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Address: 1825 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90025. Phone: Granite 3-6321.

San Diego in 1966!

Thomas Schlick for TAFF!

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I seem to be developing a penchant lately of coming down sick when a fan outing comes up. This time, I missed the 2nd Caroussel Picnic, being in bed with a bad cold from Thursday evening through the weekend, except for a brief outing Saturday morning. (This is why you out-of-towners will've gotten your copies of last week's Dist'n a day or so late; I couldn't mail 'em from work on Friday as usual.) I was hoping to make the picnic up to the last minute, but I was still coughing so much when I left the house Sat. morning that I decided a full day in the cold January air wouldn't be the best thing for me, after all. So I stayed home and read a lot of the books I'd been stacking up for months, and consoled myself with the thought that, after all, this picnic wasn't the one going down to Balboa Park-San Diego, which is the trip in which I'm really interested. So, maybe better luck next time.

I had a little more consolation, too, because the trip I made Saturday morning was to pick up my new car, the one I've been talking about buying for the last year. It's a 1966 Chevrolet Biscayne, 4-door hardtop, V-8, blue, with power steering and brakes, and seat belts all around. A standard 4-door Detroit model was what I'd set out to get, though I'd originally planned on getting a new '65 marked down for the clearance sales. However, I was able to take advantage through my mother of a standing discount from a certain Chevrolet agency to employees of the firm she works for, and get a new '66 model for even less than other agencies' unsold '65s are marked down to, which, considering such extra features as the new built-in smog control filter and seat belts in the front and back of the car, plus the extra year's advantage in trade-in allowance, makes it a nice deal all around. The Biscayne is the lowest-priced of the standard Chevrolet models; I got the car mostly for transportation, and not for extra chrome and fancier lines. Similarly, I had 'em leave off the white sidewall tires (the standard black tires get you where you're going just as well), the cigarette lighter (those of you who ride with me that smoke, bring your own matches), the light in the glove compartment, the dashboard clock (I've never seen one that kept good time), and the radio (the radio in my old car burnt out over a year ago, and I found that I didn't miss it at all); though I did take the power steering and brakes and a glare-resistant windshield -- what I consider the functional safety optionals, in other words. The whole thing, counting a minimal trade-in for my old car, came to slightly better than \$2650, which I paid in cash with the money I'd saved by not going to Europe last Summer plus what I'd been saving up for the car anyway. It pretty well wiped out the bank account I've been building up over the past few years, but I preferred to get it over with all at once, and not bother with the trouble and extra expense of long-term credit payments -- I can never remember when such things fall due, anyhow. So, after a year of telling myself that I had to get out and shop around for a new car mañana, I can finally cross this off my list of chores. I expect this to provide me with transportation for the next ten years -- and, should I decide I do want to drive out to the TriCon (which I probably won't), I now have a car that can make the trip.

## -- BEING COMMENTS ON LAST WEEK'S DISTRIBUTION

Creath Thorne -- I'm scared stiff of hospitals and everything connected with them, and generally won't read articles about operations, etc. Still, I can see why people usually write or talk about their operations; it's for much the same reason we write party reports, or tell what we've been doing during the last week, and so on. It allows us to enter into conversation, with some facts to relate, on a subject we personally experienced; this is always a ready-made subject, and saves everybody the brainwork of thinking up a conversation around some abstract subject. We all tend to be mentally lazy at times, and relating a fact is easier than composing a philosophical discussion. Besides, an operation always makes such an emotional impact on one that it may be different to think of anything else. ## Thanks for the review of Between Planets. I enjoyed it very much, and you very neatly put your finger on what I considered the book's main weakness. As he's done so many times since, Heinlein is trying to fit too many separate stories together. You've got Don Harvey the student, Harvey the fugitive from the omnipotent government, Harvey the interplanetary immigrant, Harvey the Venerian, Harvey the guerrilla fighter, etc. Each episode is logically constructed, and logically follows its predecessors, but you've still got a string of separate entities that doesn't quite become a whole. (And the book ends too abruptly, as though there was another sequence at the end that got cut off. Yeah, you finally developed the weapon to beat Earth -- what happens to Don now that his mission's accomplished?) Plot unity is one of Heinlein's main flaws; one of the reasons I enjoyed Tunnel In the Sky more than quite a few of his other juveniles, despite many peoples' opinions that it's one of his worst, is that the overall plot hangs together very well, and makes the book into a unit. The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress also seems to have a very tightly handled plot unity, concentrating almost entirely on the Lunar society, with all the action, personalities, etc., just vehicles to exhibit one aspect or another of this society. In contrast, Farnham's Freehold was concerned with not only presenting several different societies, but with clearly defining the personalities of several of the book's more important characters. Thus, while it was all interesting, the result was not a tight novel. Heinlein varies on the quality of his plot unity, and I'm glad to see he's finally come up with a good example again after several years.

Ted White -- If Roger Elwood is not responsible for the all new Captain Marvel, I'd be interested in learning who is. The names are about the only things the comic has going for it; Phil Castora suspects that the publisher may have bought the rights to the names of Captain Marvel and Plastic Man from their owners, but not the rights to the characters themselves (certainly not to the character of Capt. Marvel, which DC has all wrapped up in legal tape). ## I agree that a bi-lingual World-Con would be a problem, but unless we limit the WorldCons to the English-speaking part of the world, or are willing to forego the use of any English at the Con, we'll have to find a way to put up with it. I also favor the present system, but feel that a WorldCon out of the United States every 5 or 6 years, and not always to England, would solve the matter nicely. ## The Asimov story in BOYS' LIFE is "The Man Who Made the 21st Century", in the October 1965 issue; and yes, I enjoyed it quite well (better than his story in GALAXY), and I think you could do worse than reprint it. ## I have only a dim recollection of the unreprinted Heinlein serial in BOYS' LIFE that I saw; it was about 1956 or '57, as I recall, and someone gave me an issue with one installment (neither the first nor the last) and asked me if I wanted to read it? I said, no, I'd wait and read it all at once when the book came out -- but it never did. I believe that he (Ed Baker? or was it before I met Ed?) said it wasn't very good, being written for a lower age level than most of Heinlein's books, and so far it had told about a Scout whose family was emigrating to Venus, only they couldn't take the kid's dog along, and there was pathos all over the place. Tenderfoot in Space? As to the other unreprinted Heinlein serial, I've just heard that there is another, but no details. ## The Rolling Stones does suffer from the steady switch in locale, though the strong concentration on the personality of the Stone family (which is the predominant theme of the book) serves

successfully to tie everything together. (And have you caught Hazel Meade Stone as a minor character in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress?) But what don't you like about Tunnel In the Sky? Except for the fact that the protagonist is weak enough to be rather ineffectual, and not as admirable a character as most Heinlein protagonists, I can't see anything wrong with it. ## I agree that Bruce and I could probably help Dwain by acting as supervisory heads of his BEST OF FANDOM. However, in the first place, I don't think either Bruce or I are sufficiently interested in the project (I know I'm going to have my hands full with The Best from APA L), and in the second place, it is Dwain's project and he hasn't invited us to step in and "save" him from the work by deciding ourselves what should go in it. If it were my decision, I'd kill the idea of a BEST OF FANDOM, and put the willing bodies to work in helping me get the next Best from APA L out. ## Agreed about "Batman"; as far as interior logic goes, it's nothing but a situation comedy without a laughtrack. I didn't think much of Cesar Romero as the Joker (whose voice was used? surely not Romero's?), but George Sanders makes a great Mr. Freeze (except for the patently ridiculous Cherman agent), and the latest show has some absolutely superb lighting and special effects. ## As far as I'm concerned, we've already got an American Con. It's called the WesterCon, and it's invariably almost (and sometimes, just) as good as the WorldCon itself.

Ruth Berman -- I certainly wouldn't call Cugel the Clever a Colorless Character. A puffed-up braggart, perhaps; an egotistic bully, maybe; or a con-man with some cunning, even if not nearly as much as he gives himself credit for. But not Colorless. ## I notice that Cugel gets a left-handed plug in the current FANTASTIC; after only two stories, he's being ranked with Conan and Fafhrd & the Mouser as one of the sword & sorcery greats. (In the blurb to Zelazny's 10-page short story, which tries to make it sound as though it's the equal to The Lord of the Rings. Apparently Cohen is continuing Cele's trick of piling the highest praise on the worst stories; you could always tell when a real bomb was coming up, because it would be announced as the greatest classic of the decade, to rank with Slan and the Lens series and such-like. Remember Magnanthropus? ## Not that Zelazny's story is particularly bad, but 10 pages do not make a great fantasy novel.)

Andy Silverberg -- You're right about Bert Blum, the "King of the Comics". He's not at all interested in his wares per se, but only in making all the market will bear. He doesn't particularly hide the fact, either. In fact, he bears a strong resemblance to Manny Weltman, who was peddling some really rare Baum items to the Oz fans, with a pitch that went more or less, "You understand that I'm not interested in any of this trash myself, and I think all you guys are nuts for paying all this money for a bunch of beat up old books and song sheets, but when I heard you were paying these prices I figured I might as well get some of it, so I dug up this junk and now do you want it at my prices or not?" (I heard a couple of ladies commenting afterwards that they would never have believed in such bad manners if they hadn't seen him in person.) One "nice" thing to noncollectors is that he permits pretty free browsing, which also means that the mint rare issues he buys don't stay in mint condition for long, unless a collector buys it immediately. No wonder he's got a fan club in a nearby school -- so could Ted White, if he let all the kids in his neighborhood troop into his house and paw through all his old comics whenever they wanted to.

Bruce Pelz -- I'm certainly glad that Dian is on this Howard and Eddison illustration kick. Do you remember back when Arthur Thomson was in OMPA, and he ran a feature in his fanzine of a full-page illustration of a scene from any science-fiction story, suggested by the other members of the apa? I'd like to start a series of illustrations like that for Apa L covers, if possible. Have the contributors suggest their favorite authors or stories, and take the ones that get the most mention to Dian, or Bjo, or Don Simpson, or Jack Harness, or whoever likes that particular author or story the most, and do a full-page illustration of a scene from it for the cover of next week's Apa L Dist'n. Do you think Dian would be interested?

Jack Harness -- A very good "What To Do When"; save this stencil for the next Best from APA L.