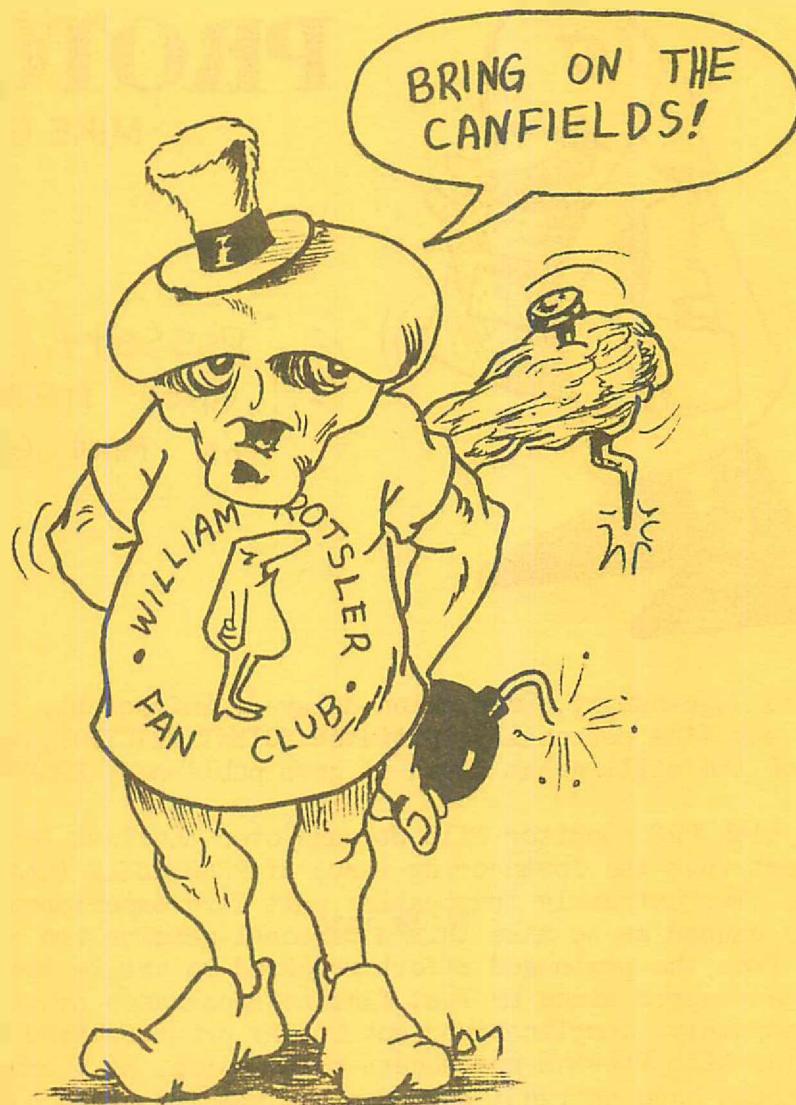


Two / SCIENTI- FRICTION / Two



SCIENTIFRICTION

#2

ilos by
Bathurst

SCIENTIFRICTION Number Two. The July issue, though probably mailed by mid-June.
Edited by Mike Glyer (c/o Dept. of Popular Culture, BGSU, Bowling Green OH 43403)
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PROTOSTFR

MIKE GLYER

PSSST....
NAKED PITCHERS
OF MIKE GORRAN.

TIRED of those Hugo-hungry, production-delayed, infrequent, dinosaur fanzines? So am I! That's why I've personally initiated SCIENTIFRICTION, while maintaining my coeditorship of the still great (when it gets published) PREHENSILE.

Conversation with PRE coeditor Milt Stevens over the last few weeks makes likely the prospect that the forthcoming issue of PREHENSILE (when it comes forth...) will be the last. The extremely frustrating wait I've experienced in the production of PRE 1½ already caused me to make this a personal-genzine (to mangle a metaphor). After recovering from the prolonged effort required to create the original 128 page behemoth, the time elapsed since my last fanzine appearance started to weigh on me. Then, almost immediately, complications set in. My printer bowed out of the picture. Through Barry Gold, Milt Stevens got access to printing, at a price that was twice what my printer would have charged; and even so, was less than half the best estimate I could get anywhere else. That, though, still was a dollar per copy on a 300 copy run. The decision to cut, both aggravating and unavoidable, was all the same theoretically implemented without too much hassle. Theoretically, because after deciding which pages to omit or rework (drop some art; omit letters and have them mimeoed) that still left hours of work ahead in re-laying-out.

The issue's ultimate disposition is still up in the air, but its fate crystallizes the accumulating suspicion that PREHENSILE is now a dinosaur, grand and terrible and incapable of being supported by the modern environment.

In past editorials I've indicated PREHENSILE was never merely a creature of convenience but of purpose. The zine represented (if realized imperfectly) my ultimate

intent as an editor: to provide excellent fanish, sercon, and artistic material; to provide my platform when I wanted to rant; to (otherwise) be a medium to speak with friends; to maintain an active lettercolum; to utilize the review section to avidly and critically follow developments in science fiction. None of these has ever been fully realized. PRE 11, in its original state would have realized them almost perfectly, just six months out of date, too massive and complicated to appear often or on time, taking a hundred hours of work to create and a dollar a copy to publish!

Grand, and terrible. The material is really dynamite stuff. The art, delightful. The review section wholly redesigned. The editorial matter lengthy and interesting. With pro contributions, and a new columnist (Joe Sanders). The former chiefly consisting of the transcribed Westercon panel where Carr, Silverberg and Goldin analyzed the original story anthology field interestingly and at length. When I asked their permission to reprint I had no idea it would be almost a full year before the thing got into print. Their patience has been taxed, and remains profoundly appreciated.

Oh, golly -- I forgot to be modest up there! But then I also forgot to have fun, after awhile. It's never been a secret that elaborate fanzines are not the product of self-amusement. In fact the assumed standard of quality for an offset fanzine as expressed by past letters of comment literally imposes a high level of pretension for any editor who is wary of receiving locs short on issue-related comment and long on "What's that shlock drawing by Joe Exx/ that dull review/ that strained humorous article/ that tiresome scholarly essay (choose one or all) doing in your almighty swell fanzine? I'm surprised that was printed in a zine of your quality."

Part of the fun of publishing a fanzine is experimenting with material and your audience. The ability to succeed doing that relies heavily on your audience's perception of the intent of your zine. Offset publishing triggers a level of expectation in many fanzine readers, if one judges by loc's I've gotten. I only halfheartedly tried to wean readers away from that idiotic prejudice since I already desired to publish a zine that would happen to coincide with those expectations. Future STFRs, by the way, will probably be mimeoed. This issue is offset free, and requires no more work from me than typing, collation, and mailing. By next issue I should have access to a mimeo again, a fact you may care less about, except that I discuss it at all only to point out that SCIENTIFRITION is not bound to any particular set of expectations whether in terms of graphics or content. Well, none outside of competent physical presentation. (That means, art reproed adequately, text legibly. I haven't reverted all the way back.)

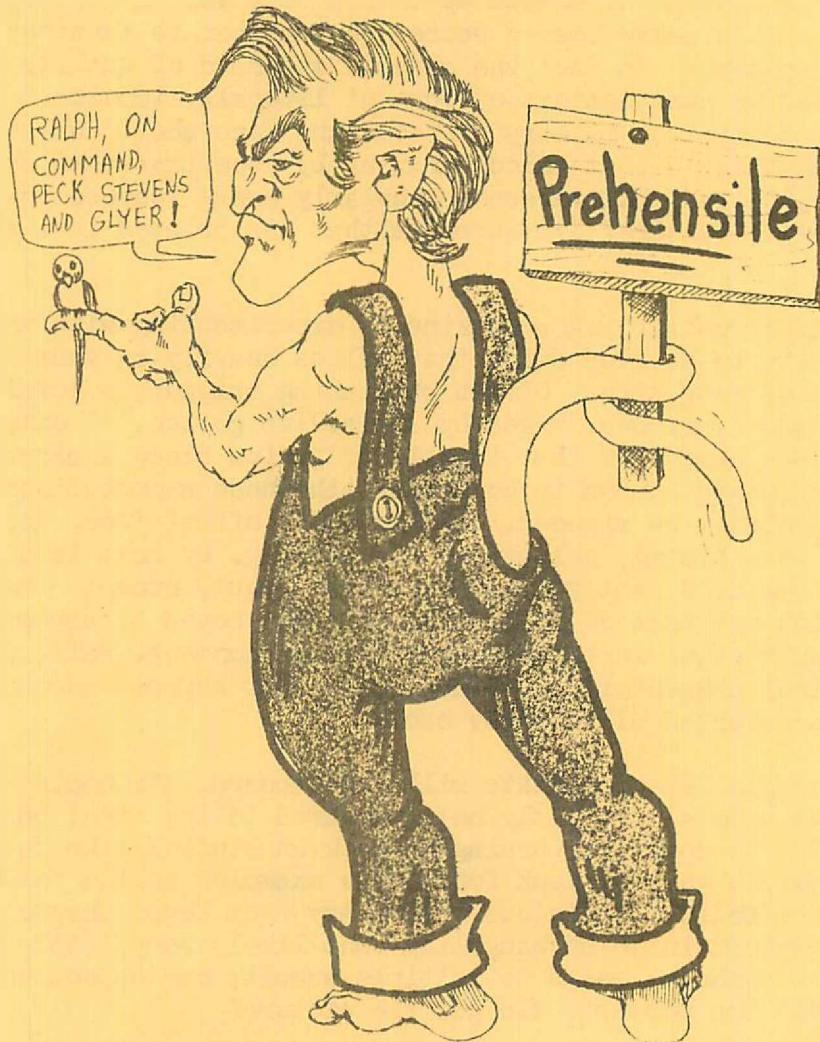
I'm hoping a couple PRE columnists will come aboard. I'm hoping Milt will contribute when he has time -- currently he's involved in the final phases of programming WESTERCON '75. No point in turning my back on stuff I like to read. By extension of which principle you may look forward to examples of the following. Fan fiction. Art portfolios. Religious commentary from Henri Chapdelaine on the Flood to Elst Weinstein on Herbangelism (but likely very little in between...) More John Ironge -- since he seems to multiple-submit, our objective is to hit fandom firstest with the bestest. You get the picture?

And letters. Now, kiddies, we get down to the nitty of the gritty. STFR will get published A Bunch of Times (a phrase permitting me to let it slide if I don't feel I've got the time to spare one month) this year. I will trade with most anything, but only one-for-one. I will send a sample to most anyone for a quarter, once. After that -- the letter of comment becomes the coin of the realm. I always wanted

to do that. Except when you're publishing a zine where it costs about the same to print 300 as it does 200, you either send out in trade for most anything and don't worry if you don't get letters, or sit around with a half zillion back copies. Now my economics are back in line with fannish reality. So is this zine's publishing. Can't expect to get locs if you never publish them; at least not good ones. Now I can publish them fresh, not even Aged In The Cask.

Naturally a few people don't have to sweat getting an issue. They're indicated by the letter P for permanent on their mailing label. Also, anyone on the sub list for my one-time newszine will find that I'm paying off the balance of their subs by sending them STFR on the basis of two newszine-issues ticked off for each STFR sent that's at least 1½ pages. Those who loc shall have their sub's longevity extended by 2 ticks. The number following your name on the label is THE ISSUE NUMBER OF STFR THROUGH WHICH YOUR SUB EXTENDS as computed on that basis.

After all that, I sure hope this zine lasts... Whew!



2. CLEANING THE DESK DEPT. Some fans are quite generous, to the point of writing fine letters of comment to zines they have no expectation of ever seeing again. I got one such from George Flynn, on the New Year's SCIENTIFRCTION.

That's a weird course you teach /Introduction to Popular Culture/. (But what do you have against Organic Chemistry? ((When I was an undergrad in the dorms at USC, it put a dent in my poker playing by obliging several potential gamblers to turn down the offer of a game in order to study it. That's sufficient reason to harbor a suspicion of anything, don't you agree?)))

The rumor about the costume judges /at DISCON/ has gotten pretty wide circulation (twice in KARASS), but I still haven't seen any indication of which judge was the culprit. Got any dirt on this?((None.))

I'm glad to see Paula /Lieberman/'s LEXICON report got published. I urged her to do one for you (since I was doing one for KARASS where...KARASS omitted half the item) but I didn't expect it to be that long. Let's see, she went to both A-Kon and LEXICON, where "there were about 50 people, none of them the same." This implies that Paula is not "people"; well.... Last weekend NESFA had its first winter relaxacon, imaginatively called Wintercon. About 40 people came (not including Paula, who was off to California -- where, among other things, she meant to ask Milt Stevens why she hadn't gotten her PREHENSEN-SIE). The marshmallow tradition was maintained, albeit with less spontaneity, and an insane time was had by all.

Mike Glicksohn in illegible ditto? How could you do such a thing?!

Ah, another admirer of "A Special Kind of Morning." (I was one of the 53 people who voted for it for the Hugo.)

Which prompts me to the Apology Department, reaching back for the remark on KARASS. Linda Bushyager, in typewritten ire, mailed me the KARASS with Feder's quote in it, demanded to know what had been omitted (which was nothing, your editor's feeble memory and ^{up}yen for investigative reportage having played him a sucker again) or else my apology. This is the or else my apology, public, and sincerely meant.

Don Keller likewise wrote. His letter's a bit longer, so for this one you lose the stylish indentation.

DON KELLER
c/o PO Box 24560
Los Angeles, CA 90024

I found the comments by Ted White and Richard Wadholm on European rock to be of great interest, particularly since, as they know, few people say much about them. Unfortunately I cannot comment directly since the groups they mention are not my area of expertise. As with sf, my tastes lie with the progressive (Ellison, Tiptree, Dozois) rather than with the avant-garde (Ballard and the NEW WORLDS school); so I am better versed in British progressive bands (Yes, Genesis, ELP), and have only heard a little European rock. (I don't really count Focus; they're closer to the British school.) I have heard Amon Duul II's PHALLUS DEI (great title) and WOLF CITY,

Tangerine Dream's ZEIT, and bits and pieces of Kraftwerk's new American release AUTOBAHN (on the radio yet!), and while I applaud their trying out new directions, I found all this material interesting at best, and not at all the sort of thing I'd want to play very often. The only stuff of this kind I've heard and really liked is Nektar, particularly REMEMBER THE FUTURE which is a beautiful album. But they are almost straight rock in orientation.

So my sympathies do not even lie in White's and Wadholm's direction. But I wonder if their knowledge extends to an Italian group called Le Orme, who I consider to be one of the best in the world. (Their now-big countrymen, PFM, have not impressed me either.) Le Orme has a three-man setup like ELP, and sometimes sound like them, but equally as often sound like Yes or Genesis; but their sound is really all their own. They have five albums, four of them (COLLAGE, UOMO DI PEZZA, IN CONCERTO, and the new CONTRIBUNTI) available only in Italian on the Phillips label; the best of them, FELONA E SERONAX, is also available in English on the Charisma label (which also handles Genesis and Monty Python). It is a (weakly) sf concept piece which, as a piece of music, is as good as any of Yes' similar efforts. Their drummer has Bill Bruford's jazz expertise plus a heavier beat, and the keyboard man has a more balanced blend of his various instruments than I've ever heard. Hopefully Le Orme will get a break, the recognition they deserve.

3. MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE MAILBOX Got a letter from Peter Roberts, which begins with the boggling remark "...I attempted to obtain a copy of PRE 5 at the fmz auction at Seacon -- I bid up to \$1, but someone else went further...." and segued into contemplations of the FAAn awards. "Firstly, I think the whole thing has gone off at half-cock: I was stunned to receive the ballot itself -- I never expected the scheme to start this early, and after only one full discussion with THE ZINE FAN. It's a mess at the moment. There's been insufficient publicity for one thing -- people have come across the ballot before they've even heard of the idea, and it's hard to generate any enthusiasm from such a cold start. Some sort of build-up was necessary to get people interested. There also hasn't been enough time -- Darroll (Pardoe) managed to distribute ballots in CHECKPOINT and I sent some last-minute ones with EGG, but... And most importantly, the wording of the ballots isn't yet adequate (for example, "literary sf" suggests something pretty pretentious -- that's one of the points Eric Bentcliffe made in the last EGG -- it should be "written sf" or some phrase that's less ambiguous than "literary sf") and neither are the rules; 50p to nominate? You'd be lucky. Anyway, I've only found adverse reaction so far; I haven't heard from Darroll...."

4. LATER, BACK AT THE MAILBOX Got a letter from Jodie Offutt, who closed with this shot to the midsection: "Hey, I meant to make some comment about how I really walked right into your remark about the price of tickets to Dodger Stadium. It costs a lot more to get into Riverfront. But that's because we take baseball seriously in this part of the country. On the West Coast it's all funny suits and long hair." As I reach into the makeup case and pull out Smile No. 5B(.04) "Condescension, towards one for whom the wearer feels familial respect and affection, but who has Messed With The Truth on a regional point of view, and needs Understanding Guidance" -- I can only say, how can anyone whose baseball worldview is provided through Cincinnati Reds baseball broadcasts be expected to Really Know?

In fact I was writing a comparative essay on baseball broadcasters' style not too long ago, which looks like it fits here. Please stay tuned while I switch gears and voices.

In a medium known more for its boosterism than journalism, the sports broad-

casters' styles might be the only thing worth discussing if this very tension between perception and promotion not so all-controlling.

Owners have ordered their broadcasters to inflate attendance figures, doctor the verbal appearance of losing teams, paper over controversy, all at one time or another. Then there are the others, who do it as a matter of course, who wear eyeshades in team colors.

Vin Scully, voice of the Dodgers over the last quarter-century, possessed of studious mind and superb vocal equipment, rose to the top of his profession chiefly by encyclopedic knowledge of his sport (between 1950 and 1974 he called virtually nothing but baseball games) combined with an ability to communicate its nuances that outshone all others'. Yet the thing that has elevated him, earned him universal respect, is an honesty that puts him right at the heart of things, characterized by objectivity and a sense of symmetry.

Age takes its toll even of Scully, for one notices his periodic attacks of pomposity; the sermon about offended families when a fan left the outfield bleachers for a leisurely Sunday streak and interrupted play last summer; as well as his current bank commercial, a ludicrous effort trying to warm up the image of good old "Cal Fed".

On the other hand, Los Angeles locals who snipe at Scully's coworker, Jerry Doggett, might best have their ingratitude repaid by a steady diet of innings called by Joe Nuxhall. Sidekick to Reds' voice Marty Brennerman, when the gravel-grunting ex-jock isn't reeling off statistical gibberish, he's coloring the play-by-play with apt remarks like "We sure got out of a terrible jam that time. Griffey made a really great play." Either of which would be forgiveable, but together, and all the time, are intolerable.

Brennerman, who reputedly copied his style from Scully's (and in calling the 1972 playoffs for NBC radio was actually confused by various LA fans for Scully), eternally refers to the Reds and "us" and "we". The tenor of the game is completely bound up in the Reds' point of view: the two callers are petulant and childish in their shifting perspectives, who rarely pay more than grudging respect to opponents (ie, a great defensive play against the Reds is always a robbed hit, never a great catch), unless the opponent is so good that they about-face and start piling praise on him in hope that the metaphorical burden will bury him. Such a case was Sutton's performance against them, a night the Dodgers finally took it 3-1. Sutton pitched about six hitless innings. But they had already been talking no-hitter since the fourth inning, dredging up Sutton's career performances, remarking on his irresistible curve, and on and on. When Bench put a home run over the left field fence, their pouting and bogus praise immediately reversed itself: Sutton's arm might as well have fallen off for all the regard he got from then on.

Recently moved to third base, if Pete Rose continues to play that position his antagonists in the left field pavilion of Dodger Stadium may finally fade away. If so, one of the great traditions in whitewash will go by the boards.

In the first place, if there are 40,000 people behaving themselves, and fifty throwing garbage at Pete Rose, and one asshole who brings in a rock and throws it at him, what the hell can you do? Actually the situation for years had been that teams were thrilled to come to LA because (as they said) "the fans" ~~were~~ so well-behaved and appreciative." English translation: "They're so passive it's like playing on a neutral site." Appreciative is valid too. There are two reasons for the high level of knowledgeability on the part of LA baseball fans, one is Vin Scully,

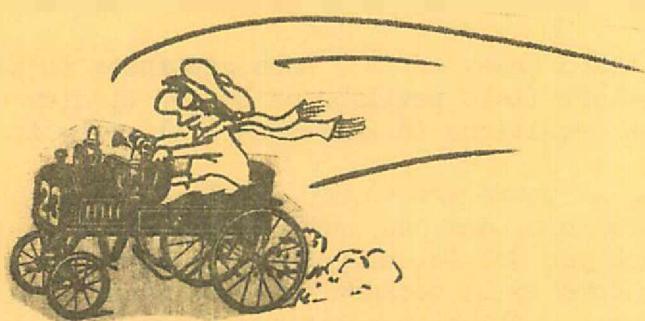
the other is the geographical location of LA, by which I mean, by the time a night game in LA rolls around almost all the other results in baseball are known; in the East, though, night games on the Coast are never reported, because their results come in too late for one day, and not early enough for the next -- besides which, most news reports center wholly on regional favorites. Unless he goes out and buys Sporting News, which is two weeks old anyway, he never finds out about the rest of the sports world, he being a Eastern fan. This, unfortunately, does not leave the Eastern fan mourning his shortage of information, but leaves him believing his region is the sports world.

To return to whitewashes, theirs not mine, Brennerman and Nuxhall, encountering the first baseball fanatics in LA history, who congregate in the left field pavilion as "Cannon Country" (ala "The Toy Cannon", center fielder Jimmy Wynn), including a handful of jerks and rowdies, emphasize poor Pete's fate. After carrying on like that six innings one night, Joe Nuxhall happened, just in passing, to mention that in the third inning Pete had flipped the bird to the left field fans, and in the fifth inning he'd taken some of the trash and thrown it back into the stands (or, in Nuxhall's overoptimistic phrase, threw it in the direction it had come). Poor old Pete may be getting treated badly, but poor old Pete sure isn't getting a whole lot of sympathy from me since he's inviting more abuse all the time.

Therefore, on the whole, I take the generalizations of Cincinnati Reds fans like I take the generalizations of John Brunner about America, all the while regretting the reportorial distortions that led them to that point of view. What really nauseates me though is the uncritical devotion Reds fans give a team made up of the most self-indulgent and pompous bunch of overrated bigmouths in the game. The fans deserve better, though being from LA perhaps I'm just as happy they haven't got it.

One thing I haven't held fast, that's my opinion of Stroh's beer. A couple years ago andy offutt wrote that he'd become a Reds fan because Stroh's sponsored their broadcasts. Or was it that he'd started drinking Stroh's because the Reds broadcasts were sponsored by them? I guess if I'm deciding taste-by-association, the order isn't all-important. But rather than blithely damn Stroh's for their lapse on that count, I bless their brew. In fact at the Big Bird Eats Moon party on the 24th of May, Ro Nagy had me swilling enough to launch a ship on.

(I was about to say that beer is the one thing all fen can agree on, regardless of their other essential philosophical differences. But recalling the IPA-Coors debate, I suppose if we can't fight about beer, the rest really doesn't matter! Anyway, maybe if I live clean andy will let me buy him a Stroh's at the next con.)



(JON INOUYE)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION WRITER WHO EVER LIVED

J. Marcus Scanner was born in a small town in California, known as Los Angeles. While still a small child, young Marcus learned how to walk.

Those early years were spectacular for young Marcus, but also full of turbulence, so common among stormy poets of many generations. At the age of five, Scanner learned how to talk and voiced his first thoughts:



Following these first thoughts, Scanner almost immediately began to write. And write.

Mrs. Grabel, his kindergarten teacher, noted a peculiar talent in her pupil. "Marcus," she said, "had a very unique niche in class. He was the only one to bring dead mice to history with the scientific urge to dissect. I hated it and it drove me crazy." She later added, "His apples had worms in them, too."

In the first grade, Marcus wrote his first stories. It came almost by accident, for if it wasn't for the fortunate churn of events, Marcus would never have become a writer.

In a recorded interview shortly before his death by well known sf fan Stanley Allen Wipley, Marcus said:

"Man...like I mean it. Man, you know what I mean, man? Like...like that teacher...if that teacher hadn't told me to write one hundred times I WILL NOT BRING TINY LITTLE FEROCIOUS THINGS TO CLASS, I would have never become... like...this science fiction writer. Like...you know what I mean, man?"

"So in other words, Mr. Scanner, you attribute your early interests in sf to that cause?"

"Yeah...like...that's the cause, see?"

A determined, rugged nonconformist, Scanner quickly took to writing. While a very mature second grader, Marcus developed an extreme interest in biology. From this interest, Marcus retorted, his enthusiasm for magazines and "reading stuff" was permanently ingrained.

Marcus recalls his family life as a very happy one. "My mom and dad," he said in the interview, "were very happy folks, and I always saw them together." His sister, with whom Marcus later expressed extreme love, was "very attractive and intelligent and witty, too, when she wasn't scratching me away, like the cat."

The following year, Ted Scanner, Marcus' father, committed suicide.

Now forced into supporting the family at age eight, Marcus quickly learned the value of free enterprise and the American system.

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"Whenever I think of free enterprise, I think of that meat factory that I went by every morning on my paper route. It's strange (he laughed) because that meat factory characterizes everything in America -- hard labor, initiative, ingenuity, automation, like I've written about in oh so many of my stories -- and sheer executive machinery. Yeah. Whenever I think about the American Dream I think of that meat factory and the flies crawlin' all over them meats." He laughed.

Later, after a brief pause: "But god almighty. That place sure stunk as hell."

This was given in one of the rare moments when Mr. Scanner was sober.

"Like...a meat factory smells like raw manure. You know what they put in meat these days, don't you young man...."

His faith in free enterprise fully ingrained, at the age of eleven, Scanner wrote his first story. It was called A GIFT TO THE GOD'S. It was about a little boy named Jerry who discovers one summer night a dog named Levnov. Levnov comes from the moon and tells of that remarkable kingdom and the riches of Luna.

"But Mr. Levnov, sir. The moon's a bunch of craters and really sick acne."

"I know, kid. But you have an imagination, don't you?"

Sending A GIFT TO THE GOD'S to the popular magazines of the time, Marcus quickly took to Bohemianism at twelve, where he was promptly jailed for attempting to read A GIFT TO THE GOD'S in public.

"There ain't nothing really wrong with it, then," he had said. "It's just that I was a genius. And I wrote remarkable things ahead of their time. Can I help that?" he asked in 1975.

One phrase in the story caused such controversy that it needs be restated here for historical value:

Suddenly, the dog stood up, its nostrils poking against its unscarred flesh. Jerry, the little boy spaceman, felt his flesh crawling uncontrollably with delight. "You're SO magical Levnov," Jerry said.

"Kid," the dog replied.

"Oh, what," Jerry asked.

"Humans and dogs must never mate."

The message was mind-boggling and far ahead of its time.

Kicked out of school at age thirteen for conducting bacteria tests with the school's water system, Scanner stole a typewriter and began writing stories. "Those were the days," Scanner has said time and again. "Yeah. Those were...."

Tons of stories poured out of his typewriter. THE MAD LOCUS concerned a small-time crook who claimed he was from Mars (believed it, too), stealing purses from little old ladies. When captured, a nation is shocked at its President. THE EYE is a surrealistic masterpiece (1928) concerning a giant eye which

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attacks earth and later becomes a respected television station. HELL, MEIN FURHER (1933) is an unforgettable tale about a great war (1931) led by a madman named Leonard Isaac Sturnburger, MD. In the novel, Sturnburger sells dozens of porno books and from this builds a financial empire, later evolving into a mini-nation attempting to subjugate civilization. HELL'S ANGELS, HEAVEN'S DEVILS involved three astronauts who discover a primitive civilization, but soon realize they haven't left earth yet. MRS. BERNSTEIN'S CHRISTMAS SECRET (1936) takes place in the far future where Japanese attempt to subjugate an America with cameras, autocars, and energy-radios. IF I WERE A RICH MAN is a highly improbable tale, but equally convincing, about a group of men who became robots and later transferred to Vietnam.

Stories poured out like a flood between 1919 and 1939. But then, remarkably, J. Marcus Scanner stopped.

"I realized that had been typing since I was thirteen and that I hadn't left the room yet. I suddenly remembered that I hadn't eaten, too. So I'd decided to get another typewriter and change my clothes."

Finally, in 1940, came his greatest novel of all.

It was, INVASION OF THE EDITOROIDS.

In this timeless classic, the editors of science fiction magazines have somehow gained control of the earth, and have converted America into a yearly awards banquet. The populations do not work, but instead rest forever within Pleasure Domes@ with electrodes attached to their skulls and images of all the science fiction stories from the past three thousand years flashing through their skulls. They are kept addicted to Mind Pleasure@ and read even the rejected manuscripts. A mad editor, Clyde Bernard Fernstein, converts the Pacific into a vast slush pile where the enslaved populations of earth must sleep.

Then came the Second World War, on schedule.

"I warned them, the idiots. I told them time and again and they didn't listen. Like I said, sooner or later, them Tahitians were gonna bomb Pearl Harbor."

Stanley Allen Wipley asked in the interview: "But, sir, wasn't it the Japanese who bombed Pearl Harbor?"

"Don't matter, they're all the same."

Angered by the hordes of Nazis and South African bunnies in the world, the nonconformist joined the air force. "I always wanted to fly," he said. "Finally my wish was coming true."

Later, Scanner was refused admittance, due to athlete's foot. "It wasn't really athlete's foot, though," he replied. "I told them I typed with my toesies, and they looked at me kinda strange."

Now rich and famous, Scanner went to Hollywood, USA, where he wrote filmscripts. One of his most noted films during the war period was I WAS A TEENAGED GERMAN KAMIKAZE PILOT IN LOVE. It involved the exploits

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of Blue Acer Hans Smileburgers, the first German to fly unmanned V-2s for the Japanese Air Command Kamikazes (JACK).

(Close-up): Hans' face, sweating: DAMNED YANKEES! DAMNED AMERICA!
DAMNED MARY SUE! DAMNED APPLE PIE! DAMNED UNCLE SAM!

(Cut to): A long shot, V-2 flying above ground in high atmosphere.

(Cut to): Interior, medium shot: Hans shaving his whiskers. He is singing the German national anthem. He spots an American carrier below.

(Cut to): American carrier.

(Cut to): V-2 heading towards American carrier.

(Cut to): V-2 cracking into tiny little pieces.
"Nothing MADE IN JAPAN works right!" he screams.

Following a variety of very successful film scripts, Scanner hears of Hiroshima and the atomic bomb. "He wrote she mey?" he asked.

Told of the atomic bomb in late '45, Scanner's hope for technology, for spaceships, lawnmowers, washing machines, and nyloned stockings with short skirts, quickly faded.

Like the atomic bomb itself, Scanner's last book brought an abrupt end to an era. In THE INVASION FROM THE WHITE HOUSE (1948) the first line is already immortal:

"Did you know I was the muffin man?"

The story involved a giant bakery in Washington DC. Secretly the bakery produced vast globules of protoplasm which grew and became living, pulsating politicians. The book sold out but was blasted by critics all over.

"Camp," he remarked. "It was a cheap book and I must shamefully admit that I wrote it to make money."

Disillusioned with America, he resided on Miami beach, vouching never to write another "one of them science fiction pieces of (censored)."

Then, on a chilly December afternoon, Scanner fell fatefully from the third story of his plush, Miami hotel. Rushed to the hospital, his dying words were "Christ, I wish they'd label their windows."

At his funeral, some of the greatest editors of the science fiction field gathered (and writers, too) in a final farewell. "Scanners live in vain," said one well-known writer. A passage was read at the funeral, one of Scanners' most poetic and memorable, LENA, THE PRIESTESS FROM SPACE:

"Oh, Bill...why did you die on me?"

"Lena," said Bill's spirit. "That wasn't my intention!"

"What!" Lena shouted.

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"Then why did you poison my drinks?"

"Oh, Bill, I'm sorry. I..."

"That's all right, Lena. Don't cry. I won't tell anyone."

"Oh, Bill. With three television shows, a series, and a commercial. I didn't think you'd die."

"I know, Lena. I know. Please don't cry. I guess next season's ratings have got to be better."

He is buried, with all reservations paid for in advance, at Forest Lawn in Los Angeles, a quiet residential district. He lies next to Wilmer Godfrey, the first black woman on the moon. On his gravestone is written an almost especially appropriate summation of his titanic existence:

DAMN. I WAS SURE I'D NEVER GET HICKIES.

-- Jon Inouye -----



NATIONAL ALF & VEG

I went to see my doctor last week, feeling a little off-colour, and he said, "You have a bad case of Brussels sprouts". "How did you know that?" I asked, politely, since what he said was quite true: Anson McTaggart had sent me the case some weeks ago from his farm in the Mallee, and I had virtually eaten nothing else since. (Waste not, want not, they say. They lie.) "I know that," said my doctor, placing his fingertips together under his chin in a most professional manner, "because your face is green and wrinkly."

I blushed. The doctor asked me to do it again. "A fascinating effect," he murmured, "but a little too Churriqueresque for these parts." (Two can play at this game, I thought.) "Then what," I said, "Do you suggest to restore my normal Palldian countenance?" He glared at me. "A psychoanalyst, perhaps, for a start, since you obviously have an edifice complex." I blushed again and he regained his composure.

"Anaverdol should do the trick," he said. "If it doesn't..." "Yes?" I said. "We'll have to amputate, of course." "Of course," I said, nonchalant-like. "But it's all on National Alf, so I shouldn't worry," he said, scribbling runic symbols on his pad. I didn't really expect him to worry.

I left the surgery, and, the horns of Alfland faintly blowing walked into my friendly neighbourhood pharmacy. I proffered my prescription for government-subsidized drugs, and the pretty little girl in the shop wanted to charge me fourteen bucks for them. Arrgghhh! "I beg your pardon?" she said -- very polite kid, that. "Arghhh!" I repeated. "Oh," she said, sweetly, "just a moment please." And she went behind the glass bit at the back of the shop and came back with the chemist and he said G'day, what's the trouble? and I nearly made a funny noise again but managed to stammer out something to the effect that I'd never paid more than a dollar for this kind of thing before and I was nearly in tears. I really was. I didn't have fourteen bucks, and I knew I'd really go off my head without that anaverdol stuff.

He said, "You can only get this stuff on National Alf if the doctor writes 'SPQR' on the scrip." "That's Latin for something, isn't it?" "Yes, Latin me know whether you can have it for a dollar!" (I hate punsters. For a moment I forgot my condition and looked sternly at him. He calmed down almost immediately.) "And as you can clearly see," he said, wiping the tears from his eyes and the scrip, "there are no such letters here."

JOHN
BANGSUND

"Arghhh!" I said.

He looked at me strangely. "I beg your pardon?" he said.
 "Oh, ah, just wondering, um, what to do about it, sob."
 "Why not go back and ask the doctor to change it?" he said.
 This seemed an excellent idea. As I walked out the door he
 was slapping his thigh and saying to his pretty assistant,
 "Latin me know! -- hee hee! -- Latin me know! Get it?"
 "Oh, you are a one, sir," she was saying. Go a long way that
 girl will.

I returned to the surgery and my doctor wasn't there. I explained the situation to one of his partners. He said, "Can't do it, you know. You have a bad case of Brussels sprouts, certainly, but to get anaverdol on National Alf you need a bad case of kohlrabi at least." I looked at him with an earnest look. "If I have to pay fourteen bucks for the stuff, I'll become kohlrabid!" He didn't look convinced, not even interested. But just then my doctor came in and there was a bit of discussion and I tried my hardest to look like a bad case of kohlrabi and finally he scribbled "SPQR" on the chit. I tore back to the chemist, and he handed over the stuff for a dollar, but he was still in a state of ill-concealed merriment. "Come on," I said. "What does 'SPQR' really mean?" "I'm not sure," he said, "but I think it means 'special perks for doctors' relatives'." And off he went again, in gales of unseemly laughter.

Boy, the things you have to go through to have Brussels sprouts!

Kohlrabi, I mean, Alf, dinkum. No, true, really.

Just joking -- ha ha -- about Brussels sprouts.

National Alf: If you were really kohlrabid you would be writhing on the floor.

Me: Just watch. See! --- writhing!

Alf: And going all blotchy and choking and...

Me: Blotchy and choking, you said?

Alf: Uh huh.

Me: If I could act like that I'd be earning a fortune and could afford fourteen bucks.

Alf: Well, acting is very good for the character, not to mention physique, quite apart from paying well if you're good at it.

Me: Truly?

Alf: Truly. Incidentally, that bit of advice will set you back fourteen...I beg your pardon?

Me: Arghhhhhhhh!

I had barely reached page 11 of a short memo to Dr. McTaggart telling him briefly what I thought of his agricultural efficiency, when a telegram arrived from him. ADVISE URGENTEST UNEAT SPROUTS STOP PIGS GREENEST WRINKLY STOP HOPING THIS FINDS YOU WELL AS IT LEAVES ME STOP ROTTEN WEATHER HERE COLON OH SCREAMER EMRULE TO BE IN ENGLAND ETCETERA COMMA EH QUERY

Now where the devil did he pick up all that jargon? "Urgentest" and "uneat" are typical journalist's telegraphese, "screamer" and "em rule" printer's talk (although most printers I know have a ruder word than "screamer" for the exclamation mark). I know that during the war he was in Naval Intelligence -- hence his later interest in omphalistic epistemology -- but I have no idea what he did before that. Perhaps he was a parasite of the Press, like myself. I must ask him sometime.

All of this has aroused my interest in vegetables, and I have given much thought to their place in the scheme of things. I remembered Peer Gynt's difficulties with the onion. I pondered Bunthorne's attachment a la Plato for a bashful young potato and other fruit.

I considered the viciousness of the rhubarb, the humour of the artichoke, the spendthrift and irresponsible qualities of the pumpkin, the nepotism of the parsnip and the unmentionable vice of the ruta baga. It is not difficult to see in vegetables a veritable microcosm of human attitudes and behaviour.

I have therefore reached the conclusion that All Vegetables Are Brothers -- which isn't much of a conclusion, but it might assist some other researcher more interested in the subject than myself.

Today I went back to see the chemist, because I had run out of those anaverdol tablets. There was no nonsense about paying \$14 for them this time, but I found to my dismay that the girl had given me only 50 of the rotten things.

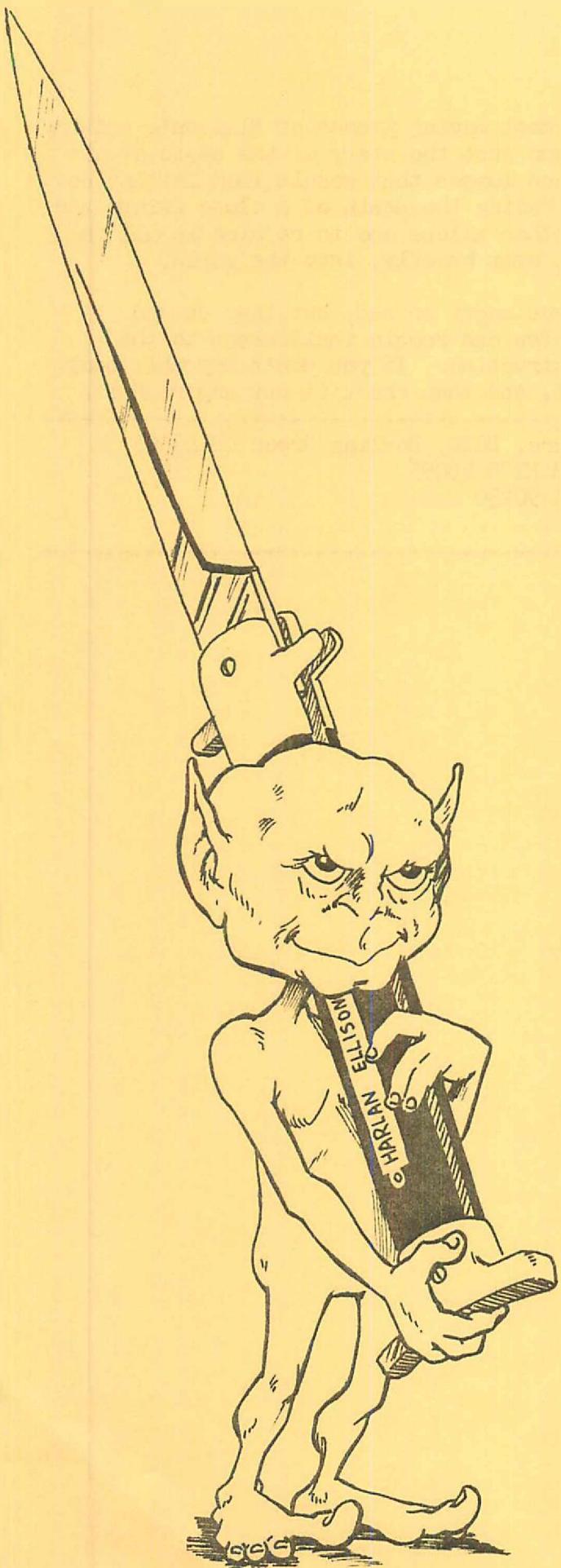
I asked why, since I had received 100 last time. She informed me that National Alf is concerned about the possible effects of anaverdol on pregnancy, and has therefore halved the permissible prescription.

I assured her that I was most unlikely to be affected in any such way. She said, "I know that, and you know that, but they don't, do they? It would be most irresponsible of them to make exceptions, wouldn't it? And you can always go to the doctor for another prescription." Her argument was flawless.

I went home in a low dudgeon (can't get high ones these days for love or money) and cheerlessly chewed on a handful of tablets. While doing so my eye happened to rest on a dictionary of abbreviations, which I had forgotten I possessed. Quickly I opened it and turned to 'SPQR.' Then I sighed and put the book away.

But we know, and it figures: "SPQR" stands for "small profits and quick returns".

I hope National Alf and the entire medical and pharmaceutical crowd will be stricken with thrip, aphis and sandy blight.



DEATHBIRD STORIES, Harlan Ellison
Harper & Row \$8.95
Reviewed by Stan Burns

Some writers are content if they present a story that entertains. Not Harlan Ellison. His stories assault his audience's emotions, gouge their consciences, stomp their prejudices, knee them in their callous disregard for their fellow man.

Ellison's most recent collection, DEATHBIRD STORIES, deals with our modern gods -- those aspects of today's life to which we surrender our freedom of thought and action in exchange for mindless toleration by our indifferent, plastic society.

Take these four gods for example:

Noninvolvement: In "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs" Ellison relates the story of a murder similar to that of Kitty Genovese, who was knifed to death while thirty-eight people stood indifferently nearby. He states a premise: 'looking the other way', rather than getting involved in any situation we know as evil, is tantamount to actively encouraging and nurturing it. Those that allow a murder to happen are just as guilty in his eyes as the one who performs an actual crime.

Love: "On The Downhill Side" is a gentle, moving story that asks whether loving another too much can be just as damaging in the long run as being incapable of ever loving another human being. But I think he is right to conclude that giving and sharing with another person is the only salvation in the land where God is allegedly dead.

Luck: While "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes" takes place in Las Vegas, the story becomes more than just another tale of gambler/loser, becomes a metaphor for the desperation of gambling; every aspect of the gambler's life -- even love -- is dominated by the compulsion to turn the card until playing the game becomes his life.

Death: "The Deathbird" contains one of the most moving pieces of Ellison's writing I have ever encountered. It becomes more than just the story of the death of his dog, but deals with all the real and imagined losses that result from letting down our defenses to open ourselves to another. Facing the death of a close friend and remembering all the good times enjoyed together allows one to rejoice in all the happiness and love that friend has brought, even briefly, into the world.

Ellison's stories may frustrate you, make you angry or sad, but they demand attention. Everyone may not like them, but few can remain indifferent to the energy and talent that goes into their construction. If you don't buy this book yourself, urge your local library to get it. And then check it out and read it.

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