

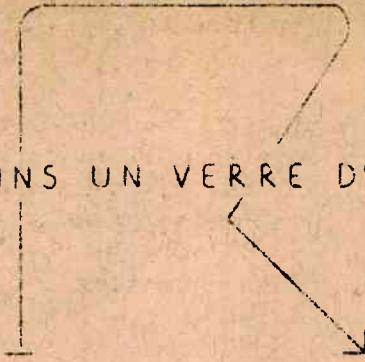
oopsia

NUMBER 23

THE FAKE FAN'S ALMANAC

bergeron

Mid-November 1957



DANS UN VERRE D'EAU

Well, here it is the middle of the month and about time for me to get out the old ABDick again... I've seriously considered trading it in for a nice, new ditto a couple of times, but somehow I don't think that I ever will. I've used this mimeo too long now--we're friends, that's what we are. Not that we haven't had our little differences...I remember one time when it kept ripping the sheets of paper in half

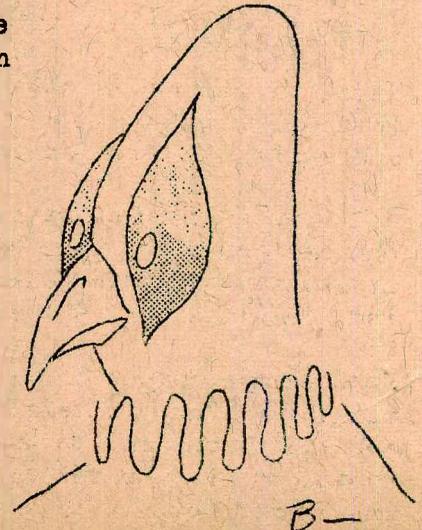
before feeding them in under the inky cylinder and I kept cussing and hitting it until we both got tired and quit...but those are things of the past. Besides, I'm not sure I'd be happy with a ditto. And they'd probably want more money for one.

This is, by the way, an editor-type fan crittur name of Gregg Calkins speaking. It seems sort of like vulgar ostentation to go right out and print my name like that in my own magazine--illegal egoboo, or something--but Bob Pavlat mentioned last time that he couldn't find my name and address anywhere in the magazine, an item which might well cut down on the number of letters I receive from readers, so I hereby stand corrected. The address is 1068 Third Avenue, Salt Lake City 3, Utah, I might add, and this is the twenty-third issue of OOPSLA to bear that title. Published bi-monthly, the price is 15¢ per copy, 2/25¢ and 4/50¢ based on a twenty page issue. If issues get thicker or slimmer prices will be adjusted accordingly.

Response to last issue has been rather slim...disappointingly so, I felt, but then it is still a little early and some more letters may arrive by the time I get the letter section cut. If not, I'll add an article by John Berry to the presently scheduled contents by Walt Willis, writing his well-known THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE; Vernon L McCain popular MARK OF mcCAIN; and Robert Bloch's timely contribution to conventioning, SURROGATE IN '58. The cover of this issue is by Richard Bergeron, too long missing from these pages, with interior illustrations by Bergeron, DEA, Harness, Metzger and Rotsler.

I suppose it is considered customary at this point for me to say a few words about the first artificial earth satellite--as of this date I haven't seen anything in the fan press about it, but then we don't all publish as frequently as SCIENCE FICTION TIMES (come to think of it, SFT hasn't mentioned it yet either!)--Well, I think it's quite a project and masterfully handled. The Russians surprised the world by getting there before the US did and by now I'm pretty well convinced that it's a Good Thing. Now don't get me wrong...I still think Russia and Communism are tremendous threats to world peace and neither one will be satisfied until the capitalistic system is no longer in existence; but at the same time I'm glad to see Russia accomplish something noteworthy enough to make the world sit up and take notice of their advancements in recent years. We've listened to them claiming invention of the electric light and telephone etc etc for so long that we've lost the power to believe in actual progress on their part. Now all of a sudden they've quit talking and started doing...witness the first artificial satellite in the sky. A lot of preconceived ideas about Russia (as well as a goodly number about space and space travel) are getting hastily revised. People are starting to listen to new ideas and think about things they didn't know existed before. And, best of all, the people with the money and the brains are starting to talk about putting the first man into space in the next few years. And who knows...one of them might be me!

-- wgc ...



B-



If you see anything dirty here it's probably my neck sticking out.

Writing this in the latter part of July, I have no assurance that Los Angeles will capture the World Science Fiction Convention in 1958--hence, out comes my neck. You might say I am sticking my neck out on the end of a limb, but if you do you'd better go back and have another look at an anatomy text.

And while you're doing so (and probably sneaking a peek at those fascinating color-plates of the pelvis) the rest of us will carry on and discuss plans and possibilities for the 1958 Convention.

I'm not quite sure in my own mind (or anyone else's, for that matter) under just what circumstances Rick Sneary originated the slogan,

SURROGATE IN '58 - ROBERT BLOCH

"South Gate in '58." The whole episode seems somewhat cloudy--or, as California citizens might say, smoggy.

For many years this fannish cry had little or no relevancy; it was in a class with derogatory remarks concerning Yngvi or inquiries concerning the damaging of a certain Mr Courtney's property. Fan-historians succeeded in tracing the Yngvi quotation back to its source, and I myself hereby claim credit for running down the Courtney item.

Just for the record, I'm going to set that little matter straight once and for all before proceeding. Many people seem to think that the query "Who sawed Courtney's boat?" originated in an Esquire article. Not so. The source is much, much older, and I spent many years tracing it. Finally I ran across the original quotation in--of all places--the Bible. Where, of course, it reads: "Who sawed Noah's Ark?"

But I'm pretty sure that you won't find "South Gate in '58" in the Bible; unless it appears in the form of a disguised prophecy in Revelations along with that stuff about the end of the world and the coming of the Great Beast. ((Which reminds me... I wonder who TAFF is sending to South Gate this year? --wgc))

Until the matter is settled by a higher authority, such as G M Carr or William Rotsler, we'll have to assume that Sneary is responsible. All through the late '40s and early '50s the fannish chant went on: "South Gate in '58!"

And now, of course, retribution is at hand. Chickens come home to rooster. So, chances are there will be a Los Angeles Convention next year--if not in South Gate at least within the general area. The damage has been done. And the next question is: "Who'll clean up the mess?"

Mr Sneary and some of his cohorts have already taken certain steps: the spring FAPA mailing included an elaborate questionnaire concerning just what prospective attendees might want in the way of a Convention program. Unfortunately, I'm afraid the questions are phrased so that answers will not be very helpful. It is all right for Sneary and Company to inquire "Do you want a banquet?" and "How do you feel about

Surrogate in '58 II

movies?" but when they follow it up, as they did, with "What do you think about balls?" the only possible answer is: "I wouldn't be without them."

No, it would appear that the Planning Committee will be needing some help and a few suggestions. My first suggestion, as an old hand at this sort of affair, is "change your name and go into hiding until 1959." If this one is ruled out--and I've a hunch it will be--then it's up to us to find a practical solution to this Convention problem.

We all know that Conventions have become big affairs and difficult to manage. In contemplating the prospects for '58 it's easy to envision a situation where a thousand or more people pour into Los Angeles and repeat the spectacle of recent years.

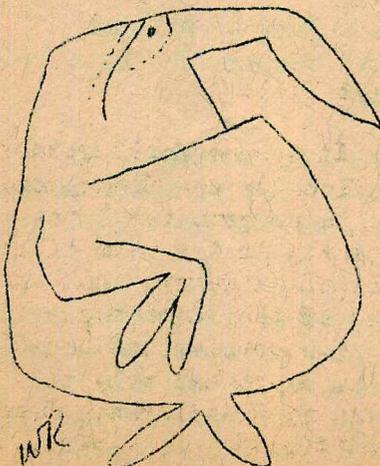
This means that the poor Convention Committee will have to scour the town looking for a big hotel that has no air-conditioning in its halls; one which will cooperate by running just a single elevator, with an operator skilled at catching passengers' heads in the door; one which will guarantee to set aside a bloc of rooms at \$7 per day until the Convention actually opens, whereupon prices will be boosted to \$12 and attendees rooms scattered all over the place for the convenience of the house detective.

This takes time and effort. Wasted time and needless effort, it seems to me. I've been trying to think of solutions. Holding the Convention in the Los Angeles sewers would probably eliminate the need of securing a spot minus air-conditioning; on the other hand, acoustics are such as to render such a location inadvisable. Those of us who have heard Moskowitz sound forth in an ordinary room must tremble in dread at the prospect of having that voice magnified in the natural echo-chamber of a sewer. Besides, the sewer location would probably make the whole Convention the target of a running gag.

Finding the hotel with 1000 rooms and just one working elevator isn't easy, either. My alternative suggestion--just take any hotel and merely remove the elevators, leaving nothing but empty shafts--meets with objections from the union. Granted that it's much easier to slip down an elevator shaft and get to your destination in a hurry than to wait for the coming of an empty car, the business appears impractical.

Then there's always the banquet. Usually the hotel provides its own staff facilities for this but in the event they can't meet the lower standards of the usual Convention meal, it might be possible to get in an outside catering service, such as a local tannery.

But why bother? Why, when there's a perfectly natural solution to the entire question. Viz: merely turn back the clock to 1946 and carry on with the Los Angeles Convention of that year.

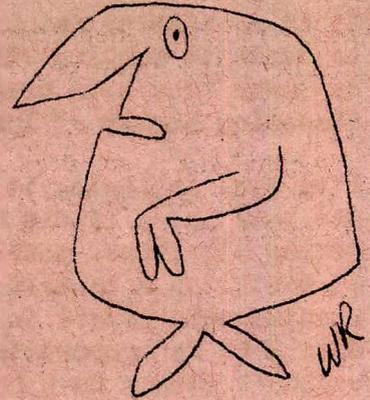


We oldtimers who attended this primitive tribal ritual can well remember just how simple it was. The Convention itself was held in an abandoned chicken-coop across the street from MacArthur Park. I don't recall who furnished the entertainment for the program but I think it was Utter-McKinley. There was no problem about handling the affair: everything was turned over to Forrest J Ackerman, who merely passed out the first day and never returned to the scene of the crime. The banquet menu was simple and typically Californian--Nutburgers, Squidburgers, Spiderburgers and things like that.

By limiting the attendance to the original 150 or 200 who showed up in '46, the Committee would avoid most of their worst difficulties, including Anthony Boucher and other

Surrogate in '58 III

upstarts who have since polluted fandom with their fancy notions, their use of correct English, and other concepts which have robbed us of our Sense of Wonder. Make no mistake about it, that Sense of Wonder was the big feature of the 1946 Convention. We were always wondering just what in hell would happen next.



For example, there was the matter of the film showing. I believe that METROPOLIS was originally scheduled, or THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME--whichever Ackerman got the biggest rake-off on. So nobody was really surprised when the movie turned out to be ONE MILLION BC. (That "BC" means "Before Cinemascope," naturally.) Those who objected to the scanty banquet fare were thus compensated by being presented with this turkey. The opus starred Victor Mature way back in the days when he was young and known as Victor Immature. It was a real educational treat, revealing such little-realized bits as the fact that prehistoric cave women wore lipstick and put on uplift bras before zipping up their leopard-skins.

Unfortunately, just as the film was beginning to get interesting--in fact, when it appeared that in this one scene the heroine had forgotten to pull up her zipper--something went haywire with the projector, or the projectionist. I forget which, and so does the projectionist, a Mr Tucker. As a result, the showing was never completed.

I submit therefore that the 1958 Convention return to the 1946 program and merely re-run ONE MILLION BC again. Ackerman can collapse once more, Burbee can climax the whole affair by telling the Watermelon Story (since filmed as THE BAD SEED) and what more do you want?

If, however, you do insist on more--and I'm afraid the Committee and some of the guests may do just that--then I've one final proposal.

That, of course, is my "Surrogate in '58" plan.

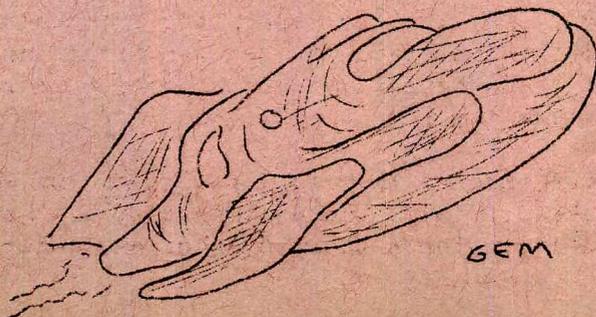
Under this proposition, there is no convention hall, no banquet, no entertainment, no speakers, and not even a Convention Committee. In fact, there's not even a Convention

Everybody merely stays home from the middle of August to the middle of September or thereabouts. You take about four days off during that time and lock yourself in a hot, airtight room, put on a continuous tape-recording of Mossolov's STEEL FOUNDRY, gulp down a fifty of Jim Beam every three hours and a bottle of aspirin each night, and stay awake during the entire period. At the end of the week you emerge, feeling exactly as you would if you'd attended a Convention.

Then, with the money you saved, you can all go off to the next affair...which I plan to promote with the slogan: "Hollywood and Vine in '59!"

-- Robert Bloch ...

((Editor's Note: It was no doubt rather a surprise to Mr Bloch to see Sneary and Company undertake to program the 1958 Convention, especially in the face of this article. It is hoped, however, that they will make good use of the other suggestions contained herein. Concerning the South Gate Convention, Mr Bloch has only this further remark: "As my Grandfathers Bloch used to say...tick tock!" --wgc...))



It is considered rather naive, in fannish circles, to admit to reading stf. However, I wonder just how many fans have been following closely the flowering career of Bob Silverberg.

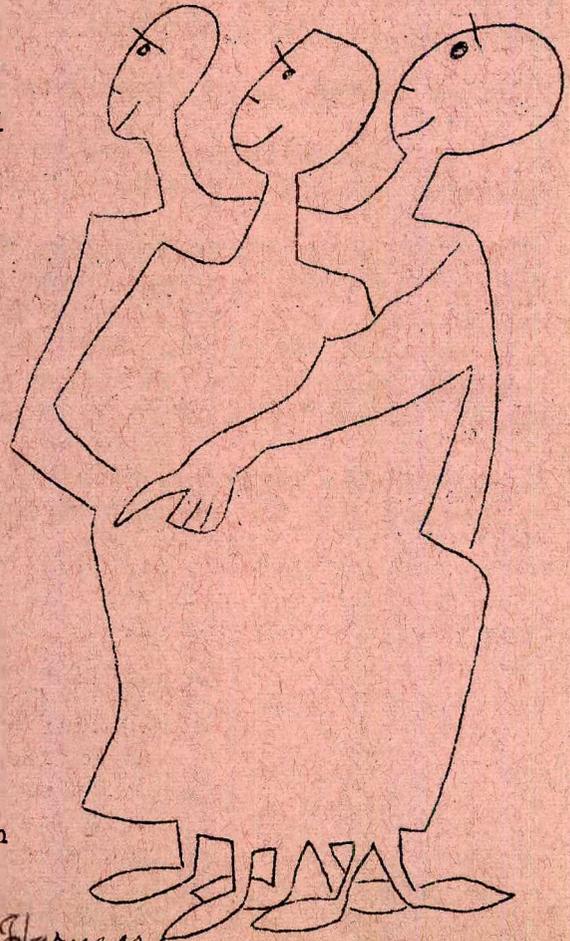
I've been following it with considerable interest, and not a little amazement. When Bob was making his first, mostly unsuccessful, struggles to establish a toehold in prodom, I was exerting considerable effort in that direction myself. I shan't be so hypocritical as to pretend that I wouldn't rather have had Bob's success myself, but I have been very pleased to see him establish himself so firmly.

One significant fact, I think, has been overlooked by most of fandom. Silverberg is the first important new writer recruited from the heart of fandom since the days of Bradbury and Tucker. There've been a number of additions to the field who had had brief contact with fandom's fringes but they were never very active. And quite a few of the familiar fannish names have sold one or more stories but failed to establish themselves as regular dependable professionals. We've even had a couple of fans who parlayed persistence, propinquity, and a complete lack of talent into temporary full-time employment as writers. However, one of these has already faded back into amateurism and I imagine the other will eventually do so also. Neither can be termed a significant addition to the field of science-fiction writing.

Bob has advanced his ideas as to why he succeeded where so many failed. I think he is too close to the situation to have the necessary perspective for judgement, however. I have several ideas of my own as to the particular factors present in his case which led to success, all of which I'm sure Bob would dispute vigorously. But that is not germane to this particular discussion.

The thing I have found particularly amazing is the vast improvement in the quality of his writing since he started. Every science fiction fan who has succeeded in selling to the professional markets has done so initially with very crude merchandise. Bob was no exception. (And in case anyone is wondering, that statement applies to every single first-published-sale by a fan I have ever read...no fans excepted. I've always finished every story with a peculiar wonderment as to what odd combination of circumstances caused a professional editor to pay cash money for anything so poorly done.) If the fan in question is a friend of yours you have to hunt carefully for any good aspects of the story which you can praise and merely ignore the bulk of

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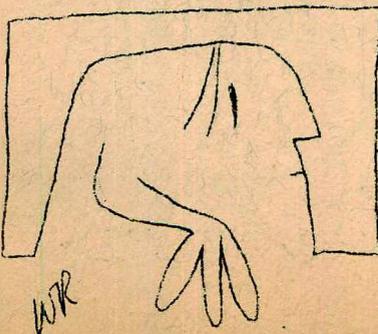
The Mark of McCain II

the inadequacies. Bob's early stories were on the usual level in both plotting and writing. In all fairness to Bob I should add that he was aware of much of this and was deliberately experimenting in an attempt to find the magic formula that would sell...since the stories he wanted to write--the best he had in him--were not selling. It is a sad commentary on the standards employed by many editors that most of his early sales came from these deliberately-manufactured pieces of inferior merchandise. Of course I suppose this could be explained by the statement John Campbell once made that he would accept much poorer treatment on a hackneyed theme than he would on a brilliantly original theme since the reader would feel let down if the original idea was mishandled and it would be ruined for any future author who might have handled it better.

However, for the most part Bob's stories were not selling any better, in those stiff-depression days, than those of any other would-be-professional fan. Then, suddenly, in the summer of 1955, he struck gold and started placing stories in every direction. I was a trifle surprised as his published work, till that time, did not seem to be good enough to allow the switch to full-time writing. The first half-dozen or so published stories did nothing to clear up the mystery. Although almost every story marked a slight improvement over its predecessor, showing an increasing grasp of the professional story-telling technique, they were still unmistakably an amateur's stories. I should add that the sole distinguishing factor from his fellow amateurs, which Bob had demonstrated from his first story, was a slightly more professional approach which could be felt in his writing. You felt that there was a potential professional writer beneath all the superficial errors he made. This quality stood him in good stead and, step by step, he was learning the trade.

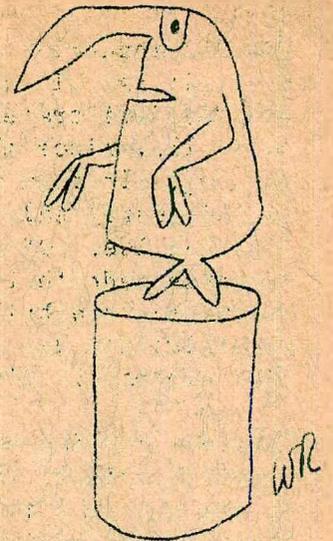
I knew that he had sold one short story to ASTOUNDING and was anxious to see what it was like. When you hear a fan has sold his first story to aSF you always feel he must have produced a minor classic to make the breakthrough and in this case the feeling turned out to be justified. The story, "To Be Continued," was a splendid little cameo and, perhaps, marks Bob's high-water mark to date. Bob's stories were growing more and more professional and he followed up with quite a few more sales to the top three, some of which were obviously carpentered items designed to appeal strictly to editorial weaknesses rather than with strength of story in mind. At about this period some of us were afraid that Bob was headed for the trap of hackdom...another Rog Phillips, Noel Loomis, or George O Smith. The stories were (usually) becoming more and more readable but there was a fear that the content was growing thinner and that they were being turned out too mechanically.

I'm happy to report my fears in that respect completely dissipated. I've just completed reading a new novel by Bob, titled "Master of Life and Death," which comes very close to matching the quality of "To Be Continued" and which it sustains throughout novel length. It's one of the fastest-paced stories I've read in a long time (without containing a lot of pointless action) and demonstrates a floodtide of ingenuity and original ideas. Bob passed the point of leaving tool-marks on his prose some time ago and his plots are almost to the same level. I could detect only one very slight error in the entire book...a wholly unnecessary deux ex machina climax in which someone else conveniently pulls the hero out of his final, biggest problem. I say wholly unnecessary because the entire book is taken up with this same hero pulling one rabbit after another out of a multitude of silk hats while wading through an endless series of seemingly insoluble problems. But Bob's skill is now so great that he almost managed to get this one flaw by me without my noticing it. Otherwise, if you were planning on writing a book in this manner on this theme, it would be next to impossible to do is more perfectly than Bob has done.



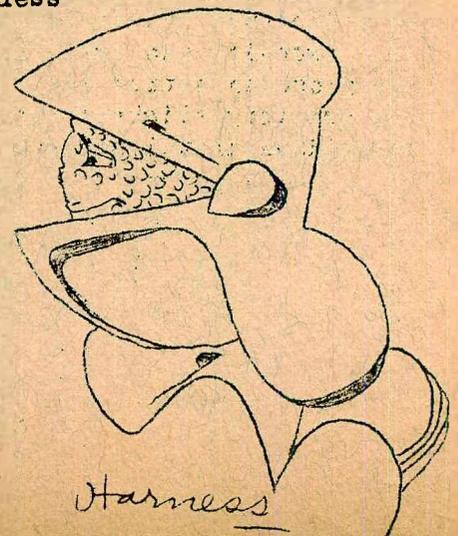
The Mark of McCain III

It's a fine book and I recommend everyone read it. It is not a great book. Silverberg has yet to produce anything classic in the genre but he's learned his trade and I see no reason why he shouldn't apply his tools to more ambitious projects in the future. He is already on a level footing with such multi-talented newcomers as Philip Dick and Robert Sheckley. At his best, Silverberg can match such veteran masters of the engrossing phrase as Damon Knight and Fredric Brown. At his present level he wouldn't suffer too badly from a comparison with the Old Master, Heinlein, though there's no doubt who would come out the consistent second in that particular match. He cannot match Bradbury at Bradbury's best (it is necessary, however, to speak of Bradbury in the past tense...his creative work in the science fiction field seems to have ended five years ago) nor would Silverberg dare to get into the same ring with Sturgeon. But certainly he is one of our important young new writers. Even knowing the talent he possessed, I certainly did not foresee this improvement three years ago when he was making his first spasmodic struggles into the limelight. Despite what the writers' magazines say, I've always had a feeling that writers are born, not made. (Of course, they are actually both...without the necessary talents and character traits, Silverberg would not have been pliable to the discipline necessary to develop a good writer.) But certainly this has been a most remarkable demonstration of a writer in the making, from formless yearning into assured mastery. And I think the most significant factor in the process was that old fannish standby, egoboo. Without the confidence and stimulus received from seeing those early, basically unsalable (even though they did sell) stories in print I doubt if Bob would have had the persistence and (for want of a better word) inspiration to press on with constant production and self-improvement. Even if he had kept writing on a fairly regular schedule I suspect that he would still be turning out basically amateurish stories...improved, no doubt, but still obviously the work of an amateur. But by selling a certain percentage of his stories he was steered in the direction of greater professionalism and he concentrated on the factors which had yielded returns before. Thus grew the professional. I think fandom can well be proud of him.



"Master of Life and Death" will not be liked by every fan. I suspect it will be particularly disliked by that vocal segment of fandom which seems to feel that every story must be a treatise on fellowship, neighborliness and the wickedness of dropping the atom bomb. This book is, basically, the story of a man who plays God. The fact that he is primarily a well-meaning, idealistic and unwilling man who is forced into the role in order to save the human race will not cut much ice in such quarters. This viewpoint is particularly well-represented amongst our good friends in the British Isles and, if I may be forgiven, I'd hazard a guess that their repetitious preachments on this subject are inspired less by moral repugnance at the idea of an individual playing God as by a general abhorrence of any such active philosophy plus dedication to the sacred British principal of 'muddling through.'

The idea of the individual who 'makes decisions' and 'gets things done' is alien to the British and their way of life. It is basically an American (and perhaps Germanic) concept. The British have centuries of tradition behind them and they aren't interested in new ways of doing things since this would no doubt interfere with the comfortable old way. Although the British, in the past, have undoubtedly meddled in the affairs of more foreign peoples than any other nation they find the idea of any tampering with



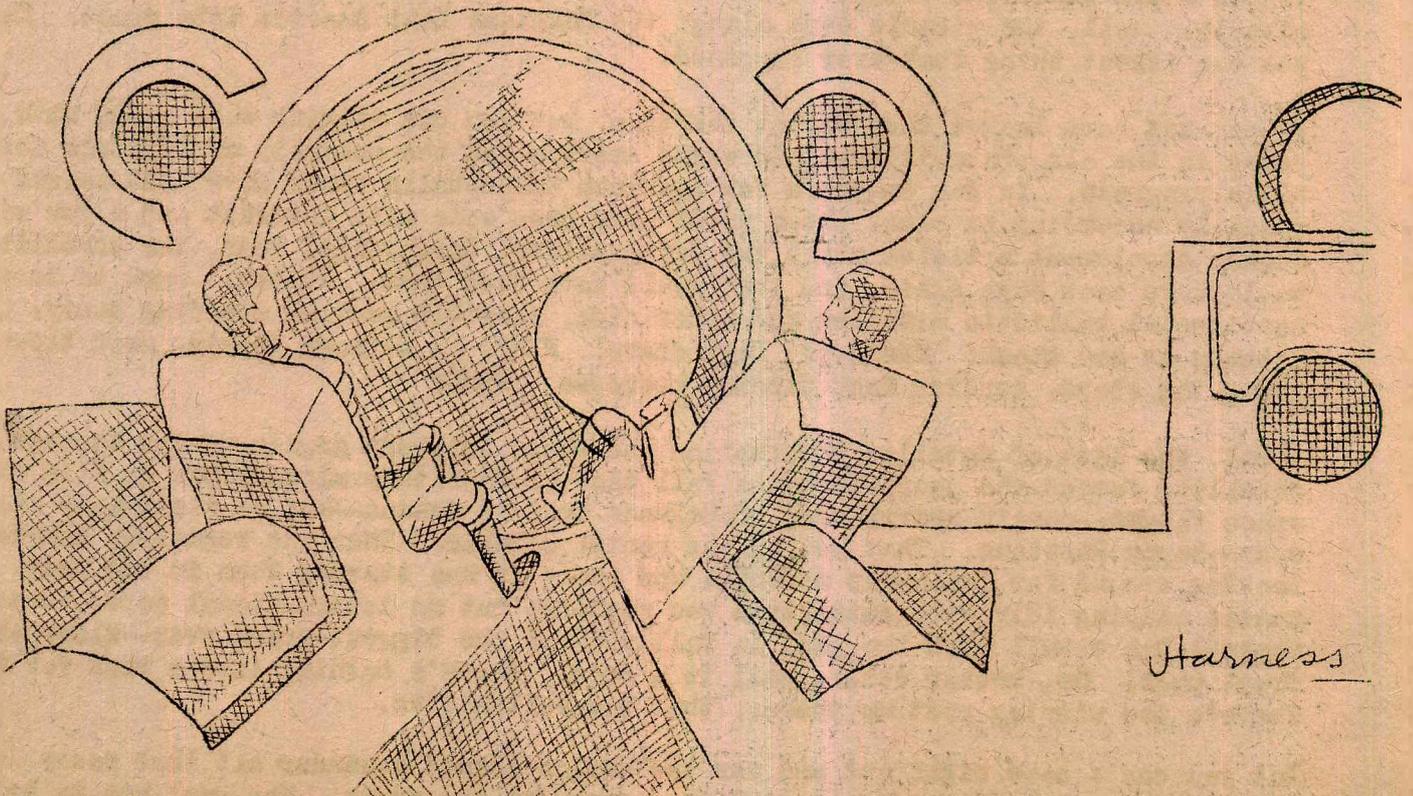
The Mark of McCain IV

their own habits and way of life extremely objectionable. And people who go out and 'do things' invariably cause repercussions in the lives of others.

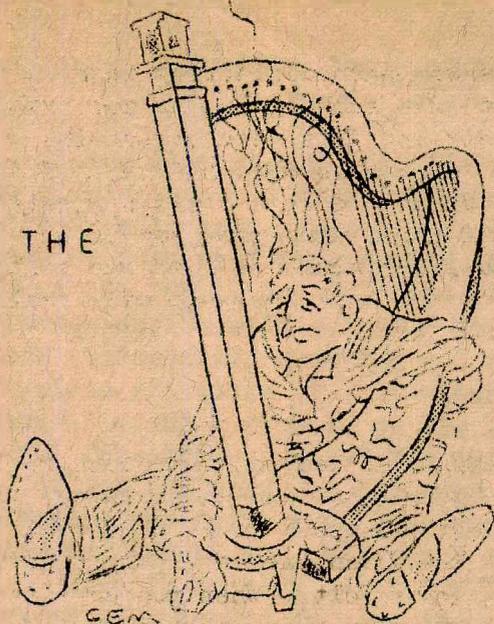
Not only is British science fiction a static, comfortable thing concerned mostly with aliens, runaway plants and chemicals which rudely interfere with the comfortable way of life and must be dealt with, but I've grown increasingly aware that other British output partakes of similar qualities. British movies have always been hard to come by in theatres in this country. Since acquiring a tv set I've had an endless supply of them and find them less attractive than I once did. They're like olives--extraordinarily tasty and a splendid way to vary the diet but not very satisfactory when eaten day in and day out...at least not to an American. And, to carry the analogy further, most people have to learn to like them. (I was an exception there in that I enjoyed both at the first sampling.) British movies are restful, whimsical, delightful, subtle and well-acted. But have you ever seen one to which the common American cinematic adjective of 'dynamic' could be applied? And, with the exception of one or two masters of suspense like Hitchcock and Reed, I've yet to see one which merited the adjectives 'thrilling' or 'exciting.' I think the science fiction stories so many British fans attack as unethical are actually abhorrent only because the fans find those stories make them uncomfortable and grab for the first handy explanation they can find on which to base an attack.

While we're on the subject of the British, James White is the most promising British fan to sell professionally in recent years. He writes extremely well and I'm sorry he isn't as prolific as Silverberg and that more of his writing isn't available on this side of the Atlantic. "Master of Time and Space" is half of an Ace double-novel and the other half is "The Secret Visitors" by James White. My expectations for this novel were also quite high but unfortunately it reads as if Wollheim had gone through and crossed out every third paragraph in order to reduce it to the required space. This novel is one of the most incredible collections of non sequiturs I've ever encountered and almost unreadable. White has always done splendidly before and it is a shame that it is in this form most American readers will encounter him for the first time. I hope that soon we can see him in non-blue-pencilled form.

-- Vernon L. McCain ...



Harness



THE

THAT ONCE
OR TWICE

WALT WILLIS

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Neofen

Isn't it funny how life always ad libs? You think up all the ways a thing can possibly happen and write them down and classify them and check through them again and again to make sure you've covered every possible twist...and then the Event comes along and Fate throws away the script and somehow manages to do the unexpected after all. I guess it proves the Universe is a live show, which is a good thing—I'd hate to be a telerecording—but it is sort of unsettling, isn't it?

I'm thinking of the beginnings of space flight as we're watching them now...or The Dawn of The Space Age as those neofannish newspapers persist in calling it. For the last thirty years and more all us high power inventive geniuses in science fiction have been working out the various ways in which this situation we have nowadays might have come about. And now here it is and it's happened in a way not one of us foresaw. What's more--and this is the most surprising thing of all--we now see quite clearly that it just couldn't have happened any other way.

I don't mean the satellites, of course, I mean something far more astonishing and important--the acceptance by the public of the sciencefictional creed that man's destiny lies in space. Now that we've won there's no harm in admitting here among ourselves that we hadn't much of a case. There is no economic or military value of traveling to the moon and the planets: nothing we could find there would be worth the cost of fetching it home and colonisation is a logistic absurdity. The brutal truth is that we have been goldbricking the world. We have been trying to hoodwink the public into throwing away billions of dollars of their money just so we could check up on Bonestell. It was a con game, the biggest ever, and it hadn't a chance of coming off without a miracle. Well, the miracle came along: the Russians beat America into space. That was the finest thing that ever happened.

It may not have looked that way at the time, but you can imagine what would have happened in the old probability-world where America had the monopoly of big-time scientific progress. In due course a few American basketballs would have been tossed up casually according to plan, there would have been some mild interest and a few more Sunday supplement articles about the International Geophysical Year, the satellites would have come down again, and that would have been that. Finish. Back to intercontinental ballistic missiles and other nice, sensible ways of spending money. But instead we had shock! Mystery! High drama! NEWS! A strange Russian moon bleeping among the stars, sending back uncanny messages. NEWS!

First, the lack of detailed information and human interest angles on the strange satellite forced the journalists to fall back on what they already had on file about space flight--mostly starry-eyed propaganda from us faaans--and on statements from space-happy Russians. That set up the mental climate. Then the reporters started looking around for follow-up material and there it was staring them in the face. One nation playing idly with satellites was nothing; but an international contest--astromical basketball with the goal in full view of the biggest crowd ever--clear the front page! Or, better still, call it a race. There's nothing like a race for news. There's the winning post up there...that big yellow disc.

But you can't come right out and say the nation should squander all that money just to salve its injured pride and make good copy for the press. The goal has to be made

The Harp That Once Or Twice II

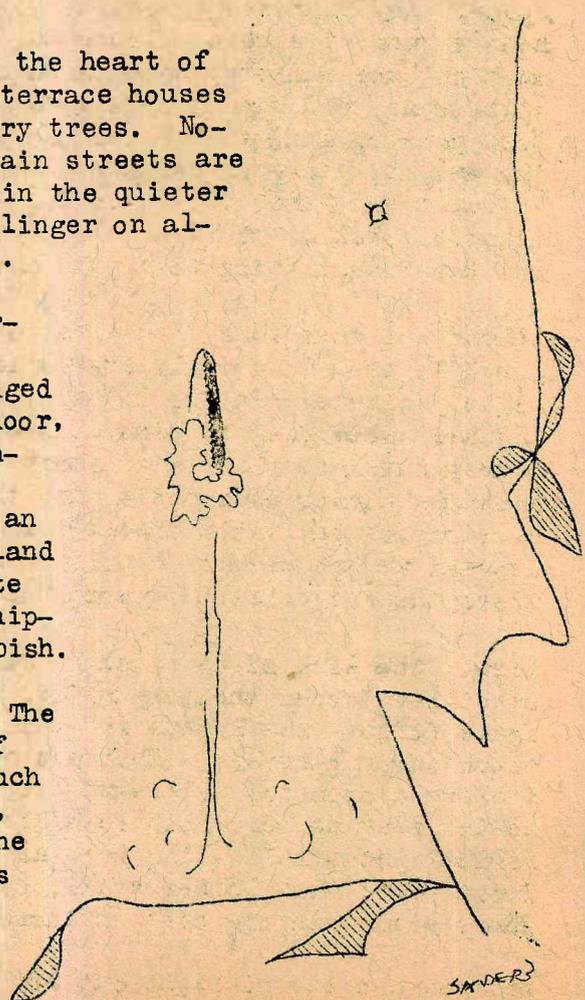
to look worth while. So all of a sudden all the newsmen became indistinguishable from science fiction fans. They proclaimed that the start of space flight was comparable to the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel and it's development the greatest thing in Man's future. The few diehards who dissented were mocked as fuddy-duddies, the way we used to be mocked as crackpots. So now we have the two greatest nations in the world ((sic)) hellbent for the moon and Mars. The race may have started for the wrong reasons but they're rapidly being rationalised into the right ones, borrowed from us, and by the time we get there, with luck everyone will realize that the only race that mattered all along was that of Man.

We're off!

SNUG IN THE FUG The London Worldcon was comfortable, relaxed, casual, conversational, friendly, informal, unpretentious and epochmaking. I'm not going to write any detailed report about it, partly because I haven't got the necessary notes and partly because it seems to me to have been one of those occasions where what happened wasn't important so much as how people felt. When you come to think of it, that's true to some extent of most conventions. You can read page after page of conreport full of details about the program or of meals, meetings and movements, and at the end of it you find that all the writer had conveyed of what was the important thing about the convention--what it felt like to be there--was half buried in an almost accidental phrase or an unconsciously revealing incident. In your mind your subconscious takes the conreport and shreds it down, throws away all the bones of hard fact except for a few flavoursome events, and boils the rest down until you're left with the pure, rich essence of the convention. This is what you remember, what distinguishes that convention from any other. It should be possible to perform this operation at the plant and supply the finished produce direct to the consumer. I'll try.

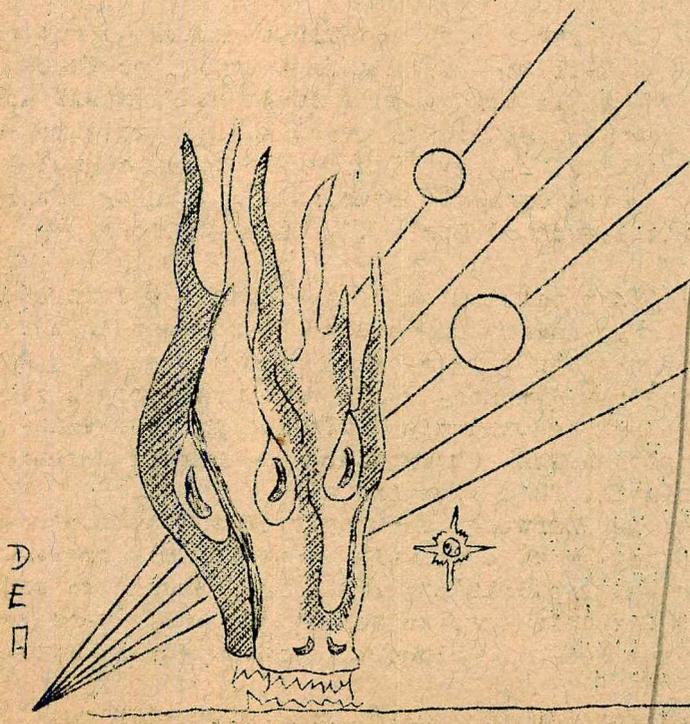
Imagine a quiet old part of London just outside the heart of the city. Bayswater. Stately old stone-faced terrace houses with balconies, rusty iron railings and desultory trees. Nobody can afford to live here any more and the main streets are all small shops, offices and restaurants. But in the quieter streets, like Leinster Gardens, the old houses linger on almost unchanged as hotels. Like the Kings Court.

We approached it from the tube station by a curiously circuitous route and the first thing we noticed about it were two tattered doormats wedged against the stone pillars on each side of the door, like hair growing out of nostrils. Directly inside the door was the reception desk with two pretty girls behind it talking to someone with an American accent whom I didn't recognize, an island of order in a sea of chaos. The lounge opposite them was strewn with unassembled electronic equipment, paintpots, junk, shavings, paper and rubbish. Overalled workmen were everywhere; there was a smell of turpentine and a sound of hammering. The carpets were up, of course, but it looked as if they might come down again by Christmas. No such glowing hopes could be held out for the stairs, where work had hardly yet started. Probably the decorators had had a look at the bedroom floors and decided there was no point in encouraging anyone to go up there. The corridors had a definite air of being reconciled to demolition, being neither straight nor level,



so that you found yourself brushing the walls or now and again running downhill... very disturbing in the early hours of the morning. This was because the hotel had been made by knocking three or four houses together and of course they didn't quite fit. Every now and then a flight of steep stone steps led down to a dirty lavatory or bathroom. There was not much the management could have done with the antiquated plumbing at short notice but they might, in deference to the susceptibilities of our refined American friends, have segregated them into male and female.

Downstairs again I found Bobbie Wild and Dave Newman, Convention Secretary and Program Committee stalwart respectively, both talking at once to a dark, plump, disgruntled man of about 35. They introduced him as the manager who had, they enthusiastically affirmed, been "very cooperative." I formed the impression that they were trying to butter him up and tried to do my bit. "Ah, M. Maurigny!" I exclaimed joyfully with my best mixture of French accent and Irish charm. So this was the wonderful M. Maurigny, proud representative of the best of French cuisine and continental gaiety and blood brother of the Convention Committee. Bobbie and Dave looked slightly taken aback and hastily explained that M. Maurigny had just sold out, leaving the sinking ship to this new manager, Mr Wilson, who had had a Raw Deal but was being Very Cooperative. Very Cooperative, they repeated fervently. Apparently the villainous Maurigny had handed over the place in dilapidation and chaos, leaving the cooperative Mr Wilson to cope with redecoration and a convention simultaneously. But convention or no convention, the redecoration must go on. I also learned that several of the Americans who had come over on the chartered plane had checked out of the hotel in high dudgeon already, some without paying their bills, and one of them had felt so deeply about it he had gone to the trouble to telephone a complaint about the hotel to the British Hotel Association. I scanned through the list of their names anxiously and was somewhat relieved to find I didn't recognise any of them except Gray Barker, the flying saucer man. Feeling that my intervention hadn't been too helpful I slunk away to get something to eat. It was only 15 paces from there to the dining room but in that distance three people told me the hotel food was unspeakable so we invited the last of them (Harry Harrison) to eat outside and had a worried curry at an Indian restaurant two blocks away. No matter how you look at it, it wasn't a good start for a Worldcon.



That was Thursday, but by Friday evening things were looking up. There were nice new carpets everywhere downstairs and even some bits on the walls. At least they were covered with an odd hairy wallpaper, all little patches of short, red fur. I remember asking Moskowitz if it was science fiction plush. I'm sorry to be talking so much about the hotel, but believe me it was important. It set the whole mood of the convention. The lounges were the key. There were five of them, altogether, all quite small, and furnished with comfortable armchairs and coffee tables. Waiters with trays and girls with trollies patrolled them until dawn plying the fans with food and drink. The drinks actually had ice in them. Yes, ICE! (Only those of us who have been to Europe will be properly impressed by this.) It seemed to me it would take an awful lot of dirty bathrooms to outweigh all this. The most important result was that we had lounge parties instead of bedroom parties, a quite

Footnote?

I think women are wonderful.

Until the other day I never really realized how indispensable they are. For instance, I always took the routine chores of a housewife as something simple and instinctive, something basically maternal which they really liked doing. Washing kids and cooking and baking and wiping and cleaning and everything. Simple. Enough to keep them quiet and occupied. On the other hand I always felt sort of humble and superior at the same time. The stolid male, the worker, the breadwinner, keeping the home going with a kind word here and there; the odd bunch of flowers; an occasional seductive tweak with thumb and forefinger in the vicinity of the nether regions; proffering sufficient amounts of money at the beginning of the month.

As I said, I thought all this...until the other day...

Then my wife developed tonsillitis and was confined to bed. The whole complex house-keeping activities fell upon me...

WHAT CHORES?

BY JOHN BERRY

The first blow was dealt when I rang up the office and discovered that I couldn't obtain leave of absence for the operative period. However, I was allowed to go home early each lunch time and with over two hours at home I thought I could manage to make dinner for the family and clean the house as well.

I think it was the essential speed that caused the uncomfortable and embarrassing incident I am about to relate to you.

... ..
Washing up the mountainous pile of crockery seemed simplicity itself. Just boil some hot water, pour it over the crockery in the sink, sprinkle in a spoonful of detergent, stir well, pull out the crocks, pile them on the washboard and dry 'em...or, according to a new Berry theory I was anxious to test, let them dry themselves, thereby saving a considerable amount of time.

So I boiled water, put the kettle on the washboard after I'd emptied the steaming contents into the sink, and commenced the chore. As I said before, there was such a pile that I needed more hot water, the residue in the sink looking like sludge I once saw at the bottom of a Sewage Disposal Tank. I filled up the kettle, placed it on the gas flame, and a few seconds later the horrible smell started...making the allusion to the sewage tank even more convincing. I furrowed my brow thoughtfully, rammed a clothes-peg over my suffering nostrils, and searched for the source of the smell.

Some strange manifestation drew my eyes magnetically to the gas stove and I saw several technicolour stalactites streeseeching down from the stove to the floor. I had a sudden premonition--a fear that I had perhaps done something wrong when obviously nothing could go wrong.

It wasn't until I looked for the bar of carbolic soap later and couldn't find it that I deduced that when I put the kettle down in the first instance I had inadvertently put it on the soap and the heat had adheared it to the bottom of the kettle. When I replaced the kettle on the flames some sort of chemical reaction had taken place.

I soon discovered a worse horror; the stalactites of roasted carbolic remained immovable--and I hadn't the time to start blasting. I used my initiative, though. When the kids came down early in the morning for a wash I simply instructed them to rub their hands up and down on the biggest stalactite and then wash their hands under

What Chores? II

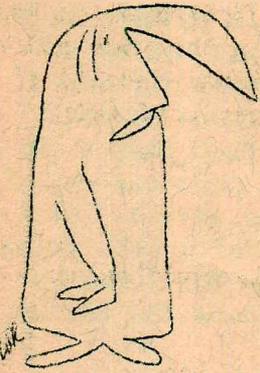
the tap. It certainly made a lather.

I'll let you know in a couple of years if there's anything to this erosion theory.

... ..

I can be excused the vacuum cleaner fiasco. I mean it's a standard Edgar Kennedy routine to put the extension into 'blow' instead of the 'suck' end. What I'm trying to say is that I know it was stupid of me to make the same miscalculation, but you must bear in mind the speed at which I was forced to work...

What tended to frustrate me even more was that the bag inside the cleaner was full of sweepings from my den, which my wife had cleaned out just prior to her illness. I felt there was something ironic about being showered with fragments of THE CONSERVATIVE.



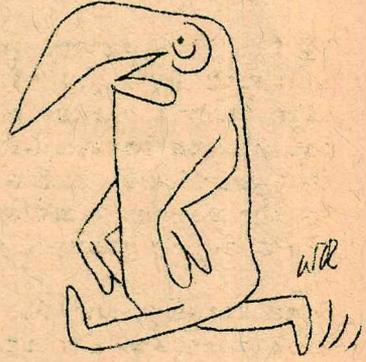
Another thing, I didn't realize the vacuum cleaner had such a capacity for large objects. It was fantastic to see a duplicating-ink-stained rag, about two feet square, ejected from the extension with considerable velocity, spin around like a matador's cloak, and whirl up to the ceiling where it landed with a 'plop' and remained. I rushed outside to get the broom to knock it down and came back in to see the rag staggering about the floor with little hands reaching out from underneath trying to remove it. I don't let my little daughter, Kathleen, aged 3, out to play. It's not just her piebald appearance; but one or two gossips in the neighborhood might suddenly recall that my grandmother was a nurse in the South African War at the turn of the century...

... ..

Laundries have always annoyed me. I'm all for a company making a reasonable profit, but some laundries charge extortionate rates. I had quite a correspondence with a certain outfit which wanted danger money for cleaning my ghoddinton trousers. So what could be simpler than to do all the washing myself and besides saving all the money I could show my wife how extravagant she had been, running up a big laundry bill when it was an easy task to do it at home. I went to the store down the road and after considerable negotiations purchased a packet of LUX soap powder which the shop-keeper said would do to my wife's undies the world of good. It said so on the package.

Quite a formidable stack of dirty linen and clothing had accumulated during my wife's illness so I bundled it all into the clothes boiler, emptied in the entire contents of the LUX packet, and switched on the electricity.

I've got to give the LUX people their due. My wife's undies came out lovely...all gossamer silky sheen and shining. My little girl's dresses turned out beautifully spotless. It was so nice to wipe away the flaky suds and see the utter cleanliness beneath. Everything came out superbly, even down to my daughter's doll's underclothes which had somehow found their way into the wash. The woman next door came in and ironed the washing and on my questioning admitted quite frankly that she herself, with all her experience, had never seen a brighter, whiter wash.



At the time I thought the laundering episode to be my greatest triumph and it wasn't until I started looking for my thick woolen army surplus vests that I began to have misgivings, especially as Kathleen expressed surprise at the sudden acquisition of two vests for her doll.

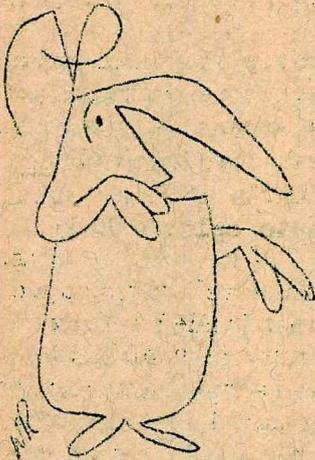
I'm just going to read this over again myself and I might, I just might discover something to bear in mind for any future occasion...which I hope and pray doesn't

What Chores? III

arise.

... ..

And so it went on. By some mischance I dropped a pair of my red silk pyjamas in the bleach. I worried a great deal about the efficiency of the mangle and had my son turn the handle whilst I peered into the rollers to gauge the necessary distance they should be apart...but folks said my moustache needed trimming, anyway, although the asymmetrical effect hasn't quite departed yet. I'm still trying to get my jam puff pie out of the oven and I've tried everything except axle grease. As I said before, so it went on. I learned a heck of a lot during those harrowing weeks. I don't want to boast, but I reckon that after my experiences I've come to appreciate the genius of womanhood even more than before.



There's just one thing.

Although my wife didn't exactly express dismay at the state of the house when she returned just the other day, she did blanch visibly and make the promise that if and when I was ill she'd make sure that my fanac wouldn't suffer. She'd keep it

all up to date for me.

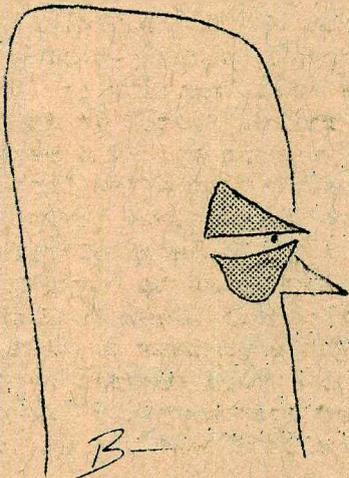
Aspirin, anyone?

— John Berry ...

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FANZINE EDITORS WITH WHOM I TRADE

OTHERS WHO HAVE HAD MY ADDRESS ON FILE NOW FOR SOME TIME

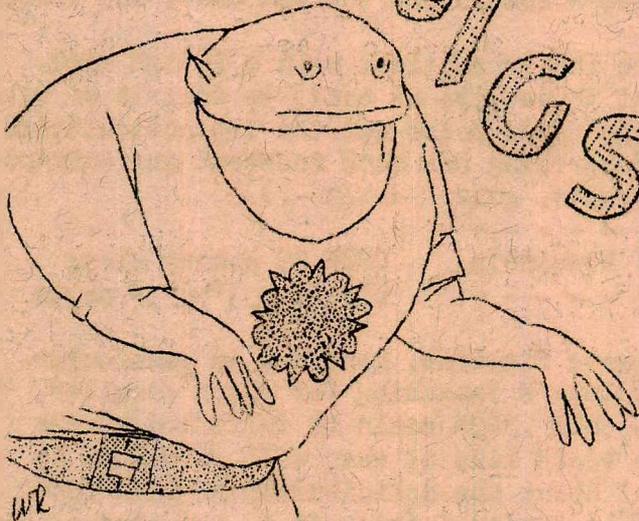


Kindly note that a goodly number of you are sending things to me at an outdated address. Since my last address was at my parents' house and they have since moved, this means mail sent to that address must be forwarded at least twice before it gets to me.

Please correct your files to my current address: 1068 Third Avenue, Salt Lake City 3, Utah

Thank you.

THE ERZBULCS



Just a slight note of clarification on my part before we begin with the letters. In the last line of DANS UN VERRE D'EAU this issue I made the statement: "...who knows...one of them might be me!" Just for the record, I was referring to one of the first men in space, not one of the people with money and brains. I do not fit in this latter category...while the amount of brains I have might be open to question, the amount of money I have, regrettably, is not. And so on to the letters.

Joe Gibson, 6708 South Merrill, Chicago 49, Illinois

Of course, Grennell was perfectly right in saying the double-action mechanism is one improvement in the revolver since its invention. Also, that this improvement was incorporated in revolvers during the early 1900's...but if you think I'm about to split a hair, you're wrong.

It's just that Dean's left out a rather hefty chapter in firearms history. The early percussion-cap revolvers--loaded with loose black powder tamped down in each hole in the cylinder with a ball or conical bullet pushed down on top of that--were slightly unpopular because that gunpowder flared out somewhat each time you fired the gun. It would sometimes set off one, two, or all the other five rounds in the cylinder,

which was quite a hellish handful.

And besides there was a better weapon available--for black powder and ball. It was developed and manufactured rather profitably by one Ethan Allen, onct him and the Green Mountain boys had sorta settled down. It was better for a rather simple reason: instead of having a short, revolving cylinder it had five or six barrels that rotated. And, incidentally, it also had a double-action trigger mechanism. It was also heavy as hell.

But I've been wondering if anyone else would seriously take Grennell to task. Seems like no one has. Surprisingly, too, considering some of the loopholes. There isn't a rifle manufactured or hand-built that can consistently plant 5-shot groups inside a two inch circle at 200 yards--but, worse yet, the vast majority of firearms tend to throw slugs all over the place. You get a good rifle, "zero" it in from a solid bench rest and then keep it around the house for a year or so. The next time you fire it you'll find the sights are off --maybe not more than a few inches, but over or under, left or right? You never know. So you've got to zero it in all over again. And we simply haven't got a really light firearm. I get a laugh out of ads about "light" guns--see this rifle at your dealers' they say; snap it to your shoulder and feel how light and easy it is to handle. Sure...unloaded! Then load the thing with the ammo required to fill the magazine and the weight damn near doubles. Nor do we have a gun that could be adjusted (and this would require some adjustment of the ammunition in the chamber, as well) to any or even most hunting conditions as they are found in the field--shooting rabbit, say, with a bear gun and still having something left for the pot.

It might also be an improvement if we had magnetic fields, rather than rifled steel barrels, to direct bullets fired from a firearm.

There would also be a real advantage to energy-beam guns if you could switch the beam on and wave it around like a flashlight, whether you use a trigger or thumb-switch to do it. A handgun that could shoot hot steam 1000 yards wouldn't be a bad military sidearm, either; a scalding blast of steam would take the fight out of just about anybody.

An important factor in any consideration of improving firearms is how advantageous certain disadvantages may be--and I've never heard this point discussed before. Ken Bulmer brings it up by suggesting a gun that anyone can shoot well, not merely those who happen to be good marksmen. Ken's a small guy, but there are good rifles that won't knock hell out of you or weigh you down on a long hike. But imagine designing a gun that anyone could shoot accurately without any practice. I can't imagine a more dangerous mechanism to the person carrying it! Might as well juggle hand grenades minus pins. All guns are dangerous--to the guys carrying them, to the guys around them as well as to their targets. I knew a guy who always carried his rifle loaded so he'd never get the damfool idea it was UNloaded! It went off twice, inadvertently, but neither he nor anyone else was in front of THAT gun when it did. Still, I'm not about to carry a sixgun with more than 5 chambers loaded and the one under the hammer empty. I have rather nice legs, really.

((You mix the practical with what seems to be the impractical with a lavish hand, Joe...from energy-beam guns (who can say about these, pro or con?) to squirts of live steam at 1000 yards (and any student of physics could point out the impracticalities if not downright impossibilities of this). Surprising how much interest and comment this gun business has caused. Interesting gadgets, guns. --wgc...)))

Dean Grennell, 402 Maple Avenue, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

GRUE 29 coming along slowly. I've 34 pages

done now and have perhaps 20 more to go.

I've a few ideas on what could be done to improve firearms, handguns in particular, and may get them onto paper one day. H Ken Bulmer's faunching for a gun "smaller, lighter, less noise, more ammunition...than a SMLE .303" could be fulfilled in the US carbine, caliber .30 M1, but I doubt if he would like it very well if he had to use it for fighting. I could say a great deal about the deficiencies of this most deficient of weapons but shall content myself by saying I think it is the kindest thing you could ever shoot anyone with, next to water pistols.

Reading through an old DOC SAVAGE magazine the other day ("The Devil Genghis," Dec38) and encountered a novel weapon--as one is often apt to in DSM--a double-barreled thing which simultaneously shot a needle-like dart to break the skin and a jet of hydrocyanic acid to do you in. I seriously question the efficacy of this, as I do most of the outre weapons in DSM.

I enjoyed all the little Rotsler beings cluttering about the issue. If Rotsler had not actually existed, it would have been necessary for fandom to invent him. ((That US carbine was a fine weapon for certain uses, though, Dean. For night patrols where mobility and silence were the only important considerations, it was an admirable weapon...much easier to carry around than the bulky M1 rifle. It shot well, too, and easily--the tendency to climb after the first round could be easily overcome and five-shot "bursts" were easy to put in the black from one to two hundred yards. It was the lack of range and the malfunctions which occurred in cold, hot, dusty or muddy conditions that did it in as a military weapon. In other words, it lacked the general versatility and ruggedness required of an all-around military weapon. It these days of modern warfare the idea of a tool for every job is ridiculous...what you want is a tool for all jobs, one that is efficient and dependable. And that eliminated the carbine. --wgc...)))

Convention note:

A letter from Frank Dietz informs me that the WSFS (World, not Washington) has elected the following officers to serve from 1Nov57 to 31Oct58: Anna Sinclair Moffatt, President; Len J Moffatt, Secretary; Rick Sneary, Treasurer; Stan Woolston, Printing and Publicity; Forrest J Ackerman, Professional Public Relations; and George W Fields, Fan Public Relations. It just goes to show that PR is getting to be an important field nowadays. The convention will be held over Labor Day weekend at the Alexandria Hotel, Los Angeles, California. Dues are \$1 and (it says here) should be sent to Len J Moffatt, 10202 Belcher, Downey, California. Either they don't trust Sneary with all that money and gave him just a titular position--he is, after all, responsible for the whole idea--or else it will be turned over to him later. That is right, isn't it, Len?

Therbligs III

Robert Bloch, PO Box 362, Weyauwega, Wisconsin ...On the statements involving
----- literature in SF (with particular
reference to THE DEMOLISHED MAN, GRAVY PLANET, etc) I think my stand will be best
demonstrated in a forthcoming book which Advent Press is arranging for publication
soon. It's made up of the series of lectures on science fiction delivered this past
winter at the downtown college of the University of Chicago. There, buried amidst
the gems of wisdom from Heinlein, Bester and Kornbluth, is a small talk by myself
which deals with these matters in great and boring detail.
But I am stung by the one-liner from an overseas correspondent--"Does Bob Bloch ever
write any stories these days?"

Tell this gentlemen, for the sake of my egoboo, that this month I have stories and
articles in ARGOSY, ROGUE, GENT, SUPER SF, SATELLITE and ELLERY QUEEN; by the time
your next issue is out I'll also be in PLAYBOY, ELLERY QUEEN again, and several other
zines. I've got an Ace whodunnit novel coming out soon, together with a collection
of mystery yarns, and I'll be popping up in SWANK, ESCAPADE, STAR SF, THE SAINT,
MICHAEL SHAYNE, more ELLERY QUEEN, etc.

Some of this is non sf, but quite a bit is sf or fantasy sold to other, better-paying
markets; being a mercenary type I kind of like the high rates. While I'm far from
being in a class with Bob Silverberg, I have had 28 magazine appearances in '57 as
of the end of September and for a lazy guy like me this is pretty fair.

((Donations from wealthy authors are always received at this address with profuse
expressions of gratitude. And while you're planning the schedule for '58's output
I do hope you're including a semi-obscure magazine name of OOPSLAUGH or somesuch on
your list. The rates aren't good, but hoo boy the prestige! --wgc...))

Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland I'm wondering if you've saved
----- yourself the amount of work
that you'd planned in cutting the size of OOPS. You reduced pages to stencil by 10,
sheets to run through the mimeo by 10 times the size of your circulation, and sheets
to collate by 5. You still have to address as many issues and staple as many times--
and if you do build up your circulation as planned you'll have saved little indeed.
Also, you've cut the price in half but have only reduced quantity by 2/3--and now
have to shell out cash for mailing envelopes. I personally have no complaints; I
hope it works out as you intended...

I'm also wondering about this immigration and reasons therefore that BoSh brought up.
Seems to me that the incidents Bob cites--the man who immigrated to Canada because
there he wouldn't have to call his boss "mister" or the one who didn't like cold
bathrooms--are probably just cases of people citing the final straw that finally made
them decide to move and that there were a dozen more good reasons behind that final
decision. The straw that broke the camel's back wasn't necessarily even one-tenth
as heavy as any of the other straws with which he had been laden.

I know that a smapling of one has darn little statistical validity except for that
one, but on Geis' question of what happened to all those TWS and SS readers, I can
comment on me as an ex-TWS-and-SS reader. I stopped reading them. No replacement.
Since Geis seems interested in this subject, I would recommend that he look over
Moskowitz' Market Survey printed by Taurasi & Co. Not that I necessarily agree with
it (from a sampling point of view) but it does contain a volume of interesting and
controversial information.

((Yes, Bob, the time savings is really appreciable...especially the time saved by
those ten extra stencils I no longer cut. There is, of course, no such thing as
money saved with a fanzine. ## Your second paragraph there makes me wonder what
sort of reasons emigrants will give for going to the planets and stars one of these
fine days. --wgc...))

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland The Calgary Bob Shaw writes
----- about an interesting problem
...the motives that bring immigrants to North America. Hagerstown and immediate
vicinity gets more than its share of foreign families because several church denom-

inations which are unusually active in sponsoring foreign families in this country have big congregations in this area. I've talked with many of these people and I've noticed three things that are common to almost all of the immigrants reaching this area: they moved to the United States because they thought that they could be financially better off; they are extremely nice people; and they came without having made any of the necessary preparations such as assurance of getting a good job, having a small nestegg for use in case of serious illness or accident, or knowing anything of the English language. Theoretically this is the land of milk and honey compared with the opportunities in most European countries, I suppose. But if nobody in the migrant family can speak English with any ability, prospects of finding a good-paying job diminish and the dangers of getting cheated in many ways increase; an enormous proportion of jobs are automatically closed to the family because of rules against aliens working for factories with government contracts, etc; and the migrant people usually settle in a neighborhood where most of the residents aren't very savory, for financial reasons. The only unpleasant experience we've had around here with foreign migrants was during the Hungarian immigration splurge. Four of five Hungarian families and individuals settled around here and something went wrong with every family or individual. Some of the troubles were funny to us, like the Hungarian boy who couldn't speak a word of English but put ten dollars down on a good used auto in the belief that that was the full purchase price; or another Hungarian youth who was given a gardening job at a snooty Episcopalian boys' school near Hagerstown and got along just fine until he discovered that he was wrong in his assumption that he had been given a scholarship to this school and that the hedge-cutting was not part of the American version of John Dewey's educational theories.

Stuart Wheeler, 728 Stout Avenue, Wyoming, Ohio

I guess you know by now that that egoboo-grabbing Harness signed

his name to the "Rotsler" illo on the cover...

((There's an explanation to that. The original cover, by Rotsler, was damaged in the press run and a new one--by Harness this time--cut and run in its place. I forgot to change the interior credit line, however...entirely my mistake. --wgc...))

Dale R Smith, 3001 Kyle Avenue, Minneapolis 22, Minnesota

Your new policy of smaller issues more frequently is, I'm sure you will find, a wise move. And the use of envelopes is most

excellent...as a collector I certainly appreciate fanzines that reach me in mint condition, having been protected from the slashing, mashing, bashing and inking of the post office department. Further, I hope that you have not made a final decision regarding the color of paper to use...I vote for a multi-colored OOPSLA.

Steve Schultheis' letter reminded me, unhappily, that my OOPSLA file is still incomplete--I need the first three issues. I'm willing to buy, for cash, at the rate of 50¢ each, just in case any of your readers are interested.

Richard Bergeron, 213 East 77th, New York 21, New York

The Rotsler illos were charming. Rotsler has

three pieces of sculpture on display in an exhibition of religious art at the Contemporary Crafts Museum here in Manhattan. The exhibition is a knock-out...it concerns itself completely with contemporary work and the selection is amazing. Rotsler is represented by "Book of the Three Kings" (from some convent or other), "Crucifixion" and another piece. At first I couldn't believe that it was our Bill but the program catalog the receptionist loaned me gave a Camarillo address.

* * * * *

Whew...four pages just aren't enough for all the letters received this time...I badly underestimated the room I'd need this time. Special thanks for unprinted letters go to Ethel Lindsay, H P Sanderson, Denis Tucker and Denis Moreen. I particularly wanted to get these letters in print (as well as print about twice as much of the letters I did print) but couldn't make it this issue. Please keep up with the letters

This has been a STARFLAME PUBLICATION and I'll try to print eight to ten pages of them next issue. -- wgc ...