

The SKYRACK

newsletter



"Watch your language tonight.
This new member hasn't even
heard of Harlan Ellison."

This is SKYRACK number 73, dated 30th December 1964 and published by Ron Bennett, 52 Fairways Drive, Forest Lane, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England. 2/6d for 6 issues. 35¢ for 6 issues in the USA (6 issues sent airmail for 70¢) where subscriptions may be sent to Robert Coulson, RR 3, Wabash, Indiana 46992. News of interest to the science fiction fan always welcome. Cartoon and heading by Arthur "Atom" Thomson, pen portrait by Charles Platt, and contributions are included from Alan Dodd, Ethel Lindsay, Dwain Kniser, Roger Peyton etc.

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: A HAPPY NEW YEAR, FANS, EVERYWHERE.
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WELL KNOWN SF WRITER and 1957 London WorldCon attendee H. Beam Piper was found dead in his Altoona, Pennsylvania, home on 9th November. Piper is believed to have committed suicide, using one of the guns from his famous collection, after his recent divorce which gave custody of his children to his ex-wife.

LOW GRADE ALLOTTED TO SCIENCE FICTION. On 26th October a lecture on sf was given at the University of Liverpool by Professor Allott of the English Department. Commenting on the sense of wonder in the genre, Professor Allott said that sf lacked scientific fact and used devices like hyper drive and time travel in order to extrapolate a given situation. The Professor seemed to be basing his sweeping generalisations upon a rather meagre knowledge. Asimov, Heinlein and van Vogt were dismissed in a sentence. Arthur C. Clarke was not mentioned and Professor Allott's examples were Ballard's Drowned World, Anis' New Maps of Hell, Wyndham, Verne, Lewis and Stapledon. In mentioning Fred Hoyle there was a grudging admission that sf does have a little scientific background. H.G. Wells occupied some twenty minutes of the lecture which was attended by some 150 people including several lecturers, and which was played strictly for laughs, giving the impression of "smartness" rather than worth in the field. The Professor's views were somewhat reinforced a few days later when his wife, Dr. Allott, presented a talk on the contemporary English novel. When asked about the state of science fiction, Dr. Allott said that it was going to be a significant part of "pop culture" in the near future, with startling ideas, but that it was not going to make any real contribution to the field of literature. Whilst there can be no doubt that much in the sf field cannot possibly have any claim towards literary merit, it is strange that such knowledgeable people should single out science fiction from all the fields of writing. It is even stranger that they cannot recognise that some science fiction has indeed every claim to literary worth. Again, as in all fields of writing.

Beryl has the distinction of being a neofan at 38, married, with two small children who read fanzines as they do comics.... but the story really starts when Beryl joined the Birmingham sf group and the BSFA, discovering fandom but having known sf for years.

Beryl is good testimony to the validity of scientology; she is both at peace with the world and extremely energetic, finding time to act as host for hordes of fans, correspond actively and at length with many friends, write scripts for the Redditch Revellers, a local comedy acting group, and of course carry on all her duties as housewife.

Her background of Scientology and columnist on a local paper shows through strongly in her fanzine articles which delight some but infuriate most. The cries of "crackpot" leave her always willing to argue and overwhelmingly friendly, which makes disagreement difficult.

The recent appearance of her fanzine Link, produced jointly with Mary Reed, will undoubtedly be a major step towards Beryl extending her influence and becoming better known in fandom, for, as many correspondents already know, as a personality she is both valuable and unique, as a fan or as a friend. (CP)

 QUICK QUICK GET OUT THE SACKCLOTH & ASHES department. A couple of issues ago Skyrack published a couple of items gleaned from our Danish correspondent, Rear Red Admiral Harold Harrison, and also ran a couple of items about said Mr. Harrison. Note that word "also." The items were not the same. Mr. Harrison, who is modest, asked me to point this out, noting in particular that his recent book, Bill The Galactic Hero (The Starsloggers in the December Galaxy) may indeed be a burlesque of Starship Trooper, but that this was not his view. Indeed, indeed, indeed, the comparison was made by someone else. Just to show how well organised a newszine Skyrack, Harry's letter was misplaced and whereas this disclaimer should have appeared last month it did not. Moreover, matters were made worse by a similar note which stated that Mr. H. was, is and will be the Guest of Honour at the 1965 Easter BrunCon. Harry did not send that item either. Accordingly, apologies to Mr. Harrison. Mi estas granda nitwit.

 SKYRACK ANNUAL COMPETITION, or Come Home, Tony Walsh. Competitors are invited to devise a programme of six items to be presented at the 2065 Galactic Convention, sf's LonCon XVI. Entries which show originality in siting the convention, as shown in the programme will be regarded favourably. Closing date 15th February 1965. One prize of a year's subscription to Skyrack and 3½d in cash.

 THE TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND is going full swing in its efforts to bring over an American fan to the August Bank Holiday London WorldCon. Nominated are Terry Carr, Bill Donaho and Jock Root, three Good Men. Voting forms may be obtained from Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey. Latest donations to TAFF have been as follows: 1964 Peterborough Convention £22.2s.10d, Kevin Dillon 14/6d, Dave Barber 10/6d, Jim Cawthorn 10/-, Wolfgang Thedewald 8s, Rosemary Hickey 7/-, Charles Platt 7/6d, George Locke 6/0½d, Joe Zajaczkowski 1½d, and 5/- each from Ron Bennett, Keith and Wendy Freeman, Terry and Val Jeeves and Ivor Latto.

 The new amateur publishing association, InterApa, ran into a snag recently, even before it was properly off the ground. Founder Kris Carey could not carry on as Official Editor because of school work and the vacancy has been filled by Dwain Keiser (5321 Mountain View Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada). Membership costs \$2.50 per year, will be limited to thirty. First mailing is due 15th March.

As 1964 draws to its close it is time again to reflect just how old and tired fans are becoming. Or at any rate, how old and tired this fan is becoming. Why, I even remember the days when fans produced bumper issues of their fanzines for Christmas! This month's offering is meagre. Purely from a quantitative position I hasten to add.....

ALIEN 12(Dec 64; Harry Nadler, 5 South Mesnefield Road, Lower Kersal, Salford 7, Lancs., and Charles Partington, 2 Matlock Avenue, Lower Kersal etc etc; 1/3 per issue; 40pp). The mixture as before from this fanzine of the macabre, horror fiction, film reviews etc etc. This issue is notable however for one or two "extras," some decided improvements, like the consistent high standard in layout, artwork and photopages, far fewer spelling errors and a faaanish party report by Charles Platt. Which fact a year ago would have taken a front page headline. But a good issue in which the group's personality is well presented.

QUARK(Unnumbered; Election Day '64; Thom Perry, 4018 Laurel Avenue, Omaha 11, Nebraska, USA, 25¢) It's one of the saddest thoughts of today --- this unnumbered, virtually undated fanzine stands a good chance of being misfiled - or even lost. Once a decade fandom is fortunate enough to possess a fanzine with excellent, mature material and that golden indefinable spark. Quandry had it, Innuendo had it, and after that build up it should come as no surprise to read that Quark has it, too. This particular issue is slim and it is unfortunate that there exists in Quark a little note not exactly in keeping with the best traditions of fannish brother. There is a disturbing tone present in an instalment of Walt Willis' column, The Harp That Once or Twice, published in Quark as a result of its latest reprint (from Richard Bergeron's Warhoon). Walt writes about the Peterborough Convention, mentioning a meeting between himself and the Alien producing Delta boys from Salford. Well, certainly, the Salford boys may not have been in fandom for long, they may not have been fed on fannish lore like Courtney's boat, B.P.'s etc etc (though they do make their own -- ask LiG about Tom Holt and the Mersey Tunnel, but is this so terrible? Perhaps to Walt it is; he appears to consider the major calamity the fact that Phil Rogers gained only four votes fewer than did Arthur Thomson in the U.K. count of the recent TAFF campaign. Whilst we can well dismiss Walt's rather narrow opinions (in the same column he expresses the opinion -- as though it were fact -- that the BSFA was formed because fandom had been worried about the "complete absence of channels of recruit" after the prozine Nebula had folded. There are two points to consider here. Firstly, Nebula, with its excellent Willis fan column, was by no means considered to be the all important recruiting agent that it is made out to be in the Harp, though no one can deny that it did recruit and recruit well. And secondly, the foundation of the BSFA was by no means linked with the demise of Nebula. Nebula folded late in 1959. The BSFA was formed at Easter in 1958.) as no more or less than narrow opinions, it is sad that one who can rise to such heights in humorous writing should be satisfied with the snide, with being funny (sic) at the expense of others. Especially when at this season there has appeared an example of kindly humorous writing from the Willis camp, namely the annual Willis Xmas card, without which no year would be complete. And this year's, let me add, is possibly the best yet. For all this minor sour note, Quark looks like ranking with the all time fannish greats, and yes, you isolationists, you know where my Hugo nomination is going as far as the fanzine award is concerned.

YANDRO 141 (Nov 64; Rbt & Junita Coulson, for address see Skyrack heading. 30¢ or 1/6 with special subscription rates. UK agent Alan Dodd, 77 Stanstead Rd., Hoddeston, Herts). More goodies, interesting and informative, on sf and fandom, with a Bob Tucker column as the highlight.

As of Xmas Day the Colin Freeman Account stands @ £12. 9s. 2d. This blotted from Colin's copy. DNQ kind people. Full special progress report next issue.

Your subscription expires with issue number 75 //Contributor's copy_____

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Dr.Peter Campbell, 3 Market Place,Cockermouth,Cumberland.

SNIPPETS: Wanted -- Copies of Skyrack numbers 64 & 72, also any issues of Ploy. State your price::: Gold Star Books in the U.S. are bringing out a series of Tarzan books, taking Burroughs characters now in public domain and writing new stories about them without crediting or paying tribute to the Burroughs estate:::BBC Third Programme recently ran a series on popular sf themes:::And BBC TV's series Hollywood & The Stars devoted a programme to monster films which included shots from several early Gothic fantasies:::and, Norman Shorrock, another programme in the same series ran scenes from Intolerance:::Another BBC sf feature, the children's programme,Dr.Who, is to be censored after complaints that recent episodes have not been "ideal children's viewing." The sadism in these episodes may bring about a title change to Dr. Whoo7::: Filmed at last -- Richard Matheson's I Am Legend, under the title The Last Man on Earth(brilliantly original) and starring Vincent Price::: Expected from Gollancz shortly are: The Joyous Invasions(Sturgeon), The Thirst Quenchers(Raphael) and Two Tales And Eight Tomorrows(Harry Harrison):::B.S.F.A. subscription renewals are now due. Treasurer is Charles D. Winstone, 71 George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23::: Apologies to all fans to whom I owe letters. I'm now engaged in night school work. Mundac is playing havoc with fanac, I'm afraid::: Last issue ran a story about an author phoning a London WorldCon Committee member in the middle of the night. It is now common knowledge that said author was Harlan Ellison who phoned Ella Parker from New York to complain about the London decision not to award a Hugo for a dramatic presentation. The position has been greatly complicated since then by various fans, Harlan among them, publishing reasons why London should or should not abide by its Committee decision:::For Sale. 1/6 each including postage:- Worlds of Tomorrow(Derleth), Look Out Behind You(Lewis)/Not So Evil As Eve(Creighton)Ace Double, Titan's Daughter(Blish),The Haploids(Sohl),The Altered Ego(Sohl),Green Hills of Earth(Heinlein),Star of Ill Omen(Wheatley),Foundation & Empire(Asimov), Earth is Room Enough(Asimov),World of Chance(Dick),Tomorrow Came(Edmund Cooper),The Green Suns(Ward),Voyage To Venus(Lewis), Ride the Nightmare(Matheson).

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