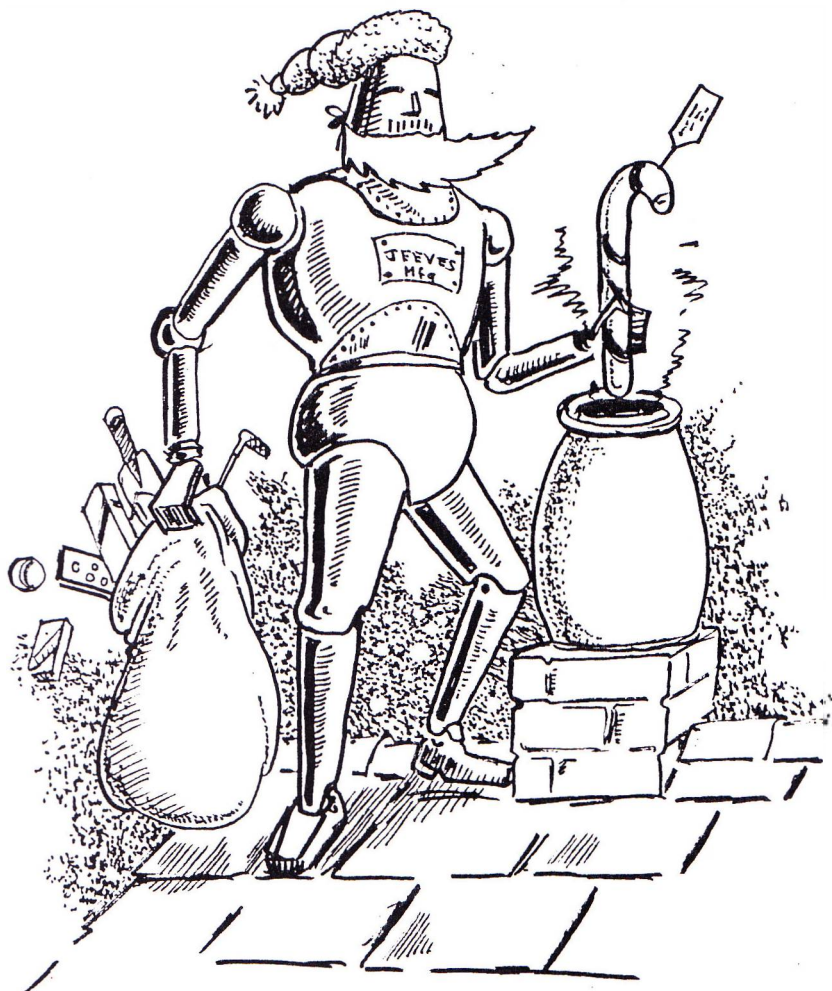


# ERG 148

QUARTERLY  
JANUARY 2000

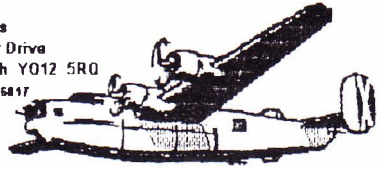
Now in its 41st, Year



# ERG.148

January 2000  
QUARTERLY

Terry Jeeves  
56 Red Scar Drive  
Scarborough YO12 5RQ  
Ph. (01723) 376417



Happy Millennium !

If you enjoyed this issue, you can get the next by sending a LOC, but sadly, for some of you regular 'silent readers', if you forget this little chore I'm afraid this will be your last issue.. Solution, LOC away.

Sale news, I've sold off all my unwanted paperbacks, so the next thing is to organise new lists of ex-collection items to be sold. Meanwhile, anyone out there interested in buying a 1935 run of Astounding or assorted hardcover SF, just send me a SAE for lists. Oversea readers can omit the SAE, just ask ...and a hearty thank you to all the good fen who send me used (or mint) American stamps, or use dollops, of them on their envelopes. Ta muchly.

**S.O.S. Help sorely needed.** Can anyone out there transfer Wordwise+ files on 5.25" discs, into AmiPro or Word Perfect files on 3.5" floppies?

Things got a bit hectic for this issue, first PC snags held things back until a rescue visit by John Rupik put things right. a week later, Paintbrush locked up and barred me from all my drawing files. John sent me a replacement and things are almost normal - except the hard disc groans loudly on bootup and needs several tries before it loads. All these happening took time, and then we had a visit from daughter Sandra and two year old Karina. This necessitated burying the Beeb and the PC to avoid surplus key bashing. So After all this, material tried to exceed available space so that both Fanzines and LOC columns got shortened, so if you find this issue a bit chaotic, now you know why. Hopefully, we'll be back to normal for the next, 41st Annish Issue. I hope you'll still be on the mailing list.

I just. got a copy of the 60 page, ERG-sized 'Light's List. Read on.....

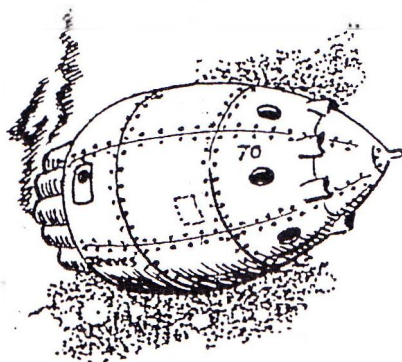
### Light's List of Literary Magazines 1999

Contains the names, addresses and brief note of interests of 1375 UK and overseas (USA, Uk, Australian, European, African and Asian) small press magazines publishing work in English. £1.50 including postage (USA \$4.00 surface, \$5.00 air). Please make cheques payable to John Light (British Postal orders or stamps acceptable instead), 37 The Meadows, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1NY, Great Britain.

And whilst giving plugs, cast a look at the back page to find out about ERG's printers whom I can heartily recommend. And so, here's wishing you A HAPPY MILLENNIUM and I hope you all escaped the Bug

*All the best  
Terry*

## Something In The Air



All the gadgetry from the Black Sapper's Earthworm to spaceships and Flying Robots, had one thing in common. Judging by the artwork, everything had been built in a shipyard using 1" steel plates joined by umpty-thousand rivets. Presumably the theory was that robots, spaceships and everything mechanical, must be made and assembled by mechanics working in shipyards or steelworks. They use hefty metal plates, welding gear, big hammers and large rivets. So, to make futuristic gadgetry more futuristic, the artists simply threw in more rivets and heavier steel plating - preferably with plenty of girder work and angle iron. Indeed, in Herbert Strang's 'A Thousand Miles An Hour', the super flying machine was made of steel plates from old mine trucks!

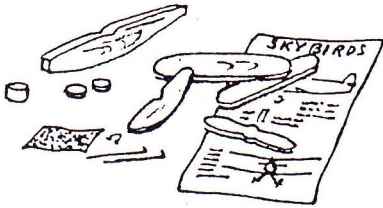
We also had real ironmongery around in the weird equipment found in some shops of that era. If you bought anything in one local shop, your money would be placed in the lower half of a hollow wooden ball. This was then screwed to its upper half which nestled inside an arrangement of wires and springs. The assistant yanked a handle, there was a loud twang and the ball went shooting along a cable, down the shop to vanish through a tiny hole leading into the inner sanctum of the cash office. Here resided a financial expert who knew how to tot up your bill, give change and make out a receipt. Having wrought all this magic, the ball was sent flying back with the result.

Wilkes Hardware, had a much higher-tech system. A spaghetti-like labyrinth of pneumatic pipes coiled around their building from department to department. Your money went into a cylindrical can. To the accompaniment of loud hissing, this was shoved through a little door into the tube and off sped the mini space capsule to the accountants lair. You and the counter assistant would then inspect each other's features for ten minutes or so, until change and receipt returned. These systems might have minimised counter errors, but they certainly prevented you from suddenly deciding to buy something else after the bird had flown.

Usually however, aeroplanes were the exceptions to all this ironmongery. In those halcyon days, real aircraft were woefully underpowered creations made from high-tech materials such as wood, canvas, string, sealing wax and a large dash of luck. When it came to showing machines of the future, the illustrators served up things looking like demented box-kites driven by propellers which resembled Lacrosse racquets.

I've been an avid aircraft buff since I was knee high to a pulp magazine. I made 'solids' which in those pre-plastic days, meant they were carved from a chunk of SOLID wood. After scrounging a chunk of balsa or a piece of firewood, you set to work carving.

4



If you felt affluent, it was possible to buy a 'SKYBIRD' kit. For sixpence in good hard cash, you got a boxful of crudely shaped chunks of timber, some lengths of twisted wire, a propeller blank, a scrap of sandpaper and a pair of unfinished wooden disks destined to become wheels. By the application of razor blade, elbow-grease, bad language, dabs of paint, slashed fingers and

sheer persistence you could make a scale model vaguely resembling its full-size counterpart. My model flying started with a stick model which ferociously attacked a Walls' Ice Cream cart, and then came a Hart, Battle, Hurricane and Fokker D-7. These were all flying models -- provided I threw them hard enough.

I also acquired a large assortment of aeronautical publications. Chief among these was FLYING ACES which billed itself as 'Three magazines in one' because it served up fiction, air news and modelling. Its fiction (90% of which seemed to be by someone called, 'Arch Whitehouse') was puerile, but I drooled over the models, and the ads. You could buy kits with pre-formed balsa shells, engines cost only a few cents, and there was even a set of moulds for all the Buck Rogers' characters, some bars of lead, and a miniature electric furnace. "Cast your own SF characters!"

Then there was the pulp magazine, DAREDEVIL ACES, all our gang read and enjoyed one particular yarn about a squadron of Fokker D-7s known as 'The Orange Tango'. Very soon, we all acquired crudely carved model aircraft mounted on the handlebars of our bicycles and painted a virulent shade of orange. We survived many hazardous 'dog fights' until the rising cost of repairs brought an Armistice.

We had no race relations boards in those days. All Germans (Jerries or Huns) were bad, all Allied (i.e. American) pilots were good. The aerial dog-fights almost always involved Fokker D-7s against Spads and used three standard themes.

Scenario.1 The sneaky old Von Ricketyoven (Germans were always called 'Von-something-or-other') would come up behind the rookie pilot from his hiding place in the sun and shoot down the poor fellow. He must have been very sunburnt from all the time spent lurking up there. When the hero came to avenge his fallen comrade, Von Supponatime would try some cowardly trick such as slumping down in his cockpit as if wounded. He would go into a spiral dive, and the upright, sporting hero would of course wave a salute and break off combat. The villain would then come back and have another pop at the hero while he was looking the other way. At this point, the Allied flyer was allowed to shoot down the Hun.

Scenario.2 Twelve Jerry pilots were allowed to knock the stuffing out of two or three Allied flyers, provided that before crashing into oblivion, each brave Yankee airman (There were no British flyers in WW.1) first shot down four or five Germans. It didn't pay to check the mathematics too closely, as the Allies frequently shot down twenty or more planes from an attacking force of a dozen.

Scenario.3 If the hero got tangled with more than six opponents, he could be shot down, but only after downing half of the enemy forces. At this point, his guns would jam, a lucky burst of

Spandau fire would stop his engine, his Spad would have more holes than a colander, and a bullet would crease his skull knocking him temporarily unconscious. He would awake after a crash landing to find himself behind the enemy lines with one of the baddies landing nearby. The German would stride arrogantly forward, draw his Luger and with a cruel sneer, point it straight between our hero's eyes. Facing death as the Jerry's finger whitened on the trigger. Our hero dives at the villain's legs, brings him crashing to the floor, delivers a straight right to the jaw, jumps into the waiting Fokker D-7 and tootles off home for tea.

An expert at all these tricks, was G-8 the master spy cum-flying ace and master of disguise. In the magazine, G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES, the hero's totally secret base was in the end hangar at Le Bourget aerodrome, where he was ministered to by his token English manservant, 'Battle'. G-8 had two regular sidekicks, the highly superstitious, All-American quarterback, 'Bull' Martin whose Spad bore the number 7, and the diminutive 'Nippy' Weston whose Spad defied fate by flying the number 13. This trio got up to all sorts of daring escapades against the evil Germans.

Now and then our heroes were aided by the lovely lady spy, R-1. Her main task was to get captured at regular intervals so that G-8 could risk his neck in saving her. Although a luscious bit of homework, R-1 was regularly threatened by fates far more ghastly than the traditional worse-than-death variety. Flying ghouls, zombies, werewolves, poison gas, vats of acid or lumbering tanks could all get in her way, but never a hint of s-x. Heads might crunch, blood spatter the cockpit as a leaden hail sleeted its steel-jacketed messages of death, through the fuselage. Flesh might char and flake away in some hellish inferno, but no hint of slap or tickle was allowed to mar the even tenure of her ways. R-1 was always chaste, but never caught.

Not only did our heroes oppose the total might of the German Airforce, but they also faced the evil machinations of their arch-enemy, Herr Doktor Kreuger. This nasty character invented ghoulish bat-planes, skeleton pilots, zombies, werewolves, strange gases and in one yarn, giant muscles which were grafted onto observation balloons hidden in artificial clouds. These would reach out to snatch Allied aircraft from the skies.

G-8 always triumphed over each new terror, whilst the Doktor would vanish in some catastrophe of his own creation. An issue or two later, he would return minus an arm, leg or other bit of his anatomy, but with another ghastly weapon designed to bring a German victory.

AIR TRAILS covered the adventures of flier Bill Barnes in his superplane, but for real futuristic stuff, DUSTY AYRES AND HIS BATTLE BIRDS led the field. Dusty's aircraft, 'Silver Flash II', closely resembled the Gee Bee air-racing death traps of the day. This hero was involved in a war against the Black Invaders who came in giant 'flying wing' bombers to overthrow America.

They don't write 'em like that any more (thank goodness). Meanwhile, on the Home Front, magazines such as AIR STORIES, concentrated on British airmen rather than Americans. I suspect that if someone had invented a machine-gun capable of delivering straight lefts to the jaw and uppercuts instead of bullets, it would have been

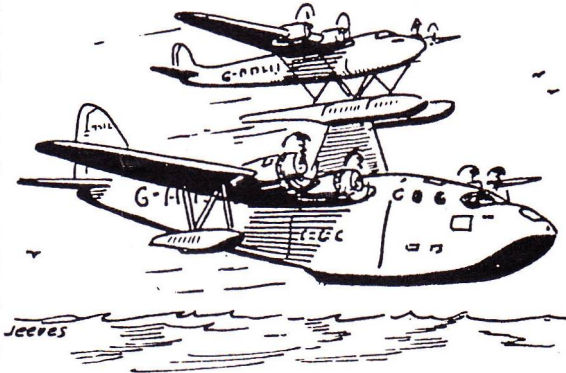


installed on the British aircraft. Most of the artwork in AIR STORIES was done in a soot-and-whitewash technique by S.R.Drigin. This not only gave the pictures a decidedly fuzzy air but for a long time had me convinced that all airmen were furry and had bristly chins.

Another magazine of that era was the prestigious AERONAUTICS which cost a whole shilling. It featured such forward looking articles as, 'The Effect of Drag on High-Speed Aircraft', which in those days meant any capable of 250 mph! It also speculated daringly that future airliners might be capable of carrying up to 50 passengers!

Alan Cobham's 'Flying Circus' toured England, often coming to Sheffield's tiny Airfield. It was there that I saw the two 'birdmen', American, Clem Sohn and the British Harry Ward. Wearing suits with built-in wings they would leap from aircraft and soar through the sky before landing via parachute. I saw a 'Flying Flea' that tore fussily up and down the field without getting airborne and daredevils performing real wing-walking, not the firmly strapped on stuff demonstrated nowadays. One flier specialised in fastening a hook to a wingtip, then flying low, banking his plane and scooping up a handkerchief!

One of the problems facing aviation in those days, was the fact that taking off required a lot of power, but once in the air, it was capable of flying with a far heavier load than it could lift off the ground. One solution built by Short Brothers, was the Mayo Composite. They created the 'Maia' by taking one of their elegant C class, four-engined flying boats, broadened its hull and did a few other modifications. They then designed a smaller, four-engined floatplane called, 'Mercury'. Mercury was lifted by a crane and perched on top of Maia. With all eight engines roaring away, the combination tore across the sea and rose into the air. Once at altitude, the overladen Mercury separated from the Maia, before flying off to create a world long distance record.



The pick-a-back idea was later used by NASA to ferry the Space Shuttle around aboard a modified Boeing 747. The idea hadn't originated with the Mayo Composite however. Much earlier, various such experiments had been conducted by the British R.F.C. and also the Russian Air Force .. in one experiment, one of their giant bombers having air-launched no less than five fighters! If you went back far enough, maybe it would turn out that Daedalus gave Icarus a boost into the air to get him started.

## GENERAL CHUNTERING

7

I regret that I don't have anything planned for this "Chunter" (yes, sometimes I do even if it ain't obvious) and I can hardly try the editor's patience by going on about Eurocon a third time, so I had best look at some of the comments on previous "Chunterings", to see if they can strike a spark. I am just (well, I have unpacked and reshelved the stock I brought home) back from NOVACON, which was quite successful albeit I think the attendance was down. And, of course, filled with "actifans"; now, me, I have always been a supporter of the opinion that anyone who reads sf in any form is a "fan" of science-fantasy; possibly more so than the prolific fanzine editor who boasts he hasn't read an s-f book in years! At least the reader probably purchased (even if only indirectly) the books or magazines which he or she read, which puts some money into the pool that pays the authors and the editors (and the booksellers!). But more or less, Mr. Sullivan, I think we stand on the same shore. Folk who attend conventions, write letters, publish fanzines and all the myriad other things that distinguish "us" from "them" are "active fans"; the others just ride along and pay their money - I think someone in the 50s coined the term "passifan" to indicate "them". Of course today we must also remember that "Read" is not enough. There are also those who "Watch"; I am not much into media-fandom, but I wonder if they have terms for those who, for example, are Star Trek addicts and sit glued to their chairs thru the umpteenth showing of episode 99 (or whatever) but have never attended a convention, written a fan letter, dressed up in ST gear, or bought a copy of "StarTrek Weekly"? I have met one or two, outside fandom - they can tell all sorts of information you don't wish to know, but cannot stir themselves to travel to the next town for a Con. And appear uncertain what you mean by a "fanzine".

Thanks, to Fred Smith for figuring out the magazine prices for me; as the sale of magazines is still falling, and the sale of overworded eight book "trilogies" appears to increase, I can only conclude that a large part of the readership just wants more words for its money. There are some excellent "stand alone" novels around, there are some very good trilogies also - but there are many works where the use of a single word is avoided, when two or three adjectives and an adverb can fill more space. And, presumably, earn more loot. And magazines are cheaper than books, with more variety.

Back quite a few issues and when I was talking about car-repairs and my own inability to cope, road-side, with modern marvels, Roger Waddington mentions chips and circuit boards sealed into plastic boxes. Well, JWC (I think) once described the perfect machine as one that had no moving parts. And didn't one of Simak's later novels have large black "things" that just moved around with no apparent means of getting up and going? Incidentally, Roger, how is your garage off for electric kettles? Mine has about a dozen - nobody will repair them today, so you just buy a new one. Should be possible to have a variation on a classic pantomime: "New kettles for old" until you find the one with genie in. Probably someone has used this already.

And now for the not so good news. Somewhere in the US of A sits the President - of FANDOM, INC.! And the website also has reference to "FANDOM™". I do so hope some in the US of A disputes the reservation of terms which are historical for private use.

Finally, and worse, I have to confirm the death of Walt Willis, on October 20th, and of Norman Shorrock, on 9th November. The latter news reached me this morning as I write; the former was given to me at NOVACON, and as I had received an earlier report a month or more back, that was then denied (correctly) I waited until I could get confirmation, which I received today. Not the best of days, I fear. For that matter, not the best of years. KFS

MEET

THE CUCUMBER  
OF DOOM

The lone Spad flew high over the Western Front, its pilot weaving skilfully between the smoky gray bursts of Archie fire whilst simultaneously consuming the six-course lunch set out on the table strapped to his knee. Before his dawn take-off, G-8's manservant Bottle had prepared the sumptuous repast to speed his master on his death-defying way. Occasionally, G-8 would peruse the map strapped to his elbow, or interrupt his meal to shoot down two or three of the numerous Fokker triplanes which kept sneakily attacking him from out of the sun.

Suddenly there was a deafening clanging which would have terrified many an ordinary pilot. The master spy merely raised an elegant eyebrow, pressed the stop button on his gold-plated alarm clock and took a final look at his map. Many Allied pilots had vanished while in the sector he was now approaching, an area bounded by lines joining Berlin, Munich and Dachau. It was an evil area commonly referred to as the 'Ber-Mu-Da' triangle. Only yesterday, his two assistants, 'Dull' Martin the hulking, All-American rounders player and 'Dippy' Weston, a short, wiry tap dancer, had both failed to return from patrolling the deadly region. The master spy meant to solve the mystery and rescue his buddies in the process.

Stowing the map in a secret pocket hidden cunningly in his trousers, G-8 casually shot down the remaining half dozen attacking Huns. His deft hands sought for and found another secret hiding place. His strong, sinewy, Scrabble-hardened fingers produced an ink pad, and the rubber-stamp of an Iron Cross. Leaning over the cockpit side, he was busily marking up his latest tally of kills when, without any warning, his Spad gave a sickening lurch, swung to one side, and headed straight towards a strangely shaped cloud.

G-8 barely had time to munch the last tasty morsel of 'chemin de fer' before his whirling propeller began to tear its way through the thick mist. Shreds of vapour parted and the master spy gazed in amazement at what lay revealed within the sinister cloud. Nothing more than a giant cucumber to which his plane was being rapidly attracted despite all his manful struggling with the controls. The top surface of the cucumber had been sliced carefully away to create a landing field. Barely had his keen eyes noticed this, than a cruel burst of Spandau fire sleeted leaden death into the engine of his Spad. It died with a brief cough and the whirling propeller slowed to a halt. Quick as a flash, G-8 shoved the stick forward, kicked the rudder bar fiercely, took a quick swig from the bottle of Schnopp's strapped to the joystick and side-slipped the injured biplane to a consummate landing on the cucumber. Barely had his craft rolled to a halt, than a burly, coarse-faced German soldier raced forward to hold a wicked Luger to the American ace's head. With a taut smile on his brave lean lips, the master spy was forced from the cockpit and led away. Even as he went, mechanics began work



repairing the damaged engine of his plane.

G-8 was taken down through a hatch leading into the dank inside of the cucumber, along a narrow tunnel between rows of seeds, and thrust violently into what, to his expert gaze, looked remarkably like the control room of a Zeppelin. His lightning gaze flashed briefly around the chamber. There, manacled to one wall by cruel chains which scratched their medals and badly creased their uniforms, were his two missing assistants. Dull's hair was badly mussed and Dippy's tie was pulled askew; clear evidence of the cruel treatment they had received. The master spy's gaze moved on. Facing him, holding an automatic in one strangely-shaped, black-gloved hand, was his old enemy the arch-fiend, Herr Doktor Kreukut! With a sinister wave of his pistol, the Doktor motioned G-8 to a chair. Purring with delight, his harsh voice grated,

"Yes my dear G-8, it is indeed I, Herr Doktor Kreukut whom you threw into a pretzel-grinding machine only a few months ago. I escaped from that with only the loss of my left leg. As you well know, my right arm was removed when you destroyed my Zombie Squadron.

Thanks to your meddling over the years, I now have an iron leg and a steel arm. I also have a synthetic left hand fashioned from metal. I have a televising right eye plus a pair of sensitive microphone ears. Moreover, my brain is even keener than ever." He paused to burnish a spot of rust from his left ear before resuming. "How do you like my latest invention?" He smirked at G-8 and gestured around him with his metal hand.

"It just looks like an overgrown cucumber to me, you damned walking junk yard", barked the master spy, manfully refraining from gritting his teeth as such treatment damaged the enamel. Out of sight of the crazed scientist, he was busily working his foot out of its encasing flying boot. He hoped the Doktor's sense of smell wasn't too good. "But it IS a giant cucumber," crowed the little hunchbacked fiend. "I fed it with a special formula of my own invention. This caused it to grow to its present huge size. During this time, it was kept in a hydrogen filled glass house. The gas impregnated it throughout until it was lighter than air. Then all I had to do, was slice off the top to form a landing field. Normal Zeppelin controls were installed, a few machine guns, a canteen, torture chamber and all the usual offices. The result is all around you. As for the concealing mist cloud, for that, we keep seventy-six kettles on the boil. Would you care for a cup of tea before I kill you?"

"Yes, and give us some food you swine", burst out 'Dull' Martin from his manacled position. You haven't fed us since yesterday. Despite a raging thirst, the master spy declined the offer of tea. What he wanted was more information. "But what pulled my Spad into the cloud?" he asked. "Another example of your cruelly twisted and devilishly evil, fiendish cunning I suppose". From experience, he knew that flattery was the best way to get the vain Doktor to reveal his secrets.

"Hee-hee-hee" chortled Kreukut with a sinister German giggle, "That was the easiest part of the whole idea. I simply mixed iron filings into the feeding formula and kept a gang of men busy stroking the growing cucumber with big bar magnets. That converted the whole thing into the giant magnet which pulled you here."

That was all G-8 had wanted to know. Inserting his toe into the now fully loosened flying boot, he lashed out dextrously with skilful aim. The heavy missile flew true to its mark on the Herr Doktor's jaw. With a muffled moan, the mad scientist slumped to the floor. It was a matter of moments for the master spy to unshackle his two assistants with the aid of a bunch of skeleton keys hidden in

another of his secret pockets. Rapidly he manacled Kreukut to an upright stanchion. From within yet another pocket, G-8 withdrew a miniature disguise kit. His flashing fingers flew fearlessly fast as with a few dabs of grease paint, some plasticine, a sheet of kitchen foil and an old ballpen, he had altered himself into a perfect replica of the Herr Doktor. Turning to Dull and Dippy, he rapidly changed them to look like typical German soldiers.

"Would you happen to have a sandwich on you?" Dull asked plaintively. G-8 motioned him to silence. Quickly he emptied the contents of Kreukut's waste paper basket on the floor. Removing the strangely overlarge watch from his sinewy wrist, he made swift, cunning adjustments to its numerous buttons. Placing the watch on the pile of papers, he led the way back to the cucumber's airfield.

Motioning a mechanic to him and emulating Kreukut's metallic voice, G-8 asked in fluent German, "Bringen to here the aircraft of the verdammter master spy. It repaired has been, Nicht Wahr?". "Jawohl, Herr Doktor", the cringing mechanic replied in equally fluent German. The Spad was pushed forward, G-8 leaped into the cockpit and as he gunned the throttle, Dull and Dippy scrambled across the wings on either side. Germans rushed forward to stop them, but Dull lashed out one beefy foot knocking them down like skittles. Without waiting for the motor to warm up, the master spy taxied the Spad to the end of the cucumber, swung it round and waited ... Bullets were now whispering their evil messages of death as they sleeted their leaden way through the flimsy fabric of the fuselage. It was only a matter of time before they found a mark in yielding human flesh. The master spy coolly ignored them as he waited...

Then it came! First a dull crump as the highly secret Uranium atoms in the illuminated dial of the timing watch exploded - then a fountain of flame and smoke as the hydrogen filled cucumber caught fire. "Let's get going", yelled Dippy Weston. "What are we waiting for?"

"Simple", laughed the master spy. "I had to wait for the heat to destroy the magnetism so we could get away. Hang on, here we go..." He gunned the engine and the heavily laden Spad shot over the edge and dropped sickeningly into space. With deft skill, G-8 brought it under control. On the brief flight back, Dull Martin hungrily scoured the floor of the cockpit for remains of the master spy's lunch - but to no avail. The underfed Hun mechanics on the cucumber had scoffed the lot.

With consummate skill, the master spy brought the overladen Spad in over the Le Bourget airfield, which, as everyone knows, was his secret base. He dropped it on to the runway as lightly as a feather and taxied to the end hangar before cutting the engine (he used his pocket-knife). Behind them over the Western Front, a huge spiral of sinister black smoke curled into the air denoting the end of the fiendish Kreukut and his deadly cucumber.

G-8's manservant Bottle, was waiting for them with soap, hot water and clean towels. Within minutes they were their normal clean-cut American selves. "Nice to see you all back again, sirs," he said. "I've made a big pot of tea and some sandwiches for you." "Damned good show, Bottle old fellow," barked Dull Martin. Wasting no time, the hungry Bottle Ace scooped up a handful of sandwiches, thrust them into his mouth and began to chew. Then his face changed.

With a grimace, he spat them out again. "Just what did you put in those darned things?" he demanded of the astonished Bottle. "Why sir," replied the manservant, "I thought you'd like them, I actually managed to get hold of some cucumber."

THE OLD MILL STREAM -- A Country Column of City Life

by Penelope Fandergaste

Oh for the open highway, Oh for the open road... How's that for a poetic beginning (I almost wrote "opening," but that would have been overdoing it)? All I need now is another dozen lines or so to complete it. I'll have to ask Pam Ayres. She says she's a poet.

And now *is* the time to think of that open highway, to pull on the old thermals, snuggle inside that electric blanket... it helps if you plug it in and turn it on (aren't you thankful for these snippets of Good Advice?)...pull down the ear flaps, pour out a boiling hot toddy, move away from the draughts whistling through the double glazing and dig out the photo album with those out of focus prints of the shots taken during the summer. Oh, sure, tell me about it... I know all about these automatic-focus cameras, but you have to hold the dam things *steady*. 'Taint always possible. The old whisky shake will out.

And what memories those smudgy prints evoke! The old caravan shakled to the Mini and taken to the hills. Those cheeful horns blaring in our wake as we trundled through Glen Coe (I'll get that piper next time, I swear it). The joys of those early morning showers in the blockhouses before the boilers had stoked up the temperature of the water at mid-day. Negotiating with that cheery kilted farmer to have him move his Angus bull from our path to the same shower block. The cafe proprietor who kindly explained the exchange rate between Scottish and English bank notes...

Perhaps we should have reverted to our annual holidays abroad ... Let's dig out last year's prints... The airport lounge where we spent three days waiting for the French Air Traffic Controllers to settle their strike. The building site next door to our holiday hotel on the Costa. Enrico, the Greek waiter who made eyes at everyone in a skirt. Stavros, the Spanish car rental agent who made eyes at everyone in trousers. The medical centre where we spent so much time with tummy troubles.

Enough! Let us return to the present, replenish our glass and trun our attention to the Box. Let's make sure that we watch as much as possible while we have the opportunity, before the BBC puts up the licence fee and forces us to have digital boxes stuck on the roof next to those obsolete squariels.

Yes, of course I'm being sarcastic. It's my Nasty Side. We all know that the BBC spens its licence fee money sensibly. Like forking out fifteen million spondulicks on a brand new newsroom building. Must be necessary. The old one is two years old.

So, okay, that was a minor aberration. Most of the money is spent on programmes, ensuring us of excellent documentaries, quality drama and wonderful spirit-lifting variety.

Like the programme I caught last week, a survey on shop-lifting. The programme makers hired a shop in the centre of Manchester or Bideford or somesuch and kitted it out with stock. And hidden cameras behind a false wall. The BBC team then opened the store for trading and we watched different thieves remove various items from the shelves. One woman snaffled fifty jars of instant coffee, even returning to finish an incomplete sortee. Everyone connected with the programme seemed overjoyed that they had proved that shoplifting exists. Wonder what they did with the unsold stock? Bet it wasn't on S.O.R.

Aw, who am I to question the moguls at the BBC? Maybe the point really *couldn't* have been put across more cheaply.

Oh for the open highway! Let me get out that photo album again.

--ooOoo--

--pf



Many of these notes should have appeared in the last issue, but were held up because of that computer spafu. Now read on.

**OPUNTIA 41.5 & 42 and then 42.1 and 42.5**

Dale Speirs, PO Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 2E7 each is ERG size, side printed and crammed with LOCs and articles on filk singing,

## FANZINES

personal musings, e-mail, fanzines and general comment. Trade or \$3.00

**VISIONS OF PARADISE.80** from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Mount Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 A nice cover, several pages of personal diary notes and musings, the problems of University entry, book reviews, three pages of humour and a hefty LOCcol

**CHALLENGER.9** Guy H.Lillian, PO Box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-3092, USA No less than 106 pages, a striking cover and a great article on Civil War re-enactment. Then a travel account, a memory of Willy Ley, and a page of fan photos. Next illness at a Con, followed by illness in the postal service, tales of idiotic college days and 16 pages of fanzine reviews. Paint drying, a book review and a 44page LOCcol and some chilling memories of law cases. Great one, get it for trade or \$6.00. It's a steal either way.

**PLOKTA** June 1999 14pp from Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading Berks, RG30 2RP Crammed with small illos and photos and a wide-ranging, text of personal notes, travels and comment which may offend some. Smashing cover.

**THE KNARLEY KNEWS.76** 24 pp from Henry Welch, 1525 16th. Ave. Grafton, WI 53024-2017, USA Personal natter, articles by Charlotte Proctor and myself, another episode of Don Pattenden's epic cycle ride and loads of LOCs. Nice and friendly, and later No.78 26pp on travel, memorable fan writing, effects of TV violence, movies and lotsa LOCs.

**FOSFAX.195**, PO BOX 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281, USA Another massive 84 page issue crammed with reviews, comment, articles and a huge lettercol with bags of argument on sundry issues. Get 6 issues for \$18.00 (\$21.00 in an envelope)

**BARMAID.7**, Yvonne Rowse, Evergreen, Hall's Farm Lane, Trimpey, Worcs. DY12 1NP. 22 pages on Convention, personal notes, drinking, sex, travel, and LOCs. Outspoken, so may offend some, otherwise a nice cheerful read.

**HIDALGO.50** Brian E.Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224. No less than 50 pages crammed with pulp nostalgia. Reviews of Edmond Hamilton's works, Weird Tales, a pulp hero Index, fiction in TWS, LOCs, and lots of excellent art reproductions used as fillos, plus superb, full colour (Weird Tales) covers

**PLOKTA.15** Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berks RG30 2RP 14pp. of assorted personal news, natter and comment. A nice piece on book hunting, comment on asparagus, dieting, LOCs eclipse adventures and plenty of illos and photographs.



## WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

By James Verran

As a child I was frequently admonished for my reluctance to eat crusts, and seldom permitted to leave the table until my plate literally sparkled -- butted clean by the aforementioned. Any question as to why, invariably prompted that hoary proverb -- which seemed somewhat trite, even to my young mind. Further explanation went along the lines of: "There are millions of starving children who would be grateful for those scraps of food, so eat up and don't ask so many questions." Although tempted, I never dared to suggest that my leftovers should be sent to the less fortunate.

My early upbringing was overseen, in turn, by two sets of grandparents, one of which spoiled me and allowed me to run feral. The other, strict Methodists of Cornish stock, insisted I be seen and not heard. I suspect a fair amount of tension existed between my seniors on what they considered the best method for rearing young James. Nevertheless, the Methodist influence, although frugal and strict, was loving and kind, while the other, exhibiting a poor family's tolerance and warmth for children, was equally loving. I am fortunate to have had such a balanced upbringing.

Although worlds apart in attitudes, the lasting memory of my maternal and paternal grandparents is their striking similarity. The war in Europe had just ended and The Bomb was about to enter the vocabulary. Australia was a nervous expanse of sparsely-populated rural communities and bustling coastal cities. In those days, Australians lived with the knowledge that they were alone and ripe for invasion.

Every household with a backyard grew its own vegetables and many collected as much rainwater as possible. Even in towns with reticulation, sewers and septic tanks were rare in all but the largest cities. In the rural districts we made do with either a "long drop", or a collection provided by the Corporation of local councils. My Methodist grandfather shunned the Corporation collection, preferring to enter the contents of the pan in trenches surrounding the fruit trees in an isolated part of his extensive garden. It produced the juiciest peaches, nectarines, apricots and citrus fruits imaginable, as well as vegetables of unsurpassed size and perfection. His cellar was stacked with bottles and earthenware jars of preserved produce, enough to last another world war.

My other grandfather was equally endowed with land and lived in a valley with a more reliable rainfall. Their self-sufficiency differed in that they traded eggs and dressed birds from their large poultry run for extra vegetables. Grandpa was also a successful apiarist so there was never a shortage of food. All leftovers and scraps were fed to the poultry, which enhanced egg production and provided plump birds for our table. Both sides of my family ad farming relatives, so there were always sides of mutton or pork or the occasional quarter of beef available.

Neither branch of my family wasted much and large family dinners were a regular part of our culture.

My life changed dramatically a year after Japan surrendered, when my father returned from New Guinea, via a prolonged stay in hospital. Until he obtained full-time work, we

lived in turn, with both pairs of grandparents, followed by a short stay on a farm. Dad taught me how to handle a boat, catch fish and net rabbits using ferrets and I was also taught how to shoot, and above all, to handle firearms with care and respect. Dad had two simple rules: never aim at anything you don't intend to shoot, and don't shoot anything you aren't prepared to eat.

The really happy times in my life came from being allowed to invent, build, or repair anything I wished, within reason, in the sheds of my grandfathers, and later, that of my father. The Aussie shed provides personal space for males, a place to do men's things without getting under the feet of wives and mothers.

My maternal grandfather was first to foster my talents for bending nails, gapping planes and chisels, and mashing slots in screws. His patience was legend, and being inventive and a true artisan, he resharpened his tools and taught me how to withdraw, straighten and drive nails back in at a more suitable angle. I was even shown how to use a hacksaw blade with the set ground from the teeth, to repair the slots in large screws. Tinsnips were one of my favourite tools, and after studying how cardboard boxes were shaped and assembled, I began fashioning some not-so-square tin boxes. Used tinplate was plentiful, four-gallon honey tins were easy to come by, but they were an unforgiving resource -- my hands still bear some of the scars. Grandpa was a great recycler; nails and screws were abundant, mostly salvaged and stored according to size and grade in dozens of trays -- also made from recycled honey tins. Wood, often the same timber from which came the nails and screws, was also plentiful. Whenever furniture, crates or containers were dismantled, every screw, nail, nut or bolt was extracted for future use. Despite being left-handed, I acquired skills which have stood me in good stead to this day.

Although my other grandfather was not as well equipped with hand tools (he was the gardener), he was equally tolerant and introduced me to the joys of horticulture. When he eventually passed his tools down to my father, my education continued. The die was cast, I was destined to become a hoarder of miscellaneous hardware.

My mentors have since gone to that great salvage yard in the sky, so continuing the family tradition now rests upon my shoulders. Although my acquisitions fall well short of their individual collections, I am getting there. My own shed, known to the family as 'The Factory', is stacked to the rafters and despite many cleanings, would provide a challenge to any foolhardy intruder: getting in is not the problem, but escaping without being buried alive is another matter. Apart from my lapidary benches, there are boxes and cupboards crammed with tools and materials, a lawn-mower, a bicycle (when the children were living at home there were up to five bikes), a mulching machine, as well as the usual assortment of gardening tools. The real treasures are the left-over rolls of vinyl flooring, wood panels, spare doors and electrical and electronic sundries, all of which "may come in handy some day", but not necessarily in my lifetime.

My children and grandchildren know that when they need a rare fastener or an obscure component for something or other, they need only arrive at my workshop with their wish lists. It seems only yesterday that my offspring used to laugh at me when I would pick up the assorted bits and pieces left over from various projects, and place them into tins and jars, or those mini-drawer sets they too delight into presenting to me for Christmas, birthdays and so on.



**Robert Lichtman**, PO Box 130, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA. Congratulations on attaining 40 years of publication. Since my first fanzine was published in 1959, this is especially noteworthy to me. I know your fanediting goes back even further because I have a number of issues of *Triode* in my files. I used to read the mechanic's magazines long ago, *Mechanix Illustrated*,

*Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*. I forget which one had Tom Cahill doing road tests and reviews of new American cars, but I remember him having a salty, no-nonsense style that I much enjoyed, even before I was old enough to drive myself. I also remember the rather eccentric stuff these magazines would feature along the same lines as you mention in your article.

**Gene Stewart**, 1710 Dianne Ave., Bellevue, NE 68005, USA. The Scoops-based cover of ERG is both fascinating and a bit alarming. Were it not for the casual stance of the figures in the foreground, one might see cataclysm in the sky they're observing. A dynamic cosmos can be a frightening thing to contemplate, after all, if one is in the way of colliding galaxies and such. One also thinks of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in the opening of which Earth is destroyed to create a sort of off-ramp for weary travellers... Somehow such humour always strikes me as more realistic than any number of more realistic speculations. The idea of attack by advanced technology must leave us cold when we look back on our own history and those sorts of encounters we have wrought. [*Not to mention all the ethnic cleansing.*]

**Ken Lake**, 36 Barrington Rd., Loughton, Essex IG10 2AY. ERG, returned for recycling as usual. [*Many thanks, handy if more readers did it!*] The writers in British SF were stuck in school magazine style: those crazy, exuberant Yanks had a lingo all their own as they pushed back the boundaries of orthodox thinking. Nowadays many British authors mimic Wells' solid Victorianism while the rest go gaga with cyberpunk nastiness. Bring back classic 1950s sensawunda writing. The peacequadrang gun-armed Swiss now have a higher rate of relatives dead by shooting than the US. 'They' should let us all have guns: you'll see and end to burglary, mugging and the rest - and a lot more husbands, wives, children and particularly infuriating grannies shot dead. All in all, it looks like guns are a good thing [*It all depends which end your looking at!*]

**C.W. Brooks**, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720, USA. My ASFs have long gone and none of my Willy Ley books include the diving slave. But water pressure increases at about 60lbs/sq.ft. for each foot of depth, so at 6 feet down, has reached over 360 lbs/sq.ft.. For a swimmer laying briefly on the floor of the pool this pressure does not collapse the lungs as the pressure inside is about the same. But if the swimmer were to exhale through an air hose open to the surface, the full weight of water would immediately become apparent to him! Air supplied to a diver has to be supplied at the same pressure as he is at. The second amendment to the US Constitution does not contain the phrase Waddington quoted, "...as part of a well-ordered militia." The entire amendment is, "*A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.*"

Roger Waddington. 4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton, N.Yorks. YO17 9ES

Re PF's column, I have my deep suspicions that it isn't change for change's sake, that it isn't a ceaseless demand by the Great British Public to make everything new; it's the R&D departments in every British Industry, whether cars, confectionery, cookers or even shoes, trying to justify their existence. Polls are probably slanted in their favour as well; when stopped on the street, the questions will never be, "Are you happy with...?", but more on the lines of "Would you like...?", and what fully paid up member of the GBP would want to disappoint them? Surely if we were left to our own devices we would cheerfully stick with the long-used and the familiar, the manufacturers would settle down to producing more of the same and there'd be no reason for the any R&D. *[But without R&D we'd have no microwaves, fridges, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and other necessities of modern life ]*.

Ted Hughes, 10 Kenmore Rd., Whitefield, Manchester M45 8ER ERG 147 was entertaining, as usual. Somewhere in the attic I have a copy of that FANTASY with Drigin's robot getting up from the operating table. Funny--I can remember,, illustrations--but the words in those old mags don't register any more. Just for fun (and maybe out of curiosity) I dug out the three old Analogs with the Simak serial 'Cemetery World'. The Schoenherr illos for the story were magnificent and unforgettable. But the story (by Simak!) was a ragbag of unconvincing ideas, padded out with unnecessary incident, not very well put together I should be grateful it was readable.

## EMJAY REPROGRAPHICS

### Mail-order printing for booklets & magazines

Emjay Reprographics specialises in smaller print runs of booklets and periodicals, produced to a high standard. Collated copies are fully-finished - centre-fold stapled and trimmed - and can be produced both in A4 and A5 page size.

We carry out preliminary reduction to an A5 page format, if needed for a particular publication, free of charge. We can print any number of pages from 8 upwards, and any number of copies from 25,

Samples, and quotations for particular jobs, on request. Origination of text, single sheet copying, envelope supplies and subscriber mailing service also available.

For a copy of our booklet, with full details of rates and other terms, write to:

Emjay, 17 Langbank Avenue, Rise Park, Nottingham NG5 5BU

or 'phone 0115 9751 753

Prices quoted are for "standard" delivery, sent by parcel post 5 working days after receipt of order, or 9 working days for an order with a total value over £200. We charge extra for postage and packing, and a small amount extra for covers in card, available in a range of colours. The "express" service, with a faster turn-round, is available at slightly higher rates.