After Ten Years

A Tribute To

Stanley G. Weinbaum

1902–1935

Published by Gerry de la Ree

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Collected by

Gerry de la Ree and Sam Moskowitz

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BUT ONE LIFE

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C O N T E N T S

AFTER TEN YEARS -- Gerry de la Ree

IT is most difficult to eulogize a person you never knew; ordinarily I would not attempt it. But this case is different, for I feel that I did know Stanley G. Weinbaum. It is my conviction that a person's inermost qualities are visible in their chosen field of endeavor, this being especially true in the fields of music, art and writing.

And that is why I feel I knew Stan Weinbaum. He put himself into his writing and, so doing, made his stories live. He made his characters human -- as human as he himself. The followers of that late, great master of the macabre, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, have continually referred to him as "his own most fantastic creation." In the same vein, I believe, we are equally correct in calling Weinbaum "his own most human creation."

That is why, after ten years, the memory of Stan Weinbaum is still strong in the minds of those who have read his works. That he chose the scientifictional field for his own, was our gain.

Weinbaum's career in science fiction was meteoric. He catapulted into the top ranks of fantasy writers with the appearance of his first story, "A Martian Odyssey", in July, 1934. A little more than a year and one half later -- on December 14, 1935 -- Weinbaum passed away. Many of his works were published posthumously.

"But, after ten years," some may ask, "is Weinbaum still popular?" I believe he is. Every bit of evidence points to that fact. For the past ten years the name of Weinbaum has always been near the top of any list of good science fiction writers.

In the Third Beowulf Poll of science fiction fandom, which I conducted this past summer, further proof of Weinbaum's lasting popularity can be found. Over 60 of the more active and critical fans participated in this poll. Selected by a wide margin as the most popular short story was Stan's "Martian Odyssey." This story headed a list of some 159 tales, among which were at least ten other Weinbaum stories.

"The New Adam," one of Weinbaum's two long novels, has for six years been the most controversial of all his stories. As

Moskowitz brings out in his article, the publication of "The New Adam" in 1939 was met with the most unpopular assortment of reviews imaginable. Still, in 1945, "The New Adam" ranks fourth among the most popular science fiction and fantasy novels of all time, in the same Beowulf Poll. Weinbaum's other novel, "The Black Flame", tied for seventh in a list that included 149 titles.

This publication is an attempt at a tribute. We have called on a few of those who knew Stan intimately to give you their picture of him. This has effectively been accomplished by his sister, Helen; his widow, Margaret; his two Milwaukee Fictioneer comrades, Ray Palmer and Ralph Milne Farley; and his literary agent, Julius Schwartz.

Sam Moskowitz, who assisted me in this publication, has contributed an article he calls "a coordinated critique." Stanley's own Autobiographical Sketch, which appears here, originally was published in Fantasy Magazine, June 1935, and is reprinted with the permission of Julius Schwartz.

To all those who so kindly contributed towards making this memorial edition possible, I extend my sincere appreciation and thanks.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

WELL, I was born, if it makes any difference, in Louisville, Ky., circa 1902, and educated, if at all, in the public schools of Milwaukee and the University of Wisconsin. While at the latter institution I assisted in the demise of the now totally defunct Wisconsin Literary Magazine, succeeded in having it surpressed (the only time, incidentally, that the publication ever showed a profit) and was ejected in 1923. All the same, that crowd made Middle Western Literary history, and it is still making it, tho they've scattered. It included the rising star of Horace Gregory, the tragic Majory Latimer, Paul Gangelin, who writes plots for the movies (one smash to two flops), and the less literary but far more famous Charles Augustus Lindbergh, who enjoyed the honor of'graduating' with me. They summoned him back for an honorary degree, but they haven't asked me yet.

Anyway, as to how I personally became interested in science fiction -- I didn't. That's supposed to imply that I've always been interested in it, from the days of such juveniles as Robinson Crusoe, the Motor Boat Boys series, and Tarzan, and eventually the real classics of Verne and Wells. That doesn't exclude a few others who receive less attention from science fiction readers than they deserve-- Bellamy (wose "Looking Backward" is still a social influence in such movements as the erstwgile popular Technocracy), Conan-Doyle, Poe, and Mrs. Shelley. Those writers wrote with an attention to realistic detail that has been rather neglected in these days of purple, green, or crimson rays; of ant-men, beetle-men, lizzard-men, and what not. Science fiction has slipped a peg or two, right into the epic stage, with heroes, demi-gods, and mythical monsters. Or such is my opinion.

And as to how I write -- well, in longhand, with a pencil, on a sheet of white paper. I can't type a first copy successfully because the mechanics of typing take too much attention, at least the way I type. It isn't a total loss, however, since it saves revision, which takes place during the typing.

Other details -- I suppose I ought to claim to write by inspiration. I wish I did; it's far the easiest and most effective

way, and don't think it can't be done, either. It can; I've known people whose minds work that way, but I'm not one of them. These fortunate souls suddenly receive an idea pre-cooked and ready to serve, and down it goes, fever hot, on paper. But I have to think up my ideas, plan them to a fair degree of completion, and then write them. They usually change somewhat in writing, and I have had them escape entirely, go rampant and end up quite differently from the original plan. This probably happens to anyone who writes; one character, intended to be subordinate, suddenly turns out to be too interesting an individual to ignore, and the plot gets warped around until he (or occasionally she) is carrying the burden of the story.

That's even happened in novels, of which I've written a few, not under my name, but I won't divulge the pseudonym. Of course it is a rarer occurrence, because novels have to be planned with some care, and even outlined on paper. One can't trust memory alone when sixty to one hundred twenty thousand words are involved. Anyway, I can't. They say Voltaire wrote his "Candide" in twenty hours, and Ben Hecht tried with fair success to duplicate the feat in his "Florentine Dagger", but I'll be that Ben at least had a few ideas before hand.

To return to science fiction, having made plain that I like it, now I'll tell you why I don't. There's one general weakness and one universal fallacy in the material published today. It's a tough one to express but perhaps the proposition can be phrased as follows: most authors, even the best, seem imbued with the idea that science is a sort of savior, a guide, the ultimate hope of mankind. That's wrong; science is utterly impersonal and never points a way, nor is it interested in either the salvation or the destruction of the human race. The words "should" and"ought", in their moral senses, are not scientific words at all, and when a scientist uses them he speaks not for science but for philosophy or ethics, not as a scientist but as a preacher. Science describes but does not interpret; it can predict the results of any given alternative actions, but cannot choose between them.

If that paragraph seems a little involved, here's an example: The great sociologist Doe, we'll say, has discovered that because of the unchecked breeding of the mentally deficient, the human race will degenerate to the moron level within fifty years. Now Doe can get exited if he wishes over this as a member of the human race, but <u>as a scientist</u>, all he can say is something like this: "I call attention to the probability that if we permit this trend to continue, in half a century the average level of intelligence will have decended to that of a twelve year old mind. If the ternd is to be checked, an effective means is sterilization of the unfit before reproduction is possible." Not "we ought to" or "should", but just <u>if</u>.

That's all science has the right to say. The choice then enters the domain of ethics, and the battle is between those who feel that the good of the race is paramount and those who believe that the

rights of the individual are sacred, and that we have no moral grounds for violating them. Science has indicated the roads, but ethics has to choose between them.

Apropos of this, I suppose all of us know which road modern ethics would choose, but only a hundred and fifty years ago, during the highly individualistic eighteenth century, all the weight of the best minds was in the opposite scales. Even a simpleton had the right to fulfill his life to the utmost, to find (theoretically at least) the greatest happiness he could, even tho that included feeble-minded offspring. In those years "life, liberty, and the persuit of happiness" meant exactly that.

All of which is quite beside the point. What course ethics chooses doesn't make a damn bit of difference in the argument, which holds that science is only a signpost and not a guide. Say it again: science is neither judge nor savior. It cannot choose. It is a roadmap, not a standard.

Here's the element that makes so much science fiction seem unreal. Half our authors use the word "scientist" about as the ancient Egyptians used "priest" -- a man of special and rather mystical knowledge that has set him apart from the rest of humanity. In fact, as soon as the word is mentioned, one visualizes either a noble, serious, erudite, high-principaled superman, or, depending on the type of story, a crafty, ambitious, fiendish, and probably insane super-villain. But never a human being.

As for the weakness, that's simpler. It's merely that most of our writers fail to take advantage of science fiction's one grand opportunity -- its critical possibilities, if you get me. It's the ideal medium to express an author's ideas, because it can (but does not) criticize everything. I mean -- well, Western stories, for instance, have no critical possibilities because the deal with conditions fifty years dead. Romance has only a few opportunities in sociological fields. Adventure is equally limited, but science fiction has no limits. It can criticize social, moral, technical, political, or intellectual conditions -- or any others. It is a weapon for intelligent writers, of which there are several, but they won't practice its use.

Oh, a few have tried it. Dr. Keller does it well occasionally, and Miles J. Breuer did it magnificently once or twice. Dr. Bell (John Taine) touches on it at times, but won't decend to practical suggestions. And by far the most of this sort of writing, when couched in the usual form of satire, is heavy, obvious, and directed at unimportant targets. No one has attempted it on the scale of Bellamy, who actually did criticize world social conditions in the form of a science fiction story, and presented a sort of solution.

For science fiction can do what science cannot. It can criticize, because science fiction is not science. It is, or at least

ought to be, a branch of the art of literature, and can therefore quite properly argue, reject, present a thesis, proselytize, criticize, or perform any other ethical functions.

Or anyway, that's my opinion, and it won't make a bit of difference to those readers (if any) who've plowed through to this point. The younger writers will stand by their guns -- the purple rays -- and the younger readers will take as much delight as ever in the super-scientists, Earth-Mars wars, ant-men, tractor-rays, and heroes who save country, Earth, Solar System, or Universe from the terrible invaders from the Outside.

More power to 'em. I'd like to experience those same thrills again myself.

THE BOY WHO NEVER GREW UP -- Margaret Weinbaum Kay

IT is most gratifying to me, as well as to Stanley's parents, that you plan the memorial edition; and I am happy to contribute my bit, but ask to do so in letter form -- as I am not a writer. In such fashion I will be delighted to tell you a little about the most charming dreamer I have ever known...

I think possibly the fans would feel better acquainted with Stanley if they knew a little of his boyhood interests, as these had a definite bearing on his later ability to create fantastic creatures.

From early childhood he was fascinated with any live thing. As a kindergarten babe they found him fishing with an improvised tackle in a sewer, and upon questioning he revealed that he was trying to catch a sewer rat in order to examine it!

A little later he started a "museum" in a sectional bookcase with a glass front. In the backyard of his home was a hornet nest which seemed like a gem for the exhibit. By shooting with an air rifle through a slit in the rear door he was able, with good aim and plenty of patience, to shoot it down. Then, by pouring water from an upper story he got rid of its inhabitants and at the same time drowned enough of its occupants to have specimens to place near the nest. This was all arranged on a shelf in the bookcase, and remained until next spring when Mother was house cleaning. Upon opening the bookcase she was attacked by a swarm of young hornets! The eggs, undamaged by the water, had finally hatched!

Exit the entire museum.

That was the boy Stanley -- who, thank goodness, never completely grew up, but always retained his boyhood inquisitiveness and joy of living creatures. He studied them thoroughly and felt the urge to improve on nature.

A whole summer we tried to capture a female Gold Finch in order to mate it with our canary, so we could have the combined qualities of both their songs and their offspring. We never succeeded, but about this time Science Fiction writing became the logical outlet for his nature "improvements."

He had read each issue of all these magazines since the inception of the first. He was disappointed in some authors' careless writing, and in their lack of information on scientific material easily available. Having read and re-read Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, he was most conscious of the fact that this type literature could be held to a much higher level, and thereby gain its rightful place. Having majored in chemistry and English in college, he decided to "take a crack" at this type writing. We all know the results.

Maybe, before ending, you'd like to know a little of how Stanley planned his yarns. It used to ammuse him very much to borrow one of his Fictioneer friends' plots -- whether the other chap wrote Westerns, mysteries, or love stories -- and then transplant the action to another planet. The foundation of many of his creatures would often be based on our own Earthly ones, and then he adapt them to the conditions on what ever planet he happened to be writing about. He always kept "Wood's Natural History", and similar volumes on his desk, where he wrote in long hand -- the mechanics of a typewriter distracted him.

Those who have felt they know Stanley a little from his writings will be glad to know that throughout the six months of his fatal illness he never once guessed he was fighting a losing battle; he looked forward to many years of writing -- and the possibility of the actual invention of a rocket ship. As long as there is beauty to be found in the imaginative on this planet, there will still be a part of Stanley Weinbaum around.

A TRIBUTE -- Raymond A. Palmer

I KNEW Stanley Weinbaum. I'm very grateful for that. There are some people born into this world who give the world a reason for existing. Or rather, I should say that meeting some people makes one feel that the world is all right. Stanley Weinbaum was one of those people.

Stanley got kicked around a little during his life. I've got a theory about that. The world isn't being mean when it kicks a guy around -- it's giving him a chance to come through. A lot don't come through. Stanley did. It made him great. Maybe so great that the world kicked him again, or rather, kicked us by taking him away. Again I have a theory. When a guy gets that good, there's a better place for him, where he can really use his talents.

Our mutual friend, Ralph Milne Farley, likes to relate how he saw Stan after death. Most people think that's fiction. I don't. Having known Stan, I know he's not dead. Guys like that make you realize there is no death. Guys like that can't die. And I know very well that Stan's masterpieces that everyone is mourning about because they would never be written, are being written, and we'll all get a chance to read them someday!

Not long ago I heard one of Stan's stories broadcast over the radio, and it gave me a thrill. You see, he isn't dead. Stan put his heart into his writing, and it's still there, beating hard. You could just hear it beating in your mind as you listened, and you felt sort of peaceful and not sad at all.

I never felt sad about Stan's leaving. I only felt sad about myself. I was being deprived of a lot. But then I began to realize that I wasn't worth his company, yet. So I decided to make the grade. That's why I'm grateful for having known him. I would not have had that E for effort without him. You've got to have your eyes up when you climb. Even the idea of climbing does not suggest itself unless you look up.

Stan and his writings have inspired a lot of people. Maybe his effect was on hundreds of thousands. If some of them have looked up because of it, how can you say that that last kick was really a

kick? Who knows, maybe I, and those others, will need some of his ability to make us look up further, when we get where he is, and he just went on ahead so's he could do a better job for us.

Stan was that kind of a guy. And if offered the choice, that's what he would have done. It was the other guy, with Stan. And brother, that's BIG. I'm glad I knew him. I don't feel so little now as I might.

STAN'S VERSATILITY -- Ralph Milne Farley

STANLEY G. WEINBAUM will, of course, always be remembered as a writer of whimsical scientifiction. But, to succeed outstandingly in even such a specialized field as stf, requires versatility, for science can impinge upon, and be written into, practically every field of writing. So Stan's versatility was an earnest of the outstanding success which would have been his, if he had not been cut off at the threshold of his career.

Most lists of Weinbaum's Published Works omit "Yellow Slaves" in True Gang Life for February, 1936. This was one of my Jim Grant gangster series, which series was unique in that each episode was a collaboration with a different author of national note.

Episode Number 5, "Tong War", had been written jointly with American Fiction's leading orientalist, E. Hoffman Price; but when I wanted to do a sequal, using the same Chinese characters, Price was too busy meeting a deadline on some definite commitments, so Stan stepped into the breach.

Although knowing nothing about Chinese Tongs, nor American gangsters and having had absolutely no experience with this type of writing, he turned out a chapter which measured up to Price's best.

If he had lived, Stanley Weinbaum would undoubtedly have branched into other fields than science fiction.

AS I KNEW STANLEY -- Helen Weinbaum

MEMORY of Stanley is very close and so much a part of my everyday life that I find it hard to seperate myself from it to get it down on paper. I have read a good deal that has been written about him and all of it is true but it is not all of the truth, and I think it is that -- the fear that I will not be able to get his humanness across -- which puts a lag on my fingers when I try to write. There is much to say, yet it seems futile and presumptuous to try to chain a man in words who, himself, used words so facilly.

Those who knew Stanley -- even some who knew him only through his writings -- have spoken of his genius, his wisdom, his personality, his charm. He had all of these, but he had more too: he had great physical beauty and a clear, indescribable light in his eyes. But even more, he was likable and winning with an unaffected modesty, ready wit and a live, eager, healthy interest in people and things in the world about him. While the scope of his knowledge was infinite he was no serious, goggle-eyed intellectual. He was mischievous, he was a tease, he found the utmost pleasure in simple things -- in a phrase well-turned, in a joke -- and he was never tired of repeating or hearing repeated the things that amused him.

It has been said that genius is a well-spring which feeds itself, which needs no tributaries to keep alive. Stanley had genius always, from the time he was a small boy and discovered how to make an "X-ray" by pasting a feather between two tiny holes bored in a box, from the time he grubbed in the dirt and watched the ants parade and -- alone -- made discoveries, drew conclusions and began to create within himself the stories and fantasies which all through his life made him such fascinating company. But every genius is a person, too, and it is about the person Stanley that I want to write.

He was always interested in science, but he was interested in everything -- in music, in why I suddenly became afraid of bugs after helping him catch them for months to put on pins, in friends, in swimming, in picnics, dances, politics -- and therein lay part of his genius. He was not, like the fictional Martians, all brain and no body -- he was a well-balanced human being with such a great simplicity of manner that he could talk to anyone. He would have

been as well liked in a General Store in a crossroads town as in the top literary circles of New York. And I don't believe he ever had the vaguest idea that he was, in any way, more talented than the average person he met.

There are many years to draw from. Stanley was four years older and we were always very close. From the earliest thing I can remember -- when I was a baby and fell down stairs and he cried because he thought I'd never walk again -- we were friends, not just not-enemies, but two people who spent time together, who listened to each other talk and took pleasure in it. You see, Stanley was that way. Though he could draw on the limitless facts in his mind, though he was naturally a creative talker, he liked to listen too. And by the twist of a phrase or the exaggeration of an idea he lent color and interest to the most innocuous prattle, so that eventually you began to feel you were a pretty good conversationalist at that and the things you said were funny. He had that faculty -- of bringing people beyond themselves, of making them feel witty and entertaining.

I have said he was a tease. When he had his first laboratory and spilled sulphuric acid on his hands he loved to hear us scream when he showed us the nasty looking sores he called his Gooslop Mines. Once he brought home a snake and when our folks objected he told them it was a rubber snake which moved only after he had touched it due to the heat of his hands. Of course, they didn't mind a rubber snake -- in fact they were quite proud of it until one day Mother happened to be in the room when it ate a frog and the jig was up. He was constantly bringing home cats. They followed him, he said. Once we had three -- and six kittens. We had chameleons, bats, turtles, canaries, fish, rats, mice, snails, cats, frogs, toads, lizards, dogs, snakes -- anything that lived and moved fascinated him.

He had a good ear for music and perfect pitch. When he built his first radio we used to sit up all night together, to the despair of my Mother, thrilling to "hot" piano playing and torch songs. Before he started to write commercially we began an operetta together -- Omar The Tentmaker -- that is, I sat beside Stanley at the desk and watched him write the book and lyrics and he sat beside me at the piano and helped me write the music. Everyone knows he wrote well. I know he wrote easily. The original draft is finely written, well polished and professional, despite the fact that during the writing of it we were drinking gin as an experiment to see whether it made our imaginations quicker. Someday I hope to see Omar The Tentmaker finished and produced.

So, from a welter of memories here are a few, tumbled out of our childhood. They are very real and alive to me, just as Stanley is real and alive -- not in any psychic sense but in an almost physical, material way as he was in the past. For, as the past was once the present, the present can be the past if you want it that way. And I do.

LETTERS TO JULIUS SCHWARTZ

(Quotations from the letters of Stanley G. Weinbaum to his agent, Julius Schwartz, who arranged this article).

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JUNE 21, 1934

"Thank you for your letter of June 18th. Of course I shall be more than pleased to submit a story for your consideration, and will forward the manuscript upon completion, in the near future... With appreciation for your interest, I am,

Sincerely,
Stanley G. Weinbaum"

(In reference to whether Weinbaum would care to have Mort and I -- Solar Sales Service -- agent his work. Which reminds me of an interesting sidelight. Desmond Hall of Astounding had just finished reading "A Martian Odyssey" in Wonder and liked it so much he asked if I couldn't get a Weinbaum story for his magazine. I didn't know how to contact Stan, so I decided to trap Hornig, who was at the time Managing Editor of Wonder, into giving me the info. I casually mentioned to Charlie next time I was up at his office that "of course you know Stanley G. Weinbaum is the pseudonym for a well-known science fiction writer?" He immediately ran to his files, saw Stan's Milwaukee address and shouted, "Ya mean, Ralph Milne Farley?" (Farley also lived in Milwaukee). I was non-committal. "What's the address Farley used?" I asked as innocently as I could, though my heart pounded like a hammer. "3237 North Oakland Avenue." That's all I needed to know. I wrote Weinbaum and as you see he accepted us as his agents. Later, I told Hornig about this trickery and he forgave me -- I think!)

JUNE 27, 1934

"...am submitting herewith the manuscript of 'The Circle of Zero'..." (Hall got first crack at this story, but regretfully bounced it. So did Amazing, Wonder, and Weird Tales. When Wonder was sold to Standard Magazines, this was the first story Mort asked for. We both thought -- and still do -- it was one of his finest).

UNDATED LETTER -- Probably April, 1935

"Ray Palmer tells me that Tremaine prefers less science

and more story than Desmond Hall. If that's true, and if Amazing isn't satisfied with 'The Black Flame' as revised maybe he'd consider it. Or, if you think it worth while, I could easily turn out an episode to occur between the assigned time of 'Dawn of Flame' and 'The Black Flame', injecting more science than the former has. I hope, later in the spring to drive East for a week or so, and I look forward to the opportunity of spending an evening with you..." (As you know, Amazing and Astounding both rejected 'The Black Flame.' Mort finally grabbed it for Startling's first issue. 'Dawn of Flame' originally appeared in the Memorial Volume we put out. To my everlasting regret, Stan never made that proposed trip East -- and I never did meet him...Also, it is interesting to note, that Palmer's original dedication to Weinbaum printed in the Memorial Volume, was thought by his widow too personal to print, so Larry Keating's tribute was substituted. Nevertheless, five special copies were printed with Palmer's forward. Copies owned by Ruppert, Palmer, Ackerman, Weisinger, and myself. Wait! I think there was a sixth copy, owned by his widow, Margaret.)

MAY 31, 1935

"...I collaborated with Farley on No. 9 for True Gang Life, and will get to work on his algae idea after I see him at the next Fictioneers meeting..." (You might look into this collaborated story if you want to complete your file of Stan's work.)

JUNE 19, 1935

"...Concerning a pseudonym, it's O.K. with me. I'll turn out some stuff under the name John Jessel, and if you think it advisable, you can substitute that name on 'The Adaptive Ultimate'..."

JULY 10, 1935

"...Have been laid up as the result of a tonsil extraction for the past several weeks, but expect to be able to send you stuff at a pretty steady rate from now on...As to the name John Jessel, I picked it because it was my grandfather's name, and I have happened to done some local work under it...I suggested to Mort that you might try 'The Black Flame' on King Features, since that is the outfit that bought 'The Lady Dances' from us...If you do, you'd better retype the title page and make the author Marge Stanley, since that is the name under which we sold the other..."

JULY 22, 1935

"...I have sort of a yen to see 'The Black Flame' placed somewhere, because the yarn is one of my favorites...By the way, it just occured to me that you might want a little amplification of Shapley's statement about the spiral nebulae not obeying the laws of mechanics (the idea I used in 'The Challange from Beyond'). This refers to the spiral shape, which could not be maintained by a rotating body for anything like the thousands of years necessary to

postulate as the age of the nebulae..."

JULY 27, 1935

"As you can imagine, I am glad to get the John Jessel name started with Tremaine. Since I already have a couple there under my own name, I think I will do another under the pseudonym, and will send it to you sometime during the week. I already have the basic idea for a biological yarn, but will have to work out the plot a little more completely..."

AUGUST 6, 1935

"Have been laid up again with some sort of imitation pneumonia as a complication from the tonsil extraction, and as a result the John Jessel story is still in the process of being finished..."

AUGUST 23, 1935

"...the sawbone at Billings ard the U. of C. have diagnosed the trouble as a mere inflamation of the lung or something, so I expect to live, anyway, and as soon as the treatments ease up, I'll get to work to finish that Jessel yarn..."

OCTOBER 2, 1935

"I just want to acknowledge receipt of check for 'Mad Moon' and also the news of 'Smothered Seas'. Looks as if you were going great guns this year; in fact, I guess that this almost sells everything you have of mine except a couple of outright duds. I'll try to get you two or three stories this month, since I'm now back at work to a certain extent, although it's still pretty slow. I think that perhaps the best thing to do is to take a few shots at Astounding with a couple of interplanetaries first, ard then do a 6,000 worder for Wonder. This last means only a couple of days work after I get back into the swing of it...Am of course greatly pleased that Tremaine liked 'The Red Peri,' and I'll turn out a sequal to it in the next month or so. Have to go back to Chicago for a week of those damn x-ray treatments the first of next month, so I think I'll wait until after that to work on the sequel, and spend the intervening time in turning out some interplanetaries...By the way, in looking over my copies of 'The Adaptive Ultimate' and 'The Red Peri', I noticed a similarity of expression in two paragraphs discussing the difference between living and non-living matter. In both stories the point is made that living matter shows irritation and adaption as opposed to non-living. The wording isn't identical, but the ideas are closely related, and appearing in the same issue, some bright reader is sure to notice it. If many notice it, we might have John Jessel explain it in a letter on the basis that he and S.G. Weinbaum are good friends who often discuss their plots together, and that the point in question was brought up at a meeting of the Milwaukee Fictioneers..."

OCTOBER 14, 1935

"...Your letter just arrived in time to be answered with the accompanying story, a 12,000 worder called 'Redemption Cairn', which I think has some of the same qualities Tremaine liked in 'The Red Peri'. That is, it has some new gags in the line of science, but the story interest is stronger than the scientific, if you get what I mean...So that's the first one finished on schedule, and I am starting at once on another. Have an idea for a humorous science fiction story but I know that these sometimes received rather unfavorable reactions, so I thought I'd ask your opinion. Of course, 'A Martian Odyssey' was in some ways a humorous story, so perhaps one can get away with it if the humor is in characterizations rather than in language. Most of the ones I have read seem to depend on funny ways of telling instead of funny characters and situations... Farley and I are talking over another collaboration, and I expect to turn out the first draft of it while I am having the next series of x-ray treatments. I figure that since x-ray treatments shoot the devil out of you, I might as well spend the time on a first draft for Farley, since it will all be gone over aryway..." (This collaboration later appeared as "The Dictators Daughter.")

NOVEMBER 19, 1935

"Iord knows I am pleased to get your check on 'Redemption Cairn', because right now I'm just about at the bottom. That is, I've been in chicago having some x-ray treatments again, and am now flat on my back recovering from them. God knows when I'll be able to get some real work done, and I hope that perhaps in a week or so more I can start."

Telegram from Ray Palmer -- December 14, 1935

"WEINBAUM DIED EARLY THIS MORNING."
(I was in the synagogue that Saturday morning when the telegram arrived. My sister brought it to me -- and when I read it I'm not ashamed to say I wept. At the prayer for the dead towards the end of the service, I said a special prayer for Stan.)

JANUARY 29, 1936 (from his widow)

"Dearest Mort and Julius,

I'm determined not to destroy this letter, no matter how it turns out. Probably Ray Palmer told you how often I've attempted writing you; and possibly you can guess the mood I get into when I do. So try and understand whatever I find myself saying -- and mainly the things I will leave unsaid. Do you have the vaguest idea just how much the past contacts we had with you boys meant to us? Then you know why it is impossible for me to express adequately all the things I'd like to say.....Maybe, now that the ice is broken, I'll be able to write again with less difficulty. In the meantime think of me as -- Stan's Marge."

(concluded on page 20)

THE MAD BRAIN

(Being a report on Weinbaum's unpublished science fiction novel as commented on by Margaret Weinbaum, John W. Campbell, Jr., and Robert O. Erisman. Collected by Julius Schwartz.)

"'THE MAD BRAIN' runs about 60,000 words. You are right in calling it a Jekyll-Hyde theme -- it is, after a fashion. But as for the outline, I can't help but hesitate over that, as Stan himself claimed the best of yarns could be ruined by a synopsis. Shakespeare and Chick Sales sound alike when you start condensing.." (From a letter written by Marge (Weinbaum) Kay in March, 1939).

The synopsis was wanted by Campbell, who thought he'd like to see it for Unknown. He finally bounced it saying, "As usual with Weinbaum -- nicely written. It's a good yarn, but as you can well appreciate, much too hot to handle in a magazine. We'd be put off the stands in a dozen cities for a yarn like that." Campbell was referring to the sex theme of the story.

"The Mad Brain" was accepted by Editor Robert O. Erisman for Marvel Stories in January of 1940. Then Erisman reported to me:

"I was all set to use the yarn when once again I got hold-off orders on the new science book it was to be used in, and the following day, orders to drop the book entirely. Since then, Marvel has been started up again on its original tack, as you have no doubt noticed, with sex-science-horror, but it remains my only science book -- and it has of course resumed its original juvenile flavor, juvenile that is in its fast action and comparatively childish ideas, and so we would not offer a spot for Weinbaum's very grown up book. And there seems no indication of any sort on the horizon that I'll soon be having a book coming up that would be right for the Weinbaum yarn. If, of course, I prove wrong about that, you can be sure that I'll be after you in a hurry for it certainly is a beautiful piece of work of its kind."

Notes: Last year Leo Margulies asked Stan's widow to see "The Mad Brain", but I never did find out his dicision regarding it. And I believe Walter Gillings (or someone else in England) is going to reprint some of Stan's stories. At least the party has already paid for two of the stories (which two, I don't know.

NOVEMBER 4, 1937 (from his widow)

"...I'd like to see 'The Black Flame' in print, for next to 'The New Adam' it was Stan's favorite. It might be interesting to you to know that the original 'Urbs' -- which was mentioned slightly in the latter volume and used in detail in the former -- was first created way back in the summer of '24 when Stan and I were practically kids. Stan's courtship was quite original, as he wooed me with tales of Urbs and promises of a trip to the moon. Figuratively he kept this promise, don't you agree? Sometimes, when I am nine-tenths asleep, I have a feeling that Stan left this dull old planet in order to inhabit the moon and make it shine brighter for us mortals..."

(Incidentally, do you think The Black Flame -- Black Margot -- might have been inspired by Stan's wife, Margaret?)

THE CRITIC AND WEINBAUM -- Sam Moskowitz

"DID you know that Stanley Weinbaum took off on the Last Great Journey through the galaxies in December? That he set his course by the stars I do not doubt. Astounding Stories is proud of his accomplishments in science-fiction. He created a niche for himself that will be hard to fill. And I can think of no greater tribute than to say what I feel -- that I think of him as having groomed his space ship and taken off for the nebula he loved to write about -- unafraid -- an intrepid explorer facing the unknown."

That was a science fiction editor with a great heart, F. Orlin Tremaine, speaking from the heart, and only the first of a multitude of eulogies that blossomed like death valley after a cloud burst.

All of these were very nice, and quite sincere, but they were not the criteria from which Stanley G. Weinbaum's greatness would be evolved. Paradoxically, Stanley Weinbaum would never be great until men had analyzed his work, thrown the weight of their retoric upon the weakest points, and callously exposed and ridiculed them. Until they had exploited every reason to prove that Stanley Weinbaum was not great and had publicly made known their findings and let his supporters rally to disprove them. When, after a thousand debates, readers still sought out and read his work in preference to currently available material, fully realizing Weinbaum's faults as they did his virtues, then he would be great. The time of final decision has not yet arrived, but the debate is well into its tenth year.

In the May, 1937 issue of The Science Fiction Critic, Sam Moskowitz wrote as an argument provoker a short article titled "Was Weinbaum Great?"

"The Man meteored across a starless sky, to science fiction reknown...Amid dry, lifeless characterizations, his sparklingly original situations and alien creations provided the readers with the only really enjoyable scientific stories available...

"Now the point that I am driving at is this. If he had commenced his literary endeavors eight years ago, literally surrounded by such creators of the human interest element in their work as Keller, Flagg, Nowlan, Wells, Alexander, Breuer, Kline, and many others, would his popularity have been as great as it was during his short stay with us?"

Quickly the defense rallied. Robert W. Lowndes in the October 1937 issue of The Science Fiction Critic replied:

"Those who question the late Stanley G. Weinbaum' greatness on the grounds of relative science fiction standards during the brief interlude of his appearance, and pose the question as how he would have rated some years previous, when there were a number of more or less outstanding authors prevalent, seem to be confusing greatness with popularity... That Weinbaum was immensely popular from the first, is merely an accident, a quirk of fate which caused his entry into the field when science fiction was so poverty-stricken that any above-the-average writer would have been hailed as a king.

"There are three essentials for a great author of science fiction: 1. An appreciation of science as a while; 2. The ability to write creatively; 3. a broad sense of humor. Stanley G. Weinbaum had all three of these, and the essentials were in him, so well balanced, that had he but written his famous "Tweel" stories, he would still merit all the honors of literary peerage.

"It is because he met the task of these essentials so well that he is, perhaps, the greatest author of science fiction since H.G. Wells, with the possible exception of David H. Keller, M.D..."

This was the grist from the mill of the science fiction reader's minds that might eventually evolve Weinbaum's greatness. Angles of the man were profoundly discussed. Lowndes again, in the January 14, 1938 issue of The Science Fiction Fan, had published an articled titled "The Menace of Weinbaum."

"Every great or outstanding figure, not only in the science fiction world, but everywhere, anytime, is dangerous, no matter how illustriously benificient they may be; they are dangerous because they have seen more than a little truth and built upon it, and because others, while perfectly able to see buildings, can not see the foundations or inner structures. What they can see is merely a little truth, enough to send them off half-cocked...

"...how are other writers to know what it was that was great in Weinbaum's work, when editors are manifestly ignorant of it themselves? How can an interpreter throw any light on an unknown language when he himself does not speak it?

"Weinbaum's influence on science fiction is likely to be more disastrous than benificial; he had genius; his imitators have not."

This was a cry against Arthur K. Barnes, Henry Kuttner, Thornton Ayre, and later Eric Frank Russell, who had attempted to copy Weinbaum's style. Though the reader's columns said the fans were pleased at these attempts, Jack Gillespie was aroused to the point where he wrote for Helios a pugnacious article titled "Arthur K. Barnes -- Parasite."

"Yes, Arthur K. Barnes is a parasite, living off Stanley G. Weinbaum's greatness. As you all know, Weinbaum had developed a style that made him shine above the rest of the science fiction writers. Namely that of making vividly real, to readers, alien places and things...Barnes has obviously recognized the reason for Weinbaum's fame and determined to grab a place in the limelight for himself. If you sit down and analyze (Brnes') "Green Hell", you will find it is just another of Weinbaum's Venus stories...I thought it possible it was a coincidence. Then came "The Hothouse Planet" in the October (1937) issue of Thrilling Wonder Stories, and all my suspicions were confirmed. Here Mr. Barnes became bolder. When he saw the success he had made stealing Weinbaum's style, he went further and stole Weinbaum's characters. Anybody who has read "Hothouse Planet" will notice that Tommy Strike and Gerry Carlyle are really Ham Hammond and Patricia Burlingame under different names. Weinbaum was great -- and like all great people has his imitators. Let us hope that Mr. Barnes stops this obvious plagerism of Weinbaum's style and characters."

Weinbaum imiattions soon collapsed under the weight of their own insufficiency. But, despite their outspoken criticism of imitators, fans secretly yearned for another man to arise who would in his own fashion have as great a story-telling style as Weinbaum. In his article "Are There Any More Weinbaum's Among Us?", published in the November-December, 1937 issue of The Science Fiction Collector, Sam Moskowitz claimed to have discovered one.

"Equally as good...has been discovered within three months of Weinbaum. Everyone praised the work of this new author, yet few took the trouble to call him great. If you other fans are reluctant to do so, I shall set the precedent. The writer I refer to is W. K. Sonneman, author of those three excellent science fiction stories, "The Masterminds of Venus", the renamed "Council of Drones" and lastly "Greta, Queen of Queens." The first and third, respectively, depict the genius of the man...Contrarily enough, we did not have to wait years for the appearance of this man, but three months. Exceptional artists are never discovered. They are always among us and wait only for recognition."

Moskowitz went on to warn that if the Teck Amazing fell, "Then there will never be any more Weinbaum's among us." Such was the loss of faith in the new ownership of the other two magazines.

But more bitter, more widespread than any controversy was the tempest aroused by the appearance of Weinbaum's novel, "The New Adam." The tremendous build-up given it by Ray Palmer left it wide open for attack, and it was without question the most maligned of all Weinbaum's work, and the only major work with opinion more strongly against its ever becomming great as any of Weinbaum's other stories.

The fan sale of the book was killed when Thomas S. Gardner, Ph.D., highly respected by many, called it "The greatest disappointment of the year...One becomes bored within a few chapters, and only

a flicker of interest kindles near the end." Gardner went on to point out the scientific errors in the story, showing that Weinbaum's superman was really not a superman at all. He deplored the crude writing and claimed to be "very peeved."

J. Chapman Miske, famous fan of the day, rallied to Weinbaum's defense. He was forced to concede every point of criticism that Gardner made, yet maintained that "The New Adam" was Weinbaum's greatest story because of the philosophy it carried and that every other failing could be excused on that account.

But his defense was scarcely more than a cry in the storm, for Donald A. Wollheim, who had generally expressed admiration for Weinbaum's previous works, wrote in a review for the first issue of Super Science Stories: "Weinbaum is now a myth, a memory of better days in science fiction...And that is why your reviewer is angry. Weinbaum was a great writer. Like all great writers, he made some mistakes; a few of his stories were below par...And therefore, there is no reason at all why these failures should be resurrected now. "The New Adam" is a failure, completely a failure. It does not put across the idea which inspired it...As a piece of literary creation it seems rather pokey, a bit archaic in style. But above all it is evident that the theme proved too difficult for the comparatively young Weinbaum to handle...Next to the incomparable "Odd John" or even J.D. Beresford's "Hampdenshire Wonder", "The New Adam fades into insignifigance."

Some fan, writing under the pseudonym of Autoycus, contributed for the December, 1939 issue of The Science Fiction Fan, an article titled "Stanley Weinbaum -- An Appraisal." In this article he stated that Weinbaum's bid for fame would lie with such tales as "The Mad Moon", "A Martian Odyssey", "The Lotus Eaters", etc., because the plots were "new", the characters "real", "But over and above he also was striving to put thought, intelligence, philosophy into the stories so that they became more than adventure tales." He continued: "Weinbaum's place as a philosopher will be determined by general acceptance or rejection of "The New Adam"...obviously Weinbaum has borrowed from several sources to produce "The New Adam". Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Flimmarion all appear...What does "The New Adam" say? It says despair, futility, negation. It is not pleasant philosophy...Accepted or rejected, it must be considered as the cry of a sick soul, the wail of one in torment.

"If Weinbaum had lived longer what would he have written? My own opinion is that he could have written no more -- at least in a real sence...artistically, aesthetically, and philosophically he has displayed his inmost being, he had nothing further to say."

These were just a few of the generally critical articles devoted to "The New Adam." To all this the only outright defense was Ralph Milne Farley's piece "I Knew Stan Weinbaum." In this four paragraph reply he denied that Weinbaum was "Obsessed with negation and futility, with a belief that the sum total of all knowledge is zero."

"I did know Stan -- and intimately...His personality was sunny, cheerful and optimistic, even when pain-racked with cancer and unable to speak above a whisper during his declining hours. I can assure you that he had no lack of faith in the future of the human race.

"That such a genial, hopeful soul was able to write fiction plunged in gloom is merely a mark of his genius."

In the foregoing quotations scarcely a fraction of expressed opinions on Weinbaum have been touched. And the emphasis has been on those who had something of a critical nature to write. For in the long course of literary history, no friends can forever protect their idols against the pitiless scrutiny of unfriendly, unsympathetic minds, and a censorship of all statements in anyway contrary to an image of Weinbaum's greatness would be a fatal, hopeless error.

For Weinbaum must be determined as great with full acknowledgment of his faults (if faults they are), or not at all.

WEINBAUM'S PUBLISHED SCIENTIFICTIONAL WORKS

Magazine Stories

AMAZING STORIES

*"Shifting Seas" -- April, 1937
*"Revolution of 1950" (With Farley) -- Oct.-Nov., 1938
*"The New Adam" -- February-March, 1943

ASTOUNDING STORIES

"Flight on Titan" -- January, 1935
"Parasite Planet" -- February, 1935
"Lotus Eater" -- April, 1935
"Planet of Doubt" -- October, 1935
"The Red Peri" -- November, 1935
"Adaptive Ultimate" (Under pseud. John Jessel) -- Nov., 1935
"Mad Moon" -- December, 1935
*"Smothered Seas" (With Farley) -- January, 1936
*"Redemption Cairn" -- March, 1936
*"Proteus Island" -- August, 1936

STARTLING STORIES

*"The Black Flame" -- January, 1939

WONDER STORIES

"A Martian Odyssey" -- July, 1934
"Valley of Dreams" -- November, 1934
"Pygmalion's Spectacles" -- June, 1935
"Worlds of If" -- August, 1935
"The Ideal" -- September, 1935
*"Point of View" -- February, 1936
*"Circle of Zero" -- August, 1936
*"Brink of Infinity" -- December, 1936
*"Tidal Moon" (With Helen Weinbaum) -- December, 1938
*"Dawn of Flame" -- June, 1939

Books

*"Dawn of Flame" -- Memorial Volume, 1936. Contents:
"Dawn of Flame"
"The Mad Moon"
"A Martian Odyssey"
"The Worlds of If"
"The Adaptive Ultimate"
"The Lotus Eaters"
"The Red Peri"
*"The New Adam" -- A novel, Ziff-Davis, 1939.

REPRINTS

STARTLING STORIES

*"Pygmalion's Spectacles" -- May, 1939
*"A Martian Odyssey" -- November, 1939
*"Valley of Dreams" -- May, 1940
*"The Worlds of If" -- March, 1941
*"The Ideal" -- June, 1943
*"Point of View" -- Spring, 1944

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*"The Adaptive Ultimate" (Under Pseud. John Jessel) -- in "The Other Worlds", edited by Phil Stong, 1943
*"A Martian Odyssey" -- in "The Pocket Book of Science Fiction", edited by Donald Wollheim, 1943

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*--Published Posthumously

THE LAST MARTIAN -- Stanley G. Weinbaum

(Reprinted from The Golden Atom)

PASS, hours and vanish. When I die, you die --
All hours and years for these are fantasy
Lacking the Mind that ticks them as they fly
To unreal past from vain futility.
All knowledge, Space and Time exist for me,
Born in my mind, my Slaves, my instruments,
Tools of my thought, and somewhat more sublime
In that it soon must perish and go hence
Taking all concepts with it. Ages ago
When our young race knew hate, and love and lust,
This brain of mine should flow away to dust
A grey streak on the ruddy sands of Mars,
A broken flash of knowledge, contents spilled
Beyond recovery.

Going from tree to seed and seed to tree.
Unthinking plants surviving in my place,
Not individual mortality
Lives on, but imortality of race.