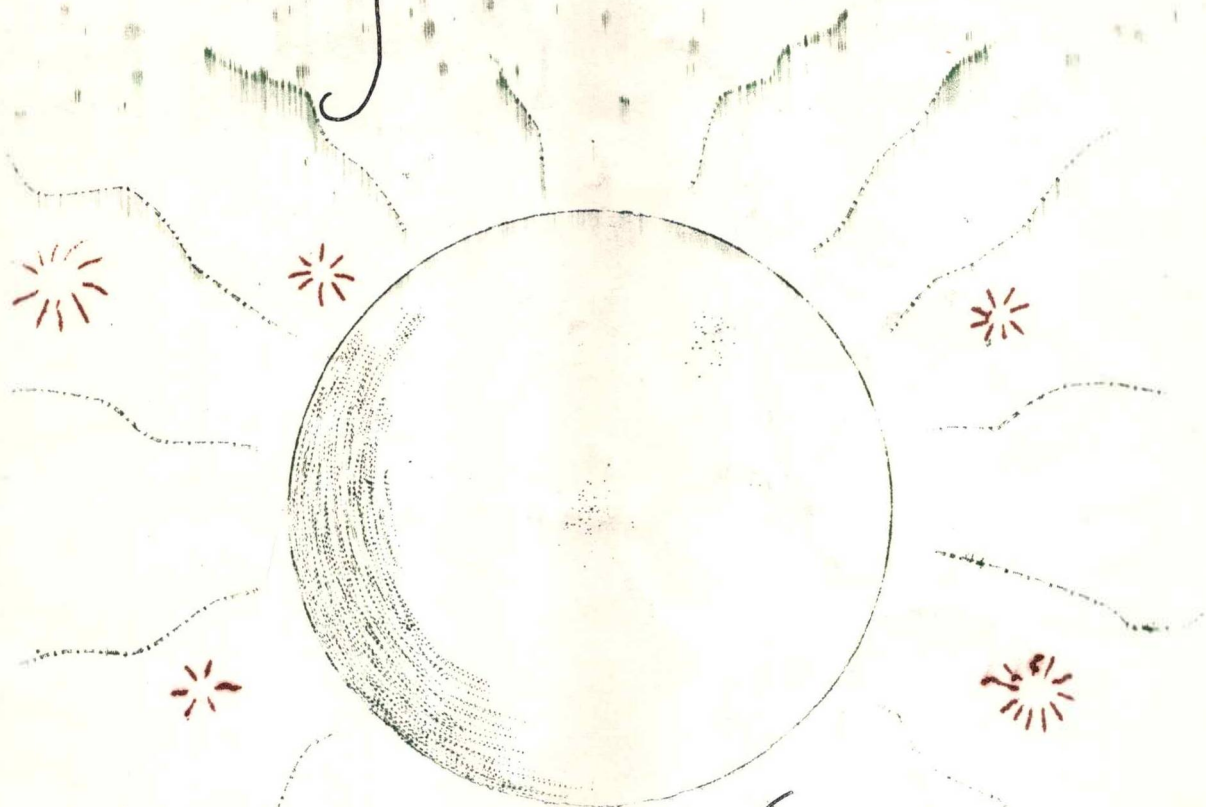


Sphere



Volume 1. Number 2.
November - December

1956



Sphere

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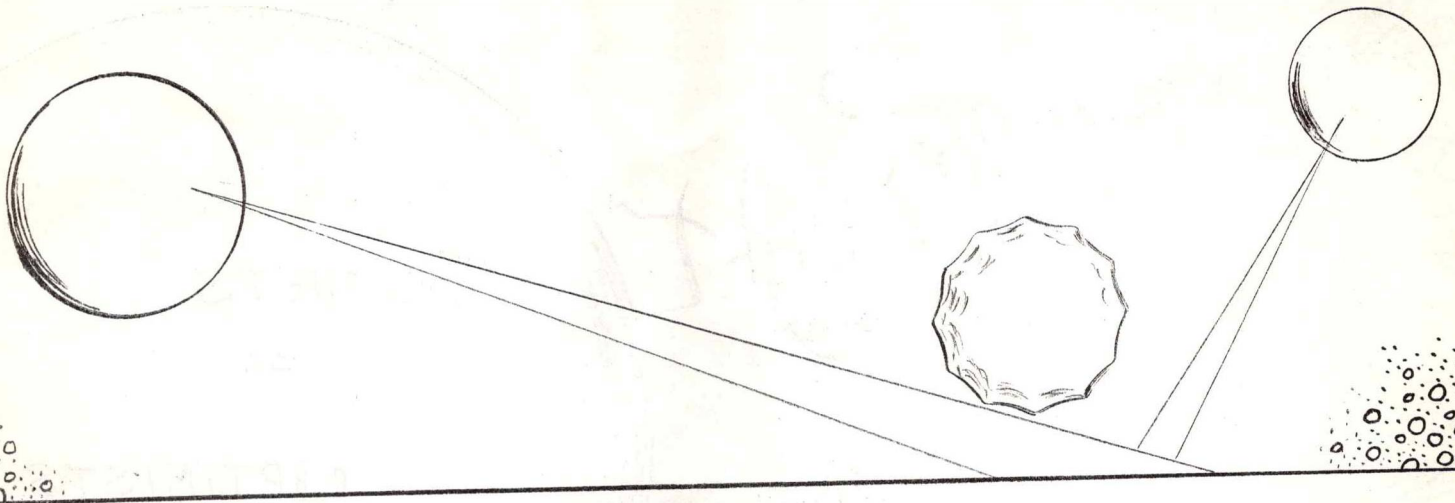
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Do you believe that interplanetary travel will be accomplished?

Surely this question has been asked an untold number of times in the past. And after each succeeding lapse of time, when it is again put forth it should be interesting to know what the incidence of affirmative answers would be.

Of special interest is Gerry de la Ree's Polls on Space Flight going back ten years or so.

Many voting in the Beowulf Polls have fallen short on their predictions. To our breed prophetic fiction is one of our specialties yet we "never--well, hardly ever" (to borrow a typical New Yorker phrase) always profess to be seers. Extrapolation of the "What If" line of thought best describes our role of prophetic fiction.

Nothing startling or new in this revelation it's true. Fantasy--Science--Fiction, after all what is pure Science? Surely, nothing more than an orderly arrangement of what at the time seems to be facts.

With all due consideration to those brave few who fearlessly voiced their views ten years ago let's at least doff our collective beanie-caps to a true fanish spirit!

Which brings us up to date and although unnecessary----as he is well known in the S-F Fan Sphere----a modest introduction for our feature article this issue-----

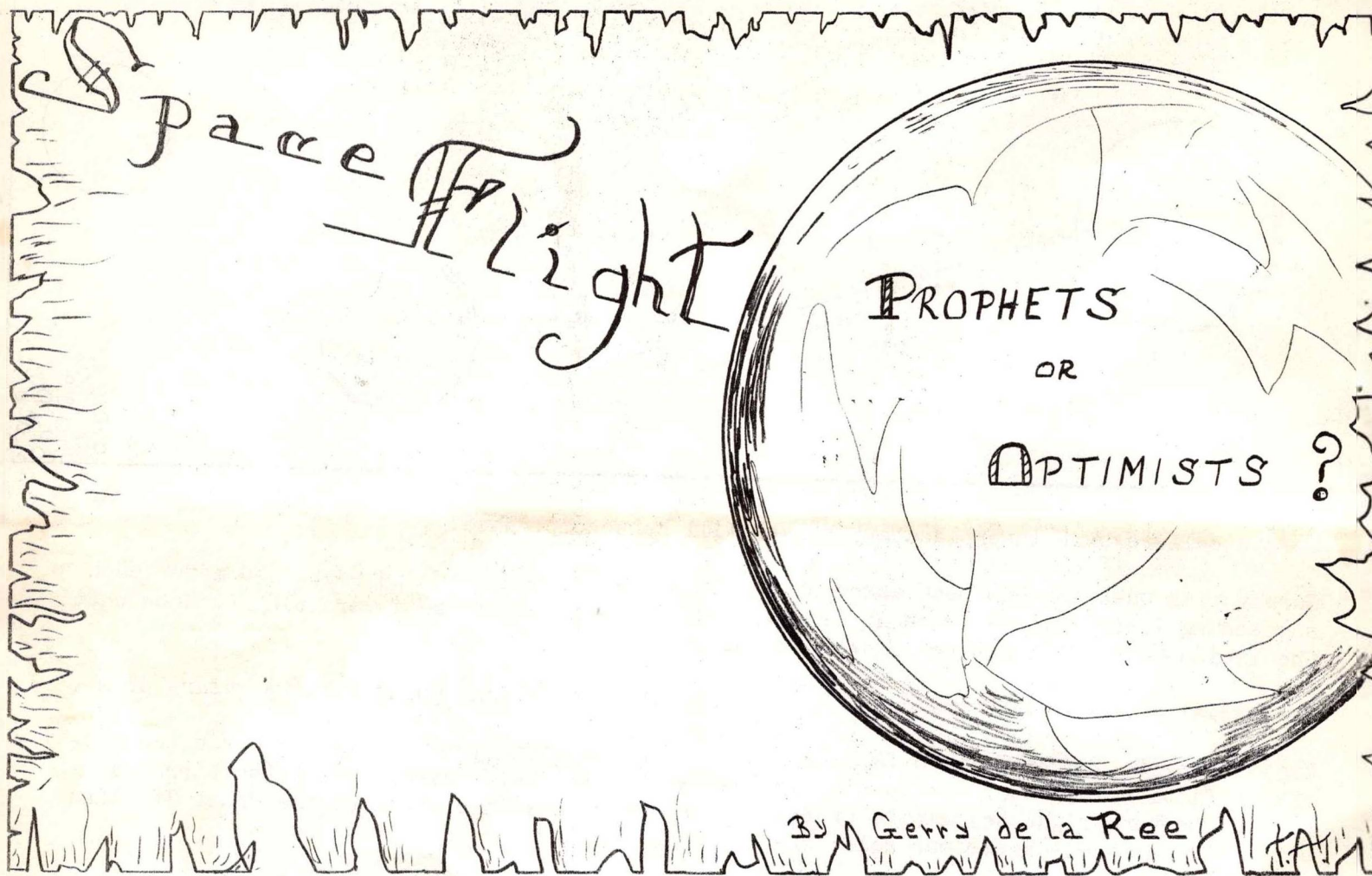
On the following page:


SPACE FLIGHT - Prophets or Optimists?

By Gerry de la Ree.

ERRATA

First issues, not only of fanzines, but pros as well, usually are rather sad---dispite the work that went into its production. That's at least some small consolation----even if we did say it ourselves. Ridiculous typos like the stary "s", the transposed "n", all on the third page of last issue. Such embarrassment-----there! That should be enough "s's" to make up for those missing last time! Let that be sufficient warning! Even on a first venture, an Editor can loose his "s" if he is not very careful. See you in January-February. Next year, 1957!



 How good are Science-Fiction authors and fans as prophets?

When the United States released the atomic bomb in 1945, a number of science fiction authors stepped forward and took their bows for having predicted, accurately or otherwise, such a development. And, without a doubt, there must have been only a scant few fantasy fans who did not turn to at least one friend and say, with a self-satisfied smirk, "Well, now you can't say I didn't tell you so!"

Since virtually every S*F author has at one time or another written of space travel, it seems safe to reason that when man first lands a missile upon the surface of the moon or eventually sets foot on that body, (or any Sphere) we can expect any number of modern-day Nostradamuses to step forward and claim they'd predicted this would happen.

Like most readers of science fiction, I have always been interested in the coming age of space flight and hopeful that I would be around to witness at least the early stages of this era.

Almost eleven years ago I decided to find out what some of my fellow S*F enthusiasts thought about the subject, when, and how they figured man would take his first step into outer space.

The first, of my three space-flight polls, was conducted in May, 1946. There were sixty-seven persons who participated in that poll and gave their views

on nine questions. The prime question asked was: "In what year do you think the first successful flight to the moon or another planet will be made?"

Most of those polled were most sincere and co-operative, they actually did as requested. They listed the year in which they thought such a trip would be accomplished. Of the 67 voting, most of those participating were fans; about half of them no longer active in the field today, as far as is known at this writing. Yet, there are some names on the list that are still familiar today, to mention a few: John W. Campbell, Jr., Forrest J. Ackerman, Bob Tucker, Sam Moskowitz, Ralph Milne Farley, Theodore Sturgeon, Richard S. Shaver, Thomas S. Gardner, Hugo Gernsback (The Father of S-S, Himself) Eando Binder, Manly Wade Wellman, L. Sprague de Camp, Darrell C. Richardson, and the list goes on.

It should be noted that this poll was conducted as World War II, with all its accelerated scientific advances, was coming to a close. Man had released the tremendous power of the atom, had made vast strides in the field of the upper reaches of Earth's atmosphere, of rockets, missiles, and had clearly shown what advances he could make under pressure of necessity. In a nutshell, things looked bright indeed for space travel----that is if----if the manpower and money was poured into such a project.

This air of optimism was obvious in the replies from those polled. Twenty-one predicted a successful flight to the moon would be made before 1957. Another 18 expected it by 1960, and all but a handful listed dates prior to 1975. Among those who have already been proven wrong are Campbell, Ackerman, Tucker, Moskowitz, and Farley.

Briefly summarizing some of the other results of that May, 1946 poll, the majority believed that a government would sponsor the first space flight, almost two-thirds said they would be willing to participate in a trip to the moon although given only a 50% chance of returning, and a large majority expected that atomic power would be used to propel the first space ship.

Since it seemed reasonable that an unmanned missile would possibly precede any passenger-carrying rocket to the moon, we asked for two dates in the second poll, which was conducted in December, 1946. This poll was on a smaller scale and included the opinions of many of the same people who had voted in the first one.

If anything, this poll produced even more optimistic views. R. L. Farnsworth, president of the U. S. Rocket Society and surely one entirely devoted to the subject, looked for the first unmanned flight in 1947, with a manned flight in 1947 or 1948. A. E. Van Vogt gave 1949 as the year for the first manned trip. Close on his heels were Campbell, Sturgeon, Raymond A. Palmer, Tucker, Moskowitz, and Ley.

Only one fan of the entire number voting expected the unmanned missile to be landed on the moon after 1960, and all but one saw the manned trip coming by the year 2000.

In 1953, seven years after the first poll, I conducted a third and far more exhaustive poll. This one was aimed at rocket experts, scientists, and science-fiction authors and editors. A few well known STF fans also participated, but primarily it was a survey of the opinions of men who were considered to be in the know at that time.

Included in the 65 participants were such well known names as: Dr. Wernher von Braun, Dr. Fred Whipple, Dr. Heinz Haber, Dr. Fletcher G. Watson, Dr. I. M. Levitt, Dr. R. S. Richardson, Rocket Authority-Willy Ley; Science-Fiction Editors Campbell, Gold, Boucher, McComas, O'Sullivan, Shaw, Mines, Walton, Lowndes, Tremaine, and Merwin; Rocket Society Men such as Farnsworth and G. E. Pendray; and authors such as Heinlein, Bradbury, Van Vogt, De Camp, Bloch, Simak, Tucker, Sturgeon, Farley, Miller, Budrys, Robinson, Binder, Schachner, Gibson, E. E. Smith, Asimov and many others.

The result of this poll received nation-wide publicity, since they were carried on Associated Press Wires.

Even with the experience of ten years behind them, however, we had the same group of optimists in the field. Farnsworth, Sturgeon, Farley, and Van Vogt were among those who looked for the first unmanned flight to the moon by the year 1956.

Nineteen predicted as unmanned flight by 1960, thirteen more expected it by 1970.

In percentages, 71.4% saw the first unmanned flight before 1975 and 73.0% saw the first manned flight before 1990. The United States was listed by 54.7%, as being the sponsor of the first slight; while only 42.9% expected atomic power to be used to propel the first space ship, as compared to 49.2% that did not expect atomic power to be used.

Although many of our prophets have already been proven wrong, there may well be one or more who took part in these polls, who have accurately predicted man's first step into outer space. It will be interesting to see who they may be.

Junior

— Gary Grayson

FROM the first day when Howard and I found Junior on the door step, I had struggled in vain to give the child the love which I could have lavished so easily on my own son, had I borne a baby to my husband.

I had always thought the foundling was something you might read about in a bit of fiction, but in the twelve years of my life with Howard, I had never suspected that this would be the way in which we would become parents. Babies left in baskets on door steps seemed far removed from the dull, eventless life we had led during the years of our marriage.

WHEN I first stood looking at the infant I found myself wondering at the strange lack of feeling in my heart for him. He was a sweet-faced child - as he lay looking up at me - but his eyes even then seemed far older and more alive than should be those of a baby of a few weeks.

I had always loved children, especially babies, but here I stood feeling nothing, except an almost perceptible disdain for him.

DURING the weeks that followed, while authorities tried to trace him, I gave him the best care a woman can give, but never could I bring myself to fondle and caress him in the way a woman will instinctively do with a child.

IT was a shock to me when Howard spoke about adopting him. I almost cried out in horror at the thought, but the look of hope in my husband's eyes held me back.

COULD this be jealousy? Did I resent this baby because he was not my flesh and blood? Or was it something deeper? I tried to think clearly, but I prayed often during the weeks while the adoption papers were being processed, that some hitch would come about.

EVEN after I became a full-fledged parent, with papers to prove it, there was no maternal feeling in me for this strange child who came to call me 'Mother'.

JUNIOR knew this antipathy I felt for him - this eerie dislike I felt as though he were an alien being. He knew my feelings as though he could read my thoughts.

AS the years passed, he seemed to mature mentally with startling speed, and Howard was the dotting father who never tired of catering to the whims of the child. There seemed to be a strong bond between the two - Junior and my husband.

THE hours during the day when Howard was at work were terrible. I felt almost a fear of the boy, as tho he were a grown stranger - for stranger he still was to me.

Junior

WE spoke to each other rarely, and then only in monosyllables, tho by tacit agreement we gave no sign of conditions before my husband.

WHEN Junior showed an interest in chemistry at the age of six, Howard's delight knew no bounds.

"HE'S going to be a mental whiz, Maud," he exclaimed. "A child prodigy!"

FROM that day my home was no longer mine. It was a shamble of jars and such, filled with vile smelling liquids. I tried to reason with Howard, but to no avail.

"GREAT Scott, Maudie," he snapped, "be your age! Junior shows a bent on science. Let him alone! Who knows what might come of it?" And that was the question I had often asked myself.

WHEN Junior was seven, he branched into other fields. His room now was a mass of gadgets and he spoke to his father about the crude box-affair on which he was working. His TIME MACHINE, he called it. I listened to them talking but could understand nothing.

I often wondered if Howard could.

WHEN my husband told me he was being sent out of town for three weeks, I felt my flesh crawl. Three weeks alone in the house with that little monster! Could I stand it?

WITHIN the first week, Junior's attitude began to become more terrifying. We clashed frequently, and with greater ferocity each passing day. My nerves were constantly ajangle.

JUNIOR was now openly hostile.

"WHY don't you disappear?" he shrieked at the peak of one of our most heated quarrels. "Why don't you go away?"

MY little remaining control left me. Seizing a broom I swung it wildly, sending a row of jars on the table flying into a thousand pieces.

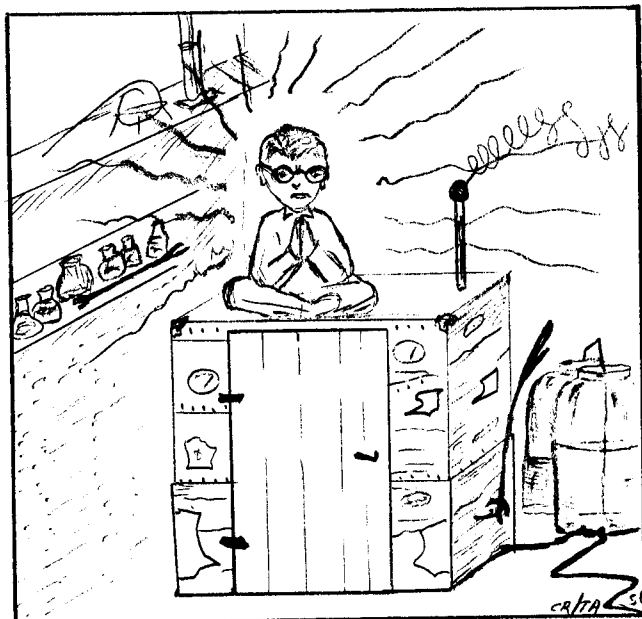
THE sharp jingle of the shattering glass seemed to cut me loose, and I was a mad-woman, trying to wreak all the havoc I could with the things which Junior had so methodically assembled.

HOW long I spent in this destruction, I don't know, but suddenly I stopped short. Junior was clutching my arm, and his eyes were like pin-points of flame.

"I'LL get rid of you," he screamed. "This is the end of your bothering me. I'll lose you for good!"

HE pulled at my arm, and I seemed powerless to resist, as he half-dragged, half-led me toward the weird box-gadget in his room. I could not fight him! I had all my senses, but he seemed to hold me under a spell with his fiendish, hate-filled eyes.

HE made a sudden move, and I was shoved into an opening in the side of the box he called Time Machine. The panel closed.



"AWAY!" I could hear Junior's voice, so distorted with rage as to be almost unrecognizable. "This time machine will lose you forever! You'll never be able to come back here!"

SUDDENLY I saw a flash of light, and I felt my body almost bent double as the bolt of current struck me! And then blackness closed over me. . .

I awoke.

MY body felt worn, as though I had traveled a million miles, and my head pounded. What had happened to me?

WITH all my remaining strength I shoved at the door panel of the rudely constructed box, and found myself back in Junior's bed-room.

JUNIOR stood in the center of the room, before a switch. For a stunned second he stared at me unbelievably and then his face seemed to crumble.

HIS lips trembled. "It didn't work," he almost blubbered and then he threw himself on the rug and began to sob hysterically. His fists pounded the floor in fury.

I watched in amazement, still weak from the shock of my experience. I don't know how long I stood watching Junior, knowing he had tried to get rid of me. Would he try again? Would he succeed next time?

SLOWLY - almost without volition - I picked up a heavy wrench from the table and swung it one time.

I was safe now - for the time being at least.

I was still here, but Junior was gone - for ever!

-0 o 0-

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The Readers' Department

Wherein the Editors have

The Last Word

The response to the first issue of **SPHERE** has indeed been most gratifying. If the present flood of letters is any indication, this department might well develop into one of great size.

Appropriately enough first came "A" as in Asimov. Isaac, that is.

Isaac Asimov who writes from Massachusetts: "Thank you very much for the first **SPHERE**. I hope there will be many more in the future. The reminders of the NYCon were delightful to me, and Glasser's two S-F Alphabets were, in a way, painful. You see, I remember the significance of the allusions in the earlier one. I am proud to head the list in the '56 version. Hope I hang around to hog the '80 version also. My wife and I met Miss Val Anjoorian some time ago, she is a most charming young lady and writes a nice article....."

Thanks for your views, we too have been around long enough to enjoy the full significance of Allen's first Alphabet, you shouldn't have any difficulties in maintaining your position, you've been in our Top Ten S-F Hit Parade for a very long time now.

From Brooklyn comes Allen Glasser's card of Holiday-Cheer saying briefly, and we think very thoughtfully:..... "Thanks for **SPHERE!**.....
.....It reads good-----Like a Fanzine should!....."

Big, bold letters spelled out Weyauwega, Wis., as a return address, so we were happy to hear from Robert Bloch: "Glad to get the first issue of **SPHERE**, sorry to report, however, it arrived exactly one day after I'd completed my review column for **FANDORA'S BOX** and mailed out. Next column is not due until the end of February and wont see print until June---so I think I will wait and review the most recent issue available, next time around.
.....a very nice job, and I'm happy to see Ackerman's article gracing your pages. All the best with your project for the coming year!"

Thanks, Bob, for your thoughtful consideration and good wishes. All this coming from another long-standing top-flight author like yourself makes the complimentary bouquet even brighter. What would be your answer if we asked you for a short story or an article for some future issue?

A most encouraging letter came from one fan containing a three-year subscription. Mrs. Lee Sirat from Springfield, Virginia writes: --".....What a warm and welcome surprise to receive the promised issue of your Fanzine.....
.....Val (My Sibling) had written me that she had composed the deathless piece titled 'Through Bloodshot Eyes' for the venture, and I looked forward eagerly to devouring same, as she hoards the making of a quite talented and expressive authoress----is already a most accomplished raconteur...."

Mrs. Lee Sirat continues:

"But the effects of the Newyorkon must have still been with her (I mean the no-sleep effects ((Of Course))-) or, else I got whisked down out of Cloud #9 somewhere in the precise narrative of what followed what.....so actually to my complete delight at its unexpectedness, I was very much touched by the last entry, by another one of us wide-eyed first-time convention goers....." ((Yes, we placed it last, it was titled "First", for those who may have missed our first issue. We too, considered it a beautiful bit of impressionistic writing. She also penned the unique word-picture poem: "The Creatures and It" on Page -5- last issue.)) The letter continues:....."....." who writes in the sensitive impressionistic vein, again stirs old gentle memories. I should like to meet the author. ((And of course you did at the Newyorkon, but we'll never reveal her identity, that you must figure out for yourself---shouldn't be too difficult, there were three clues---so)) Enclosed is my check for \$3 to cover subscription to SPHERE for three years. OK? ((OK!)) Keep the issues coming. Thanks for an awfully wonderful time at the Newyorkon....."

A great big THANKS to you, My Fair Lady, you write a very enjoyable letter, and when we get ones like yours, plus a three-year sub----well we are very happy, and we shall spend the next three years telling you as well as others who have shown interest in SPHERE, just how appreciative we are as we prepare each new issue for you---O.K.?

Now we have an encouraging letter from Ed Chamberlain....."Hope I can get my werewolf story to you in time for your next issue....." and he sends along a swell set of pics taken at the last World Con. Thanks Ed, will try to answer your letter direct after this issue goes to press.

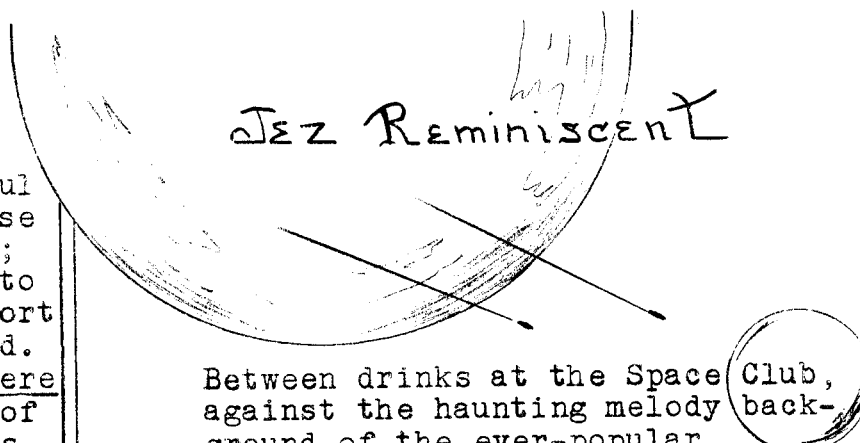
From The BERGEN EVENING RECORD and Hackensack, N.J. comes a pleasant letter from Gerry de la Ree, fan of long-standing....."Thanks for first issue of SPHERE. Please note you sent it to my old address in Westwood. Haven't lived there for eight years! I enjoyed reading your views on the recent convention in New York. It was the first favorable review I've come across. Most fans seem to have felt it was a poorly run affair with a dull program. Best of luck to your publication!....."

Thanks for your views, Gerry, and especially for your swell article in this issue. Let us hear from you regularly. Next we have Leslyn Mocabee who writes a charming letter from Stockton, Calif.

....."I like very much the beautiful new fanmag, SPHERE, which just arrived. 4e Ackerman probably gave you my name as 4e & Ray Bradbury are my two 'adopted sons'. Since I have been crippled and houseridden for the past 7 years, they keep "mama" informed of the Big Wide Wonderful World on the outside of this bedroom.....I think your fanmag is elegant, with a capital E. It's wit and scope is mature----'mirabile dictu', for a fanzine!!! The S-F Alphabets of 1933 and 1956 were very clever----and----very nostalgic."Someday I shall write a definitive History of Science Fiction----- a job for 4e perhaps, yet he shouldn't, because he is too much a vital part of the mechanics of that history to see the woods for the trees. I may have to wait another ten years to get a sufficiently unbiassed view of one of its central figures.....I do long for some of the old friends and intimates of my former 'incarnation'. Fanmags are my 'crystal ball'((Then SPHERE should have a double symbolism, Leslyn, right?))....How 'bout an illustrated page showing that pair of costumes that 4e described in the first issue? It's about time fanzine illustrations went photographic for a change, instead of 'stylized copies' of pro mag drawings. Best wishes for many future issues....."

THE LAST WORD (Continued.)

Jez Reminiscent



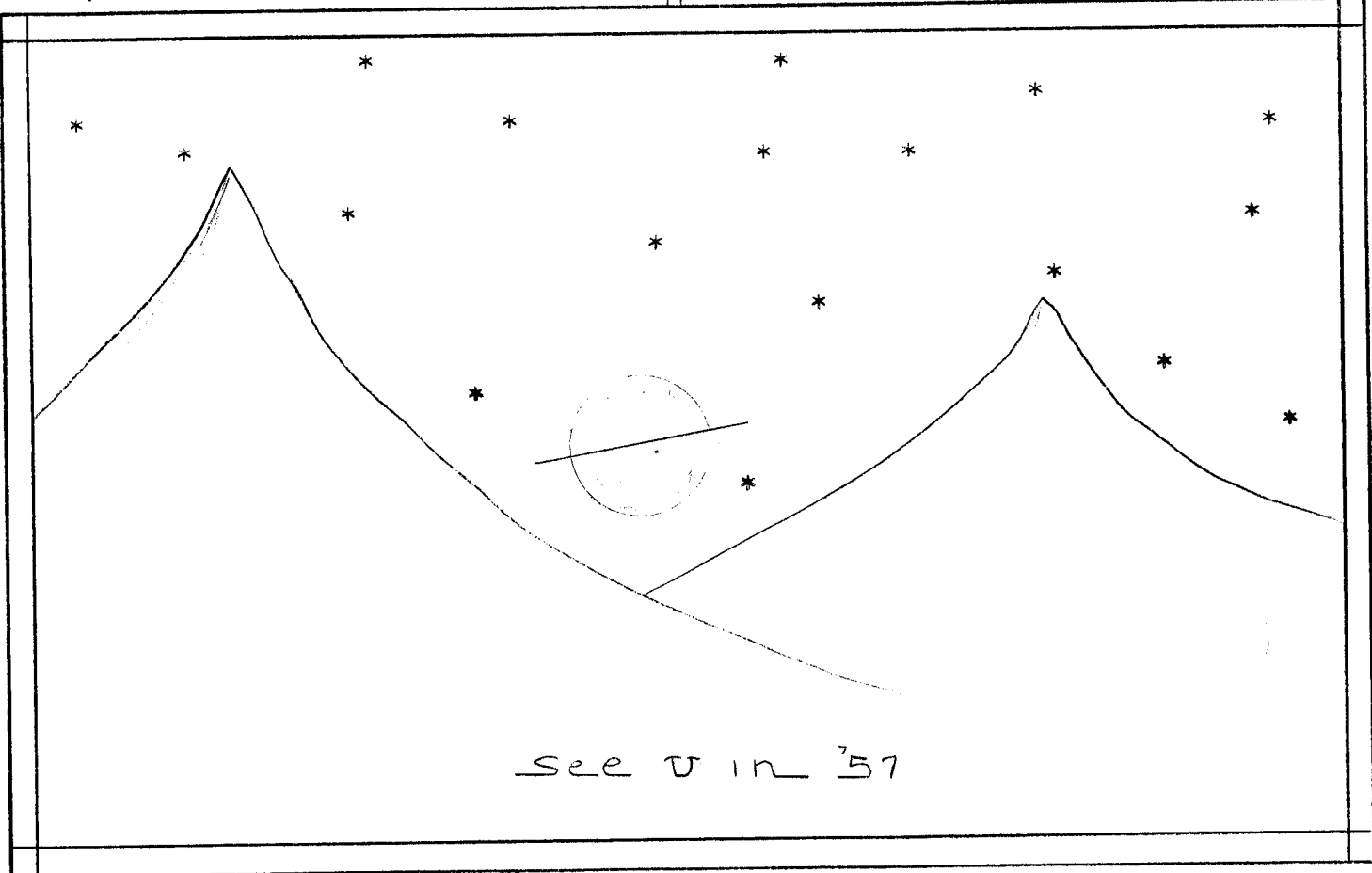
Thanks, Leslyn, for your thoughtful letter. Your suggestion for the use of photographs is a very good one; this we have made plans to adopt to some degree at least, within a short time. Tony Allen, our staff art Ed. is trying now, (See Classified Sphere this issue.) to get a special set of pics taken at the last, as well as previous Conventions.

Let us hear again from you soon, and you may as well send us that short, short-story, or article----the mind that dreamed up the title for the deathless: "Methuselah's Children", should not wait any longer to hit the fan press with a big, pent-up bang! O.K.?

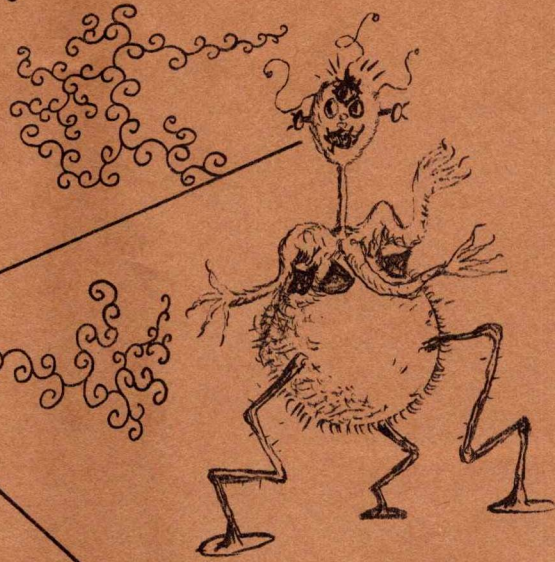
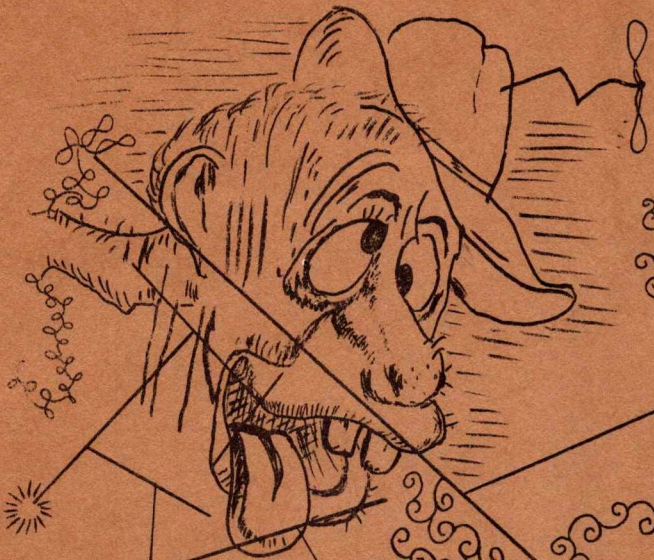
Space does not permit any more letters this time. But we promise to answer as many as possible direct that are not reprinted in this department. Your views are appreciated, so let us have them. -Editors.

Between drinks at the Space Club, against the haunting melody background of the ever-popular "Carry Me Back to Old Uranus", we usually hear a few priceless bits of conversation. Some, you couldn't print, of course, even if you could translate it. Like the one we heard the goodlooking Martian gal telling her friend from Neptune:

A three-headed triped from Pluto,
Refused to play amorous judo,
With a one-headed wreck
From an Earthship - - cuz heck!
She disliked singularity nude-O!



see U in '57



Lite Fantastic

There was an old Fan named Wright
Who travelled faster than light.
He went off one day,
(In a relative way)
And came back the previous night.

ENCORE

There was a fem fan from Lorraine
Whose fanzine was really quite plain.
But her mag had a streak
That made the fans shriek:
"Again," and "Again", and "A-gain!"
-Joe Fan.

***** WISHING YOU ALL A COOL YULE-----AND A HAPPY NUCLEAR *****
(Reaction.)