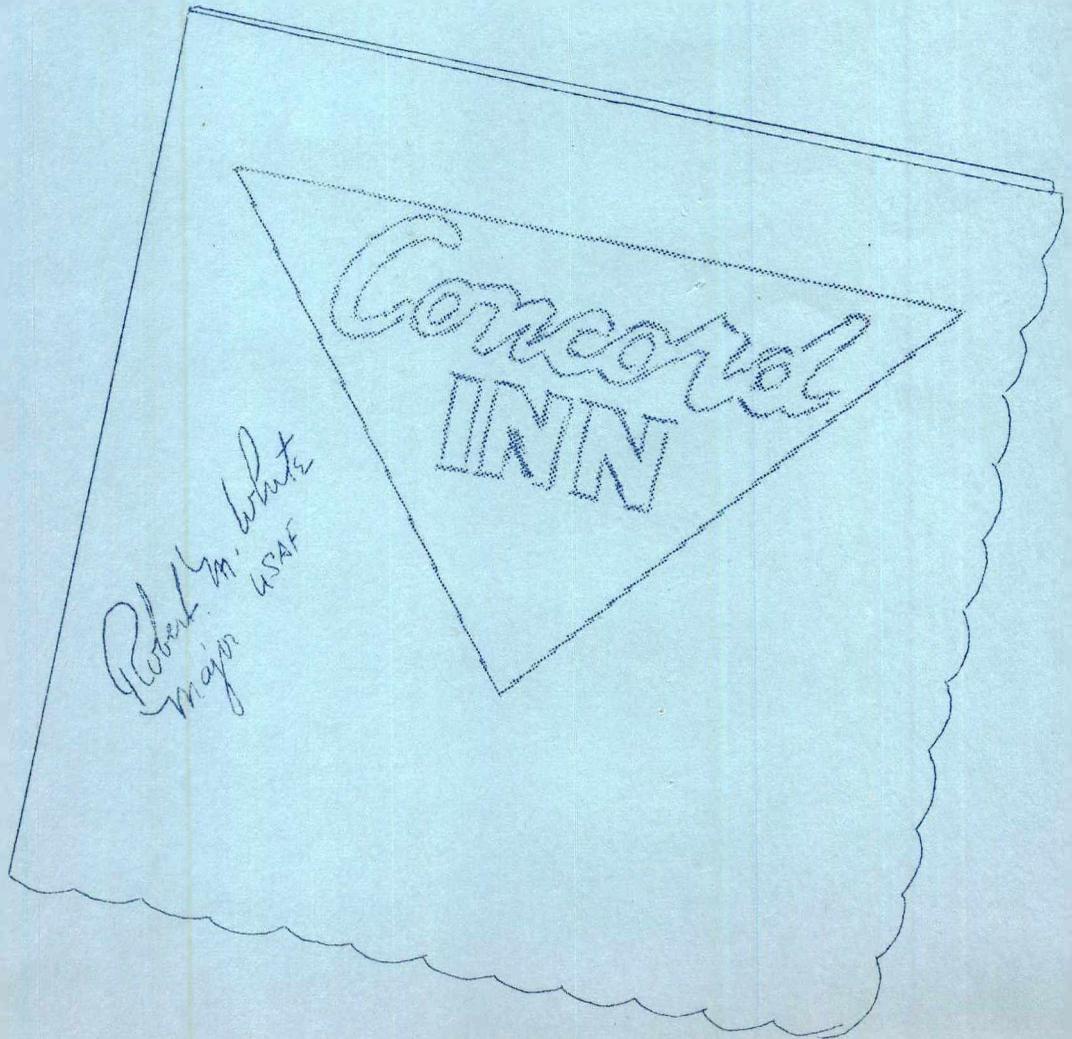


THE ZED



This is Zed #801, published by Karen Anderson, 3 Las Palomas, Orinda, California. No, and it isn't what I thought this issue would be like, either.

Here we go, late as usual and far too late to write a convention report. I'm sorrier than you are; I'd like to have remembered more details. I'll have to settle for a report on one session of the 13th Annual Conference on Nondestructive Testing. Didn't know there was one, did you?

Neither did I, till I saw an item in the paper that Monday night, September 24th. It said there was going to be a banquet the next evening. . . and it was only over in Concord, twenty minutes away. . .

Interlude on pin-ups

I used to have any number of pin-up photographs, but my favorite for quite a while was one I had on the inside of my locker door when I was in the tenth grade or so. It was of some diva (I remember it as Patrice Munsel) costumed as the Rosenkavalier. I've started a new series of pinups now. . . it wasn't until I remembered that one, though, that I got a new insight into why I have them. You see, I mainly liked the idea of getting to dress up like that. My new pinups? Four photographs of men in spacesuits.

Meanwhile, Back at the Concord Inn

So there I was in my brand-new green hat, complete with fur cape, basic black dress and pearl-and-gold necklace, going to a convention banquet. The guest of honor was Major Robert White--- the man who knows how to set a spaceship down on a runway. (I'd had a letter from Bob Heinlein a year before saying that the X-15 was the only true spaceship built yet; I was certainly glad to see it officially recognized when White got his astronaut wings.) It was easy to pick him out in the big, crowded lobby: he was the one everybody was getting autographs from. Most of them said they wanted his autograph for their children, but I admitted it--- I wanted one for myself.

I asked him if he read science fiction, and he said yes; but he didn't sound as though it interested him especially. I tried to explain what it means to a spacehappy nut like me or, I don't doubt, most of you when we see our dreams becoming reality. But it's hard to communicate sense-of-wonder.

I never dreamed I'd meet a genuine honest-to-Gernsback space pilot. . . goshwowboyoboy. . .

The Management Says You Can't Sit There

"There" being a block of about a dozen places reserved for the press. I got into the banquet room fairly early and nabbed a place next to the press section, well up front and near center. The food was excellent and probably the cheapest banquet I've been to: \$4.00. Too bad Concord is such an out of the way place, or I'd recommend it to the Westercon committee. (Swimming pool, even golf ferpetesake --- what a motel!)

After the meal (and, incidentally, there was a bar waitress on hand; I wanted brandy after dinner and got it pronto) there were a few bits of protocol, introductions etc., which can't have lasted above five minutes. Then came the really important part. Major White talked about the X-15. (He began by remarking that although this isn't really the kind of non-destructive testing Naval Ordnance does, you could think of it that way --- a point which had occurred to me an hour or more earlier, considering how much hardware is thrown away on every Project Mercury shot.) I took any number of notes on the back of another cocktail napkin; unfortunately, my desk is in its usual state. The notes are most likely in the late Pre-Cambrian strata. Where am I typing? On the kitchen table --- isn't that where I always type?

Anyway, it was very interesting.

Home Movies

At least, it seems remarkably like a home movie when there's no sound and you hear on-the-spot commentary by someone who's in the picture. Now if you read "Edwards Air Force Base" for "home"

...

It was quite short, and consisted of a static firing and a flight. Well . . . gee whiz goshwow. . . what can you say about something so beautiful?

I'll try quoting General Dornberger, though. He was working on the A-4, which eventually became the V-2, and Hitler inspected the project in 1939 without being impressed: "This was the first time that anyone had witnessed the massive output of gas at enormous speed, in luminous colors, from a rocket exhaust, and heard the thunderous-rumble of power thus released, without being enraptured, thrilled, and carried away by the spectacle." And that's just a static firing.

While I'm thinking of Dornberger, by the way, I'll just throw this in --- it seems the Gestapo arrested von Braun and two other researchers in 1944 for "sabotage," namely, going along with the A-4 project just because it furthered their interest in space flight. To which Dornberger replied that they'd better arrest him too, as he felt the same way. (All this is from Dornberger's book V-2.) By the way, it was just 20 years ago last week that an A-4 reached a height of 60 miles. He knew then that he had a spaceship, and remarked that as soon as the war was over they'd have to start on some way to land the things. Which gets us back, I believe, to Major White.

I can't describe the wonder of the X-15 in flight, but here's what the movie showed. The plane was tucked under the wing of its B-whatsit, with a wide belt of hoarfrost around the midsection where the LOX tank is. They took off, and climbed up to whatever altitude it was --- sorry to be so hazy; I do wish I'd found those notes. This part was all covered from other planes. The X-15 was released and went off like nothing else on Earth. That was followed from the other planes for a while. Then came a much-too-short sequence taken from the X-15 in space. Then it landed, taken from the ground.

What a beautiful, beautiful thing!

I can't say it's the most beautiful sight I've ever seen, but I'd put it pretty close to the ICBM I watched from the back yard. (I've mentioned it before --- one fired from Vandenberg at just the right time of day.) When the contrail stopped and there was that lovely glow like a short-tailed comet going on and on, I knew I could only be looking at a rocket in space. I was actually seeing that crazy Buck Rogers stuff in front of my very eyes. "Oh, boy, what a view!" I can see, out the kitchen window, the bit of sky where it finally disappeared, near the brightening evening star. (I wish I may, I wish I might. . .)

I believe "spacehappy" was the word I used a few pages back. Hm, I think it's time for a haiku:

Over our plum tree
A shining trajectory:
Oh, star light, star bright!

I'll talk about something else now, and get the lump out of my throat.

Fighting Off the Deadline

Yesterday I was all set to do this issue and (I hoped) mail it today. I cleared the kitchen table, brought out the typewriter, looked for stencils . . . looked . . . looked . . .

There hadn't been a stencil in the house since July.

This morning I got up early and rushed down to the Gestetner agency. While I was at it I shot my whole wad on heavy cover stock and a second-hand color change kit. If I hadn't, I might have bought something silly like clothes. Dean Grennell (a good man . . . oh, you knew?) had sent me some convention pictures and I asked them whether the one of my costume would Gestafax. They tested it and advised me that I'd better retouch the wings to make them show. That's why the next Zed will probably have a cover reprinted from Alif; there just isn't time to fuss around with it now.

Speaking of that costume, does anyone know whether it ever appeared in LIFE? I was told it would be "late September or early October" if it was used at all.

Root, Root, Root for the Home Team

Even if the Giants lose the series (and I rather expect them to), good grief --- I never thought they'd play in it! I've never lived any place where the home team had the slightest chance at the pennant. The World Series was just something that interested other people. And now the Giants are playing. . . not that I'm interested to listen on the radio; I just had to ask Astrid about today's game. She says the Giants won it. It doesn't seem real.

"I Bought Your Story, But You're Wrong"

We just got a typical John Campbell letter. He's taking Poul's latest story --- one about Nick van Rijn --- but he took a couple of pages complaining about various aspects of low-temperature chemistry involved in it. This happens all the time. He never asks for revisions, but he almost always disagrees with some point in the physics (damn this typer) or chemistry or sociology of a story.

I've missed him at the last couple of conventions; I do like John, in spite of everything. I still hope to write something I can sell him.

I Don't Quite Hate Ferman

I thought I was going to have to join the We-Hate-Ferman club. Groff Conklin wanted to anthologize my haiku, and Ferman wouldn't release the rights for quite some time. I checked the dates on the letters from Conklin and the contract, and it turned out that it exactly fitted the three-month period during which I wasn't allowed to resell the work. Ferman also held first anthology rights but he must have decided (or Avram decided) not to use the haiku in F&SF's 1962 annual. I'd much rather appear in a Conklin antho, but for a while there I was worried.

A Bribe of Eunuchs

Today's mail brought a request from Ron Ellick to illustrate a story that won a prize in the NFFF contest. I appreciate his confidence in me, but I'm puzzled by his offer of ten eunuchs anointed with bheer to shout my name eternally in the halls of Jophan. In Bloch's name why eunuchs? And anyway, where in fandom would he find them?

Speaking of Jophan, Saturday's Oakland Trib had a headline quoting Joe Fan but it was just something about the World Series: "Giants To Win, Says Joe Fan." They might, at that.

Department of Filling the Last Stencil

This isn't a poem yet, just sort of notes-to-work-from. It's about a trip to the Canadian Rockies several years ago; I've been remembering this bit and wishing I weren't too busy to spend a couple of days working on it.

That was a helluva day, the kind that starts
so bad you know you're going to wish
before it's over, that you could have just skipped it.
It was raining of course, but I couldn't stay
in a camp consisting of one crowded tent
and a dripping table, noplac at all to read
even if there was a book I wanted
within fifteen miles' slogging.
If I'd known I'd come back with squelchy socks
(which I did) and find the tent needed bailing,
air mattresses awash in rainwater and marmot shit
I wouldn't have been surprised. But I marched off
with spare kotex making my jeans too tight, and cramps.

O the cliffs, the Morning Glory Lakes!