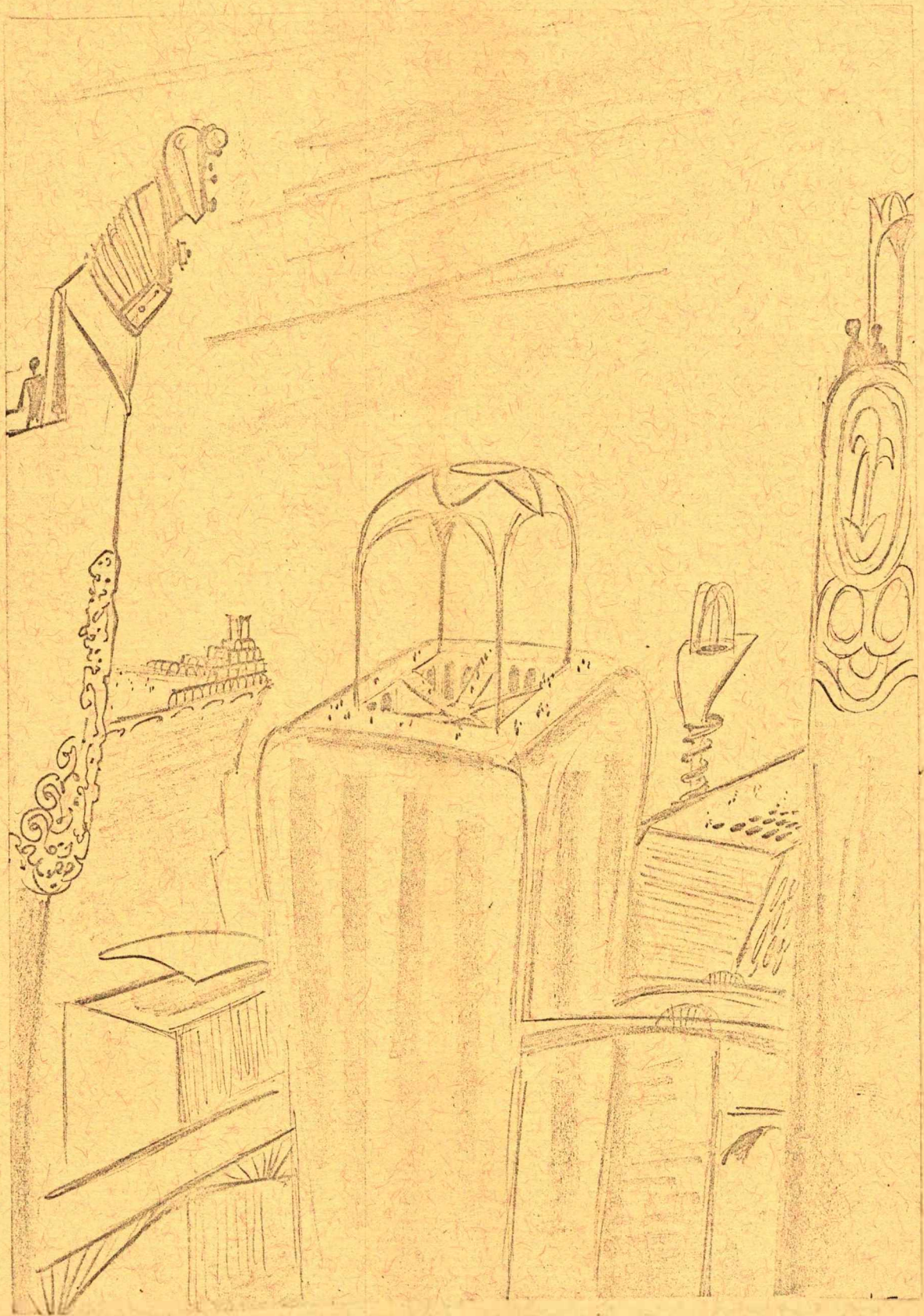


MISTILY MEANDERING No. 23



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St. Louis in 1969! Heidelberg in 1970! Salamander Press no. 306.



It's election time, and here I am running for Official Editor once again. Not on a platform this time, though — in fact, there are no reforms that need to be made, even if I'd wanted to make any. I'll just promise to maintain the status quo, and to get the mailings out on time. I seem to be having good luck in getting my local Post Office to accept large envelopes of fanzines at Book Rate, so I should be able to hold down expenses, despite the recent rise in Printed Matter rates. Not that our Treasury is in any trouble, but it never hurts to save money. So, for a good, dependable, safe OE, vote for me!

- oOo - - oOo - - oOo -

I don't usually use artwork twice, but the cover of this issue of MISTY is an exception. It originally appeared in SALAMANDER #2, as a blurry vagueness. The original illustration is a light pencil sketch of a city of the future, with more variation in shading intensity than could be transferred onto stencil by hand. I'd hoped that it could be copied successfully by burning it onto an electronic stencil, but, as those of you who read SAL #2 saw, all that came out were the darkest lines. I was dissatisfied with the result, and I put the original sketch away to await a better method of reproduction. That was six years ago.

I've finally found the solution. The second printing, on this fanzine, is by the Xerox process. It's picked up the entire range of shading, from the lightest to the darkest areas. The whole picture could've benefitted from being a bit darker, but that was the fault of the setting on the machine, not the method of reproduction itself. They say that the Xerox process is being used heavily by the motion picture animation industry today, and I can see why. It's an excellent means of copying artists' rough sketches or finished drawings, quickly and without losing a line. The main disadvantage it has, from our point of view, is that we can't afford to use it under normal circumstances; obtaining a machine itself is out of the question, and commercial printing outfits usually charge from 15¢ to 25¢ per copy — too expensive for any fan needing 35 copies or more for his fanzine. Still, methods of reproduction are becoming more elaborate and more within fans' reaches all the time. How will the majority of fandom be publishing its fanzines in another ten years, I wonder?

4 Los Angeles will not be without a science-fiction Con this year, after all. On the 4th of July weekend, from Thursday the 4th through Sunday the 7th, we will be host to FUTURE UNBOUNDED -- the F-UN CON.

This is not a sour grapes Con, or anything like that. If you can't afford to come to California twice this year, then save your money and go to the BayCon. We'll all be there in September, just as we hope the BayCon crew will be able to come down for our Con two months earlier. We're going to be trying something new, though, and if you can attend both Cons, you'll certainly find it worth your while to come on out to the F-UN CON.

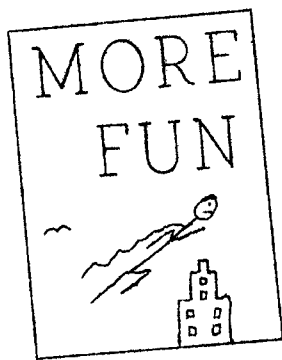
The F-UN CON is the brainchild of Chuck Crayne, who is taking advantage of the fact that this will be a one-shot Con, with no traditions to maintain, to go all out in experimentation. Chuck wants to see how successful an s-f Con can be when managed along the same lines on which the big industrial conventions are run. They draw thousands of attendees, and rake in thousands of dollars. Since we aren't planning on getting the faanish attendance that the BayCon will have, we don't have to worry about crowding the Establishment out with newcomers. This will be a Con aimed at attracting the walk-in trade, then, and on trying out some of the new ideas that the WorldCons and WesterCons never get around to because they have too much traditional stuff to get onto the program. This doesn't mean that we aren't going to have the tried-&-true stuff too, though. We're going to have everything!

We'll be going all out to get advertising. Notices in the big scientific industries in Southern California, in libraries and bookstores, in the newspapers and on radio and in IF's new SF Calendar. What will we offer? A fully-packed program. The standard stuff will include panels, talks, auctions, an art show, a masquerade ball, a fashion show, and so on. There will be special rooms for the specialty fandoms. Chuck plans to keep a motion-picture room running almost constantly, drawing on the large quantities of excellent technical films available from such places as the aerospace industries, as well as s-f fare. A banquet, of course. From medieval tournaments on up -- we'll have it.

Where is this going to be? At the Los Angeles Statler-Hilton -- our good Statler-Hilton -- the hotel the Pan-PacifiCon would've been in. The management is so anxious to prove that it's in no way responsible for the New York hotel's mismanagement that it's offering all sorts of things, in writing. Do you want to use the pool at any time of day or night? Do you want assurance that there'll be no elevator problem? You've got it. The Statler-Hilton isn't just interested in our trade on a one-time basis; it wants us to look to it every time an s-f Con comes to Los Angeles. (It's checked those bar receipts and our conduct.) And it knows that the way to do this is to make us happy.

The F-UN CON will also be recruiting for fandom. We're going to let the walk-in trade know about fandom and about the WorldCon. If you like this Con, we'll say, the really big one is right up in Berkeley in two more months. We don't expect any danger of persuading so many walk-ins to travel to Berkeley that the regular fans will be crowded out of the BayCon; but if there are any proto-fans among our audience, we'll find 'em! Fandom has been arguing for years over whether a Con should be big, to attract new blood into fandom, or small, to provide the regular fans with a pleasantly cozy get-together. The F-UN CON is going to test the first of these purposes in every way possible.

Who's going to be at the F-UN CON? Right now, I'll just mention our Guest of Honor -- Harry Harrison -- and our banquet Toastmaster -- Robert Bloch. If you want any more information, you'll have to get it from Chuck. Write to Charles A. Crayne, 1050 North Ridgewood Place, Los Angeles, California, 90038, for information about memberships, hotel rates, programs, special events, or anything else. Memberships at the door will be a fair bit higher than they are now, so if you're planning to join, don't wait. That's the F-UN Con -- FUTURE UNBOUNDED -- in Los Angeles, in less than six months. I hope to see a lot of you there.



TO PUZZLE OUT...

I've always been fond of the alternate-universe theme, so I was happily surprised recently when a large stack of postulates appeared from a completely unexpected source. Dan Alderson, a Los Angeles multi-fan (s-f, comic books, Diplomacy), has begun indexing MORE FUN COMICS for the late 1930's, and it seems that at this time, the comic had a regular column called "Just Suppose", which presented new "what if..." ideas each issue. The postulates varied widely in their imagination and degree of probability, but some of them are intriguing enough to warrant looking into.

Just suppose... "Filui Orsene succeeding in his attempt to assassinate Napoleon III, leading to no Sedan & World War."

Frankly, I don't think that the removal of Napoleon III from European politics in 1858 would have had that much influence on the events leading to the Franco-Prussian War, and its outcome. Napoleon took all the blame for France's loss, but he hadn't dragged France to war against its will. Indeed, the war was a desperate attempt by him to do something popular to preserve public support for the Empire. France had been dreaming of "revenge" against Prussia ever since Waterloo, and I think that the Franco-Prussian War would've come about and followed the same course no matter who was leading France. There's certainly no evidence of any other French leader of the time who would have prepared the nation for war in any better manner. The main difference that Napoleon's death in 1858 could've made would've been a probable return to republican government. I don't think the concept of the Empire was popular enough to stand up under an infant Napoleon IV and a regency. And, if an early Third Republic were to receive all the blame for France's defeat in 1870, the result might well have been a return to a Third Empire under the almost-adult Napoleon IV in 1871, or to the Kingdom under the Bourbon pretender Henri V -- a monarchy until World War I or later, at any rate. Another interesting result of Napoleon's assassination would have been the lack of any Mexican venture, which was solely his idea; which might mean that it would've been Maximilian and not Franz Ferdinand who would be assassinated at Sarajevo in 1914. But I don't think that Napoleon III's assassination would've saved France from either the debacle at Sedan in 1870, or from World War I.

... "The Monitor not being ready in time to fight the Merrimac, resulting in the Civil War ending with the Confederacy independent."

I don't agree with this conclusion at all, either. Despite Secretary of War Stanton's fears (it was reported that he kept running to the window, expecting to see the Merrimack steaming up the Potomac and shelling Washington), the Merrimack was not really a sea-going vessel. It might've been able to sink all the Union ships that came to Newport News, and thus break the blockade at that particular spot, but I doubt that it could've done much more than that. And once the Union recognized the strength of the ironclads, even if it hadn't started building any at all up to that time, it could still have retooled and produced enough to outweigh the temporary Confederate advantage. I also doubt that the Confederacy could've gotten enough supplies through

6 that one hole in the blockade to make any significant difference in its fighting ability before the Union plugged it up again. If a Confederate victory at Newport News had been impressive enough to persuade Britain or France to recognize the Confederacy, the result could've been something else again; but there's no evidence, either actually or in MORE FUN's postulate, that either took any more note than as to what difference the sudden importance of ironclads would have on their own navies.

... "The lack of Benedict Arnold's military ability at Saratoga leading to the failure of the American Revolution."

Now, this is one in which I can believe. According to most of what I've read, it was Arnold's vigor in attacking Burgoyne that led to the latter's decision to surrender, rather than trying to continue to fight his way South or to retreat back into Canada. And it was the surrender of one of the major British armies in America that put new spirit into the American side, and, most importantly, persuaded the French that the American rebels were strong enough to be worth supporting. And the French help was vital. There's a lot of debate among military scholars as to whether Burgoyne's attempt to cut off New England could really have worked, without the support of the other British generals, who were all off fighting individual campaigns of their own. Even if it hadn't, though, even a limited success, or the escape of Burgoyne's army intact, would not have cheered the Americans, who needed a victory for psychological reasons, or discouraged the British as much as Burgoyne's complete surrender did, or brought French aid. The outcome at Saratoga had an important result in the American and British wills to fight, not to mention the great military importance that it did have; and it was Arnold's determination to press the attack against the British that made the difference. Without it, who knows what would've happened?

... "Andrew Jackson being killed in a duel with Dickenson instead of the reverse, leading to the continuance in the U.S. Presidency of the "Virginia dynasty"."

Possibly, but I wonder if Jackson's death wouldn't've resulted instead in the "frontier" support going to Henry Clay? Clay had been grooming himself for the popular image that Jackson usurped, and was considerably miffed when Jackson did steal his thunder. It's significant that in the 1840 election, William Henry Harrison, who was a member of the "Virginia dynasty", found it expedient to campaign under the "log cabin and hard cider" image. I think that Jackson just happened to come along at the right time to take advantage of an inevitable shift in the American political structure, and that his premature death wouldn't've affected the fortunes of the "Virginia dynasty" in any significant way.

... "Ferdinand de Lesseps, aided by "a Walter Reed", succeeds in constructing a French Panama Canal, forcing the U.S.A. to build its canal, if at all, through Nicaragua."

But Lesseps' failure wasn't that dependent on the yellow fever problem alone. He refused to listen to advice, and attempted to build the Canal in the same manner in which he constructed the Suez Canal -- an ocean-level ditch, without any locks. By the time he was finally persuaded that he'd have to change his plans, his company had lost too much money and went bankrupt. Even with the fever problem beaten and digging equipment that was 20 years more advanced, the Americans couldn't dig an ocean-level canal, but had to settle for the present system of locks. If the postulate stated that Lesseps had been persuaded to construct the Canal under the lock system from the start, then it would be conceivable that he might've been successful. In that case, I don't think that the U.S. would've gone to the trouble and expense of building another canal; but the imperialistic fervor of the Teddy Roosevelt period might've led the U.S. to try to acquire the Canal from the French and Colombian governments (there wouldn't be any Republic of Panama, naturally). If the French decided that they didn't want to sell, and the U.S. decided that this was a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, the results could've ranged from a Franco-American War to a pro-German attitude in the U.S. at the outbreak of World War I. And how Colombia and Germany would react to this, what advantages Germany might try to take due to French preoccupation, are anyone's guess.

Tjns jns



... "Religious prejudice prevents Disraeli from becoming Victoria's prime minister, whence Russia outcompeted England in India and the latter is now part of the U.S.S.R."

I'm not overly familiar with Disraeli's career, but I'm under the impression that the British subjugation of India was already more-or-less complete before he came into power. He did arrange for a closer union of the separate Indian states, I know, under the British empire (giving the title of "Empress of India" to Victoria), and was responsible for a greater British interest in India than had existed before; but I think that British interest in India was already sufficiently great that Russia wouldn't've been allowed to seize it, even without Disraeli. It is possible, though, that it was through Disraeli's influence that Britain decided to maintain Afghanistan as an independent buffer state between Russia and India, and that without Disraeli the Russian (and Soviet) border might've extended clear down to the Khyber Pass, and less than 300 miles from a port on the Arabian Sea. I tend to doubt that there was ever any real likelihood of anti-Semitic prejudice keeping Disraeli from a political career, and of this affecting the British course of empire in India even had it happened, though.

There are other interesting postulates -- a Persian victory at Thermopylae; a greater interest in New France by Louis XV; Henry VIII's acceptance of the Church's order to remain married to Catherine of Aragon; King John's being a good ruler (no baronial unrest, no Magna Carta, and a longer period before British common law develops) -- but this is enough to give you an idea of the sort of postulates that're presented. I'm impressed to find anything of this degree of sophistication in a comic book; I'd've expected ideas more along the broad ideas of, "What if Germany won World War I?", or, "What if England won the Revolutionary War and we were still a British colony?" I wonder how many of the comic's readers the editors expected to have heard of the "Virginia dynasty", or the attempted assassination of Napoleon III by Orsini? (Not "Orsene"; there are a lot of misspellings in these quotes, but I don't know whether to attribute them to MORE FUN or to Alderson's copying.) On the whole, whoever wrote these avoided generalities and concentrated on specific points-of-if, so it's a lot more fun puzzling out whether the postulate is a logical one or not. No credit is given for authorship, but MORE FUN was edited at that time by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, with Vincent A. Sullivan and Whitney Ellsworth as associate editors. Whoever was responsible for the column, it introduced something into the comic that makes it worth reading today, for something more than just nostalgia value. I'm looking forward to Alderson's finishing his index, so I can see what other interesting postulates were made.

The Owl Service, by Alan Garner; Collins, 1967, 157 p., 15/-.

"You shouldn't have done that." Her knuckles were white on the edge of the deck chair. Her neck was thrust forward. "You shouldn't have done that."

Gwyn could see himself reflected in her sunglasses, and at the corner of the lens something fluttered like a wounded bird. He turned his head. It was the book. It came for him through the air. Its pages rattled, and disintegrated, but still came for him, like a tail after the red binding. Gwyn dropped the flour bags and protected his face as the book swarmed at him.'

And that brings the action up to only pg. 44.

Garner's three previous books have all been good examples of the standard children's adventure fantasy formula: an Ancient Evil menaces the world, and a group of children work together to combat it, with the help of faery allies and magic talismans. In this book, the characters, children and adult, are all self-centered, co-operating with no-one. At best, they're well-meaning but unwilling to commit themselves to any serious purpose that might inconvenience them; at worst, they hate each other's guts.

Garner's other books revolved about the development of an Ancient Evil that threatened the whole world. By their very nature, the Evil had to be defeated to provide an emotionally-satisfying climax. In this book, the Evil menaces only an isolated group of people, who are so unsympathetic (though very realistically described) that the book could logically end with any or all of them being destroyed. The setting is an old mansion in a small Welsh valley, where a nouveau-riche English family comes into contact with a group of "uncultured" peasants. The beginning of the story is deliberately vague as to the background and relationship of all the characters; but little by little, enough clues of personal history and motivation are supplied until the picture begins to form. As the supernatural influence slowly begins to grow, it and the characters react to each other, the characters drawing malignance from it, and in turn coloring it with their own failings and prejudices. As it grows more obvious, the cast reacts to it on an individual basis: remaining blindly oblivious to it, trying ineffectually to drive it off in different ways, refusing to recognize it and hoping it'll go away, or planning to get out of the valley and good riddance to those who stay behind. Faster and faster, the nature of the people and of the spirit grows; minor incidents suddenly connect to take on significance; the scattered fragments fall together to form a picture that rapidly turns into a nightmare. If Garner's other books were reminiscent of Tolkien, this one is more like Conjure Wife. It's certainly his most powerful and carefully constructed book for children to date. For children!?

The Swords of Lankmar, by Fritz Leiber; Ace #A1-38, 1968, 224 p., 60¢.

There was a time when I thought that a new series of Gray Mouser novels would've been the most glorious thing that the s-f field could possibly produce. But no longer. And, unfortunately, I don't think that I've changed much; I recently reread the old stories from UNKNOWN, and "Adept's Gambit" in Night's Black Agents, and they're as good as ever. It's Fritz's writing that's changed.

When Fritz rewrote "Adept's Gambit" for FANTASTIC a couple of years ago, he said that he was looking forward to retelling one of his earliest stories with the advantage of 25 years' worth of writing practice behind him now. You saw the result. Competent, yes, but the special magic, the word-influence of Shakespearean literature coupled with Fritz's fantastic imagination, was gone. Two unique characters, in a unique setting, are now just a prehistoric version of Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin, saving Lankmar from a demonic version of THRUSS. I suppose it's more commercial than Fritz's earlier, archaic style of writing, but it's no longer noticeably different from any of the rest of the flow of stock sword-&-sorcery novels. I mourn for what should have been, but isn't.

A



FOR

TED JOHNSTONE

COMMENTS ON THE
81ST MAILING

Thanks, Dave, for reinstating Ted, so I can continue using this column title.

LOKI #11 -- (Hulan) Reinhardt has an excellent article on swords here, from my point of view. It tells me just exactly how much I want to know about them. ## I can only recall seeing one movie in which the shields were really used in the sword fighting. This was "Prince Vaillant", in the big duel between Robert Wagner and James Mason at the climax; and the reason the scene sticks in my memory is that the shields crumpled like pieplates with the first blows they took. Cheap props.

TOADSTICKER #3 -- (Wright) I have a feeling that Diplomacy may be an older game than any of us really realize. From one of the rules that I recently overheard local Diplomacy fanatic Dan Alderson citing -- "The unit furthest from the homeland shall be removed, and the Army before the Fleet..." -- I'd say that it must date back to Nostradamus, at least... ## Where does Elvis Presley stand these days? (A question so phrased as to permit of varying and interesting answers.) ## People who dismiss bourgeois things simply because they're bourgeois probably never analyze any more deeply than the label, anyway. I once saw a translation of a literary review guide for the high school level, I believe it was, that was a standard in Nazi Germany. Under the section of criteria to use in judging literary merit, it said the first thing to ascertain was whether the author was a Jew or member of one of the other lower races. If he was, then you automatically know the book is without any literary merit, without having to spend time checking any further into it.

THE RAMBLING SAP #2 -- (Jacobs) Your idea for a TV pilot is okay, but I prefer Len Bailes' for a new series of Hanna-Barbera cartoons featuring Harlan Ellison, Norman Spinrad, and Damon Knight...

SARDONICUS #3 -- (Stevens) I don't suppose anybody else saw the crab? ## Well, there were fan organizations taking stands on political issues, to hear SaMoskowitz tell of the early days of Fandom. But all that was a long time ago. I'm waiting to see the lists of pro- and anti-VietNam authors that're to appear in the prozines soon, according to Ted White. ## I've often been in the situation of suddenly feeling in the mood to write a letter, or say something on stencil, just when I'm getting ready to go to bed, usually around 11:00 o'clock. Then I have to decide whether to take advantage of the mood while the words & ideas are flowing freely, or skip it and go to bed so I won't be groggy at work the next day. ## Fortunately, the LASTS' psychopathic killer hasn't been around since that time in '61. The Robot Ranger Man is still with us, though. He showed up at the WesterCon, telling us how to run things, as usual. He claimed that a professional newspaper somewhere in Arizona actually began printing his "Robot Ranger" strip (I got the impression that he donated it to them for nothing), but dropped it after about a month and a half, just when it was beginning to

10 get serious (by which I presume he meant it had reached the point where he began working in the advertisements for his Robot Ranger uniforms (a different uniform for each member of the family), his Robot Ranger bicycle with its revolutionary new design (which makes it impossible to turn the front wheel), and his organization of the "Robot Ranger" fan club (which will take up the torch of young brotherhood where the Boy Scouts left off, and be the organization for world peace that the United Nations has failed to become!)) I'd hoped that we'd seen the last of him four years ago, but apparently he's still in the woodwork. ## You are the heaviest pipe smoker of whom I know in fandom, though Roy Squires comes close. For cigarette smoking, though, I'd have to see anybody top Ernie Wheatley before I'd believe it. Ernie is never without a lit cigarette in his mouth, except when he's eating. ## The story about the were-deer was Fred Brown's "Too Far", which I think packs more puns into a smaller space than any other anecdote ever written.

DEADWOOD SAP #12 -- (Toskey) Ayn Rand's writing reminds me of the Bible-wavers that infest downtown Los Angeles: "The world is going to Hell, but believe in this message and ye shall be saved!" Her message is that everybody should show initiative and think for himself, rather than milling around like a sheep and expecting his equally-mindless neighbors to do all of his thinking for him. (I think she satirized this most pointedly in The Fountainhead in the letter that an unnamed individual wrote to architectural-critic Ellsworth Toohey, saying, "Dear Mr. Toohey; I hear that everyone is talking about this new building of Howard Roark's; since I like to consider myself knowledgeable in the field, would you please tell me if Roark's building is good or bad so I'll know whether to like it or not?") Yes, Atlas Shrugged is the same sort of book, but with the message even more intense; if you liked The Fountainhead, you should enjoy it very much. Indeed, Atlas Shrugged is definitely science-fiction -- fully as much so as 1984 and Brave New World -- and should be in any fan's s-f library.

MURIAS #7 -- (J. Berman) I don't know how you keep going, Jean. When I saw you at the NyCon, you looked totally exhausted, and that was the day before the Con began. You seemed to weather the Con better than I did, though. I wish I had your stamina. ## I agree with you about the merit of a nice, honest MidWinter Celebration, without all the frills that commercialism tells you that you have to put on it to be socially acceptable. One of the sights worth seeing (once) in Hollywood during the Christmas season (Thanksgiving until Christmas) is the Santa Claus float. This is a large parade float, in full Rose Bowl Parade style, of a snow-covered pine forest, with a seat on the tallest hill for Santa and his guests. His guests happen to be whoever's rented the float for the evening -- usually some Hollywood personality and his family -- and it drives slowly along Hollywood Blvd., with Santa ho-ho-hoing through a loudspeaker, and the guests bellowing, "Merry Christmas from the Don DeFore's!", or whoever it happens to be. (DeFore's the only one on it that I'd ever heard of before.) If it were a one-shot idea, it might be pretty impressive, but the thing rolls down Hollywood Blvd. every night for a month, every year, in exactly the same manner. The resulting impression is more of a, "Who's on it tonight? So-&-so. Big deal. Shrug, and walk away." ## I wonder if any high school really has any school spirit any more? When I was in high school, the scene was almost exactly as you describe it. I think the lack of spirit is due in part to the modern social pressure to appear cool & sophisticated, and above such juvenalities as displaying any loyalty or patriotism toward an abstract organization. The result reminds me of the snipe hunt that I went on once when I was in the Boy Scouts. This is an old trick, and is about as close as the Scouts come to anything that might be called an initiation. The old-timers on a camping trip take the new boys out into the woods, supposedly to look for snipe, posting them a bit away from camp and telling them to stay there until the snipe are driven by. Then the old-timers go back to camp, and see how long it takes the new boys to realize nothing's going to happen, and return. In our case, though, all the new boys knew that it was just a trick, and all the old-timers knew equally well that we were aware that it was a farce. But we had to have a snipe hunt -- the Troop always had a snipe hunt to initiate the new boys to camping -- so we went through the formalities in a very lackluster manner, we new boys staying in the woods for about

five minutes so nobody could say that we weren't playing the game, then all drifting //
back to the campfire. In many cases, a false pretense at maintaining an emotional
tradition that's really no longer existant can be worse than giving up the tradition
would be. Merely going through an empty formality tends to alienate me.

DINKY BIRD #24 -- (R. Berman) Ken Fletcher is one of the reasons s-f fandom should
go proselytizing in Comics Fandom. Strangely enough,
though his rat cartoons are good, he does better s-f work for Comics Fandom than he
does for s-f fandom, in such zines as yours. I have in mind one two-page humorous
time-travel strip that was as good in its own way as "By His Bootstraps". Any chance
that you could get Ken to redraw it for you, and publish it where s-f fans can appre-
ciate it? (Hmm, I guess Jean would have a better chance of getting it, now that you've
moved out here.) ## The only translations I've read recently have been in French comic
books. I wouldn't say that Walt Kelly or Stan Lee are necessarily better in the French,
but I was rather surprised that so much of the original flavor could be maintained in
the translations. What I find the most humorous are the attempts to show American and
British accents. "Ouaip" -- "yup" (a cowboy). "Je dis, ça c'est un morceau de chance!"
-- "I say, this is a bit of luck!" Or the French stereotype of an American atomic
scientist; a cross between John W. Campbell and Arthur Godfrey.

BANDERSNATCH #3 -- (Thorne) Fans go to Conventions to have fun -- yet what is having
fun? I attended my first Cons because I wanted to see
the pros in person, get inside information on the s-f field, and buy material for my
collection. These motives have lost most of their force by now; I've seen most of the
pros at least once, I can get most inside information through the regular fan channels
at any time of the year, and I've got a big enough collection that I no longer go out
of my way to add more to it. Why, then, are Cons still worth attending? It is because
of the people. Maybe someone more extroverted than I am wouldn't be as dependent on
Cons, but I just don't meet that many enjoyable people, who share my interests, else-
where. I can enter conversations with strangers more easily, because of the relaxed
atmosphere that makes us semi-friends just by being there together, and because we're
more likely to have backgrounds and interests in common. If you can get this every
day of your life, you're lucky. ## Another advantage of electric shavers over conven-
tional shavers is that the noise keeps you awake. If I had to shave with a conventional
razor in the morning, I'd probably go back to sleep during the process, until I cut
myself, which is too drastic a method of waking up in the morning. It takes me about
a half hour of stumbling around after getting out of bed in the morning before I'm
anywhere near being really awake. ## My high school chem lab was pretty much the
same. One thing that prevented most students from having a chance at a high grade
was the teacher's habit of assigning special projects, that were supposed to be car-
ried out by the individual students working under the supervision of the teacher.
Since the teacher couldn't give individual supervision to every student at once, most
of the projects remained unfinished, and the student would get a C or B- at most, de-
pending on how far he'd gotten before having to stop and wait for the teacher. My
project was to extract gold from gold ore by the mercury process, noting the various
chemical combinations in the procedure. This process works by pulverizing the ore,
then pouring mercury through the muck to amalgamate with the particles of pure gold,
and finally boiling off the mercury to leave the pure gold as a residue. Since mer-
cury vapor is extremely poisonous, the boiling part of the project was where the tea-
cher was to step in, using some special equipment that the students weren't allowed
to touch. But he never got around to me, and all I got was an explanation at the end
of the semester of how he couldn't give me an A when I hadn't finished the course work,
even if it was due to circumstances beyond my control that I hadn't finished. That was
another low-morale class. ## Fred Patten lives! That is, I think I do. Hmm, might
make a good program for debate at the LASES: "Does Fred Patten live?" 80% of my friends
would be glad to take the negative argument. ## I suppose you know that Sherlock Holmes'
principal pastiche, Solar Pons, now has his own fan club -- a pastiche of the BSI. From
the banquet reports that August Derleth has published, I suspect that the memberships of
the two groups are practically identical. Wasn't there an attempt to found a Professor
Challenger fan club a few years ago? Whatever happened to it?

SAPSAPFIELD #8 -- (Kusske) How many people are active in APA 45, and who are they?

I'm curious to see how many of 'em I've heard of before.

As of 7 years ago, when I was introduced to fandom, publishing fans all over the country were all pretty much known to each other. Either they published genzines, which you got or at least saw mentioned in the review columns of the zines you did get, or they published apazines, and apa fandom was small enough with so much interlocking due to the multiapans that you pretty well knew the names of all apa members, at least in passing. Now, though, there're all these exclusive and local apas, with new members that nobody outside the group has ever heard of. ## Won't APA 45's raison d'être have just about disappeared in another 4 or 5 years? ## You're anthropomorphizing. A nation is not cowardly or brave; it's the reactions of the individual citizens that have to be taken into account. A lot of Swedes did fight in World War II, just as a lot of Americans joined the British or Canadian armed forces to help fight for what they thought was right, before the U.S. got into the war. Would you say that the U.S. was extremely cowardly between Sept. 1, 1939 and Dec. 7, 1941? (And we only joined in the war then because it was carried to us.) ## How do you feel about our involvement in Viet Nam? If you think we're in the right, why aren't you out enlisting and volunteering for duty over there? And if you think we're in the wrong, why aren't you out parading in peace marches and burning your draft card? ## I've had a number of people tell me that I have a Southern accent. As I was born & raised in Los Angeles, if I do it can only be the result of the influence of my mother and grandmother, who were born & raised in New Orleans. ## I think that Tolkien was trying to have it both ways, by ascribing Bilbo's finding of the Ring both to the Ring's own volition (it wanted to get out of Gollum's dark hole) and to a Higher Authority (Bilbo was Meant to find the Ring so that it wouldn't fall into the hands of someone who would succumb to its influence). ## Tom Dupree owes me \$10 on a bad check. He tried that missing fanzine gambit in N'APA, too.

POT POURRI #50 -- (Berry) Congratulations. Which is all I can think of to say.

OUTSIDERS #69 -- (Ballard) Gee, there's any number of fans besides Laney who should've been represented in your cover bookcase. Harmon, Jardine, Rotsler, Boggs, Blackbeard ... ## The company that I work for has just moved into new quarters that were occupied by an orange grove previously, and I was very pleased that they left a number of the trees standing as part of the landscaping, instead of pulling them all out and replacing them with palms or something else. Not that I have anything against palms, but orange trees are very decorative in their own right, and it's always seemed to me to be a waste to destroy every tree on a lot that's being converted from agricultural to industrial use, when new trees are going to have to be brought in for landscaping, anyway. The trees that we have left don't constitute a wilderness, of course, but it is Nature and Conservation in a way. ## The first ten years in fandom are the best? I've only been in for 7 1/2, and I already feel old & tired. ## I hope Seattle will be holding another Con soon to give us all a chance to visit the area again. Not the next West Coast WorldCon; I have other plans for that one; but something sooner. Why not another WesterCon? Something for the fans who like quiet, small, pool-side Cons?

An overhead light bulb just burnt out as I was typing the above comment, and it was a bit unnerving to have the room suddenly darken unexpectedly. I don't believe that I've ever had a light bulb burn out in this manner before. I've had lots that flared out in a last burst as I turned the light switch on, but I can't recall ever having one fail in the middle of a period of usage, before now. Weird.

MISTILY MEANDERING #22 -- (myself) I see that I inadvertently left a floating asterisk in my last issue. I was talking about the NyCon III being a big Con, but not the best Con.* The * was supposed to refer to a footnote that I forgot to put in: which Con was the best Con? Of all the science-fiction Conventions there've ever been, which do you think was the best, and why? This is mostly a subjective judgment, of course; what was the best for one fan won't've been the best for another. But whether you base your selection on objective or subjective grounds, which is your nominee for the best Con ever held, to date?