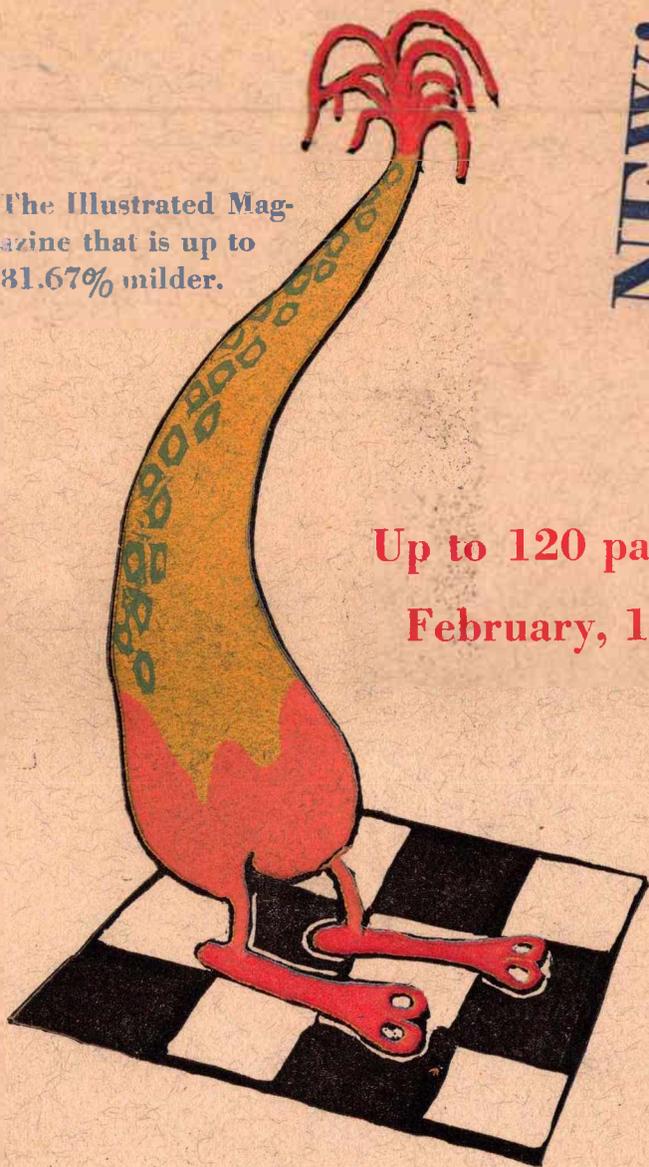


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STEFANTASY

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"Everyone's queer but thee and me, and even thee's a little queer sometimes."

THE FIRST PAGE

"You can fool some of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool some of the people some of the time."
—AMBROSE J. WEEMS

Here is part of a letter to Les Nirenberg, of 1-12-61:

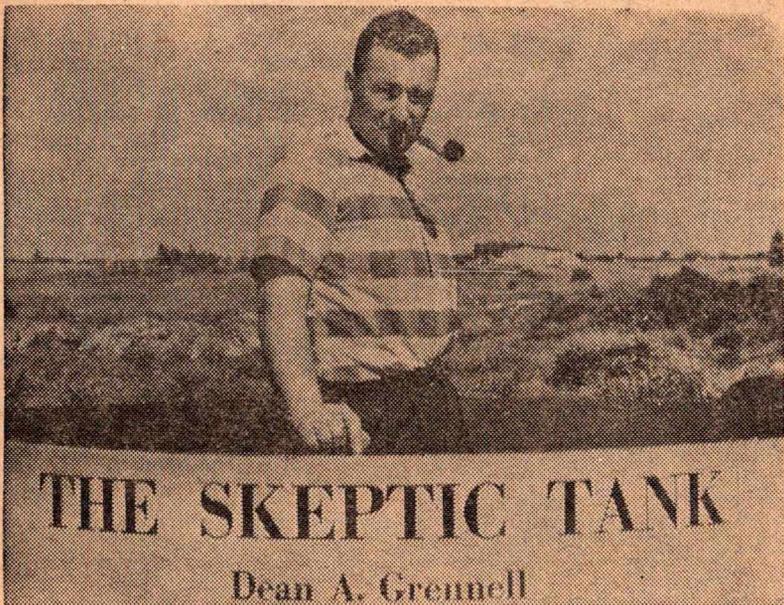
Que Pasada 3 came today. I haven't read it yet, but somebody else has, for the closing staples had been removed before it reached my box.

So far I've had no trouble with the post office, and I don't want any. This is the first indication of any kind that any of my incoming mail has been opened, and I hate to think that from now on any of is likely to be, simply because you feel impelled to put such a childish notice on the outside. Presumably whoever opened it didn't find any of the basest printed matter or of the raw untamed lust advertised on the cover; the hitch is that he's likely to keep trying.

You and a few other fan publishers seem to have the idea that employees of the post office take such notices in the spirit in which they are intended. Possibly a few do, but probably a great many don't, and I must confess I myself think they are pretty silly. In these days of slowly diminishing freedom and slowly expanding censorship it is foolish to invite the attention of censors, whether self-appointed or otherwise. That is the only result of such notices as yours.

If you consider it necessary on any future publications to say anything other than "Printed Matter Only. Return Postage Guaranteed" I hereby request that you remove my name from your mailing list. . . If I seem to you to be all fuggheaded and sercon, well, it's just too damn bad. I enjoy most of the associations I have made in fandom, though I have never considered myself a fan. Such provocations as you and a few others have provided contribute to a gradually-increasing urge to gafiate completely. It is getting easier all the time to understand why so many people have done so.

The invitation drop me is extended to all who indulge on their mailing-wrappers in such childish taunts at admittedly childish (in some cases) postal regulations.



Twelfth Tankful

MANY DEVOUT READERS of *Stefantasy* have asked for current news concerning The Frieda Effect and it is with moderately heavy heart that I must report that it has completely broken down; it is pau, kaput, fini. It doesn't work at all now. In fact, had I but a shade more courage, I might almost theorize that it now works in reverse but I'm not at all sure that I didn't nullify the whole business by writing it up in these pages. If this is the case, it is somewhat of a shame.

I wanted to bet on Nixon in the recent election but Frieda made that fatal mistake so prevalent in betting: she let her sympathies override her financial acumen and, being a rabid Republican, refused to bet on Kennedy. What happened is, of course, history.

It may even be that I ruptured the cosmic tissue that sustained the whole business by making a bet during the Republican convention that was so utterly at odds with the field of chance that even so hitherto reliable a phenomenon as The Frieda Effect could not cope with it. I managed to get a bet down to the effect that Nixon would not be nominated. Had the Effect brought that off, it would have been but a scant few more years until complete Utopia would have been realized although I will allow you to pause for a trice or two and speculate on whether or not you would care for a Utopia shaped by my admittedly capricious whimsy.

Anyhow, now you know. It was fun while it lasted. Hail and Farewell.

A COUPLE OF YEARS OR SO ago my oldest daughter, then in about the seventh grade, asked for help on a question in her homework. "Are measurements always exact or only approximate?" was about the way it was worded.

I immediately perceived that this was some sort of a trap question and after no more than a trifle of thought on the matter I explained that all measurements were precise only to a relative degree.

I suppose my entire technical background, such as it is, set me up for the answer I gave but as a sometime machinist, photographer, heating engineer, ballistic researcher and what-not, I am quite accustomed to working within prescribed tolerances and margins of permissible variation. It is true that, in some instances, the margin of error is so thin that it might well pass as dead precision among people accustomed to more charitable tolerances, but . . .

I told her how blueprints and shop drawings for machine parts are customarily done with a dimension set down and an

allowable variation specified. The diameter of a shaft might, for instance, be written: $1.026'' +.001''$, $-.0015''$, which would be taken by the machinist to mean that if he got the diameter of the shaft anywhere between $1\frac{1}{2}$ thousandths of an inch undersize and one thousandth oversize, it would still get by the inspector.

I dug out my micrometer and showed her how easy it is to split inches up into thousandths and even ten-thousandths. We miked the diameter of a hair, a sheet of paper, and a few things like that and I pointed out that even here we were only measuring the approximate thickness since neither hair nor paper is exactly uniform in thickness and we were only taking the average thickness over the quarter-inch circle spanned by the jaws of the micrometer. Also, that in measuring anything, the instrument inevitably compresses it by some slight amount and thus indicates a trifle less dimension than it has when not under stress.

I then showed her how things get bigger as they grow warmer and smaller as they cool and pointed out that no matter how accurately you measure something, the moment the temperature changed by so much as a thin part of a degree, it would be longer, shorter, wider, narrower or whatever.

Then we took up the matter of measuring weight and found that matters were, if anything, worse. I got out my trusty Redding powder scale, set it to balance with a scrap of paper in the pan, took it off and had her write her name on the paper with a soft lead pencil, put it back on the scale and showed her that even so impalpable a thing as her signature contained something like a tenth of a grain of graphite. I pointed out that there are 7000 grains to the pound so that her name, written in soft lead pencil, weighed about $\frac{1}{70,000}$ th of a pound but again I stressed that even here, it was only

approximately a tenth of a grain and if we had a really good scale, we might find that it wasn't really a tenth of a grain but more like $\frac{11}{100}$ ths or perhaps $\frac{99}{1000}$ ths of a grain and even then a scale, even more fantastically accurate might show that it was $\frac{1078}{10,000}$ ths of a grain and so on and still, no matter how good a scale we weighed it on, we could never be certain that an instrument even more sensitive would not show that our last weight was still off by a little.

Further on weights, I pointed out that weight is actually nothing but an expression of the relative force with which a given object is drawn toward the center of the earth . . . or, rather, I amended, the force with which they are attracted toward each other. I said that it is a well-known fact that the attraction of gravity diminishes as the object to be weighed gets farther from the center of the earth so, therefore, any given object might be expected to weigh less on a mountain top than in a valley a mile or so away and, since this is a fairly constant variation, subject to conditions I would shortly describe, it would be reasonable to theorize that even a change in elevation so slight as a thousandth of an inch would affect the weight by a very minute amount.

And then I told her how, since everything we encounter is immersed in a sea of air and since air has weight—the earth's atmosphere is generally estimated to weigh several quintillion pounds—it follows that objects immersed in air are buoyed up to an extent equal to the weight of the air they displace; just as objects immersed in water are reduced in weight equal to the weight of the same volume of water. We had previously discussed Archimedes and the bathtub so she grasped this without too much trouble.

Then I explained about centrifugal force and showed her, on a globe, how things near the equator were subject to more

of this than the same thing would be at either pole. I explained how, if all other conditions were uniform, the weight would vary with latitude and how, if something were moved even a millionth of an inch farther south, [in the northern hemisphere] it would still be infinitesimally lighter than it had been.

I explained that the earth's crust is by no means homogeneous and how the presence of really large masses of different minerals below the surface could cause variation in gravitic attraction over a wide area, even to causing slight shifts in the apparent center of gravity.

With these facts in hand, I was ready to explain that it is very nearly impossible if not completely impossible to ever state the weight of anything with complete, million-decimal accuracy.

I pointed out that there are certain standard measures of length, weight, etc., lovingly stored in various parts of the world and that only these can be said to be really accurate and even the accuracy of these is of a statutory, not physical nature. The standard pound weighs a pound only because we say it is a pound, etc. I explained how the standard pound is kept at a carefully controlled uniform temperature, rarely touched and then very gently with padded tongs for purposes of comparing it with other weights which are then used to compare with still other weights, etc.

Even the standard pound, I said, varies ever so slightly in weight with variations in air-pressure due to the displacement variable. It also varies slightly due to shifts in latitude caused by the imperceptible movement of the continental land mass and, conceivably, since each particle of matter attracts each other particle in the universe, if an airliner were to fly over the Bureau of Standards as the weight of the standard

pound was being checked, the attraction between the pound and the aircraft might cause the pound to weigh a shade light if that particular variation was not offset, nullified or augmented by one of the other dozens of variables.

I was, by this time, no more than getting well warmed up to my topic but I could tell by the light glaze on Pat's eyes that I had exceeded her attention span. It was quite a large gulp of philosophy and theory for a seventh-grader to swallow.

"Then measurements really are only approximate and seldom, if ever, exact?" she asked.

"I think you could say that," I told her. "In fact, that's about the only way the question could be answered, don't you think so?"

She agreed and wrote down "Only approximate," which I considered a masterly summation of the lecture.

Next evening she came home somewhat perturbed. "Miss Bray marked that wrong," she said. "You know what she said?"

I told her I would be interested to hear.

"She said measurements were always exact, otherwise how could they build houses? And I was the only kid in class that had that one wrong and everybody laughed at me."

Q. E. D. A little learning is, after all, a dangerous thing.

Especially if it should fall into the hands of a teacher. I could, I suppose, devote every single one of these despumations to comments on the gentle, benign wisdom of those self-admittedly superior beings whose high calling it is to gently mould and shape the minds of the nation's young. However, self-discipline compels me to do it no oftener than every fourth or fifth time. Too much pleasure isn't good for a person.

Exit, muttering darkly—DEAN A. GRENNELL

Matt O'Leahy, psidick, in the case of the old man who played with dolls . . .

TIME PAD

by Rod Goulash

MATT STARTED TO LEAN ACROSS THE table toward the girl and the end of his tie dipped into his coffee. Absently he removed it and wrung it out in his napkin, then shoved the cup aside. Now he leaned over again.

"I don't do it for a living, Betty," he said.

Betty Miaskovski idly twirled and untwirled a strand of her greenish-yellow hair around her right forefinger. Under the table, with both shoes off, she was gently rubbing her right instep with her left great toe. She happened to glance out the window and saw a brown dachshund walking a man on a leash. "I realize that, Matt."

Matt leaned back in his chair. He found that by moving his head just a little to the left he could line up one whole row of ceiling lights with his right eye. He noted that all the glass globes of the fixtures were full of dead flies. "What's your problem?"

Betty switched from rubbing her right instep with her left great toe to rubbing her left instep with her right great toe. She saw a man at the cashier's window who looked just

like a man who had almost run her down with a motorcycle in Grassville before she had come to the city two years before. "My father plays with dolls, Matt."

"Grassville's a nice little town, Betty."

Betty was working her feet back into her shoes. "Yes, but I don't live there any more." Her right foot refused to enter the shoe and she tapped on the table with the fingers of her left hand, frowning in annoyance. Then the shoe slipped on and she smiled in relief. "What were we talking about, Matt?"

Matt O'Leahy rolled a cigarette round and round between his forefingers and thumbs. After a bit the tobacco started to dribble out the ends and the cigarette went all to pieces. He took out another one and started rolling it. He happened to glance through the glass door into the kitchen of the restaurant and notice that a fire had broken out there. "I don't quite know, but I see a fire has broken out in the kitchen, so maybe we'd better leave. And have you noticed that those light-globes

are all full of dead flies?"

Swiftly they walked to the cashier's window and paid their checks, then left the place. Looking back, Matt noticed that the fire appeared to be out, but they had finished their luncheon. "Wasn't there something you wanted to tell me, Betty?"

As they walked toward Betty's apartment she kept her head down in order to watch the pavement and avoid stepping on cracks. She saw a big black ant and was about to step on it when it scuttled into a crack and was saved. "Why, yes. Now, let me see—Oh! My father steps on—no, that isn't right! My father plays with dolls."

"Hmmm." Matt glanced across the street and saw a couple of little girls on roller skates pulling a toy wagon loaded with what appeared to be bars of gold bullion. One of the little girls was licking a big lollypop with great relish. "That's serious. I haven't run across a case like that since the forty's. But I told you I'm only a psidick as a hobby, didn't I?"

Betty was so preoccupied with watching the pavement that she walked past the entrance of her apartment building, and Matt went along with her. "Yes," she said thoughtfully.

"I think we've walked past the entrance of your apartment building, Betty." He noticed how preoccupied she was and didn't want to startle her with the idea that had occurred to him so he looked around and saw a funeral coming down the street. Oddly enough, it consisted entirely of horse-drawn carriages, a

sight he hadn't seen since the early twenty's. He wondered if the pale man riding beside the driver of the hearse could be Aaron Burr.

Betty interrupted his meditations. "Yes."

"Yes?" Matt cudgeled his brain. "Yes, what?"

She stopped and turned around. "We seem to have walked right past the entrance to my apartment building. Let's go back." She started to walk and he accompanied her, falling into her habit of avoiding cracks. "Don't let us pass it again."

He watched the buildings as they passed; it was an excuse to put off asking the question he must ask her. But soon the apartment-building entrance showed up and he steered her into it. Inside the door he stopped her with a hand on her arm, pricking his middle finger on a spanish needle embedded in the rough wool of her coat. "Your coat needs combing."

She mused that she was a pretty good detective herself. It couldn't be to tell her that her coat needed combing that he had stopped her, because he didn't prick his finger until *after* he had stopped her. "Yes, but didn't you want to ask me something?"

Matt looked all around, but the lobby was a pretty bare sort of place and he could see nothing to help put off the question any longer. He noticed something in one of the long row of mail-boxes that looked like a hand-grenade, but this didn't seem a good time for talking about hand-grenades. "Who'll get the fortune your mother left you if—if any—"

He hesitated, at a loss for words.

Betty looked at him compassionately. "You mean if I kick the bucket?"

Matt was thinking furiously, but apparently this was the time to get it over with. "Yes."

Betty walked over to the mail-boxes and, producing a key, opened the one containing the hand-grenade. She took it out and examined it carefully, rubbing her right forefinger over its knobby surface. "Funny—it looks just like the one father keeps in the glove compartment of his car."

Matt felt an awful apprehension. He saw the elevator was at the tenth floor, the one on which Betty lived. "Come!" and he jabbed his finger again. He dragged her to the elevator and pressed the "DOWN" stud. Anxiously he watched the indicator but nothing happened. "Come!" and he grabbed her other arm and dragged her to the stairs. "We must get right up to your apartment. I'm afraid something is going on there!"

Hand in hand they sped up the ten flights of stairs. At the second-floor landing Matt looked out the window and noticed a vulture perched on the sill and watching them intently with beady eyes. At the third-floor landing Betty happened to notice a woman plummeting head over heels from somewhere above. "Look!" But when Matt looked the woman was out of sight. After that they were too intent upon climbing to look out windows. Finally they arrived at apartment 1066 a little out of breath and Matt shoved Betty back. "Let me go first."

He twisted the knob and shoved on the door with his shoulder, but it was locked so he had to let Betty use her key to unlock it. This time when he tried it the door opened easily and he preceded her in. Across the room, at a desk by a window, an old man sat staring preoccupiedly at something in his hands. Matt saw at once that it was a crude-looking doll and that the man was

about to thrust a large hatpin into the region of its heart. He dashed madly toward the man. "Stop! Don't do it!"

But he was too late. The pin was thrust home and Matt crumpled to the floor, dead.

The old man looked toward the doorway and saw Betty standing just outside. "Well, girl, step in and close the door. Or close it from the outside as you leave. Don't just stand there gawping."

Betty stepped in and shut the door. She saw Matt laying all crumpled on the floor, apparent victim of a heart-attack. She was still panting slightly. "I'm out of breath."

Her father toyed with another doll on the desk. "I noticed that. Did the two of you climb the stairs all the way?"

Betty noticed a peculiar expression on his face. She began to wonder if he had evil designs on the fortune her mother had left her. Her feet hurt so she sat down and took off her shoes and began to rub her right instep with her left great toe. "Yes."

"Meddling fool! He won't poke his nose in other people's business again!"

Betty began to rub her left instep with her right great toe. She noticed the doll her father was toying with at the desk and wondered why it was vaguely familiar. "That's why I brought him here."

Her father looked out the window and noticed a starling flying an eagle on a leash. "It doesn't matter now. He just had a heart-attack from all that climbing. And so did you!" He thrust the hatpin through the heart of the doll he was holding and Betty crumpled to the floor beside Matt.

The old man threw both dolls in the open fire in the fireplace and watched them while they were completely consumed. He noticed fascinating pictures in the flames—dollar-marks and big cars and yachts. Finally he returned to his desk. "Now I can call the cops."



POETRY PAGE

"And did not the philosophic Coleridge say that the object of poetry was 'delight?'"—W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Extempore

Jingle bells on radio, on TV, in the movie show!
Jesus Christ, and glad new Year!
Happy, joyous atmosphere!
Peace on Earth, and plenty of it—
How the manufacturers love it!
Replicas of bombs for Sonnie,
Android dolls for Sister Sue,
C.O.D.—it costs no money—
In the store, no bills fall due.

Now the Season's safe behind us,
Now the year is '61.
Christmas '60's dead as Marley—
Lock your mailbox, everyone!

Jingle bells on telephone, in the mailbox and at home!
Here's collection, come a-courting,
Here's the process-server now!
Jolly elf, with eyes a-twinkle,
Somewhat drabber than Kris Kringle,
Somewhat less benign, I fear—
Down the chimney, come a-serving;
Jesus Christ, and glad New Year!

—A. J. BUDRYS

AS HE LEFT restaurant there was a cessation of noise—not only of the mingled loud conversation but also of the clatter of dishes and cutlery. It was very odd, he thought, but there was no time to investigate; he must be on his way again.

“But *how* I’d like just a couple hours sleep!” he mumbled as he cranked the ancient engine and got behind the wheel. “Who ever thought up this idea, anyway? And how’d I get mixed up in it?”

The square-cut gears were slow and noisy, but once he got into high the old Lozier really performed very well. As it ate up the miles he began to recapture some of the thrill he had felt at the start of the race. When he rounded a curve in the strangely deserted highway and saw the Mercer ahead, his heart speeded up along with the engine as he gradually drew closer. The road—the beautiful four-lane concrete highway—was empty as far as he could see except for Buz’ Mercer and his own Lozier. Opening the throttle wide he swung far to the left and passed Buz with the cutout roaring.

As he settled down to overtake the Stutz he fell into a reverie, driving automatically. He knew the road perfectly, having driven it often in his ’49 Packards, but he had never seen it so completely deserted before. Once or twice as he mused he nearly went to sleep, then woke with a start and a shudder at thought of the possible consequences. In one of these periods of semi-consciousness he thought he heard voices.

“*Put those things away and go to bed at once, do you hear?*”

“*Aw, just a little longer. I—*”

A sort of echo of his childhood, he supposed, when the shiny Lozier across the street had been his first love. The first

voice was like his mother's, which he could still recall after over twenty years. But, he reminded himself sharply, he had better stop dreaming, and *now*.

"Where the hell's that Bearcat?" he muttered, thinking that talking to himself might help him to stay awake. "Should have caught up with him before this. Don't these other birds ever have to eat, or what?"

He came upon the Bearcat suddenly. It was pulled over on the berm and the driver—Raeburn, was it?—was changing a tire and, most likely, swearing a blue streak. He blew a long blast on the Klaxon as he roared past, but the other did not even look up.

"Two down," he mumbled, "and three to go." While in the restaurant he had heard five of the other cars go by and automatically noted the make of each one by its characteristic sound. "The next one ought to be the Stanley. Burb seems to be doing pretty well with the old kettle."

Apparently Burb was doing better than that, for the next car he sighted was the Jeffery. It was still going strong but its four cylinders were no match for the Lozier's six big ones. As he swept by he waved at Bill, who merely gripped his wheel harder and nearly bit through the stem of a cold pipe.

"Never would have gotten ahead at all," he muttered, "if I hadn't stopped to eat. Christ, those other guys must all be starving!"

Finally he spotted the Stanley going at a crawl though the road here was level. As he approached he saw Burb pull on the handbrake and reach for the water-hose.

"Ha! Knew he'd have to stop for water before long. Hope the stuff in that creek isn't too hard on the boiler. . . Let's see . . . only one left now is the Pierce. He shouldn't be too far ahead."

He settled down once more to the monotonous grind, absently wondering for the umpteenth time at the total absence of normal traffic. "Must have detoured it all, I suppose. But nobody said anything about it, and it seems funny to close *this* road.

There was a sudden loud swishing from his left rear tire. He closed the throttle and braked hard, bringing the car to a stop on the berm before all the air had escaped.

"There goes the race," he mumbled, while reflecting that at least all that expensive rubber wouldn't be ruined. Then fatigue finally overcame him. He rested his head on his arms, which were still gripping the wheel. "Just for a moment," he promised himself, "then I'll change that goddam tire and get on with it. Might still get in before the Overland, I guess."

As he drifted off he heard the voices again.

"I told you to go to bed ten minutes ago!"

"Aw, gee! Just another—"

"Not another second! To bed with you now! Get!"

He woke suddenly as a minor quake shook the earth. As he quickly got out another, heavier shock split the road and the ground as far as he could see, and tilted up the two sections at a sharp angle. The Lozier slid into the V which then tilted from another quake and dropped the car out of sight into some sort of dim abyss. There was a muffled, long-drawn-out series of crashes, as of the great-grandfather of all collisions. He managed to hang on for a moment to some shrubs along the road, but they broke and he went plummeting after the car. Just before losing consciousness he heard the voices for the last time.

"Put that game away at once!"

"It is, mom. But, gosh—"

"Not another word, now. Up to bed with you!"

The Feather Bed

Reprinted from *The WILLIAM FEATHER Magazine*

One phase of an actor's routine that I would detest is the everlasting changing of clothes. Even as a common citizen, playing an ordinary role in life, I sometimes envy the beachcombers who have reduced their wardrobes to a pair of pants, a shirt, and tennis shoes.

To get in and out of a gray flannel suit or its equivalent every working day, and to switch to pajamas, lounging clothes, walking clothes and dinner clothes, are chores which, like shaving, are a nuisance. It should be restricted to, and borne only by, those of royal blood. Whatever modern royalty gets out of life is earned, I say.

Elapsed time between the initial contemplation and final execution of the task of clearing out desk drawers and cupboards is usually two years.

As the climax to the dream of a lifetime, a public accountant, a friend of mine, booked himself and his wife on a trip around the world on a slow boat with seventy passengers aboard. From his published report, I judge that topmost in his memory are dysentery, putrid human odors, lying sick abed while navigating the Suez, Nasser's censorship, poor air-mail service, overpopulation in the Far East, and deep despair of the future of mankind.

I confess that such a thought [that we are owned by the past] would have been violently repudiated by me when I was thirty years of age, even when I was forty. I assumed my generation had ample time to remake the world. Now I say, with Anatole France, where did all that time go?

If I ever had any doubt about the competence of people to manage their government, I fear my doubt would be strengthened by the mess so many people make of their own lives.

As examples I am choosing blunders in addressing letters, and failure to follow instructions when competing in box-top contests.

The dead-letter statistics—undeliverable mail—are shocking. Daily, in every large city, hundreds of letters are mailed without any return address on the envelope, to persons unknown at the address given, to addresses such as 'two houses east of Prospect on Main St.,' and to cities without a designation of states, or states without a designation of city. Such ill-

directed envelopes often contain cash with a note reading 'This is all I can spare.' The unclaimed money, perforce, goes to reduce the post office deficit.

So shiftless are contestants in prize contests that three-fourths of the thousands of entries are sometimes discarded before the judging begins.

I have never seen a report from an election board on the markings of ballots, but the errors must be awesome. Probably hundreds of thousands of specific votes are ruled out in the counting.

How come? What can be done about it? Are people incurably stupid and irresponsible?

The answer is yes, although in public affairs it doesn't make much difference. The vote of one moron is offset by that of another. In personal affairs, the consequences of carelessness and ignorance are tragic, pitiful, tearful.

The sponsors of some radio programs seem to think that all the listeners are irregular, thirsty, broke, smelly, arthritic, or hungry.

What puzzles me is how people can be so gullible [as to enrich such quacks as John R. Brinkley]. The best explanation is the one offered by William Allen White, the great Kansas editor.

White said: 'In every civilization there is a moronic underworld which cannot be civilized. (About twenty percent of the population is permanently gullible.) It can be taught to read and write, but not to think, and it lives upon the level of its emotions and prejudices.'

These are solemn words, especially distasteful to those of us who want democracy to work. Considering the nitwits who respond automatically to demagoguery and quackery, the wonder is that things turn out as well as they do.

You say hello and first thing you know you are in trouble.

Even among men and women who write for a living and are used to seeing their words in print, it is the universal experience that their writings seem more interesting or more important or more significant after getting into type.

It is difficult to explain this influence of print, but it exists. It is not too strong a statement to say that the average man and woman, without realizing it, is in large measure a slave of print. We little realize how many of our notions we get from print, and how uncritically we accept them.

Book Review

ROGUE MOON, by *Algis Budrys*; 176 pages; *Gold Medal Books*: 35¢

I read novels for entertainment, and once in a while I run across one I know I shall want to read again someday. Most of these are science fiction or fantasy of a sort and this is one of them. A. J. asked me to wait for the complete version rather than read the abridged one in *F&SF*; I am glad I did, for in common with most present-day novels even the complete version is too short. But reading tastes change and, while I don't advocate a return to the two-volume novels of the past, the trend now has gone too far the other way.

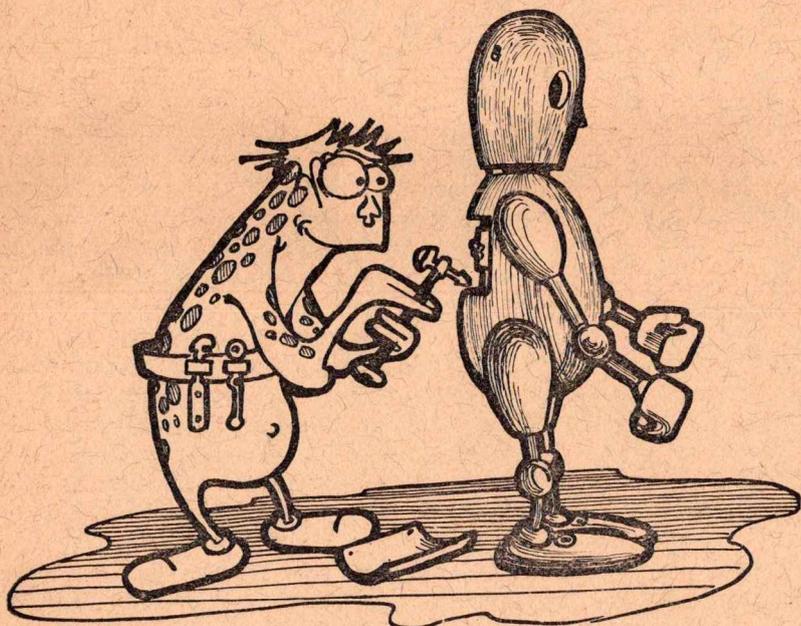
Sadly enough, the best-written science fiction is often pretty shaky in the science department, so that I find myself muttering uncomplimentary four-letter words as I read. This book occasioned no muttering at all, and the only statement that lifted an eyebrow is that made by Hawks on page 171: "Then we'll either have to pressurize the entire chamber or learn to design electronic components that'll work in a vacuum. And if you think that's not a problem, you're wrong." I couldn't see the problem, but A. J. told me an electronics manufacturer assured him there is one, so I stand corrected, though the problem is one of materials rather than of function.

The basic premise of the book—a matter transmitter that is also a matter duplicator—is probably one of the hardest sf ideas to swallow. But once it is accepted (and sf addicts are accustomed to such feats) this turns out to be the best-presented and most-nearly-believable matter transmitter yet. And I'm happy to say that it isn't operated by touching and/or pressing a bunch of studs.

A. J. says, in a letter: "I write my books in my head . . . and carry them around for years, rewriting, once in a while trying out a scene or two on paper, before I commit them to typescript, which I do just once. Much of this is conscious, but the fine detail—the stuff that will enable the reader to make contact with the book, but which is unessential to me—is generated in the back of my head, so that I'm constantly giving myself a string of interesting surprises as I plough along through the manuscript. By the time I get around to writing a book down, I'm so enmeshed in it—it becomes a species of systematic delusion, coloring all my thinking on any subject—there are many things in it which I undoubtedly put there, but which have since drifted out of my Ready File of factual information. I reel it out like a man pulling up a tapeworm, and I, as I, have little connection with it."

I don't know how many novelists work in this manner, but I wish a few more sf authors (especially since A. J. has quit the field) would try it. For "Rogue Moon" is not, like so much current sf, just a bunch of lay-figures and bug-eyed monsters, each assigned a conspicuous quirk so the lip-moving reader can distinguish them one from another. There's not a BEM in it or, for that matter, a villain or a hero or heroine, in the usual sense. It is, instead, the story of a bunch of very real people—even down to such unimportant ones as the man in the general store where Hawks and Elizabeth meet. They are not shoved around arbitrarily by an omnipotent author, but respond naturally to situations which have arisen just as naturally. In other words, "Rogue Moon" is a first-rate novel which happens to have a science fiction theme.

If you've read it I think you'll agree with me; if you haven't read it yet I think you'll enjoy it as much as I did.



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THE LAST PAGE

By W. MILDEW DANNER

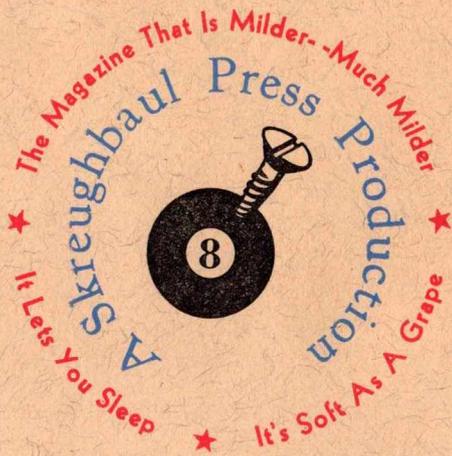
THE LAST PAGE in # 45 had an entirely unexpected repercussion with which I am both surprised and pleased, but more pleased, on the whole, than surprised.

A letter came from Harry Devon, a friend and former neighbor in Mt. Lebanon, saying that he would make up a block for me. Before long it arrived: a piece of $\frac{3}{8}$ " plywood with successive layers of white vinyl, black rubber, stripping fabric and vinyl. Pencil lines transfer to the vinyl very readily, and it cuts easily, especially with the scalpel-sharp engravers' knife, designed by Harry, which he enclosed with the block.

You have already seen on the cover what a bungling amateur can do with this material. At first, because of its resilience, I had a little trouble with narrow parts such as the fronds, but successive cuttings were easier and there is *no* danger of such parts breaking off. Furthermore, because of its resilience and smooth surface, it gives a uniform impression with minimum of pressure and ink.

Do you think Harry was satisfied? Hell, no. He offered to make any zinc etchings I might need, and in thanking him I said I'd take advantage of his offer after redrawing the pressmark. He didn't wait for that; six days later I received a couple hundred offset copies of a beautifully-re-designed letterhead and, subsequently, zinc etchings of the form in two sizes. Some of you have seen the letterhead; the larger of the pressmarks appears across the way.

Harry's first letter came during one of those periods when I wonder if it's really worth the trouble to get out another issue of this thing; except for the more active FAPA members and other amateur publishers it's remarkable how few recipients bother even to acknowledge it. When the block came, of course, I immediately tried it with another one of the Atom color cartoons, and this issue was started. Now Harry tells me he is planning a cover for August, so if I live long enough (if the big BOOM doesn't come) there should be another *Stef* this year. If you're glad just direct some of your thanks to Harry, who is so largely responsible for your having this issue. If you're *not* glad, for chrissake tell me so I can drop you from the list.



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