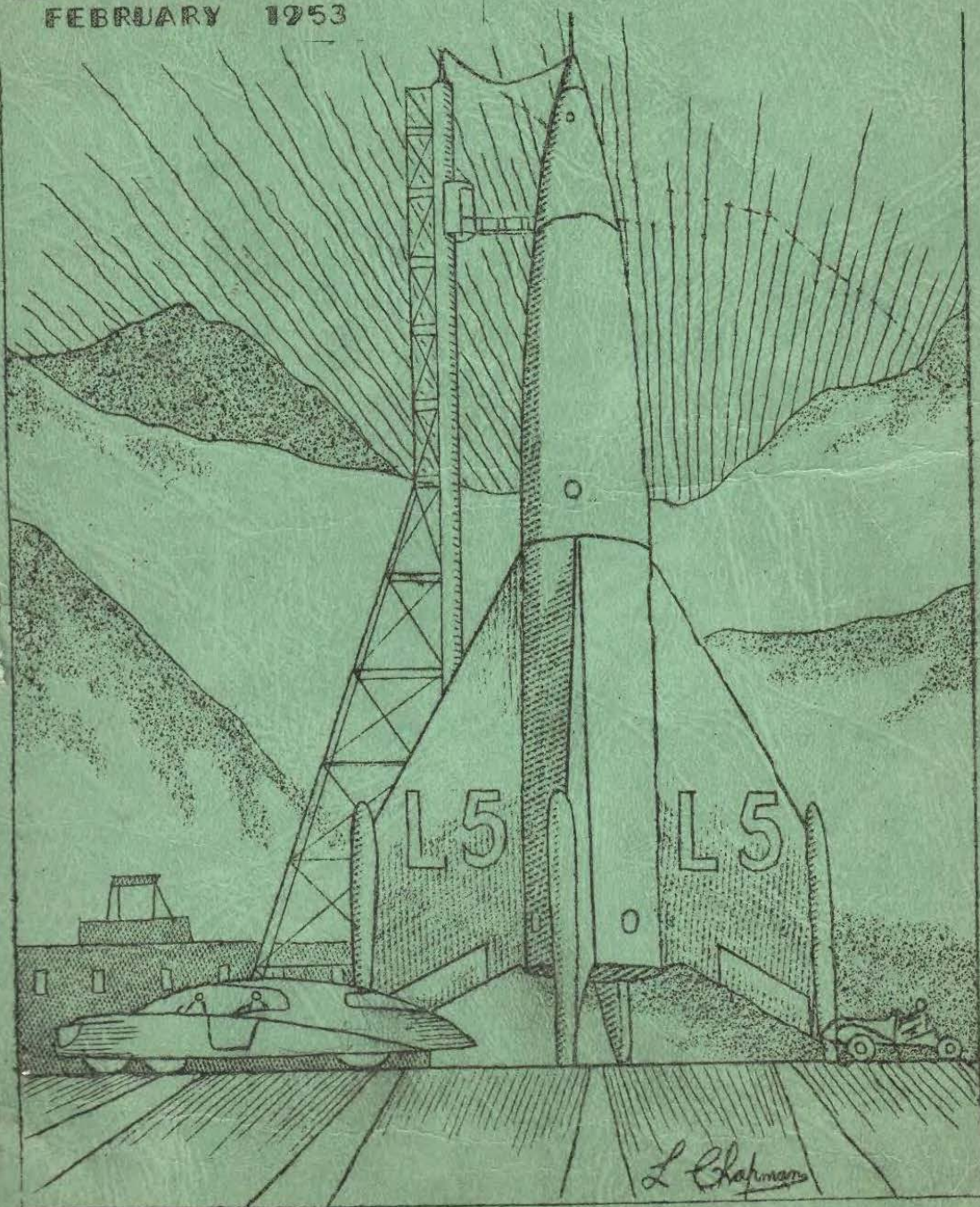


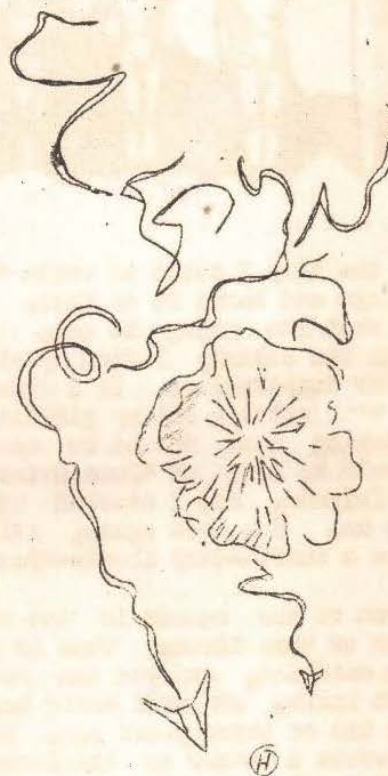
# PEON

FEBRUARY 1953



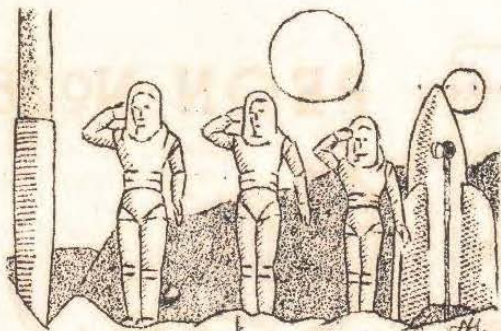
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## PEON No26



Volume Six Number One

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# PEON NOTES

Every time I start to write up this part of PEON, I say to myself and really mean it, "This time, keep it short!" This is the last thing done on each issue, and I'm usually tired of the whole thing

by the time I start to write "Peon Notes". So I fully intend to just do a page and leave it at that. Usually, I start off without any idea also of what I'm going to say. However, surprisingly enough, once I get on with the column, I find myself writing page after page, until I quit in sheer desperation. If I didn't, you'd find practically all of PEON filled with nothing but my gibberings. So, I quit after three or four pages, thinking that should be enough--so what do some of you write? "There should be more of "Peon Notes" in each issue!" I thank you one and all, my friends, but I started publishing PEON to give other people a break--not me. So, once again, I'll resolve, this issue of PEON is going to have a short--very short--"Peon Notes". Let's see how it works out now.

First on the agenda is the note that Jim Harmon and Tom Watkins are not with us this issue. This is primarily my fault in not notifying them of the deadline, and you can rest assured they will be back with us in the next issue. Jim will bring back one of his sexy-satires that went over so big two or three years ago. In fact, that was how he got started in PEON. He wrote a letter to the letter-columns back then, satirizing one of the then-popular detective books, and I asked him to do a regular feature.

Second, a word of explanation about the reason for running fanzine reviews. I've seen protests against this practice of fan editors reviewing other fanzines, but I don't agree with them. This is the natural place for reviewing fanzines--the prozines don't have the space to do justice to many of the fine efforts the editors are putting out, while I do have plenty of room for it. Besides, five years ago, when I started PEON, I received a boost in a fanzine that boosted my ego enough to keep on with PEON--and, who knows, perhaps one of the current fanzine editors will be one of the big names some of these days, because someone gave him a bit of praise for his hard efforts. So, the fanzine reviews will stay in PEON, and if you don't care for them, you can just skip those pages. I might add here that not all of the fanzines received either by John Ledyard or myself are reviewed--only those we think worthy of mentioning.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 32)

# LITTLE BROTHER

—DAVE MASON—

You were my brother, Saul.

I remember you, dirty-faced, tagging after me along the broken sidewalks of Philadelphia, when I was ten, and you were six. You hadn't figured out yet what happened to Ma. You were entirely concerned with the great and painful mystery of the burns on your skinny arms and legs and back, the bleeding, pus filled burns that would not heal. And, for the first time in your life, nobody paid any attention to you when you cried, because there were a great many others who were burned and bleeding.

That was the year of the war. I was ten. The word war meant nothing to me but a strange something that always happened somewhere else, on the pages of history books in a school I never again attended. The school was gone, the teachers were gone. Most of the pupils were gone. The rest grew up in the years of victory.

The newspapers I slept under with you kicking and moaning in your painful sleep beside me, those newspapers had headlines. I could read them. They said "we" had won. They said the "menace was gone forever." Only a little later they said the "menace" was back, and that measures, would have to be taken.

By that time you and I were in business, Saul. We were in the auto-part business. We went to work equipped with screw drivers and wrenches, and we sold such items as headlights and door handles to an obliging middleman.

That was when we saw them shooting people in the courtyard back of the police station. Afterward we managed to pick up cartridge cases, for the brass in them.

By that time you were seven and the scars had healed up into red lumps on your arms and legs. Nobody paid any attention to the way they looked. Lots of people had them. "Radiation burns", they called them, and they

were as common as freckles in America in the Sixties.

We never did find out why people were sometimes shot. It had something to do with the new government, but all that the new government meant to us was that somebody came and caught us. We were put in an Industrial School, and I learned to be a machinist, ultimately. You never learned anything, because you ran away, on your ninth birthday, and I didn't see you again for a long while.

The school had a library; yes, that's part of the story. You never did see that library. You never learned to read really well, so I guess it wouldn't have mattered to you. There weren't many books there, and every so often somebody would check the shelves and cart away another dozen or two, to burn in the big incinerator outside. It was usually because they had the wrong ideas in them. The only ones left, after awhile, were books like "Tom Swift" and "The Program of Nationalist America" by President Henry Rayford.

I was supposed to carry the books out to be burned once. The man in the police uniform who had been picking them out took an armful and gave me another. The top book, old and dirty, had a title lettered across it. The title was the only part of the book I ever did see, and I've never again been able to find a copy. The author had a Chinese name--that's all I remember. But the title was "All Men Are Brothers."

It was the title that reminded me of you. I wondered where you were, Saul. I still remembered you the way you were, skinny and cold and hungry, holding onto my hand as though it were an anchor.

I hoped you'd found another anchor outside the school walls somewhere. "All Men Are Brothers." Not so far as I'd been able to see. Did it mean that people took care of each other the way we had taken care of each other? The Industrial School had walls, but walls don't keep everything out. And I was pretty sure all men weren't brothers to each other the way we had been.

I was sixteen when I was sent out to a job. The school authorities found me a room, in what was known as a Labor Front Hostel, and they gave me a card which landed me a job, at what was called an apprentice wage, in a Naval Repair yard. I didn't like the wages, but I found out I was lucky to have a job when I passed the Work Militia recruiting office and saw the long lines of men who didn't, waiting to enlist in the thing people called "Rayford's Robots."

One old man who worked next to me told me that the Work Militia was something like what he called a WPA; the difference was that these men couldn't quit, and got only their food and minimum needs. The old man talked, in an undertone, about somebody who'd been President sometime before Rayford, somebody named Roosevelt, and how good things had been then.

"All we had to worry about then was a depression." He'd say, and then

the foreman would come by, and he'd close his mouth, tight.

I read a lot. Books I'd find, on second hand shelves, junk stores-- there were hardly any new books; I wouldn't have wanted to read them, even if I could have afforded the twenty or thirty dollars a copy they cost. Most of them were about love or else about the New State, and President Rayford. Love I didn't want to read about. Not just to read about, anyway. And Rayford, I could hear on the radio, practically every other night.

The old man's name was Elihu. I got to know him pretty well, since he lived down the street from me, and we used to stop at the same bar for a drink or two. Only his wasn't a drink or two. It was usually a couple of dozen. It made him talkative, and he'd sit there and tell me about the old days for hours on end.

I asked him what the war had been all about; who won and what made it happen. The only thing I knew about it was the February 10th was Victory-Day and we got the afternoon off to listen to the Yard Chairman make a speech about Nationalist America's future, and watch the Police Services drill.

He had been a soldier in that war. He had a wife and two kids, in a place called Seattle. It wasn't there nowadays, and he didn't find out what had happened to it until he got back to the country.

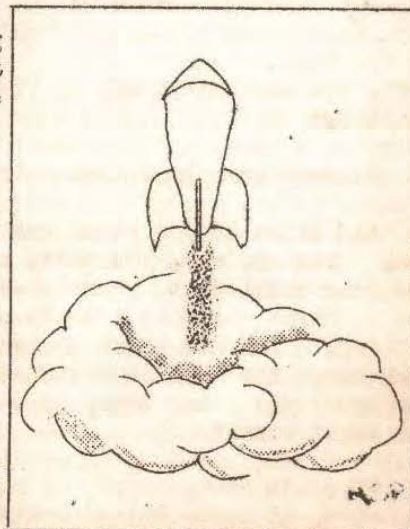
"I ain't mad at anybody any more, Son." He swished the beer around in his glass. "After what I seen over there, coming back, and finding out they'd done the same thing to us--well, I felt like hell, then, but now it seems like justice, somehow. Those guys on the other side....Commies. They were all wrong, sure. But maybe, there could have been some other way. I dunno what way. They were human, like us."

"I saw a book once." I said, thinking about that title. "It might have been about some idea like that, that everybody was like everybody else. Never got to read it, though."

"People catch you reading too many books they'll say you're a Commie, too."

"There aren't any left."

"No." Elihu agreed. "No Commies, but people get shot just the same. They ain't Commies, not like the ones that was in the war. They're just any dope that talks against the government--they call them Commies, but that's just guff. Any real Commies left, they don't open their traps."

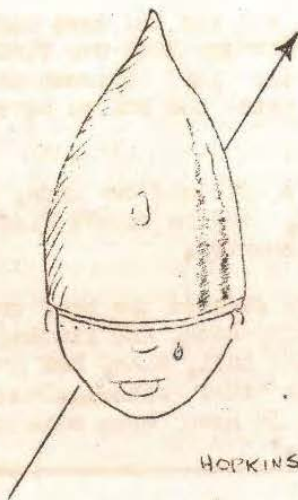


"So why should anybody talk against the government?"

"The government wasn't always like the way it is, boy. Used to be elections, people voted for a president. Rayford, he's been elected by the Congress, and he's Life President. Means he stays in till he dies. Used to be other things different, too. Used to be--" he looked around cautiously, "--unions."

I looked at him, and lowered my voice to suit his.

"You be careful, Pop. Last time somebody talked unions around the yard, they slapped him into the Work Militia. How do you know I won't give you away? Haven't we got a union, anyway? The Yard Chairman says our Employee Association is just as good as any old time union used to be, besides."



"Yeah." Elihu spat into the sawdust. "Who pays his salary?"

He polished off his drink morosely. "Son, there was maybe three fourths of the people in the world got killed on account of that war we're talking about. They nearly all of them thought the world was going to be a better place afterward. They never figured that you can't atombomb half the factories and farms off the face of the earth, spread germs and dust over the rest, run your country like it was an army, and expect to see any considerable improvements. They all used to talk about how the Commies were plotting a revolution. Well, the way it's going now, there'll be a revolution; only it'll be just a lot of guys too mad to care anymore, who'll burn down everything that's

left, and then we'll all be livin' like the apes in the zoo--back where we started."

"I read someplace that we're descended from apes. Think so?"

Old Elihu looked at me and chuckled. "Tryin' to change the subject? Hah. Listen, son, you don't have to worry any. You keep your trap shut and your opinions to yourself--I seen that already. Me, I'm so damn old and so burnt out that I don't care if they fill me full of lead tomorrow morning. I don't think the world's gonna improve any, but I sure like to talk about the way it was when it was fit to live in. Only maybe that's because I was young then, and any world's good enough when you're young. How about that?"

"I don't know, Pop." I shook my head. "Listening to you, I get to wondering if maybe things couldn't be better."

"Don't never believe it, boy.. You'll be a sorrow to yourself if you do. Tomorrow's always worse, believe me. Never lift a hand to make tomorrow any better, or you'll never live out the night."

He spread the coins in his hand across the bar, gazed at them sorrowfully, and repocketed them.

"Time to go home."

Once in a while, Saul, I'd think about you. A couple of times, I even tried to find out what had become of you. I looked up people who lived in the shacks that had been thrown up on the ruins where our old house had been. Maybe something had pulled you back there. But nobody remembered a kid--no particular kid, anyway.

Then things kept me busy--a girl and other things. I began to forget about you, Saul.

There was the old man, Elihu. He was the one who told me not to ever try to make tomorrow better. Then, when all of us went out into the Yard, yelling and cursing, because of that new "assessment" for the President's Relief Fund--half our week's pay, and the third time in two months...the old man made a speech. It was a hell of a speech, partly to us and partly to the windows of the manager's office, telling us not to take it, to get a decent day's pay for a day's work, telling us we were Americans and men, and telling the Manager he was a lying, slave-driving, cheating politician and all in all, a hell of a speech. I wish they'd let the old man finish it. They shot him from the windows before he was half through.

After we broke some windows and some more got hurt, we went out of the yard, with the cops pushing us along. Next morning about fifty of us got sentenced to the Work Militia, and the rest got fired. I was one of the lucky ones who were lucky. I got fired.

By the time I got signed aboard the freighter "Sigma" I guess I'd pretty well forgotten how lucky I was. I'd been eating out of garbage cans, taking an occasional trip up to the National Employment Service just to see if I was still black-listed. I was.

Somebody must have forgotten the black list temporarily or else they needed spacemen who knew machine work pretty badly. I could see how that was, after a couple of weeks aboard that ship.

The Sigma ran between Jefferson City on Venus and Earth. She carried protein mold back from Venus, the usual miscellany outward. The protein mold was supposed to be highly concentrated and valuable plant food, but it smelled high all the same. There were times when the crewmen used to say you could blast off on the smell alone, no fuel. But it was a living.

I wasn't getting paid any fortune. But I saved some of it, by staying aboard, not hitting the bars--not too often. And after I met Millie, I managed to stay off the girls in Jefferson, to a certain extent. Millie was a typist, and smart--pretty, too. I'd wash the scent off myself, get spruced up, and get somebody to stand my watch; every time the ship came streaking down toward the Long Island spaceport, I'd be wriggling in my harness, waiting to get earthside and spend that one day in every two months with Millie.

We had an understanding, Saul; me and Millie. I told her about some of that free farmland I'd seen on the uplands of Venus, where a few hardy souls were working away already. No more than a few though--plenty of room for more. The land was free, but you had to have enough money to buy tools and seed. And the fare to Venus wasn't cheap. I could ride free, but Millie'd have to go passenger.



I thought about you, too, Saul. I still hoped I'd find you. I hoped you'd want to come too. I thought about when we'd been kids, in the alleys, talking about the country, and how it might be great to be a rancher or a farmer, always with plenty to eat, a creek to fish in, a farmhouse with warm beds and a big fireplace. I thought maybe you'd be there to share it with me and Millie.

I came back to Earth on a bright July morning, down from the black sky, full of a lot of queer warm feelings. There was almost enough in the account now; I could see Millie, tell her to get packed. Another trip, and she could buy her ticket. I'd be waiting in Jefferson City for her, and we'd get into a shiny new tractor and head up into

the green hills of Venus.

But Millie was upset.

"I'm sure I'll get fired," she said, twisting her hands together. "He is letting half the office go. Every time he gets more worried."

"What's this boss of yours matter, kid? We're all set to get married and go homesteading." I made it sound confident.

"Oh, I guess it doesn't matter much," she answered, staring at nothing. "It isn't as if I had anybody to take care of, and I've got enough to live on for a bit. But a person hates to get fired."

"Maybe he won't get around to it. What's the matter with him?"

"He's sick. He has everything in the world--he owns half the country, that man does. Really. I've typed letters for him that you'd never believe. He buys people. Not many people know how big the Company really is." She looked at me seriously. "He even owns that ship you're on, indirectly. It'll be his company we'll sell to and buy from if we really do homestead on Venus."

"I never heard about him. What's his name again?"

"Sounds a little like yours. Spelled differently, though. Not many people ever have heard about him. He keeps things out of the news."

She dug in her handbag. "Here's a picture of the Company's office party last Christmas. He was there for a minute. I think it's probably the only picture of him around--he's sensitive about his looks."

The radiation scar on the neck. The face wasn't a skinny kid, and it wasn't dirty. But it was you, Saul. You, with your eyes looking out of a hard, fleshy, face, hungry, scared eyes.

I handed the picture back to Millie.

"That's my brother." I said.

I don't know what she thought. She might have still thought I was kidding right up to the moment I put her in a street car and started off in the other direction, toward the place where she said you lived.

I told the man at the door to say that Dave was here, Dave that you knew when you were a boy. Then the man came back and led me in.

You were sitting behind a wide desk, covered with papers, a bottle and glasses at your elbow. You looked at me, hard and cool; then you motioned me to sit down, still not saying anything.

"Dave". You tried to open me up with your eyes. You looked like a man who couldn't trust anything.

"Is it really you?"

I nodded.

"God." You poured a drink for each of us. You stood up, sat down again, still looking at me.

"You. What became of you, Dave? Where have you been?"

I told you. A quick briefing, not a biography--and you told me. "Money," you said. "The only thing that buys a man safety. Ma and Pa could have been safe, with money. Could have lived outside the city. I mightn't have these--" you touched your scars, "--and I mightn't be dying."

I felt cold and dead when you said that.

"Cancer. Radiation burns do that, much later, sometimes. The doctors give me six months, more or less." You turned in your chair.

There were big charts on the wall, and a map.

"Dave--I own all that. I've done a lot for the country, Dave. I've got a right to live, haven't I?" You looked at me as if you expected me to contradict you. I wasn't, for everybody's got a right to live.

"The government, too, Dave. Without me, that fool that took over Rayford's party won't be worth a tinker's damn. Five years it's taken me to get up, and another three I've been riding in the saddle. Another five, and I'd have the world on its feet again."

You coughed and took a pill. "I could stamp out the last of that poisonous nonsense that makes these men act the way you've told me about--throws good men like you out of work because of rioters." I'm a progressive man, Dave. But I've been lucky, and you haven't. But--I'm licked. I'm dying."

You looked at me a long time. I had nothing left to say. Then you came out with it. "Dave, I want to help you. A job--"

"Saul, I can't use it--I'm going to homestead on Venus."

You laughed. "No, Dave. No more homesteads on Venus after next month. That protein mold's too valuable. All that land is going to be declared State preserved, for lease to producers, mostly the Company. No more homesteads and we'll get rid of the ones there are." That pioneer stuff's all very well, but the world's not like that. You've got a future right here, Dave--"

I stood up. "No, I haven't, Saul. No. And you've got no future here or anywhere. Saul, there's a cancer in you. Not just the one that's eating at your body. Another one. Remember how scared and hurt you were, how you used to shake all the time? You're still scared, and it's eating you, eating away the kid I knew. You're sick, Saul. And the whole world is sick, the same way. The people on Venus aren't sick, not yet, but you'll spread it there, too, won't you, Saul?"

You were still standing by your desk, the cold light of a lamp white on your face like candles at the head of a corpse, when I walked out.

I never saw you again, Saul. The new law you talked about, never happened, but I never heard whether you had died or not. With the best of doctors maybe something could have been done, no matter how sick you were--at least something for one kind of cancer, anyway.... Sometimes, a man comes walking up the road, past the farm in the uplands, and I look close. But it isn't you, Saul. .. .. It's never you .. .

# FIGMOS

*hal shapiro, db*

The first Figmos brought an unexpected reaction. Riddle asked for another. Okay, lad, but don't you know when you're well off?

First, a couple of notes anent that last column. Correction: The Jerry Weiland cover picture sold by Ray Nelson, Art Agent, went to Imagination, and not to If as stated. Sorry to have made a mistake. It'll probably happen again. Also, about last issue, all poetry was used without permission.

Well, if reports are correct, Fandom may soon have a network show of its own on the wires of ABC. The Aliens, a stf club in New York City in cooperation with the Junior Astronomers Club of the Hayden Planetarium are just about set to go ahead on a science fiction discussion program in the near future. Under the guiding hand of Dave MacDonald, wheel of the Aliens, big plans are being made. Everyone seems to be enthusiastic. Hope it works out.

Seems to be some discussion in fandom these days about the address of one of PEON's columnists being a vacant lot out in San Francisco. Any comment anent this from the "Fantastuff" author?

In the November 29 issue of the Science News Letter, in the "Books of the Week" review column, is the following review: "Avon Science Fiction and Fantasy Reader, Volume 1, Number 1 - Sol Cohen, Editor - Avon Novels, 128 p, illus., paper, 35¢, quarterly. Containing new stories for science fiction fans." In all, it took up less than three lines. In the same section was a

four line review of Conklins "Omnibus of Science Fiction."

Samson, Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary were all born of elderly women. In each case, an angel tipped off the expectant mother. If any reader sees an angel talking to an elderly lady please wire info to this column. We'd like to scoop FANTASY TIMES and maybe publish it before Drew Pearson predicts it.

At this writing (December 14) this writer has just returned from an abrupt tour of the sunny southland. It was fun hitch-hiking two thousand plus miles in a triangle, (No. Missouri to Atlanta to Lynn Haven to No. Missouri) and we had fun at the Lynn Havention. Many people were supposed to have shown up and didn't, which should prove something or other. Present were Shelby Vick, Joe Green, Anne Shan, Johnnie Henderson (who all live in Lynn Haven and vicinity), Ian Macauley, Harry B. Moore, and myself. A great time was had by all for, with no planned program, it was something like Indian Lake, only on a smaller and cheaper scale. Now, if the national cons can be scaled down from "big business" to friendly get-togethers where fans can enjoy themselves, they'll be fun, again, instead of work.

Like to quote here a portion of a letter from Australia's Roger Dard. "My feud with the Australian Customs has caused a big feud within the Australian fandom. For two years, I've been trying to get fandom organized to fight them. Unfortunately, the reactionary ele-

ment in Austrlian fandom has fought all my efforts to do anything. This element is led by one Graham Stone, a Sydney fan, and he and his supporters have denounced me as a trouble maker and an anarchist. Don't be surprised if you hear of me being kicked out of Australian fandom at any time. However--recently, I received unexpected support. Lyell Crane from Canada, former head of Science Fiction International, is in Sydney, and not long after he hit there, he denounced the Sydney fans who were trying to get me kicked out of fandom, and publicly said I had more guts than all the rest of Aussie fandom put together, and that I was the only Australian fan upholding Australia prestige in the USA. I think Lyell is exaggerating a bit, but anyway, his support is much appreciated."

Well, this writer does NOT think that Crane is exaggerating. It was Dard who organized the Australian element of the NFFF and built it up to great heights, often spending money out of his own pockets, and taking no remuneration. After it had been built up, he turned over the reins to someone else who has let it slide down and down, while receiving expenses and a portion of the dues. Rog is now the Australian agent for Operation Fantast and has built that project up until now, it is one of the biggest driving forces in Australia.

Dard is still working to break the strangling hold of the Australian customs on fandom. With Aussie laws the way they are, customs can seize just about anything that is in the least unusual. And they have seized many sfmags. In any event, Dard does deserve recognition for being one of the very few Australian fans to keep that land's prestige up in the United States. Off hand, I fail to recall who the

others are, if any.

To change the subject a bit, the popularity of space stuff seems to have seeped into the comedy field. Not only are Abbott and Costello making a flick to be called "A&C GO TO THE MOON", and Hope and Crosby rumored to be considering a picture, "THE ROAD TO MARS," but the National Association of Gag Writers has elected model Selena Walters "Mis Space Queen". This Association has also begun an interplanetary cartoon and gag contest. You can get particulars, if you wish, from NAG, 292 Madison Avenue, New York City. There's a hundred buck first prize in it for someone I'm told.

Holt now has a \$2.50 book out titled "Sun, Moon, and Planets" by Roy Marshall which seems to be an excellent primer on astronomy for the layman who don't know from nuttin' about such stuff. Reads good. BRIEFLY:::Prophesied at the Centennial of Engineering in Chicago last September was a completely automatic factory. Machines which could punch tapes to operate other machines and set up jobs via cybernetic were shown....Noted the other day was an elderly gentleman, obviously inebriated, looking into a store window and paying homage to the female maniquens inside by doffing his hat. What stopped us was the fact that his "hat" was a helicopter beanie....And, in case anyone is interested, it seems that Voltaire never made that famous statement often attributed to him: "I do not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Voltaire authority, Beatrice Hall, created the statement to describe the philosopher's attitude towards freedom of expression....And with that expose, I'll quit until next time. Have fun....hal

# THE DEFINITION OF SCIENCE FICTION

JIM HADEN

Jim Harmon's remarks on the question of maturity in the November 1952, issue of *PEON* are extremely interesting. The distinction he makes between personal maturity and literary maturity may not be too valid, however. Obviously, the distinction arises from a discrepancy between what his proposed definition of maturity covers and how he wants to use the term in connection with writing. But if he is forced to define the word in two different ways according to the field in which it is to apply, then why use the same word in both instances? The other alternative is to formulate a definition which does apply to both situations. I am sure that Mr. Harmon has discovered the difficulties of defining; if he has ever read Plato he should have an even clearer idea of how hard it is. (Plato is not really out of place here; Sturgeon's "Maturity" contains a very creditable Platonic dialogue.) If we want some clarification of what maturity in life and literature may be, perhaps this will serve as a rough definition: adolescence is a state of transitory urges motivated by a dim recognition of unexplored possibilities, a time when one does what one does without really knowing why; maturity is a state in which one possesses a clear idea of one's own nature and powers, and in which one is in possession of a definite, evaluated goal and is at least reasonably clear about the best means to that end. I am alive to the imperfections of this, but as it stands it can be applied both to fans and to science fiction.

As far as the fans go, I won't risk my neck by applying it. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that the mature fan is one who can apply the definition to himself. It is much more instructive, I think, to apply it to science fiction as a form of writing. The result is that stf comes out as not yet mature, but still adolescent, although late adolescent. The chief reason for this is lack of clear knowledge concerning its own "nature and powers." More simply, there is lacking a satisfactory definition of science fiction. Only when there is available an objective, fruitful definition, known to fans as well as authors and critics, can science fiction develop other than blindly. No one can deny that stf has come a long way from its early days, but blind development is immature development.

Now, I would like to pose a definition of science fiction which begins to meet the requirements of a working definition, although it lacks polish as yet. There have been groping attempts, such as the one offered by the Baltimore Science Fiction Forum: "Science fiction deals with science and its impact on man during time--Past, Present and Future--in a fictitious way." (*Astounding*, Jan. 1952, pg. 146). This is not exactly wrong; it is not, however, a sufficiently clear standard for judgement--i.e., it is not useful.

However, this definition did provoke an interesting response from L. Sprague de Camp, in *Astounding* for April 1952 (pp. 168-170), which does

clarify the nature of definitions in general. He distinguishes two varieties: one which attempts to set forth the common characteristics of an existing group of "real things", and one which prescribes more or less arbitrarily a set of attributes defining a class of objects which may or may not exist at the time of defining. He calls the first type "nuclear", and the second "perimetric." I would rather substitute the less bizarre names of "empirical" and "normative."

De Camp objects to normative definitions of science fiction and holds that it is easy to think up empirical definitions. But he evidently fails to consider certain elementary pitfalls of the latter type. For example: how do we select the class of existing "real things" in a case such as this? Is everything science fiction that its author or publisher has labeled as such? Is nothing not thus labeled genuine science fiction? Why must labeling be the exclusive property of the author and/or publisher? (It is no secret that publishers are interested in selling their products; is not their judgement likely to be affected by the inclination of the public to buy anything that has a science fiction label on it?) And finally, what are we going to do about stories as yet unwritten? These are not "real things" under his definition. De Camp would profit from Plato, too.



A purely empirical approach works no better for defining than it does in science in general. On the other hand, we can have little use for a purely arbitrary definition. (Call this sub-type "stipulative.") What is needed is a skillful blend of the two; one which doesn't hesitate to throw out stuff that may have passed under the name of science-fiction for years, which provides a guide for authors and would-be authors, and which does satisfy those vague feelings which we all have about the proper domain of stf. Call this type "prescriptive" The medicinal ring to that word indicates that the use of it would be healthful for the art of science fiction in general. It is my personal belief that stf is a legitimate and distinctive form of literature, which is to say that it performs a function which no other form of literature can fulfill, and unless the highest standards are set the valuable and the creative will be swamped under the sticky tide of Captain Video-style of goo that multiplies faster than it can be laughed out of existence.

What I am going to give here is only a skeleton exposition of how I believe stf should be defined. But on this basis anyone familiar with the field should be able to build, and this is one requirement of a useful definition. The process has three phases; you will recognize in them many ideas which have had long-standing currency. The difference is intended to lie in the way in which these are coordinated.

The first stage is to eliminate all stories which are "translatable." This is the sort of writing against which Horace Gold of Galaxy has so correctly inveighed. (Which is not to say that he has invariably avoided the trap himself). If science fiction is to be a truly distinctive form, it must be impossible to translate a stf story into any other brand of fiction merely by use of a sort of dictionary in which, say "ray gun" is exchanged for "six-shooter," and so forth. More accurately, the plot, (or more generally, the whole story in all its phases) must be one which has science as an indispensable element. (The limits of meaning of the word "science" can have are rather broad. I am going to shirk the job of drawing them here). This is, of course, nowhere nearly precise enough for a working definition, since, as de Camp pointed out in his letter, it includes Arrowsmith, which one would not normally want to call science fiction. But it does effectively amputate "space opera", which as a matter of fact would not have received its special name had it not already been dimly recognized as something separate.

Now for the second step. True science fiction lies between the realm of realistic writing about science and the realm of sheer fantasy. It is distinguished from realism by a strong imaginative element (usually called "extrapolation"); the events narrated must not be probable occurrences in the present or past of the history of the universe under the limits set by the present state of science and the present knowledge of history. This lops off Arrowsmith, since it is certainly probable in the sense that if one were to suddenly find oneself in the situations Lewis narrates, it might be surprising, but hardly incredible. At the other end, stf is differentiated from fantasy by the fact that science is by definition the knowledge of nature, in which new occurrences are put into logical relation with a previously established system of ideas and facts. Fantasy does not have this check-rein--which is what makes it so much fun. It can cheerfully traffic with the supernatural without a qualm. I am perfectly ready to admit that these two boundary lines are hard to draw unambiguously, and that there may well be border-line cases which are hard to classify unequivocally. Nevertheless, within these limits there remains a large and fertile area for writers.

We need one more step to bring final order into this area. So far we have been saying more what it is not than what it is. The last step is to categorize the region of genuine science fiction in a simple, permanent way. Practically any anthology one picks up has the stories classified in some fashion. Generally this is by some breakdown of the scientific or imaginative ingredients, which is perfectly all right for the anthologist. But this involves a grave difficulty for the definer: any reasonably bright and imaginative writer can keep several jumps ahead of the laboring critic and anthologist by thinking up new twists for his stories. Therefore such a classification is always subject to change without notice. But a simple formal classification can be made, based on factors which are necessary to any stf story, and which can be without breaking. There are two essential factors: (1) the scientific or technical element, and (2) the characters. No fiction gets along completely without (2), and we have already said that (1) is a necessary ingredient.

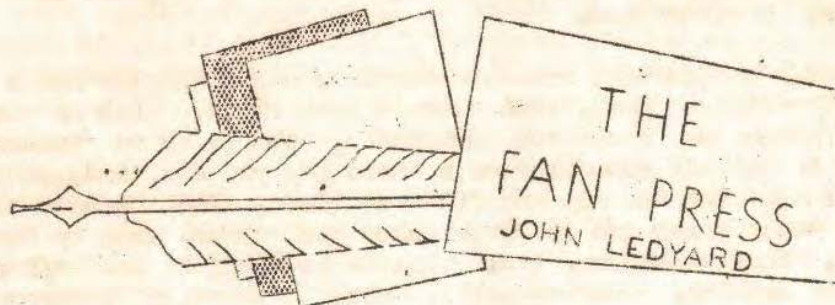
On this basis, we can get three categories, according to the emphasis which the author intends to place on these two factors. Category I is that in which almost the entire emphasis is on (1); it is an imaginative, and often playful, examination of certain scientific or technical notions enlarged past their known bounds. The characters are there only to carry the story along. As an example of this story, I would suggest A. J. Deutsch's fine short story, "A Subway Named Mobius," which appeared in ASF in 1950. This category shows that despite Groff Conklin's opinions, genuine stf can be humorous. Category II is that in which approximately equal emphasis is put on both (1) and (2). This produces what one might call "sociological science fiction" as contrasted with Category I's "pure science fiction." In Category II fall all the stories which are concerned with the impact of science on human society. Well's "The Food of the Gods" is a classic example; Julian Cain's "Success Story" is a more modern one. The Category II story doesn't have to deal explicitly with the race as a whole; it can often be more convincingly played out on a quite restricted stage.

If Category I represents the earlier period of stf writing, and Category II is perhaps the most prevalent one today, Category III may be the one of the future, since it has been least well explored and also least clearly recognized so far. It contains stories which subordinate factor (1) almost entirely to factor (2); (1) is not dispensable, though, since it affords the necessary presupposition or background of the events of the story. The characters are more than individuals or more than members of society; through them the whole relation of man to the universe is symbolized. One might call this category "cosmic science fiction." (Not to be confused with the "cosmic epics" of space opera). In it, one can see that man is the paradoxical creature capable of removing the last spatial and temporal barriers to his physical finitude, only to discover what an infinitesimal scrap of the universe he is.

There is all the difference in the world between the partial removal barriers and their total removal; therefore a genuine Category III story about, say, space travel, is not translatable into terms of travel on the surface of Earth. The first men to go to the Moon or to Mars and back are not just super-Magellans; there is not only a difference in the length of distance traveled, there is a qualitative difference. A true Category III story is rare because only the best writing can capture this distinction. It is no accident that Bradbury wrote a story about a time-machine especially constructed to bring Thomas Wolfe into the period of space travel in order to do literary justice to it; Bradbury is himself the Thomas Wolfe of science fiction. Not until more really good writers (they don't have to write like Wolfe) come into the field will there be more Category III stories published. Bradbury can do it; Kuttner can sometimes; very rarely Heinlein can also, but he is such an awkward stylist (the Sinclair Lewis of stf) that he is better off in the other two categories.

Now, obviously, only a few stories will fall neatly in one of the three classes. But one can just as conveniently cross-classify a story by a multiple designation, giving the primary category first. For example,

(continued on page 27)



THE ALIEN. October, 1952. Bi-monthly, 10¢, 6/50¢ (\$1.00 with membership in the Alien Science-Fantasy Club.) Vic Waldrop, Jr., 212 West Avenue, Cartersville, Ga. Mimeographed.

This is the third issue (the second issue was reviewed in the last issue of PEON) of this fanzine, and shows signs of improvement. The cover is signed RAE, and was litho'd by Lynn Hickman.. Inside are stories by Bobby Warner and Toby Duane (both fairly good), various club items, and Joe Green's excellent poetry column. This zine, undoubtedly, will improve as its editor gains experience.

BOO! January, 1953. Monthly, 10¢, 12/\$1.00. Official Organ of The Faceless Ones. Bob Stuart, 274 Arlington St., San Francisco, California. Hektographed.

This is a first issue. It looks it. The cover is a condensation of Schoenburg's "Slan" cover on FSM. Inside is an editorial, a column by Ray Thompson, quite a bit of just plain stuff by the editor, and some reprints from--of all places--Bill Knapheide's SEETEE. SEETEE, under the direction of Knapheide, was one of the poorest fanzines around, yet Stuart had to pick that mag to reprint poetry from. You can imagine the results. The reproduction leaves much to be desired, the makeup is poor, material is the same. Yet it has the possibilities of improvement. Unless Stuart gets some subscribers, I doubt if it will improve. Why not try a copy--- see if you like it.

FANTASIAS. #5. Quarterly, 15¢, 2/30¢, 4/60¢. David English, 516 Deer St., Dunkirk, N. Y. Mimeographed.

The cover of this issue is by Orville W. Mosher, who printed it himself. Inside are columns by Dick Ryan and Fred Chappell (the latter excellent), a humorous bit by P. H. Economou (very good), a story by George Wetzel (good), poetry by G. K. Stephens and P. H. Economou (fair), an article on OAHSP by W. Wiers, de's editorial and the letter column. Pretty good stuff.

FIENDETTA. December, 1952. 10¢, 3/25¢. Charles Wells, 405 East 62nd St, Savannah, Ga. Hektographed.

I didn't list a publication schedule because, while Charles has a definite schedule, it varies. Hmm, that doesn't look right. Let me put it this way: some issues he comes out bi-monthly, others every two-and-a-half months--but he has his schedules on a schedule, you see, and...well, maybe you'd better send for the mag and find out there. This issue's cover is a five (count 'em) color job in both hekto and mimeo, done by Charles and Lee Hoffman. Very well-done, too. Inside is stuff by Lee Hoffman, J. T. Oliver, Russ Watkins, Charles Wells, etc. Generally humorous stuff--though Charles' future-history of fandom is seriously done. His page-numbering system, by the way, is by letters, instead of numbers.

GROTESQUE. October, 1952. Irregular, 20¢, 6/¢1.00. Al Leverentz, 320 Stenzel St., North Tonawanda, N. Y. Mimeographed.



This is the first issue of a magazine that will devote itself to fantasy and the macabre. Included this time is fiction by Alice Bullock, H. S. Weatherby, and Toby Duane, an article on M. R. James by George Wetzle, poetry by Toby Duane and Andrew Duane, book reviews, and features. This promises to become one of tomorrow's top fanzines.

NOTE. November, 1952. Bi-Monthly, 5¢, 6 for 25¢. Bob Peatrowsky, Box 634, Norfolk, Nebraska. Hektographed.

This issue is as much better than the 2nd issue as the second issue was better than the first. The artwork has improved tremendously, what with the addition of Naaman Peterson and Richard Bergeron to the staff. Peterson, in particular, can turn out great stuff. Included in this issue, aside from quite an abundance of art work, are columns by Richard Lupoff, Richard Bergeron, and Dick Clarkson. There are other features (like a humorous story by Stan Serxner), of course, all of general good quality. If this zine keeps improving like it has those last two issues, it'll soon be among the top few.

PROGRESS REPORT #1. November 16, 1952. Dave Hammond, editor. Published by the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Penna. Photo-offset.

This is not a fanzine. It is, as the title suggests, a progress report on the 11th World Science Fiction Convention. It seems that the Philadelphia group is already hard at work on preparing to put on a grand show next year. They have only 86 members so far, so why don't you join? Send your

dollar to the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, address above.

SCINTILLA #6. Irregular, 10¢. Larry Anderson, 2716 Smoky Lane, Billings, Montana. Hektographed.

A pretty good issue. Has columns by Charles Wells, Terry Carr, and Vernon L. McCain, poetry by Orma McCormick, tips on fanzine-publishing by Barclay Johnson, and other stuff. Interesting throughout. Larry promises to have a mimeograph for the next issue, and to "make a grand slam out of it." He probably will, too.

SF. October, 1952. Irregular, 15¢, 8/\$1.00, 17/\$2.00. John L. Magnus, Jr., 9612 Second Avenue, Silver Springs, Md. Mimeographed.

This is a half-sized mag that promises great things for the future. Its cover is a lovely silk-screened job in two colors. Nice reproduction, neat format, good material--and, above all, a definite personality. As evidenced by the contents page, from which I'll quote a big: THE VEILED-WOMAN...Is that all she wore? THIS REVOLVING WORLD...Let's hope it keeps on. PREFERENCE LIBRARY...Good things in general. ANALYTIC GAB-ORATORY...Are you there? THE WILD MAN...Brash Cracks. See what I mean? THE WILD MAN, in particular, was enjoyed by yours truly.

THE SPACETRAILS SERIES. Bi-monthly, 15¢, 8/\$1.00. Ken Krueger, Box 2075 Buffalo 5, N. Y. Photo-offset (I think).

This is a series of booklets that is being issued by Pegasus Publications. So far, there have been four titles: "Prison Planet" by Wilson Tucker; "The Flesh Eaters" by Basil Wells; "Disease Planet" by David English; and "Dark Evolution" by Walt Klein. The format of these booklets vary, but usually there is at least a cover illustration, by such artists as Lee Hoffman, Richard Bergeron, and Charley Momberger. Unfortunately, the illustrations, so far, have been far below the standards of these fine artists. These booklets are going to be collectors items in a few years I'll bet.

TYRANN #4. November, 1952. Bi-monthly, 10¢, 3/25¢, 6/50¢. Norbert Hirschorn, 853 Riverside Drive, New York 32, N.Y. Hektographed.

This is a real colorful item, with nice artwork by Richard Bergeron, the Assistant Editor. The contents include articles by Marion Z. Bradley, Bob Farnham, and Richard Elsberry, a story by W. Paul Ganley, a poem by Toby Duane, column by Ev Winne, editorial, letter column, and fanzine review by the editor. This is well on its way to the top.

Too late for review thoroughly is the latest copy of VANATIONS issued by Norman G. Browne, 13906 - 101A Ave., Edmonton, Alta., Canada. This is the fanzine that you pay for in the amount what you think its worth, and I suggest that you send for a copy right away. The current issue sets a high standard for illustrations and artwork, and the inside material seems to be of the usual high standards of VANATIONS. Recommended.

A PEON Special Feature:

I E S I   Y O U R S E L F

by Ken F. Slater

(Editor's note::The following quiz recently appeared in Ken Slater's FAPA magazine, MONOM, and I had so much fun working it out, that I thought the readers of PEON would like to try it also. Answers will appear in the next issue of PEON.--CLR)

All very easy. Follows a list of four-letter words, not necessarily common Anglo-Saxon ones. Only the centre two letters have been shown. Clues are provided. The first letters reading downwards give you the title and author's name of a recent book, and so do the last letters...Go to it!

1. To put to the proof
2. Christian name
3. To dig, beheaded, or mythological creatures, curtailed
4. Initially, South East Asian Command
5. Opposite, against, in exchange
6. I could egg you on, but you should twig this
7. Disavow or repudiate
8. H. H. Munro
9. In fact, it's wide ....
10. You've got two, and you probably stand between five or six
11. If you have knobs on your antennae you ain't a
12. Kind of axe with arched blade at right angles
13. Ferric oxide
14. "Mint Amazing '26 April - only 30¢"
15. Camera
16. The reverse of wear
17. Metered method of transport
18. Well, how did that creep in? Oh, religious sense?
19. Margaret of
20. --stat control
21. You can lead with this; I often do
22. Chit---
23. Isn't it? And all you gotta do is double it!
24. Without tears, too.
25. I've got one, and J. Arthur is one.
26. I certainly wish I had more of it.
27. A Persian prince

E S  
- U G -  
- L V -  
- E A -  
- N T -  
- E S -  
- E N -  
- A K -  
- P E -  
- O O -  
- O T -  
- D Z -  
- U S -  
- A L -  
- G F -  
- A E -  
- A X -  
- E L -  
- R B -  
- H E -  
- H I -  
- H A -  
- U L -  
- V E -  
- A N -  
- A L -  
- M I -

## LIMITED EDITIONS--BIG DEAL

*Larry Saunders*

"Deluxe editions. Inscribed by the author. Limited to 3000 copies. A future collector's item."

That's what the advertisement said. Now you don't have to travel to Canada to make your fortune after all; you can buy limited editions. So, making the smart move, you pay the premium price and you receive the book. Naturally, you can't read it; you might soil a page in the process--beside which you can't stand the author anyway. Instead, it's salted away for the future price change.

And as it happens, one day in the future you receive a price list through the mail. Sure enough, the price of your book has changed. Only now, it is \$1.00 instead of \$3.00. On top of that it is still labeled a "future collector's item." Apparently this is very true. When they say future, they really mean future. 2000 A.D., or so.

Take the case of Arkham House. Directed by the versatile August Derleth, it is--or more accurately, ~~was~~--the leading publishing company that concerned itself solely with the production of limited editions. As every amateur collector knows, the early A. H. editions released in the early forties are now true "collector's items"--"The Outsider and Others" by H. P. Lovecraft bringing premium prices as high as \$60.00 at some time or another. Demand was high for this and similar books, such as Donald Wandrei's "Eye and the Finger" and Henry S. Whitehead's "Jumbee and Other Uncanny Tales." The field then was uncrowded--A.H. was the only large publishing house that catered to a very hungry, demanding, book-barron field. Naturally the books were received as a godsend and because of the excessive demand, rapidly sold out.

Derleth then took a chance. He issued a science-fiction story by van Vogt, entitled "Slan", and on top of that, issued 4000 copies--an unheard of amount. And "Slan" paid off with dividends. It quickly sold out and became a much sought-after book.

I think Derleth then made a big mistake--assuming that there existed a regular demand for limited editions, he followed "Slan" with a barrage of books--and they floundered miserably, with the exception of a few.

He issued Bloch's "Opener of the Way" in a \$3.00, 2000-copy, edition--following it up with his own collection of "Something New." This was in 1945, and it was just recently that the last copies were disposed of--and



there is no indication that their value will mount in the near future.

Disaster followed after the release of the Bloch and Derleth books. One book followed another in a continual stream--generally in the same \$3.00, 3000-copy, edition. Today many of these books sell for \$1.00--and they are in premium shape.

There is virtually no demand for these books. Reasons are varied. Number one, the book publishing field has grown incredibly in the last five years. As a result, only the best books stand a chance of paying off in the overcrowded field. Science fiction, generally. Number two, the demand for fantasy and supernatural stories is nil. There are not 3000 collectors willing to shell out \$3.00 for a book of limited appeal. And number three, Derleth decreased their overall value by turning them out like hotcakes. The result is a shambles.

Arkham House has, in plain words, lost face with the collectors.

Derleth, in recent years, has realized the mistake he made in overestimating the field and has slowed down the deluge of books considerably. In a letter to him (December of 1950), I asked why the editions supposedly limited were issued in batches of 3000 or more. He replied that overhead and general production difficulties made it impracticable and unprofitable to issue books in lesser quantities. My sentiments at the time boiled down to this--why bother to issue limited editions at all when the phrase itself had become meaningless?

Derleth probably thought along the same lines. In a surprise move, "Away and Beyond"--a collection of van Vogt's short stories to be released under the auspices of A. H. in 1949, then 1951, finally appeared in a Pellegrini and Cudahy edition. Titled "Destination Universe" and priced at \$3.00, it contains only ten stories and is reputed to be the first of two volumes. Then surprise of surprises--"Tales of Underwood"--a collection of Dr. David H. Keller's short stories, announced to be released by A.H., was released by A. H.--in affiliation with Pellegrini and Cudahy. I wrote again to Derleth--was "Tales of Underwood" an A. H. book? Derleth says it is--its distribution was undertaken by Pellegrini and Cudahy. Any resemblance between this book and the earlier A. H. books is purely a coincidence.

Also, I inquired as to whether A. H. was continuing. Derleth assured me it was. And no more 3000 "limited editions". Aside from the fact that I spent some 60 odd dollars on A. H. "limited editions" which I could later have picked up for half-price, my interest was negligent in the matter.

Live and learn, I guess.

A classic fiasco involved a book entitled "Edison's Conquest of Mars", written by Garrett P. Serviss, and published by Carcosa House. This book

had all the necessary ingredients for success, being issued in a limited deluxed edition of 1500 copies, priced at \$3.50, and written by one of the "old masters". One rather trivial matter was overlooked, however--a story. Regardless of this fact, this book will always remain a mystery as far as I am concerned. How could this book be reduced to such worthless proportions as to be offered as a free gift by many book dealers as a come on? As an example, Bob Silverberg even goes on record in the July 1951 issue of QUANDRY in reporting, that with a \$3.00 purchase of Smith's "First Lensman", he received the following free books--"Greener Than You Think", "Well of the Unicorn", and "Eddison's Conquest of Mars."

Sometime ago, I wrote to Carcoas House in an effort to find out what was up, but they have never bothered to reply. Possibly, they might have moved in the meantime--for which I honestly can't blame them. I'd be embarrassed too, if a dealer thought so much of my book that he wanted every one to have a free copy.

Other books that have failed to make the grade were, "The Porcelain Magician" by Frank Owen; "Moonfoam and Sorceries" by Stanley Mullen, a limited edition, numbered, and priced at \$3.00; Dr. Keller's "Life Everlasting", limited to 1,000 copies in a deluxed edition, priced at \$3.50; and also Dr. Keller's two books issued by Prime Press, entitled "The Eternal Conflict" and "The Lady Decides", both of which were limited to 350 copies, numbered and autographed by the author--in addition to being boxed.

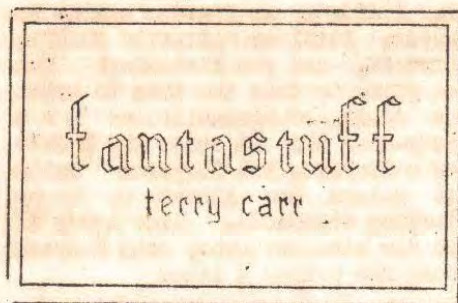


"Life Everlasting" evidently withstood the acid test--its price was only cut in half--a notable achievement, taking everything else into consideration. Dr. Keller's other two books are today selling for \$2.00 each, or two for \$3.00, a loss from the original price of \$3.50. Yet, Dr. Keller seems unperturbed. In fact, he bought out the majority of the copies Prime Press had in stock. In a letter, Prime Press explains this curious action with, "Because of the extremely limited edition and high cost of manufacture, Dr. Keller's share of the sales of the work was paid for in books..." And again, "...it appears that the Doctor would like to have people read his books and is not much interested in the profit..."

Dr. Keller's personal opinion runs as follows: "...As time passes, you will pay more (or less) for them. My idea is that you will finally pay more than the original price of \$3.50 each..." Perhaps. And for the sake of those collectors who paid the original price of \$3.50 each, I hope so.

Obviously the day of the limited editions is past. In 1950, a new publishing house calling itself the Peter Pauper Press made its initial appearance with a non-fiction book entitled "Cotton Mather On Witchcraft."





#### ...AND THEN THERE WERE THREE

Last issue of PEON I told you A Tale o f Two Moskowitz'. Well, since then, there has appeared another of these creatures (powerful numericobobble, these Moskowitz'). His name is Jack Moskowitz, and the tale I told you last issue becomes still more complex. To quote from his letter in Thrilling Wonder Stories for February, 1953: "...my cousin, Sam Moskowitz..."

#### WADDAYA GOTTA DO DEPT.

A fellow name of Van Golding wrote an article for VULCAN about Krazy Kat, and planned to include a full page o f Krazy Kat comic strips (copied from original strips). He wrote to King Features Syndicate, Inc., for permission to use the KK strips, telling them that he would be using them in an amateur magazine devoted to fantasy and science fiction. King Features answered: "We are puzzled as to just what your plans are in the matter of using KRAZY KAT. If you would let us have more details and specific information as to your plans..." So, we figured that it was natural for them not to know about fanzines. Val wrote back to them at length, explaining--he thought--very clearly. The answer? "...we are still unable to give you any permission concerning reprint rights to our

KRAZY KAT feature. We would have to know specifically just what you intended doing with our copyrighted feature." We were nonplussed that time, but Val wrote them a still longer letter explaining in detail about fanzines, and the specific article and artwork in question. The answer came back airmail: "We are pleased to grant you permission to reprint in "Vulcan"..." It did work out--finally. We got reprint permission, and didn't even have to pay for it, either. But we practically had to draw them a diagram first...

#### FROM THESE ASHES...

As Editor Riddle announced last issue, STRAIGHT UP has folded. And as Riddle said, the editor, Fred J. Robinson (not Frank, editor, ol' boy) promises to be back with a new fanzine in the very near future. The zine will be a clubzine, published by "The Cymrades" (or something, that's as near as I can translate his writing...he writes in Old English practically, with a Chinese accent), a fanclub that was formed around August or September of last year. The name of the zine will be GAMBER. Sub rates will be four issues for one 35¢ prozine.

#### AD THE INITEMS

Rumor has it that The Variants, a stfclub which issues a fanmag calld VARIANT WORLD (reviewed in the last issue of PEON), is due to fold very soon. Apparently Sheldon Deretchin who is the Grand High Muckamuck, has been antagonizing some of the members--like J. & H. Schomberger. He stole an article of theirs and published it, lied to them about it and refused to send them a copy of the issue it appeared in, etc..... While speaking of people not ~~said-~~

ing people issues of fanzines, I'm still wondering whooppen to my copy of FANTASTIC WORLDS. I sent Jan Romanoff a quarter for the first issue, waited awhile, then heard that the mag had been out for two weeks. I hadn't received a copy, so I wrote again and explained the situation. He wrote back and said I should have a copy by that time, but if I didn't, to write him about

it. I didn't, so I wrote again. No answer. Still no FANTASTIC WORLDS. Romanoff, are you listening? I'm not going to take the time to write you again...Congranulations and howdy-does are in order for PEON's new columnist, Hal Shapiro. Initial column was almost up to my sterling standards. Also howdy to the new zine-reviewer, John Ledyard whose new policy I like.

-0-

#### NOMINAL NOMINATIONS

The time is come, sez Pogo, to Albert,  
To look 'pon this las' year--  
Goodstuff on that side over there  
And bad stuff over here.

Bes' promag of the year, I guess  
Was Goldie's Galaxy.  
Bes' story was Demolished Man--  
That was good from A to Z.

Hol' on there, Pogo, Albert sez,  
You is forgot a tale  
What caused a lot of ruckus too:  
The Lovers (hail-oh-hail!)

Okay, we'll pick a second place--  
Don' think it'll do no harm...  
And fill it with The Lovers,  
By Philip-of-the-Farm.

Fine! hollars out ol' Albert,  
Now how about worst mag?  
Amazing Stories, natural--  
A really fouty mag.

Hol' on again! ol' Albert sez,  
I disagrees with you.  
Fantastic Science Fiction is  
The Magazine to rue.

A-greed! sez Pogo,  
Now best new writer...  
Why, Philip Jose Farmer,  
Than whom there ain't no righter.

Best cover by Robert Gibson Jones,  
November Other Worlds  
Second, aSF for October.  
Neither of 'em filled with girls.

What's wrong with girls?  
Yells out ol' Albert.  
Pogo sez, With all them bombs  
I'm 'fraid they gone get hurt.

Fiddle-dee-duddle, sez Albert,  
You don' know this femeenine race.  
Why, they go'round without no clothes  
Right out there in space!

Oh, sure, sez Pogo,  
But, you see...  
Ding-blantit! hollars Albert,  
Don' you 'you see' me!

Them femeenines is gotta stay,  
And I think you is crazy  
If you preefer a rocketship  
To one of them Bergey Daiseys!

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THE DEFINITION OF SCIENCE FICTION  
(continued)

one can have a Category I-II, or a Category II-III story. One may even set up a special classification--call it the "perfect" science fiction story--in which all three categories are evenly balanced. If Mr. de Camp will please note, by using a prescriptive definition of stf we have come out with an ideal which may not have yet been realized, but which the knowledge of the ideal may cause to be created. I would say that if Arthur Clarke's "Prelude to Space" were rewritten carefully enough, it might qualify as a perfect story.

That substantially completes the outline of the definition. Notice that is not a neat phrase, although one might be cooked up. The test of it is whether it enables anyone to become more maturely self-conscious about the reading and writing of stf. Not everyone will wield this definition with equal skill; that is what makes some literary critics better than others. Nevertheless, the exercise of critical standards on any level is what is necessary to improve the field of stf, and the clearer one is about his standards the better. At least that is my opinion; it is not shared by Mr. Gold, who has told me that the ordinary reader reads for enjoyment, and to tangle him up in an intellectual apparatus of this sort will only spoil that pleasure. This can only be decided by experiment. I would be glad to hear from anyone who tires this proposal out, concerning his success or lack thereof, and his proposals for its further clarification and improvement. It doesn't tell you not to read such things as "space opera"; it only says to stop calling them true science fiction.

## THE POET CORNERED

(Beginning with this issue of PEON, there will be set aside a page or two for the publishing of fantasy poetry. This is in compliance with the wishes of quite a few readers who like to read fantasy poetry, and PEON will welcome the submission of any type of verse in the line of fantasy or science fiction. All PEON asks of the poet is that the poem be good!)

### UNHALLOWED COMPULSION

-by Isabelle E. Dinwiddie-

Spider-quiet was the night

As the web of dreams was spun.

Dwellers of the Threshold woke

With the sinking of the sun.

Lanterned by the fireflies,

They stepped out from emptiness

To a world wrapped up in sleep

Which was easy of access.

Slipping sideways out of time,

Out of the fourth dimension,

Baleful spirits now took form,

Too vile for comprehension.

Hovering over sleepers

To subject each mind and brain,

To impel some vicious deed

When they woke from dreams again.

Ever and ever they strive

As the hour glass of time

Keeps revolving on itself,

To commit the world to crime.

# THE HOWELL MAGAZINES

JOHN MARIM

Back in the dim red dawn of history there existed some magazines put out by the John F. Howell Publishing Company, consisting of three: Musketeer, Silver Masque, and Golden Book Magazine (circa 1890-1930). The former two were weeklies and the latter a monthly. Apparently the weeklies sold for a nickel and the monthly a dime, until sometime in the twenties, when they were raised to ten cents and fifteen cents. Today, in the era of thirty-five cent pocket-sizers, we have to admit they were worth the price asked--at least, from a standpoint of quantity.

Musketeer and Silver Masque had 224 pages each in standard pulp-size--with untrimmed edges, until the final phase of their existence. Golden Book Magazine was quite a job--476 pages, large size (old Amazing and Astounding Size), trimmed edges and two-color illustrations; proving to the Fantastic that there's nothing new under the sun. The magazines carried no masthead but the editorial features were signed "Bob J. Risley." The magazines were general adventure like most of their contemporaries, presenting mystery, westerns, sports, romance (rather rugged and more realistic than most others), fantasy, and a surprising quantity of science fiction of a rather high quality.

These are three of the few old pulps that modern stf fans can read with anything more than historical interest. Some of the stf they used was good by modern fiction standards, if not scientifically accurate by modern standards.

I might point out at this point that I have only four copies of Silver Masque, three of Musketeer, and three of Golden Book. I got these in a lot of fifty I bought from an old time fan and I might add that I don't expect to complete my collection. All my information about the contents of the Howells comes from the contents, advertisements, announcements, and letters in these ten issues.

One of the best of the stf stories Musketeer used was "Planet of Zombies" by R. D. X. Yarbrough (a thin fellow, undoubtedly), a 130,000 word serial in six parts, December 3, 1919, to January 2, 1920. This was told in the first person by a native Martian, Alpha-33-Y, who was one of an invading force on Earth. Al and his pals--plant-like leeches--attach themselves to the local citizenry and have things pretty well shot with our civilization until they find out that their human captives have made themselves and the attached Martians opium fiends. So to get more of the happy powder they throw in the towel, and go back to raise oppies in hot-houses on Mars and generally go to pot, never to be a threat to Earth again. More a satire, perhaps, than a bonafide science fiction story, but still quite well-written and very original for the time.

However, it seems smoking opium didn't make the Martians harmless. It just mutated them. They reinvaded Earth as robots ("The Metal Monsters of the Martian Meteor", (short story, 5000 words), Silver Masque, September 8, 1927); again, as intelligent snakes "The Reptiles From The Void" ("Full Length Story", 7000 words, Silver Masque, November 16, 1927); again, as instinctive animals in a matter-destroying crystal form "The Devouring Diamonds of Doom" (short-story, 3000 words), Golden Book for April 1927; and once again, this time as sexy women in "Vampires Of The Void", Musketeer, June 19, 1922 (length and author not known by me). The authors of the previously mentioned stories are -- reading from left to right -- Dwight Smirkinski, Ph.D; Fritz Mines; and Robert X. Davies.

Radio and television figured in many of the Howell science fiction stories. R. X. Davies, again (who was probably R. D. X. Yarrowrough, too) told of "The Telegraphed Motion Picture" in Musketeer for December 11, 19



(another "full length story" of 7,200 words), which incidently, was a super extravaganza starring William S. Hart, Tom Mix, and Pearl White. D. P. Smith can argue it out with Ralph Milne Farley because he had a 3000 word short story in the September 8, 1927 Silver Masque, called "The Radio Man"; a little different from Farley's Cabot of Venus. This told of a man who lost his vocal cords and had them replaced with a radio. "The World-Wide Radio" by X. R. Valdez in the February 1927 issue of Golden Book told of the building of a radio so big that when it was used to advertise its makers' smaller radio products, it deafened every body in the world--surely not an unlikely commentary on advertising in the 20th century. Sometime in 1923, Silver Masque ran a story called "The Radio Monster" about a marauding remote-controlled robot

who robbed the U. S. Mint and sundry other places. Fritz Mines had a "Feature Novelette" of 32,000 words, in the April 1927 Golden Book called "The Hypnotic Radios", about a radio that had a screen on which weird forms were projected and hypnotized whoever watched. Civilization degenerated as everybody sat around staring at the radio screens. Considering some of my neighbors and their television sets, I'm inclined to think this is another case of science fiction becoming fact.

As a matter of fact, the Howells did use several stories which have more-or-less become fact. They predicted such inventions as the atomic bomb in "The City That Went Bang!" by R. W. Preston, in the November 1923 Golden Book; the jet plane in "Around The World In Eighty Minutes" by J. V. Wells, November 16, 1927, Silver Masque; the electronic microscope in "The Atomic Humans" by D. H. Keller (our familiar, beloved and respected Doctor!) in the September 8, 1929, Musketeer; and the V-2

rocket in "Shot Into The Night" by Fritz Mines, in the Silver Masque for April 16, 1923.

The editor, Bob J. Risley, was probably the most prolific author for the three Howell magazines. From similarities in styles and names and from hints in the editorial and letter features, I believe he was not only the previously mentioned R. D. X. Yarbrough, Robert X. Davies, Xavier R. Valdez, J. V. Wells, but the most recurrent name in all three magazines: J. Risley Roberts. If so, he wrote about half of each gigantic issue of his magazines, making Kuttner, Burroughs, and MacDonald look like pikers with his quarter-million words a month! Perhaps I'm mistaken, but anyway, it brings us to J. Risley Roberts.

Roberts wrote most of the "complete in this issue novels" for the three magazines and the "double-length novels" for SEM. The "citi novels" ran from 40,000 to 70,000 words and the "double lengths" from 80,000 to 140,000--historical novel length. He apparently did two "citi" jobs every month, one "d-l" every two months and about two serials (70,000-150,000) a year. Most of it was general adventure like the rest of the magazines, but I know of three outstanding (for their time) sf novels he wrote.

In "The Ninth Planet", Roberts presented the not-unfamiliar theory that there must be a ninth planet to "balance" the solar system. It seems that this planet is so far from the sun that it's pretty cold, sort of like the North Pole. The Radium core of the planet (Mephisto, he called it) helps heat it some. Enough to let some Mephistites live there. Ugly brutes, the men, but their daughters are real cool stuff--so some traveling spacemen come along and get involved in a Swift-Coblentz satire of the foibles and fables of civilization.

"The Artificial Planet" tells of the building of a moon or satellite to circle Earth just beyond the pull of gravity. It seems this would be useful in astronomical observation. This was written in 1919.

Roberts narrates the story of the first flight to the Moon in the Golden Book "double-length novel" (120,000 words), "The Rocket To The Moon." Nothing unusual--an atomic-powered dumbbell-shaped spaceship taking off from an artificial satellite.

Three novels by an unknown writer named J. Risley Roberts or perhaps, Bob J. Risley, written twenty and thirty years before Heinlein, Ley, Clarke, and modern science-fictioners advanced the same ideas.

In 1930, MUSKY and SM cut to 192 pages, then raised to fifteen cents and 256 pages, only to cut back to ten cents and 160 pages--all within six or eight months. They had, with the last cut, also gone to monthly publication from weekly. GEM cut itself to 320 pages, but remained the same otherwise. Then, with the February 1931 issue, this magazine became Musketeer-Golden Book Magazine and Silver Masque was discontinued. I can find no further trace of the remaining publication after 1932, so I suppose this ended that early source of science fiction--the Howell magazines.

PEON NOTES  
(continued)

Charles Wells has taken over as assistant editor of QUANDRY now, and all correspondence should be addressed to him, since Lee Hoffman is attending night school and doesn't have the time to keep up with all the letter-writing. The last issue I received of QUANDRY, Lee announced that she would not exchange Q with any other fanzine and that no new subscriptions were being taken. However, Charles asserts that Q has not and will not fold, but if he isn't taking any new subscriptions, I don't see how Q can last, for it is the new blood among the subscribers that keeps any magazine, fan or pro, going. There seems to be a bit of opposition to the type of humor that is prevalent in Q these days, but as far as I'm concerned, Lee is still the tops in fanzine editing. However, be that as it may, if you want to query Charles about QUANDRY, write him at 405 East 62nd Street, Savannah, Georgia.

One of PEON's best contributors has crashed the prozine field--and it all was because of yours truly (if I may brag a little bit). Joe Hensley, who wrote "Fish Story" in a couple of issues back, submitted a story for this present issue, entitled "And Some Not Human". I liked it very much, but thought it was too good for fanzine publication. I requested his permission to submit it to one of the prozines for consideration, and after he said to go ahead, I sent it to Horace Gold. Just received word the other day that Galaxy had bought it -- not for Galaxy itself, but -- for Beyond, their new fantasy magazine out on the market in May. So, you will be seeing it soon in print.

How many of you noticed the advertisement on the back of the February aSF about the new Science Fiction Book Club being organized. I did, and sent for a membership. Just received my first shipment, consisting of three books (two free for joining, and one being the current selection), and it only cost me a buck thirty. Future selections will be sent out every other month, consisting of two different books, and they, too, will cost only a dollar each. All of the books are well printed, nicely bound and I think it is high time someone came up with an idea like this for we readers of stf. You can get further details by writing Science Fiction Book Club, Garden City, New York. Tell them that you read it in PEON-- maybe I'll get a free membership.

I said this would be short, and this time, I mean it. I'm closing up now with a reminder that if you aren't a subscriber to PEON as yet, you'd better get in your dollar bill right away, if you want to get the super-duper anniversary gift this year--125 pages of the best of PEON's many articles and stories from the past five years. It will be sent only to regular subscribers when it is released sometime in the middle of the year....Fairwarned is forearmed!.....And, with that remark, I'll shut up shop for the time being. Hope you liked this issue, and remember, all we fanzine editors like to hear the readers' reactions. Let us hear from you all sometime.....



