



tightbeam

TIGHTBEAM

This is Tightbeam, Sept.-Oct., 1970, #63, the letter column of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. Tightbeam is published for the N3F by Gary H. Labowitz 1100 Betzwood Dr., Norristown, Pa. 19401 to whom all letters, manuscripts, and artwork should be sent. A return envelope with sufficient return postage would be appreciated with all non-letter material. Tightbeam is published more-or-less bi-monthly and is distributed free to members of the N3F and for trade of other science fiction fanzines. Persons mentioned in passing are invited to comment, regardless of membership status, if so inclined.

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH:::

As you will note in the Treasurer's report in TNFF (you remember TNFF!) Tightbeam has been for a couple of years now my only activity in fandom which I could therefore afford to support. The times, they are a-changin'. Several things have happened which begin to make Tightbeam more of a chore than a pleasant activity. Firstly, we are having a baby soon, which will turn the ol' pocketbook upsidedown. In addition, I have revived my own fanzine, Canticles from Labowitz, which I really should devote more time to. Thirdly, I have been publishing Tightbeam for some time now and perhaps it's somebody else's turn. Or turns.

There are a couple of possibilities here. First, if there is some person out there who wants to edit TB, and do the stencil cutting I will still be glad to run it off and do the mailing. That's about two days out of the two month's work. Really. Second, perhaps there is someone out there who will do both the editing and publishing as I have done. Third, perhaps it is time to go back to the rotation plan of passing the editorship around to different people each issue. This has been done in the past and worked rather well. All of these plans have one major thing in common: if you are interested write to the President, Stan Woolston (or whomever takes over for next year) and volunteer. That's it. Naturally, if there are several volunteers the one with the most previous experience or known effort will probably be selected but that's a decision for the President. I will probably muddle along here until the relief troops are chosen. So start thinking about it today and if you can do any of those things listed above write in and say so. I am a tired fan, and old and worn out.....

Which brings me to the current issue. I have had what you see here on stencil for some time. Somehow I have bogged down entirely -- not cutting a single stencil for several weeks. Gasp! I said to myself. This cannot go on! The best way out of this seems to be to get what I have on hand out and start on the gala Nov.-Dec. issue right away. It's a whopper. (Takes two hands to read!) The letters on hand are postmarked back to the end of July. That, plus what comes in meanwhile, plus the roster, plus the fanzine checklist (yes, the manuscript bureau has been working), plus whatever else pops up will make the last issue of the year a giant. So, the best thing is to get this issue mailed and on its way. Sorry it wasn't bigger, gang. Even ol' Labowitz gets hung up on the real world occasionally.

Oy, vay! Philcon coming up! Will the demon typoser of Betzwood Dr. get Tightbeam #64 out on time. Tune in next issue.

Keep smiling,



DOUG ROBILLARD

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Jerry Lapidus: Of course Slaughterhouse Five is science fiction! The hero, Billy Pilgrim, had a sort of time-travel; even though he was on the planet Tralfamadore, imprisoned, he could go back for short periods to Dresden and New York City. Vonnegut may not consider this sort of thing sf, but I do.

Instead of having the poll where we write in about our favorite stories from the past ten years, why not take a poll of the favorite authors? You could ask the readers' ten favorite authors and see which place the highest.

This (gasp) "new wave" debate has gone to the point of being ridiculous. Sure, some of the new stuff is bad, but there is some good in it too. Why don't both sides end their disagreement (I hesitate to say "hostilities") and admit that neither is perfect and work together instead of attacking each other? I know this debate is something to talk about in letter columns, but it is getting downright sickening. Let's talk of something other than new wave, okay?

The annual anthologies such as Orbit are really sf magazines in the guise of paperbacks. The stories are original, never before published anywhere. They have an advantage over sf magazines though; most zines stay on sale for a certain length of time, usually about a month. The paperbacks, however, can stay on sale for as long as a year until the dealer takes them off. Paperbacks also have a different distribution plan and reach a wider audience than do the zines. This is one reason the magazines are not doing so well.

//Is Orbit an annual?? ghl//

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

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It was a great treat to receive TB 61 only a few days after it was published. However, I think Tex Cooper is a bit over-enthusiastic in wanting all his copies par avion. TB is certainly interesting, but I'm not sure I would pay 90¢ an issue in postage for it!

//This is indeed a problem. However, those overseas members who are active enough to send letters will continue to get their copies airmailed. The others are presumably content to remain three or four months behind. ghl//

Jerry Lapidus: Charly was through here last month, and (perhaps because I'm not an actor) I thought Robertson wasn't too bad at all. It wasn't a great portrayal, but not nearly as bad as you say; anyhow, what about his Oscar? A note: did you notice that bus ride through Boston University, home base of the Good Dr. A who presented the Hugo for Flowers for Algernon? The long arm of coincidence, or a fannish-minded director?

Redd Boggs: the PO in your country seems to be less efficient than ours (if that's possible), but we have more industrial disputes. The Unions are always having go-slow or work-to-regulations or downright strikes. It's a pity fandom is so dependent on the mails. What about training eagles as giant carrier pigeons to carry fanzines?

Gary Mattingly: I was entrusted with the task of making up an Australian fan registry in 1969, but the task is complicated by some gypsy-like fen who move every few months (or so it seems to me)!

Harry Warner: Australia gets British and American TV shows, so we get to compare. I'd say that the British have more good straight sf (like "Out of the Unknown") than the Yanks. They do have their occasional duds though; some sf series get panned unmercifully. But even the BBC children's series "Dr. Who" abounds with advanced sf concepts; it's about six times as good as "Time Tunnel" ever was.

Darrell Schweitzer: 195 was the last issue of New Worlds I've seen too. I picked up four copies at the Easter Con in Melbourne of fairly recent issues; I think three issues are banned by the Customs in this land of the free. I have a great stack of the old small sized NW that I used to buy off the local newsstand regularly when I was 15 or 16. Must re-read some day.

Since everybody plugs their stuff in TB, I might as well put in my tuppence worth: AUSTRALIA IN '75!! Don't forget to vote for us, fellers; Strinecon!

H. S. WEATHERBY

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Anyone know where we can get a copy of "Mr. Goodjohn and Mr. Badjack?" By Frederick Bradnum, for production by The West Coast Players? Ours is a radio-tape stock company producing a weekly play on tape. We organized just a year ago as an outlet for dramatic talent at Bradenton, Fla. and the initial showcase for plays of mine published in Shivers.

With tonight's production of Aileen Fisher and Olive Rabe's Sci-fi play, "Invasion from the Stratosphere" we plan for drama activity on Robert A. Anderson's "Trouble in Outer Space," Paul T. Nolan's "Tree to the Sky," Richard B. Sheridan's "The Rivals," Elinor R. Alderman's "Anyone for the Moon?" John Murray's "Visitor from Outer Space," Marian L. Miller's "Cry Witch," Claire Boiko's "The Book that Saved the Earth," Wm. Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew," and others.

The West Coast Players feel themselves an integral part of the N3F Tape Bureau. We feel that with today's cinema release there is a growing field for higher type theatre, whether it be shown on stage, television or superior radio-tapes. And we shall try to supply a minute part of that great need.

//The N3F Tape Bureau Catalog shows 27 tapes by the West Coast Players. And that's a lot of work. ghl//

GARY MATTINGLY

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Doug Robillard: F & SF Book Co., (P.O.Box 415, Staten Island, N.Y. 10302) has several back issues of New Worlds. Science Fiction Review #35 has New Worlds subscription information. Also, several best of New Worlds books have been published by Berkley Medallion books.

Rick Sneary: On contact between overseas fans, you might get a list of ham operators and exchange news via that mode. If their range is limited, you could relay from one ham operator to another. If operators had tape recorders available, two could be used to speed up tapes and normal hour tapes in a couple of minutes. Static might present a problem however.

ghl: I started publishing before I even got my hands on equipment and I'm a neo -- not necessarily HOGWASH. Also Art Hayes sent me an introductory zine quite similar to The Neo-Fan's Guide. I don't know if he always does or not, but it was quite informative.

Ed Krieg: Hate to tell you this but I just saw clips from the second planet of the Apes movie. At least that's what I think it was.

//I believe there is now a second sequel planned for "Planet of the Apes." ghl//

Has anyone ever said anything about starting some type of stf and fantasy center, built and supported by fans? It would take time and money to find a location, buy and build on it. Of course that might cut out the pleasure of being able to gripe about the service and the building itself. There are probably architects, electricians, etc. in fandom that might be able to help in one way or another. And it might be interesting to design in stf and fantasy styles. Could use it as a repository for authors' notes and works, films and radio programs, and of course, the new short wave station -- The Voice of Fandom. Many other possibilities. Any comments?

//Two quick quotes from Fancyclopedia: "Midgicon - "Midget Chicon", a gathering of Tucker, Ashley, Liebscher, and other fen of the area at Chicago in the spring of '43; they prowled the bookshops, and at a hotel-room gathering, the idea of Slan Center was first presented."

"Slan Center - A proposal brot up by Ashley at the Midgicon. He suggested it to be located in Battle Creek, but later plans substituted Los Angeles. The idea is to form a corporation and buy a city block on the edge of town after the war, on which will be built prefabricated functional houses for fans to live in while working around the city, and a community house where meeting, mimeoing, &c, can be done; and make purchases cooperatively."

Fancy II tells us: "Up to half a dozen of them have existed at one time [Slan Shacks] such as Tendril Towers (Jacobs & Cox, in LA), The Ivory Birdbath (Youngs & Stark, in Cambridge), Granny's House (Kerkhof and others, in DC) and several others ..." This entry deals with fans living in little groups and identifying themselves as such, rather than just roommates. I'll let the rest of you explain to Gary about LASFS. ghl//

ANDREW PHILLIPS

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Let me suggest you continue to print a ToC like the one you introduced, albeit inadvertently, with #61. It will be especially useful when referring back from replies to letters in later issues.

I disagree rather completely with Jerry Lapidus on the relative merits of The Hobbit and LOTR, in that I was fascinated with the former but got

rather bored with the latter. Tolkein's strength is in detail and micro-rather than macro events. In TH it's the adventure of the journey that's the thing .. at least up until the death of Smaug. Significantly, what comes after that is much inferior in terms of enjoyment to what has gone before. Again, in LOTR it is the adventures-of-a-small-band that provide the most enjoyable parts, and it is the macro-events (battles, court scenes, etc.) that are the weakest. Contributing to the latter is the necessity of providing a capital-M Menace in the latter book, something which Tolkein totally fails to do. In TH Bilbo and Co. didn't so much defeat their enemies as escape from them, something which left the menaces unexploded. The exceptions, such as Tom Bombadil's easy stomp job on the barrow-wight, produce a disconcerting sense of anti-climax.

It is this sense of paper-dragon anti-climax that diminishes the enjoyment of LOTR. With every succeeding example of orcish battle prowess -- or lack of same -- the feeling became stronger that if Sauron couldn't produce any better than those fellows, the Forces of Evil weren't too much of a threat. When Gandalf came back, that was just about the last straw. I read the rest, but it was pretty much of a chore from then on in.

My Pierce tendencies??? What might he mean by that? Merely the fact that we both consider the New Undertow an abomination isn't enough to indicate any real degree of philosophical consanguinity. Jayjay's orientation is primarily conservative moralism and humanism -- he sees NU stories as sick and homophobic (I think). My orientation is almost diametrically opposed -- a sort of amoral hedonism. My objection to the NU is directed to its sacrifice of entertainment and other reader-oriented values to an esthetic morality and "artist"-orientation that I have no sympathy with.

Now, how did I get into that! Oh, well ... just saw in the paper that Vonnegut got \$185,000 for movie rights to Slaughterhouse-Five. Buyer and producer, Paul Nash. Director George Roy Hill. Universal in '71. Maybe I should read the book -- I do remember liking Sirens of Titan in the long ago.

Oh, and thanks to Jerry for answering my question about Ticktockman/Handicapper-General. I still want to know (a) What was the first story in the latter series, and (b) What was that Handicapper-General story in National Review. And I still have this haunting memory of having seen that handicapping idea somewhere else quite a long time ago. Anyone?

George Willick: "What happens when a galaxy does actually recede from a common point with us and we reach a mutual parting speed of light." Can't happen (according to relativity). If you look one way and see an object receding at .6c and look the other way and see an object receding from you at .6c, they are not receding from each other at 1.2c. They are receding from each other at a rate of slightly over .88c. Weird, but apparently true. I'd give you the formula but our friendly local Naz-ghl wouldn't print it.

//Worse yet, I'm not even sure if I should have printed the above. We are about to get embroiled, I fear. The real point was somewhat skipped over so I'll elaborate a bit: From our point of view each galaxy is receding at .6c; from the point of view of an observer in one of those galaxies the other is receding at the .88c figure given above. From any point at varying places outside those galaxies (and moving at various velocities relative to them) we would get various estimates of the speed at which they recede. Confused?? Naz-ghl??? Oh, oh. I'm high flying, alright! ghl//

Particles that move ftl??? Wha?! Not in a vacuum, you don't mean? It would be interesting if we could give some physical meaning to a De Broglie wave ... the wavelength has definite theoretical applications, but the wave itself doesn't. The interesting thing about this "wave" is that its velocity is never less than c, and ranges up to infinity. But, what is it? I certainly don't know.

I wonder what Ed Krieg means when he says "Repent Harlequin... is tied up neatly."

//Look, gang, tell you what. First go to your local libraries and get volume 2 of The World of Mathematics and read the articles on the theory of relativity. Then we can start out about equal. I've got that funny feeling in my stomach that we are about to refigure the theory -- and it's been done already ... a long time ago. ghl//

JOHN ANDREWS

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Rick Snery: The remark about the Establishment can more easily be understood by considering the verb Establish instead. You are right: ancient peoples have legends explaining how things came to be. The modern view just leaves out Gods and Heros and treats of impersonal history. Acts without any simple actors.

People admit that the human world has changed, but try to think of us spectators as the same through the ages. SF stories very often tackle remote time-periods; these stories implicitly face the question: would the personalities of the characters be at all like our own? I referred to one obvious change in outlook. Try another: not until the 17th Century A.D. did men reach an understanding that enabled them to see an Establishment. That was when the "innate ideas" doctrine collapsed under the attack of John Locke.

Before, each child came pre-equipped with states of mind to support the social order (so it was implicitly held). Under the newer view, the world trembles on the verge of dissolution with each childbirth.

Stf "probability world" stories provide easy descriptions of these ideas. If everything in history could have been changed by trivial acts of a fictional time-traveller, then our present is arbitrary and provisional. Such an arbitrary world corresponds to the "Establishment" concept. The time-traveller acts in a way foreign to the mythical stories of gods and heros. Foreign in two senses: first, acting anonymously without grandeur; second, (some stories) consciously selecting and interfering against the results he himself sprang from.

Esperanto must be useful -- a number of people are using it. Please, when colleges drop the foreign language requirements, then bring up the question of "unnecessary effort," not before.

I have seen a short sf film shot by the Department of Cinema, U. Calif. at L.A. A man with a numbered forehead runs through a giant technical center like a rat in a maze. A horde of technicians, monitoring his doom, keep up a drone of status reports, checks, and meter readings.

A typical tale of a man (THX 1138) hopelessly pitted against technocracy that treats him as just an object for experiment.

Darrell Schweitzer: I am not sure the New Wave fits your second criterion. Perhaps New Wavers do not intend anti-humanistic, anti-heroic, anti-scientific productions. What if their effect were ambiguous; their work allows itself to be twisted too easily, any way the public chooses. Instead of judging only on the success of their intentions, consider also the strength of their effects -- do readers find too easy a compromise with their tales? Some stories allow a reader to put his own biases too much back into them -- they are so much jumbled. Experimentation may be causing temporary lack of control. Then prevailing trends get forced onto their interpretation. A ground-swell of anti-heroic, anti-scientific feelings exists. When you don't know what to make of a story, you may read the worst into it. Some will project their low wishes, too.

MATT HICKMAN

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I have been thinking some things over during the last couple of days (spare the obvious comment) and have come to a startling conclusion: Fandom is prejudiced against adventurous fiction. Yes, Science Fiction fandom is populated by a bunch of snobs.

But, you say, "some of my favorite stories are adventures" (I know an Arab who says some of his best friends are Jews). When was the last time an adventure story won a Hugo? Much less a Nebula (the SFWA being admittedly snobs on a far higher plane). I consider Anne MacCaffrey's awards due to condescension given to show the s-fdom isn't prejudiced against women plus the fact that it was good enough to be well accepted and it wasn't in the novel category and in the case of the Nebula this attitude was reinforced by the fact that the story was published in a magazine and Analog to boot.

Thirty years ago something like "The Black Destroyer" was able to gain its rightful place in the hearts of the fans. If it were published for the first time today it would be enjoyed but otherwise it would hardly make a ripple. (Hell, even the Idiot's Science Fiction Hall of Fame doesn't include it.)

What, one may ask, has happened over the last thirty years? I personally think sf has gone on an acceptability kick. In doing that we have adopted some of the false values of mainstream. In doing so it has become vaguely ashamed of what it should hold most dear.

After all, is there anything basically wrong with an adventure? They can be and are well written, internally consistent, plausible within the future tense situation, as well as having a plausible future situation. They can and do tackle important, interesting, and serious problems that may arise in the future. Merely because the tone and stress is not serious does not mean the book is not!

The reason I was thinking around this subject is that last year I read The Rebel Worlds by Poul Anderson (one of the Flandry Series) and thoroughly enjoyed it, even then I felt it was the best of the Flandry series and one of Anderson's best. Then, a couple of months later while making out

my list of the Hugo Awards I asked myself "Why not?" It was then I asked myself if Fandom as well as myself were growing prejudiced and snobbish. I decided to wait a little while until other Hguo lists were made out. Most of those that are going to be published have been; no one selected The Rebel Worlds. Only one novel that could be considered adventure was mentioned and then only by one person.

When I made out my Hugo nomination list I read The Rebel Worlds a second time and I enjoyed it even more than the first time. When that happens and within six months of the first reading, that means it's a great book.

George Willick and Alex Krislov: You two both seem to have overlooked the fact that Jakobsson called for the revoking of JWC's right to freedom of speech comparing JWC's thoughts to pollution in general. I don't know about you, but personally I consider this grounds for censure. Alex, have you ever read P. S. Miller's column? This certainly makes up for the two or three anti-New Wave letters JWC has published. George, remember this: if you fan the flame the fire dies out sooner. Who are you to be wishing our problems on our grandchildren?

//Huh? ghl//

I guess it's a little too late to send in my choices on that poll but I'd like to get my two cents worth in anyway. Here are my choices: Way Station by Clifford D. Simak, The High Crusade by Poul Anderson, and The Moon is a Harsh Mistress by R.A.H. Himself. My choices for Authors are Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson and H. Beam Piper. If the time rules are changed to '61 to '71 replace The High Crusade with The Rebel Worlds also by Anderson.

//Shucks, never too late for anything in N3F. Right?? ghl//

JEAN JANSON

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A letter was written combining science with science fiction. In rebuttal, a letter was written stating that the two were incompatible. Science fiction is written by engineers, and scientists who are so far advanced mathematically that science fiction becomes the poetry of the mathematical mind. The mind is too large to be contained in a round world, with other round planets revolving around a hot sun.

Can we have reviews of sky shows in the zines?

//What's a sky show? Eclispe? Ariplanes? ghl//

MIKE O'BRIEN

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In reply to George Willick's thoughts on c, there are some other strange things going on. First off is relativity itself. Certainly it would be

possible to situate an observer at a common point and have two galaxies receding at $.7c$ in opposite directions, adding up to $1.4c$, but that's not what inhabitants of the galaxies would see. Time dilation and Lorentz contraction would assure that they would see the other galaxy receding at less than the speed of light. Of course, if the galaxies were accelerating, worse problems come in. That's general relativity, and there are very few people who can make that come out right. (In case you'r curious as to what the galactic travelers would see, I think from what I've studied that they would see all the rest of the universe foreshortened along their line of flight. Who's to say who's moving? The foreshortened rocket sees the universe as foreshortened. Since the universe is shorter, the other galaxy isn't moving as fast to cover the same amount of ground. It comes out in all cases to be less than c .) It's things like this that force simultaneity itself to become relative. The phrase "at the same time" turns out to be good only in a single frame of reference.

Gary, are you a physicist, or perhaps a mathematician? That's the most concise (and correct) explanation of the concept of infinity that I've read anywhere, in or out of a textbook. In fact, I'm stealing it for future explanations. And, in fact, it is just what Asimov meant. He never said a thing about a universe with a speed of $2c$. Where did you get that one, George? From what I recall from F&SF, where all this appeared, he said just what Gary said: speeds are symmetric about c in an inverse relationship, with zero velocity here corresponding to infinite velocity in the "tachyon universe." If the thought of infinite speed bothers you (as it bothered me at first), just remember that there is really no such thing as zero velocity here. Something is always moving, to some degree. Just so, in the tachyon universe things always would have a residual energy, and would move at slightly less than infinite velocity. Now, all this is classical mechanics. The quant-mech boys, I believe, assure us that no system ever acquires zero energy; that there is always a residual "ground state energy." If quant-mech is true in the tachyon universe (and it had better be, or the whole thing becomes a deal more complicated), things will always be moving at something less than infinite speed. By the way, Gary, if you are a mathematician, I dare you to put a metric on that space. Come to think of it, you might point the way to proving or disproving its existence if you manage to do so.

Mass is no more of a lie than energy is. They're both just distortions of space, with matter being more concentrated and in a special, stable configuration which we'd give our eyeteeth to know more about. Centrifugal force is no unknown, either. It just results from looking at things the wrong way -- in this case, from trying to make Newton's laws apply to a non-inertial frame (something going in circles) without going through the preliminaries.

What particles exceed the speed of light, George? I and a number of others would like to hear about them, because if we can produce and detect them, then we've already got FTL communications. Actually, relativity doesn't say that nothing can exceed the speed of light. It merely says that funny things happen as one approaches c , and only massless particles can go at speed c , and those can go no slower. What this comes out to is that no self-contained particle or wave, of whatever mass, can exceed c . However, certain things can. You can imagine my surprise in elementary physics lab when we were given instructions to build a device which would cause the creation of something that would travel faster than light, and which could

cause that thing to go all the way up to infinite speed. I was skeptical, but it was true. You can build it yourself, in about two minutes, with household materials. Matter of fact, one or more are probably sitting around already in disguise. Two parallel metal surfaces are it. Used as a radio waveguide, they cause radio waves to bound merrily from wall to wall and carry on down the guide. The closer the surfaces get, the more nearly parallel to the walls the crests of the waves lie. Where crests reflecting off one wall intersect those reflecting off the opposite wall, a point of peak intensity is produced. These peaks move on down the guide much faster than the crests which produce them, in the same manner in which an op art pattern changes rapidly if you move two transparencies slightly. However, the speed of these points (the phase velocity) is not the same as the speed with which information can be transmitted down the guide (the group velocity). Only the crests themselves can carry information, and they just plod along at speed c.

Fire and light are the same in that while you can freeze the first and stop the second, they stop being fire and light any more. Put a copper screen in a candle flame and the flame stops at the screen. Cooled down, the fire becomes hot gas and nothing more. Just so, we have been stopping photons since the day we were born. We call the process "sight" in scientific terms. When a photon is stopped, it gives up its energy to the thing which stops it. If it comes to something which due to quant-mech considerations cannot accept that particular amount of energy, the photon does not stop. Hence, transparent substances. Now, the man who slows a photon down has got something. I'm speaking of free space now, of course. Light slows down in any material substance.

I just enjoy a good scientific discussion, Gary. If you don't want to print all this, by all means don't. I just thought you might enjoy it.

//What the hell, it's only paper. You hit it, I was a mathematics major; taught physics in college; am presently a computer programmer. However, I was just guessing at what was said, having never read the Asimov article in question. That wave guide example is very quaint. It's all a math construct as I can see and becomes unmeasurable. It's like supposing the "equator" of a particle rotates about the particle at the speed of .5c and then rotating the particle at .9c. Or is it. Perhaps putting two such systems together and watching points on the equators interact. Or something.
gh1//

MIKE KLAUS

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I see Redd Boggs seems to be a staunch supporter of the P.O. I'm not! But in all fairness, I thought I might mention one point he doesn't; namely, the P.O. policy towards the hiring of "poverty people." The P.O. doesn't hire anyone that's not qualified to handle the mail. And to prove that a person is qualified for the job, he/she must pass a battery of tests. No one is considered for employment with the P.O. if they don't pass the tests. Also, the higher the grade made, the quicker that person gets a job. None of this is a guarantee that they'll work after being hired, though.

Of course, Boggs is right about work. Who does like to work? I don't (I enjoy my job, but there's a lot of other things I'd rather be doing than working). Nobody is asking that the people who work for the P.O. do

their best. Most people would be happy to just see the mail be handled in a competent manner. We're getting neither the best service the P.O. could offer, nor are we getting "competent" service. So why shouldn't people be up in arms about the mail?

I thought I was freaking out there for a minute, when I suddenly noticed the background color of Alex Krislov's letter had changed from yellow to white. What were you doing, Gary? Were you using up the extra paper you had around the house? Or is a multicolored Tightbeam going to be the regular thing from now on?

//I don't know what you're talking about; all of last issue was done on green paper. ghl//

Jerry Lapidus: Anybody who doesn't like The Hobbit probably won't enjoy LoTR. I'll admit LoTR is by far the better of the two, but I haven't heard of anyone reading LoTR and then becoming bored when they tried The Hobbit, or vice versa. Most people either read LoTR and The Hobbit with rapt attention or else they never get past page fifty of either one. It wouldn't hurt to start someone off on LoTR but I doubt if it would make much of a difference.

JUDI SEPHTON

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There are a few reasons why I am writing this letter. I lost some addresses of fans I need to contact and the N3F list or roster is around someplace; I want to inform two groups of Neffers about particular items and I must let people whom I know and haven't had a chance (or the time) to write a long letter to know where I will be and what happened before present developments.

First: My address at Elm Place in the Bronx will be good for all mail, from fanzines on. I will be in and out of New York city during the academic year and using the established address is going to be the best procedure for contact unless you happen to live near me or there are other arrangements. I expect to be in New York two or three times a month -- the distance from N.Y. to Washington, D.C. isn't all that staggering -- financing it may be a strain. I will let people know my Washington, D.C. address if there is a vital reason for contact or if they want to write to me. Actually, you could write both places but send fanzines to the New York address.

I will be attending the Catholic University for a Masters in Teaching Science, Psychology Program. This means I am working toward teaching college and getting the second union card. I will be pursuing a Ph.D. later.

With regard to communication, when in New York, phone me at 733-2925. While in Washington, I will have a phone but unlisted. I'll give the exact address and number to people later when I have it. This condition will be for about 1½ years. I plan to return to N.Y. for further graduate work and my job. I got appointed to teach but am deferring position for study. This is in the city school system.

ESP and psi fandom or Neffers in the "old" Inner Circle, defunct due to gafia, etc. I had been seriously ill in the fall of 1967 and this delayed everything. The treasury is still \$55.00 (a maximum amount) and

Mark Owings has been like a turtle with the promised book list. Some of it can now be published and everyone will get it. I spoke to members as I saw them and everyone I talked to is positive about reorganizing the group and doing a better job at it. Any people interested, please write. We should get back to group activities. Any IC members still interested, PLEASE WRITE and let me have some addresses of people as I lost my address book. As you write, I'll tell you who we need to find as they are non-N3F people. I had to take 1968-69 to catch up on dropped college work and graduation. Also, I was required to take further courses for professional reasons and I had to clear up other matters. Now, I can resume activity and help make the group a good one. I will be a better correspondent.

ALMA HILL

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Here's what I've been doing recently to stir up activity. The Fandbook for writers has been coming along for the past couple of years, subject to various interruptions, with few and slow contributions, but finally accumulated enough to put out a first draft for the Writers' Exchange to criticize. After all, being set up to comment on unpublished mss., we should comment on this one. I also sent copies to various pros known to be good-natured about such matters, and to all the editors in this field. About a dozen comments have come back so far, all in apparent agreement that the coverage is good and the material sound, so this booklet could be distributed to members or fans who want copies except that this limited edition was done by Xerox, but a friend of mine offered to do it on mimeo, in which case it would cost much less, but take longer.

Meanwhile various additions have turned up which are interesting and worth putting in. If I do that, the size and value of the booklet would go up. So would the price. Maybe this could be sold and if there is any profit, that could go to maintaining services to writers; but as a rule fannish business sets prices to minimize the cost to the officer who takes on the project. For my part it's fun and I don't mind underwriting some of the cost, maybe offer ten dollars and not struggle too much if it doesn't run too far past that figure. I'd like to include photostencil covers and fillos -- do any NFFF artists care to contribute designs? I can send stencils to draw on and mark off the space to be used for text.

This is meant to be a semi-professional desk book with down-to-earth how-to material. At the same time, let's face it, story-making is not a beginner's field; some of the comments aren't even understandable to a person who has not put in lots of practice on fundamentals. So I've been thinking very seriously about adding some pages on writing for fanzines, and selling fact articles, this being one of the best disciplines for sf writers to develop skills. How about that, does anybody want to comment?

One member wrote to ask about how to make up an outline to go with the first few chapters in selling a book by the contract method. Should this be included, and if so, how? I wish I knew more on that point myself, but isn't that a bit advanced for a semi-pro handbook? We don't want a writer's encyclopedia, just a reference for things such as format and office work, and some answers to frequently-asked questions about common problems.

One thing we don't need is this recent interest in plagiarism. That could not possibly become a problem in this in-field. All the editors have been reading one another's output since Gernsback created the universe, so a copied-off piece would be recognized at once. But it might be worth mentioning that unpublished material has what is known as common-law copyright, and that Exchangers can be witnesses. Almost everybody realizes this already, of course. I do hear a lot of twaddle about how to copyright material and how you can sell stuff as new to prozines even after it has been published in fanzines. Fellow-Neffers: I did NOT ask fans about this. I asked EDITORS. First serial rights to a piece are gone if the material appears in a fanzine that sells for a price or circulates over 100. Second serial rights are also gone unless the fanzine copyrights its contents. In any case, first serial rights sell for peanuts and second rights, when they sell at all, go for peanut-shells.

I also asked a lawyer who specialized in work for publishers, and who corroborated the above, subject to what lawyers always say: "Of course, you can never be sure how a court will decide about a particular case." You CAN be sure, however, that editors are not interested in borderline questions about whether or not they bought first rights.

On this matter of originality and creativity: write out one idea and two will sprout in its place, so don't overvalue your practice-work. Just keep writing new stuff.

Ray Nelson wrote me something interesting I'd like to quote: "The fanzines should function as a kind of avante-garde for science-fiction, not as a dragging tail. Fan fiction is not written to make money -- so what is it written for? Just to fill space? No, it should be written because somebody is mad about something, or glad about something, and a story seems the best way of getting this emotion across to others." He goes on to say more, but I'd like to apuse and remark that's why I write pro stories; there is no other reason to write anything, pro, fan, or (as most are in this field) semi-pro. Even fact articles deal with things we care about.

John Campbell sent me two pages which stress newness and originality so much that it's a reminder of who's been leading the New Waves as they roll up the beach. He says in part,

- "1. Never take a course in short-story writing. If you have taken one, you're laboring under a handicap until you can forget it.
2. Never try to repeat a success. Writing is essentially part of show business -- the entertainment industry -- and it's the most unstable, unreliable, unpredictable, whimsical illogical business there is. The one thing guaranteed to be a wrong answer is the one that worked last time. Because that's the one that was fresh and new and delightful -- once.
3. And don't expect to find the formula for selling stories to me, or any other successful editor -- because you're really selling to the guy with 60¢ to slap down on the counter, not to the editor. And he wants the fresh, new, delightful, and unexpected -- which means that the editor has to keep changing the angles, or drop out. ... If the author could predict accurately what I'm going to buy -- the reader could predict accurately what he was going to read in Analog. And, in that case, why buy it? So he wouldn't."