

THE
LETTER
FORUM

I.E.S. NE

MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Alma Hill
Lee, Maine

Contents: Printed Matter
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John Buttenworth
37 Richmond Road
Belmont
Massachusetts

INTERPLANETARY EXPLORATION SOCIETY
New England Members & Friends

Bulletin #14

12/15/1959

Notices:

The next open meeting will be on Saturday, January 2, 1960
from 7 to 11 PM
(approximately, that is)
in the Adams Room of the Hotel Touraine, Tremont & Boylston Streets
Boston, Massachusetts
and there is a parking lot in back if you arrive in time,
and it is right across from the subway,
and the interstate busses come in one or two blocks away;
and it is a long weekend-

Topic: BUGS, BEASTIES, AND BACTERIA

Guest speaker, Dr. Krabek, bacteriologist
Plans are still early, but we mean to have some special
observances to start the New Year auspiciously.
If you can't come in for the whole meeting,
be old-fashioned
pop in for a short call.

Minutes: To get ahead of the usual season of stress in the postoffices,
we are trying a risky experiment - setting this on stencil on the same
weekend as the meeting itself, typing the agenda and just marking the
votes as voted - if we get notified in time. Now, with most groups,
this would be a perfectly simple and sensible time telescoper.

However, FEEL are DIFFERENT. Our policy is Anything, and as for
our possibilities, they are infinite. So something completely differ-
ent may have transpired. If so, we'll doubtless find out in time to
include the holy truth in the next bulletin, q.v.

We are also including a slightly more-arranged evening - not much,
just a letter from here to the meeting, with a couple of suggestions
and questions. These constitute the known agenda and are set down,
fair & square, on the next two pages. If no votes are marked, you may
know from this that something else took place, or we didn't get word &
decided to mail out regardless, this once. But DON'T suppose that
NOTHING happened. That also is possible but it is the least likelihood.
Our meetings are the core of the whole concern. The newsletter may go
further, but a group meeting face to face can process information
about 10,000/1 newsletter.

LETTER TO THE MEETING: (Secretary via Chairman)

Dear Tom,

This is in reply to your inquiry about schdules and to say that the members who suggest it may have an idea.

Before starting guesswork, there are two points involved: both have to do with the kind of questions groups can answer. About the starting time, first show whatever you mean, and ~~then~~ ask if it's okay - if not, the politest will let you know by at least withholding affirmation. It seems as if your idea of a ~~prompter~~ start is absolutely sound, your idea of a general conversation period from 7 to 7:45 is also good. so why not try it first and see what people say? I think that the others will agree too. In practice, the best intentioned have to come in at times astraggle it's no use starting too early, nor yet try-in to wait out the last least laggard. But ask and find out.

VOICE OF THE MEETING

Start program at: 7:7:15; 7:30, 7:45, 8, 8:15; etc. The second point is implicit although you don't mention it -so before it comes up, let's take up what happens after the main event. I wrote Miss Walsh's department of the Touraine, sending a check in advance payment and ordering refreshments, it seemed to work all right to count preferences and call from the room phone for alterations. My guessed-at order will be coffee for 25 with cookies and also tea and milk for about 10 each - you can change or let it stand, whichever is convenient then. Obviously, the time to do that is after the film and before serving time. If the film is a two-reeler it will run about right, if not, then a question session on some related topic is easy and fun to start ad lib. You know, there is something about film watching that is too stolid, so unless you give things a push in a direction, just that once, people tend to feel at a loss for what to do next. The invited speaker or dinarily is the one to do that. Any few words or many are fine - our members seem to know about how to pitch in. Once coffee arrives, conversation gets general, and then it is MUCH nicer if we follow the suggestion that turned up at our first meeting there - rustle chairs around into a sort of circle so people can see who they're talking to, and speak collectively or individually as proves convenient. AT THAT TIME, if you take up any business our bunch gives it amazingly good handling. Will you please read this letter and the next page to the members then? I know they will listen goodnatureedly, and from what they say they want, you can plan, and we'll redcircle the votes in the newsletter.

LADIES, GENTLEMEN, MAD SCIENTISTS AND GENIUSES:

If this gathering

can spare the time to consider the newsletter and its policies, a report of your opinions would clarify some points and help to form some decisions. It seems clear that this clubzine is welcomed and encouraged to continue - but, seriously, how far should we go?

We are not (let's hope) kidding ourselves that we can match what John Campbell can do if he ever prints the Interplanetary Journal so that we can read it. Actually, we are only broadcasting Brass Tacks analogs. These matters of club business go along all right with the main stream of thought as an interesting branch of Fanthropology, and in fact so does anything else - in theory - although refinement of theory might show reasons why (as in practise we do discover) incoming ideas tend to take two particular directions: how-to-do-it gadgetry (serious) and why-it-happens theory (fun).

Brass Tacks has always been heavy on theory & argument, yet has been managed with a light hand & has thus been a popular regular feature - the wonder is that John didn't try to make a separate magazine of it before. Does it need imaginative fiction as a balancing factor, or can it stand alone? Once separated out, will it behave predictably? Can it maintain interest or would it fizzle?

Possibly, then, our newsletter - if we try hard, are lucky, and all that - might make a good trial ground, perhaps even forward a recognition of the Journal and its possibilities. How about that?

Q:

Do you consider, on the basis of what you have seen so far, that it would be a good idea to improve the newsletter, beyond our own immediate needs, just for the fun of seeing what's possible?

A: VOICE OF THE MEETING: Yes No Maybe

Do you, as a group, favor increasing the circulation of Letter Forum copies beyond our immediate membership?

A: VOICE OF THE MEETING: Yes No Maybe

If the answer to the foregoing is NO, we can proceed at the rate now in effect, which is easy and interesting. If the answer comes out Maybe, we will improve all we can, as we can maybe. However, if the answers are YES, - then please consider, individually or as you wish, what can be done to give us a boost, because to do the most possible both of funds and ideas.

CORRECTIONS & APOLOGIES AS PROMISED

Arthur Milano has been wronged, but let him tell it:

"I hate you. Hate you! What's the idea of printing all those lies about me? I am not majoring in journalism (I am a French major), the Stylus publishes no humor (I am still trying to find out what it does publish; I wouldn't have anything to do with that page) and anyway you didn't print my lovely picture that I spent a whole Saturday afternoon creating. [Arthur - we are working on it, but our color ink won't run fast enough to keep up.] Also you forgot to put in the two most important hobbies of mine: writing and girls. Next year I plan to add more interesting hobbies: running New Hampshire trails [maybe we had better postpone mention of these hobbies until next year which will be soon enough to believe it.]"

"Seriously, why don't you send down a page or two of mimeograph material and I'll draw you a nice cover and send it back up to you or Don for the January issue? Since that's about the only thing I can offer at the present moment, I would prefer my services to be realized and taken advantage of. Or else I would have to be satisfied with being the black sheep of the group.

"But anyway we'll see about taking a writer's course next year, and then there'll be no stopping me.

"Disgruntledly yours,

Arthur, you are right and we were wrong. By some clerical error we were using next year's crystal ball instead of current data. Our familiar spirit has been fired even though the smell was terrible, and we have hired a new hand who claims to know one year from another.

FURTHERMORE, FRIENDS, don't use that address for Cliff Garvin - our letter to him went somewhere but has no reply; our bulletin came back marked "moved, no address". Apropos, this card from Ed Meskys, who gave us the address, says we can count him in as a member of the New England chapter of the IES until such time as it starts charging \$7.00 per year dues, the way the NY one does. The chances of my making a meeting are very slight (I travel very little) but if I'm ever up that way I'll drop in.

No need to send the handwritten meeting notices, but I would appreciate any written ones. (Incidentally, the NY chapter used a \$5 hektograph for those & mailing stickers.)

"If you have them available, would you send me one extra copy

of the Letter Forum (was that the title)? I'm writing from school & don't have one handy) #13; I'd like it for a special file I keep. No hurry -- you can send it along with the next issue.

"Scientifictionally yours,

So we sent him the copy that came back from Garvin - waste not, want not, and Ed may get Cliff relocated by asking around.

ONE MORE APOLOGY : don't blame any of these typos on Don: he says to let you know that he got in between a family crisis and working exigency and has to be counted out temporarily, maybe a couple of months. The notice being too short to get it mailed to a local printer and back &c., Mrs. Hill is making it up on the school equipment which is good but not used to Mrs. Hill. The electric typer is so much easier to use than her portable, that she is having a good time for herself; but the big fancy Gestetner just sneers and wallops the paperfeed through cornerwise and varicos. Also she is the same mediocre typist even with electric to play on. She is doing her best, though, such as it is. Maybe we shouldn't blame anything, not even the luck, but plan it into consideration.

IF THE COVER CAME OUT GOOD, thank Jean Young for stencilcutting, she rallied around and got some nice colored ink for us, too.

A QUERY AS BEFORE, about membership, from Art Hayes, P.#3, Banc Ontario, Canada; sends \$2, (USA) for the newsletter and says that he wants more of the same kind of information, and how does he go about qualifying for full membership. Well, the last we heard, the group has not seen fit to go deeply into that matter, but we did hear an agreement that a subscription to the potential Interplanetary Journal was basic. We also suppose that people unable to get to meeting or assist in any way, wouldn't be much interested in small details. We have not set up any bylaws, oaths, vows or commitments and quite possibly never will. We don't seem to think in terms of maximal effort, or even maximal results - just maximal information and freedom. This does make this group interestingly different in lots of ways. We are just watching to see what the ways are, as they develop. As for the Letter Forum, Mrs. Hill is keeping books and says the cost is trifling but if the group gets a serious treasury and wants a bill they may have one. Meanwhile, some people have helped with news, some with the actual work, and Frank, Meskys, and Hayes contributed \$2 apiece, now converted into postage stamps. Actually, all it takes to get this newsletter is an expression of interest. This seems to concur with all sentiments heard, and is about as easy to mail another, once the members' copies are sent, as to mail another postcard - thanks for writing, Art, and if they let you, tell us about the uranium mines.

F. ETHNOLOGY

- an infant science - has interesting data.....

available to people willing to try codifications...

In fact, some experiences are so repetitive that it is perfectly possible to operate on instruments, using rear vision alone. There are no guarantees of success by this or any other way, naturally; neither are we trying to develop any substitutes for Golden-Rule, Common-sense, Free-Speech, and other expensive old-fashioned ways which are at least reliable; but here are a few sortings-out:

about now, Boston meetings of IES are ripe and overdue to produce Fano-menon Z (so called because it is usually the last of everything) & otherwise known as Group Syndrome Eleven Quarterbacks.

Nobody can be a fan. Do not try. One of the nicest things about fans is the cheerful and complete independence with which we operate; and when we all happen to be going the same way, then we can make anything happen; but let's not get too ambitious on that account; because, for fans to be all going the same way does not happen as often as you might hope.

Yet a group can only accomplish things whenever it moves together or at least with common denominators. It follows that all groups and not just fan groups have lots of hazards; but as fan groups have more variety, we have more hazards as groups.

In nonfan groups it usually soon works out that the loudest voice gets the most willing slaves together and things get done; but in fan groups all the voices are loud and none are slaves, yes?

Look at us and you can see right away that either it's easy or it doesn't get done. At meetings, we are blessed with some wonderful voices. We have Batteau, who arrives in the limelight by popular demand, works his way back out as best he can, leaving all so delighted that all else was dropped, and a good thing, too. Asimov is another natural center of attention, to which he adds, when he wants to, a clown act you can hear outdoors and down the street, and must warn your lady friends about, saying, After All, he IS a Genius, and it is a Good Thing if he Scares Off the Bum Sports. But try to get a word in; it is said that the last time John Campbell was in town it wound up as a yelling match. Then we have our chairman, Tom Hill, very well able to get and hold the floor, when he delivers informational technicalities about a megaton per second, snap, crackle, pop & bang. Where is the top of the peck order when everybody is there beforehand?

What happens when you get such types together and plenty more (??). Well, one nice thing is that our Loud Speakers can listen as well as talk. Sometimes so much goes on all at once that one almost feels that nothing is happening at all; but then it sorts out.

But if at any time the numbers get to feel that the air is full of wisdom, only badly scrambled, there are always things the rank and file can do about it, so don't think you have to sit idle with your head, so to speak, revolving.

Recipe One, to be used on occasions when the discussion hangs up while two champions go at each other (John, the Campbell, is a wonder at this, both at winning such games, and at drawing victims into trying such games with him - don't play. If you do, the matter gets spun out into fine points of logic and lost, because of course logic is a game only as long as you don't beat anybody else with it. So if it gets chuggy, you can always reduce to facts. Any flat foolish factual question from the floor gets a redeal. Floor questions take precedence whether you are using formal rules or catch-as-catch-can, because it is a natural circumstance. It reminds your champions that they have gotten out of reach of listeners, and they look around, take a fresh stance, or even start a new game. I have seen young fan haul rambunctious men, twice their age and education, back to a main point in this way; it is fine exercise for both young and old.

Of course, the young fan may get an epigram exploded in his face; and yet, after he recovers, he will find that it has done him good; and so all is still for the best.

Well, now, if you remember that, you may never need Recipe Two; in fact, our group might never need any recipes. The Eleven Quarterbacks syndrome may never turn up with us at all. We are new in many ways; perhaps we will turn out to be unusual in that way also. But if it does, we do not need to let it throw us.

We will turn over the last page of this newsletter to guest speaker Andy Young, whose first reaction to the IES idea was not too hopeful; but after he got to thinking about it he talked himself into something.

Shucks, if we had no hazards, how would we have any purposes?

And let us all wish one another a happy and prosperous 1960: Science Faction For Fun.

S F F F

"I agree that mimeing will look better than that purple stuff, which Bill Donner complains comes in 'six colors: purple, purplish blue, purplish red, purplish black, purplish brown, and purplish green.' Did you intentionally staple the wrong corner so as to make me read it backwards?... My experience with amateur science things of all sorts is that they turn into social organizations, or start discussing That Crazy Buck Rogers Stuff, or something of the sort. And stfanom won't care, either; fans are in it for social reasons or because of their interest in science fiction (not science) or both. I've found very few fans I could interest in serious matters. This is not to say that nobody'll be interested.....just that you'll never (in my opinion) get a lot of really serious scientific thought out of such a group. The best you can do is encourage the serious members and turn the frivolous souls to some useful task like making sandwiches or turning the crank

But amateur science has a couple of strikes against it nowadays. The professionals have such a vast body of undeniable fact about most subjects that you have to be one yourself to accomplish anything, and usually a lot of expensive equipment is needed. On the other hand, there are little nooks and crannies of technology which have never been dipped into, or which haven't been touched since 1800 because somebody found a better gimmick in 1801 which used entirely new principles, but which are now open to amateurs because of new products on the market (epoxy resins, aluminum, ceramics of special sorts, etc.) which weren't around in 1801.

An example is thermo-electricity, which sat around for years doing nothing but deflecting galvanometers. Now it's been turned to commercial uses in generation of electric power, and in refrigeration thanks to various semiconductors which are much more efficient at it than the metals which used to be used. So there may be things like that, and you can be pretty useful if you find them. Finding them is the trick. And you must expect to discover that 9/10 of you really good ideas have already been thought of, too -- that's another curse of being a non-expert, not knowing what the experts have thought up.

Needless to say, you'll attract swarms of cranks of all sorts...

At this point we break off, though Andy has given us some sound views on cranks - but so far we have seen none. Mrs. Hill is the only crank in the lot and if treated kindly but firmly she can be shut up for quite lengthy intervals. ♪

or

How it all came out....

Additional notes from chairman on Voice of the meeting - summary:

// "Expansion of newsletter by addl. material of same type;

if # of copies; charge for outside New England.

Improvement in present direction, no fiction altho poems req. by one person. More items like Batteau's req. by many. All felt newsletter/forum going well.

VERY small attend.; T.Hill. 2 Krabek; Sarill, Cohen, Young, Nickerson, Milano. Concensus of this small group; don't try large enterprise. Have more def. speaker; don't make movie main program. Letter fols. when back from NYC Dec. 10th. "

Editorial comment: we had hoped to get out the newsletter on the weekend of the meeting but the covers didn't come until Thursday so it makes sense to include these further details; as long as it is no longer possible to be virtuously forehanded, at least it's possible to be more comprehensive. The above came via airmail Tuesday; the one below came airmail special delivery Wednesday. please, no more specials to here - it's just a small village PC. Airmail does get slightly faster handling, though not much. The covers came the day following, and so proceeding - probably, the... best deadline for us takes these lags into consideration. Maybe we should aim at a mailing date of the 20th normally.

Minutes via assistant secretary Bill Sarill are even more informative, and begin with a pencilled PS which may indeed account for the small attendance, at least in part:

oh - I forgot to tell you - we was gypped! The meeting was held in the Cotuit Room instead of the Adams Room, mainly because a banquet of sorts was occupying the Adams Room. So some of the members didn't know where to go

[editorial comment, "QWERTYUIOP: 0-0-0!"]

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE I. E. S.

VERY FEW MEMBERS (ALTOGETHER, ONLY EIGHT) ATTENDED THIS MEETING, PROBABLY FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS -- IN PARTICULAR, THE WINTER MONTHS MAKE FOR INCONVENIENCES IN TRANSPORTATION. WE HOPE THAT THE SAME SITUATION WILL NOT BE EXTANT ON JANUARY 2, FOR WELL-KNOWN REASONS.

REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT SO FEW MEMBERS WERE PRESENT, HOWEVER, THIS WAS ONE OF THE BEST MEETINGS WE HAVE HAD IN A LONG TIME, IN THE OPINION OF THE AFOREMENTIONED EIGHT.

AT ANY RATE, BY ABOUT 7:45, ALL THE MEMBERS WHO WERE GOING TO COME HAD ALREADY DONE SO, AND THE MEETING OFFICIALLY BEGAN. FIRST ON THE PROGRAM WAS THE BELL FILM "OUR MISTER SUN", WHICH WAS SHOWN AGAINST THE FURIOUS PROTESTS OF YOUR ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND ANDY YOUNG. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE MEMBERS HAD ALREADY SEEN THE PROGRAM ON TV, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME FOR MANY TO SEE IT IN COLOR. THE FILM, WHICH WAS THE FIRST IN THE SERIES OF BELL FILMS TO BE MADE, WAS MORE ENTERTAINING AND INTERESTING THAN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ONES.

AFTER THE SHOWING, ANDY YOUNG, GRADUATE STUDENT OF ASTRONOMY AT HARVARD, LED A DISCUSSION ON IT. THE DISCUSSION SOON BROADENED TO INCLUDE SUCH DIVERSE TOPICS AS AN OBSCURE POINT IN QUANTUM MECHANICS AND THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE MOON HAS A CORE. THE SUBJECTS DISCUSSED WERE ALL VERY INTERESTING, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, THE MEETING DID NOT BREAK UP UNTIL SHORTLY AFTER 11:00 P.M.

THE MEETING SERVED TO ILLUSTRATE A VERY IMPORTANT FACT ABOUT "BASIC RESEARCH" -- THAT THE MOST BASIC KIND OF RESEARCH INVOLVES NOTHING MORE THAN SITTING DOWN, THINKING, -- AND TALKING. THE LAST ITEM IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, AS A FRESH FLOW, OR INTERCHANGE, OF IDEAS IS VITAL TO ANY KIND OF RESEARCH. THE SCIENTIST MUST BE AWARE OF WHAT ELSE IS OCCURRING IN HIS FIELD AND IN OTHER FIELDS.

FOR EXAMPLE, DURING THE COURSE OF THE MEETING, ANDY YOUNG FOUND OUT SOME INFORMATION ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY WHICH WILL BE VERY USEFUL IN HIS ASTRONOMICAL WORK. MEMBER STANLEY COHEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAME UP WITH AN INTERESTING IDEA FOR A NEW PRINTING PROCESS, WHICH HE CALLS "PHOTO XEROGRAPHY", A DRY-PROCESS PRINTING INVOLVING ELECTRO-STATIC FIELDS. UNFORTUNATELY, STANLEY SOON DISCOVERED THAT A SIMILAR PROCESS HAD JUST BEEN DEVELOPED, BUT AT LEAST HE KNOWS THAT HIS IDEA WAS SOUND.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED, WILLIAM J. SARILL, ASST. SEC.

Bill Sarill here:

The cover on this issue is a considerable improvement over that of the last issue; similarly with the paper on which this page is printed. Please pardon the cheaper "second sheets" we had to use on the first and fourth pages, but it won't happen again. From now on, nothing but the best paper for this bulletin.

I think we should try to get other films than the Bell Telephone ones, which are, in my opinion, all too similar in their childish outlooks. Right now, I'm trying to get a film card from the Boston Public Library, so that we'll have some variety in our film fare.

Well, that's all for my acidic comments.

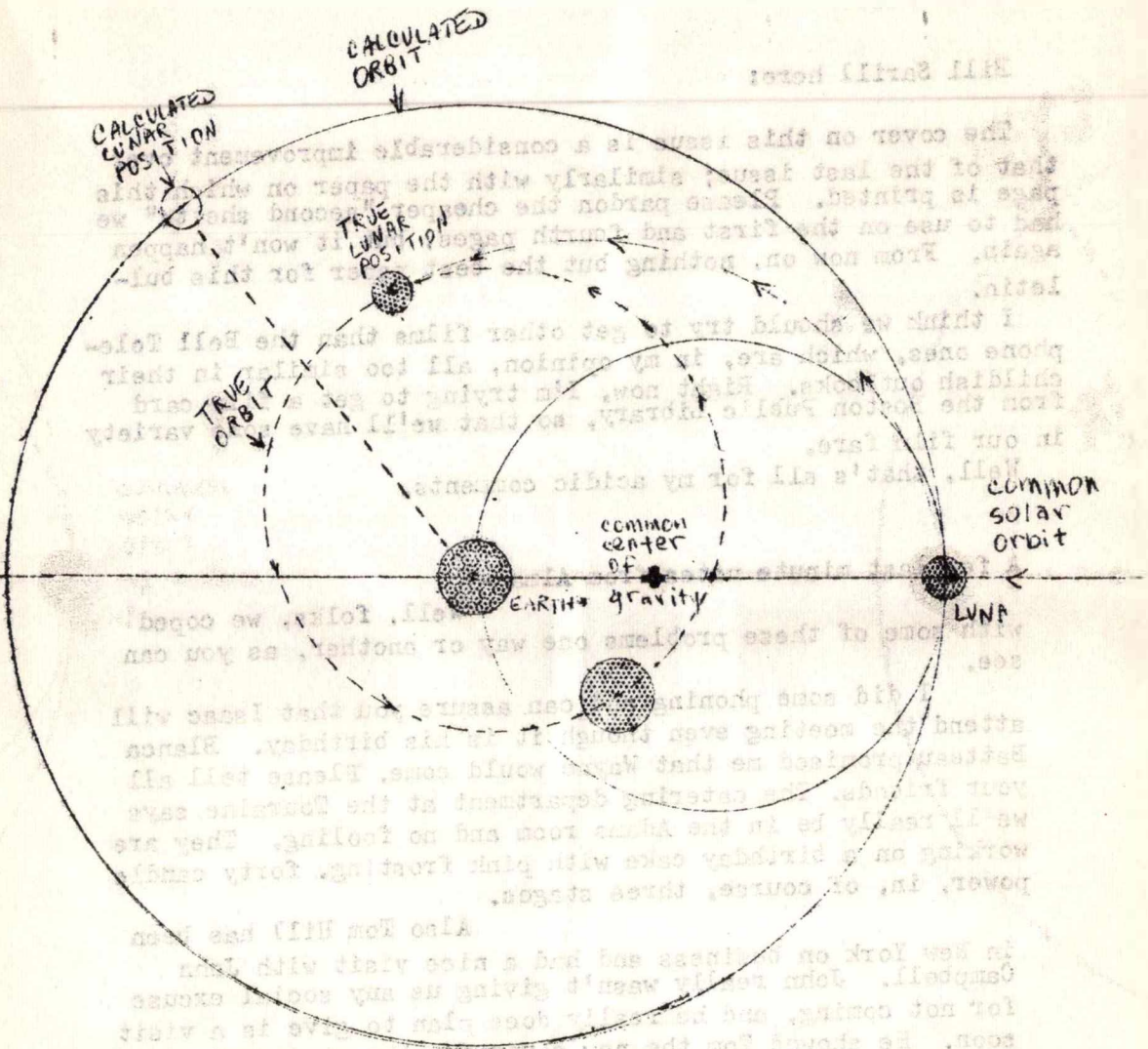
A few last minute notes from Alma -

Well, folks, we coped with some of these problems one way or another, as you can see.

I did some phoning and can assure you that Isaac will attend the meeting even though it is his birthday. Blanca Batteau promised me that Wayne would come. Please tell all your friends. The catering department at the Touraine says we'll really be in the Adams room and no fooling. They are working on a birthday cake with pink frosting, forty candle power, in, of course, three stages.

Also Tom Hill has been in New York on business and had a nice visit with John Campbell. John really wasn't giving us any social excuse for not coming, and he really does plan to give us a visit soon. He showed Tom the new cover for the projected name and format change from Astounding Science Fiction to the new Analog title with increased emphasis on fact. Tom says it looks handsome.

As for the last meeting, it seems to have been small but happy; they like the Cotuit room better for films than the Adams room. Word is that the conversation was fabulous. Come if you can to the next meeting and if not.....*WR*I*T*E*.....



Bruce Berry suggests that if we take the moon and earth as a double planetary system, it will have a common center of gravity somewhere between the two. He says: "With a little thought, I think you can unravel the meaning of this diagram. The straight dotted line indicates where the American missiles have been going!"

