

*Thought I was...  
ask of...  
development of...  
London in this...  
area*

# vertigo





VERTIGO #26 is the 25th issue of the Official Organ of the Carolina Fan Federation. This issue is to promote the July 13, 1975 Durham mini-con. Editor, typesetter: Edwin L. Murnay, 2540 Chapel Hill Rd, Durham, N. C. 27707. Publisher: Scott Whiteside, P O Drawer 25830, Raleigh, N. C. 27611. Cover Artist: Clyde Caldwell, 505 Hand Circle, Lowell, N.C. 28098. Price 35¢ this issue pubbed on June 21, 1975.  
26 26

under the elm tree

#### THIS ISSUE Dept

Here we are again with another issue of everybody's favorite local zine. This issue will be just as local as usual. I won't say what will be in this issue because I don't know at the moment. Material from others should start coming in tomorrow and I have a couple of ideas I'm working on for filler articles. There are two news items that should be in this lead spot but which will be postponed until after the lead commercial. The cover this issue is by Clyde Caldwell and is quite nice though a bit different from the past few covers. Special thanks to Mical Fowler for the fine job he did printing the cover this issue. Thanks also go to Karl Wagner for taking time out of his busy schedule to do the E. Hoffman Price piece for us.

#### CON-FUSED Dept

Durham mini-con XXVIII will be held on July 13, 1975 at 2540 Chapel Hill Road. This was the only date available in July that would not conflict with another con that area people might want to attend. The first weekend is booked with the Sculing Con in NYC, the #1 comics con. The third week features the Western Film Festival in Nashville (moved from Memphis) that several of you attend. The third weekend is tied up with RiverCon (DeepSouthCon) and the possibility of Milo Holt's Old Time Western Film Club meetings. Check with Milo or Ed Williams or Herb Swilling about the correct date for this. As you can see, we just barely fit in this time. Most of you know what to expect at a Durham mini-con so I'll just hit the highlights. The con runs roughly 9 AM to 5 PM with no program and plenty of time to browse, buy, sell, trade, converse, etc. Let us hope the weather is nice so that the usual Summer mob can spread out some as the quarters become a bit cramped when a large number of people are kept inside.

#### BIG CON JOB Dept

This is the section where I tell you how wonderful our last con was and then bore you with a list of almost everyone who attended. Attendance was steady at about 75 for the third or so con in a row as things seem to be leveling off a bit. Durham mini-con XXVII was held on April 6, 1975 and was great like usual. Irvin Koch came all the way from Chattanooga the day before and we spent the evening with him talking about the state of southern fandom. One of the things he came to find out was why fans in this area don't travel as much/far as those from other southern states. I don't think we ever settled on anything though the large percentage of comics fans in the area could have something to do with it. Before the con really got started I was talking with Samuel Joyner about area fossils without realizing that within a couple of months the oldest fossil yet found in North America would soon be found in Durham County. I somehow managed to find a copy of one of the earliest comics I remember picking up, ZOO PARADE believe it or not. I had been about 4 when I got it first. The never-popular con photo album was well thumbed through, as usual.

One especially unpopular picture was a "Gil Kane" shot of Terry that is so ugly that George Beahn had to enlarge it so supersize as some sort of insidious revenge for untold deeds. Joe Treacy was there with a mock-up of his upcoming DEADSPAWN fanzine. Karl Wagner had a handful of copies of BLOODSTONE which were eagerly snapped up by friend and foe alike. That dreaded time is here again. I will now mangle the names of all of those who attended the last con: Irvin Koch, Samuel Joyner, Bill Starnes, Scott & Linda Whiteside, Grier Neely, Bill Olfields, Dan Brooks, Mark Austin, Will Bullard, Clai Snisson, M C Goodwin, W R Dail, Russ Dail, Tag Gibson, Joe Treacy, Paul & Floyd Shead, Ernest Moore, John Allison, Joanie Walker, Andy Smith, Norman Hunter, Chuck Hafter, David Kelly, Nancy Barker, Paul Maggitti, Richard Hurt, Milton Road, John Squires, Jerry Minter, Richard & Mildred Minter, Steve Massey, Pam Turner, Ray Cardwell, Karl & Barbara Wagner, Dave Drake, Billy Saunders, Clay Kimball, Gordon Messer, Mike Cromartie, Ron Myers, Carl Oliver, Ben Brown, Rich Hall, Richard Crouch, Tim Marion, Jim Bodie, Charles Nash, Robert Rubin, David Merkel, George Beahn, Bill & Leslie Pearce, Randy Vance, Dave Ortman, Ned Brooks, Martin Massoolia, Casey Cooke, Ed Vance, Steve Turner, Ed Williams, Milo Holt, Eric Larsen, Elmer Clark, Tom Long, Ken Stanbaugh, Phil Cowan, Stuart Schiff, elm & Terry. Apologies to all.

#### DICK MOORES WINS REUBEN Dept

Yes, North Carolina's very own Dick Moores has won the National Cartoonist Society's Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year in the most recent voting (1974 I would assume). As most of you know, he does the GASOLINE ALLEY dailies and has since 1960. The strip appears in quite a few papers including the Menomonee Fall Guardian. Dick Moores was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on Dec 12, 1909 and is only 10 years older than GASOLINE ALLEY. After moving around quite a bit as a youngster he finally settled in Chicago long enough to attend the Academy of Fine Arts and later assist on DICK TRACY for five years. Next he soloed on JIM HARDY/WINDY AND PADDLES. It was at this time that he shared a studio with Frank King of G.A. He married Gretchen Stahl and in 1940 they moved to Santa Barbara. Two years later he discontinued W&P and began working for Walt Disney. He was in the Disney comic strip department for 14 years, during which he drew "Uncle Remus" and "Scamp" and numerous comic books, albums, and hardcovers. In 1956 he was called on by former studio-mate Frank King to assist on G.A. so he moved to Florida. He took over the dailies in 1960 and has done them ever since. He now lives on a 60-acre farm in Fairview, N.C. and draws some of his background from the local people. I know that all of you join me in wishing Dick our warmest congratulations for the honor he has won and hope that he will be doing GASOLINE ALLEY for many years to come.

#### WILLIAM F. JENKINS 1896-1975

William F. Jenkins, more popularly known as "Murray Leinster," died on June 8. At this time I have almost no details on his death so I encourage you to watch for the obituaries in LOCUS and other fanzines. I do know that he suffered a stroke a few months ago and has been in a nursing home since then. He has been called the dean of science fiction since he has been regularly writing s-f since "The Runaway Skyscraper" appeared in ARGOSY in 1919. His most famous story is probably "First Contact," a classic tale of mistrust when humans and aliens first meet. It was voted into the Hall of Fame. His "Exploration Team" won the 1956 Hugo for best novelette and his "The Pirates of Ersatz" was nominated for the best novel Hugo in 1960. He was also responsible for front projection.

Will Jenkins was born in Norfolk and continued to live in that area. The only time I met him was when he was a guest of honor at FanCon there a few years ago. The sound system was not very good but we were lucky enough to be in one of the front rows and can attest to the fact that he was a very entertaining speaker. I will leave the eloquent memorials to others and just say that as s-f fans and fellow Southerners we are all poorer from his passing but richer from his having passed this way.

#### DOUBLE FEATURE Dept

Due to circumstances beyond our control the weekend of May 10-11 was a very busy one. On Saturday the Old Time Western Film Club held one of their regular meetings and on Sunday David Luebke held his second Comic Book Trade Mart & Convention in Richmond. For those of us who attended both cons it was a rather full weekend but quite enjoyable. The western roundup was held in Siler City and drew a full house of western fans. The main feature was "Billy the Kid" starring Johnny Mack Brown. Other features were "Bullet Code" (George O'Brien), "Trouble Duster" (Jack Hoxie), and a lot of serial previews. We always enjoy these Saturday afternoons at the movies and look forward to each one. Once football season starts other loyalties will prevent us from attending for a while but that doesn't mean we won't be sorry to miss them. An interesting sidelight of the day was that we managed to cut our Batman want list to two issues, #1 and #3. We are living up on #1 as too costly but will take a #3 if the price is fairly reasonable.

On Sunday we attended the Richmond con and arrived in time to find the room fairly crowded. As with most cons these days (mini-cons included) the crowd seems to arrive early and leave early so we weren't surprised when things started to break up in mid-afternoon. There was a variety of material on sale and we managed to pick up a few odds and ends from the 1950s (a period we are working on these days). There were quite a few familiar faces and we had fun talking to old friends from previous cons. We can't mention everyone but will say that we talked to Tom Long and Ed Vance about one of their new projects. We aren't at liberty to give any details but if things clear this booklet should be of more than slight historical interest. Stay tuned for further developments. Between Norfolk-etc and Richmond there is always something happening in Va and we are all reaping the benefits. I like these one day cons where you can meet friends and look over some goodies without having to take time off from work to do it.

#### PUBLICATIONS Dept

DEADSPAWN is a new fanzine coming out of Virginia and will feature strips, articles, interviews, etc. The first issue has a Deadspawn strip, an interview with David Knaf (now at Atlas), and other goodies. It is \$1 an issue or \$4 a year from Joe Treacy, 2400 D. Walner St, Norfolk, Va 23513.

The special double issue of WHISPERS is finally out and while I haven't gotten my copy yet it is worth the wait from all reports. Every issue seems to sell out so send in your \$3.50 to Sturat Schiff, 5508 Dodge Drive, Fayetteville, NC 28303. With luck there should be copies available at the mini-con too.

The LASFS publishes a Science Fiction Club Address List twice a year (May and November). This list includes all national, regional, and local clubs they could get confirmation on. Clubs from this area listed are: CFF, Nameless Order, SFC, Greenville (SC) Association of Fans, and the Nelson Bond Society. For a copy of the list send 10¢ and an SSAE to LASFS, 11360 Ventura Blvd, Studio City, Calif. 91604.

## FOLKS AROUND HERE Dept

Nobody has accused me of playing favorites yet but I still thought I had better explain why you see the same names every issue in the local news section. As a news section we include things about people who do something (move, publish, marry, etc) or are otherwise newsworthy so if you want to be mentioned let us know what you are doing. Probably the biggest offender in the news category is Karl Wagner. I don't know how he does it but he is currently holding down three careers: doctor, author, publisher. With any luck the new Carcosa book should be out in early Fall. The wagners and the Wellmans will journey to England July 21-Aug 4 on a sort of working holiday. Karl is doing another Kane novel for Warner Paperback Library entitled DARK CRUSADE and will be doing a Bran Mak Morn book for Zebra. Dave Drake has been doing research on the Bran Mak Morn book and I understand Karl will spend at least some of his time in England getting a feel for the area. Karl has written a pulp-type super villain story titled "Sign of the Salamander" which will be published as a booklet by Gary Hoppenstand. The Lone Star Fictioneer people will be publishing a limited edition booklet (85,000 words) titled "Nightwings" and containing six Kane shorts. Fabian, Barry Smith, and Frazetta have all been mentioned as possible artists on this project. A new issue of MIDNIGHT SUN, the fanzine devoted to Kane, will hopefully be out by the July mini-con so watch for ads. Karl says three of those books are due at his publishers within the space of about two months so it is no wonder he is running behind on other things. From reports I hear BLOODSTONE is selling fairly well and at least one dealer has reported trouble getting enough copies to fill orders. DJ'S Newstand at North Hills in Raleigh (colloquially known as "Scott's") has sold about 150 copies. Karl seems to be on a hot streak now and I am sure we all wish him continued success. . . Other Chapel Hill authors are in the news too. Dave Drake has a story coming up in the July GALAXY and with luck it should be out by mini-con time. Manly Wade Wellman's Sherlock Holmes and the War of the Worlds stories will be collected in a book from Warner PBL and should be out in September. There will also be a Panther edition in England. . . D Gary Grady missed the last mini-con when he was stationed in the Bermuda Triangle. Luckily he didn't vanish mysteriously the way all the rest of the Wilmington mob seem to have. I wonder if Gary ran into Skull the Slayer while he was out there. . . Former NC fan Bruce Coville has a new baby daughter, Cara Joy, born May 3. Bruce is a member of Apanage along with Va fans Tim C. Marion and David Ortman. . . Former Va fan Bruce D. Arthurs had the lead spot in SF REVIEW #13 with an essay/interview on/with Roger Elwood. . . Two more articles have been reprinted from old issues of VERTIGO. My own piece on redone Superman stories was reprinted in BATMANIA #21 and Karl Wagner's review of the "Who Fears The Devil" movie was updated and reprinted in XENOPHILE #11. XENOPHILE is the only fanzine I know of to follow the tradition of VERTIGO and the pulps and skip a number. There was no X #12. We are in fine company. . . COA: Jimmy & Sharon Wade, 1531 Hanover St, Raleigh, NC 27608. Bill & Leslie Pearce, 4321 Avent Ferry Rd. Apt 2, Raleigh, NC. Guy Lillian, Box 5066, Tulane U Sta, New Orleans, La 70118. . . Eric Larsen and several Nameless Raleigh fans are planning to put together an sf-fantasy fanzine of some note and I understand they are taking submissions of art and written material. Write to Eric at 4012 Colby Dr, Raleigh, NC 27609. . . Addresses of people mentioned earlier are: Gary Hoppenstand (MIDNIGHT SUN), 2014 Mackenzie Dr, Columbus, Ohio 43220. Byron Roark, 2951 South 34th St, Kansas City, Kansas 66206. . . Clyde Caldwell has a number of projects in the works but nothing we can mention at this time. More on these later. . . This issue delayed one week due to printing difficulties. . . Durham mini-con Oct 5. . .

## FOR STRIPPERS ONLY Dept

Ronn Foss has had two chances to make something of the new incarnation of THE STRIPPER and has failed both times. What was once an interesting fanzine devoted to comic strips is now something that should be retitled RONN FOSS' BURLESQUERAMA. Only two or three pages each issue are devoted to syndicated strips and the rest of the issue is devoted to burlesque, music, tv, etc. I have no objection to this material (though I find it a bit dull) except that it is not what we were led to believe would be the focus of the zine when he took it over from Biljo. Ronn should either change the contents drastically or change the title and take poor Biljo's name off the zine. He says it will fold if he doesn't get ads but I can't see any ads feeling at home in the zine except for ones for OUI, GALLERY, PENTHOUSE, etc.

As most of you know by now, VINTAGE FUNNIES folded with issue #100. I hated to see it go because in the last dozen or so issues the line-up had improved so that the stronger strips were getting more pages, taking up space previously held by strips most of the people I've talked to were not interested in. The subscriptions had been going down steadily and this may indicate that many of his other readers may have felt the same way about the earlier line-up. Alan Light is hardly one of my favorite people in fandom but he did put the zine out for 100 issues and for that I thank him. Here is hoping that he will continue to put out albums of reprints of some of the more popular strips from VF. I would like to see ones devoted to Terry & the Pirates, Alley Oop, Capt Easy, Mickey Mouse, and Dick Tracy (again).

I hear stories that new issues of PHOENIX are out but I haven't gotten any in my sub since #3 and as far as I know the same holds true for Bill Starnes. I notice that some reviewers got copies while other subscribers haven't. This reminds me of the fanzine of a few years ago that lost almost all subscribers copies in the mail but all the dealers and reviewers managed to get copies okay.

## COLD NEWS Dept

The coverage of this first news item is devoted to Jim Steranko and MEDIASCENE. Recent issues have had a bias that is out of place in a big time newszine. : In a brilliant move DC managed to stick Marvel with a big money drain, Jack Kirby's salary, and rectify a mistake of a few years ago. After watching Kirby pile up flop after flop they decided to trade the master of the 7 page story in 20 pages to their biggest competitor for the other company's #2 writer. Gerry Conway had earlier been farmed out to Marvel to learn how to write and after years of practice has finally come into his own. He now has a chance to put together a new batch of winners for DC. Marvel is still wondering what to do with Kirby since he insists on trying to write his own stories. (The Steranko reporting of this news was just as slanted but in the opposite direction). . .Marvel & DC will put out a joint 100 page \$2 comic that will team-up Superman and Spider-Man. Conway writer and Andru artist. Writers and artists have switched companies before so the Kirby-Conway news is interesting but not spectacular. A joint effort by the two top companies combining their top sellers is something that is completely unheard of. Money talks and this is a sure sellout at any price. Will there be a sequel of, say, Batman & Capt America if this makes a mint? How about something annual like the JLA-JSA team-up? I suppose the story starts when Clark & Peter meet covering a big news event in a neutral city (on a neutral Earth). It will be strange to see Stan Lee Presents Superman. I also understand that there will also be a joint effort OZ series after the first Marvel issue. . .

## SMILIN' JACK

Recently there has been a slight revival in interest in "Smilin' Jack" due to the strips cancellation and the recent ads by Zack Mesley offering to sell originals. For the final few years of the strip it was in a very few papers and many, if not most, of the old fans thought the strip had already been cancelled. I've only seen about six months of it but from all reports the last few years of the strip just seemed to lack something. The last story (a long one) was little more than a reread of a sequence from 1949-50. In the earlier story Jack got married again and in the final story his soon Jolly got married. Why am I writing about Smilin' Jack if it seemed so lackluster? Because at one time it was a very interesting strip and I think we should reflect on this better period instead of its final days.

Back in the thirties the country was in love with airplanes. Flight was still a fairly new thing and pilots were big heroes to the young. Air war pulps were flourishing and model airplane magazines were avidly read. It was this national love of the airplane that led to the creation of Smilin' Jack, first as a Sunday and then as a daily strip. The strip caught on and became one of the more popular strips of that time. Why it was popular is easily understood. Jack was a daredevil type racing pilot who went through more girl friends than Steve Canyon. The art was fairly simple but told the story well and didn't distract the reader from what was happening. The stories were dramatic and emotional and kept the reader interested because something was always happening. To demonstrate what I am talking about I am going to briefly relate the main storylines from the very key years of 1937 through 1939. It was during this period that the early Jack was transformed into the Jack that we are all familiar with.

When we join Jack in late 1937 he is a lean pilot with no mustache. He is in love with a girl named Dixie and is teaching her brother, Cotton, to fly so that she won't have to support him any more and can marry Jack. Cotton secretly takes up Jack's special racing plane in order to look like a big shot pilot but only succeeds in buzzing the town and wrecking the plane. Cotton gets Dixie to protect him from a very angry Jack by pretending to be a hit and run victim and denying having taken up the plane without permission. A real feud is started when Jack loses his pilots license because he can't prove that he wasn't the one who pulled those dangerous stunts Cotton tried while in the air. To make matters worse Jack's sister, Jill, comes to town and falls in love with Cotton. In order to get money to send Jill to a girls school to keep her away from Cotton Jack takes a flying job in Mexico (where he can fly). As things turn out, he is a pilot for a band of smugglers and tries to get out of his contract when he finds out what they are doing. For his trouble he gets a very nasty scar on his cheek as punishment. The smugglers try to eliminate him by dumping him from a plane in the desert but he survives and starts to track them down. In the meantime Cotton marries Jill and takes a flying job with the same smugglers to get some quick money. Jack finally tracks down the smugglers and captures them. During the capture he accidentally shoots and kills the fleeing Cotton. This accident kills all love Dixie had for him and alienates him from his sister. Dixie meets an old boy friend of hers who happens to be a top plastic surgeon. One thing leads to another and Jack has his face repaired by his rival for Dixie. Jack's face heals perfectly but he is torn apart inside when he acts as best man at the marriage between Dixie Lee and the doctor. He swears off girls completely and takes a job as a test pilot. The danger will help him forget.

Jack is now a test pilot on a new super-plane and runs into trouble when spys sabatoge the plane so that the U.S. won't use it. Jack eventually tracks down the spys who are selling the plans to a foreign power. By a strange coincidence one of the spys is almost a double for Jack so he is enlisted by the government to take the place of Powder, the spy, and track down the head man of the spy ring. At this time, to complete the disguise, Jack grows a mustache, dyes his hair blond, and has a mark branded on his palm. Jack infiltrates the spy ring as Powder and almost gets in trouble when he discovers that Powder is married and has a kid. The leader of the ring is The Head, Jack's arch enemy in future years. The Head has a huge bodyguard named The Claw because of the hook he has in place of a hand. The Head looks like Peter Lorre. The Head becomes suspicious and eventually traps Jack into making a slip. After a while in the brig Jack escapes in a plane and is forced down in a storm at sea after shooting down the plane of The Head. Jack manages to swim to a tropical island where he is mistaken for Powder and is trapped in an engagement with the island chief's daughter. Here he meets Fat Stuff, the only civilized islander (he had served time in white man's prison). Jack and Fat Stuff escape from the island before the wedding ceremony can be completed only to be picked up by the chief guard at a prison island where Powder and Fat Stuff had served time and escaped. Unable to convince the prison officials that he is not Powder, Jack and Fat Stuff are sent to the sulphur mines. The Head and The Claw are also in the prison and make it tough on Jack until they are all put in solitary for an aborted escape attempt. Jack manages to make a key to his cell and sneaks out at night to construct a glider to carry him off the island and into the path of a passing plane. Luckily his old friend Downwind is on the plane and they are able to convince the prison officials that Jack is not Powder. Jack blackmails the prison into releasing Fat Stuff too.

During the period I have just covered we are introduced to Fat Stuff, The Head, Downwind, and Jack's mustache. Jack has gone through a number of dramatic adventures and has emerged as the hero we are familiar with. The strip continues to improve for several more years before starting downhill in the late forties. Smilin' Jack was once an excellent strip and will always be fondly remembered by those who read it at its best.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ODD ENDS

A few notes left out earlier: Irvin Koch (835 Chattanooga Bk. Bldg, Chattanooga, Tenn. 37402) is planning a con for Jan 2-4 1976. The Chattanooga Science Fiction Convention will be held at the Sheraton Motor Inn on I-75 at EastRidge Exit. Those planning on attending are encouraged to write Irvin and send in reservations early. . .Richard Minter is the top acknowledgement in Robert Jones' new book, THE SHUDDER PULPS. Karl Wagner is quoted in the text. . .We were very pleased to see Don & Maggie Thompson print the lengthy chronology of ACG by R. Yudkin in their column in TBG #85 but must quibble when they say it is the first ACG article they have seen. They received VERTIGO #9 back in 1971 and that issue contained a piece that dealt for the most part with the top ACG stories and the house style. Frankly we are glad to see another ACG fan surface as there aren't many of us around. . .It may be old news to some but we just learned that Maxfield Parrish's painting "Daybreak" sold for \$100,000 late last year. That was for you Parrish fans who wonder what originals go for. . . Recent articles have mentioned that the character of Maverick was based on the anti-hero of Stendhal's book THE RED AND THE BLACK. Not a western about a gambler (surprisingly) the book deals with France after the Revolution. .

Some Biographical Notes on E. Hoffmann Price  
by Karl Edward Wagner

E. Hoffmann Price was born in 1898 in Fowler, California, and in this state he spent the first nineteen years of his life--attending school and earning a little money as a soda jerk, movie usher, newspaper boy, and various other odd jobs. Throughout his early years, his ambition in life was to become a fictioneer--and not just the usual armchair-adventurer-turned-writer. Price dreamed of far off lands, exotic adventures, alluring women and strange liquors. To write convincingly of such matters would require first-hand experience. Price set out to get this.

In June 1917 Price joined the Fifteenth Cavalry. They still rode horses in 1917, and, as if in training for the role of an adventure yarn hero, Price learned to fire with either hand, ride at six hurdles and sabre each of the course's six dummies. Under the tutelage of a Master of the Sword, he learned to use the épée to good effect and became familiar to a lesser degree with the duelling sabre. With the 15th, Price travelled to the Philippines, Japan, did a stint chasing bandits on the Mexican border, then spent some time in France. Here, in the ancient city of Bayonne, which Price would later make use of as the locale of his Pierre d'Artois series, he explored the mysteries of the city's crypts, fortifications, bars and whorehouses--writing a pair of sonnets (later printed in WEIRD TALES) to a favorite lady of pleasure.

In 1919 Price attended the A.E.F. University--an institution formed after the Armistice to keep our lads out of these last mentioned establishments--and passed entrance examinations for West Point. He graduated from West Point in 1923 and received a commission in the coast artillery. Price's military career was short-lived, however, as he was soon to resign his commission in the face of a threatened court martial when a meddling superior officer objected to the attentions Price was paying a young lady. Union Carbide came to the rescue with a job, and Price was put to work as student engineer in an acetylene plant in Newark Transfer, New Jersey.

It was here that Price began to write for the pulps. Price, whose first name is Edgar (and who answers to Ed), signed his manuscripts as E. Hoffmann Price--striving for that sonorous effect of such famous names as H. Dedford-Jones. He might better have chosen his middle name for the initial, since pulp editors (and subsequently, fans and fanzine editors) were forever misspelling "Hoffmann" by dropping the second "n." But however they spelled or misspelled it, his was a name that would emblazon countless pulp covers for the next quarter century.

After work Price hammered away at two stories simultaneously. The one, "Triangle with Variations," sold first time out for \$24 to DROLL STORIES (May 1924). The other, "The Rajah's Gift," was bounced by LACK MASK but sold for \$25 to WEIRD TALES (January 1925). Price quickly wrote several more stories, but rejections were consistent until he sold "The Stranger from Kurdistan" to WEIRD TALES (July 1925) at a whopping  $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ a word (\$12). Price then sat down and studied two major texts on creative writing, reassessed his own techniques, then went back to rebuild the rejected stories. It paid off in spades. Price began to sell consistently to WEIRD TALES, getting his first cover for "The Peacock's Shadow" on the November 1926 issue. One of the rejected stories, a 2200 word short entitled "The Ziggurat," Price rebuilt into a 12,000 novelet, "The Infidel's Daughter," which drew the Hugh Rankin cover for the December 1927 WEIRD TALES.

Price quickly became one of the stars of the WEIRD TALES circle--selling one successful story after another to this pulp in its golden age (1925-36) and to its companion pulp, ORIENTAL STORIES. He was going to need all the sales he could get. In 1932, in the worst of the Depression, Union Carbide fired him. Price then made the decision to become a professional fictioneer

--to write full-time for a living. This meant selling to other pulps than WEIRD TALES--in its day, a low-paying, "odd Ball" market, barely able to survive despite the loyalty of its readership.

Price's agent snorted at his twenty or so sales and asked if he had ever sold to a "real magazine." What followed was a gradual apprenticeship in the major pulp fiction genres--adventure, mystery, and western--and a phasing out of Price's WEIRD TALES career. Starting with the lesser pulp titles, Price began to write more and more stories in other genres than fantasy. He began to scatter his name through pulps such as CLUES, STRANGE DETECTIVE STORIES, UNDERWORLD, FIVE NOVELS, ALL DETECTIVE, SPY STORIES, NICKEL DETECTIVE, COMPLETE STORIES, TOP-NOTCH, THRILLING ADVENTURES, and countless others. A major break came with the appearance in the mid-'30s of the lurid "spicy" string of SPICY DETECTIVE, SPICY MYSTERY, SPICY ADVENTURE, AND SPICY WESTERN. Price found he could get a cent a word from this chain, published by Culture Publications, and sell anything he wrote as fast as he could hammer it out. But more important, while Culture's formula required frequent references to bare flesh and negligee, Price made use of the typing practice to perfect his command of mystery and western writing--and in particular, the difficult field of adventure fiction.

Thus, as the '30s progressed, Price's name disappeared from WEIRD TALES. His fantasy pieces, increasingly rare and often only reworked rehashes of earlier tales, mostly appeared in SPICY MYSTERY--although there was a brief reinterest in the genre at the close of the '30s, when Price sold several excellent pieces to UNKNOWN, WEIRD TALES, STRANGE STORIES, and a few mainstream adventure pulps. But Price was through with fantasy. There would be a few science-fiction yarns in the early '50s, and one last appearance in WEIRD TALES in 1950 after a ten year absence. In recent years Price sold a few new fantasy tales to the moribund WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY. But these were all sentimental gestures in memory of his apprentice years as a fictioneer. Price had found a place in other pulp genres--and to the astonishment of most fantasy fans who know Price only for his reminiscences of his colleagues of the old WEIRD TALES circle--only about 10% of his fiction output of some 500 stories falls into the classification of fantasy.

For as Price moved away from fantasy fiction, he began to hit it big in the mystery, western, and adventure pulps. At one time Price passed a newsstand and noticed ten pulps there in which he had the cover story. By the close of the '30s he had appeared in close to a hundred pulp titles. More important, he was making a success in the tough adventure field, and by the end of the '30s he had crashed SHORT STORIES and ARGOSY--two prestige markets. His success continued into the '40s, and in 1942 he broke into ADVENTURE--the top prestige adventure pulp of the day, second only to BLUE BOOK (then in decline) as the class pulp adventure market. In a matter of months, Price was getting covers on ADVENTURE as well--although BLUE BOOK forever eluded him. In the mystery field, he again hit the top of the field, breaking into BLACK MASK. And all the while, sales to the lesser pulp titles were constant. The best work was for ARGOSY and ADVENTURE or SHORT STORIES, the rejects grabbed up by pulps such as Leo Margulies' "Thrilling" chain, eager to get the E. Hoffmann Price name across the cover.

After the war, the pulps began to dwindle. Ignoring the new science-fiction and fantasy titles that sprang up (and dwindled) except for a rare foray, Price continued to plug away for the stalwarts--ADVENTURE, DETECTIVE FICTION, SHORT STORIES. But they were dying. One by one they dropped off--or changed format from their pulp heritage. ADVENTURE and BLUE BOOK eked out a miserable dotage until recently as men's blood-&-guts mags; SHORT STORIES, who now owned WEIRD TALES, struggled on as a digest, as did WEIRD TALES, and both faded away in a whimper. ARGOSY went through change after change, finally to survive as a slick. Mostly they just died.

By the early '50s, Price called it quits. An agent returned a bale of unsold manuscripts. No market anymore. Price made a bonfire of them. The pulps were dead; one effort to enter the new paperback field, a mystery novel entitled THE CASE OF THE CANCELED REDHEAD, did not spark a repeat. Fictioneering, at least as in the heyday of the pulps, was dead. Price got a job and settled down in his Redwood City, California home.

He's still there, with a basement full of rotting pulps, and his thoughts full of memories of the pulp days and his friends and colleagues of the era. Now and again he shares his memories with today's fans, and, rarely, he writes a new fantasy tale.

\* \* \* \* \*

ONCE AGAIN, ELM

Just a few notes to fill the remaining space: The comment Karl made about fanzine editors hit close to home and I had to go back and add in an extra "n" as best I could. David Kraft used a character named E. Hammond Preiss in the Man-Wolf story in CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #37. The character was drawn to look very much like Price. . .I had a short piece on the wave of Mafia buster paperbacks already on stencil for this page but it was literally shoved out of the issue by the fine piece of Karl's that just made the deadline by hours. I want to thank Karl again for the time he took to do this piece for me as I know what a crushing schedule he has. The Mafia buster piece contained nothing very profound, only a few minor observations on the patterns they fall in. Most are Viet Nam vets. After all, where else do you learn how to kill with skill. Most also seem to swear revenge on organized crime for the death of a loved one of some sort. They all have nicknames that read like titles of Matt Helm books: Butcher, Destroyer, Executioner, Revenger, Marksman, Sharpshooter, Enforcer, Lone Wolf, Penetrator, Liquidator, etc. Someday I would like to read a piece on this phenomenon that is more than an interview with Don Pendelton.

FROM: Edwin L. Murray  
2540 Chapel Hill Rd  
Durham, N. C. 27707

Trade



TO:

FIRST CLASS MAIL

J. D. Siclari  
4304 Richmond Ave  
Staten Island, N.Y. 10312