhaps a lifetime subscription to JDMB (the mag's lifetime, not yours, of course...)

In the meantime, we'll call it HARD TOUCH, and look forward to receiving your commentary on Bill's initial effort. We're sure there will be some...

HARD TOUCH

by Bill Wilson

Away back in the early days of mankind when someone stole a man's cookpot, filched some food, or made eyes at his woman, the offended party took off after the offender with whatever weapon he possessed and proceeded to do him in (if he could). This, of course, was not justice; but vengeance. And, like most vengeance, was not a good thing. For example, it presumed guilt, and it did not allow for error or misunderstanding. Also, it had its drawbacks; the offender might be larger, smarter and better-armed than the victim. In addition, there was no code of punishment. The victim of the offense usually tried to kill the offender for any offense.

Later on, when people began to live in groups and a civilization was being formed, the victim took his complaint to the headman who sat in a form of judgment on the complaint and the offender. The problem here was that the headman usually prejudged the offender and also had no real measure of punishment. Punishment was usually at the whim of the headman or else was inflexible tradition.

Then, as man became more civilized and society more complex, the victim took his complaint to some form of king's man who, in the name of the sovereign, acted as investigator, prosecutor and judge. The punishment by now was determined by a code of laws, which was an improvement over sentence by whim or tradition--however, one can imagine the impartiality of the man who wore three hats. The whole system of justice and law depended upon the ethics, if any, of the king's man.

As time went on, the system of trials was refined, and tribunals of judges or panels of nobility sat in judgment on the accused. However, this too was unfair to the accused in that he was being judged by people who were often of a different social strata, and therefore often incapable of understanding or caring for the moral aspects of the trial. Also, the victim got short-sticked if he made a complaint against a nobleman--in fact he was lucky if he didn't get charged himself with some trumped-up offense.

So we see that justice for the victim depended on the identity of the accused, and likewise justice for the accused depended on the station of the accuser. While the law was codified, the ethics of the court was often highly questionable, and morality (the idea of right vs. wrong) was not given too much consideration.

From all this evolved the present system of courts, and trial by the adversary system. JDM went through the adversary system in NO DEADLY DRUG, and it would be redundant to discuss it at length here. Today, the victim makes a complaint to the authorities, who, after due cause has been determined, arrest and arraign the offender. Then the adversaries take over. The prosecutor is by oath supposed to guarantee a fair trial and to present the state's evidence. The defense is supposed to do all in his power to defend the accused; to insure that the evidence withstands examination and to test the witnesses for credibility. However, the adversary system, one can hope, is but another stage in the development of justice. Under the adversary system, personality cults have developed among the practitioners of the law. Criminal lawyers and prosecutors talk of winning or losing cases, instead of convictions and acquittals. In fact, frequently defense counsels throw victory parties after they have succeeded in getting their client off with an acquittal. Far too often the prosecutor is out to get a conviction, and will do anything he can to keep out evidence favorable to the accused, because to date "He

hasn't lost a case, and by God he isn't going to lose this one". Or, if the accused is someone with a good deal of local influence, the prosecutor will put up a case that any good law clerk could tear apart. As to the defense--doing all in his power to defend the accused frequently gets stretched out of proportion. It is sometimes interpreted as doing anything to win. Because, after all, the big fees go to the boys who have the best track records. And the new trick is to try the case with an eye to the appeal if it looks as though the case is going badly in the trial. Work for a questionable ruling from the judge, or pick up a technicality and make the appeal on this basis, hoping for a new trial which is often no trial. Now this is just fine, except what has happened to the question of guilt or innocence, and where is justice?

The high courts in their "wisdom" like to split hairs over fine points of legal technicalities and, to put it in the words of one jurist, "The nice subtleties of constitutional law". Reminds one of the Scribes and Pharisees of the Bible. This is all a very entertaining game for the legal profession, but what has happened to simple justice?

Let's examine a couple of cases. Two young men committed a robbery. In a gunfight with the police, one of the robbers shot and killed a bystander. The men were apprehended and brought to trial, and convicted. After a year, the arresting officer, who was the principal witness for the prosecution, died. Now the defense found an error in the indictment, and appealed for a new trial. This was granted, and on re-trial an acquittal was obtained. Now, the original trial was heard by a jury and the question of guilt or innocence was resolved. The appeal was based on a legal technicality which had no bearing on the presumption of fact. But here is the disturbing thing. The bystander who was murdered was a young salesman, the father of two small children. He was not wealthy, and after his death his wife became mentally deranged and incompetent, with the end result that she had to be committed to an institution, and the children placed in foster homes. So, a judge is rocking in his chair and saying what a fine decision he made on that tricky point of law; a lawyer makes a deposit in the bank; and two murderers whose rights have been diligently protected walk the streets free, but where is justice for the real victims?

In another instance, a dangerous sexual psychopath committed a series of rapes (including forced sodomies) and other weird acts. Several years ago he was apprehended and positively identified by seven of his victims. There was a question of jurisdiction, and by consent of both jurisdictions, he was tried under what by custom was the appropriate one. Based upon a recent decision of the Supreme Court (on another case) an appeal was filed and the accused set free on the grounds that he was tried by the wrong jurisdiction. A trial under the correct jurisdiction is practically impossible at this late date, since the victims are almost all scattered, and those remaining in the vicinity do not want to go through the ordeal of a trial again. And, incidentally, of the "scattered victims", one has committed suicide and one is now insane. So again, what has happened to justice for the victims?

It would seem that society has become so concerned over the technicalities of the law that the basic concept of justice has been forgotten and that the basic moral issue of right vs. wrong consigned to limbo. Hopefully for mankind, we are in a continuing state of evolution in the administration of justice, and that some more perfect system will emerge.

Meanwhile, in today's confusion of law and justice and recompense or satisfaction for the victim emerges the fictional protagonist McGee, who goes forth and does those things that the honest policeman can't legally do, and causes a form of justice and certainly retribution to the criminal psychopaths who so frequently walk the earth under "full protection of the law" and with mercenary lawyers and idealistic jurists to guard their rights. One almost wishes that there was a real McGee.

- Bill Wilson

NOTES ON TWO SHADOWS OF JDM

"YOU'VE GOT TO BE COLD" (Shadow Mystery, April-May 1947) opens in a bar where Walker Post is slowly and methodically drinking himself into the ground. His wife and mother having been killed in an auto smashup while he was fighting in the Pacific, he returned home to nothing, was unable to adjust, and as the story begins is living a hand-to-mouth existence of drinking, sleeping in cheap sour furnished rooms, walking the streets and giving a damn about nothing.

He is rescued from a vicious barroom brawl by a smooth, efficient amoralist named Drake, who runs a "rest camp" deep in the woods and is looking for a tough young man to help keep the place up. Post doesn't care one way or the other, but accepts Drake's offer of a job, goes with him to the lakeside camp, and finds half the handful of residents vicious and the other half frightened. Tensions mount between him and the other two hired hands, while simultaneously a rather better relationship builds between him and Nan Benderson, who, with her wealthy father, is a reluctant guest at the camp.

After witnessing sadistic brutality and gratuitous murder, Post forms an uneasy alliance with Nan and they attempt to escape from the camp; but the natural impulse to go to the police for help is complicated by the fact that Post himself is wanted for murder. JDM disentangles all the messes neatly (perhaps a little too patly), and the novelet is smoothly written, sharply paced, and impossible to lay down unfinished.

Interesting sidelight: the tale is a very early instance of JDM's later practice (as in The Executioners, Nightmare in Pink, etc.) of making readers long to see the villain's face smashed in, then having him get his just deserts unspectacularly and offstage.

"WHEN YOU GOT A PIGEON" (Shadow Mystery, December 1947-January 1948) is set in the thriving postwar manufacturing community of Acton, New Jersey, and is concerned with a power struggle among the top executives of Haydon Motors. Baker Hay, plant engineer and son of one of the founders, joins forces with the Old Guard in an attempt to keep the general managership out of the hands of the coldly brilliant but ruthless Randolph Post. Hoping to discredit Post, Hay digs into the man's past--specifically into the suicide-by-overdose-of-sleeping-pills of Post's wife, Julia, who had been engaged to Hay before Hay went to war.

With the help of Juanita Anderson, switchboard girl at the apartment building where the Posts lived, Hay picks up some facts which could add up to something other than suicide. The method of murder turns out to be rather weirdly offtrail (reminiscent of the wild gimmicks in some of Cornel Woolrich's lesser stories), and Hay figures out the scheme by a flash of intuition (another Woolrichian touch). Fortunately for all concerned except himself, since the legal evidence against him is almost nil, the murderer elects to jump out the window upon being exposed. But, all flaws aside, the tale is taut, well-told, realistic in background, and peopled by quite a bit more than stick figures.

SUMMATION: JDM was the last great natural storyteller to come up out of the pulps, and these two tales from SHADOW are fine examples of his talent in its intermediate stage. They shouldn't be restricted to the handful of today's readers who own or can borrow moldering mystery magazines that become harder and harder to locate as the years pass. We can but hope that the recent upsurge in articulate reader comment on mystery fiction may stir some right-thinking publisher into action. Pending that day, there's nothing to do but hunt...

- Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

Please Write For Details

JOHN D. MacDONALD, Sarasota, Fla. 12 Aug 69: Just back from the Chicago tub-thump. No need to describe it. Clarence Petersen chugged along every inch of the way with us, and will do a no-crap piece on the whole routine--which so many writers seem to lust for. The hell with it. This was probably my last foray into the world of PR. The essential relationship is book to reader, not writer to listener.

Just read No. 12. Interesting review by Locke. Had I flawless objectivity, there would be no fun in either my writing, or anyone reviewing. All thoughtful reviews are useful, in some kind of catalytic way. Amused by Jim Gaudet's letter. One useful and almost essential aspect of the internal condition is to feel, to greater or lesser degree, like an impostor. No humor is possible without that lurking suspicion. What is Jim Gaudet really like? Would his 10 best friends give you 10 different answers? Probably.

KNOX BURGER, Editor, Fawcett Publications, New York: Perhaps some of your Chicago area subscribers will send you clips on John's appearance out there. He did very well, particularly on a late-night telephone jockey show conducted by a bright young Englishman. I was watching the phone extension lights blink, and about three quarters of the calls that got through were from devoted and discriminating readers. The conversation was really on a very high and amusing level. ((This is as good a place as any to thank all of you who have been sending clippings and other info. We wish we had the time to write thank-you notes to each of you individually. We do appreciate receiving the clippings, etc., and hope that our inability to respond immediately will not stop you from sending them. -ljm))

WILLIAM RUBLE, Petersburg, Va: Enclosed is a sheet from the local Sunday newspaper. The fact that there will be a "John MacDonald Paper Jamboree" is certainly not news to those of us who read the JDM BIBLIOPHILE #12. What is news is that the Richmond paper took note of it. For years now, the Richmond paper has carried a one-page book review section each Sunday. The reviews are as stuffy as the rest of the paper, and they are generally pretty much limited to "serious" works of non-fiction and one or two volumes of fiction that would not offend any of our local Daughters of the Confederacy--of which we have quite a few in this area. At any rate, I thought you might find it interesting that JDM has finally arrived--in the last capital of the Confederacy. Now for the moon!

Thank you for sending me each issue of your publication. I thoroughly enjoy reading each one. And I always wonder at the variety of the letters from your readers. The letters are certainly the spice that brings out the substance in the articles. (Let's see you figure out the meaning of that sentence.)

CHARLES MacDONALD, Burnaby 2, B.C.: Enclosed my quarter. Comment: after being a Serials Librarian for 4 years I hate periodicals to which you can't subscribe in the orderly fashion adhered to by such upholders of apple pie as Playboy and Time.

((Playboy and Time aren't spare-time hobby publications. Publishing JDMB is only part of the spare-time activities in which we are involved. If we could publish it on a regular--scheduled--basis we would probably encourage annual subscriptions. Since we can't, it is easier to keep reader status records on an issue-to-issue basis. And there is no guarantee that JDMB is going to go on forever. We'll publish it as long as we have interested readers and interesting material. We figure that sending 25¢ or a letter of comment, two or three times a year, isn't that big a chore for those who are really interested in receiving the magazine. -ljm))

I think that the JDMB is fine, and for god's sake don't listen to any mug who objects to amateurs discussing literature. Go through the crap published in the multitude of lit. crit. journals found in any University library and you'll see the fate of

authors left to dried-out book-hating professionals.

It may be that I am the only subscriber to JDMB who has never read a JDM book. I subscribed because of interest in all non-fiction material on detective fiction. Until now, JDM was just someone who might be confused with Ross Macdonald. Profuse apologies and be assured that this gap in my cultural development will be overcome right fast.

JOHN T. MYERS, Corvallis, Oregon: Must emphatically agree with D. Locke in his analysis of the apparent reality of JDM and F. Brown's writing. Every writer uses our frailties and desires to enhance the image he tries to project. I would say that I read JDM, Brown, T. Sturgeon, Ed McBain, Nevil Shute, Spillane, et al, specifically because I find this touchstone of reality in all their writing to some degree. But JDM has the master's touch. As an Engineer, I admire him as a craftsman and a working professional.

((That's mighty high-powered company there for Spillane. You sure he belongs there? -jmm))

FRANCIS M. "MIKE" NEVINS, Lawton, OK: By rights, I ought to explain at length why I think Dave Locke was a little too harsh on The Girl In The Plain Brown Wrapper. But right now I'm reading two novels at once ((one with each eye? Is that binocular vision? -jmm)) I've got a third manuscript lying on my shelves, at least one huge book coming in within 48 hours for me to review, and enough unanswered correspondence around the house to paper the walls of San Simeon with. And I don't think there's a chance in a thousand I could get far enough ahead to get something to you by your next deadline. In that grand old military phrase: Sorry About That!

((Okey, Mike, but what about our next deadline? -ljm))

HARRY WARNER, Jr., Hagerstown, MD: Obviously nothing short of paralysis from the wrists downward will spare me from the letter-of-comment incubus.

"Junket" was extraordinarily interesting on two levels. It's the first extended account of a launch not written for a big audience and for profit that I've seen. I'd been wishing that some fan or other would get the urge to write an obituary, so I could see the honest reactions of an individual who wasn't holding back things that might hurt someone's feelings or might not interest the bulk of his audience. This is better than a fannish account in some ways, because I don't think anyone in fandom is important enough to have received this kind of vip treatment.

The second level is the insight the report gives on how MacDonald reacts to real events. From this, it's possible to get at least a little knowledge of the intermediate stage between reality and his fiction, the perceiving of reality and the choice of which aspects and details of this reality burrow deepest into his mind.

Now, the next obvious question is: how long will it be until someone writes fine fiction about astronauts? I don't believe anyone wrote important fiction about aviators until the 1920's, a couple of decades after the first powered flight. Maybe it'll be at least that long until someone gets the right perspective on the first space travelers. I'd like to be around to read the first good story on the topic. It would be an odd experience, contrasting fiction written after the fact to all the science-fiction that I'd pored over before there were any astronauts.

Dave Locke's review is the most iconoclastic thing I've seen in the JDMB, if memory isn't faltering even more severely than it normally does in these latter years. ((Au contraire, Harry, I didn't find it at all "iconoclastic". After all, you have to have icons before you can break them. -jmm)) I imagine that some more of those plain brown wrappers will be required to conceal the explosive nature of some of the reaction to this review. As I think I've said before, I don't care for the McGee books nearly as much as most of JDM's fiction. Maybe a milder form of my reaction doesn't become evident in readers like Dave Locke until he's gone through a given number of the McGee series and then it breaks out too violently as a result of its long underground seclusion.

This has nothing to do with JDM, the Bibliophile, you, or anything else with real relevance. But I can't help mentioning with awe the fact that a letter from Andy Zerbe is in this issue. You've read in Horizons about my admiration for Kim Darby, who has just graduated from playing half-grown girls in television dramas to playing two-thirds grown girls in the movies. AP ran a feature on her, revealing that her real name is Derby Zerbe. Ever since I read that, the name Zerbe, which I'd never even heard before, has been turning up with amazing frequency in the most unexpected places. I found it among the picture credits in a Hedda Hopper book, among the cast names for a television show, in the JDM Bibliophile, and in many other places. I know that an infatuation can cause a girl's face to appear in every cloud and behind every counter, but to find her name in solid black letters wherever you look is just plain ridiculous.

I noted a plug for The Mystery Reader's Newsletter in the gossip column of the bulletin distributed by the Nostalgia Book Club. It's described as "nicely written, handsome, readable and sometimes features articles on yesteryear's detective stories". If you'd like to seek the same, and risk a still greater circulation, the address is 525 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY, 10801. In case you aren't familiar with this organization, it's on a smaller scale than most mail-order clubs, guarantees that it doesn't use computers, and adopts a very soft sell technique for its offerings, mostly books and records involving old movies, radio of the past, once-popular musical groups and reprints of esoterica like the first edition of Emily Post's Etiquette and an ancient Montgomery Ward catalog. Lupoff's book on old comics is supposed to be offered soon. Prices are generally somewhat lower than list, and occasionally there's a record offered that is not available through other channels. ((Anything on Vic an' Sade? -jmm))

Thanks for keeping on your list someone who still hasn't read the entire JDM canon. I must have a dozen of his books awaiting their first reading now, if good intentions mean anything to you.

((Would you believe that we haven't read all of the JDM books? We have all of them, and have read the ones that have been published in the past several years, but still have the older ones to catch up with. And I doubt that all of our readers have read "the entire JDM canon". Some have, of course, but it isn't necessary to be a completist reader or collector of JDM to remain on the JDMB mailing list. Just keep writing, Harry! -ljm))

TED WHITE, Brooklyn, NY: So I have this big X beside my name on the sticker, a copy of JDMB #12 at hand, and I've just today bought and read DRESS HER IN INDIGO. So naturally it's time for a letter of comment.

Our Mr. Ron Archer, "that gross man-mountain of a seedy detective", gave JDMB a review in the November AMAZING STORIES, which you may or may not have noticed. ((Someone did point it out to us. -jmm)) I have no idea whether it will enrich your readership (or whether you want more such riches), but there it is, and I hope you dug it. ((Most excellently well, sir. Thank you. -jmm))

I am annoyed at Dave Locke's review of THE GIRL IN THE PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER, because although I agree with him that it is a weak book--perhaps the weakest in the series--I don't think he's very close to the reasons why. It's been a goodly while now since I read the book, so reasons no longer come quickly to mind, but, as I recall it, I found two basic flaws in the book.

The first was in the vantage-point of McGee. He was too exterior to the crucial events of the book. He stood about on the outside, looking in. Too much happened to the other principals offstage. I wanted to see McGee move in with that family, as I recall, and when he didn't, I was disappointed.

But I could have forgiven that if McGee had not reached out and shaken the long limb of coincidence a trifle too briskly. The scene with the motel maid annoyed me because it was patronizing and phoney. But to have the grapevine supply McGee with the most needed clues--that overstrained my credulity. MacDonald resorted to a pernicious cliché--"them darkies know everything that goes on"--and then added for good measure "you ask one of them, and he knows what any one of them knows". Sure, and if you want to know any of the scandal of the Jewish community here in New York City, you just ask me, and I'll ask

(Ted White, continued)

my wife, because she's a Jew, and them Jews stick together. Right? Crap.

((Your analogy would do to sift cornmeal. The Jews of present-day New York City are hardly a persecuted, ghettoized minority. (Self-ghettoized, maybe, but that's another discussion entirely.) If the same situation obtained in New York City as in any large European city of 50 to 100 years ago, your wife might indeed be able to ferret out whatever information you wanted. But in that case, she probably would not be your wife. -jmm))

What made the whole bit so bad, so annoying, was that the whole plot pivoted on it. McGee had to know what that other maid knew, and that's how he found out. The "darkie grapevine". Oy vey!

But the book was an off-book, and I can accept that. It could happen to any of us. However, after just having finished INDIGO (which is a vastly better book in most respects), I feel prompted to remark on something I've noticed more and more of lately in MacDonald's books: the Generation Gap.

All right, John likes to talk about real-world things in his books. And drugs and like that are now a part of our real world and the pop culture and all that. And John is trying terribly hard to Understand. But he doesn't. It is as plain and simple as that. He has the casebook studies down pat. They cropped up in PALE GRAY FOR GUILT in abbreviated form, and they're the backbone of INDIGO. Case histories of degradation through drugs. Sure. But John doesn't know. He's never been there. I doubt he's ever really known someone who went through that sort of bad drug scene. He's read a lot and is knowledgeable about the external signs, but when he puts it all together it does not come out whole and believable.

Take, for instance, his descriptions of marijuana and the way people behave while "stoned" on it. False. There was a time of innocence when I moved unknowing among pot-heads--before it was such a pervasive influence in our social culture that it was impossible not to know about it or be aware of its presence--and while they seemed to laugh a bit, they did not otherwise act unusual. Since then I've been to too many parties where pot was in evidence, and I daresay that had Good Ol' John been there with his gin and tonic, he'd have wondered why nobody seemed to be drinking, and everyone was so comparatively straight. The glassy eyes--I've never seen a glassy-eyed pothead.

The hypocrisy of the alcohol culture runs rampant through the McGee books. In them, McGee sings the glories of getting drunk, thinks nothing of putting away enough drinks to make me thoroughly and unremittingly sick, and indeed seems to drink enough to destroy (or at least pickle) his liver. But let someone puff one of those "funny cigarettes", and he has sold his soul into perdition, and is not far from glassy-eyed gang-bangs Or Worse.

When McGee/MacDonald sticks to his case-history reports of sickies abusing drugs, he has a clinical correctness going for him. When he reports an actual meeting, confrontation, etc. with someone who is high on a (non-alcoholic) drug, he rings totally and completely false. (Tonight, on one of Dick Cavett's last shows, the remark was made that marijuana has a "sweet odor", and I was reminded of all those mystery novels where the hero remarked upon entering a room, "There was a stale, sweet odor of marijuana lingering in the air" or words to that effect. The first time I ever walked into such a room, I said, "Jeeze, who's been burning rubber in here?" and earned myself a horse-laugh from all assembled. Marijuana does not have a sweet odor.)

I think it is time someone called MacDonald on this. I'm not suggesting that he take his life in his hands by actually exposing himself to that killer weed, marijuana, but I wish he'd stick to what he knows--like going on a good drunk. There was a time when a writer could pass the most sensationalistic fantasy off as fact, when "drug-crazed" rolled easily from his typer. That time is past. Too many of today's younger readers are aware, from first-hand experience, that this is crap. It destroys identification with a book, and it puts McGee/MacDonald on the Other Side Of The Fence: with those people who Don't Know, but presume to Advise.

Okay, I'm 31 myself. But many of my friends are a lot younger, and I'm tired of seeing them patronized. ((Many of your best friends, I take it? -jmm)) I'm tired of the little gratuitous sermons about how, bigolly, even "hippies" wash, and even Negroes, gosh-darn, are ed-u-cated these days, and my, aren't we discerning to notice this?

(Ted White, continued)

In fact, I'll even go so far as to say that when he raps PLAYBOY (which he doesn't mind copping \$3,000 from for a meaningless short story), John D. is talking about a magazine at least five years out of date--the centerfold girls have been surprisingly less bovine, on the whole, in recent years. John D. MacDonald, you are letting yourself become un-relevant.

Even sex. Has John ever himself personally known as many perfect sexual raptures as McGee manages to find in each and every book? I doubt it. Although I think John's motives are pure--his original shtick, Before McGee, was Involvement--I think he's peddling a new version of the old Hollywood Romance bit, the Perfect Orgasm. He's made a religion out of it, and I think somewhere along the line he lost contact with what sex really is. This Sex-Therapy jazz is part of it: almost a caricature of it, in fact. The danger lies in the fact that sex really isn't that much a purely perfect experience. For some people it never begins to approach it. For others, it may come close, and that could be pretty damned wonderful if someone wasn't repeating to them over and over, "it could be better, it could be as fine as I've described it". Hopefully, they'll remember it's just fiction, and ignore it, but most people have been sold on the "it's better for everyone else" bit, and for them Marvelous McGee is simply additional confirmation.

Where it's gone wrong is this: Once upon a time, John D. MacDonald wrote books about real people, more or less, who sweated it out in bed with each other and groped towards real communication, and sometimes even found the drug of love. But you can't keep writing about the same thing, over and over, without losing some connection with it. What was meaningful and insightful the first time out is a commonplace when you come to write your 50th seduction scene. You vary the characters, sure, and their motivations, backgrounds, hangups, etc., but I will tell you, Meyer: that Mexican crumpet was a beautiful piece of candy, and nothing more. She never breathed a breath before she walked into the pages of INDIGO, and I doubt that she ever knew a childhood in Mexico or anywhere else. She is a geisha, beautiful, loving and perfect, with just the right touch of shy inexpertness, and she became real for a few pages in the first seduction, first orgasm, and then became interchangeable with her sister and Lita again. There to hold hands and scrub backs and Make Love, and discreetly vanished offstage again when not required.

John's notion of Perversion is tiresome, too, because either he has little imagination about sex, or he is basically a Puritan about it. He reminds us of that actress and her mixed parties "bare-ass" again in INDIGO, and I was reminded of one of the least substantial pieces of "perversion" I'd ever encountered in a McGee book. Mighod, Fatty Arbuckle made that sort of thing obsolete decades earlier!

MacDonald/McGee tries to be big-hearted about homosexuality--qua the fag and the lesbian in INDIGO--but his horror, contempt and fear come through nonetheless. One again feels the compassion is patronizing.

Perhaps it's because what starts out to be people ends up as labels. Bruce starts out as a believable character. He ends up as Fag: Interior Decorator. That's sad, purely as an example of a book losing its veracity. It's a shame that such defeats must be mixed with the successes in INDIGO--like Becky, who is mostly real--because I still yearn for That Perfect McGee Book. Maybe, like the Perfect Orgasm, it is an impossibility.

But, hey, I didn't intend to get into all that, and I wouldn't have gone on about it at such length if I didn't care about John's books and his writing, so much that each weakness cuts me far deeper than it would in the works of a lesser writer or a hack.

Turning on to letters, while basically agreeing with Robert Turner's point about the pulp writers of the late forties, I'm afraid I'll have to disagree with some of his specific examples. Frank Kane, for instance, has to be one of the hackiest of the hacks. I remember when I was wading through a batch of his Johnny Lidell books, and each one had scenes and bits of business lifted whole, word for word, from earlier ones. The bit I remember best was when a baddy would offer Johnny a cigarette from a box of foreign (black paper?) cigarettes, and Johnny would reply, nonchalantly, "No thanks. I prefer mine with tobacco in them." As I recall, I finally found what I considered to be the prototypical book, from which all the other books had lifted their scenes and bits, but

(Ted White, concluded)

that was ten years ago, and I no longer remember its title. At any rate, for self-cannibalization and unmemorable plots, Kane has to rank close to the top.

I disagree with Zerbe about MacD's pulp shorts. They're not all masterpieces, to be sure (as so many were in THE END OF THE TIGER), but they ranked well against the competition. A couple of years ago I pulled out my SHADOWS and DOC SAVAGES and read every MacDonald story in them. After the first year or so, they all boiled over with the MacDonald hallmark of characterization and involvement. He put in scenes which added nothing to the actual plot, but did deepen the characterization and add dimension to the story. Those stories were a pleasure to read, and would go as well in book form today as much of what is now being published.

Well, that's what you get for putting an X on my label. Four pages...is that too many...?

((No, Ted, that's not too many... But enough, I think, to inspire all kinds of pro and con comment in next issue's lettercol! Thanks for taking time from what must be a very busy schedule to write, and thanks for the plug in AMAZING STORIES. The latter did bring us some new readers. We don't mind adding names to the mailing list and keeping them there as long as they show a continuous interest. We drop deadwood from the list before each issue is mailed, and new readers come in to replace it, so the number of copies we have to run remains fairly constant, though I do think it increases a little each go-round. -ljm))

JESSE BURT, Nashville, Tenn.: As much as it runs against my grain, I have to say that I believe DRESS HER IN INDIGO fails to qualify as a top performance by the master of them all.

Style is an intensely subjective consideration, but to my ear, at least, JDM in this one writes like Hemingway at his poorest, or like a Western Union teletypewriter on a poor trip. Fragments, "the's" left off, one word sentences, and an awful lot of repeating turn up on almost every one of the 209 pages that I have managed to read.

The sex scenes are dull, even contrived, and full of tired words like "keening", over and over. Travis seems like only a shadow in this one; and I don't grasp what is being implied, or nearly implied, about Meyer. The reason for the journey to Mexico fails to convince me.

The kids are like all the other kids that others have written about more sharply, like the current Tom Wolfe. There is nothing that seems freshly observed or important.

And the old narrative power just isn't there. Furthermore, the conflict is spoiled by the presence of too many people you want killed off, preferably by a vermin exterminator. The characters are damned tedious to keep track of, like in a Tolstoy book. The names are drab and they pop in and out. It takes forever and forever to get any sense of anything except an odd excursion into Mexico. Travis should never have left home.

DRESS HER IN INDIGO may be the finest item in the JDM bibliography. This reader and student of Mr. MacDonald, however, doubts that it is. Perhaps his editors had an off moment in processing this one. Or, perhaps, tired of Travis, as JDM has seemed to imply, he has chosen to let him limp away.

((Not the "finest" but surely not the poorest, either. And I would hope that instead of "limping away", Travis would have at least earned his own "Reichenbach Fall" if he is indeed to be eliminated. However, we shall see... -jmm))

ARCHIBALD C. MATTESON, San Francisco, Calif.: Seems to me JDM (as judged from INDIGO) is drifting slightly out of focus. The topicality of his story in this instance seems to have taken over at the expense of the wonderful local color he used to splash in--like Winslow Homer in words. This I hope is only a temporary phase...

DAVE STEWART, Phoenix, Arizona: Having recently finished DRESS HER IN INDIGO, I can say that I am glad the series is approaching its demise--the novels are becoming, frankly, too long and too dull. The first four McGees averaged

148 pages, yet I recall most of the plot details of each; the last four average 244 pages yet for the most part are vague blobs in the mind. Too many speeches, too much description, and not enough show. Are the Fawcett editors afraid to tell their authors to "firm it up" when necessary, or do they subscribe to the "more for your money" philosophy of selling? Interestingly, from BLUE to INDIGO, the length is now up 76%, the price is up 88%.

Other aspects disturb: too many people (Fortner Geis, Puss Killian, Helena Trescott, Liz Bowie) are dying of cancer. If dispatch we must, a quick clean heart attack would be a welcome change. And let it happen to somebody other than an old friend of McGee (or of Meyer). There are too many old friends of late and too few clients. McGee, the amiable skeptic, is being turned into an amiable altruist who works for expenses or who gives away his fees smilingly. How about a quick, clean "salvage job" for a change. No emotional entanglement and no long and sour thoughts on society--just shootin' and fightin' and half a hunk of recovered loot.

Too little care is taken to smooth out inconsistencies: McGee's "alarm system" is so acute that he's tipped off by a closed bathroom door in INDIGO, page 172; he and Meyer, however, are nearly killed on page 200 by a clumsy and obvious amateur. ((The word "amateur" means someone who does something for the love of it--which makes him some kind of a madman. -jmm)) McGee couldn't be that slow, especially since another amateur pulled the same stunt on him in RED FOX, using the same exact type of weapon. McGee's traveling companion in that instance, also, was seriously concussed but recovered. Having already killed the man who was blackmailing McGee's client (in INDIGO read "embezzling"), the amateur then fled at a high speed, sailed off a cliff and conveniently died.

The similarity of these two passages is incredible. So incredible, perhaps, that only a complete change of scenery can serve to wind up the author and set him ticking, i.e., putting The Busted Flush and her captain in permanent drydock.

Since we have been reasonably assured that this is JDM's intention, we may now speculate on the direction he will take after McGee. Harry Warner, Jr. (JDMB #12) has suggested a novel of length, which, of course, we would all look forward to. But length presupposes subject. What subject might JDM choose? What are the writers writing about these days?

They are into the supernatural (Levin), adultery (Updike), Jewish mothers (Roth), homosexual fantasy (Vidal), politics (Drury), black history (Styron), various businesses (Hailey), various other businesses (Susann).

I can't visualize JDM going into any of these areas, although I would love to see a good plot man write a novel about the black man in America. (Non-plotters such as Baldwin are far too subjective in their approach.) The theme could be society's emotional castration of the black male. The hero, a man of great talent, would struggle magnificently and eventually either overcome or fail heroically, dependent, I suppose, on whether the author wished to stress symbolically the talent of the race or the magnitude of the castration. JDM certainly seems to have an eye for the problem, otherwise the Santa Claus parachute sequence in PLAIN BROWN, for example, would not be so vivid or memorable a word picture as it is.

At the same time, I can't see JDM returning to the short, uncomplicated exercises like THE EMPTY TRAP, ON THE RUN, YOU LIVE ONCE, etc. nor to more complex stories like THE LAST ONE LEFT, whose sole theme is easy money and those nasties who go after it, nor (like Spillane) to another series character who, to be popular, would be more brutal and cynical than the first.

And the fact that JDM has not tackled the "big book" in 20 years suggests strongly to me that he won't. At best, he'll write a "long book" based, like THE LAST ONE LEFT, on some factual incident (perhaps, even, the Chappaquiddick mess). More likely, he will be turning more to "non-fiction" novels, that type of pseudo-literature made popular by Mailer and Capote. NO DEADLY DRUG and THE PRIMITIVE EXPERIENCE are, I think, the first volumes of the John D. MacDonald of the Seventies--MacDonald the Journalist.

JDM fans please note: this last is my own personal theory. No one would like bigger and better things from The Man more than I, but I do feel he will take the easy way out--to graze in the increasingly lucrative fields of "dramatic" journalism. His

metaphysical estimation of himself and his place as a writer is best summed up by Jimmy Wing's statement in A FLASH OF GREEN: "In all this, he thought, in all this which diminishes me, no act of mine, or of anyone else, has consequence. Morality is a self-conscious posture. Dedication is delusion, based on a fraudulent interpretation of fact, a wishful projection of our present velocity. The only valid role is that of observer. Soon we will all eat stones."

((Good heavens, I HOPE not! John? -jmm))

MRS. RONAN G. MacDONALD, Syosset, NY: A great wave of relief rolled over me when we learned that Rod Taylor was going to be Travis McGee, and not Robert Culp. I just don't think I could have stood it--I mean watching Mr. Culp wiggle his behind in his TIGHT WHITE PANTS. ((Illogical. As any actor, Culp would have dressed and made up for the role. Seldom--if ever--does an actor play a role in his regular clothes. -jmm))

I didn't like INDIGO at all. Could it be that I am 45 years old and out of touch? Loved JDM's Junket. My favorites are still THE ONLY GIRL IN THE GAME and THE TRAP OF SOLID GOLD--plus a story I can't remember the name of--about a family who owned a shopping center--could it be CROSSROADS? Does anybody know?

WILLIAM F. SMITH, Rochester, NY: I have just finished reading DRESS HER IN INDIGO.

Very, very good! John D has an unerring touch!

About the drug situation he tells it like it is. The violence and sadism in this are greater and more horrible than others in the McGee series, it seems to me. But, of course, with the necessary underlying motivation.

I should like two extra copies of the JDM Master Checklist. One of these, I may send to Stockholm along with a few copies of JDM novels. The purpose of this would be a proposal to the Swedish Academy to consider JDM for the Nobel Prize in Literature at some later year.

Others in the JDM Group, including yourselves, are better qualified than I am to do this! But, if no one will volunteer to do this noble (Nobel) work, I'll do it myself (said the Little Red Hen).

Of course, they did not give the award to Emile Zola, who richly deserved it, but since then things are a bit less stuffy in Sweden (so they tell me). JDM deserves it also! So, I suggest that you two charming people (well, June, anyway) get the ball rolling, along with Bill Clark and Ed Cox. If you want me to do it, I will.

((I'm not entirely sure that John would be interested in being nominated for the Nobel Prize--but we'll let him speak for himself, if he cares to, in our next issue. -ljm))

CLAY KIMBALL, Eden, NC: What I liked about INDIGO was the neat switch on the sex cure routine, with McGee for once being the curee.

((Yes, indeed! -jmm))

IRA WOLFF, New York, NY: Just read INDIGO. Agree with you on merits. However, as my wife points out, Travis is a very unsympathetic character in this one. He also has no rationale for gathering loot toward his continuing retirement. Still, it is good to have him back.

Read the LIFE article. Superb in that it was fact-filled and made a solid case rather than the usual emotional conservationist plea.

((I got the impression that McGee was hired to go to Mexico and find out what happened to the girl. //Last Chance to Save the Everglades, LIFE, September 5, 1969, is the sort of article that should have been in the front of the magazine, not in the back. Not just because it was written by JDM, but because of its importance. But, of course, Pop poster artists and the Prexy in his California retreat sell more copies. -ljm))

DORA SIEGEL, Chicago, ILL: I am not a poet, which you found out by "scanning my scan-sion". Long ago I was a piano instructor, but for years now I have been a typist and key puncher. To let you know the sort of non-poet I am, I compose couplets for place cards at luncheons, and longer poems for the family's births, deaths, and weddings.

Although I am a typist, at present I have no typewriter at home, and here I come to my own self-defense about the poem you published. I was on the bus going to work on my last day before my vacation, when I realized that I had to mail a poem to you that day. I thought of a poem in my mind (which obviously wasn't too bright that morning) and at the end of the work-day I typed it.

As proof that there is "more to the girl" than seems to show, I have always been avid for knowledge on all subjects. Through the years I have attended lectures at the various universities in the vicinity, and have learned from such minds as Mortimer Adler, Jacques Barzun, Eric Bentley, Harold Clurman, Will Durant, C. Day-Lewis, Richard Wilbur, Mark Van Doren, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, et al.

I have a personal library of more than 1,400 books on diversified subjects which my friends call the "Abortion to Zoology Library". My large collection of phonograph albums include complete plays and treasures such as John Barrymore doing Shakespeare, and Carson McCullers reading from her works.

I enjoyed JDM on Jack Altman's radio program when he was in Chicago recently.

I read that English actress Suzy Kendall is joining the cast of DARKER THAN AMBER to play a dual role.

Forgive me my "I-Me-Mine" letter, please, as graciously as you forgave my "have-Trav".

((I see nothing wrong with rhyming Trav with have. Not that I'm an expert on the subject, but all of your rhyming was certainly acceptable, and I'm not sure mine was... Obviously your verses are not the only game in the girl, and we envy you with that collection of books and records. Especially the Barrymore-Shakespeare records. One of my biggest regrets is that I never got to see JB in his long run of Hamlet. -ljm))

MRS. J. L. POTTER, Greenville, GA: I look forward to the next issue from the day the current issue is received--so I certainly hope you can continue--though where you find time for such an organized and devoted endeavor, I can't imagine. We keep busy with so many of my husband's projects--I'm sure we scatter our shots too widely to ever accomplish what you've done. Of course, 7 children, from 19 months to 18 years don't simplify things!

JDM's "Junket" was interesting. We've been through the area, though never during a launch, and other than noting how Orlando had grown since '49, we had much the same impressions. Since the move of NASA to Houston, the whole coast during non-launch periods looks so overextended and forlorn.

((We don't find time, so much, as TAKE time. Right now, and for the next several months, we are involved in more projects than any two persons in their right minds should be. Publishing JDMB, publishing for amateur press clubs in science-fiction fandom, part of two convention committees, and involved with various clubs in the IA area. And on into the night... -ljm))

MRS. HARRIET STEVENSON, West Linn, Oregon: There seems to be a debate between your readers whether FLASH OF GREEN or THE LAST ONE LEFT should get the "best book" prize among JDM's readers. I haven't read FLASH OF GREEN so I can't debate. Pardon me if I express an opinion. I think JDM took the easy way out with THE LAST ONE LEFT. He got tired of it and wanted to get everyone home in time for the weddings and a reunion with the lawyer's wife. It seemed to me that he gave it a "Perry Mason" finish. ((Ooh! What a horrid thing to say! -jmm)) In the Earl Warren Court the conviction wouldn't stand up. The lady (if she could be called that) had not been allowed her constitutional rights. She was framed to confess. Presumably, no one should be framed that way. I think she should have been given a boat and allowed to find the Island. Then that Old Guy from Texas that pinched the bottoms of all the girls should

have pursued her. They could have fought it out like the Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat. So I should write a story, huh? Presumably, no one should be framed that way.

I have read the Paul Holmes book, THE COPPOLINO TRIALS. I'll be waiting for JDM's books, if they ever get into PB.

Since you work in Downey, were you any part of the MOON landing? I mean, even to type a message from the Steno to the Secretary, or something? Oregon contributed something. I think it was titanium and freeze-dried food. I watched while Wally Schirra was talking to Cronkite. Then while Arthur Clarke was talking. Walter asked if the moon landing would be the end of SF. No, said Clarke, there are still the under-seas that haven't been explored.

((Far as we know there are no plans to reprint JDM's Coppolino books in paperback.// The company for which I work supplied the bags for the astronauts' food, but I don't work in that particular division. So that's as close as I come to being involved with the Moon landings. A number of our friends do work in the aerospace industries, and of course, as long-time science-fiction fans, we were and are most deeply interested in space exploration. June and I watched the first Moon landing with a houseful of fellow s-f fans, and you could feel the tension in the room during the more critical parts of the event. I doubt that the massed tension--if that's the term I want--was any higher in Houston or at the Cape. -ljm))

BERNARD BEAUCHESNE, Chicopee Falls, Mass: That letter by Robert Turner in your #12 issue was most interesting indeed. He brought up points on the pulp-paper field that I had never run across before. It surely brought back memories of those good old days when there was so much to look forward to in the way of mystery fiction every week, every month.

((We hope to have Bob Turner and others who used to write for the pulps on a panel at the first Mystery Convention. -ljm))

JACK CUTHBERT, Greensburg, PA: Thanks for JDMBs #11 and 12 which as usual were highly interesting, especially the sections from Himself.

Enjoyed his JUNKET and am happy he permitted its publication. I suspect a lengthy Autobiog of JDM would be highly interesting reading if he would ever get around to doing same. By the way, what is JDM's favorite book--excluding his last, next or present one?

((In JDMB #11, page 14, PWFD -2, John answered a similar question re what he considers his best work. He said: "'Best work' is too inclusive. Some come closer than others to what I was trying to accomplish with each book. I would say that the one that comes closest to doing what I wanted it to do within the constrictions I established is A KEY TO THE SUITE. But it falls off here and there, and if I had it back I would run it through one more time, I think." -ljm))

ANDY ZERBE, Montgomery, Ala: Would be interesting to know when Mr. MacDonald reached his decision not to allow WEEP FOR ME to be reprinted. Have obtained a copy of it. A little notice in it says 2nd printing May 1959. My collection of JDM firsts is slowly growing. The major exception to it is still the Popular Library originals. These just do not show up in this area. Have seen only two originals published during this period from them and I have both.

Am coming to like JDM more and more. Originally I started reading him because so many people recommended him as a good writer. I failed to see anything in him, so dropped him after a couple of books. Started on him again when the JDMB started publication. Figured as long as I was reading a publication about an author regularly and enjoying it, might as well be reading the works of that author.

Read the New York Times Book Review interview with James M. Cain recently. His attitude toward what Hollywood has done to his books is one that should be applied to JDM's books. Hollywood has done nothing to my books.

((Nor mine...ljm))

JON L. BREEN, Los Angeles, CA: Just a quick note to tell you I'm back from my long trip, had a wonderful time. I particularly enjoyed Ireland and really regretted that I wasn't able to find a copy of that book you recommended to me before I left.

I did some book collecting in England, but was disillusioned to find how hard it is to locate old English detective stories. I think I could find more pre-war English editions in Long Beach than in London. I was able to get quite a lot of new material, however, at prices far lower than they would be in the States.

Some of JDM's books that appeared as paperback originals over here came out as hardbacks in England. Several other American paperback writers (Mike Avallone, Edward S. Aarons, Richard Deming, Richard S. Prather, etc.) also enjoy the "snob appeal" of hard covers in Britain.

JIM GOODRICH, Middletown, NY: I sympathize with those who have trouble finding what they want at their fave newsstand. Hereabouts conditions currently are not too bad; but I have heard from reliable sources that the Mafia considers distributors as prime targets for take-over. Isn't anything sacred?

I can't help as far as advance notice of JDM titles in England are concerned; however, my library subs to the Whitaker series which is equivalent to our BOOKS IN PRINT & supps. Will be glad to check on any book for its availability in Mr. Hale's land. There is a BRITISH PAPERBACKS IN PRINT which I do not have access to.

Do not know whether there is a Mary Worth fandom extant, but do know many fans of hers must exist to account for the popularity of the strip & 2 paperback collections being pubbed. My wife Helen is one of them!

Let's start a campaign to have JDM contribute some unretouched nudes to Playboy--a houseboat for a background would break the monotony.

I think it would be an excellent idea to have a banker go to Trav for aid. Banks have been infiltrated by criminals, you know.

BOB BRINEY, Salem, Mass: By the time the news can get spread around, it will probably be too late to do any good, but--if anyone needs a hard-cover copy of either NO DEADLY DRUG or THE LAST ONE LEFT, both titles are included in the Catalogue #121 of Tartan Book Sales (PO Box 914, Williamsport, PA 17701), at very attractive prices:

#70154 MacDonalD THE LAST ONE LEFT \$0.50
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State sales tax (your state's, not Pennsylvania's) must be added to the remittance, but postage is included.

Tartan is a clearing-house for ex-lending library volumes, and their lists feature best-sellers (fiction and non-fiction) mysteries, science fiction, westerns, etc. The books, despite having been circulated in lending libraries, are in fine condition--the jackets protected by Bro-Dart plastic covers (Tartan is a division of the Bro-Dart company), and all library indicia affixed with rubber cement, removable with scarcely a trace. It is worthwhile getting on their mailing list.

September may have been a JDM "Jamboree" month, but you couldn't tell it by the newsstands around here. I searched all over town for a copy of DRESS HER IN INDIGO, and finally found one in a drug store in one of the railroad stations. None of the larger paperback stores had the book at all. (They may just be slow--or, rather, the local distributor may be slow; the same thing happened with Alex Panshin's MASQUE WORLD--copies did not show up on local newsstands until more than three weeks after I had already bought a copy in New York.)

Had a very enjoyable visit to New York a few weeks ago. Due to a near-miraculous combination of coincidences, I was able to meet many people whom I had known only through correspondence or through seeing their contributions in magazines--Al Hubin (of THE ARM-CHAIR DETECTIVE), Marv Lachman, Charles Shibuk, William K. Everson, Edward Connor, and--but this was no coincidence--Mrs. Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, widow of guess who. (The trip was for the express purpose of interviewing Mrs. Rohmer, who was on a brief visit to the U. S. The rest came about because Al just happened to be in New York that same weekend.)

((Hope to see all of you easterners out here at the first Mystery Convention in May!

-ljm))

SUSAN SHIFFRIN, Bloomington, Ind: INDIGO ranks fifth in the McGee series, which places it better than 70% of all JDM missives. The major problems of the book can be listed as follows. First, the characterization was somewhat shallow. Meyer, especially, awaits further development. Over the course of ten books, the major understanding I have come to is that he exudes a likeable father-figure essence and has an extremely hard head.

For very personal reasons I disliked the character of the sex fiend Becky, so that this well-drawn but narrow character was a net plus for JDM but a net loss for the book. McGee was adequately drawn, but few insights were added, and I am tired of waiting for him to fall in love. (Can it never happen?) ((It already did. Now he's Trying To Forget, I suppose. -jmm))

The second difficulty lies in the plot, with too many berserk minor characters confusing matters with random killings. Also, the final escapade was a bit too much, with McGee slithering about the exterior of the hotel like an overgrown centipede. Furthermore, the scheme for uncovering Vitrier's telephone number was not nearly as clever as JDM seemed to think. Also, one wonders about the candy wrapper bit--did McGee already suspect? We were not led to believe so.

The dramatic organization of the book lacked in several respects; it gave the impression of being written without prior planning, the plot slowing to a stop and then suddenly being rescued by an ad-hoc "surprise". The usual constant building of tension to a climax simply was not present.

The locale of the book was somewhat depressing, and also too easy, JDM dishing out a standard Mexico with little original insight. ((Oh? -jmm))

A final difficulty lies in the number of characters and general length and choppi-ness of the presentation. There were simply too many semi-major characters, and the important messages--such as the incredible effects of drugs--were somehow lost in the confusion.

The above comments are not to be taken too seriously, and must be considered with respect to the other JDM works. JDM cannot write a bad book, and overall this book would be preferable to 80% of the non-JDM books I have been reading. The good points are numerous, but were expected for the most part--i.e., the intriguing characterizations, the gory murders, the McGee fights, the impossible escapes, the women McGee beds and helps, and the carefully handled dialogue. ((In this book, McGee was on the receiving end of the "therapeutic sex"--or did you notice? -jmm))

Specific incidents I found particularly pleasing included: McGee being called "McGoo"; McGee's approach to the "young people" in the cafe; ((Yes, I enjoyed that one, too. Sadistic, aren't we? -jmm)) the fight at the pyramid; ((Which wouldn't have occurred if McGee had used the sense he was born with instead of copying Epaminondas. -jmm)) the dinner at Bundy's house; McGee's questions to the doctor attending Meyer's head injury; the "rape" of the stoned girl in the field, and other incidents not worth enumerating.

As a general comment, I think McGee is wearing thin--he has really become too much to take: permanently irresistible to women, ever-ready with a rationalization for taking her to bed, constantly injured but always strong as steel with non-deteriorating lightning reflexes, ready with never-failing remarkable insight into human nature, able to choose just the right approach and just the right words to get his way with anyone. ((Hasn't anybody else tumbled to the fact that McGee is, in large part, a fantasy character? -jmm)) Actually, the book is not so much at fault as the series--McGee needs to grow a little--to show us a new face now and then. I would probably have rated this book higher in the series, but now I'd rather see JDM give us some non-McGee books--maybe he can start a new series.

The series books I would rate higher than INDIGO are, in order: A PURPLE PLACE FOR DYING, NIGHTMARE IN PINK, A DEADLY SHADE OF GOLD, and PALE GRAY FOR GUILT.

(PWF continued on page 4)

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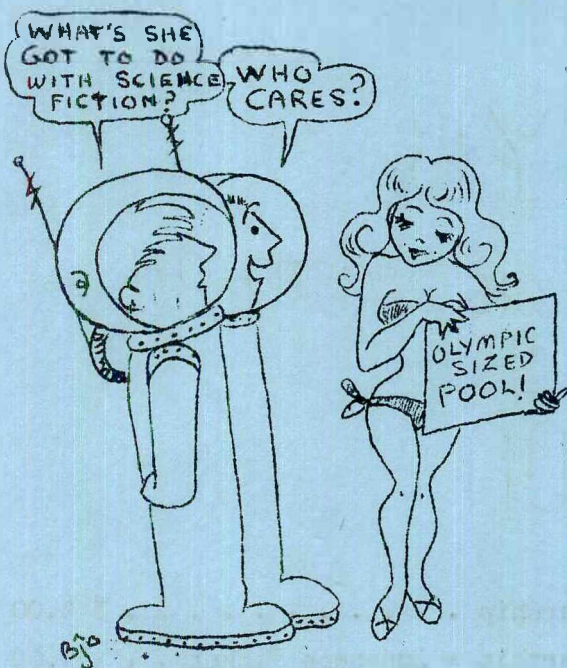
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