SAVOYARD

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1930-042065

Being the 12th issue of
THE SAVOYARD, from
Bruce Pelz, Box 100, 308 Westwood Plaza
Los Angeles, California 90024

OMPA 44, June 1965
IncuNebulous Publication 357

"If You'll Give Me Your Attention..."

This issue is dedicated to the late John Champion, from whose files the majority of the material came. The exception to this, besides the cover and any items signed by me, is the Geis article. This was unearthed in a box of semi-used ditto masters (some were used in places, others were just old) that Geis gave me back in 1960 when I bought his old spirit duper. The article has been lying around my to-be-published file for lo these many years, and I figure it is about time I used it.

The Champion material consists of a cover -- my bacover -- by Terry Jeeves, intended for the second issue of John's genzine IMPASSE; a column (also for IMPASSE) by Ron Bennett, and a list of John's fanzines. What better place to publish these than OMPA, where Ron and Terry can more easily see their work?

The Bennett column includes a covering note requesting that a copy of IMPASSE with the column be send to L. Donald Harley, Esq., c/o Barclay's Bank D.C.O., Main Street,Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. If this address is still valid, I'll be glad to send a copy to Mr. Harley, Ron. Also, scribbled on the note is an even shorter note to John from Bob Lichtman:

> John - I can't help but say that I like Ron's article inclosed. About the best thing I've ever seen by him. Bob.

The duper I bought from Geis, by the way, I got for $5 -- with the box of miscellaneous stuff, and about half a gallon of fluid thrown in. Dick was living in Venice, California, then, and had quit fanpubbing. He had called the LASFS -- in the person of Jack Harness, then the LASFSecretary -- to see if the club wanted to buy the duper, which was an antique Rex which fed the fluid in from a brown-glass bottle attached to a rubber tube. Very crude, but it worked. Jack Harness called the LA Fan Center of that time -- Fan Hill (980 Figueroa Terrace) -- and I offered to buy it myself rather than have the club haggle over it. The next weekend I got someone to drive me to Venice and collect the machine. It had to be cleaned, as the rollers had several layers of purple carbon on them, and the drum had at least one or two such layers. The machine was strange in another way: it printed on the bottom of the sheet coming through the rollers, so that you couldn't see what you were getting without turning the sheet over -- very annoying to someone accustomed to watching the sheets as they come tumbling out, to see how they are printing. I got it working, and put out quite a few issues of THE MENACE OF THE LASFS on it, as well as a number of other small-run zines. When I bought a Gestetner at the Discon, I discarded spirit duplicating, and late in 1963, having repaired a few parts through the cannibalization of a machine of the same make and vintage which lay ignored in the back of the UCLA Physics Library where I worked, I sold the Geis machine -- generally known as the PSYCHOTIC Duper, since it had once published that reknowned zine -- to Ted Johnstone.....for $10. A valiant little beast! (The duper, nit.)

As a postscript, when I got married, I acquired half interest in a $120 Heyer duper that Dian had bought about two years ago, and used very

sparingly. It, of course, doesn't work. Oh, well, I don't like spirit duper work that much anyhow.

- - - - Bruce Pelz

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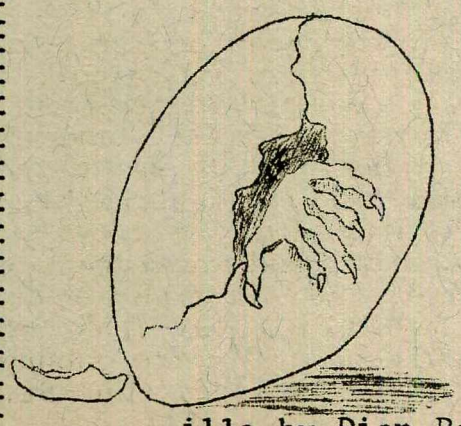
John Champion was killed in an auto accident on 13 July, 1962. Friday the 13th.
His list of publications went as far as #22, with the first 17 typed and the rest added in pencil. I have added the only other zines I could locate between March 1961 and July 1962. I know that he published no other Cultzines or FAPAzines in that period.

- - - Bruce Pelz



- - - illo by Dian Pelz

The Plasticine Giraffe

by Ron Bennett

I almost feel like subtitling this column "I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.," but it wasn't for the F.B.I. that I was a Communist. For a week I was the community's leading Red for an entirely different reason.

It happened during my second year at Castleford Grammar School. Castleford is a mining town set in the murky heart of the Yorkshire coalfield, and at that time I was living halfway between Castleford and Leeds. I'd attended Leeds Central High School until I was seventeen, and as that school possessed at that time no facilities for continuation studies in a "sixth form," I moved to Castleford Grammar School. At eighteen I muddled my way through the end of year exams, and was afforded a deferment from National Service until I had completed my studies.

I suppose it was the school's Headmaster who started things rolling. During Assembly one morning he announced that he hoped the school would take an interest in that practical lesson in current affairs, the General Election. He told us that our parents were soon to go to the polls, and he fully intended that we should do the same. We began to look interested. He proposed, he said, to hold a Mock Election within the school. There would be candidates representing each political party, and each candidate would be expected to make a speech on party lines, putting forward his party's policy to the rest of the school. There would be a week's campaigning, during which he hoped there would be no untoward incidents, and then every pupil in the school would vote for the candidate thought to have made the best impression during the entire campaign.

There were several comments amongst the members of the sixth form as the assembly broke up. Several thought they might nominate one person or another as a candidate, but there was little time for a discussion. We collected our books and went off to our classes.

A couple of days later, I was sitting in a Geography class. I don't remember what I was doing. I had a habit in later years at college of writing letters to various fans while I sat in uninteresting lectures, but at C.G.S. I always found something of interest in class, and the Geography course was always a favourite of mine. Come to think of it, I like teaching Geography, too; one can really get an informal approach into the subject. And so it was that I was actually an active participant in the Geography course. Suddenly, the classroom door burst open and the school's senior master, the deputy Headmaster, swept in. There's no other way to describe the man's movements. He swept everywhere. This was Mr. Delaney, a man of tremendous energy and enthusiasm who died about two years ago. He was close to the teachers' retiring age at that time. He was tall, and straight. His grey hair and fine moustache would bristle. He was always perfectly fair, a model teacher. He specialised in the Classics, and when crossed -- well, I prefer not to discuss that! He was Irish, too, as might be expected by his name. The boys all called him "Pat" behind his back, and on March 17th it could be counted on that he would be even more jaunty than usual, wearing with pride a sprig of shamrock in his lapel. One St. Patrick's Day, the entire sixth form

bought shamrock and wore them openly, bidding everyone a pleasant, "Begorra, bejaber and the Mountains of Mourne, the top of the marning to ye." I'd tell you about the timeI borrowed his glasses, too, nut I'm holding up the action of this tale a little overlong. Let's see....Pat swept into the room. "Bennett here?" he asked.

The Geography mistress pointed me out, Pat asked if she could spare me for a moment (what a question!), and I hurried from the room in an attempt to keep up with him. "Follow me," he ordered. I did.

He walked through to the school hall and stopped suddenly. He turned to the panting Bennett who was bringing up the rearguard. "The Headmaster wants to see you," he announced. If I was already shaken, this last statement scared me rigid. The Headmaster never saw anyone in the school unless it was to declaim on some misdemeanor. Pat swept on, across the hall, stopping only to knock on the door of the Headmaster's study. He opened the door and held it open for me.

I entered.

I noticed that the study appeared to be crowded with other sixth formers. The Headmaster spoke. "Ah, Bennett," he said, "Are you going to stand as Communist candidate?"

When they brought me round, I was told that my name had been put forward by two sixth form girls. The Headmaster sent for them. Yes, they'd put my name forward. Yes, they'd like me to stand. Well, it would be ungallant to refuse a pleading look from a pair of pretty eyes.....

"But not as a Communist," I objected.

"We have the other candidates," the Headmaster told me. "Michael Roberts here is the Socialist candidate, Harvey Jackson is the Conservative, and Donald Openshaw is standing as a Liberal."

So, almost before I knew it, I was Castleford's Communist candidate for the Mock Election. We candidates agreed amongst ourselves that Mike Roberts was sure to win the election. Although the Headmaster had specified that voting should be based on the actual preparations made by the candidates within the school, we felt that most of the pupils in the school, particularly the younger ones, would vote according to the leanings of their parents in the election proper. Castleford is a working man's town, and even the most diehard of Tories (the Conservatives) will admit that it is a safe Labour (the Socialists) seat. Even so, we decided to give Roberts a run for his money. We had impromptu soapbox sessions during recess periods, and it was soon obvious that each candidate had his own band of supporters.

Various friends supplied me with progress reports of the campaigning they were doing on my part. One girl in the school was a Communist, and she supplied me with official election propaganda. One friend did a little arm-twisting for me in order to gain support; he confided in me that it was practically the Real Thing. And there was the time when I was thrown out of a newsagent's shop for trying to buy a copy of The Daily Worker.

Eventually, it was time for the main speeches. On two different mornings, two different candidates presented their viewpoints to the assem-

bled school. We drew for positions, and I came in fourth, a good position, as I could, if necessary, deal with points raised by the other three candidates. Roberts got a terrific reception, and, bucked by this sign of his obvious future success, presented the case for the Labour Party in a rousing fashion. Don Openshaw followed, and though he tried to present the Liberal's viewpoint in a quiet, efficient, and logical manner, his reception was as quiet as his subsequent presentation, and he was obviously shaken by it. Harvey Jackson and I, sitting together in the body of the hall, agreed that Roberts had the election "sewn up."

It was our turn the following day. Harvey spoke first, his speech full of "what we have, we hold." His speech was well received. Then came Bennett....

It was usual to begin one's speech with an acknowledgement of the presence of the Headmaster and staff, but I was having none of this. "Fellow workers!" I announced, "I....." My supporters at the back of the crowded hall rose and cheered. It would have made no difference whatever I'd have said, they had that little move rehearsed for me. It was encouraging. I've spoken to audiences several times since, on various subjects, and I've shaken like a leaf every time. At the SoLaCon, my hand trembled so much that I had to put my sheet of notes down on the table before me. It certainly can't be that I didn't know my audience. Perhaps it was that I was Bennett speaking as Bennett. During that speech I made as a Communist I was acting a part. I shouted, I banged my fist on the table before me, and I strode about the platform, pointing with derision at Harvey Jackson who was sitting behind me. Even Jon Lakey couldn't have been more of a fanatic that morning.

The Senior English Master said it was the best piece of sheer tub-thumping he'd ever witnessed, and the girl Communist told me she had never heard her party's cause presented in a better fashion. It frightened me.

Each candidate held a Party Meeting during the following week, and apart from a cupboard window being kicked through at the Labour Party meeting, things went along smoothly. One or two fights amongst pupils at the lower end of the school broke out, it is true, but my first consideration was that I managed to waffle through a few awkward questions without being tripped up too obviously.

The next to the last phase of the election was the open question session. Again the school assembled in all its glory. The four candidates sat on the platform, and questions which had been submitted to the Headmaster for his approval were posed us. I felt that as long as people kept off the question, "What will the Communist Party do with the Royal Family if you get into power?" I could manage. Somehow. Most of the questions were, I was happy to realise, being posed at Harvey Jackson and Mike Roberts. The one question asked me was "What happens to the miners when the coal has run out?" It was a nice easy one, and I took full advantage to show that it could run out just as well under the regime of any party, and that it wasn't likely anyway. I said something about the development of atomic power, too, which must have shown my leanings towards S.F., even in those days.

Then it happened. The questions ran out. "As we still appear to have some little time at our disposal," the Headmaster told the assembly, "Perhaps there are some other questions which I am sure our candidates would be only too willing to answer."

One girl stood up. "I have a question for the Communist candidate," she announced.

I stood up, and went forward. "You mention raising the wages of miners, road haulage workers, teachers, labourers and several other types of workers from different walks of life," she said. "What about the dockers?"

"The Communist Party intends to increase their wages, too," I said. I turned to sit down.

"Therefore you intend to raise practically all wages," she went on. "And yet you intend to cut Income Tax. Where are you going to find the extra revenue to provide the money for these wage schemes?"

I said something about Nationalisation, and increasing purchase tax on luxury items. "Therefore prices will go up," she stated. "Only on luxury items," I assured her. "Such as?" she wanted to know. I named a few, but felt that things were getting a little out of hand. One or two friends at the back of the hall attempted to regain my rapidly vanishing face for me by asking ridiculous questions which I could answer with some degree of authority.

Our dear friend with the awkward questions was on her feet again. This time she bore into the other candidates, and then announced, "I have another question for the Communist candidate." I staggered forward. "What about tariff reforms and the removal of protective duties on imports into Great Britain?"

I hadn't a clue what she was talking about.

"Tell her you'll remove them," whispered Harvey Jackson behind me.

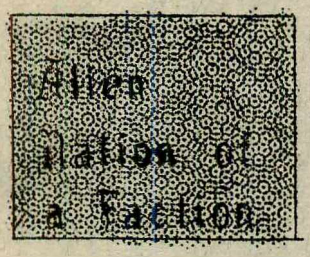
"We'll naturally look into the possibilities of removing these tariffs," I said, and sat down hurriedly. I'm still grateful for Harvey's quick thinking.

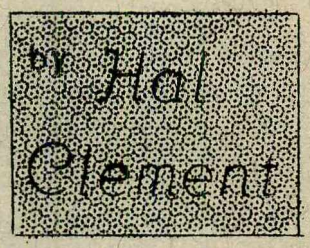
The poll itself went as expected. Pupils filed into a special polling room for the vote, and we candidates were allowed to wander around inside the room as long as we did not talk to anyone. This naturally didn't stop us from distributing menacing glances where we felt they were warranted. Roberts's return was about 70% of the electorate, running over three hundred. Jackson, too, polled three figures. Don Openshaw rated a couple of dozen votes, and I was amazed to see that I'd beaten him with just over fifty votes.

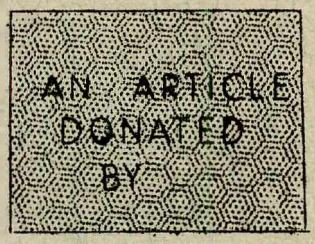
I naturally demanded a recount.

-- Ron Bennett
31 Dec 58

Whether or not Miss Karen Kruse, who suggested this subject to me, was being deliberately subtle when she presented it as a challenge, I do not know. In her letter she certainly took pains to bring up a statement -- perhaps only an isolated opinion -- to the effect that it would not be possible to write convincingly about an alien mind until we know more certainly how our own minds work.







Perhaps I have no right to take issue with such a statement; certainly my formal acquaintance with psychology is confined to two undergraduate courses, of which the more recent was taken some six years ago. Nevertheless, I do make the claim that minds of non-human or non-earthly beings can be developed in a literary effort, and developed to a point which permits at least as much personality construction for the alien character as is normally encountered in a modern novel of more conventional form. That last qualification may seem like an effort to duck out on my statement after making it, but I mean a novel written by any recognized master of prose style such as Wodehouse (in his earlier days), Dorothy Sayers, or Joseph C. Lincoln -- I think anyone will admit the technical competence of any of these writers, even if he is not fond of the particular type of story in which each has specialized. Their human characters are real and believable; I mean to claim that non-human beings in a science fiction story can be made at least eaually so.

There are several ways of proving a statement such as I have just made. One, of course, would be to cite examples of stories in which this problem had been successfully solved; the difficulty here lies in the fact that there is probably no one story which all my opponents would admit to contain a successful representation of alien character. Attempts have been made -- very good ones, or at least very good stories -- but all the ones I can think of at the moment might be rejected on any of several grounds. Those grounds are certain to occur to anyone not already in blind agreement with my pompous opening declaration. It will be claimed, for example, that the Palainians of Edward E. Smith's Galactic Patrol stories were merely suggested, not characterized. True enough, though the sequence in which Nadreck sought out and eventually killed Kandron of Onlo seems to me to involve rather more than a simple statement to the effect that the Palainian mind was unhuman. Still, I won't press the point too hard.

Possibly a better example, though it is still vague enough in detail to lend perhaps at least as much support to the opposition as to me, is the late Stanley Weinbaum's immortal Tweel, who appeared nearly twenth years ago in "A Martian Odyssey." True, we saw Tweel's mind from outside, and were never sure what was going on between his ears -- excuse me, in his thoracic brain-box -- but he was a pretty definite, knowable character for all that. Certainly he was more so, to my mind,

than the Dick Jarvis through whose eyes we saw him. There are authors who would contend that this is the only honest way to present an alien intelligence -- indicating only the impression he or it produced on a human character. I'm afraid that if I joined this group, however, I would be delivering myself bound to the enemy -- in effect, admitting that such a mind could not be portrayed because it was beyond any author's imaginative powers. I still don't admit that, and never expect to; even if I never succeed in building such a character myself, I intend to keep on trying.

But perhaps I'm going at this argument the wrong way. I said that the citing of examples would be one way to prove my point, but that is true only if the examples are really good. I'll have to admit the ones I've used so far are not -- though I don't mean to detract from their worth as stories. Actually, what I have let myself in for is showing that we can really get inside a mind which developed under a set of conditions unfamiliar to any native of Earth; no hints or outside views will really serve to satisfy my opponents. Examples don't seem to have worked very well, and probably won't, so we'll try another method.

Let's see why I think such a thing is possible, and how I, at least, would go about the job.

First of all, what is a mind? In detail, I'd be the first to admit that we just don't know. However, some pretty specific statements can be made about what a mind does; and perhaps that will be enough for our purpose.

Basically -- and very materialistically, I admit -- a mind seems to be an organ capable of collecting, recording, and comparing data, of detecting trends toward repetition in phenomena affecting its receptor organs, and of using its file of such trends to predict events. Perhaps "predict" is too strong a word, but at least a mind can evaluate probabilities on the basis of what it has learned; it can conduct experiments in a symbolic manner so that, in effect, the trial-and-error process by which the paramecium gets around obstacles can be carried out with much less danger to the organism involved, since only the successful -- or most probably successful -- attempt is carried out with the physical body. Just what the symbols may be we don't know, though some quite likely-sounding hypotheses have emerged in recent years; but I see no reason why we should have to know, in the task we have here set ourselves.

If this definition is adequate, it would seem at first glance that all we need to do in order to portray an extra-terrestrial mind is to gain a sufficiently clear picture of the conditions under which its owner acquired his basic data; then the functioning of his mental processes, at least as it is expressed in speech and action, would follow necessarily.

Better take a second glance.

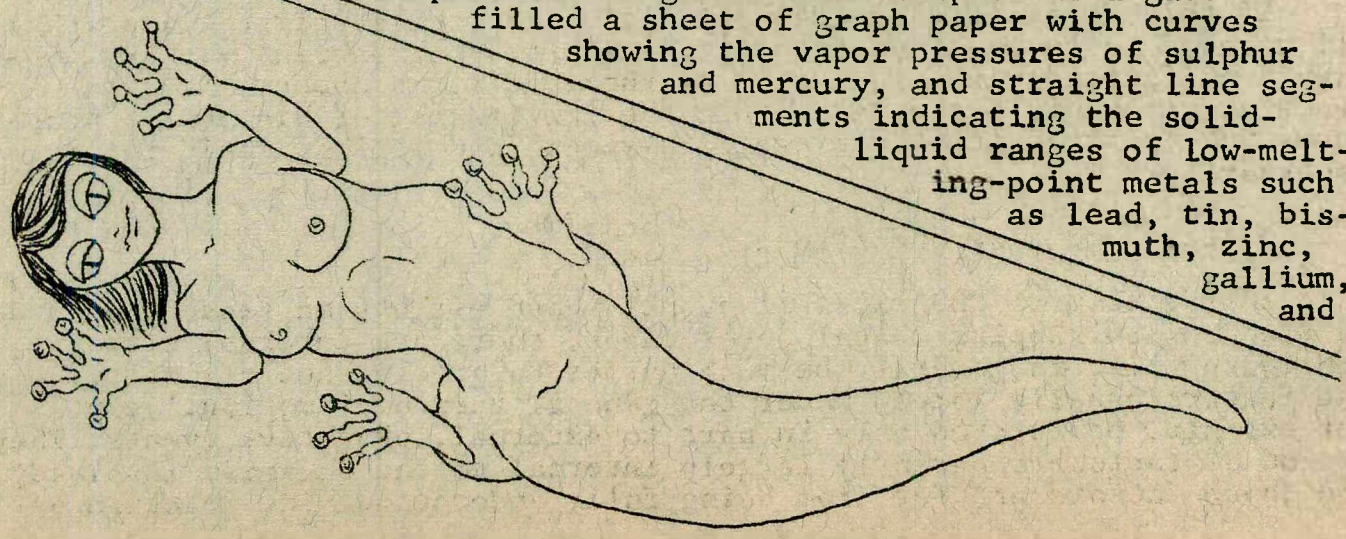
In addition to the external events whose effects on sense organs do so much toward shaping mental development, there are internal effects; and those will, in general, be much harder to predict and allow for. The factors usually lumped under the general term of 'emotions' can, for example, be related only in part to external, objective events. They depend on factors apparently largely internal to the organism involved, and those factors are far from being fully understood. The reaction of

anger so common to a human being when he finds himself proved wrong in a favorite belief is well known to everyone, but hard to explain logically. Emotions are involved, and, apparently at least, common sense ceases to play a part in the situation. Who is to say that a non-human being will react in this way -- or that he won't?

Our normal reaction to incongruity is an emotional one -- humor. Development of the sense of humor correlates highly, I understand, with intelligence. This is reasonable; a more intelligent person will be better able to detect incongruity. It would be a mistake, however, in conversing with the first Martian we meet, to belittle his intelligence on the grounds that he was not amused by the sight of a top-hatted politician slipping on a banana skin. While he may realize, it may be safe to assume, that banana skins are not used as pavement in Terrestrial cities for the purpose of speeding up travel, we could not be sure that his normal reaction to incongruity was not an emotion resembling our anger or disgust -- both attitudes at least as natural, speaking from as impartial a viewpoint as I can attain, as the rather peculiar emotion we experience. If that were the case, an attempt to joke with him might have awkward results.

Such factors cannot very well be predicted, merely by describing in detail the type of planet our creature grew up on. In fact, they cannot be predicted on the basis of anything we now know; and that leaves the writer with a way out. This writer uses it for all he's worth; a little later, we'll see how.

First of all, the environment of the native is outlined with great care. In "Iceworld," none of the scenes of the story were ever laid on the sulphur-breathers' home planet, with the exception of an introductory conversation which was not at all illuminating about the nature of the creatures. Nevertheless, I had specified in writing, before ever commencing the actual story: the type of sun which Sarr circled; the distance of Sarr's orbit from the sun; the length of the planet's year, which I computed on the basis of that distance and the standard mass for a star of that type; the diameter and mass of the planet; its mean temperature, which of course was determined principally by its distance from the sun; its rotation period, since the characters had to have some time unit which they thought of as a "day"; its atmospheric pressure, since that would determine the temperature range in which sulphur is a gas. I filled a sheet of graph paper with curves showing the vapor pressures of sulphur and mercury, and straight line segments indicating the solid-liquid ranges of low-melting-point metals such as lead, tin, bismuth, zinc, gallium, and



several others. I had a fairly long list of inorganic compounds which would be liquid at Sarr's temperature. I could not, of course, supply myself with a complete Sarrian mental background; but by the time I had finished those lists and graphs I felt that I could at least put reasonable conversation into the mouth of an Eartgman brought up on Sarr, if that had been possible.

I made no attempt to put any other influence to work on the Sarrian minds, and I can see where Sallman Ken and his compeers might have been a little too human to satisfy the standards of some science-fiction fans; but the method can perhaps be extended. Let's see.

Well, there are the internal influences to be considered, as we said. Of course, we cannot predict what such influences will be -- or can we? Aren't some of our personal reactions due to our own physical shapes and limitations? We get confused when faced with a problem of too many simultaneous factors -- might not the fact that our principal sensory equipment, the eyes, are designed to cover only a single object at once [be significant?] Most of my own thought are in the form of pictures -- that is, recapitulations of optical data, with material coming from the other sense organs serving to "fill in." If I could think in, say, musical pictures, using data from a sense organ capable of recording a broad band of information at one time and identifying its separate components individually and simultaneously, might it not make a difference? The ear can do that -- how does one distinguish between piano and violin, or a harp and a human voice? If I postulate a being like Dr. Smith's Velantians, who were supposedly able to concentrate on several problems at once, I may be able both to justify such a concept and, to some extent, to follow and describe his thought processes, in spite of the limits of a speech form designed by and for human beings. I haven't tried it yet -- I only came to consider the problem in these terms while writing this paper -- but I promise I will some time. Let's see what happens -- will you suspend judgement on that possibility until I have made the attempt?

Then there was "Uncommon Sense," written while I was coming home from Europe on a troop ship (if anyone cares). I've sometimes wanted to go back to that planet of Deneb and find an intelligent race with the same sort of olfactory eyes that Laird Cunningham discovered there -- pinhole cameras sensitive to diffusing molecules, which travelled in straight lines on that airless world, and were perfectly capable of forming an odor image. There will certainly be some funny minds directing those eyes.

Another factor we can include, in building our alien minds, is the emotional one. I said not too long ago that we didn't know what caused emotional reactions -- at least, I said we didn't know specifically why human beings react as they do to incongruity, and some of the explanations I've heard for other emotions seemed a trifle far-fetched. (I have nothing against Freud in a general way, and I'm willing to admit that there may be a single basic factor underlying all human reactions; but I'm not completely convinved he found it.) Still, if we don't know the why of these questions, it seems to me that we're free to substitute other, arbitrary reactions in our non-human beings. Burroughs had his green Martians experience our "humor" reaction in situations which we would consider provocative of pity or horror; the same thing can be done with any feeling you care to name, as long as the reaction produced

is not one which will definitely tend to lead the organism toward self-destruction or some other result in conflict with the picture we have built of its physical and social structure.

The last page or two has been rather general; I've said several times that we can do this or that, starting from a given situation. Actually, that's all I claimed in the first place. Perhaps to some readers the outlining of situations, as I have just done, is enough. They can see how one might go on from there. Others will still feel that even the situations I have mentioned will lead to minds quite indescribable by human beings in human languages, and that I will have proved nothing until I draw an actual, clear, believable picture of a being with one of these backgrounds. Well, maybe I'll try;but let's bring up one other point of technique first. That alone may convince some people that it can be done; if there are a few left over -- well, we'll see.

Actually, the only technique I have ever developed for getting started on an alien viewpoint is very simple. It consists in taking exception to every statement I hear starting with or including the words "Of course." Those words imply that both speaker and listener are taking some fact, presumably the same one, for granted; and, the cosmos being what it is, very few facts can be taken for granted at every point in the universe.

Of course you can build bridges and houses of matter (unless you live in one of those masses of incandescent gas called stars, which have sewed up probably half the matter in the Galaxy.)

Of course you can't siphon water or any other liquid of decent density over a mile-high mountain (unless you live on a world with the atmospheric pressure of Jupiter.)

Of course a candle will burn as long as it's in an oxygen-rich atmosphere (unless it's in a free-fall situation so that weight is zero, and there are no convection currents to bring oxygen to the flame.)

Of course a race will develop the telegraph and telephone or their equivalents before they make a television set (unless they're deaf and dumb, and communicate normally by visual signals).

Of course the first extra-terrestrial to land on Earth will be a mine of information on the physical sciences (unless it's a child who knows how to push buttons but not what the buttons actually do -- thanks, Ted.)

In short, as long as we all follow the very human tendency of taking things for granted (a necessary habit; life's too short to re-examine all our axioms and postulates each time a slightly different situation arises), there will be material for science-fiction writers; and that material will be usable as background from which non-human minds may be developed.

Still too general? All right, you win. No, I'm not backing down; I'll shoot my last bolt. Let's build ourselves an alien, and put him in a situation where his alienness will show.

Let's see. His name doesn't matter -- we'll call him John. He

comes from a planet of Earth size, circling the star Wolf 359 at a distance of two and a quarter million miles. The mean temperature of his world is about that of Mars. The oceans are water, with all the expected materials in solution, are liquid over most of the planet most of the time, as on Earth. The atmosphere is 80% nitrogen, 10% argon, and 10% chlorine; his body chemistry is based on oxidation reactions using the chlorine, and he sonsists of fairly normal organic compounds except for the general chlorine-for-oxygen substitution. His year is about four and a half Earth days long. His planet has a large moon, comparable to Luna, at a distance of 60 thousand miles; it revolves in a period of about three and a half Earth days, and tidal friction has brought his world's day into accord with this period, so the moon can be seen from only one hemisphere. (If it weren't for that, the sun would have done the same; I'd have had an eternally dark hemisphere, and no atmosphere or liquid oceans.) The moon's orbit is in the plane of the planet's equator, which is inclined about 45 degrees to that of the planet's orbit. Revolution, and hence planetary rotation, is retrograde with respect to orbital motion about the sun. (This is all mental arithmetic, but I think the retrograde motion would almost be necessary for stability of the planet-moon system so near the sun. If someone claims even that to be insufficient, I'm afraid I can't prove him wrong.) The solar day on the planet comes out at about two of ours, or almost half of one of the planet's years. If I ever really write this story, I'll have to compute a set of tables for figuring out the sun's apparent position at any time, since the world can go from mid-winter most of the way to the vernal equinox while the sun is crossing from horizon to horizon -- at least I think it can; that will depend heavily on the latitude of the observer, and I refuse at this point to try to work that one out in my head. However, John's language may use minor variations of the same word for 'winter' and 'night,' and just what a given season means in terms of climate will undoubtedly depend on whether the season occurs during the day or the night time.

John's race averages four and a half feet in height; is bipedal, bimanual, with each hand equipped with three mutually opposable digits; poikathermal*; oviparous; has an average mass of about one hundred thirty pounds, though the variation is as wide as among human beings; has two wide-spread, independent eyes, covering a full hemisphere of vision; has auditory plates like those of a frog, but is tone-deaf; sees from about 5 thousand to 13 thousand angstroms, with a shade discrimination about equal to that of a human being; has a sufficiently acute dermal temperature sensitivity to detect a human body against a freezing-point background at about two hundred yards. Its nervous system transmits impulses about six times as fast and its retinal cells recover from stimulus about ten times as fast as ours. It has senses of smell, touch, and taste similar to ours. The normal life span is about 30 Earth years. Eggs hatch about six Terrestrial months after being laid; the "child" reaches physical and mental adulthood in another six. During the development period their memories are virtually eidetic; even in old age, they are generally better than those of an average human being.

The civilization level of the more advanced races compares with ours about the time we land the first moon rocket.

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* having variable body temperature, like cold-blooded animals.

These assumptions, of course, would normally come out in the course of the story; reactions based on them would be correspondingly harder to understand then. This way, I am increasing the difficulty of the task of making the Wolf 359-ers seem alien. But if I can still do it, the demonstration will be that much more complete. I have a couple of other characteristics in mind which I'm not going to describe just yet; we'll see how they help or hinder the general picture.

The situation will be a standard science-fiction one, involving a meeting between Earthmen and the natives of the Wolf planet. The human beings are the first to land on any world of the Wolf system. They placed their advance agents near a small city and withdrew the ship to an orbit above the atmosphere while the agents made contact with the natives. The relationship has gone on long enough for John to have learned a great deal of English and the Earthmen to acquire enough of John's language to express simple ideas, though actual conversation has been mainly about concrete matters -- abstracts still don't get across, and the human beings at least know better than to try communication on such a level at this point, having had some experience with this general situation.

But let's get down to brass tacks and have one of these conversations. That will be the acid test, after all. John, the native, and Carl Frick, one of the human explorers, are seated on the ground near the ship. The man, of course, is wearing a face mask serving the double purpose of supplying oxygen and protecting eyes and respiratory passages from the atmospheric chlorine. The mask is not completely tight, and John is upwind of Carl to avoid the taint of oxygen leaking from it.

Carl: I think we've been here long enough for all your people to be used to our appearance and characteristics. Do you think it would be safe and advisable for some of us to start visiting in your city now?

John (after a moment's hesitation, during which he decides to misunderstand the question): Yes, much too long. Will you take me with you? I could do any necessary explaining, perhaps.

Carl: Take you where? I was suggesting individual visits -- you could not accompany us all.

John: I meant to the city you were going to visit. The nearest is over fifty miles away, and too far for convenient access on foot.

Carl: I meant the city right here, two miles away. I see no point in travelling to another when it is available.

John: But I asked you to see it when we first met, and I understood you to refuse. I was guessing at your sign meanings, of course, but you have used gestures ever since in exactly the same meaning. Perhaps you did not understand my invitation?

Carl: Oh, yes, we understood, but we didn't feel that we knew your people well enough then. We wanted to learn your language and at least a little of your customs before venturing among

you and perhaps causing offence by our ignorance of some forbidden action.

John (making the sound the human beings have come to recognise as laughter): Very good, friend Carl! Do you plan to use your big ship for the journey, or have you smaller fliers inside, or would you like me to provide an aircraft?

Carl: We will walk, I imagine. The gravity here is so nearly like our own that two miles should bother no one. Certainly there would be no need of flying; but if you would care to bring a ground vehicle, I am sure the gesture would be appreciated.

John (after another thoughtful pause, and realizing that Carl isn't joking after all): Perhaps the ground car would be best; I will bring one tomorrow. I fear that not more than two of your people can accompany me in it, though, because of your size. Also, it might be well if none of you attempted to walk to the town; there are areas between where there are plants we grow, and until you learned to recognize these, your people might cause damage, as you said.

Carl: Do you not have marked roads? It looks to me from where we're sitting that the way is clear enough.

(Fade-out; reopening with John, Carl, and another human being driving through the streets of the city. The sun is low; the tour, obviously nearing its end.)

Carl: I'm rather sorry we picked a holiday, John; perhaps we did not get such a good idea of your normal life. Still, it was more than interesting. It might be good for several of us to come in later and attend some of your schools, if that can be arranged without disturbing the classes too greatly. That would give an even more complete education in your specific customs than we have at present. Do you think there would be any objection?

John: Perhaps you or one of your fellows might come to explain the suggestion more fully to one of our city governors -- I do not know just what you mean, myself. I have shown you everything of importance except some of the military establishments, which, of course, I could not enter with strangers. I do not know what more you would be likely to learn from another visit----

Well, so it goes. A singularly boring couple of pages of conversation. I did not have John excuse himself to go dexitroboping or platting the twishers, or distimming doshes, for that matter; I don't think I had to. There were a couple of points where man and Wolfian were obviously not getting together; there would have been others if this were to be a full-length story. John had worked up a healthy mistrust of all things human by the time we left him a moment ago. Why? He could not see why the explorers refused to visit the city at first, and then asked to do so later, for one thing. Such a visit, rather than an involved and lengthy process of verbal questions and answers, seemed to him the logical way to find out what the Earthmen wanted to know. His people would

never have resented mistakes the visitors made while learning; their own children learned the same way, and an outstanding characteristic of John's race is a patience with ignorance. They would not, however, be patient with slow learners. Their quick-growing children learned with unbelievable speed; the few who needed to observe the same thing more than once to learn all it implied were regarded as objects of pity. John had been bored to tears by the explorers' attempts to teach him about their home planet. He had seen movies which to him were long series of separate pictures, and he could only conclude that the visitors were trying to conceal things rather than teach them. Carl's desire to get back to the city to visit schools, and his conclusion that there had been a holiday simply because there were so many new-hatched children around the streets -- his very insistence on entering the same city he had once refused to visit -- made no sense. The Wolfian was convinced by then that the men had some ulterior motives behind their trip. I would probably have had to end the story with a landmine going off under the Terrestrial ship.

All right, the Wolfians aren's as alien as Palainians. I'll admit that. I'll even admit that I could never draw a good Palainian character; I don't, and never can, know enough about Palain. If I want to write about such a planet, I'll have to fall back on meaningless words. as has been done in the past -- but I don't think that's a solution to the problem of portraying an alien. I still believe that, as long as I have the physical characteristics of a planet, a set (arbitrary, perhaps) of emotional tendencies, and a specification of the sensory and other bodily equipment of a particular race, I can have members of that race act peculiarly enough to be as "alien" as anyone could reasonably ask, even though their actions are completely consistent with the conditions I have set up. The fact that those actions later *do* become explainable in human terms doesn't bother me; to me it seems only fair that there should be enough evidence in the body of the story to permit readers at least some chance of working such matters out.

If beings portrayed in this manner still do not seem alien enough, I'm sorry. It seems to me that anyone not satisfied with that method wants something very much like a contradiction -- an understandable portrayal of the incomprehensible. If they want me to start by saying that my characters are completely beyond understanding and then use up thirty thousand words trying to explain them, it's too bad. I've made mistakes in logic and will probably make more, but that's not one of them.

I think -- and here I realize I'm sticking my neck out again -- that anything we ever recognize at all as intelligence will eventually become comprehensible when its environment is understood. I have a great deal of fun setting up environments, deducing the nature of the minds that would grow up in it, and then letting readers work the problem backwards. If that isn't portraying an alien intelligence, I don't know what is. If people don't like it -- well, I can't expect to have 100% Hal Clement fans among the ranks of science fiction readers. All I ask is a big enough percent to draw John Campbell's bonuses.

This was written for the Proxyclave, the 3rd Disclave, where the pros send in article/speeches to be read by members of the Washington DC club. Apparently, after the Proxyclave, it was sent to Geis. If it has ever been published, I don't know where. //Eney -- details on the Proxyclave, and this speech in particular would be appreciated...BEP.

IMPASSE