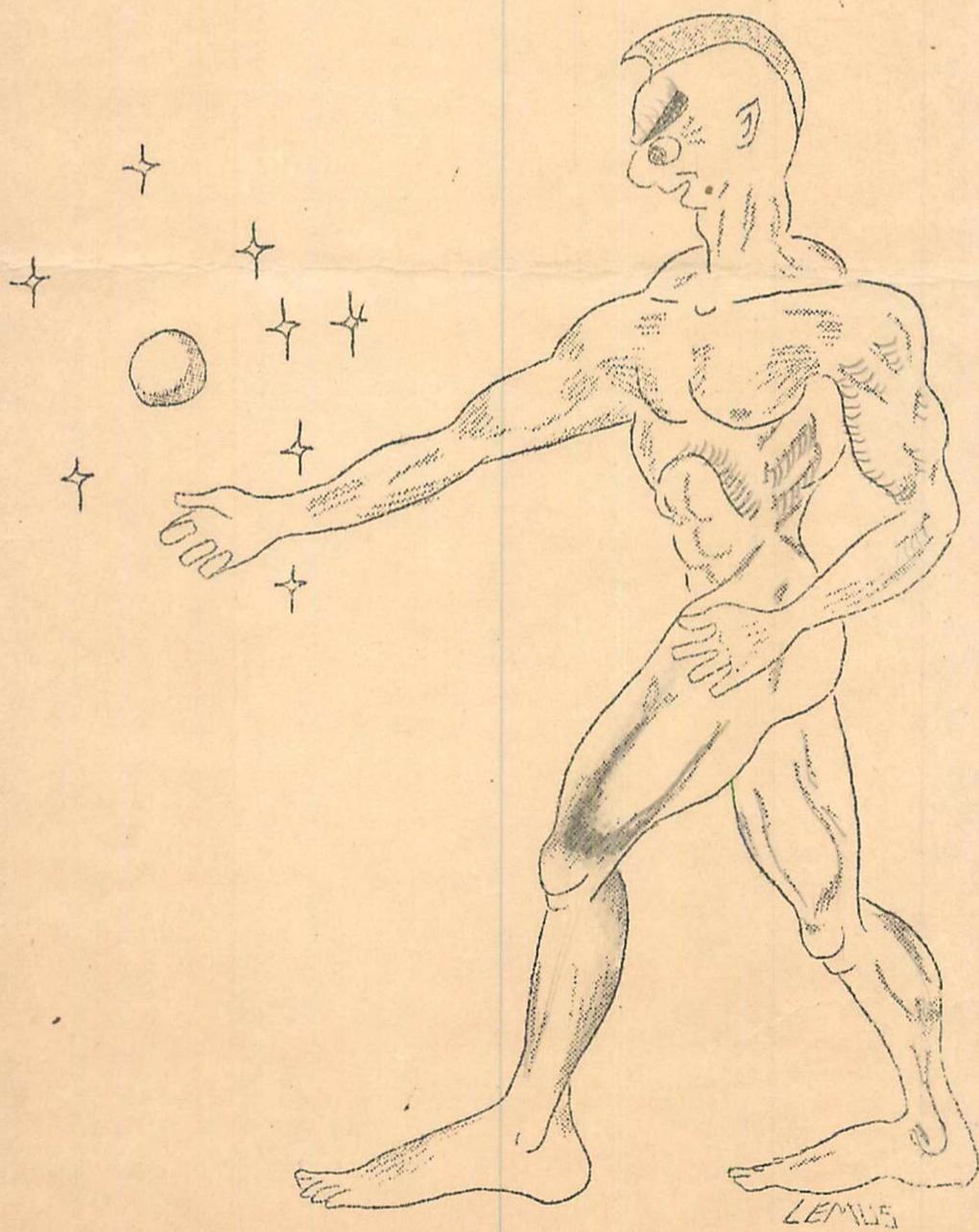


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OMEGA

March 1953
#1



[SFP]

OMEGA

[SFP]

Volume 1 Number 1

March 1953

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Front cover by Maurice Lenus
 Back cover by L. Chapman
 Fillers by Brady, Carr, and Hostetler

OMEGA is published quarterly by Keith Joseph, 105 Richland Ave., San Francisco 10, California, and edited by Terry Carr, 134 Cambridge St., San Francisco 12, California. Subscription rates: 50¢ per copy, four issues for 50¢. Ad rates: \$1.00 full-page, 50¢ half-page, 30¢ quarter-page. Money should be sent to Keith Joseph; material and comments to Terry Carr.

RED FACE DEPT.: So I stencil the contents page, only to find that I forget to include the article A Critique of Pure Proxins, by Gregg Galkins, which begins on page 21.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

THE EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of a fanzine that will soon be near the top of the heap of mimeographed fanzines--we hope! A lot of work went into this issue, and there are many flaws. Still, we are proud of the finished product; not only that, but we are also certain that future issues will be improvements over this issue.

Some of this issue was run on an inferior grade of paper, for which we can only say, "Sorry." Next issue will be done entirely on regular mimeograph paper.

Some comments on the material now. The front cover, of course, is an experiment in shading-plate technique which worked out even beyond my expectations. Above and beyond the fact that the technique turned out well, the drawing itself is excellent. Maurice Lenuis is my own personal find, and I'm proud of him. His cover and illustrations inside should indicate why. You'll be seeing more of his artwork in future issues of OMEGA.

The back cover is by L. Chapman, a member of the Fantasy Art Society. The F. A. S. is an organization headed by English pro-artist Alan Hunter which is dedicated to the furtherance of fantastic art. Alan gives hints to the various members to help them improve their work; he also runs contests between the members and stages projects. Their first project was the Fantasy Art Society CALENDAR for 1953, an excellent job of artwork and reproduction, containing artwork by Alan Hunter, Gerard Quinn (another New Worlds artist), Bob Shaw, Peter J. Ridley, and others. Copies cost 2/6 in England and 35¢ in the United States. In England order direct from:

Alan Hunter
124, Belle Vue Road
Southbourne
Bournemouth
England

In the U. S. you can order from:

J. Ben Stark
290 Kenyon Avenue
Berkeley 8, California

The mailing wrapper was a brainstorm of mine, rendered by me. If you like this sort of thing, you might write for the second issue of VULCAN, which has the same type of thing on its mailing-wrapper. While on the subject, I might as well make the plug good. This second issue of VULCAN is 48 pages long, in 8½" x 11" format. It's a companion-mag to Om. Sells for 15¢, four quarterly issues for 50¢ (same as the zine you're reading). Money goes to me, not Keith Joseph.

Gregg Calkins' article was originally submitted to VULCAN, way back last May. This is the first chance I've had to print it, though, so I switched it into Om. It's dated, I'll grant you, but still is interesting and, therefore, worthy of being printed.

"Wolfpride" begins a series of fanzine-reprints that I hope you will approve of. This first reprint is from ALIEN No. 2, a zine which is due to fold with its fourth issue, out about the time you read this. Vic Waldrop, the editor, says that it will be a monstrous issue (somewhere around 40-60 pages) with loads of good stuff. You might try sending for that one, too. The address is:

Vic Waldrop, Jr.
212 West Avenue
Cartersville, Georgia

That issue will cost you 20¢.

And now a few words about another policy of ours. With every issue we will award an original (be it drawing or original manuscript) to the person who wrote or drew the item which was voted the best in that issue. In other words, if

Gregg Calkins' article is voted the best in this first issue of OMEGA, he is entitled to any original he wants...including the original of his own manuscript, if he wants it in preference to something else. So get your votes in, so that I can notify the winner and allow him to take his choice. And get some material on its way to me, if you want a chance at an original.

Next issue will have, at present reckoning, a story by Helen Vasquez called "Mang Poison", with an illustration by Ken Calloway. Also there will be "Atlantis" by yours truly, with an illustration by Richard Bergeron. And there will also be David Rike's column, most likely a second column by Dave E. N. Parker or Peter Graham (depending on who turns in the better column), and the regular features...including the letter column. It looks to be pretty good...definitely worth reading. Why not sub now, while you think of it?

-- Terry Carr --

THE OMEGA

I just can't believe that OMEGA is out. It was planned last August and is finally out now (reminds me of our sister-zine, VULCAN). You should have heard and seen all that went on. The name was supposed to be BLANK, but Terry wanted OMEGA instead...what a hot argument that was! I cussed, yelled, and screamed, but my dear Editor stood firm. The front cover was originally destined to be the back cover and it turns out that it is the front cover. We yelled over that issue a bit and in the end I was forced to like it (I thought it was rather nice anyhow)...

On top of all that I had to buy another mimeo. My mother decided that she wasn't going to buy it for me (of course, I did break her vase)... The entire interior was to be in black; but I couldn't get my mimeo paid for in time, so Bob Stewart (who publishes BOO!) mimeoed much of the interior for me. Bob has four pads, each a different color, so that is how we have four different colors. One of these colors is out of the ordinary.

We are sorry about the second-to-last page of "Last Hope". As I mentioned before, we wanted an ink out of the ordinary, and as you can't see, it is out of the ordinary. Well, that pad has got to go...

All future issues, I promise, will be on time. Since the first ish is out I should be a little more settled.

We left a stencil over at Bob's house for him to run off. He puts it on the drum, finds himself a bit late, takes it off again, and goes to school. He comes back and what happens?--the stencil is not worth ----. Terry goes to stencil it again and what happens? -- he has a half-page left. Thus we have a filler by Hostetler on page 7.

We are happy to say that the Capella's in this issue turned out pretty good. Previous Capella's haven't turned out too well in mimeographed fanzines. I guess Capella's style makes his drawings hard to stencil.

In the next issue we intend to have a letter column and a fanzine review column.

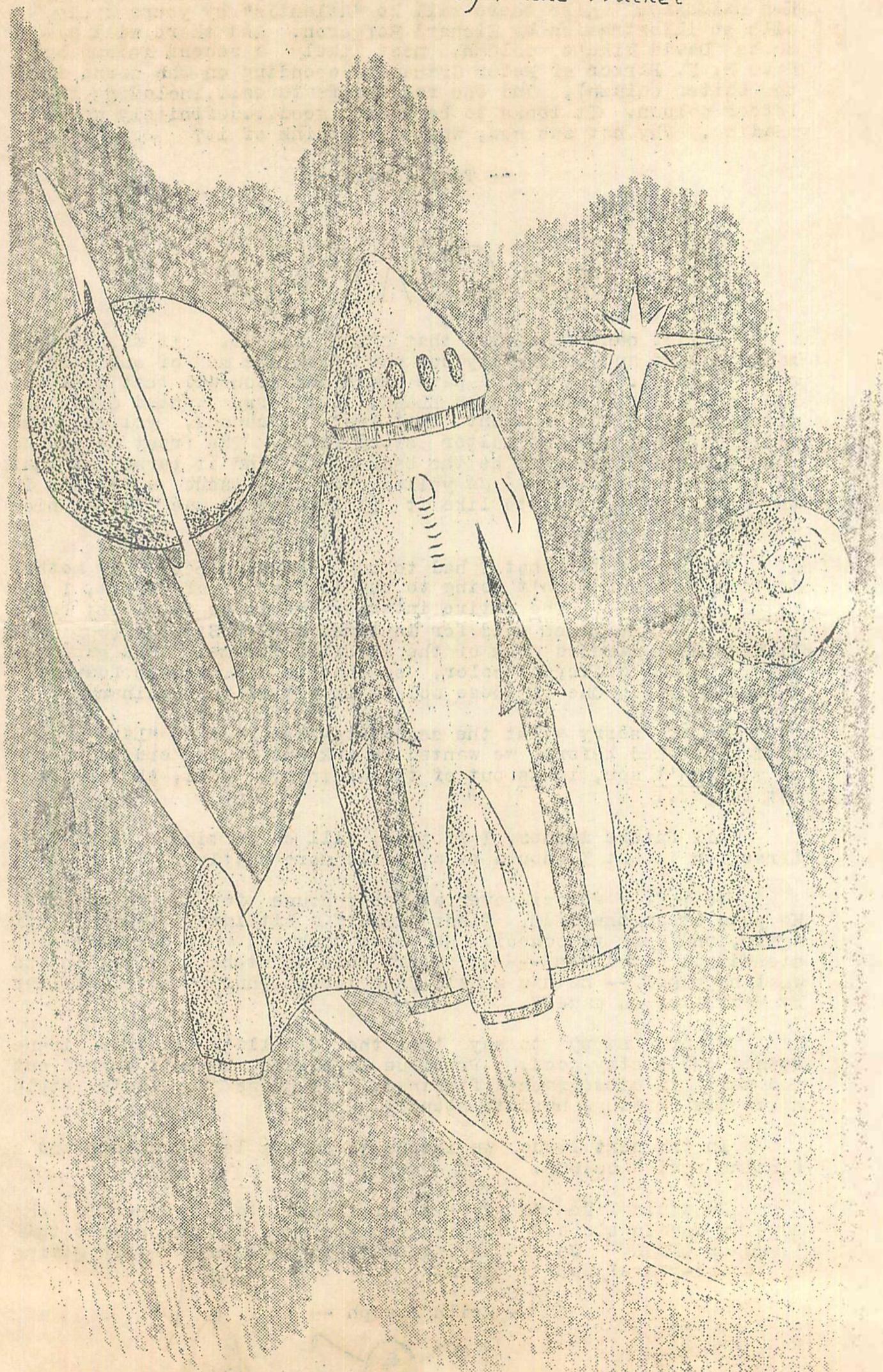
We would like to express our thanks to Bob Stewart, who gave us invaluable aid in bringing you, me, and the editor this issue of OMEGA. We are so indebted to Bob that we are giving him a two-years' sub to OMEGA.

-- Keith Joseph --



THE ROCKET

by Mike Walker



The rocket gleamed upon the sands
And people stood in throngs and bands
And yelled and cheered and played their bands.
They waited.

The crew came out and entered it.
The ground shook and the heavens split--
The flames shot out and with a roar
That could be heard from shore to shore
It lifted.

Ever up the rocket flew,
Beyond the clouds, beyond the blue--
Just like a bullet, straight and true,
Out into space.

Jim Barns was captain of the crew,
And though the name sounds new to you
He plotted course both straight and true
Beyond the stars.

TWO LONG YEARS PASS

They approached the planet coming fast,
Their long trip ended now at last.
They turned their ship and with a blast
They landed.

The locks were down, the motor off;
All was silent, save for a cough.
The door sprung up, the crew jumped out--
They expressed their glee with a joyous shout:
"We made it!"

They organized an exploring party.
"Be back by five and don't be tardy,
For we don't know what's on this planet
Besides a lot of rock and granite,"
Said Jim.

The party set out to explore
Along a nearby ocean's shore.
They marched for miles and then, said one:
"Boy, this is work. It sure ain't fun.
And it sure is an awful pity
That we ain't even found a city."
Just then they saw one.

The walls gave off a luminous glow.
The city was dead; it would live no more.
The streets were deserted, the walls were bare.
The city was dead, with no one to care.

It had been destroyed by a terrible war
That had ripped the city right down to the core.
Then a movement was seen far off down the street,
And they heard the pounding of many feet.
They ran.

They ran to the ship, jumped quickly inside;
But the creatures threw something, hit Jim in the side.
He spun and he fell while the crew stood beside.

They picked up the object and found it a book.
But they didn't have time to get a good look,
For the things had followed at a pretty fast pace,
And they now had to face the whole blasted race.

They pulled in Jim, shut the door of the ship,
And the doctor put something on captain Jim's hip--
For they couldn't leave till he got well,
And they had to leave this terrible hell!

The beings were closer; they were closing in.
The men waited for the fight to begin.
The crew was ready, their weapons in hand;
It was four to a hundred, but a powerful band.

With their raya and their bombs they knew they'd win,
So they waited for the fight to begin;
But Jim called out from his sick bed,
"Don't stay and fight, Blast off!" he said.

So the rocket took off from the planet!
It charred the earth and burned the granite.
And as they took off from their hearth
They read in the book that the planet was Earth.

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A CAT

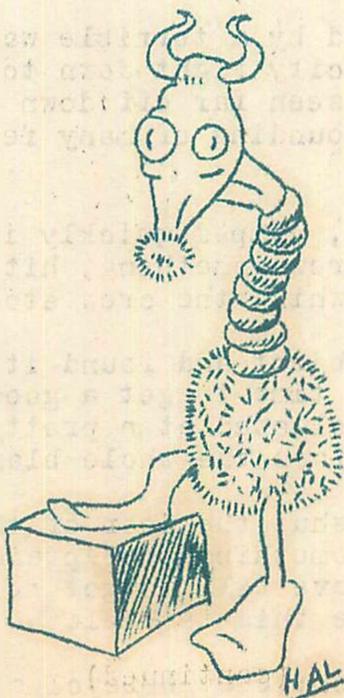
On the following pages you will find two stories--or perhaps I should say only one story. Actually, these stories are the very same story, but told in two different ways, from two different viewpoints. Capella uses two different styles of writing on these stories.

When he submitted the two stories to me he expected me to pick out the story that I liked best and reject the other. This put me in a quandary, however, as I found myself liking both stories very much.

What could I do? Certainly I couldn't print both of them -- or could I? Well, why not? I asked myself.

Therefore on the following pages you will find a demonstration of the fact that there is

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A CAT



LAST HOPE

one—mythical

by Ray Capella



Capella

"The wise ones beyond the walls must be reached."



of the precipice. Below was darkness; from above came snow that flecked the darkness like the unseen stars. The world was cold and black.

There was only his hands and the ridge from which he hung, surrounded by blackness.

The cold was becoming pleasant and his eyes grew heavy and started to close slowly. Why not let go, let the icy breeze take him? Why not drift away towards comfortable oblivion?

But there was a spark of consciousness that cried in the back of his mind: You can reach the top! You must, your people depend on you!

Yes, his people, the race that had been born in a huge canyon, whose universe had been 2 walls, a green land underfoot and a strip of blue overhead. A strip that changed only with the coming of the flame-god during the day and the silent visit of the white goddess at night.

That had been their world until the metal bird had roared from above and disappeared. Then their curiosity had led them to the old wise man of the caves to find out whence had come the weird apparition.

And he had told them of the Stone Book, from whose carved pages they read how they had come here. It had told them of the wise races beyond the top of the walls, of how a few people had come to this canyon and, unable to escape, had multiplied to become the race they were now.

This all added up to Ical's precarious situation, for their thirst for knowledge had brought determination to reach the outer world. They had trained him from childhood to endure months without protective walls around him, by raising him atop a huge boulder. To them, the thought of living on plains and unprotected places, where a strong gale might carry them off the world, was horrible. Imagine, living in a place where danger might attack from anywhere but underfoot!

But nevertheless they had prepared a messenger to the outer world to ask the wise people for new knowledge. Ical was that messenger; he must not fail his people.

Ical felt warmer, upon thinking of their faith in him. He pressed himself closer, slid his arm into the ridge, raising his body into a comfortable position. He would reach the top, and may he fall into the sky, to be eaten by the flame-god, if he didn't!

"Ical returns!" was the cry two weeks later, when a haggard figure appeared high above, descending towards the world of the canyon-people. They did not let him talk when he arrived. They bathed and fed him and tried to heal a few strange burns that he had.

When they thought he looked healthier, they sat him upon a throne and grouped about him. They quieted, waiting for the message from the Wise Ones.

"I have seen....." Ical started. Then he remembered the ghastly war he had witnessed, the battle of titanic explosions and destruction on a giant scale in the mad world above. They warred. They fought each other, a thing that had been banished from his race aeons ago! He started once more:

"I have found we were being deceived! There is no world beyond! This is the only universe; the Stone Book lies! The metal bird was but a trick caused by the flame-god!"

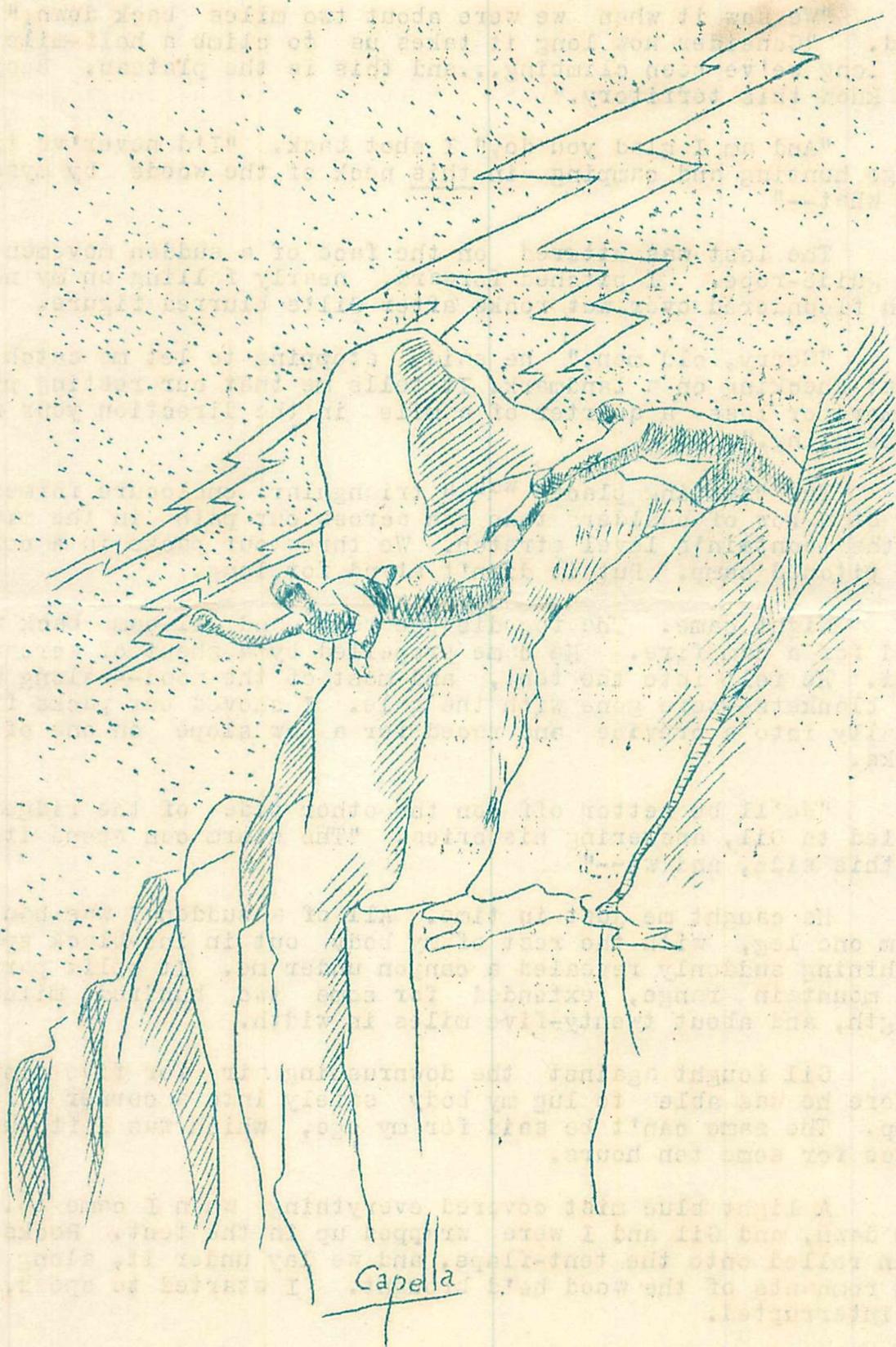
They stared at him aghast, but they believed. There was a grim, purposeful look in his dark eyes that told them that he spoke true. The people went sadly back to their everyday life, to break the monotony only when the burns that Ical had brought with him began spreading.

After the battle Ical had witnessed, theirs was the last race. And their messenger had brought Death as an answer from the "Wise Ones"...

LAST HOPE

two—modern

by Ray Capella



"He caught me just in time..."



"HIS IS BLUE HELL!" I cursed, pawing at the fog around us. "How're we gonna find the plateau in this soup?"

"If I'm not mistaken," Gil laughed, "It's just four or five feet above us."

His body, long and hazy in the blue envelope around us, arched dangerously backwards in space. Then came the sound of his pick, as it struck the rock above him. On the third try, it made a dull sound; it had struck home.

The guide-rope tugged at my waist. I reached up, to find the holes he had dug above me, and followed close on his heels.

"Well! Maybe it is the plateau," I grunted a few minutes later, when we stood on a flat piece of ground. "But I can't see enough to make sure."

"We saw it when we were about two miles back down," Gil said. "Consider how long it takes us to climb a half-mile and how long we've been climbing...and this is the plateau. Besides --I know this territory."

"And am I glad you do," I shot back. "I'd never've tried to go hunting and camping in this neck of the woods by myself. But what--"

The last was uttered on the face of a sudden movement of the guide-rope. I pitched forward, nearly falling on my nose, then floundered over wet rocks after Gil's blurred figure.

"Sorry, old man," he said, stopping to let me catch up. "Just checking on a landmark. It tells me that our resting place is more or less a quarter of a mile in the direction your nose is pointing."

The "resting place" was a triangular enclosure formed by two of a row of boulders that ran across our path in the middle of the mountain's level stretch. We threw our packs in a corner and pitched camp. But it didn't stand for long.

Night came. The fog disappeared, and Gil came back with wood for a campfire. He came propelled by a sheet of screaming wind. He fell into the tent, and most of the wood--along with our blankets--were gone with the gale. I shoved our packs frantically into a crevice and raced for a low slope on one of the rocks.

"We'll be better off on the other side of the ridge," I called to Gil, answering his cries. "The storm can spend itself on this side, and we--"

He caught me just in time. All of a sudden I was hanging from one leg, with the rest of my body out in ink-black space. Lightning suddenly revealed a canyon under me. It split part of the mountain range, extended for some two hundred miles in length, and about twenty-five miles in width.

Gil fought against the downrushing air for five minutes before he was able to lug my body safely into a corner of our camp. The same can't be said for my ego, which was left out in space for some ten hours.

A light blue mist covered everything when I came to. It was dawn, and Gil and I were wrapped up in the tent. Rocks had been rolled onto the tent-flaps, and we lay under it, along with the remnants of the wood he'd brought. I started to speak, but he interrupted.

"This is so familiar to me I didn't realize you didn't know about the canyon back there. Sorry I forgot to tell you. Nearly got you killed...you banged your head against a ledge on the way up--how do you feel?"

"Fine. But don't look so downcast. I should get bopped on the head--or worse--for rushing into things so blindly. I owe you my life," I told him. But though I meant it, I had a sense of wonder left in respect to the rocks around us. Gil saw that.

"I know what you're thinking," he said. "'This is one helluva place to go hunting and camping'. But you see, old man,

I didn't come back here for just that. Sit down; it's a long story..."

We faced each other over the campfire, Indian-fashion. He looked over the low slope of the boulder into the darker mist beyond and told me a simple story.

"Take an ancient Indian tribe and their Viking captives after a battle on the coast. Then follow their path through the Deep Woods in search of a safe, peaceful land further inland. Then give them a promising-looking pass through the mountains in their way--and trap them in the midst of the range with an avalanche or volcanic explosion.

"That is one of my theories. There are others which might be just as good, but the point is that this strange combination developed into a race of good men...intelligent and honest.

"Intelligent; that is, to a certain extent of culture and civilization...for a superstition or some unexplained dread led them to believe that the deep canyon they lived in was their world--a long, fertile strip of land bordered by equally fertile ledges, hemmed in by great cliffs, with a strip of blue above.

"A beautiful world, where strife was defeated and war became a memory. And then, one day, a metal bird burst to a hundred pieces on a ledge of their little universe.

"Surely, they thought, it must come from beyond, for there was no such thing in their land. Outside! The word opened new vistas. Could there be another world? Perhaps. If so, there were creatures there who could fly!

"Evidently, the pilot bailed out and landed outside the canyon, for the people could only guess at the life-form that might have built the plane. As it was, they considered the outsiders very wise beings, and decided to contact them.

"A young man was elected to try for a climb to the outside every generation for three generations. On the third, their messenger found a way out. The young man came to the outside world. He lived there for fifteen years--fifteen long years."

I stared at Gil. It was not hard to believe. Gil had the aquiline features of an Indian, the kind, long black hair. But his eyes were ice blue and his skin was very fair. And he was well over six feet, with a build to match his height. Perhaps his basic theory was right.

"Of course, you're the messenger," I said, trying not to sound awed. "but then--why the silence? Why doesn't the world know about this Utopian colony of yours? And--assuming said place is just over these rocks--you're going back without telling anyone but me. Why?"

"The sole reason for telling you is because you're my best friend," Gil replied. "You practically pulled me out of the gutter and showed me the Earth. But for you, I wouldn't have traveled to all those countries and seen what the "Outside World" is like....I'm trying to repay you, Curt---I want you to come with me. To the best country on this crazy planet."

"Then you don't intend to tell us about your Utopia!" I ejaculated. "And by what you think of us, you'll probably tell them there's no outside world!"

"Something to that effect," Gil smiled wearily. "I'll say I've spent fifteen years in a limbo not meant for our race. I have pictures of certain places that will corroborate my word. It will at least keep them back until the world has--changed."

And it has changed, now. Gil intended to let me take the last remnant of some race in the outside "land". I sustained the effect of his words would've been marred by my presence. I gave my word not to reveal what had told me until the Earth had changed.

There's hardly any plastiglass or metal left on the window I'm looking out from. Out there is a sea of ruins stretching to the horizon. It's the same all over Earth. Yep, the world has changed, all right.

(continued)

This is only for the record---to whatever little group of people is left somewhere---though I may well be the last man to spin a yarn from truth...and I won't be alive for long...

Somehow, I hope this manuscript won't reach anybody; though I'm writing it. Gil's lost race should be left alone. At least for a little while longer. Maybe later they'll come out of their own accord and do something for good old Terra.

But for the time being let's leave lost races alone, huh? They're Earth's future!

-- Ray Capella --

AFTER ALL!

by Donald O. Cantin

 I'M WALKIN' ALONG this sidestreet, see. Doing nuttin' special, just counting the cracks in the sidewalk, when all of a sudden a hand comes out of the shadows, grabs me by the neck and drags me in an alley. Well sir! You'd think they'd of had respect for my size, but no, I was pushed, pulled, dragged, etcetera. Never have I been so manhandled (back to the story)... anyway this guy picks me up and carries me down the alley 'till we get to a door that's almost flush with the wall, an' it looks like it's part of the wall. The door opens and a strong odor, like at the hospital, reaches my nose, but not for long. I'm hit; on the head yet!

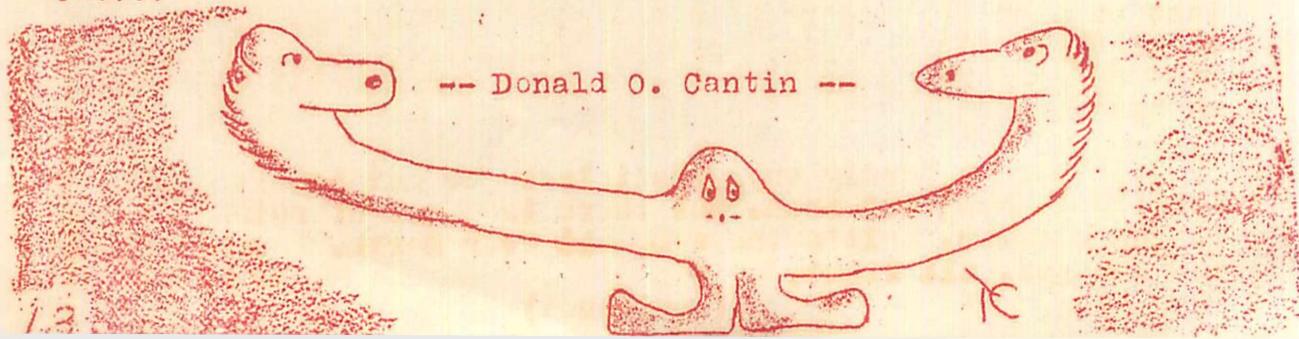
When I wake up I'm in a room, round and gray, like steel. And there's a noise, loud and steady, like a train. There's food in one part of the room so I don't starve anyway, an' there's a tag around my neck: THERMOANESTHASIC. Having nothing to do, I count my feet, yep, all there. Then I walk up to the ceiling, oh, I forgot to tell you, I don't weigh nothing in this room, funniest thing. Pretty soon the noise stops, the whole room shakes, and I'm back on the floor, on my head again.

This time when I wake up, I find that some queer has put a fishbowl on my head, and the air tastes kinda metal like. And I'm not in the room anymore, I'm on a rock. A big rock! Nuttin' but the rock, and darkness, and stars. Alone. So, naturally, I nose around. I don't find nuttin' but steel crates with food in 'em, and some sort of heating unit. Also, there's a plaque stuck on a piece of rock, which I can't make heads or tails of, so I sleep again, as best I can with my head in a fishbowl.

This time I wake up with the sun in my eyes, jeeze is it small! So far away. It's a good thing I got this heating unit. I look around to see what I can find, and I see that plaque again, only this must be a different one, 'cause I can read this one, it says:

ASTEROID NUMBER 36-R
EXPERIMENTS IN INCREASED
INTELLECTUAL STATUS DUE
TO PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO
EXTROSYNCRALEXIAL RAYS
NO. 64pO - & 64jI-

Huh! What's that supposed to do? Make me smarter or somethin'? They got no right to do this to me, they can't put me here. I got my rights, after all, you can't just put anybody where you want to without asking 'in. I'm no guinea pig, I'm a cat...



WRITINGS

by Rike



a column

The postman cometh. I stayed out of sight so as not to scare him away. The postman leaveth---in a hurry---probably because Buster, my dog with chartruse eyes, was looking hungry. However, he had nothing to fear: Buster's carnivorous and wouldn't think of harming mail. MAIL! I slithered out of the crack and proceeded to examine my treasure...a fanzine. This fmz, called the FEMZINE, is a li'l thing put out for fems, by fems (only). It's the O-O of the Fenettes, an all fem-fan-club headed by Marian Cox, 79th A. B. Sqdn., Sioux City, Iowa. It looks perty nice, tho a bit too thin for 15¢. The cover had, of course, a man for the main feature; no beefcake however; just the head. I can well imagine what future covers will be like:



A "Science Adventure" movie company is being formed by Richard Carlson, Ivan Tors, and Curt Siodmak (the author of "Donovan's Brain") called A Men Productions. They're going to do three science-adventure films: "A Men", "H. G. Wells I. A. C.", and "The Hungry Atom" (to be shot in France and Italy). I hope these stfilms will be more than "Rocketship X-M" or "Red Planet Mars". If their stuff does good at the cinema, they'll put it on TV also....oh goody, something to take Capt. Z-Ro's place (he's the local flesh an' blood Howdy Doody, with a time machine).



Here's a li'l thing that happened a while back in Berkeley: on Telegraph Avenue, near the U. C. campus, is a drugstore which stocks most anything printable, in periodicals and newspapers, including a fanzine, the RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST. I was coming from the Garden Library, the congregating-place of the Little Men, with some new issues, when I dropped into the drugstore to see if the latest New Yorker had any Chas. Addams cartoons in it. While thumbing thru the issue I noticed a couple approaching the RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST and handling it with curiosity. They looked thru it and seemed interested to some degree. Reaching the last page and putting it down they looked at each other, a bit puzzled; said the husband: "It's a fanzine." They shrugged their shoulders and walked away.



I guess by now all of you'uns have seen the crudzine, Fantastic Science Fiction. It took me a week to find the Thing on the newsstands; I at first that it to be a color book. If you ever had any aspiration to see what the Russi mag Thrills Inc. looks like, take a gander at W-Stf... though it's a bit larger and the authors are different, basically they're about the same, especially on the intillos, both terrible. Somehow or another the cover "artist" seems familiar; maybe he's the boy who drew the things in the li'l comic sent to you in a plain, sealed wrapper. I can well wonder what such a person looks like when busy at work...



Waal, I'll be oozing off for now. Ghoul Eye...

finis

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

Why science fiction?

Or maybe I should ask why organized science fiction. And that's a good question, too. I began reading stf about ten years ago when some mags were left laying about the house. I liked it. That's why I'm still reading it. But where does fandom come in at? Being an active fan is still something very new to me. I guess maybe seeing the same names over and over in lettercolumns fanzine reviews, etc. helped. I've read letters signed by Gregg Oopsla, Terry Vulcan, and Henry Three-Bridges till I'm blue in the face. Possibly this article may accomplish nothing else but to see my name in print. Even so, I'll be happy!

But I'm not telling you why fandom has been organized. I'm asking you. You tell me.

There are a few other random queries I've had in mind, too. One thing I'd like to find out is what fans have in common outside of stf. What their tastes in music run to. Occupations. I know if you would drop Terry or me a few thousand lines or so we'd be glad to publish a survey or something

Maybe these words have done enough damage for any one time. I'd better leave the desk quietly now, before Terry comes in and finds me here...

by Toby Duane

Now, once in a traveling circus
 there was a young flea in the show;
 This flea had queer characteristics:
 he had a desire to know.
 He didn't just want to be normal,
 and charm human beings to nirth;
 Or travel the route of the flea show--
 his goal was to tour the whole Earth!



He started by fleeing the flea show,
 took refuge in shadows and fog;
 and then, nearly catching pneumonia,
 found warmth in the fur of a dog.

Near-ousted he was from that haven--
 his nemesis--water and soap!
 But events which took place soon thereafter
 allowed him no leisure to mope.

More days passed, and then he was herded
 with other dogs just like his host,
 Down into a stuffy compartment,
 closed off from the breeze of the coast.

The only bug there was our Merlin--
 no sign of a flea, louse, or tick;
 But soon he forgot to be lonely:
 that's right!--the poor flea was sea-sick!

At first Merlin couldn't believe it:
 that he really was on a boat;
 But a porthole was slightly ajar, and
 a glance told him he was afloat.

'Tis lucky that Merlin possessed not
 a way to foretell the next day:
 His ship was but one of a dozen
 that floated in Likini Bay.

The dawn ushered in sounds of airplanes;
 a ship dove down over the fleet;
 And only a few moments later



A CRITIQUE OF PURE PROZINES

BY GREGG CALKINS

W

HEN IT COMES TO the science fiction world in the form of fandom, not a single thought seems to be given to the merits and demerits of respective prozines, except that one is bad, the other is good, and the rest are somewhere in between.

A casual glance over the market will show some 18-24 prozines operating in a more or less successful fashion, and appearing regularly on the newsstands of fandom America. Of these, both the good and the bad appear side by side (though there is a tendency to segregate Galaxy into the semi-slick ranks) with not a single care as to their various qualities or flaws.

Perhaps the largest-selling magazine on the market, if we go by what the editor tells us, is Amazing Stories. This is also about the oldest. Unfortunately, too many people tend to take for granted that because it was once great, it will always be great. However it's a pure and obvious fact that Amazing is not the best prozine on the market, and never will be again, unless something drastic happens. Is it Howard Browne's fault? Obviously it cannot be entirely Browne's fault as an editor for he does a very fine job on the new Fantastic, successfully catering to all types, and doing so very capably. The latter mag has very fine stories done by recognized and known authors, and is a very fine magazine from the reader's standpoint. Where, then, does old Amazing foul up?

Perhaps it is the fault of Mr. Ziff and Mr. Davis, though one hesitates to put the blame on them. It might be their policy of catering to the third-and-blunder audience who wants the triple-S policy mentioned by the Colles some time back--Sex, Sensationalism, and Shallow-plotting. At any rate, Amazing remains unreadable and (we suspect) will remain unreadable for some time to come.

Along with Amazing and closely related to it is Fantastic Adventures. Linking it with Amazing immediately classifies it--with the lowest. Needless to say, it at one time also published creditable fantasies, but with the recent policy has dropped off into the SSS policy of Amazing and the allied mags.

Probably the leader in the circulation field instead of Amazing is Galaxy Science Fiction (although ASF may be ahead, or very close). This newcomer to the field of late 1950 definitely had plans in mind, and editor H.L. Gold went directly ahead with them, stepping bodily over those who stood in his way. Promoting the best from the old writers, and the new stars as they came out, Gold offered the highest rates in the science fiction world to pro writers, and they flocked avidly.

The public flocked, too.

By its third issue Galaxy's following was phenomenal for a magazine so young. Now, its second year almost completed, it stands at the top of the field, with but one contestant in fan-nish minds. What made it that way? Gold certainly isn't the best bet in the world as an editor. Surely his early editorials antagonized more fan than they attracted, and his pompous self-praises sounded so much like Ray Palmer that you'd have sworn Gold was a Z-D hand from back. But, aside and above all these, Galaxy rose steadily, and its gain attitude had a large hand in its rise to fame.

With its very first issue, Galaxy catered to the "adult" readers of science fiction, attempting to do away with the typical "goshgeewhizwowboyohoyohay" young reader of fandom. And, it seems, he has succeeded -- at least in his own magazine. Today Galaxy is a must for all science fiction fans.

In mentioning Galaxy, one cannot escape to another subject without first bringing astounding Science Fiction into view, for this venerable old magazine of s-f is the other half of the once

raging feud between editor H. L. Gold and Editor John W. Campbell, Jr. When Galaxy appeared, it immediately took steps intended to put it "first in the hearts of its countrymen" and, in doing so, trampled smack-dab over the top of the then-unchallenged ASF. Editor Campbell rightfully resented it.

Then began a name-calling campaign carried out in typically modern warfare under the guise of an "inference and association" campaign. Neither editor actually accused the other of a thing, nor did they even come right out and admit that there was another magazine challenging the position of top in the field. Gold was forced to admit ASF's presence because ASF was the mag Horace had to top but Campbell found himself in the advantageous position of "king of the heap" to begin with and gave Galaxy the "maybe you'll go away if I don't notice you" air.

Thence followed a mad month or two when either and both editors called the other various things. Eventually some decision was reached, for now the air seems to be clearing somewhat; but it is now obvious, even to Campbell, that ASF is no longer the undisputed master of the field.

When you bring in such greats as Galaxy and ASF, surely the next to be recognized is The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Here, too, attitude played the most important part of all, though different from either Galaxy or Amazing. Whereas the other two magazines' attitude was that of editor to reader, MoF&SF played editor to public, an entirely different concept. It's true the reader is also the public, but the public is not always the reader. In MoF&SF, editors Boucher and McComas attempted to produce the best of science fiction from a literary standpoint. Apparently they are doing so quite admirably, for The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction ranks not only tops in the fan world, but in other unconnected circles as well.

Of the top three, one has a hybrid development: Galaxy Science Fiction Novels. In these, editor Gold has attempted to bring to the fore both new and reprinted novels, and in his nine attempts thus far seems to be on the winning team. This is one of the few novel magazines to last and be published regularly on any sort of schedule.

Floating around in the field along with these mags, Ray Palmer's Other Worlds and Bill Hamling's Imagination strike the eye (due, no doubt, to their usual garish covers.) Both old Z-D boys from way back, Palmer keeps his old stable of writers, only incorporating them in a different magazine. This is a favor to fandom, and one that should not go unpraised. Truly, with Shaver, Byrne, and Phillips appearing under only one magazine's cover, the fans are spared finding hack by these "writers" all over the field in otherwise readable magazines. Editor Palmer apparently finds some readers for OW, because he plans monthly schedule any time now, but where he finds these patagons of literary taste is yet a mystery -- yea, even as great as the Shaver Mystery he successfully ran into the ground.

Hamling is a horse of another color, but still a horse. Imagination still remains slightly more readable than OW, but only slightly. Apparently Hamling is in rather close contact with Rap, and cannot break loose from Palmer's machinations. However, we could be wrong -- Hamling could be just plain poor on his hook, and actually believe he is presenting the best in Imagination. There is no accounting for tastes.

Deserving of praise are the newcomers to the science fiction field. In all of these, the trend towards the semi-slick digest-size magazine is very obvious. The trend also seems to follow Galaxy's lead towards "adult" type stories, also. True, Fantastic caters to all types and tastes, but this is the exception, rather than the rule. When Fantastic came out some months ago, some groaned, some screamed for joy, and some sobbed. It is much too early to pick the accurate reaction at this date.

Another new one is Paul W. Fairman's If. Three issues of this magazine have since gone by, and Fairman has had Sturgeon, August Derleth, and other fine authors of Galaxy and ASF rank. Perhaps it is destined to someday become something very fine. In If, Fairman has incorporated some very fannish departments that are worthy of some comment, if not loud praise. His guest editorial is often better than his own, and the personalities in science fiction are a must for the reader.

Two more are del Rey's Space Science Fiction and Rocket Stories; the first, supposedly, paying the highest rates in stf today, and the last on a par with the thud-and-blunder style of Planet Stories. Apparently editor del Rey is attempting to hit both sides while the other isn't looking, thereby assuring himself of an income. He wants the cream from Galaxy's readers, but also the large-selling crud of Amazing and their contemporaries. Obviously he cannot put them both in one magazine, so he puts out two. Again it is too early to say much either way on these mags.

Two Complete Science-Adventure Books and Famous Fantastic Mysteries seem to be presenting quite adequate science fiction and fantasy, and though nothing exceptional, do very well. TCSAB presents two novels every third month, almost on a par with the GSE Novels, thereby out-presenting them in quantity, if not also in quality. FFM, long-acknowledged leader of the fantasy field, still publishes quite creditable fantasy.

An all-round average of the field may be hit in the four publications that issue from Thrilling every year. Publishing Wonder Story Annual every year, Sam Mines puts in his two-bits's worth as an anthologist, and usually fails quite miserably, although usually his lead selections are fine. In his Fantastic Story Magazine, issued quarterly, it's quite a different story, however. Here Mines presents some of the best all-round stf that can be found. His latest choice, "Elan", almost made history.

Still editing away, Sam puts Thrilling Wonder Stories every other month, and Startling Stories on a monthly basis. In these two magazines, she presents a wide variety of material by some of the better-known names in stf, and is consistently very readable. Not on the literary par of Galaxy, ASF, or MoF&SF, perhaps, but very adequate to any tastes, and as much above Amazing, OW, and Madge as the stars are above those street-lights outside. And editor Mines keeps turning them out. In 1952, if nothing abnormal happens, he will turn out over 23 issues under the Thrilling name.

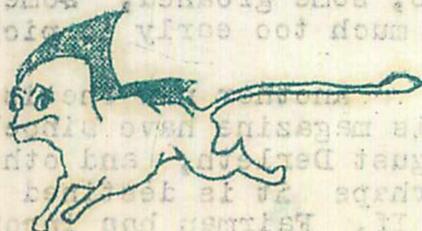
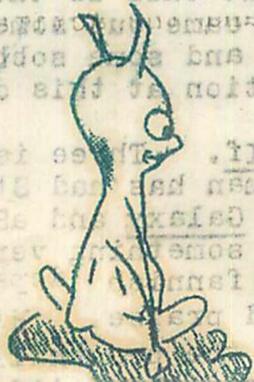
It goes without saying that the unmentioned magazines are worth shying away from: Future, Science Fiction Quarterly, and the rest just aren't worth the trouble the quarter takes to get out of your pocket.

There are about a dozen magazines that you can safely buy on the market and proudly carry home with you; and, happily, the list seems to be growing rather than receding, so the stfan of the future still has some spark left to glow in his breast, however faint. These magazines you can trust to safely give you many hours of pleasure over the long nights.

<u>ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION</u>	Monthly,	12 issues per year
<u>FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES</u>	Bi-monthly,	6 ipy
<u>FANTASTIC</u>	Quarterly,	4 ipy
<u>FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE</u>	Quarterly,	4 ipy
<u>GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION</u>	Monthly,	12 ipy
<u>GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS</u>	Bi-monthly,	6 ipy
<u>IF</u>	Bi-monthly,	6 ipy
<u>SPACE SCIENCE FICTION</u>	Bi-monthly,	6 ipy
<u>STARTLING STORIES</u>	Monthly,	12 ipy
<u>THRILLING WONDER STORIES</u>	Bi-monthly,	6 ipy
<u>TWO COMPLETE SCI-ADVENTURE BOOKS</u> ..	Quarterly,	4 ipy
<u>WONDER STORY ANNUAL</u>	Annually,	1 ipy

Twelve magazines, and they give you over 75 - 80 issues of reading pleasure per year, for less than \$25, by subscription prices. What more could a fan want?

Gregg Calkins



Brady



WOLFPRIDE

by A. A. Henderson

Dogs! Curling their tails and groveling in the dust;
Dogs! My distant cousins, long removed by blood and
Farther yet by choice; things of selfish, pampered lust,
Who live and die and never know the touch of nature's hand.

In the forest white
I hunt by day and night;
The cold clings close around
The frozen, silvery ground;
I suffer, hunger, and fight
Starvation's ancient night;
For I am Wolf, and free
To seek my own wild destiny.

And in the springtime, ancient aphrodisiac of earth,
The pack breaks up and, two by two, seek shelter, hidden deep
Within our forest mother's heart; and soon the joyous birth
Of pups at play disturbs the mountains in their timeless sleep.

Rabbit, woodchuck, squirrel and deer
I hunt; they flee in panicked fear
And then I catch and slay and eat
My fill of warm and savory meat.
High and long and fierce I sing
My song of death; some forest thing
Has fallen to the hunter's night,
And mate and pups, shall feast tonight.

A rich life, a good life, of freedom, meat and playing with my pups,
Until the long awaited winter comes, and Father Frost's cold breath
Cuts short our revelry; the game grows scarce, and he who sups
From nature's bounty must be strong, or feel the clutch of death.

Into a pack we band
And roam the ravished land;
He who disputes our night
Will be picked bones tonight;
For slaughter, death and fear
Have made us masters here;
No servil; whining dogs are we;
We have Wolfpride, and dignity.



NEWSSTAND MEETING BY NORIAN G. BROWNE

I was walking down the aisle of a large department store when suddenly my eye caught a figure and I stopped short. I stood there watching for many minutes. It was a boy about 19 years old standing by the magazine section calmly reading a copy of Other Worlds. I stood there transfixed, my eyes gazing off into nowhere. Here was another person, a person like I who read stf. I was spellbound by the thought.

Then gradually my senses returned to the department store. It was silly of me to look at the incident in that light. Certainly other people read stf; why I had just received a letter saying that there was a possible 1000 readers of stf in my town.

My world of dreaming bliss suddenly crashed about me as a rather heavily-laden buxom woman collided with me in the middle of the aisle. I hastily mumbled a string of suitable apologies, but I fear they were lost upon her as she waddled away in a huff. But the incident served its purpose: I quickly sidled up beside the lad at the magazine counter.

Then my troubles started. He was reading Other Worlds; what should I read? Should I act very highbrow and pick up a copy of Galaxy? Or should I act like the rankest noofan and read a copy of Future? I decided to gamble and picked up a copy of Galaxy. For many minutes I stood there, flipping the pages in a magazine that I had already read, watching him out of the corner of my eye. Would he take the bait? Would he notice me reading a stf magazine? Would he be interested enough to say anything? Nothing happened. He seemed completely oblivious to my presence.

Then a horrible thought struck me. How much farther had he to go before he would finish the magazine? Panic-stricken, I glanced over and saw that he was nearly finished with the copy. Would he leave then, or would he browse through another magazine? I waited and watched. The copy of Galaxy in my hands vibrated from my nervousness. Hastily I shut it and pretended to be reading the ad on the back cover. The seconds crept by in agony; the suspense built up and built up.

Then, slowly, ever so slowly, he replaced the magazine on the rack. I watched his every move, breathlessly. He didn't pick up another magazine; instead he stood there looking over the rack.

I could feel the fear building up in me. My nervousness was becoming noticeably worse. My mind kept shouting over and over, "Don't go, don't go, don't go..."

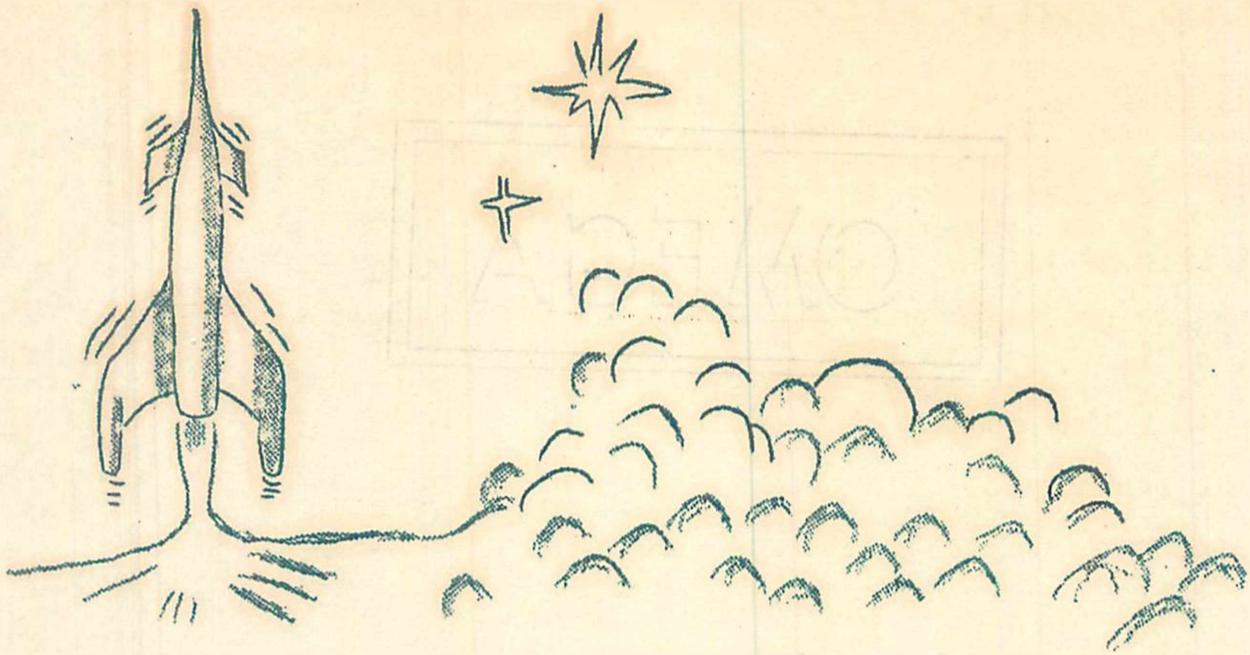
Then a strange thing happened. He glanced over at me. Quickly I brought my gaze back to rest on the back cover of the mag I was holding. I could feel his eyes burning through me. Over and over again I read that one ad until its damning message was burned into my brain. When I thought he wasn't looking I risked a glance in his direction. He was still watching me! I reddened from embarrassment and hastily averted my gaze.

Meanwhile my hands had been sweating so much from the sheer tension of the situation that I felt the mag I was holding slipping from my fingers. Slowly, ever so slowly, I replaced it on the rack. After wiping my hands on my trousers I returned to the mags and looked for another suitable item for bait. Still he stood there, gazing at the magazine counter, unmoving.

At last his searching eyes came to light on a copy of Future, and this he picked up. I groaned inwardly but followed suit and picked up another copy of the same mag. Then I decided I didn't want to go through this all over again. After glancing through it briefly, I placed it back on the rack with one word:

"Crud."

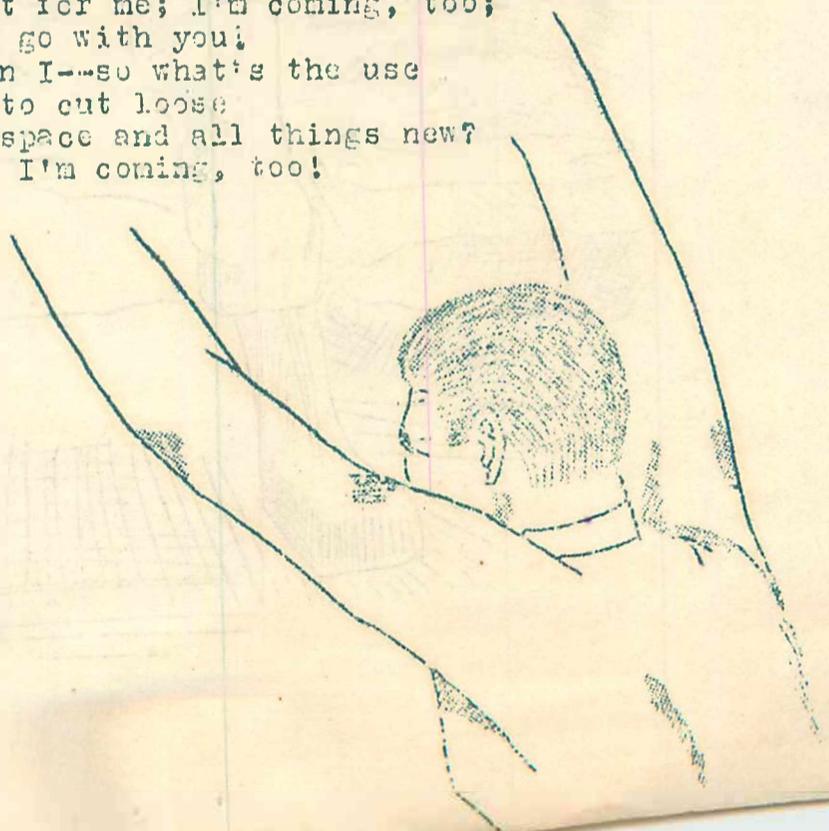
He said, "That's for sure," and turned to look at me, a smile on his face. Then it dawned on me; why he had ignored me, why he had watched me, why he had smiled when I had said crud. He had been reading Other Worlds to bait me! We both burst out laughing...



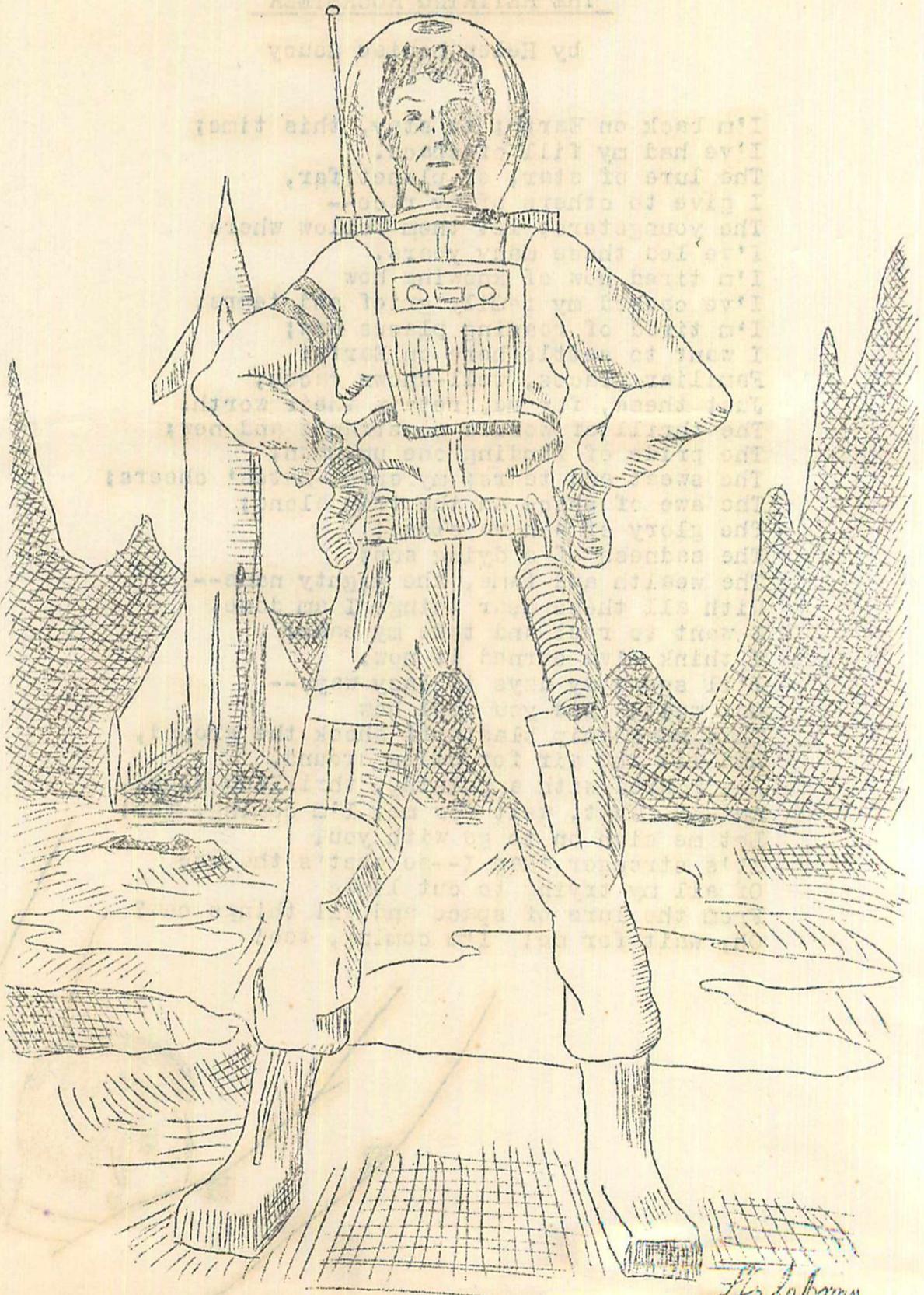
THE RETIRING ROCKETEER

by Helen Louise Soucy

I'm back on Earth; to stay, this time;
I've had my fill of space.
The lure of star, of planet far,
I give to others of my race--
The youngsters; let them follow where
I've led these many years.
I'm tired now of knowing how
I've caused my family grief and tears.
I'm tired of roaming places new;
I want to settle here on Earth;
Familiar places, well-known races;
Just these, for me, retain their worth.
The thrill of worlds so strange and new;
The pride of finding one unknown;
The sweat and tears; my space-mates' cheers;
The awe of space on the trip alone;
The glory of a nova close;
The sadness of a dying sun;
The wealth and fame, the mighty name--
With all these dear things I am done.
I want to rest and take my ease;
I think I've earned it now.
I'll spend my days in lazy ways--
But wait! Did you feel how
That spaceship blast-off shook the ground,
And lit the air for miles around,
And roared with a pulsing, thrilling sound,
And--? Wait, wait for me; I'm coming, too;
Let me sign on to go with you!
It's stronger than I--so what's the use
Of all my trying to cut loose
From the lure of space and all things new?
Oh, wait for me! I'm coming, too!



OMEGA



H. Shapiro

1.) You done SUBscribed



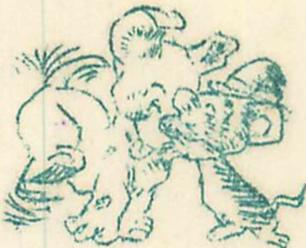
2.) You sent a mere 15¢



3.) You is a REEviewer



4.) You done CONTRIBUTED



5.) Sample...gone sub?



6.) Trade for _____



You got _____ more issues comin'.

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c/o

Keith Joseph
105 Richland Ave.
San Francisco, Calif.

Terry Carr
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San Francisco, Calif.



Mimmy-o-graft stuff only

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