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Sigma

Octantis

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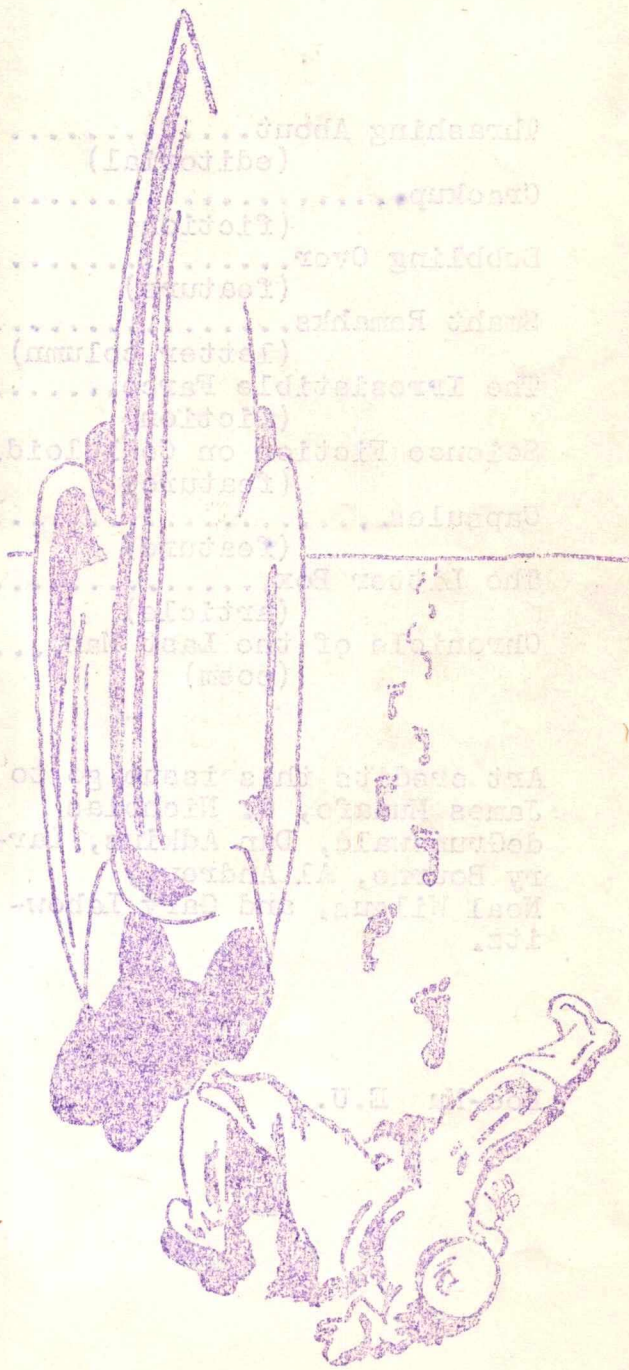
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Art credits this issue go to James Munafò, G. Nicholas deGrunswald, Dan Adkins, Larry Bourne, Al Andrews, Neal Wilgus, and Gary Labowitz.

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Last issue's discussion of the sad state of fandom's fiction (and other) output brought in a variation of commentary on the subject, ranging from complete agreement with Ron's and my own views to a wide number of reasons for the situation's existence. But one point was universally agreed upon: the quality of present-day fanfiction is below what the average fan writer could be expected to produce.

Now, instead of turning the letter column or the whole magazine into a battlefield for fannish pans in an attempt to fathom the basic reasons for the large amount of fancrud being turned loose on the fannish market, a group of us have come up with a project which should prove, once and for all, whether or not fandom is capable of creating (or wants to create) worthwhile fiction. For a change, the positive approach will be used: a stimulative will be provided to urge the fannish mind to produce.

In short, we have decided to sponsor a contest. This contest, which we have dubbed The First Annual Fandom Fiction Contest, may pave the way for future affairs of like nature, depending on the number and quality of entries. We are attempting to put it on a fandom-wide basis, and have begun a campaign to obtain mention in fan and professional magazines. (So far, two returns (favorable) have been received from the professionals, and several more from fan magazines. At this writing, the promotional campaign is but half over, so more returns are expected.)

As judges, we have a board consisting of Richard Lupoff, Samuel Johnson, Ronald Voigt and Robert Madle. In the very near future, three more judges will be added, bring the total to seven, which number should be sufficient to give every entrant his due consideration and assure him of fairness and non-partiality in judgement. Manuscripts will be judged round-robin.

And, as in every contest, prizes will be awarded to the winners. There will be ten places (including first), and appropriate awards will be set up for each. Rather than set up a number of cash prizes which, because of limited funds, would necessarily be small, and therefore hardly a motivation force, we have decided to make the awards in the form of books and magazines of suitable value for collection pieces. The leading science fiction magazine and book dealers have been contacted, and returns from this source are very promising. Those offering material for prizes are Brad Day, Claude Held, George Spencer, Howard DeVore, Edward Kisch and Richard Witter. Several others have offered material contingently on the contest becoming established, so are not listed as yet. A listing of dealers and the material offered follows:

thrashing about
by
Guissey

Glaude Held, 307 East Utica St., Buffalo 8, N.Y.: 25 to 40% off on listed items.

George Spencer, 8302 Donnybrook Lane, Chevy Chase, Maryland: 30% discount on orders, regardless of quantity.

Kisch News Co., (Edward Kisch), 4873 Cochran St., Santa Susana 1, Calif: two \$5 orders in retail amounts of rare, hard to find foreign items.

Edward DeVore, 4705 Weddel St., Dearborn, Mich.: 1 \$3-\$4 mint anthology wdw, 1 pkg of two ASF ten years or older, 1 pkg of three pulps ten years or older and three pkgs of three (each) pocketbooks.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Publications, (Brad Day), 127-01 116th Avenue, S. Ozone Park 20, New York: Talbot Mundy Biblio, 1; Checklist of Fantastic Magazines, 1; Checklist of Fantastic Magazines, 1; Index on the Weird and Fantastica in Magazines, 1; Past and Future (anthology), 1; Pilgrims Through Space and Time, Bailey, 1; Modern Science Fiction, Brothman, 1;

F. & S.W. Book Co., (Richard Witter), 204 Rice Avenue, Staten Island 14, N.Y.: One copy each of Fahrenheit 451, asbestos limited, numbered and signed; Keller limited, numbered, signed and boxed Lady Decides and Eternal Conflict; Rhode Island on Lovecraft; Myers Try Another World and 13 Seconds That Rocked the World.

In addition to these, several individuals have offered material, including three original manuscripts or stories printed in professional magazines (Al Andrews), an inscribed medallion for the first place winner (myself) and some unspecified donations from private collectors.

Now as to general information: The entries will be fiction, short stories of 5000 words or less, sf or fantasy in theme and no taboos held in handling or in subject matter. Eligible are non professionals in fandom, a sub to SigOct not being necessary to enter a mss. Opening date for submission of mss is July 1st, 1956 and closing date will be December 31st, 1956, the latter being a postmark date. All submissions are to be addressed to 4 Curve St., Wakefield, Mass., and must be typewritten, double spaced and accompanied by a stamped envelope. The first prize winner's story will be published here in Sigma Octantis, and others, though not obligated, are invited to submit their mss. All rights to all stories shall remain the property of the authors.

The procedure will deviate from what is held to be normal for such contests as this, and will include the office of Story Editor, whose task it will be to give semi-professional advice to the contestants and offer them aid in the revision of their mss. Al Andrews, 2108 16th Ave., So., Birmingham, Ala., has agreed to accept this position and all manuscripts, unless otherwise specified, will be posted from here to him for any direction which may be needed. Al will work personally with each contestant, fully analysing his mss and giving on-the-script editing, to produce a good script. This may seem like a radical change, bordering on cheating, to some readers, but we feel that if a writer is given some help in dodging the snares and pitfalls of fiction writing, the better script he will produce will be worth the added aid. This, incidentally, is the reason for the abnormally long running time of the contest: six months.

It is our hope that the readers of this magazine will circulate the news of this contest among their correspondents and attack their typewriters during the long summer months ahead to produce a manuscript for submission. Requests for additional information and questions about the above information should be sent to the address on the contents page.

Because events are likely to move more rapidly than would be feasible to report their outcomes in SigOct, a bulletin will be drawn up periodically and mailed to interested parties. For a copy, drop a note to me here at the above-mentioned address.

So there you have it. Why did we go to all the trouble of arranging a judging board, prizes, story editor, et al? Well, there were several reasons, chief among the being to see whether or not, given sufficient stimulation, fandom can produce a number of really good fiction pieces. As you can see by flipping through almost any fan magazine, the greater amount of readable 'fan' writing is done, not by the amateurs, but by professionals as a sort of hobby outlet or means to get rid of material not suitable for one reason or another for pro publication. While not advocating a 'give fandom back to the fans' movement, we believe that, given something to work toward, the percentage of well-written fan material may rise to a predominance instead of remain a minority.

Another reason, and perhaps a bit idealistic, is the hope that the contest might give some fan a slight push down the road toward professionalism: supply a vehicle or recognition whereby amateur writers may gain professional editorial notice.

And third, yet more idealistic than the second, that some fan who had never given a thought to writing as a vocation may sit down and bat out a story which will prove to be really good. This 'uncovering latent talent' kick may be never realized, of course: probably not, but it's a possibility not to be overlooked.

And then there are a host of minor reasons: curiosity, personal satisfaction, and the rest, but the above pretty well covers the more important purposes. Now there's just about one thing left to be done, and that's for you to sit down and give birth to an opus to end all science fiction short stories.

Readers will note the addition this issue of a movie review Comment column. This has been included only tentatively, and its extension to future issues will depend on your comments. There are no small number of fan magazines including such features at present, but if Science Fiction On Celluloid seems to merit continuance, it will become permanent. Also likely to be noticed is the wider variety of artwork. And a few new names among the old. Your commentary will be appreciated.



crackup

Kent Moonaw

The General, clad in his neatly pressed blue uniform, waited quietly at the speakers' rostrum until the wave of applause spent itself in the afternoon air. Spread out before him in orderly rows, transforming the ferroconcrete landing surfaces of the newly constructed Los Angeles Spaceport into a sea of upturned faces, stood the graduating class of 1986. All of them with five rugged years of Academy training under their belts, all of them commissioned USSF officers as of this hour. Each wore his polished silver emblem proudly, almost defiantly, and the aged officer could sense that a good many potential leaders were met in the group.

The sun was hot on the back of the General's neck, but there was no time to wipe perspiration from under his collar now; this speech culminated the commencement exercises, and the young lieutenants knew that when it was over they would each receive sealed orders and be sent on their first assignments in space. It was a tremendous feeling to know that you had finally made it where so many others had failed or dropped out, and it was quite likely that none of them would ever forget this day. The General still remembered his graduation, and that had been over twenty years ago.

Illustrations by
Munafu,
Adkins,
and deGrunswald

He cleared his throat and began.

"Men, this isn't the first year that I've been called upon to make the graduation address, therefore I

know what is expected of me. I'm supposed to tell you that the unexplored road of life is waiting ahead of you as you stand here, or something to that effect, and that by applying the knowledge gained here at the Academy to not only your USSF work, but also to everyday living, you will lead a rich and a fruitful life. Well, I don't want to make that kind of speech any more than you want to hear me do so, so for our mutual enjoyment, I won't"

"There is no set formula for success, and trying to copy methods another person has used to get to the top will get you absolutely nowhere. No matter how much you learn from your classroom instructors, they can never teach you the most important thing of all: how to think and act for yourself. Wherever you are sent after today, be it to the moon, to Mars, or elsewhere, you are certain to come up against situations that none of the men back here ever had to meet. They won't be able to tell you what to do, and in many cases you'll be better equipped to handle it than they are."

"In other words, you'll have to learn how to face things on your own. If a meteor fragment punches through the outer wall of your ship, there isn't time to look up "loss of air" in the Handbook. If you do, you'll be dead; there's only one thing to do, and that's plug it up."

"You're all intelligent men or you'd never be here now. The final exam last week, for instance, would probably have stumped me!"

A smattering of good-natured laughter drifted lightly over the scene as the young officers recalled how they had struggled to answer the complex questions that were placed before them, and how grimly sure they had been of failure as they handed in their papers. But they had all passed or they wouldn't be here, as the General said.

"At any rate," he continued, "you're all smart enough to know what I'm trying to say, even though I'm not expressing myself very well. Live your own life, take everything in its stride, and you'll be a better man for it."

He paused to let his point sink in, and then went on in a louder, less serious tone: "I'm going to cut this thing short, since I know how anxious you all are to get the hell out of here. Studying at the Academy has been a great experience, I realize, but don't let it cramp your view. The sights and the sensations waiting for you out in space will be far grander than anything you've ever known on Earth, and that's a fact. Remember what you've learned here, however, and remember how a Space Force officer is expected to conduct himself."

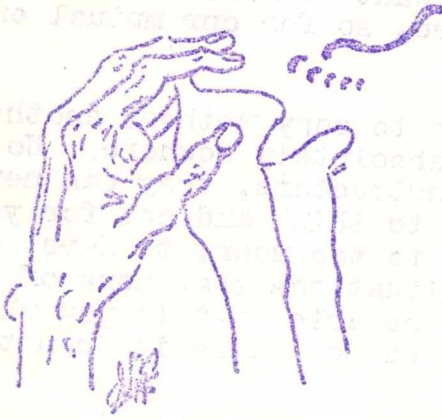
The General took two quick steps back from the stand and saluted smartly to the group before him. "So long -- spacemen," he said.

A great cheer exploded from the field, and hats flew up in unison. It was over. They were really spacemen now, and the feeling was like something none of them had ever known. The whole universe was theirs to

explore and conquer. The moon, the Jovian satellites....

The General smiled as he watched them.

II



The trip from Lunar Headquarters had gone off like clockwork, even to the point of not having a single case of space-sickness during the initial blasting period. It didn't seem at all like a trip into the unknown was supposed to seem, and although the rest of the crew seemed slightly jumpy about the whole affair, I wasn't bothered in the least. But since I had graduated with top honors at the Academy and most of them had come up through the ranks, I suppose that was to be expected.

Sure, we were on our way to Venus and no one had ever been there before, but I was commander of the ship, so what was there for them to worry about?

The fact is, if it hadn't been for my co-pilot's bungling, we might have gone through the entire flight with no trouble whatsoever. Preparing to start the deceleration orbit, the observers on the radar bridge wanted Henley, the navigator, to do some intricate figuring for them. He began to protest, but since I had excelled in mathematics on Earth, I told him to go ahead, that I would plot the simpler landing co-ordinates for Radcliffe, who was handling the first leg of the trip. He insisted that they were wrong, but it's inconceivable that I would make an error in such basic calculations, so it must have been he who slipped up. At any rate, the braking jets came on much too late to give the thrust needed for landing, and the ship piled up on the side of a stubby mountain. God, was I burned!

Bunch of lousy knuckleheads; they couldn't even perform a simple landing operation. How the brass expected me to make the Venus survey successfully with such an incompetent crew, I'll never know.

Surprisingly enough, we all escaped uninjured, and the ship didn't appear to be permanently damaged. There was, however, a gaping hole in the port side and a rupture in one of the major fuel connections. These could be repaired easily enough, but a large piece of the right steering vane was missing in addition, and for this we had no replacement. Jimmy Riley, the chief technician, said he couldn't see how such a bulky section of equipment could be demolished in a crash that harmed none of us. Since it was nowhere in the vicinity of the ship, he theorized that the impact must have thrown it quite a distance. This didn't sound at all likely to me, but no other theories presented themselves and there was nothing else left for me to do but follow through on his. Assigning all available men to overhauling the damaged ship, I took Riley and one of his subor-

dinates, a Ralph Collins, and set out in a ground motor-scout to look for the vane.

The Venusian countryside was rather barren and dry for a planet that was supposed to have so much rain. Vegetation was visible in the distant hills, but in our immediate area the soil was of a monotonous yellow-brown shade, cracked in certain spots due to lack of moisture. In a way, it reminded me of Mars; oh yes, I pioneered there also.

Peculiar rock formations adorned the scene around us, growing steadily steeper on both sides until we finally entered a blind canyon with sheer stone cliffs rising above us on three sides. Riley and Collins scanned the horizon frantically with long-range binoculars, while I drove the scout at a steady pace to aid them in the search. Somehow though, I didn't share their despair; I realized as well as they did that our store of supplies contained only enough food and water for the intended three-month period of exploration, but it wouldn't be too difficult to construct a powerful radio beacon and shoot a signal through the blanket of clouds to the Mars station. It wasn't as if we were in any unconquerable danger; I had the situation under complete control.

Consequently, I wasn't paying a great deal of attention to the passing view as our little vehicle rumbled over the rocky soil, and it came to Riley as a surprise when it was I who spotted the missing part at the far end of the gorge. I myself wasn't overly amazed, as I've always had exceptional eyesight. Another of my many extraordinary attributes.

I called their attention to the bright glint of metal reflecting sunlight ahead of us, and Riley was quick to agree that it was undoubtedly the detached vane we sought. Collins strapped himself in the rear seat while Riley took the seat beside me, and I pushed the accelerator down all the way. We surged ahead with the sluggish kind of power that only a gasoline engine can produce; it's a wonder to me why they don't equip the newer ships with electric shuttles, if only for the added comfort of the passengers.

We reached the spot with a minimum of rocking and swaying, and climbed out to take a closer look at what we had seen. The atmosphere was much thicker than any previous scientific estimation had given it credit for, and the climate was warm and mild, therefore we needed only facemasks for protection.

The vane was there, to be sure, but some freak act of fate had thrown it high up the canyon wall, leaving it balanced precariously on a thin rock ledge. "Oh, brother," murmured Collins through his mask. "How do we get up there?"

"There's a supply of rope in the scout," I reminded him, resisting the impulse to add the word 'stupid'. "If we can hook a loop around that jagged edge near the top of the wall, it won't be difficult to climb up."

For once Riley was thinking with me, and had already broken out the heavy metal-fiber line. I took it from him and twirled the open loop above my head two or three times, finally releasing it and feeling it catch on the rock arm some fifty feet above us. At times like this, I was even more proud than ever of the fact that I was an Academy graduate; we had been taught the fundamentals of working with almost every type of tool in existence, even the obsolete lariat.

Riley and Collins stood staring at me as if they didn't know what to do next. "Well," I said, "let's go!" I paused. "It'll take all of us to get that vane down, won't it?"

"Sure," Riley replied.

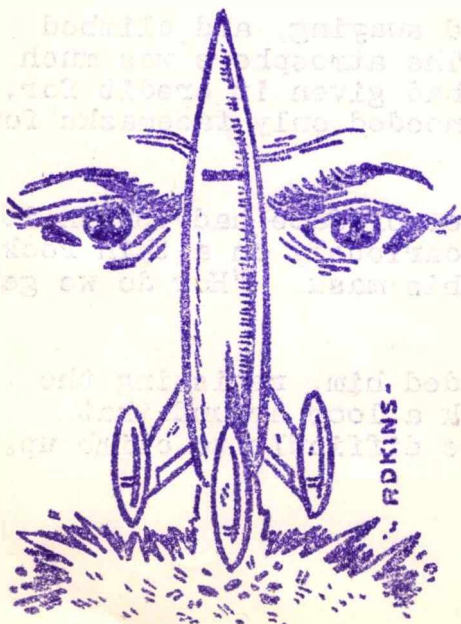
"All right then, come on," I told them, and we began the ascent.

It has never ceased to puzzle me as to how that damned vane was thrown so far (nearly two hundred yards through the air, but a much greater distance on the ground by motor-scout) when nothing else on the ship was knocked even half that distance. I've never come up with a plausible explanation, either, but it certainly was one difficult climb. Hand over hand up the almost vertical cliff face, with only an occasional foothold along the way, is not my idea of fun. To top it off, Collins came close to falling as we reached a midpoint in the climb, and it was all Riley and I could do to keep from falling ourselves and grab him at the same time. Enlisted men!

We were all pretty well exhausted by the time we reached the ledge, and the thought of heading back down immediately, lugging the heavy steering vane, appealed to none of us. I could have done it, but Riley flopped down on the rock facing as soon as he pulled himself over the edge, and I hadn't any intentions of trying to get it back down alone. I lay down beside him and covered my face with the crook of my elbow. Sleep came fast, and Venus seemed a million miles away.

I had almost dropped off when Collins' sudden cry startled the drowsiness from my eyes. "Commander, look," he fairly screamed, standing at the edge with an index finger pointing down at the canyon floor.

I leaped to my feet and cast a quick glance down. Below us, a group of tanned humanoid figures were milling around the scout, some poking at it experimentally with long knives, others daring to touch its metal skin with their fingers. Except for their costumes, which were tight fitting animal skins dyed a variety of colors and worn only in strategic places, they might have been natives straight out of Frank Buck or Martin Johnson. The



women, bare-breasted, cradled cooing babies in their arms, standing back a respectful distance while their men grappled with this strange new invader. They looked primitive, but I wasn't going to take any chances.

There was only one thing to do: we had to get back to the scout. Suspecting no trouble, we had left all the weapons in the chest from which the rope had been procured, and now we were utterly defenseless. "There should be some sort of rocks or tree limbs down there," I told my companions. "We'll be able to attack and drive them away, at least long enough for us to get out the nerve guns. Come on, we're going back down."

It was evident that Riley didn't approve of my plan. Two years away from Earth must have done something to him, for I could see the way he was eyeing one of the younger, practically naked, native maidens. "What about the vane?" he protested.

"It'll still be here when we get back. Now move!" I gestured to the rope, and down we went. We must have broken every existing record for sliding down a rope that day, because I was wearing gloves and the palms were shredded by the time my feet touched bottom. The only thing on my mind was to get them away from the scout and reach those arms. I underestimated the Venusians' cunning, and forgot completely that it might have been nothing more than an elaborate trap, which it was.

They were waiting for us around the bottom of the line, and we had no choice but to slide straight down into their outstretched arms. I put up a good scrap, naturally, but it was futile. They had us outnumbered, and the element of surprise was in their favor. The last thing I remember was going under in a pile of fleshy, hefty bodies, with darkness closing in fast.....

Well, that's the story. I've been a prisoner of these people for at least six months now, and during that time I haven't seen Riley or Collins even once. For the most part, they've kept me in this rude cell with nothing to do but talk with myself. The group of natives who must be the leaders, dressed in pure white loincloths, visit me periodically, but have made no attempts to learn who I am or where I come from. They merely walk in, study me for an hour or so, and then leave. I try to communicate with them at every opportunity, but they never reply.

And the torture. This is the part that baffles me the most. Once or twice each day, a native whose skins cover most of his body strolls in and proceeds to plunge a razor sharp knife into my arm or leg. I can't imagine why; he doesn't gloat over me as he drives the blade in as a sadist would, savoring each drop of agony, and there is never anyone else in the room when he does it. Once they sent a woman in to do it, but I overpowered her, and tried to make her speak to me. She didn't; she merely screamed and ran from the room. Ever since, a man has done the stabbing. Ah well, the pains are only fleeting ones.

On other occasions, however, the torture has been more complex, and much more painful. They have a kind of electric generator that almost drove



me out of my mind with pain, but that was used only a single time, as though they wanted to be sure of keeping me alive. I've also been examined closely by their witch doctors, but nothing has become of that.

They feed me well,
But the whole thing

is inexplicable. Who are they? What do they want? Where is the rest of my crew? Academy training in psychological fields is probably the only thing that has kept me from losing my sanity; thank God I made it!

Wait, one of them is coming in now. Oh no! He's got a stretcher with him! The only other time they used a stretcher was when they carried me to the shock-torture room! They're going to use it on me again! No, I can't! The memories of the first session are still fresh in my mind; the suffering was unbearable! No, keep away from me! I won't go. For the love of Jesus, leave me alone! There's no purpose to your torture; you're just primitive sadists! I'm an Academy graduate: you can't do this to me! Keep away, damn you. Keep away from me.....

III

"...damn you!"

Doctor Paul Anderson could hear his patient's rasping screams as soon as he left the elevator, all the way down at the other end of the hall. Mentally, he winced. He had been positive that the patient was on the road to recovery, as the past few visits had clearly indicated to his trained eye. But this tantrum sounded as bad as did those during his first week of admittance, and Anderson could imagine the hysterical sounds going to every part of the Los Angeles Psychological Foundation. Hopelessly insane; the thought plagued his conscious mind. Incurable.

A long walk past sundry rooms alone, and the doctor stepped through a heavy door marked 'Isolation' in trim black letters. Two burly attendants struggled with a man inside, doing their best to get him on a stretcher. The patient's eyes were wild, and he strained to free himself of their grip until the tendons stood out in his neck and the blood rushed to his head.

"Where's he going?" asked Anderson quickly.

A final buckle secured the wrestling mass of humanity on the carrier, and one of the white-clad men looked up. "Shock treatment," he said. "Doctor Langdon's idea." He gestured to the other side of the room where Doctor Frank Langdon stood watching the procedure. "Ask him about it."

Upon noticing his colleague, Langdon moved across the floor to Anderson's side. The patient, still babbling fearfully, had been moved out into the hall, where the attendants would wait until given further orders.

Anderson smiled in a grim sort of way. "Up to his old tricks again, eh, Frank?"

"Looks that way," replied Langdon. "He was acting so well this week that I decided to have Nurse Parker give him his hypo this morning. Certainly was the wrong thing to do; he attacked her and would probably have killed her if she hadn't called for help. He's like an animal again."

"Good grief."

"It surprised me, too. He happened to pull off part of her uniform in the assault, and Parker thinks he was trying to rape her. She's quitting."

Anderson shook his head. "I just don't understand. How could such a thing like failing at the USSF Academy drive him so completely out of his mind? Thousands fail every year, but he's the first to react in this way."

"You have to consider the circumstances," Langdon pointed out. "When they mixed up the grades on that final exam and told him he had passed, he was permitted to attend the graduation exercises. For two solid days that boy was sure that he had made it, and participating in the commencement ceremonies just about made his fondest dreams come true. Paul, he walked off that field to get assignment papers and got a washout notice instead. Sure, it was all a mistake, and the grades were corrected as soon as possible, but what good did all that do him? Can you imagine the shock? The utter despair that followed when he heard the news? No, you can't. And neither can I."

Anderson mulled this over in his mind, then spoke again. "But do you think electricity treatments are the best way?"

The other shrugged. "I don't know what else we can do. I remember how he reacted after the first one, that's why I hesitated to do it again. But we're up against a dead-end now, and it's the only way out I know of."

"I suppose you're right. That jaunt up to the Mountainview Rest Home certainly was a waste of time. He kept babbling about Venusians and some sort of missing part all the way up. Besides, climbing that hill was almost like trying to drive up the side of a mountain. He's still on that outer space routine now."

"Wait a minute," said Langdon with a sudden gleam in his eye. "What about those two inmates he palled around with when he was up there, Paul? I know they only stimulated his Venusian dream to a greater extent, but he didn't have a single outbreak during that time. Perhaps if I could get them transferred down here, it might settle his nerves for a while. We've got to do something; what do you think?"

Anderson considered this for a moment, finally nodding. "Could be. I think anything's better than shock right now. You saw how he fights it, yourself. What say I drive up there over the weekend and try to make the arrangements?"

"Right," agreed the older man, "but I'm going ahead with this last treatment anyway. It can't do him any harm."

"All right," replied Anderson grudgingly. "You're the boss." They walked slowly out into the hall together, each with his own thoughts. While Langdon made ready to head for the electro-treatment room, Anderson turned toward the elevators, in the opposite direction. Ten paces away, he wheeled and called to his friend. "Frank, what are the names of those fellows? My memory isn't as good as it used to be."

Langdon thought for a moment, then returned the answer. "Riley, I believe, and Collins. Yeah, that's it: Riley and Collins. All straight now?"

Anderson turned away without replying and walked on. "Yeah, all straight," he mumbled under his breath. The sheer animal-like cries of his patient flooded the corridor with sound, and the rhythmic tapping of his shoes on the tile flooring supplemented its eerie quality.

Gradually, as he moved toward the elevators and the man on the stretcher moved in the opposite direction, the intensity of the nerve-shattering screams became less and less, and for some strange reason Anderson was very glad.

It was a terrifying sound.

---Kent Moomaw

WANTED: material for a fanzine

I am considering publishing a fanzine. I need both material and people willing to buy ads in it. It will be of a general nature with several pages of ads and news or articles for collectors. Rates will be \$2.00 a page and fractions thereof. If you would like to receive a free sample copy (when and if it is published) send name and address to me. If you would like ads, please do not send money until you hear from me. All suggestions and wishes will be appreciated. Jerry Page, 9 Carthy Loop, Apt 6, MacDill AFB., Florida.

Frank Arthur Kerr

Firstoff, let me express my thanks to those of you who said such nice things about this column in the last issue. It's such things that make fanning worthwhile. Ah yes, egoboo.

It's like a drug. When you first take it, it's just a pleasant lift. But the more you get, the more you need, and if your supply is cut off, watch out! Which brings me to the point that by the time you read this I'll be wearing a uniform. And I don't mean that I'm going to work as an usher, either.

Yep, when I got out of high school, Korea was all ablaze and the army was a rather unsafe place to be. So I crossed my fingers and started college. So, here I am with a degree and no place to go. Did you know that it's awfully hard to get work if you're draft-bait? Well, it is. So I've taken the bull by the horns, and if this column disappears all-of-a-sudden, you'll know what happened. However, I'll try to keep it coming.

COMIC BOOKS YET, AND HE'S A COLLEGE GRAD

Down at the local newsdealer's the other day, between PLAYBOY (don't tear up that TV GUIDE, Honey, there's time for play after Alfred Hitchcock) and the various writer's magazines (I try, I really do try) I happened to glance at the comic books and noticed a cover that struck a responsive chord.

The title was NATURE BOY, but the drawing reminded me muchly of one yclept CAPTAIN MARVEL, JR., alias Freddy Freeman, boy newshawk, or, more properly, the late Freddy Freeman, he of the pleasant memory, but recently laid to rest beside Billy Batson, boy newscaster, and Mary Baston, boy girl, last surviving members of the cult of Shazam (BOOM!) previously Shazamo, until the rebellion and expulsion from Olympus of Ogar, the World's Mightiest Immortal, and his subsequent destruction by Captain Marvel, World's Mightiest Mortal, just having returned from a triumphant tour in "Captain Marvel vs. Mr. Mind," having previously restored to his proper loyalties one Spysmasher, previously perverted by an Axis Power Machine.

But anyway, this Nature Boy fellow got me to reminiscing about the comic books I had doted upon yea many years ago, and if it's not giving too much away, shall we reminisce together?

Ready: 1, 2, 3, reminisce.



Over
the
line

When you think about comic books, or at least when I think about comic books, I hark back to the granddaddy of them all, the old FAMOUS FUNNIES (is that still going?) and the very first strip it featured, Buck Rogers (in the Twenty-fifth Century). Comic book stf, to be sure, but did you know that Anthony (Buck) Rogers made his debut (I could never bring myself to say 'debuted') in Amazing? Phil Nowlan started him off there; he was then grabbed for a newspaper strip, and then reprinted in FAMOUS FUNNIES.

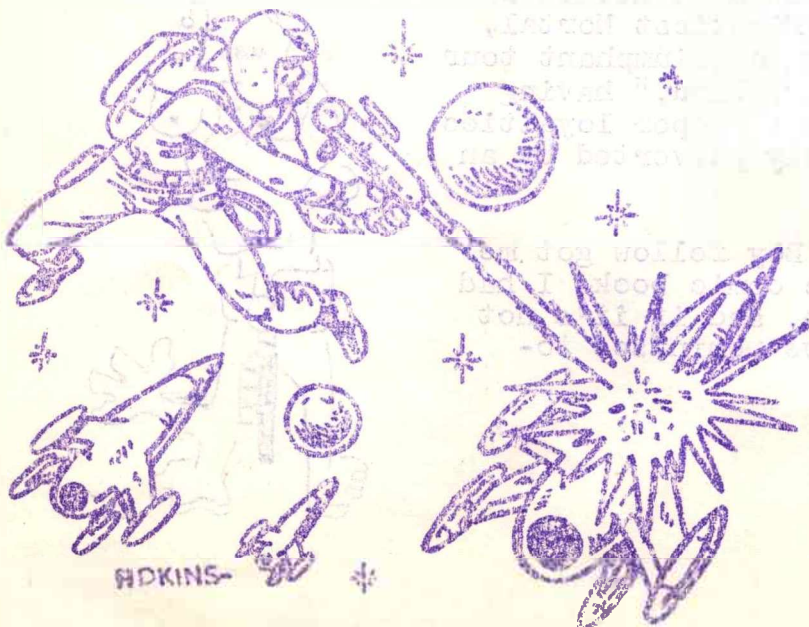
And whenever I think of Buck Rogers, the next thought is always of Larry (Buster) Crabbe, better known as (no, not Captain Gallant) Flash Gordon. And did you know that Flash started out in his own pulp mag bar in the early thirties. It flopped in short order, but Flash, Dale, Zarkov, Ming and the rest have been going strong in comics, movies, radio, TV, and young imaginations ever since.

And I surely must mention SUPERMAN. This comic was real stf at the start. In fact, the creators of Clark Kent, Lois Lane, Mr. Mxyzptlk, et al, were two of the early science fiction fans, Jerry Seigel and Joe Schuster. And the strip had a tryout in one of the early fanzines before it ever ran in a newspaper or comic book. Remember how it all started? The planet Krypton is about to blow up, according to the calculations of Jor-el. He proposes mass evacuation by rocket, but is laugh ed down. When the end comes he places his infant son in a miniature rocket and propels him out into space.

And although Simon and Schuster are long since departed from Metropolis, Mort Weisinger, who currently runs much of the comic book show for the outfit that owns Soupie, is an ex-editor of TWS. (Weep, for the day fast approaches when those initials will have to be explained.)

And where SUPERMAN goes, not far behind is CAPTAIN MARVEL, and vice versa. For although Clark Kent attained his unusual abilities by science-fictional means, the stories are often more like fantasies. CAPTAIN M, on the other hand, started out by fantastic means ("...the Ancient Egyptian Wizard...") but the stories often read like surprisingly good science fiction. They ought to have. They were scripted by Eando Binder. Remember the evil Dr. Sivana, he with one gorgeous blond daughter and one hideous brunetta, Georgia Sivana?

And then there was the GREEN ("Om mane padme hum"--zing!) LAMA, created by none other than Horace Leonard Gold. Wow!



Comic characters with a science-fictional angle abounded for years. Without any study, or even a serious memory-session, let me read a roll that came easily to mind:

AIRBOY	The HANGMAN
BLACKHAWK	HAWKMAN
BULLETMAN	The HEAP
CAPTAIN AMERICA	NAMOR (Submariner)
CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT	The SHIELD
CRIMEBUSTER	The WIZARD
DAREDEVIL	WONDER WOMAN
The FACE	RADAR
GREEN LANTERN	HUMAN TORCH
The GRIM REAPER	IBIS

Plus innumerable Captains, and at least one Major that I can remember.

In fact, some of today's science fiction readers probably came in by way of the comics. Anybody home? You remember that PLANET STORIES used to raise its own with PLANET COMICS. And farther back, TWS-SS and CAP FUTURE had comic book equivalents. In fact at one time TWS ran a comic strip for several pages in each issue: ZARNAK 'twas called.

And that paragon of scientifiational value, OOTWA, had a built-in comic book for its two (too many) issues.

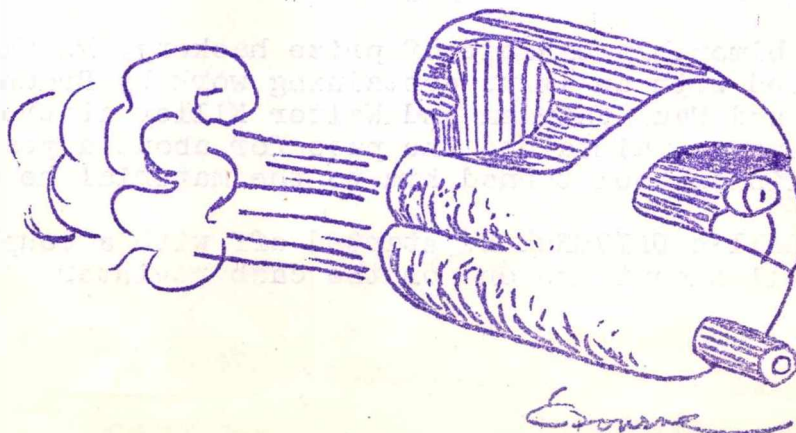
But now that the excellent EC line of comics is gone, the closest thing to an 'adult comic' is TERROR ILLUSTRATED, which is about halfway between comic book and regular narrative. I noticed that Dick Lupoff included TI in his genealogy in the latest Sigma Octantis, and I'm inclined to agree that it is indeed not a comic, but a stfmag.

Yes, as Jim Allred says, each generation speaks of the good old days. Everything used to be better than it is now. The new generation is going to the dogs.

And of course this is not always so. But remember the little boy who cried wolf.

Department
of
Brief Thoughts:

I had to look twice at the April SAFARI to make sure that it wasn't SCIENCE FICTION PLUS reborn, or something similar. Turned out that the cover (and an excellent one it was) illustrated the article



"We're Ready for the Safari into Space." Ah me.

Did you notice that even the staid FLYING magazine recently ran a full-page interior by Valigursky, along with an article (dead serious) on how to land a space-ship. Shades of Gernsback!

A couple of years back, the inverted -L format popularized by GALAXY (though used as far back as 1940 by COMET) was in use by over half the magazines in the field. Today, only two or three magazines use it.

THE GREATEST

Not that it will prove anything, but just for the fun of it, I wonder how many readers will agree with my ideas of the greatest single issue, story, and novel that have ever come out of science fiction.

There have been many great editions of the magazines. A few of them may have 'just happened,' but the majority were unusual editions: first issues, anniversary issues, or other 'specials'. I don't think it would be quite fair to include reprint magazines, although if it were, there would be a number that would demand consideration.

The sole edition of FROM UNKNOWN WORLDS would rank high. It contained stories by de Camp, Boucher, Block, Sturgeon, Gold, del Rey (as 'Philip St. John'), Kuttner, and the now nearly forgotten John MacCormac. The cover and all interior illustrations were by Edd Cartier.

The 1953 WONDER STORY ANNUAL was no slouch either. It had stories by Jack Williamson, Fredric Brown, Ray Bradbury, Bob Heinlein, Sam Mines, and the same Henry Kuttner. It was illustrated by Virgil Finlay and Paul Orban, among others.

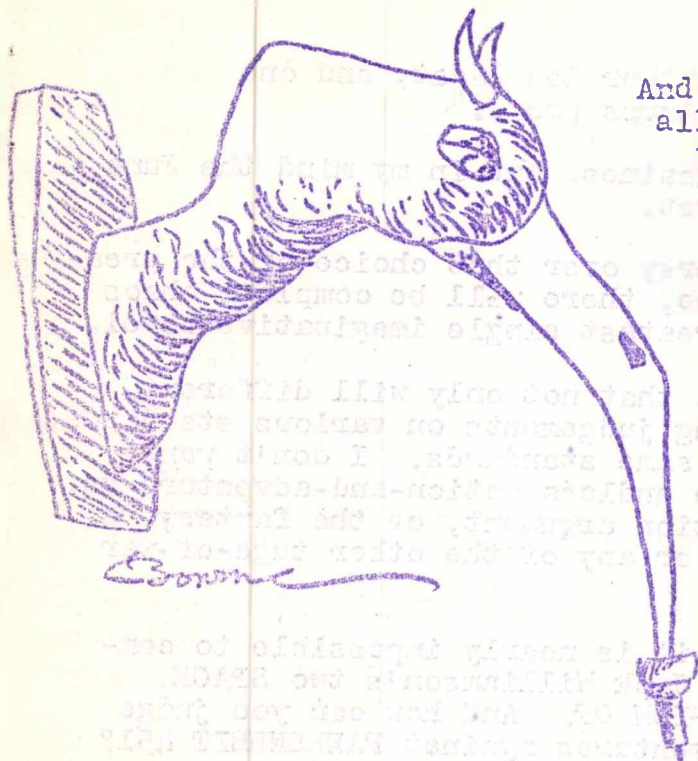
And, of course, the recent AMAZING 30-annish.

But these were all reprint magazines. For new material there are still several magazines that rate high. The initial appearance of UNKNOWN in 1939 led off with Eric Frank Russell's SINISTER BARRIER, printed complete, and followed up with Gold's TROUBLE WITH WATER.

The leadoff edition of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE managed to get most of the top men of 1953 into its 200 pages.

Today's bimonthly exhibit of prize hackery, FANTASTIC, was not always so. It started with an issue containing work by Bradbury, Gold, Kris Neville, Asimov, and Paul Fairman and Walter Miller at their non-space-operative peak. Browne maintained the pace for about a year before the pinch of the declining boom turned him to the material he currently uses.

George Bell's UNIVERSE SF started off with a couple of issues that rang every bell except the one on the cash register.



And even Ray Palmer came up with a fabulous all-editor edition of OTHER WORLDS, proving that nobody is beyond hope.

Several early GALAXYs demand at least passing mention, and the ASTOUNDINGs that came near the top are too numerous to mention.

But my personal choice for the greatest single edition of any science fiction magazine is the June 1939 THRILLING WONDER STORIES, a tenth anniversary cooked up by Mort Weisinger. The cover was hardly a masterpiece. It was a bit of artistic hackwork by Howard V. Brown, illustrating nothing in particular. But look at that contents page!

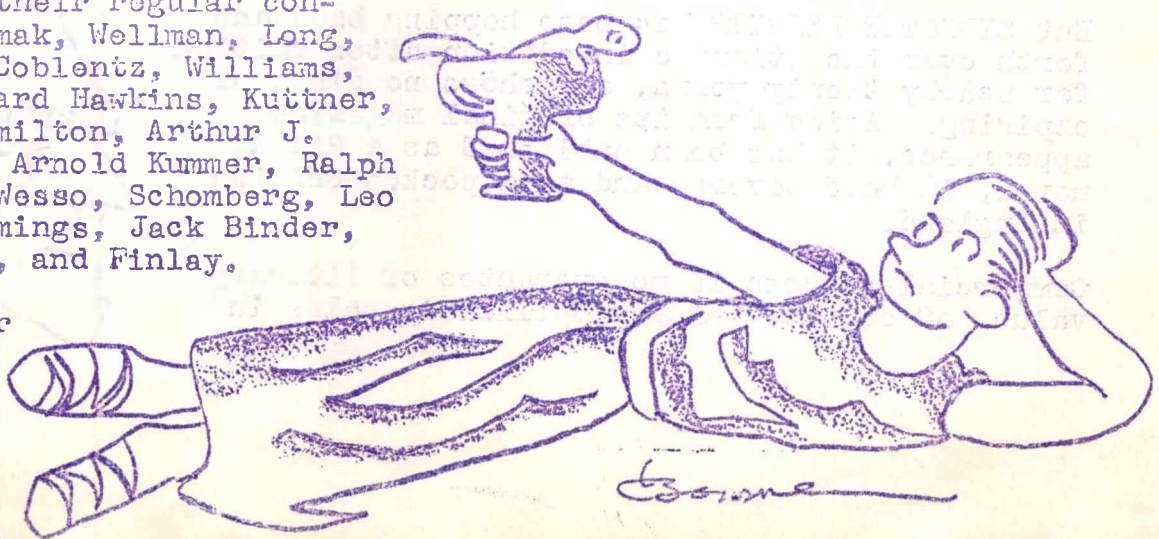
SCIENCE FICTION STORY. The next tale was Otis Adelbert Kline's STOLEN CENTURIES, another small classic which has been reprinted over and over. This was followed by THE MAN WITHOUT A WORLD, a minor space opera by Edgar Rice Burrough's two sons. Next came stories by Eando Binder, Jack Williamson, and Doc Smith. Dr. David H. Keller's NO MORE FRICTION was a lighthearted kind of farce, yet entirely logical ... a kind of story whose passing seems complete and, to me, entirely regrettable.

The lead story was John Taine's THE ULTIMATE CATALYST, which appeared most recently in MY FAVORITE

The final story of the issue was Stanley Weinbaum's DAWN OF FLAME. Weinbaum had now been dead for over three years, but his papers were still being sorted and DAWN OF FLAME, although prior to the already published BLACK FLAME, story-wise, was appearing for the first time in a magazine. It had previously been printed in DAWN OF FLAME AND OTHERS, a memorial edition. There were only about 250 copies of this printed.

In addition to this feast of fiction, the special TWS included pictures and biographies of all the artists and authors in the issues, plus six pages more of their regular contributors: Simak, Wellman, Long, Max Sheridan, Coblenz, Williams, Carl Jacobi, Ward Hawkins, Kuttner, Frank Paul, Hamilton, Arthur J. Burks, Fredric Arnold Kummer, Ralph Milne Farley, Wesso, Schomberg, Leo Lewis, Ray Cummings, Jack Binder, and Archioni, and Finlay.

Even the letter column was spotted with



names like Isaac Asimov, Fred Pohl, and Arthur Leo Zagat, and one reader states that "I hope Alfred Bester turns pro..."

There have been great issues of great magazines, but in my mind the June 1939 TWS still stands first.



If there will be controversy over that choice of the greatest single magazine issue, there will be complete chaos over the choice of the greatest single imaginative novel.

The reason, of course, is that not only will different individuals have differing judgements on various standards, they won't even have the same standards. I don't want, just now, to get into the endless action-and-adventure vs. sociological-science-fiction argument, or the fantasy vs. rigorous-science battle, or any of the other tugs-of-war that go on and on.

The point is simply that it is nearly impossible to compare Arthur Clarke's and Jack Williamson's two SPACE books, PRELUDE TO and LEGION OF. And how can you judge one of Howard's CONAN adventures against FAHRENHEIT 451?

You can compare good Pohl-Kornbluth like THE SPACE MERCHANTS with inferior pseudo Pohl-Kornbluth like PREFERRED RISK, but how can you compare either with Anthony Gilmore's SPACE HAWK, or a lensman story, or a Cap Future opus, or a Pratt-de Camp fantasy? Can you match 1984 with THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING or THE PUPPET MASTERS with BRAVE NEW WORLD?

It is impossible to take every science-fantasy or even every science-fiction novel and pick a winner.

Yet with fear and trembling and ready to retreat at the first sign of opposition, I nominate SINISTER BARRIER as the greatest ever.

Not the most fun to read, although fun; not the most significant, but significant; not the very best in any of the many categories of judgement, yet SINISTER BARRIER in its gestalt has struck me since I first read it as outstanding. And if you disagree, you're probably right.

But SINISTER BARRIER has been hopping back and forth over the Atlantic in edition after edition for nearly twenty years, and shows no signs of expiring. Aside from its original magazine appearance, it has been published as a GALAXY novel, in hard covers, and as a pocket edition in England.

Commercial success is no guarantee of literary value, of course. Mickey Spillane's sales in



the millions of copies tell that. Remember the Spillane issue of FANTASTIC? It sold 215,000 copies, the only stf magazine ever to hit that figure for a single edition.

But SINISTER BARRIER has lasted. And the ability to stay against the competition of years is more often the sign of quality than a momentary popularity, wick can be brought about by a craze, a dearth of good competition at the moment, or almost any number of reasons.

If it's hard to pick one novel as outstanding from the hundreds that rate consideration, it seems that the task of picking a single story as the greatest, from among the many thousands, would be impossible.

Yet after my numerous visits to Gavagan's Bar, to a certain Old and Famous University wherein lurks a certain Old and Evil Professor, after Asimovs, Bradburys, Clarkes, de Camps...right on through 'z's', Youngs, and Zagats, I can unequivocally nominate one story for the top position of all time: A MARTIAN ODYSSEY, by Stanley G. Weinbaum, which initially appeared in the July 1934 WONDER STORIES.

In it, a member of the first Mars expedition is scouting a couple of hundred miles from the main rocket. His scout-ship is disabled and he makes his way partway back on foot before being picked up. The ODYSSEY is the story of those miles, and of the several creatures he encounters. The story is clever, the gimmicks are interesting, the ideas are stimulating, but above all, the characters come to life.

One editor once said that it is unimportant whether an aspiring author could plot or not--he could teach him to plot if need be. But writers who could characterize were worth their weight in acceptances.

Dick Jarvis, Weinbaum's hero, was little more than stock stuff: young explorer of another world, a touch of humor, you know the type. But his Martians ...Weinbaum succeeded magnificently in performing that most difficult of all science fiction tricks, making an alien both truly alien and yet real and sympathetic. In addition to the intelligent Martian, Tweel, who befriends Jarvis, there is a whole menagerie of Martian Flora-Fauna, several of which even today keep popping up in new locales all the time.

The story was an immediate success, so much so that a typical reaction was "Like one of those dreams that make you sorry to wake up." So it was.

Weinbaum followed shortly with a sequel, VALIEY OF DREAMS, which introduced more interesting aspects of Martians. It was more of the same great stuff, and



one exchange near the end left an opening for a series that could well have become a book -- and what a book it would have been! The passage went:

"Well, there does go the last mystery, then," mused Harrison. "Yeah?" queried Jarvis sardonically. "You answer these then. What was the nature of that vast empty city? Why do the Martians need canals, since we never saw them eat or drink? Did they really visit Earth before the dawn of history? If not atomic energy, what powered their ship? Since Tweel's race seems to need little or no water, are they merely operating the canals for some higher creature that does? Are there other intelligences on Mars? If not, what was the demon-faced imp we saw with the book? There are a few mysteries for you!"

Of course this is taken out of context and most of the magic is lost, but all these questions logically and naturally rose from the ODYSSEY and the VALLEY. At least a third story was planned, but Weinbaum never lived to write it. He had been sick and with the passage of time became unable to work. Within eighteen months of the publication of his first story, he was dead.

Even today, bright young sf writers are matched against Weinbaum, but none has ever made the grade.

The two stories were reprinted in STARTLING STORIES in 1939-40, in the book A MARTIAN ODYSSEY AND OTHERS, 1949, and in the book FROM OFF THIS WORLD, also 1949.

Whenever I get tired and discouraged with science fiction, whenever I am tempted to join in on the chorus of "Where has the Sense of Wonder Gone?", whenever I look at the trash that passes for so much of today's imaginative fiction, and am ready to throw the whole thing up, I reread A MARTIAN ODYSSEY and VALLEY OF DREAMS.

And I say to myself, "Maybe, just maybe, somewhere in the world, perhaps discovering his first space-opera or scribbling somewhere for a third-rate crudzine or gathering rejection slips from the pros, there is another Weinbaum.

"Maybe, between the next Johnny Mayhem adventure and another story of the AAA Ace Galactic Transport Company, there will turn up another MARTIAN ODYSSEY.

"Maybe. Not for sure. Not even probably. Just maybe."

I always manage to stick it out.

As I said at the beginning, it won't prove anything...but just for the fun of it, why don't you send in your choice of the greatest single mag-

azine issue, novel, and short story to come out of the science fiction field.

---Frank Arthur Kerr

ed's note: Readers are invited to submit listings of their choices of the best in the above categories, together with a resume substantiating their selections. As suggested by Frank in an addendum note to the above column, the more interesting (controversial, logically thought out, etc.) will be printed in the letter section. Readers are asked to remit all such listings to me at the address on the contents page. JDM.

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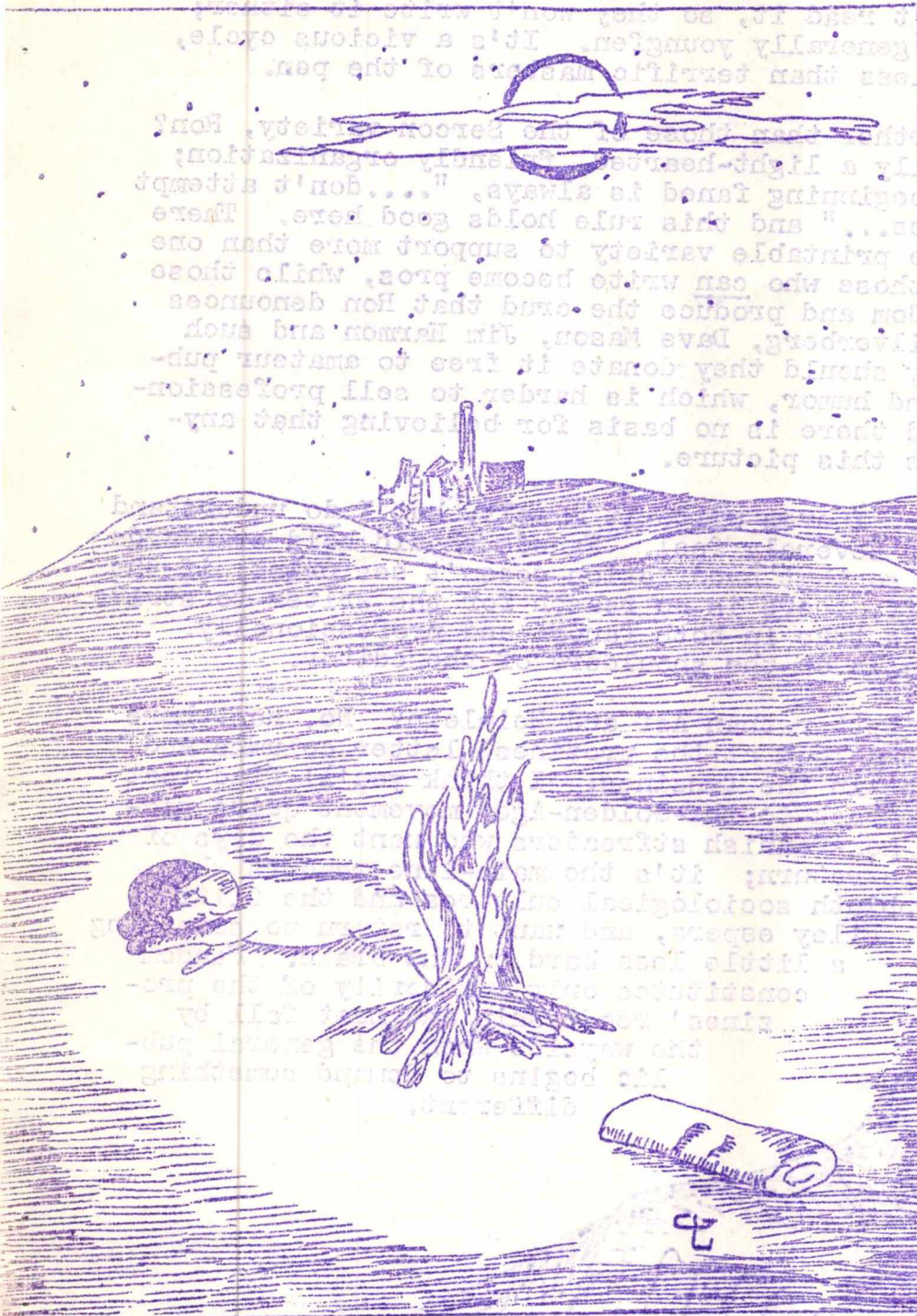
You know, this business of editing a magazine can have its rewards. Awhile back I received a note from a reader who stated that he was writing his missive during that hallowed time just before Elvis Presley comes on the air. And another from a fan who started his letter at three o'clock in the morning. Sorta gets you right here.

Like this one from Alan Elms, who says: "#4 has been laying around my room for quite a while now, and tonight I flipped between it and the latest Atlantic, having nothing better to do. I read SigOct--and I liked it. Fact is, I liked the whole thing, bar nothing except the repro on the last few pages. Editorial was all right, although I'd like to see it lengthened; Alfred McCoy Andrews' "Cry" was also, with the exception of a few inversions, pretty good, although I still lean toward Omar as the better of the two poets. I even liked "Flesh and Furry", although I usually hate fan-fiction with an all-consuming hatred; the ending of the first installment was rather weak, but it's well written. Next two items are also of some interest; Mr. Andrews' little article was, with the exception of the uninterlined interlineation just below, the best thing in the issue. "On Wwhim" I found a bit odd. At least it didn't represent the normal fannish view of things. "Bubbling Over" was somewhat trite, but again well-written; "Smaht Remahks" I also found interesting, and containing not a little egoboo, although I'm very much inclined to agree with Andrews on my verse. Munaf's illos look good, although I think this all-pervading passion to see his name in ditto ink could be sublimated to an occasional initial or two. Incidentally, what ever happened to Barry Gardner's column?

"Speaking of flying saucers, are there any Bridey Murphey nuts in the audience? I note that some hypnotists have been able to send subjects to future incarnations, which should provide some stimulation for slick sf in future months. Generally, I think the flying saucer enthusiasts have taken over Bridey as their own invention, but I wonder just what fandom has to say about it? Hypnotism, time travel, anti-Christianity--what more could you ask?"

Hesitant to put my foot into the lime, I'd say that this Bridey Murphey business has very interesting prospects to say the least. Whether the woman dredged her mind for all bits of Irish folklore in an attempt to please the hypnotist, or whether the fact that no atom of energy is ever destroyed extends even to the electrical energy within the human brain is hard to say. But the latter offers much food for thought and fiction. Mayhap other readers have something to say along these lines.

Re Barry's column: Barry has had an attack of gafia due to too little time for things fannish, so his column has been regretfully discontinued. Several readers have written in asking as to its whereabouts, which attests to the measure of popularity it gained in its lone two installments.



And speaking about lost columns, readers will note the absence of Ron Voigt's "On Wwhim", which condition is a result of the same lack of time effecting Barry. Ron's column should appear next issue, though. In the meantime, repercussions from last issues column sit here clamoring for space. From Cincinatti, Kent Moomaw is heard saying: "Both Ron Voigt and yourself appear to be quite perturbed over fandom's oft-voiced distaste for fanfiction. Their aversion may be a little fanatical at times, I will admit, but no matter how much you argue, one fact cannot be denied: the vast majority of fiction appearing in fanzines now is sheer crud and nothing more. The stories are loosely plotted, characterization is almost never developed, and the plots themselves are, more often than not, trite beyond words. For the most part they depend upon a "gimmick-ending" to make the story worthwhile at all, and when the gimmick fails to click...nothing.

As you will notice, the majority of fanfiction critics are oldfen, or at least have been reading fanzines for a few years. Why? For the sim-

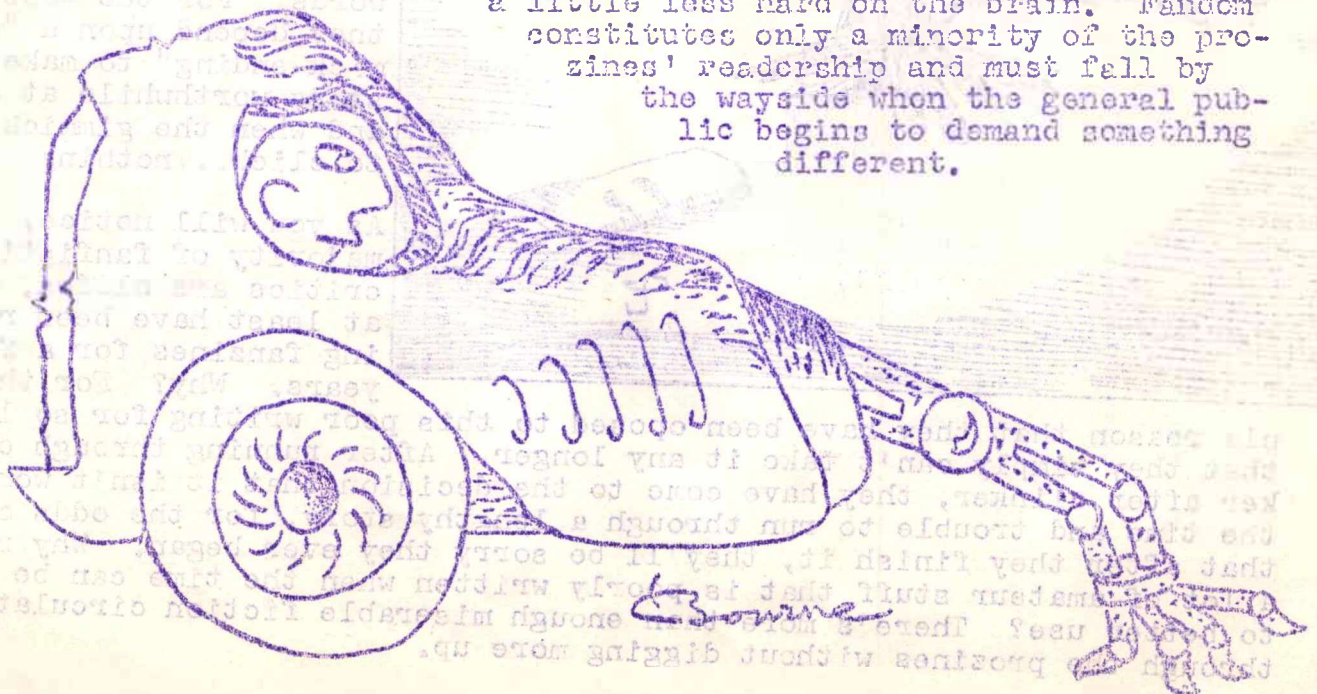
ple reason that they have been oposed to this poor writing for so long that they simply can't take it any longer. After running through clinker after clinker, they have come to the decision that it isn't worth the time and trouble to run through a lengthy story, for the odds are that after they finish it, they'll be sorry they ever began. Why read a lot of amateur stuff that is poorly written when the time can be put to better use? There's more than enough miserable fiction circulating through the prozines without digging more up.

"Youngfen, still fresh and undaunted, usually boost ff, and many write it themselves. Oldfen won't read it, so they won't write it either; thus, the ff producers are generally youngfen. It's a vicious cycle, as these nees are usually less than terrific masters of the pen.

Why do fannish zines go farther than those of the Sercon variety, Ron? Because fandom is essentially a light-hearted, friendly organization; the first rule given to a beginning faned is always, "...don't attempt to compete with the prozines..." and this rule holds good here. There just isn't enough ff of the printable variety to support more than one or two good Sercon zines; those who can write become pros, while those who can't stick around fandom and produce the crud that Ron denounces so. Harlan Ellison, Bob Silverberg, Dave Mason, Jim Harmon and such can sell their work, so why should they donate it free to amateur publications? Thus, satire and humor, which is harder to sell professionally, dominates fandom, and there is no basis for believing that anything will happen to change this picture.

"I am not a hater of ff, for I even write it myself, but I do understand how those who dislike it so severely feel. Faneds should hold standards in their zines high enough so that crudfiction doesn't see print; if the eds will take inferior stuff, there is no reason for the writer to strive for better work. This holds true in both fandom and professionally. Again, much of the blame falls on the shoulders of the editor.

"Fans like thud-'n-blunder better than Asf and Heinlein? No, Ron, here your really mistaken. Takena look at the prozines' letter columns and read a few critical articles in the fanzines; I think you'll find that the fans are fighting this "back-to-the-Golden-Age" movement quite vigorously. It's the general non-fannish stfreaders who want the days of Hamilton-Williamson-Smith to return; it's the main-line readers who have tired of the Pohl-Kornbluth sociological cultures and the Clifton-Riley espers, and want to return to something a little less hard on the brain. Fandom constitutes only a minority of the prozines' readership and must fall by the wayside when the general public begins to demand something different.



"Besides, wasn't all that psi-esp stuff beginning to wear on you a little, Ron? No matter if you're Doc Rhine's brother, you can't honestly say that stories of mental mutants in each and every issue of each and every magazine didn't bore you a little. Perhaps this adventure trend won't be as extreme as many anticipate, and we'll be able to combine skillful writing with action. It's been done before by the aforementioned Smith, Williamson, and Ike Asimov, among others; it can be done again."



"Ah, he spelled 'Fury' wrong...."

And that about sums up the views of most readers. However, several of the arguments appear to me to sport a good number of holes. First, about there not being enough printable ff to support more than one or two good Sercons. This I can see. But then, as a possible remedy for the situation, it is suggested that faneds place and keep their standards high. This is as good a solution as any, I suppose, but I'm afraid it would result in a good many magazines folding and a good many others being issued on highly erratic schedules. And for prozines to follow this policy is almost completely ridiculous. The high word rates draw the best material to Astounding, Magazine of F & Sf and (let's face it) Galaxy. No, an editor must do more than just place a high entry price on his magazine. He must also be willing to buckle down and work hand in glove with each author, and work hard. I do not offer this as a complete panacea for the problem, but how many mss would you say were copied straight onto stencils or masters without being blue-penciled at all? I couldn't hazard a guess myself, but I'd say the percentage is high, very high. An editor owes this not only to himself but to each of his contributors, and, most of all, to his readers.



And along lines of the general discussion, Ron says: "I think that fandom's character must change if it is ever to produce any effect on science-fiction and other fields of literature. It must change to gain interest from groups larger than its own. Of course, if fandom is quite content with its own minor interests, happy with its own insignificance and pettiness, there is nothing which can be done for/to fandom.

"I am not anti-fandom. I believe nine out of ten fans who leave fandom would give the above as reasons for leaving. When the interest of fandom wears off, (and it usually does within a year or so) it is pretty hard to rekindle. There is no incentive to return; and few do."

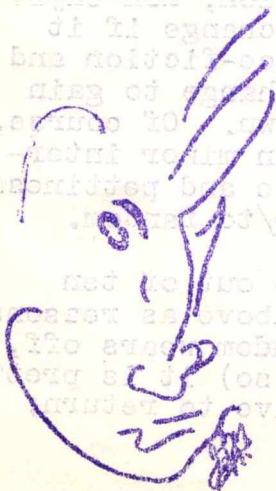
Another piece in the pages of last issue which brought in a goodly bit of commentary was Neal Wilgus' "Flesh and Furry". Like this letter from Dick Lupoff, late of Miami, which states that: "Flesh and Furry was terrific. Wilgus has a wonderful imagination (3d Wrestling!) and a style of writing that beats some of the pros. I expect to see him join the latter group before too long. However, the story raised several questions in my mind as a reader, and failed to answer them. As a writer, on the other hand, I can.



1.) 'Free fall stimulates strange growth (or lack of growth) in almost everyone who can take it at all.....' Question: How so? Suggested answer: 'The high concentration of cosmic rays pulverizes chromosome-bonds in the cells of the body, releasing long-recessive genes.'

2.) "Sam, as you can gather, is not too bright, but due to the lack of qualified men, they have to take anyone who doesn't get sick or have harmful growths..." Question: Why would anyone take such a job? Suggested answers: "But since the pay is as high as it is, there are always volunteers." or "But since the space-stations are absolutely vital to the commerce and welfare of mankind, the draft keeps us supplied with recruits" or "But since the prisons are located on Venus anyway, and convicts must experience free-fall while being shipped out, they are happy to volunteer for space duty in return for parole in a few years."

3.) The captain was known to oppose such things as 3D Wrestling. Yet the whole thing was set up and he didn't find out until the last moment. Question: How could this be? Suggested answers: "The captain was on leave, and it was hoped to get the thing done before his return. Unfortunately, he was particularly adept at popping up unexpectedly to check on the crew." Or, "The captain was in sick bay, and we hoped to get it done before his recovery. Unfortunately, despite being small, he is as strong as an ox and got up and around days before the doctors expected. Or the rest of us, for that matter."



"But before you mark me down as a violent critic of Wilgus, let me repeat that I enjoyed the story immensely. Let's have more."

Or this one from Jerry Page, who declares: "FLESH AND FURRY was nice. Since most people just call stuff like that dirty names like 'fan-fiction' and don't get constructive, I will. For one thing, most fan fiction does not build up. This one leaps in head first. Also, the Reptile should have been mentioned (if only in passing) at the first. Wilgus has a good quiet style, but often misses the obvious.

Free-fall Wrestling is already pretty well accepted as a form of recreation by astro-medical authorities. His extrapolations on the effects of null-G are very amusing. All-in-all, I found this a very unpretentious tale of space meant mostly to be laughed at. The reviewers will call it childish.

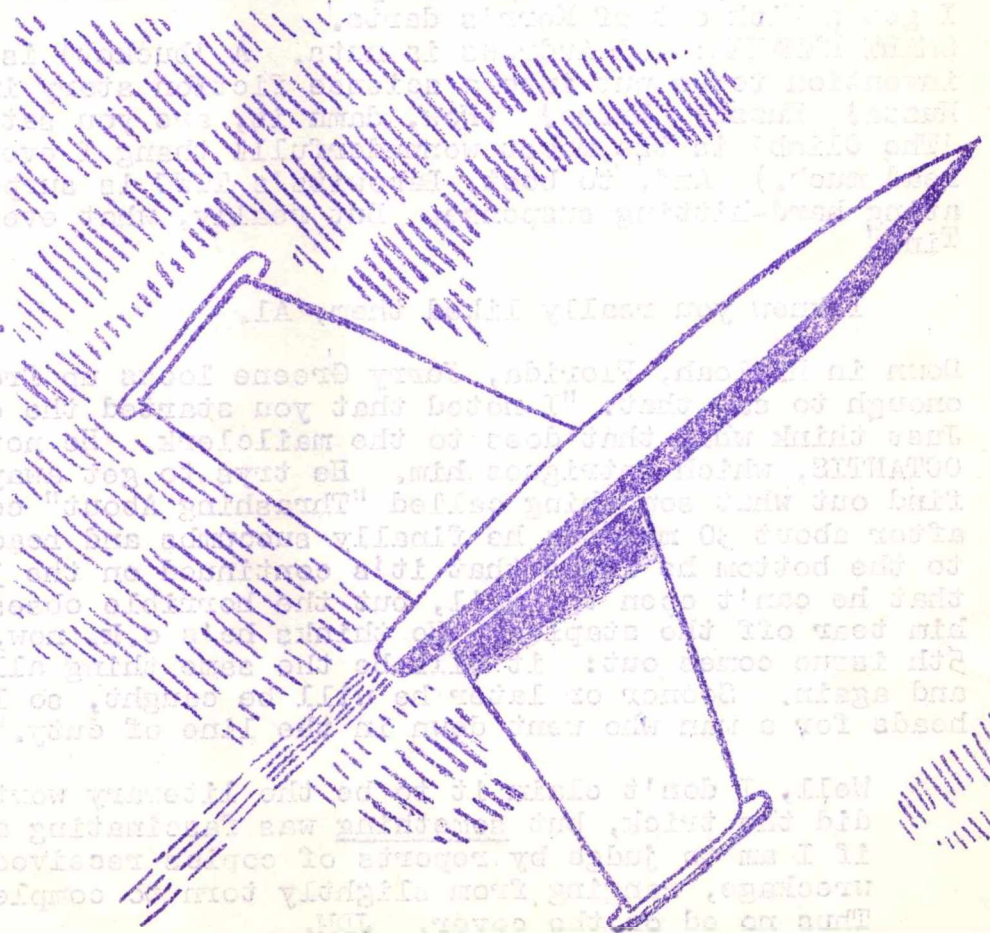
"Art was good. The Munaf's illoes were good and the one on page 20 was backward. How did he do this?"

Several readers wondered how this came about. Jim was under the impression that to have wording reproduce positive, it must be set down negative. So he carefully constructed his name backward.

Says Lenny Brown: "There's a man who's been dabbling in sf for a good deal of his life. He's met success and even failure. Right now, he's on the borderline of both. Although still losing money, this man continues to publish his magazine. He's continuing for a definite reason. For a definite cause. He's doing it for the benefit of the sf field. And yet, he's been attacked by a good deal of so-called 'sf experts'. Their constant accusations have done what they were meant to do. They've put a big dent in his circulation, and kept many new fans from touching him. I am asking the readers of this fanzine to go out and buy his magazine and tell your friends about it. With enough backing, this magazine can lead its field.

"Perhaps you wonder why I'm writing this. The reason is purely selfish: I want to continue getting enjoyment from this magazine. If circulation goes up, I can continue doing it. The name of the magazine? OTHER WORLDS. Its editor? Ray Palmer. Go to it, fans; it's 35¢ you won't regret spending."

Many readers will wonder why the above was printed here in SigOct.



Well, in my humble (or soon to be humbled) opinion, this business of everyone panning OTHER WORLDS as material fit only for non-fans and idiots has grown to alarming proportions. As with most movements of this type, the down-with-Palmer crusade began with a few of the B-er NFs taking a poke or two at Palmer's policies. Now a growing pack is tearing over the hill hell bent for blood in the great tradition of sheep emigrations.

I'm not defending Palmer's stand; all I ask is that he be judged on what he is trying to do, not compared with Galaxy or Astounding's intentions.

Meanwhile, back at the letter pile, Al Andrews' missive states: "Since you reprinted one of my raving epistles in #4 (oh, you're a snaky one, you besmatted canine) I'll use the same format for my remarks.

"THE CRY OF THE PULP READER: Marvelous; Stupendous; Extraordinary; Remarkable; Consummate; Might; Noble; Supreme. What ever happened to Rin Tin Tin?"

"ON WHIM: "Waal, if'n you don't lik me, buddy, I'll jus pic up mi copy uve Weird Tales an' leave!" The sad fact is that Voigt is mostly right. most fans seem to like "Them picture-books wid them there naked wimmin in em."

FAMOUS LAST WORDS DEPT.: Ask Kerr to read some of the impassioned editorials of Ray Palmer, whom he professes to have a fond affection for. I get a kick out of Kerr's darts.

SMAHT REMARKS: Al Andrews is nuts. A 'bucket' is the greatest creative invention to be put into a science fiction story in the past fifty years. Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! (Now, damn it, are you satisfied?) Furthermore, 'The Climb' is the moost wonnnderfulll thang I ever read (but then I don't read much.) And, to boot, Labowitz's TTWC is surperb action and scintillating hard-hitting suspense. But really, what ever happened to Rin Tin Tin?"

I knew you really liked them, Al.

Down in Hialeah, Florida, Jerry Greene looks up from his dope sheet long enough to say that: "I noted that you started the editorial on the cover. Just think what that does to the mailclerk. He notices the name SIGMA OCTANTIS, which intrigues him. He tries to get away, but he just has to find out what something called "Thrashing About" could be about. So after about 30 minutes he finally succumbs and reads it. Just as he gets to the bottom he finds that it's continued on the 3rd page. Now he knows that he can't open the mail, but the horrible obsession to finish makes him tear off the staples. He thinks he's o.k. now, but wait to the 5th issue comes out: it will be the same thing all over again and again and again. Sooner or later he will be caught, so let us now bow our heads for a man who went down in the line of duty."

Well, I don't claim it to be the literary worth of my ed that did the trick, but something was fascinating about last issue, if I am to judge by reports of copies received in various stages wreckage, ranging from slightly torn to completely shredded. Thus no ed on the cover. JDM.

the irresistible farce

Neal F. Wilgus

FLESH & FURRY
part II

Again, Sam Jenson and Pete Johnson - Flesh and Furry - blame me for all that happened, though really, it wasn't my fault. How was I to know the Reptile - Captain Harris of Earth satellite I - was such a crook? I ask you: is it fair to blame me for the whole thing?

After all, Jenson and Johnson were just as mad as I when they heard that we'd been sent to Pluto station. And that wasn't my fault either. Could I help it if the Reptile had us transferred there so he could get primary rights to our idea?

And by the time the ship arrived at Pluto Station the news was already all over the solar system: free-fall wrestling. Not that we really cared. After all, the field is big and has very tight limits since only a few people qualify for space in the first place. So by the time we arrived at Pluto, I had just about persuaded Flesh and Furry to let the Reptile have his fun in peace for the time being, while we staged plans for a comeback. We didn't realize then what the extent of the Reptile's plans were.

Our first step in making our comeback was to get the confidence of the captain of Pluto Station, Captain Haggard. Haggard, like myself was a normal. That is, he was able to live in free-fall without developing any strange growths or the lack of growth. Sam Jenson, for instance, had lost all his hair and finger- and toenails, while Pete had grown long, furry hair all over his body. Almost all the men who went into space developed some kind of growth, or lack of it, such as this, and men like Haggard and myself were rare.

Captain Haggard didn't particularly give a damn for Harris, so was partial to our plans for getting even. It seemed that none of the other officers had any use for the Reptile; this substantiated my theory that to know the man was to detest him. Because of his position, however, Haggard refused to help us outright, but agreed

Illustrations by
de Grunswald
Andrews
Adkins
Munifo



to give us what other aid he could. This was all we needed. We went to work immediately, taking over the recreational room in the station and setting up our 'three dimensional ring' used for free-fall wrestling. Then Flesh and Furry began training.

"Have you seen this?" asked the furry Pete Johnson as I wandered into the training room.

"What's that?" I asked. He handed me a slip of paper that turned out to be a notice that the Reptile was bringing out a new wrestler - The Immoveable Object.

"So what?" I said. "We'll beat anything he can bring on. With a couple of wrestlers like you two we can lick anything he has."

"Yeah," said Sam, who was standing in the background, his big idiot face split with a naked grin. "Let him bring on his objects. We can beat him."

"I don't know about that," said Pete. "Look at this." He handed me another slip of paper. This was an interplanetary notice of the kind we get our news on. This one, however, was a sports notice.

"Harris brings out new type of wrestler," it read. "Captain Harris of ESI introduced a completely new type of wrestler and startled the experts of this brand new sport. The new wrestler, The Immoveable Object, is a tall, bulky man who climbs into the ring - or cube - floats to the center, and curls up into a ball and challenges his opponent to uncurl him. Last night, with this new method of throwing an opponent, the Immoveable Object threw (or out-lasting) the Red Terror from Venus Station. This new method of wrestling seems to be fair according...."

"Hey," I yelled, "This is unfair. That's not wrestling. It's human basketball. How do they get away with it? How do they get the officials to agree to such a thing?"

"I don't know," replied Pete, "But you'd better find out or we'll never get a chance at the System title."

"I'll find out," I said. But I had no idea how.

It wasn't long after that, too, that I got a slip of paper from communications which read:

'To Mr. Vance Dark, c/o Captain Haggard, Pluto Station. Dear Mr. Dark: You are hereby invited to match you wrestlers, Flesh and Furry, against our wrestler, The Immoveable Object, here at ESI on the 21st of this month. We are sure you will be able to obtain permission from your commanding officer and will meet us at the Jupiter Station Wrestling Center. Thank you for complying. Sincerely, Captain Harris, ESI'

So the Reptile was challenging us? He was actually challenging us to come to Jup Station and beat him. I was on top of the system. So what if the Reptile had some new kind of wrestler who had beaten all takers. I had originated the idea of free-fall wrestling, hadn't I? Didn't we - Flesh, Furry, and I - know everything there was to know about the game?

I hurried to the training room. "Look what I've got," I sang out to Flesh and Furry, who were practicing in the ring. "We've got an invitation to beat The Immoveable Object."

"Let's see," said Pete, grabbing it out of my hands. "Hmmm, I don't know; how are we going to beat this Immoveable Object? All he does is float in a curled-up ball and let his opponents pound on him. From all I've heard, that's like pounding on a basketball. Nothing happens. How can we beat him when we can't get through to him?"

I hadn't thought of that. In space wrestling, since you can't pin your opponents shoulders to the mat, you have to fight until one is completely beaten. And if your opponent is unhurttable, you lose by default. Many were the wrestlers who had been pleading with the Board that it was unfair, but so far, it hadn't been ruled out.

"Don't worry," I said. "We'll beat the Reptile and all the Immoveable Objects he can bring on."

"You got an idea?"

"Well, no," I admitted, "but that won't stop us. We'll find some way to beat 'em." I tried to look confident.

For the next few weeks everyone at Pluto Station was busy training, helping train, making bets and generally getting in each other's way. Flesh and Furry were in the peak of condition, and we were all confident that they would win. Me because we had to, Sam because he was too stupid to know any better, and Pete because I had out-talked his fears. As the appointed day for the match approached, the tension at the station got greater and the bets grow bigger.

Then came the big day. We reached Jupe Station after a week of interplanet travel and were all ready for the big grudge match. So was the Reptile.

"Well hello, Dark," smiled Harris as we met at the air lock.

"Greetings, Reptile," I shot back, "how's snakes?" He grinned at me, and I glanced at his wrestlers who were standing next to him. The fight was to be a tag match, of course, since Flesh and Furry always worked together, so the Reptile had brought along 'Monkey' Jackson from Earth I to complete his team. Monkey, of course, had a tail. That was good for our side: As long as there was something to grab on to, my boys would win.

The big man next to Monkey, though, was a different story. From where I stood, he didn't look like too much of a wrestler, but I knew his record: he hadn't lost a match since he started. He was a tall fellow. I could see no abnormal growth about him, so I assumed he was a normal. His face was that of any professional fighter - broken, ugly - but he looked fairly intelligent. I had to give the Reptile credit. If this fellow had anything special, it was well disguised.

The reporters took a few pictures, and then we went to our quarters. Ours were way in the back of the



station - that is if anything in space has a 'back', and we were left alone.



I decided to go exploring around the recreation area to see if there were any hidden gimmicks that the Reptile might use to help the Object. Leaving Flesh and Furry in the care of the trainers, I went to the rec room.

The room was large - the largest in the station, and one section was roped off into a cube to serve as the ring. The rest of the area was divided between electrical equipment (the match was to be telecast system-wide) and spectator room. All the men of the station, except the skeleton crew to keep things running, would, of course, watch the match. There was even a hot-dog stand in one corner.

As I was examining the ring I heard something behind me and turned to see the Reptile floating there, grinning at me. His scales were glimmering in the dull light, and I marveled again at how such a dirty personality could be hidden under such beautiful colors.

"Salutations, Rat," I said.

He continued to smile at me. "The great normal fight promoter, huh?" He moved closer and grinned at me. "Think you'll win, Dark?"

"You bet I'll win," I told him. "And here's why: we're playing it from the bottom up. You've got to lose sometime because sometime your gimmick is going to fail and you'll be helpless. And I just hope it's my boys that you're helpless against."

The smile left his face as he floated over to the ring. "I always knew you were a nut, Dark," he informed me. "You don't know a good thing when you see it. That's why I separated you from your idea; now I'm going to use it to promote you and your stooges out of the game for good."

"How does the latest trick work?" I asked, not expecting an answer. "What means are you using now?"

"That you'll never find out," he said. He grinned again, and I could have cheerfully kicked him away from his teeth.

"Remember this," I called after him as he floated toward the door, "When we get that gimmick of yours, we won't stop until you're back patrolling Martian dunghills."

He grinned wider and thumbed his nose at me as he floated out of sight. I wished I'd thought to bring my fish scraper along.

After the Reptile left I floated around the place trying to find anything that could be used to help the Object in his fighting, but couldn't come up with anything. Until Sam came in, that is.

I was over near the ring again when I hear Sam floating into the room. He grinned a grin completely unlike the Reptile's, and moved over my way.

"Didn't I tell you to stay in the room?" I asked him.

"Sure, but I wanted to see the ring. Is this where we're going to fight?"

"That's right, Sam" I said, letting him get me off the track. Sam's too likeable to stay mad at long. And too dumb. "Well, I can't find

anything here that would help the Object in his fighting, so let's get back to the dressing room. What time is it, anyway?"

"Oh, we've got plenty of time before the fight," said Sam, "it's only 1632."

"What? Oh, let me see that," I said. I knew that couldn't be right. We'd arrived at the station at around 1630, and we'd been here for quite a while already. I grabbed his wrist and looked. 1632.

"The damn thing's stopped," I said, shaking his wrist. "That's what you get for buying a cheap watch."

"It's not a cheap watch," Sam asserted. "It cost me a hundred bucks. I don't know what's wrong with it. Nothin' like this ever happened before."

"Yeah? Well, you never know about... Say! That's it! This place is right next to the engine room isn't it? Sure. And they set up their equipment.... Say, Sam, you've shaken hands with the Object. What's it like?"

"Ah, he ain't very strong. He didn't even make me feel it."

"No, I mean what did his hand feel like?"

"Oh. Well, it was hard and sort of brittle. Kinda like metal..."

"Thanks," I said. "Come with me."

He followed me into the next room. Here the atomic reactors supplied the power to the station and all other functions of the station were taken care of. I found what I was looking for over near the wall that separated us from the recreational area.

I looked it over, slapped Sam on the back, and hurried out to see the Object in person.

I pushed into the recreation room in front of Flesh and Furry and looked around. The place was crowded with the men of the station and the technicians running their TV cameras around. The Reptile and the two opposing wrestlers were near their corner of the ring and their trainers were hustled close by. A cheer went up when Flesh and Furry came in behind me, and we made our way to the cube. I had made some experiments and then had had a long talk with Flesh and Furry before the match. Now we were ready.

The Reptile lurked at us from his corner of the ring, and we lurked back. "Don't let 'em get you," I said. "And just remember what I told you."

Sam and Pete nodded, and I sat back, confident we'd win. The referee called the attention of the crowd and things got under way. He announced the names of each of the wrestlers, then got them to the center of the cube and gave them an unintelligible speech. The TV cameras rushed up to the ring, backed away, and generally got in everyone's line of vision.

The fight was on.

The Reptile, of course, sent in the Monkey first to tire our boys out. This was exactly what we wanted. Sam is the bigger of my boys, so we sent him in after Monkey. Sam, I'm happy to say, is about the best thing there can be in the line of wrestlers. There's not a hair on his body, so consequently no one can keep a hold on him. And he's strong. He could have bent Monkey around his little, hairless finger.

To keep the fight going, however, he didn't demolish Monkey right away, but let him play around some. Monkey got a hold on Flesh's head; Flesh slipped out, grabbed Monkey's tail and swung him around the ring for awhile. Then Monkey tied Flesh in the ropes and beat on him. Flesh tied Monkey's tail to the ropes and beat on him. Then Monkey grabbed Flesh's legs. Flesh bit Monkey on the tail, enraging the referee.

Things went on like this for some time, and finally Monkey got enough. He reached over, tagged The Immoveable Object and slipped out between the ropes. The Immoveable Object came into the ring, moved slowly toward Flesh, and then curled up into a small ball. This was the moment everyone was waiting for. This was what the match was really being fought for. Everyone in the room held his breath while Flesh examined the Ball of curled wrestler.



"Go ahead, Sam," I shouted.

Sam nodded and attacked the ball of flesh. He kicked it, beat it, butted it and twisted it. Nothing happened. The Immoveable Object didn't move, but floated calmly in the center of the cube and let Flesh beat.

The Reptile grinned his nasty grin across the ring and acted as if he had already won. Sam kept beating on the Object.

After a quarter of an hour of this, Sam caught my signal and came over to tag Furry. I let another signal fly to a friend I had in the engine room, and he quietly slipped out.

Pete moved quickly to the center of the ring and grabbed what was showing of the Object's legs and twisted his ankles and wrists together, making the Object an even more compact ball. Now the Object couldn't uncurl even if he wanted to.

And then Furry started his game of free-fall basketball.

The Immoveable Object came out of his once-famed stationary position in the center of the ring, and Furry began dribbling him through space in the grand tradition of space basketball players. He bounced the Object off the corner posts, the wall that served as one side of the ring, the referee and anything else which came into view.

And when Furry tired, Flesh took over.

The Reptile hurried over to me. "Stop this," he croaked. "What are you doing?"

"Two can play this little magnetic game," I told him.

"What did you do? How did you find out?"

"Watch it there," I yelled to Sam, who was bouncing the Object off the ropes. "Don't let him tag the Monkey."

"I don't think Monkey'd go in the ring, if he was tagged," said Furry out of the corner of his mouth.

"What did you do?" repeated the Reptile, whose widened eyes gave him the appearance of a fish out of water.

"First I found that your Immoveable Object isn't exactly the normal he seemed to be. Then I turned off that machine of yours next door," I said simply.

The Reptile let out a growl of anger, and hurried back to his corner. But there was nothing he could do. We had won.

After the fight was declared over, I called the press together and gave them the whole story on the Reptile's game.

"Yep, boys," I told them, "this was how he worked it: he had found that The Immoveable Object - Jim Thompson is his real name - had no exterior deformity caused by free-fall. But he did have something that made him different. To put it simply, he had a very high concentrate of iron in his skin. Of course, it's more complicated than that, but essentially this was the case. The iron crystalized in his skin, making it hard and brittle, and in a quantity that was effected by magnetism. I found this out, after I already suspected it, by examining his diet. He ate only foods with a high iron content. The Reptile, too, had found this out, and used it to hold him in place in the center of the cube with properly placed magnets.

"Of course he could have been moved: he didn't have that much iron in him, but we just didn't know it. Anyway, after I found it out, I did what came naturally. I had Furry tie him up like he did, and then had a friend turn off the electro-magnet control in the next room. That's all there was to it."

And that's right: that's all there was to it.

We won the match and put the Reptile in place doing it. We were well on the way to winning the system title, which was what we were after.

So why are Flesh and Furry mad at me? Well, that comes of being too smart: I should have told Captain Haggard about the magnetism gimmick.

Yeah, he lost a bundle on the fight, betting on the Object to win. Now he's raving mad at us for having lost. In fact, he let the Reptile talk him into going into partnership with him.

So we no longer have a chance to practice wrestling at Pluto Station. They're keeping us so busy that we can't train, much less attempt to promote bouts.

So, Flesh and Furry are mad at me again, and it looks as if we'll never beat the Reptile to the title.

-----Neal F. Wilgus.

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science fiction on celluloid....

THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED (American Releasing Corporation); starring Richard Denning, Lori Nelson and Adele Jergens. Superscope.

Plot: the world is contaminated by nuclear radiation. Somewhere in the United States, a man has built a shelter for himself and his daughter. Somehow, five people happen to be near the shelter when the blast occurs. All seek shelter in the house, and the movie then is concerned with their struggle for survival, feuds, fights with mutations roaming around outside, etc.

In my opinion, this is one of the best small-scale sf films yet. Former SPACEWAY art editor, Paul Blaisdell is in this one also, animating the monster. Recommended.

THE PHANTOM FROM 10,000 LEAGUES (American Releasing Corporation); Kent Taylor, Cathy Downs and Michael Walen.

This thing is about a marine biologist who activates a uranium deposit on the ocean floor and creates a "something horrible" which looks like a half-brother of the Creature from the Lost Lagoon. There is some sort of radioactive beam coming out of the sea that burns people and ships with wild abandon. And of course there's the young scientist and the old scientist's daughter. The characters are as stiff as a two hour corpse, and the monster is as phoney a looking thing as could be your misfortune to see. Even if just for laughs, take it in.

---Marty Fleischman

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (Superscope) Walter Wagner, producer. Dana Synter, Keven McCarthy, and King Donovan. Based on Finney's "The Body Snatchers."

This one follows pretty much the Hollywood criterion that science fiction is really only horror under a different name. The in medias res treatment and a goodly amount of special effects adds to the desired audience reaction, as does the stock night chase with "them aliens" in hot pursuit.

The story, which recounts a man and woman's attempt to escape a town which is slowly

Marty Fleischman and David Hannon

being taken over by aliens through a type of ego transference, provides a field day for the special effects men in the construction of huge seed pods (the aliens burb out of the pods when they are placed nearby the victims) and mock-ups of the principle actors. Fifty to one hundred extras wander around stony-faced, portraying the alien controlled citizens.

Sf readers will look forward to this film because it is based on Finney's well-known "The Body Snatchers", but will be miserably disappointed. One good result of the film's showing, however, is that Finney was paid for the work done on his novel. H.G. Wells wasn't so fortunate.

INDESTRUCTABLE MAN, with Lon Chaney, jr.

Chaney plays the part of a dimwitted criminal who is left holding the bag after a murder and robbery. Just before being electrocuted, he swears vengeance on his former accomplices, and, ironically (?), after the execution his body is swiped by a couple of half-loony scientists who need a human cadaver for an experiment. The stock laboratory is the scene of the somewhat cloudy experiment, which, needless to say, succeeds. Chaney, revibrated, lurches around the room like a drunken zombie, wreaks some substantial havoc to demonstrate his newly acquired strength, then staggers off in search of his former cronies.

The ever-present Big Chase ensues, and Chaney, after bumping two of his buddies, is finally cornered in an electric power plant and fried when the tower he is standing on comes in contact with some high tension wires. Irony again.

The truly outstanding thespian in this revolting waste of film is the woman who plays the part of a sodden hag as back-drop in several bar room scenes. She doesn't say much, which is one reason for this nomination. The other is that her appearance of disheveled misery reminded me so much of myself after paying good money to sit through this rot.

To be avoided as you would the plague.

---David Hannon

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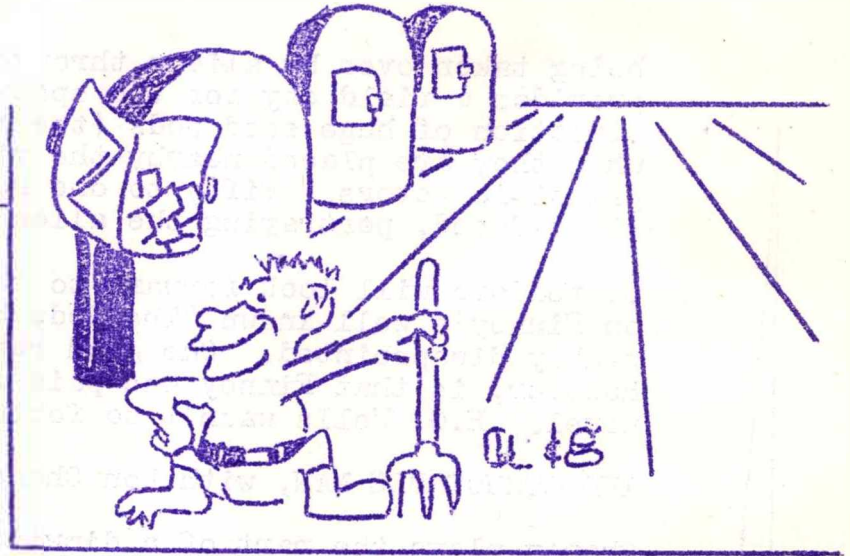
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capsules

by Gary Labowitz

Once again, Knight rears his ugly head and spews forth: "I am leaving the Capsules just as they were last issue. The main idea is to review as many fanzines each issue with the least error in fact. This method has met with a fair bit of success, and until I hear differently from the readers (via the editor) they will stay as they are."



THE HOAX THAT FAILED!

My original intention was to build up Gerald Knight as a real person, and might have succeeded, but I can't put off things any longer. Most of all, I can't waste the time required. My real name is (and I imagine most of you know already, so no shock) Gary Labowitz. Well! I just wanted to reply to Al Andrews, who rather sets himself up as an authority. Dear readers (and I'm truly surprised no one noticed) TTWC was written as a satire; yes, a regular space-opera. I believe John Murdock was the first to notice it, although it might have been Ray Schaffer, jr. Then there fellows is true fans. They can spot the heart of a story. And now, the zines:

SIGMA OCTANTIS #4
John Mussells
4 Curve St.
Wakefield, Mass.
NPL

Repro *
Format *
Material *
Artwork *
General ***

Best item this was a toss-up between Behold the Poor Liverwort and Genealogy, depending on whether you are interested in the old mags or humor.

INSIDE & sfa
Ron Smith
611 West 114th St.
Apt. 3d-310
N.Y., 25, N.Y.
5/\$1

Repro *
Format *
Material **
Artwork *
General ***

What can you say about a lithoed zine? It is as neat as a pin, put together very well. Best this was Masters of the Metropolis by R. Garrett and Lin Carter. Bravo!

MAGNITUDE #3

Ralph Stapenhorst
409 West Lexington Dr.
Glendale 3, Calif.
10¢; 6/50¢

Repro *
Format *
Material **
Artwork ****
General ***

Another lithoed one.
The boys in Calif. and I
have rather lost touch,
but school did that. Of
course, they haven't
tried to keep up either...
Where are you, Lewis
Kovner?

ECLIPSE #14

Ray Thompson
410 S. 4th st.
Norfolk, Nebraska.
10¢/ 6 for 50¢

Repro **
Format *
Material *
Artwork 0
General **

This one refuses to give
up. Though mostly by the
editor, Ray is the type
you could listen to all
day. But the zine only
lasts about thirty
minutes.

ISPA #4

Ed McNulty
5645 N. Winthrop
Indianapolis, Ind.
NPL

Repro *
Format 0
Material 0
Artwork 0
General *

Ed is just barely keeping
this one alive. It is a
zine you must have back
issues of to understand.
Very unfortunate for so
much work. Lacking!

HI?

Eva Firestone
Box 515
Upton, Wyoming
ISFCC

Repro 0
Format 0
Material **
Artwork 0
General **

Much as I hate to, I'm
taking Eva's zine down
a little. It interests
me as a member of ISFCC,
but to the ordinary fan
I think it would appear
weak.

INFF

Racy Higgs
813 Eastern Ave,
Connersville, Ind.
N3F

Repro**
Format 0
Material NC
Artwork 0
General *

Gad! N3F fell down on
this issue. I just cou-
ldn't find anything out
of the ordinary here.

PEON

Charles Lee Riddle
108 Dunham Str.
Norwich, Conn
20¢; 6/\$1

Repro **
Format **
Material **
Artwork **
General ****

What an issue! Charles
Lee really has a great
zine, but others have
told you that for years.
Should be in every fan's
library.

UMBRA

John Hitchcock
15 Arbutus Ave.
Baltimore 28, Md
10¢; 3/25¢

Repro **
Format *
Material **
Artwork **
General ****

Another very good zine.
If you want to see some
good Eastern Fandom, Um-
bra's it. The color is
fantastic, considering
that it's spirit dugged!

GEMZINE
G.M. Carr
5319 Ballard Ave.
Seattle 7, Wash.
FAPA

Repro *
Format 0
Material *
Artwork 0
General **

Gem's comments are the only thing in the issue that stands out. Gem's intelligence makes excellent reading, showing you how little you know.

FRONTIER
Dale R. Smith
3001 Kyle Ave.
Minneapolis 22, Minn
6/\$3

Repro ***
Format **
Material **
Artwork 0
General ****

A very well put together zine which sports a print-sized color cover which is suitable for framing, making Frontier a beautiful zine. A marvelous job.

That wraps it up for this issue. Tune in next month for another try to please your sensitive tastes.

---Gary Labowitz

ed's note: For review, faneds are asked to post their opera to Gary at 7234 Baltimore, Kansas City 14, Mo. Though, as manifested below, a few zines will be reviewed by the eds from time to time, this will not remain consistent practice. JDM.

WWHIMSY
Ron Voigt
3859 Sullivan St.
St. Louis, Mo.
50¢; 4/\$1.25

Repro **
Format *
Material *
Artwork (none)
General ***

An 'independent poetry magazine, 'Wwhimsy specializes in non-traditional verse with leanings toward no field in particular, but containing an amount of sf & fantasy material.

FANTASY TIMES
Fandom House
PO Box 2331
Paterson 23, N.J.
10¢; 24/\$2

Repro *
Format *
Material ***
Artwork (none)
General ****

A newszine, FT is in its fifteenth year of publishing accounts primarily of prodrom but occasionally of fandom happenings. Recommended to all.

CRY OF THE NAMELESS #91
Nameless Ones
Box 92
920 Third Avenue
Seattle 4, Wash.
10¢; 2/5¢; 9/50¢; 21/ \$1

Repro *
Format 0
Material *
Artwork 0
General *

Containing some miserable artwork, CRY is the 0-0 of an esoteric group, The Nameless Ones. The club's practice of rotating editors is probably responsible for its 0-0's weaknesses. Some material of interest.

SATA #'s 1 & 2
Dan L. Adkins
PO Box 258
Glendale Arizona
(Luke Air Force Base)
10¢; 6/50¢

Repro *
Format **
Material *
Artwork ***
General ***

Unlike CRY (above), SATA is typified by some of the best artwork in fandom today. The material standard is a bit below this, however, and could stand improvement.

ESP
Donald N. Stuefloten
Rt. 1, Box 722
Hemet, Calif.
10¢

Repro *
Format 0
Material *
Artwork *
General **

The issue at hand, though not numbered, appears to be a first ish. Though written entirely by Don himself, this issue of ESP shows promise for the future.

MUZZY #9
Claude Hall
408 Alta Vista
Carlsbad, N. Mexico
25¢

Repro *
Format *
Material **
Artwork 0
General **

Because it is a 'personality' zine, this one will effect each reader individually, depending on which end of Hall's barbs he is on.

---JDM

FRIEND:

Are you tired of harsh reading? Are you sick of fanzines that are rough on the I-zone? Are you after a fresh, new fanzine? Then try OUTRE'. It's different.

Are you sick of reading old fannish crud? If so, try some new fannish crud. Try OUTRE'. It's longer filtered

Listen to the comments:

John W. Campfollower: "Well, well. No burning staple sensation."

Horace Goldfinch: "This, I would like to burn."

Larry Shawmut: "Eh?"

Howard Bronze: "Ah, the makings of a purge."

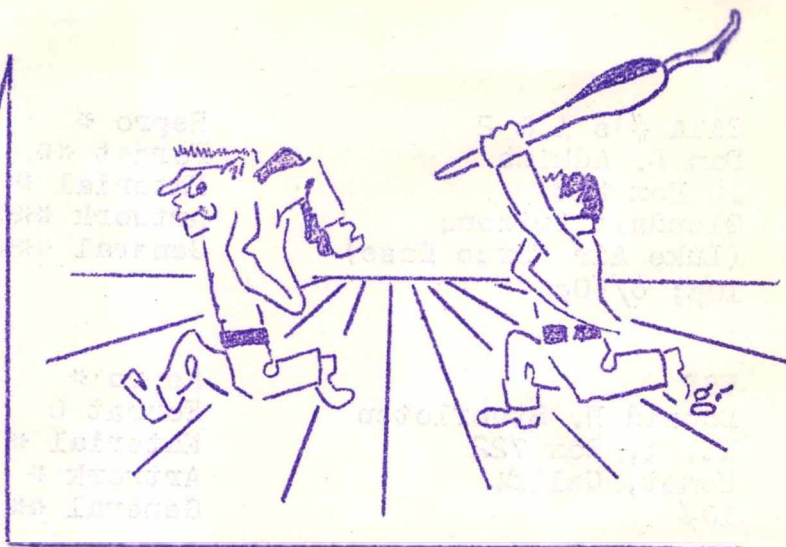
Anthony Butcher: "Quick! Which end do you light it on?"

Enjoy the smooth reading of fine material. Don't miss the pleasure of reading longer filtered OUTRE'. Only OUTRE' has twenty thousand tiny letters to filter, filter, filter your reading. Did you miss the first two issues? Why stretch your luck? Don't miss the third. It will be out any time now.

Just send 15¢ to George Spencer, the ed, at:
8302 Dornbrook Lane
Chevy Chase 15, Maryland.

the
litterbox

Jerry Page



Well, it's obvious enough that the only thing needed to round out another perfect issue of FRANTIC SOLAR SYSTEM is the reader's column. So, we start with a letter from a

DEVOTEE

Dear Sir:

I have been a steady devotee of your's for over a month and feel that my Mommy read's your magazine real well to me. I am four years old, and wish you lots of luck.

Yours truly
C.T.B.
Old Crow, Kty.

((Cal, you show almost as much intelligence as I did at that age: IQ of $23\frac{1}{4}$. It's remained at a constant level, too. Pardon the egoboo, boy. Love your home town.))

FAN ABOUT FANDOM

Tony:

I was discussing your mag with 4e, Willis and a few other fen by mail last month, protecting your good name. I was writing to RIP when I got a brainstorm. I compared copies of your mag with some other mags nubbed since '26.

My little scheme (reminds me of an arguement I once had with McCaulee about what constitutes a good story) worked and I found out what's wrong with FSS. Read the editorial in my fanzine.

FANatically yours,
G. Binforward.

((Jerk! What the - opps, almost slipped. Whoever heard of an editor swearing? There ain't nothing wrong with FSS. By the way, which editorial in which of your fanzines?))

A COMPLAINT

Dear Tony,

You are a real butcher! You have loused up one of the greatest mags in the history of sf. And the editorials! Ehhhk! Your viewpoints are so warped, it's pitiful! Glad to hear you're going monthly.

Ghoulishly
F.J. Yackerman
Dollar, Wyo.

((Why don't you start thinking? I'm fed up with your tripe! If you don't cut it out by '60, I'll stop running your letters in this column. Love your home, boy, love your home.))

SUMMONS ON THE WAY

Dear TB,

You are a germ infecting sf with a menace matched by few, surpassed by none! Through your money-grubbing methods and your cheap, chiseling, coniving ways, you've shown an absolute contempt for the field you pretend to love: Science-fiction.

Love,
G.M.C. Truck

((Lies! Slander! Libel! I'll sue! If you learned anything about sf, you'd die of fright. By the way, how'd you like the last ish of FSS?))

A WORD OR TWO...

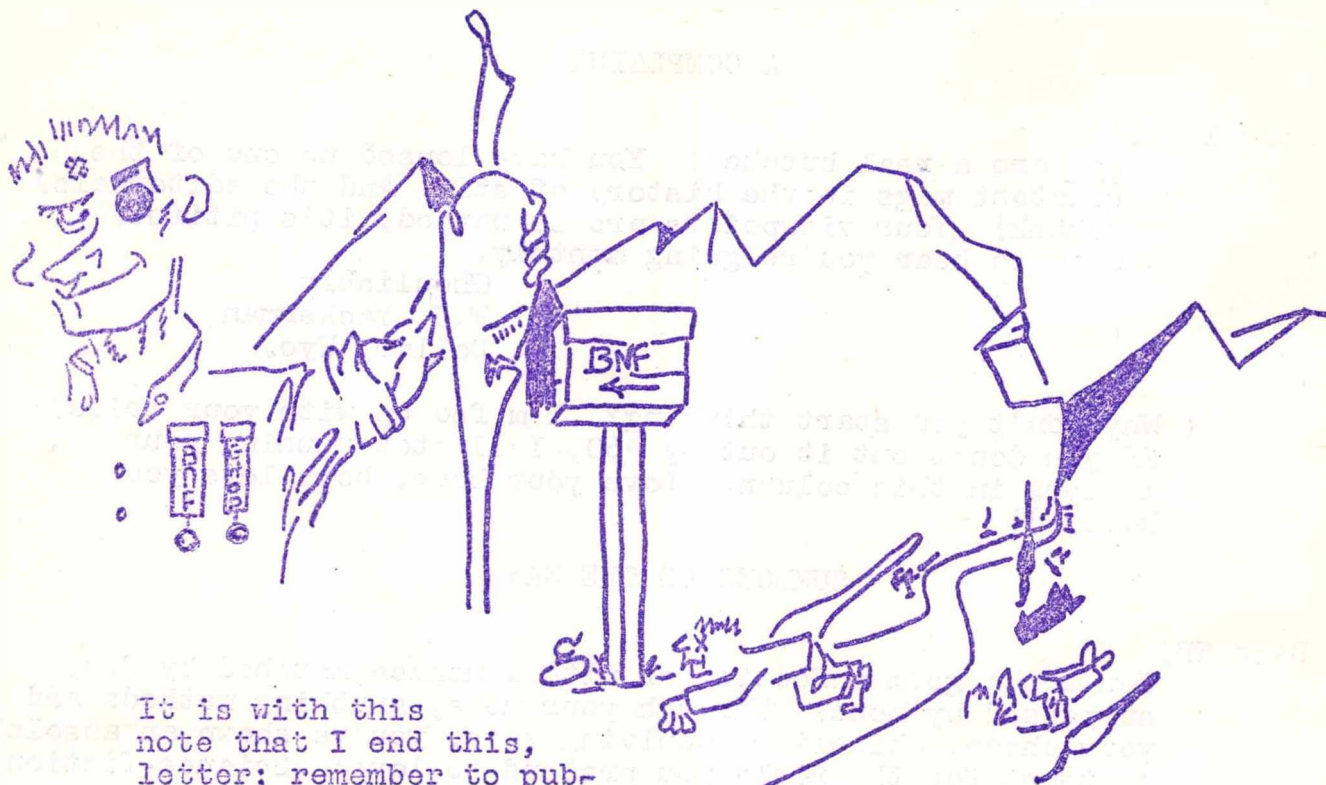
Dear Tony,

It is with a great deal of surprise that I find myself taking pen in hand to write a letter to ANY magazine, particularly one with a reader's column. For years, I've been reading your magazine, and I've been enjoying it. Then you added a reader's column. My main complaint is that it wastes space which could be used for more stories. You should drop all of the features except for your editorial and the book reviews.

However, since you probably won't drop the letters, I'd like to add my suggestions:

- a.) print only short letters; there is nothing more boring than long, drawn-out letters.
- b.) don't print the letters of fans; fans are just childish, sub-level, non-IQed know-it-all who consider themselves above editors.

It's all right as long as fans keep their trip to them-selves in their own fanzines, circulated among them. Fans should be thrown out of sf! We buy your publication for the stories, not for the worthless babblings of some fan!



It is with this note that I end this letter; remember to publish only the shortest letters received. Please ask the readers to send in the shortest letters they can possibly write. I would like to add that I feel that you have the finest magazine in the field. May both you and FSS enjoy a fruitful existence.

Your brother
George Butcher

((Sorry, George, but we couldn't print the other ten pages of your letter. We ran out of room.))

OUT-OF-TOWN FAN

Quiero Usted:

La pluma est en la mesa. La FSS est cruddy!
Roberto A. Madero
1620 LaCalla de Anderson
Charlita, N.C.

((Si! What you said. I think...))

CONCISE

Dear ed,

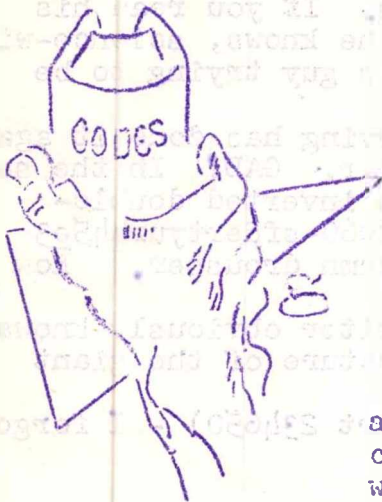
Damn!

Yours truly,
Djaughe Ko

ABBREVIATES

Ed.,

Saw new fmz c'l'm'n. Great. Not like c'l'm'n in FFs, tho. Slippin', ed; typos pgs 3, 6, 12, 47, 89, 103. Get new prfrdr. Att. Friscon III; grt affair. Illo. pg. 6 rts echhh. A.C.-D.C. B.V.D. L.S./M.F.T. P.D.Q. S.OS. Y.V.T.



BUDDY

Dear Tony-boy,

Remember the conversation we had at the Fleeglecon? Boy, that was one important conversation. And then there was the time you were doing that speech in Chicago.

I'm all the way with you buddy-boy. I can't take those attacks that certain unfair fans are making against you. We been buddies too long.

Which reminds me ed; how's your Mom?

Holler N. Bellersome
New Jerk, N.Y.

((Oh yeah. I remember you. You're the guy who borrowed that match from me. Say, did you ever repay me?....))

MR. SCIENCE FICTION

Dear TB,

Love the editor in your mag. 'specially you.

Love,
Tony

NO FUTURE IN SF

Dear Sir,

Enclosed find one mss. I got the idea while doing my column for Gsf. I hope you like it.

W. Lay

((Sorry, Will, I have to reject your mss. I can't predict much of a future for you in stf until you learn more about science.))



APPRAISAL

Dear Careless editor,

THE STAR, by ACC - As always, science takes a beating in this guy's stories. If you read his PRELUDE, you know how little he knows, science-wise. F.QB. VENUS, by Bond - Is this guy trying to be funny?

PARRADOX CROSSED, by Pox - Irving has done it again. However, it does sound familiar. GAD! In the second paragraph, he says: "the inverted double-cleaved micrsonic 3#456279000*60-sfdertyurll45e3 corellator fints onto the vacumn drousser." How do such goofs get by you?

ORSON WELLS ON MARS - This writer obviously knows nothing about the Atomic Structure of the giant Redwood.

THE PLANETS WENT THATAWAY (part 234650) - I forgot which one is the hero.

Features:

Book Reviews:	Geo. Butcher	echhhhk!
Fanzine Reviews	Poj Fillup	PU
Science Briefs	Ezray Thaw	Unauthentic
Editor's Page	TB	?????
Guest editorial	Victor Panemall	Excellent
Contents page		Fair
FSS Contributors	Raymond Gunn	Hiss
In Our Next Issue	TB	If it only wouldn't come true.
Sf Quotes	miscellaneous	So what?
Adds		Nice
Rings of Satire	Ranwill Barrett	Notice that it rhymes?
Staples	Punchem & Twistem	Keeps the mag together.

The illoes were crummy!

Victor Panemall
Girl, Ohio

((I really do love your home, boy.))

ART LOVER

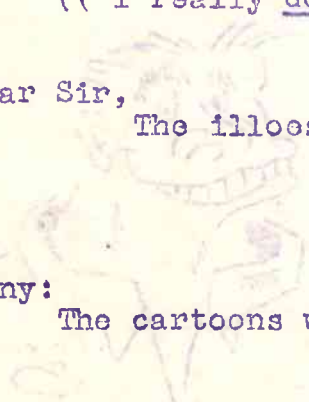
Dear Sir,

The illoes were wonderful, 'specially the finneys.
Virgil Finney.

LIKES SHIFTY

Tony:

The cartoons were great, 'specially the shifty's.
Luther Shifty.



37

...the man's name was ...
...the man's name was ...
...the man's name was ...

...the man's name was ...
...the man's name was ...
...the man's name was ...

...the man's name was ...

Chronicle of the last man...

by Alfred Russel Wallace

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Wakefield,
Massachusetts

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