

PEON

NOVEMBER '54



David
Wood

PEON

Number thirty-three

NOVEMBER 1954

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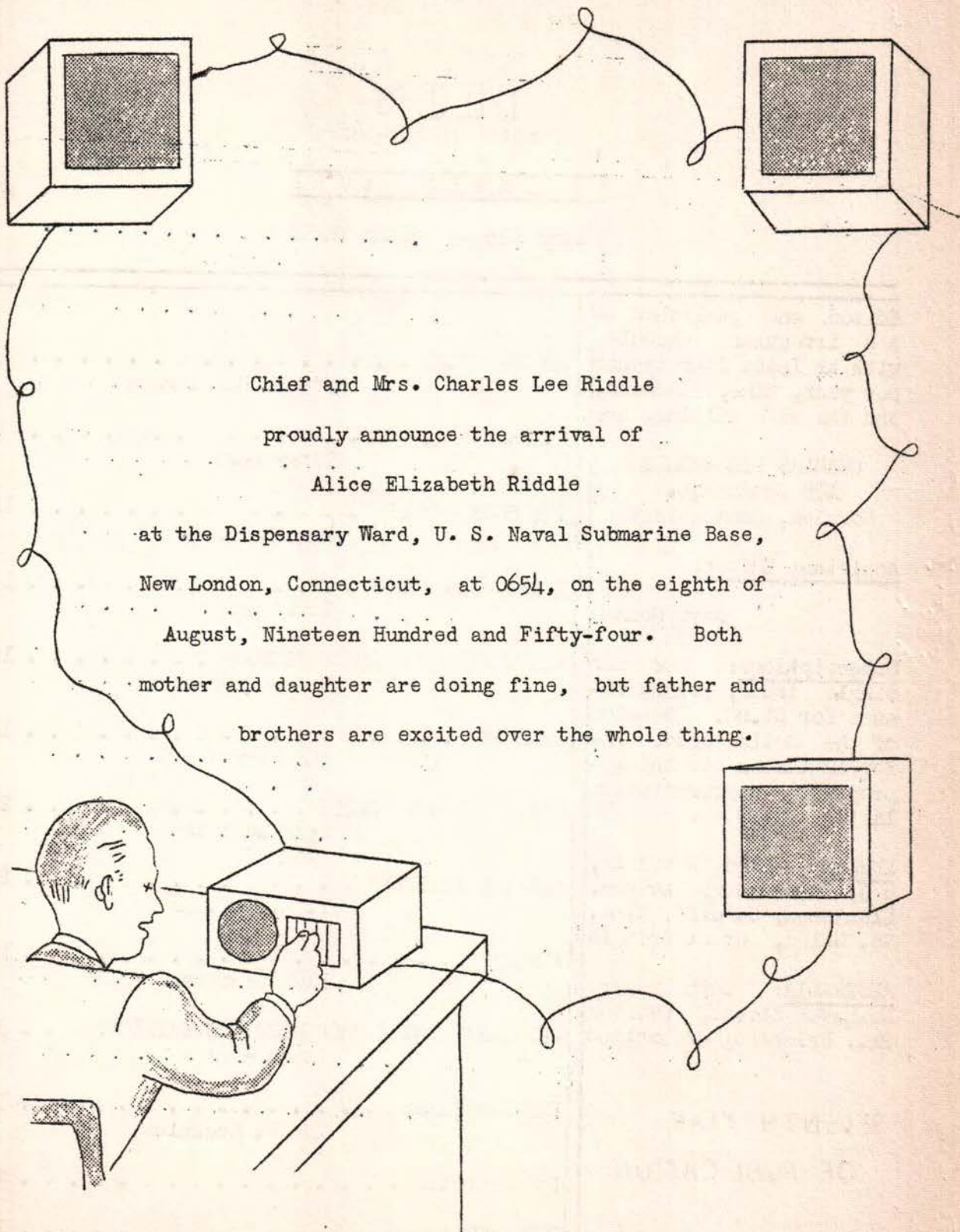
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SEVENTH YEAR
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SECOND STORY	3
Joe L. Hensley	
FANTASTUFF	9
Terry Carr	
THE BOOK CORNER	11
Dave Mason	
I SING NEW SONGS	13
Terry Carr	
THE DEATH OF SCIENCE FICTION	14
Harry Harrison	
HARMONY	15
Jim Harmon	
FAN INSURANCE POLICY	21
Stan Woolston	
KAN KAN KABITZER	23
T. E. Watkins	
KUMQUAT	27
Dick Clarkson	
WHY CAN'T THE AUTHOR MEET HIS CRITICS?	31
Isaac Asimov	
THE FAN PRESS	35
Ian T. Macauley	
PEON PEOPLE	20
PEON NOTES	30



Chief and Mrs. Charles Lee Riddle

proudly announce the arrival of

Alice Elizabeth Riddle

at the Dispensary Ward, U. S. Naval Submarine Base,

New London, Connecticut, at 0654, on the eighth of

August, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-four. Both

mother and daughter are doing fine, but father and

brothers are excited over the whole thing.

Second Story

JOE L. HENSLEY

And now, in the twelfth generation, the legends begin again:

In the village they called him: "Mad Kevin," these people who knew nothing but the digging and planting and the long winter with too little food at the end of it. Among the children he was called a similar, but not so kind, name: "Kevin, the Stupid."

In truth he was not so much a stupid boy as he was a strange one. He was awkward and too small for the children's games and the work of the fields left him weak and gasping. He wanted only to sit and look at the sky and ask silly questions, the answers of which no one knew.

Dis-similarity from the mob is punished much more strictly in a small community than in a large one. Had Kevin been born during the 15th century he would have been burned as a wizard. But he was born in the 23rd. He was born a poet in a world that had no verse. He was a dreamer in a world that had no dreams left.

His father was a Smith in the cold months, but it soon became apparent that Kevin would not do that. His hands were too tiny, the arms too thin.

"You're like your mother," his father told him, not unsympathetically. "She was skinny. Seems like she just wasted away and died in one of the bad winters." He shook his head. "But what am I going to do with you? You're not good in the fields, and we all have to carry our own weight, you know."

They found something. At fourteen he was apprenticed to the Watcher, the tiny man who kept the records of the growing seasons and tallied the results, which he read at the village meetings. The Watcher also swept out the living huts during the growing season, when the physically able were in the fields--and kept the old Earth books--he could read and write.

In a way it was a God's gift for Kevin--he found himself and lost himself again there in the old records hut, where the books were kept. His rations were cut in half, for it was the rule that the Watcher drew only half as much as the field worker. Kevin grew as thin as a plant stem and his eyes were two huge lakes with his face like arid land separating them.

But he learned to read.

At first it was only the simple books. The old Watcher struck and cursed him until he had mastered them. The writing came quicker and soon, Kevin was writing all of the records that the Watcher laboriously read to the village meetings.

But, it was the books that came off the old, wrecked Earthship that changed his life.

He learned that they had come from the white star that hung atomically apparent in the cold, gray sky. He learned that there had once been many men, but now there were very few.

The books were new and unread for the first generation had been busy and they had already read. And the second generation had been busy--as was the tenth, but they had not read. There were no schools now. A man found out how to work the fields and a little about his father's trade--that was enough. There was no time.

Kevin read enough for all of the others: He read Keats and Byron and a strange one called T. S. Elliot, whom he did not understand, but the words were good. He memorized Kuhbla Khan, and, "These are the days ~~when~~ birds come back . . ."

There were whole pages he could quote from Skylight and Mistletoe, the story of the Commander Christmas expedition to the moon. And there was Hans Christian Anderson, Jules Verne, and the mysteries of Gulliver. And there were other names that prodded his imagination! Tom Sawyer, Gene Gant, D'Artagnan, Penrod, George Washington, Ben Franklin-- and the others in the thousand or so books.

The old knobby armed Watcher let him alone after the work of cleaning the huts and keeping the books was done. And they ate their meals together and were jeered at by the small children, for the Watcher's task was at the bottom of the village social strata.

"Why do you read so much?" The old Watcher asked him, for he read nothing himself that he did not have to read. He felt a sort of dull

wonder at this boy who had mastered in a few short years what it had taken him a lifetime to learn.

"I want to know," Kevin told him.

"Know what?" The old Watcher smiled a weak smile, thinking he had Kevin there.

"Everything," Kevin said.

The Watcher told that one around the village to those who would take time to listen and they laughed. They could still appreciate a joke, these exiles of Earth, and everyone knew that the boy did not even know how to mend a shoelace or husk an ear of shriveled corn. Know everything, indeed!

It was the burning of the books that broke Kevin's heart. Some rags that the Watcher had thrown into a waste container and then packed down with paper caught fire in the early morning. By the time the alarm came the back of the record shack was a white-hot inferno.

Kevin stood on the edge of the crowd and sobbed while he nursed his throbbing, burned hands (for he had tried twice to get in and been pushed roughly back). And inside the dreams of a million years, minus ten generations, became ashes.

It was a greater loss to the village than they knew or appreciated, then. Even the simple, unused schoolbooks had been packed away in the library. Now there were no written records left.

In the full light of morning, the boy was gone.

The Martian desert is cold at night, even along the equator. There is no protecting heavy coat of atmosphere to hold in the heat of the sun. It may be eighty above at noon, but when the sun goes down the temperature drops to far below zero.

The hardy Martian plants combat this. They grow a tough outer shell into which they retreat at nights. In the mornings the shell opens and the tentative green sups again at the sun.

Kevin learned to imitate. He made himself a shelter of the hard outside shells of the plants, and at night he would dig it securely into the sandy loam and creep inside. Before he learned to do this he almost froze during the harsh nights. Afterwards, it was still cold, but endurable.

He learned to eat the roots and leaves of the tall Martian plants. At first, they made him violently ill, then only queasy. Later he even grew to have favorites among them.

The water was a problem too. He found after painful and thirsty

experiences that it could be found by digging where the plants grew large and tall.

When his only pair of boots wore through, he was stumped for a substitute--and so there was none. He went barefoot. The soles and sides of his feet grew as hard and horny as the rocks themselves.

He wandered.

It is perhaps not correct to say that he was insane. The word would be--unsane. He had always been an outcast from the world he had lived in and a dweller in a world all his own--peopled now with the characters--to make them live again he must remove the fire from his mind. That meant removing himself from the scene of it--that was his logic. And so, the sandy days, with the slight wind of Mars picking at his ragged clothes, and the cold, shivering nights--the dreams of the world he had found and lost and found again.

To the north he found the ruins of a great civilization, which had roared up and fallen when man was still an ocean protoplasm. There were high buildings of a curious and capable design. There were no signs of atomic destruction, but only the great, fire-gaped pits of stupendous rocketry to the west of the city.

"Gone to the stars," Kevin said aloud to the listening world around him. And it was a listening world. Down beneath the foamy turf, where the earth turned hard and brittle, there were creatures that lived and moved. Kevin had seen them come out into the sand of the desert to bask in the hot sun. They were beetle-like things, quite large. They didn't bite or sting. They only dug in the cold earth and ate the roots of the tough plants.

Kevin moved into the city -- alone, but not lonely. All around him, it seemed that ghosts whispered stories of other times and places.

The beetles of the deserts had burrowed deep into the rock-hard walls, cutting their way through with the slow working of time. At nights, sometimes, they would come to the very edges of their holes and listen silently while Kevin told them stories of a cherry tree and an axe or perhaps about the three bugs and the little girl named Goldilocks.

And they cocked their hard-shelled heads and -- listened.

The walls of the buildings were covered with mosaic pictures, beautiful things. The Martian race had been thin bodied, with expressive faces and great, soft eyes. The pictures told that.

"I am an ape," he told the pictures, and looked out through the window to where that third planet cooled.

In the mosaics the race worked and played and always they smiled.

Kevin studied them and found that he could not avoid smiling back. And, sometimes, the pictures showed the beetle-like insects too, riding on a Martian shoulder, or leashed, doglike, on a thin Martian hand.

"Why did you leave?" he asked them, but his only reply was the whispering sand wind and the clicking of the beetle pets in their holes.

In a way, Kevin was content in the city. He had found a culture that surpassed his own dreams and he had found an audience -- for at night, the huge beetles thronged from the bored holes and sat listening to him. And every story teller must have an audience -- for a story loses his flavor when it is repeated only to oneself.

Sometimes, the thought they were trying to tell him stories, too; but his thoughts were too much lost in his own stories to hear them. His body which had never been strong, was beginning to fail him, and his mind wandered out between the third star and the fourth one. But he still remembered.

He told them the story of the last man on the moon, he gave them the inimitable legend of the lady and the tiger, he repeated the lines of Khubla Khan -- changing them subtly to fit the world around him and the worlds he dreamed. The last man on the moon became the last Martian on Mars and Xandau was the city around them. Don Juan was a beetle with a quest, The Great Stone Face, a mosaic picture.

"Listen," he would say to the beetles. "Listen!"

Behind Kevin, in the village he had left, life was hard. A great sickness came in the warm months, when the men must work in fields. The people died -- until only a few were left. The weeds of Mars, long kept away by busy hoe and knife, rooted again in the gardens and interbred with the sprouts of corn and beans. The resultant mixture grew tall and hardy and more edible. The race began to increase again -- and there was time.

Kevin had not known they were intelligent. The pictures might have told him, but they did not, for to him they were only pictures; he saw the Martians and the beetles were only incidental to them. It never occurred to him that a bug could be other than a bug except in the fairyland of a story. He told them the stories and they listened and that was the end of it -- they were an audience. And sometimes, when the voices came, cutting into his mind over the sound of his own voice, he would hold his ears in sudden pain and fear.

When the sickness came on him, he could feel them scurrying close around him, closer than they had ever come before. It was comforting in a way, but he felt the need for human companionship again. Even the mosaic pictures of the tall buildings were not enough. But no human came -- except the white lady: La Belle Dame Sans Merci. She came several times at

nights, while the beetles lay nearby and told them of her. Then, at last, Kevin and the white lady left together.

The city is still old and men still do not live there, but they come and they stay for a time. And at night the beetles come out of the holes and take the food-offering that has been brought. Then the tiny antenna twitch and the language of telepathy that they learned from the ancient, star-fled race that were masters and friends fills the darkness.

"Listen," says a large brown beetle, "and I will tell you the story of Rip Van Beowulf, a beetle who lay asleep for twenty years and at last killed the dragon who had placed a spell on him."

"Listen," says a beetle with a mottled back, "and I will tell you a story that an ancestor told to me -- about the ancient races whose pictures hang on the walls and where they have gone and why."

For, you see, the beetles decided to stay when the masters left Mars. And they have always had the stories of one world -- now they have the stories of two. And where the stories are -- the knowledge of how to make them come true will come.

Men hear the tales and take them back to the campfires of the villages and they are re-told there. The villages are three in number now and are growing.

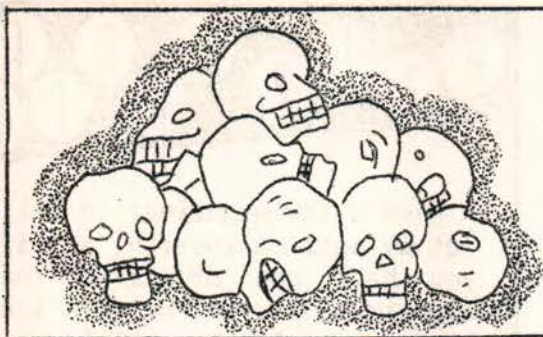
There is a hunger in man that food alone cannot satisfy. There will be another pilgrimage and another.

Someday the beetles will perch on a strong brown shoulder in the same way as they perch in the mosaics.

"Listen..."

And now, in the twelfth generation, the legends begin again.

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*
* Back issues of PEON.. I will pay 25¢ *
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FANTASTUFF

terry carr

FANMANSHIP DEPT.:: Following the teachings of Bob Shaw in SLANT, various fans have come up with some nice exercises in Fanmanship recently; to wit and so what: Mari Wolf in "Fandora's Box", Imagination, May 1954...in a review of STARLIGHT..."The first issue contains a short story, "Osan, My Beloved", by Atlantis Hallam, and Bob Tucker's brief autobiography. Why not sample this one? It's a fine looking zine." Or take the case of Bill Danner, LARK, May, 1954, in a review of ATOMICA..."Nice reproduction..." And then there's Don Wegars in a letter to me..."Got VULCAN 4 and a few weeks later your letter.. and that poem, too. Like VULCAN."

PARDON, YOUR SHIP IS SHOWING:: Bill Knapheide, in his HISTORY OF THE GOLDEN GATE FUTURIAN SOCIETY: "At our last meeting in December, 1949, new elections were held. Rose Davenport was elected President and Your Truly ceased to hold office.. this began the Golden Age of the GGFS." More: Ralph Stapenhorst in SPACEWAYS (the fanzine) #3..."features by Eugene Geyer, Don Donnell, Jimmy Clemons, S. J. Johnson, Mark Pinney, Mike Stapenhorst, Richard Finney, myself, and many other great authors."

RANDOMUTTERINGS:: There've been quite a few letters appearing in the pro lettercolumns recently that

were signed by Robert R. Stewart.. those fans who fear the sinister influx of Bob Stewarts into fandom fear no more, For This Be An Imposter. Y e a and verily, it's merely Don Wegars hoaxing away under a phoney name and using a friend's address. # Ever notice that Mari Wolf has never given a fanzine a bad review except BREVIZINE, which she has reviewed unfavorably several times? This obviously has Deep Significance, but I think the obvious one is good enough. # Random thot...the annish - o f VEGA was called the Vannish--after which VEGA did just that.

TYPOS, INC.:: A filler in FOG #3 carries this monumental typerflub: "...His l a r g e forceful hand gripped the steel bar with sudden strength...he applied pressure. He could feel the weak metal give. First a deep impression was made in the surface. He bore down with renewed strength...it gave! The first beer was opened! The 1954 world can had begun!"

OF MICE AND FRIEBERGS:: I've got a couple of items about Warren Frieborg that I'd like to mention, so as to leave the other items untainted. I suppose many of you have heard about the Frieborgripe against fandom...you know, it does not recognize him as the genius he

so he calls fans jackasses. But did any of you notice his line in ZIP #3...?..."I have a great many things that need airing..." To which I can only say How True and laugh at the filler drawing that Ted White sandwiched between two Freiberg articles in that issue...I laugh because the drawing is titled "Arrogant Man."

FAMOUS LAST WORDS:: Mari Wolf in Imagination, May, 1954, doing a review of the Vannish..."Redd Boggs writes "Annishes Are A Plague," citing the mortality among fanzines that expire in the blaze of a glory of their special issues. Well, that won't happen to VEGA..."

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?:: The first ish of VOID carried a plea in inch-high letters: "W.E. NEED MATERIAL!!!" Which isn't very surprising, in a first issue, except that this first issue ran to sixty (count 'em, 60) pages. # An ad in Future Science Fiction, August, 1954: "The big second issue of SCIENCE FICTION STORIES (also in pocket-book size.)

MIGHOD, WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO DEPARTMENT:: Or, I'd Rather Eat Pickles Covered With Chocolate Syrup...Publisher's Weekly for May Eighth, this year, in its listing of "The Year After Tomorrow". imparts the information that the book in question is composed of "Science Fiction chosen from Astounding S-F and the American Boy."

KAYMAR TRADER
If you buy, sell, or trade STF mags and books, be sure to get the current listings and prices. Just a thin dime will bring a copy of K-T into your mail box. K. Martin Carlson, 1028 Third Ave. So., Moorhead, Minnesota.



I need a few magazines to fill out my poor collection, and if you have one or all of the magazines listed below, in good to excellent condition, I will pay the prices listed:

FIFTY CENTS EACH

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1934--Jan, Nov, Dec.
1935--Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.
1936--Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.
1937--Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.
1940--Feb, May.
1941--Jul, Sep.
1943--Jan, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Oct, Nov, Dec.
1944--Jul, Sep, Nov, Dec.
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Planet Stories

1939--Wint.
1940--Sprg, Sumr, Fall, Wint.
1941--Sprg, Sumr, Fall, Wint.
1942--Sprg, Sumr, Fall, Wint.
1943--March, May, Fall, Wint.
1944--Sprg, Sumr, Fall..
1945--Fall.

CHARLES LEE RIDDLE
108 Dunham St.
Norwich, Connecticut

THE BOOK CORNER

CONDUCTED BY

Dave Mason

Let me forestall the fan, who, glancing at the opposite list, says, "These are not stf. They aren't even remotely connected with it. What the hell?" Quite right. They aren't. But they do have something to do with stf.

The intelligent fan, and there are some, reads a great deal in other fields besides science fiction. Frequently he writes, and sometimes he even sells. To such a fan, adequate comprehension of what literary and philosophical currents are running through not only contemporary stf, but all fiction, is important. The works that I have listed here are collectively, the voice from the cesspool. They are a concerted cry of unbearable agony, and a howl of rage.

In a recent issue of Astounding, I counted four yarns in which humanity had smashed itself falt, atomically and otherwise. A quick look at other current mags shows an equal proportion of heralds of doom. This is a new feeling in the stf writer, a feeling which appears to be shared by other writers of this period; a feeling that, as Patchen puts it, "We are coming to a very low bridge, and the hand of the engineer is fish cold upon the throttle."

All of these novels deal with today, but in them, tomorrow casts its grim shadow, the same tomorrow that we are now learning will bring an atomic holocaust down upon the civilization that we used to think so wonderful. Each of these three writers sees man as a beast whose fantastic and obscene ways are at once immensely funny and unbelievably horrible. Seen through their eyes, as in a mirror, man may see what he has become. The stf writer can take it up from there and show him what he will be. But this last task has so far been too much for most of us. There doesn't seem to be anywhere to go except out. Consequently many a plot begins with the period following the almost total destruction of man on the planet.

But few stf writers express the deep involvement with man that writers such as Celine, Patchen, and Miller have. To the stf writer describing the world after the Blowup, the event itself has no reality; the people who died were only statistics. This isn't always true, but in the majority of cases it is. Celine and Co., however, cry out, not against man; but in sympathy with his agonies, because such a writer is primarily a man being himself--not a recording device. He cannot say coldly, "This is the way it happened..." but rather, "It is happening to all of us, and god dammit, IT HURTS!"

Take on the other hand, Van Vogt and his fabulous semantic world.

THE JOURNAL OF ALBION MOONLIGHT
MEMOIRS OF A SHY PORNOGRAPHER
both by Kenneth Patchen

DEATH ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN
JOURNEY TO THE END OF LIGHT
both by Louis-Ferdinand Celine

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
by Henry Miller

These people suffer occasionally, purely physically. But even death does not seem to bother them much. Nor does there seem to be any moral issue involved when a character is casually killed off. He's dead. Good bye.

The trouble with stf characters is of course that they don't have any bowels, literally and figuratively. Spacesuits have no trapdoors. But man, real, human, man has.. He is born, he smells badly and ultimately he dies, and is really ended. In between his birth and death he lives in increasing torment of spirit and agony of body, and if you must write about the future, be sure you include that. Remember that the 20th Century has become an up-to-date Hell, purely through man's efforts in that direction. These writers record that effort with photographic precision and insert their personal yowl of pain among the others.

The picture drawn by Fritz Leiber, Jr., in his portrait of post-atomic America as seen through the eyes of an intelligent British traveler is the logical corollary to Celine. This is Celine, Miller, and Patchen brought up to 1980. This is the way our world is ending--not with a bang, but with a whimper.

We need more Fritz Leiber and less van Vogt. Science fiction is graduating, and becoming literature; some of it is already being written as such. We need the bitter tang of reality in our fiction. The fan, and for that matter, the average reader, is no longer the adolescent satisfied with the wonder of new machinery. He can take it. Give it to him where it will do the most good.

And don't imagine that the properly expressed shriek doesn't do some good, both in stf and in Celine. We don't understand, yet. But we will. We will gradually come to understand the important whys and wherefores of human existence as we go; if we survive as a species. Celine, Patchen, Miller, et al. do not depress the reader whose sensitivities are not located exclusively in his stomach. They are exhilarating as is any direct attack on a vast and forbidding problem.

Nor are they protest fiction, in the sense of the proletarian literature of the thirties. They offer problems, photograph and chart the difficult terrain--it remains for later writers to offer solutions. They offer the great basic problems in which the stf writer himself can find plot material; and in which the best of stf writers may be able to offer the beginnings of a solution.

The stylistic form of these writers can offer a guide to those among stf writers who want to express something beyond the exclamatory phrase.

Man today is faced with moral problems which can no longer be solved by the easy method of a command from Sinai, social problems which cannot be untangled by quoting Engels, and psychological problems that are only dimly visible by the brightest of Freudian lamps. Such complexity can become part of an adult science fiction that draws upon the great novelists of this century for inspiration.

The style of Celine is seemingly chaotic, the words tumbling one after another in a torrent of pictures, sounds, smells, the crowded sensations of an intensely alive individual's experiences. So also Henry Millers fantastic and Joycean reminiscences, a panorama of the obscene, idiotic, shambling horrors that infest a DT's dream, and all as real as the lamp post on the corner. Nothing invented--all of it really happened. By contrast, Patchen's prose is urbane, delicate, a tracery of surrealistic symbolism veiling a reality that is not rendered any less clear by being outline in such words as these:

"A Diversion. Moonlight advises the Rulers to examine attentively what will happen to a sword when there is no one alive to wipe the blood off of it."

And sometimes the veil breaks....

Sometimes....

~~~~~

## I SING NEW SONGS

terry carr

I sing new songs  
Of life yet unborn,  
Days yet to come,  
Thoughts yet to be thought  
And sights yet unseen.

A dream-world is mine,  
With dream-creatures  
And dream-people  
And dream-thoughts  
And dreams.

I tell of tomorrow;  
Of bright horizons,  
Misty achievements,  
Fantastic creations  
And colorful pastimes.

My world is the future;  
A bright world it is,  
And yet, under all  
A shadow is spread.



# THE DEATH OF SCIENCE FICTION

HARRY HARRISON

Science-fiction is not dead--dying perhaps, but not dead. It is being killed all around us every day by the most gleeful of murderers. Cheerful editorial assassins butcher it, laughing writers tighten the garrote about its neck and chortling fans stand by to push the weary head under again as it comes up for the last time. No amount of mixed metaphors can fully describe this unhappy state of affairs.

When I say science-fiction I mean something specific. I don't mean the tired, re-hashed adventure plots that grace the majority of the magazines now on the stands, nor do I mean the frou-frou, watered-down, New Yorkerish cutesities that grace the pages of the circulation leaders. I blame the writers for writing these stories, editors for printing them and the fans for not holding their noses and protesting both loudly and vigorously.

Science fiction means something to me, both in the present and in retrospect. I read my first Wonder when I was eleven years old and I could almost hear the boundaries of my world creak as they moved back. From then on I was hooked and glad of it. Science Fiction was to me always entertainment and many times much more. Looking backward I can see where many of my interests began, many of those fiction stories started a train of thought that only some heavy non-fiction reading could finish. No one, to my knowledge, has ever satisfactorily explained the lure of science-fiction, but we have all felt.

Be introspective now, be truthful. Open each current copy of every science-fiction mag you have and examine the stories in the light of memory. If you were again eleven years old and picking one of these little things up for the first time, would you react the way you did then? If you say yes, don't bother reading any further. You have been bored reading this far, and anything else I have to say, will be meaningless. If you say no, I say praise be, and what are we going to do about it?

Science fiction had an infancy and it outgrew it. That doesn't mean it grew up. There are adult science fiction stories being printed now--but how many out of the bulk of meaningless crud? And how many fewer each year?

There was a fannish motto in the early, dark days. It stated simply, "Boost science fiction." This was great stuff and much needed in the pre-atomic era. It could be changed now to "Knock Science Fiction." I mean





## J I M H A R M O N

I kicked open the door and went in with both guns blazing.

I've always had a yen to begin a story that way, and I have quite a story to tell. At least it seems so to me, but perhaps Harmon writing about Harmon is as dull as Claude Hall and others have said. Therefore, perhaps I'd just better state something for the record.

Point of Order, Mr. Chairman. Stop me if I'm wrong, but I believe "Harmony" now becomes the first fanzine column to be written by a pro magazine editor. Mighty big of me if you ask me. But then I'm a big man as you'll see if Lee Riddle uses that photo of me he asked for. Yes, Lee asked for a photo in the same note in which he stated he was expecting his fourth child momentarily. Personally, I'm beginning to doubt that fandom is his main hobby.

Did I hear a small voice in the back ask what pro magazine I'm editing? X Science Fiction. I'm not hiding behind anonymity; X is the title. X means the Unknown, the Future, what lies beyond time and space. Bill Crawford, Editor-Publisher of Spaceway is publisher for this one, too. As editor, I'm looking for very original science fiction concepts, something like Tremain's "Thought Variants", but written literately within the frame of an adventure story (rather than a character study, romance, or "serious incident story"). I've already got what I consider to be very good stories by S. J. Byrne, Harry Warner, Jr., Forest J. Ackerman, David Grinnell, Albert Hernhutter, and others and am trying to get ones by A. E. van Vogt and Isaac Asimov.

X will be published in a slick magazine format, which I hope will be one of the better science fiction magazines. Right now I'm trying to raise as much money as I can by advance subscriptions. It's very important to get as many subscriptions as possible. That's why I have a special offer: 24 issues of X and 24 issues of Fact (a man's magazine like Argosy that I'm also editing and which will have much stf material) for \$3.50 (48 in all.) Some skeptics have suggested that the magazines might'nt go.



24 issues (I refute this base insult to my talents). Well, naturally, if they didn't, your balance would be returned. Meanwhile, you can get good science fiction magazines for something like 6¢ each. If anybody would care to do some huckstering or if a group wanted to subscribe, 10% can be deducted after the first subscription. Make orders payable to me. (Crawford is allergic to it). The address: Jim Harmon, 427 East 8th Street, Mt. Carmel, Illinois.

In case any of you are going to object to having a paid advertisement in the middle of a column, let me assure you that it is certainly not paid.

~~But.~~

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"This magazine'll have name writers or an expose - it's up to them."

---

---

"Who unthawed Courtney's moat?"

---

Crang-qq!

I shot her through the navel because I could see right through her anyway.

As you can tell, I've been thinking about Mickey Spillane. Lately, too, I've been thinking about kissing Marilyn Monroe again. Yes, I've felt like that several times before. But those are two different angles. Let's get back to a straight subject, Spillane.

I've been one of the people against Spillane, and like anybody who is completely for or against anything, I doubt that I've been completely logical. Undoubtedly writers, just like human beings, have some good and some bad in them. There must be something good about Spillane's books. I'm thinking hard. Well, you have to admit that they do move fast. If anyone has ever suffered through a drawing room mystery (and I've never suffered completely through one), they can appreciate a story that moves like an express train -- even if sometimes taking a bad road. Then, Spillane seems genuinely opposed to organized crime and communism. His sermons must have its effect on his fans. They'd be afraid to deal in crime or communism for fear of having their guts shot out. Such a logical approach to correcting the ills of our society shouldn't be ignored.

I've often wondered why so many people, like myself, have been so opposed to this man's books. Saddism? Many favorite science fiction authors have dealt in saddism. Clark Ashton Smith regularly, and remember when Robert Heinlein tortured a naked girl to death in "Gulf"? Ray Bradbury employs sentimentalism almost saddistically. Sex? I find it hard to conceive of fans objecting to sex on paper or off. Thorne Smith is a universal favorite, and while Spillane takes sex more seriously, even tragically, he employs it in no more greater amounts. Poor writing? We have taken notably crude writers like Edgar Rich Burroughs to our hearts. No, it is more than this. Perhaps the reason some fans and intellectuals do not like Spillane is that while these other authors shared some of his faults, they had their virtues, and Spillane is nothing but saddism, sex,



and poor writing. But maybe there is another answer. Maybe fans and book critics don't like Spillane because the public does like him and we have come to think that the public may be wrong in literary tastes and judgments. That may have been so once; but in a country like America, the public is becoming educated to develop a literary taste. Because of the public, today's comic books have pulp level writing, our pulps are using slick-paper stories, and the slicks often delve into "Quality Magazine" material, all compared to the publications of ten years ago. Let's face it. The public may be right. Mickey Spillane may have done for grown-ups what Hans Christian Anderson did for smaller children.

Incidentally, I have read two of the man's books -- the first and the last to date. In "I, the Jury", I got the impression he was learning to write. The last half of the book is certainly a much smoother, professional job than the first. After five more books, "Kiss Me, Deadly"-- shows some additional improvement. Mike Hammer has developed enough character to not sleep with every woman who comes along and to keep fidelity to one woman. Only once in the book does he assault an innocent person, and then he hits him instead of killing him. A "skinny" clerk at a locker room refuses to be bribed and therefore became a "punk", i.e., anyone who talks back to Hammer. It's interesting to note that the innocent people Hammer assaults are usually physically weaker than Mike, the sign of an inferiority complex on someone's part. Likewise, Mike Hammer shows that he can get along without his gun if he has to, altho he prefers not to. Only on the last page does Spillane make two serious errors. A girl is described as being covered with burned tissue scars from her throat to thighs thighs and being recovered. A human being can't live if over two thirds of the body has been burned to the 3rd degree. Mickey then relates how Mike sets the girl on fire because she had recently had a rubdown in rubbing alcohol. This is an over-estimation of the inflammability of alcohol, considering its rapid evaporation reaction. Still this book is an improvement. If Spillane ever writes another book, it might not be bad at all.

In revisiting Spillane, I mustn't forget an expose to the effect that Howard Browne actually wrote the story, but I don't think this is entirely correct. In an interview with Life Magazine, Spillane outlined "The Veiled Woman" as his next story. Browne may have done much the work, but he must have used either Spillane's outline, or perhaps extended the novelet from Spillane's short story. Such scenes as the fight in the restaurant in the story must either be genuine Spillane or the greatest pastiche of modern times. For better or worse, Mickey Spillane qualifies as a science fiction writer.

As such, he is one of the few stf writers to be a movie star. Fritz Leiber reversed the process and became a stf writer after being a movie star, and John Payne entered movies after writing horror stories for Weird Tales, but Spillane became a motion picture star because he wrote such outstanding fantasy.

I saw Mickey with Clyde Beatty in "Ring of Fear", and he wasn't at all



bad. He seems to be rather a likeable little guy, somewhat introverted but overcoming it, an impression I had also got from seeing him a few times on television. He is much too normal to be a living Mike Hammer, for which the world should be grateful (as well as Mr. Spillane). "Ring of Fear" was a thoroughly entertaining picture. It might not be Mickey's last if he can improve his voice and mannerisms a little. As it was, he was very convincing in the part of Mickey Spillane.

Clyde Beatty is another interesting personality. Movie reviews complimented him on his performance since he is another amateur actor. Actually, he is far from being an amateur actor. I guess movie reviewers just don't go to B-pictures and serials. One of Beatty's early pictures was the "Steel Arena", and then he made a science-fiction-jungle serial named "Darkest Africa", released again a few years ago as "King of the Jungle-land"; and just a few months ago, I saw his "Perils of the Jungles" (obviously two sliced-together pilot films for a television show that didn't come off). Beatty hardly qualifies as a amateur, altho he does lack professional polish. Considering that several of his jungle movies have actually been science fiction, I suppose that makes him the world's only living science fiction hero.

---

"No science-fiction convention here -- I'm murdering my wife."

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He was a one-handed reader, so he gave up reading.

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Beanie propellers turning, he stood ready to prove himself.

---

We knew it all the time.

I suppose you saw where Dr. A. H. Sturtevant, a zoologist, confirmed that atomic radiation is producing mutants in the human race. He took issue with AEC Chairman Lewis Strauss, who claimed that H-bomb radiation was not harmful.

Strauss is quite a liar -- one of those people who think that what the public doesn't know won't hurt them. In this case, what the public doesn't know may kill them. After Strauss told his pack of lies about the H-bomb test, I sent a letter to a publication that had been publishing my letters regularly, picking holes in the Admiral's half-truths and evasions. They didn't publish the letter. Maybe they weren't allowed to. Strauss is power-hungry.

He wants almost dictatorial power over the Atomic Energy Commission so he won't have to be "handicapped" by the other members -- particularly by the damn fool scientists, the only people who have any right to be on an Atomic Energy Commission, since they are the only ones who really understand atomic energy.

Lewis Strauss has publicly tried to soothe the country by underestimating the power of the Hydrogen bomb -- such as saying it would "incapacitate" the downtown area of New York. It sure as hell would! An H-bomb



would completely destroy every living and non-living thing in a good part of New York state. An H-bomb dropped between Philadelphia and Washington would probably knock both of them out, killing all life but leaving some structures standing. Any city that was hit directly by an H-bomb would be evaporated and a large circular impression of hardened silicon would be all that was left. Yes, it would "incapacitate" downtown Manhattan.

Strauss is a dangerous man, perhaps intentionally, perhaps not intentionally. There are enough intellectuals to defend our freedoms from intellectual tyrants like McCarthy; but let's not forget that our freedom and very existence are threatened by soothing politicians like Strauss. Suppose he begins to minimize the effects of the Cobalt-bomb and authorizes a test? There are dangers besides the political subversives to our national security.

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"Harmon's been here -- I can feel a draft."

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Insurance of a kind that will be of utmost benefit to fandom is just around the corner, it was revealed recently by a spokesman of a well-known insurance company to a small, exclusive group of Southern California fen.

Declaring the belief that fandom had expanded enough for them to put out policies designed for the needs of various kinds of fans, this company stated its readiness to "guarantee" the fan's continued existence.

"Statistical examinations show that the average life of an acti-fan is shortly over two years," the spokesman said. "By then, either a mental change, or outside forces, cause the average fan to collapse and die."

Though the fan may be revived at a latter day, years of fanactivity will be wasted, declared this man. His name cannot be revealed as yet, until the campaign of interrelating publicity of TV and radio, the pro and fanzines, are completed.

He continued: "This, I know, all fans will admit, cannot go on. Our company, in an effort to prevent the high mortality of the actifan, has developed insurance policies that will guarantee activity.

Special fines for noncontinuance will be imposed to help the fan with a temporary aberration continue until the stimuli of crifanac return him to mental health. But this is not all the policy does.

The General Fanlife Policy states that, in case of injury to an arm (especially the right one if right-handed and left, if left-handed) or the two fingers customarily reserved for typing (if the individual fan uses a typewriter), a stenographer, paid for by the insurance company, will take dictation, help the fan stick on the stamps ("You furnish the spit, we the stamps") and otherwise insure a flow of fanac, the spokesman said.

In case of temporary mental instability (ranting, frothing before strangers, etc.), the policy provides a suitable rest-home and a secretary trained in ghosting fanletters and fanarticles or other material of a type the fan habitually writes for the fanzines until he recovers. The spokesman further said: "Our two dozen regular secretaries receive your monthly reports on current fanaddresses and type of writing, and the files are opened for reference so your style will be authentic."

Faninsomnia, from extended periods without sleep, will also invoke the ghost fanwriter while the fan is submerged in a vat of carbon-dioxide to





promote sleepiness.

"For fan conventions, our company," said the spokesman, "will have a lady 'guardian angel' on hand to lead you to various meetings, planned and unplanned, according to a combined written request and the desires you indicate while there. She is especially sensitive to the unconscious requests of the fan who walks in his sleep, and by the end of the con you will be assured of complete coverage.

This policy is issued to male or female between the age of 10 and 99, if they have a certificate from one national or international fangroup declaring they are known to be an accredited science fiction fan.

A "Reader's Rider" will be attached for a small additional fee, and a selection of from fifteen to fifty fanzines a month will be subscribed to in the fan's name and a reader will read them to him in his own home, at work, or on the way to work, etc.

Special policies for accredited fans include "Guaranteed Egoboo" which guarantees publication in fanzines, in prozine letter departments, having pics made with proeditors or toprate proauthors, etc. There is a "Budget Egoboo Policy" which is in effect only during conventions, and guarantee introduction with at least three BNFS, three top professionals, and Wilson Tucker (if available).

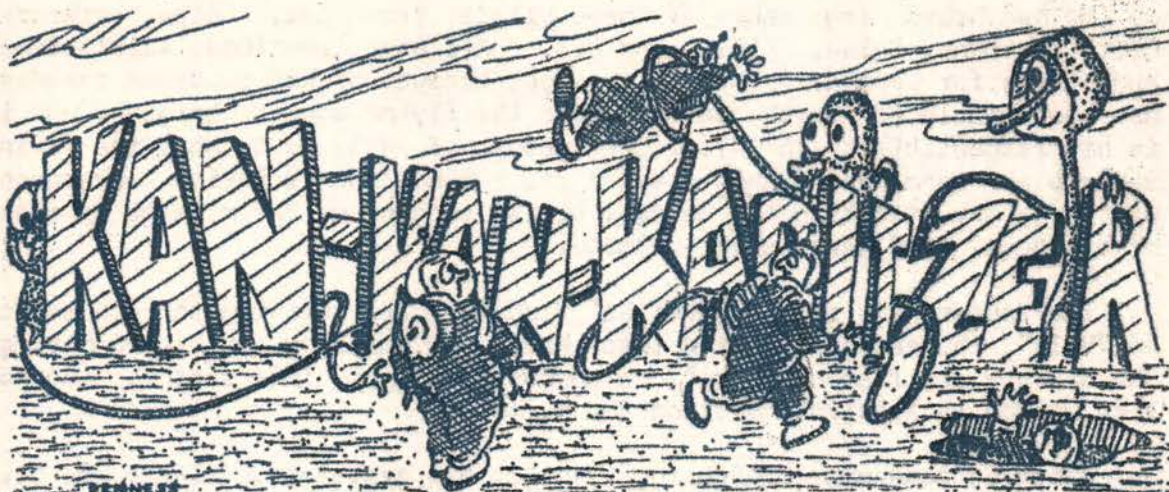
The "Fan Health Policy" insures the policyholder against eyes being too weak to actively participate in fanac, muscles too flabby to crank a mimeo at least 100 impressions an hour, or punch a stapler at a rate of at least ten complete copies of a fanzine every fifteen minutes (2 staples to a mag). Stand-in publishers (using the name of the fan) will take over within 24 hours, if asked to do so.

The "Partial Disability Rider" will be added for half price if the fan is a member of any club with the name "fan" or "fantasy" in its title. This rider is for one-finger typists who sprain their fingers, or loose its use by brawl, while mimeoing a fanzine or otherwise indulging in cri-fanac.

Fans studying this policy will note the special "Atom and H-Bomb Rider" which guarantees no atomic or fission device will produce unhealthy conditions that will interfere with fanactivity. If vaporized or otherwise incapacitated, the fan's name will be taken over by a special ghost, who will continue his activity at the same rate he did before his demise, and continue spewing out posthumous egoboo for ten years.

For special policies and riders, this company has provided a great variety, so that any fan may tailor a policy to fit his most exacting needs. For more information, it is suggested that you wait for the grand splash in all the important medii, or better still, write to this magazine in care of "Fanin" and ask for details when they become available. The rush will be great, so get in your inquiry as soon as possible!





T. E. WATKINS.

### THE FLYING SAUCER RIDERS

One of our TV newscasters ended his program last week with this chuckle: Mr. X. was very indignant when his claim for a record in crossing the continent was turned down. Mr. X claims he made the trip in less than an hour in a flying saucer.

Mr. X. is not the only flying saucer passenger. I know of two others. One wrote a book and I met the other one. Let's take the book first.

VAN TASSEL'S TOWER: George Van Tassel is a 42 year old airplane mechanic at Lockheed Airport and his book, "I Rode a Flying Saucer!" is published by New Age Publishing Company at \$1.00 per.

The book is a compilation of messages received by Van Tassel from flying saucer pilots from January 1952 through March 1953. George is a sensitive. He lives at Giant Rock Airport near Los Angeles. Here he has spent a lot of time with his thoughts and discovered an unseen portion of himself, a seventh sense, a sense of "be-ing". This seventh sense is a perfect instrument, and George can PARALLEL radio, airplanes, television, and other mechanisms, such as flying saucers. This does not mean that he flies around the air. George is only sensitive to the vibrations of those mechanisms.

Van Tassel is not confined to earth. He sets up a tower or beam and anything that vibrates within that beam vibrates George too. The beam can extend--well, on and on. As George expresses it, "The universe is mine to explore."

It was only a question of time until George and the flying saucers would get together. Messages from saucers come every day or so. Example: "Greetings. I am Elcar, 6th projection, 42nd wave, realms of Schare. Congratulations from Central. You shall see more of us. Elcar discontinue."



He has heard from many of these pilots, from Noma, OBlow, Latamarx, Clota, Lutbunn, Dulac, Kleac, and Qel. All have greetings, salutations, and praise for George. You see, George, because of his peculiar talents, has been appointed "earth contact" for the flying saucer brigade, and it is his responsibility to inform the people of earth as to what the flying saucers are and what their mission is. Since the stinkin' Government won't pay any attention to George, he is sending us the message by means of his book. And here is the message.

The saucers are really "ventilas" and they are policing the 4th sector of "Vela", the sector of space into which our solar system is now moving. The saucers are from "Schare", a space station of this sector. (Sounds like George is a science fiction fan to me.)

Ashar is commander of Schare, Blaroc, his assistant. There are also Lax, Noot, Klacta, Tonla, Vela Rouee, Betth and Maxslow! (Ah, A Russian.)

The saucers are peaceful, but the cigar-shaped ships are not. Look out for those cigar-shaped ships! The saucers are investigating them as well as us.

We are under investigation for making hydrogen bombs. Hydrogen is a living substance and when exploded creates a "frozen equilibrium" and that sort of going-on will have to stop. If it don't stop, the saucers take over.

Both the saucers and the saucer pilots, Betth, Dulac, Klacta, and Maxslow, are made out of light. Seven hundred passengers can ride a saucer without being crowded. They would be no more crowded than 700 flashlight beams pointing at the same fly on the wall. Saucers move by breaking hard light particles into soft light particles. So, it's just silly for the Air Force to try to capture one. They might as well try to capture a moon beam.

George tells us that the Air Force has recognized that the saucers are of higher intelligence, but have not conceded that the saucers are of a higher authority. This meanness on the part of the Air Force will only delay the return of the "spirit of the Christ Consciousness" which George feels every time he talks (or vibrates) with a saucer pilot.

In one of the last messages, Ashtar told George that he had authorized several hundred of the boys to make the vibrational change that would place them in human bodies like ours. So, if you see someone all lit up--he's a flying saucer pilot.

THE ASTRAL ADVENTURE OF MAJOR G.: Major G. believed he could project his spirit out of the physical body. This is known in occult circles as "astral projection. On one of his astral trips, he ran across a flying saucer and rode it for two hours.

Major G. was a retired civil engineer. He had moved from New Jersey



to central Michigan where he worked a truck farm until a heart attack made him a bed patient. I met him at a nursing home and was introduced by a mutual friend.

The Major was thin and bald, with bright intelligent eyes. When we came in, he put down a book he was reading (George Gamow's "The Birth and Death of the Sun"), and we shook hands and were invited to sit down. He was familiar with popular books on science subjects, such as the one mentioned above, and also read science fiction. However, he believed occult doctrines concerning the universe and this is reflected in his flying saucer adventure.

According to the Major, the flying saucers come from Venus. They are plant-like creatures and breathe carbon dioxide instead of oxygen. He did not find out why they were visiting earth. He did discover that they were very confused about us. They do not eat food nor do they have a sex-life; so two of our common activities are a complete mystery to them. They do not talk like we do and there is very little basis for communication with them. The Major did not know how the ship was made or how it was propelled. He got the impression that they were being very cautious in their exploration, but he thought that contact might eventually be made.

The Major was most convincing. By that, I mean he believed the story himself, he was not just telling a tale. And I think Van Tassel believes in himself, too. He has convinced a number of friends and they have meetings at his lonely airport and take their mission for the saucers seriously. Right here we can say--without knowing anymore than what I have written--one of them is wrong. And there are hundreds of people who have similar harmless occupations such as saucer vibrating and astral projecting. What ails them, anyway? Do they ever come up with anything worth while? Yes, they do. Some of these off-trail occupations produce astonishing results.

THE NEW FRONTIER::About the time of World War I, Charles Fort gathered strange happenings and put them in a book which he called "The Book of the Damned". Few were interested. Today, an increasing group of individuals are studying this type of phenomenon. Most of the scientific work is being done in parapsychology by Dr. J. B. Rhine and at Utrecht University in Europe.

Extra-Sensory Perception is not the only subject that interests these new "mystics". They are going into such things as immortality, mediumship, and clairvoyance.

Several months ago, the Saturday Review ran an ad on a new publication Tomorrow, being published by Eileen J. Garrett, a noted medium and clairvoyant. Miss Garrett has worked with Dr. Rhine and other scientists. The magazine is a quarterly review and covers the field of Psychical Research. It is a sort of a highbrow Fate. The Summer 1954 issue contains articles by Gabriel Marcel, french philosopher; Edmond Gibson, Michigan archeologist, and a review of the Symposium held at Saint Paul de Vence, France, in



April for psychic researchers.

With my year's subscription to Tomorrow, I got a book, "Telepathy" by Eileen J. Garrett in which this noted sensitive discusses some of the problems involved in psychical research.

Miss Garrett does not think that telepathy and clairvoyance are new talents developing in mankind. She thinks they are old talents that have been little used. She believes that all sensitives have somewhat the same development in that the barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind is weakened. And this vast area, which some call the unconscious mind and Freud called the Subconscious mind, is for the most part unexplored.

All sorts of strange things can develop in this area. George Van Tassel could worry about the hydrogen bomb so much that he could develop super flying saucer pilots that even talk to him and which he expects to come out of the night and save us. Major G. could develop an astral body that flies over the earth and rides flying saucers. His flying saucers reflect his occult doctrines and his popular science reading. (Occultists believe that Venus has a well developed evolution which is "one round" ahead of ours). Of course, Major G. would have his Venusians breathing carbon dioxide because Gamow tells him there is no oxygen on Venus--only carbon dioxide. Yet, both of these men can believe firmly in their own experiences.

The new mystics may explore the vast areas of the subconscious mind and bring to light its hidden secrets. It might even come to pass that we will find all the flying saucers and their pilots in the hidden valleys of this mysterious area after all. I sure hope not--but I'm such a skeptic.

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To begin with this time, I think I'd better explain why I haven't been around of late. I'd contracted to write this column last summer when I didn't know what was coming. Last October, I had to undergo an operation of a rather serious nature on my right leg, and in January of this year the necessity of taking x-ray therapy made me miss more school, this time in the middle of exam period. Well, on getting back to college I found that not only did I have to catch up and stay that way with my regular work, but I also have to make up the final exams that I had missed. Some of you may realize how submerged I was with work.

Under those conditions, I had to drop most of my crifanac in order to devote most of my time to studying. This column had to go, too. In fact, almost all of my fan activity, including correspondence with my best fan friends, had to go out the window and was left hanging for about four months. To those of you who care, it all ended fine. Now I'm on summer recess and have managed to get back to normal output and even more so and so here I am once again. I want to thank Lee Riddle for allowing me to resume this column, and all of you whom I was forced to slight for bearing with me.

On to current things, I find after reading the August 1954 Astounding that John Campbell in his editorial has come out with another of his occasional gems. I'd advise any and all of you who have not seen that issue to get hold of it as soon as possible. Keeping my own opinions to myself, I will say that this editorial deals with our present social system as compared with other previous social systems as a basis of investigations to the whys and wherefores of a very narmal event--war. In an extremely Euclid-like logic process (accept his premises and you have to agree), John Campbell points out that all social set-ups from the beginning of recorded history suffer from a common failing: that of refusing to allow irrational reasoning to take its place in building the social system, and believing on the part of the creators of that society that all problems and questions may be resolved through the use of a strictly materialistic logical process. Looking from all angles, the



editor does an excellent job, and I will go on record as recommending this as Editorial of the Year -- pending what I see in the September through December issue of the several magazines I read. Véry worthwhile.

Sam Mines has come out with his Fall FSM and a very informative editorial of his own, dealing with the development of a small battery which functions on solar power, transmuting solar energy directly into electricity via silicon plates. And in the fanzine world, several things have recently developed; one I think especially deserves comment. John Magnus is putting out an entirely new -- and vastly improved -- fanzine, VARIOSO. to replace his old SF. A middle step in the process was one issue entitled VAMP. John informs me, however, that the permanent handle will be VARIOSO. The much hailed DIMENSIONS came out recently, and I'm afraid editor Harlan Ellison disappointed me greatly. I don't want to knock him, but as those who received the first issue have noticed, DIMENSIONS is merely the old SFB in every detail except the title. And it still comes out with infrequent 90- and 100-page issues, rather than having its material spread out in order to be more regular, if only containing a mere 30 pages. That boy puts out an annish every time a new issue comes out. But then, they say he had two offers to make it a promag. Last but not least, Lynn Hickman informs me that not only is he planning to put out a one-shot type magazine to be called JACKPOT, but he's also going to issue a special STF TRENDS in order to cover the two most recent conventions. The last Midwescon will be covered by Joe Gibson and Norman Clarke, while the Detroit (Border Cities) Convention of the July 4th weekend will be handled by Bob Coulson and, if I ever get it done, yours truly. Should be worth getting.

Speaking of that latter convention briefly, I was somewhat disappointed in the small attendance, although that far from held me back from having my time of the year. It was purely a fan's convention, the absence of pros lending, to me, an entirely new atmosphere. Offhand, some of the attendees were: Ray Nelson, Harlan Ellison, Lynn Hickman, John Magnus, Hal Shapiro, Roger Sims, George Young, Howard (Huckster) DeVore, and large parts of the gangs from Cleveland, Indiana, and Chicago. I'm hoping for a repeat next year.

§ § § §

Since recently many of you have received BLOODSHOT and most of you also got HALF-SHOT last year, I think I'll dwell on a time on the subject of one-shots. In many ways they are superior to "regular" fanzines, in that no books have to be kept and not much more money is spent than for a normal single issue of such a fanzine. They're cranked off and, in fact, made up under extreme excitement and inspiration, except that after the first couple hours both wear off and you come to your senses just too late to stop. There are also hazards.

You usually want to get it done as fast as possible in order to mail it out quicker and thus impress people with your baby. Well, this leads to disaster....we almost gave BLOODSHOT up in disgust when we found our-









# PEON NOTES

Well, my friends, the long long wait is finally over. As you can see by the announcement on page two, the Riddle family now numbers six, with the arrival of our first daughter, Alice Elizabeth, on the morning of the 8th of August. That was a rather exciting weekend. First of all, I wasn't watching traffic very well downtown on the 7th and smashed into the rear end of

a garbage truck right on the main street of Norwich. The front end of our car was completely demolished, and necessitated my putting the Willys in a local garage for repair. Then, at 4:30 a.m. the next morning, we decided that it was time to take Rosella to the hospital at the Submarine Base, about 12 miles away. Thanks to the cooperation of a very good friend here in Norwich, we made it out there about 5:30, and Alice was born at 6:54. Things are settling back to a normal pace in the Riddle household now, if you can call getting up every four hours in the night to feed her as being normal. One consolation, however; I am able to catch up on my letter-writing and reading while she is taking her early morning bottles. If I may be a typical father for just a little while, she is a beautiful baby, and I can foresee that she is going to be a heart-breaker in about 17 more years!

Incidentally Bob Tucker, who is trying to catch up with yours truly, also became a father that same weekend, but for the third time only. Congratulations, Bob!

-oOo-

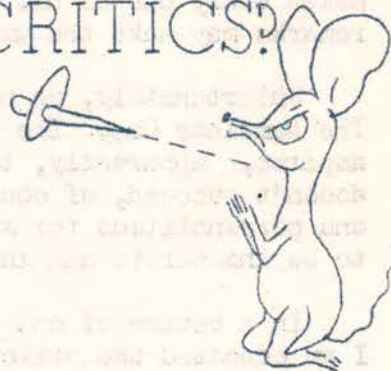
As many of you know, we recently underwent a terrific hurricane here in Norwich and New London, where I was stationed during the storm. While the local area suffered millions of dollars of damage, we personally did not suffer anything except loss of electrical power for about three days. Since we cook by electricity at the house, we certainly got tired of cold meals for those three days; but then, after viewing the damage suffered by other residents of the area around us, I guess we shouldn't complain too much. Needless to say, I was rather perturbed during the storm while at the Lab over in New London, especially when I saw huge concrete slabs

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 38)





# WHY CAN'T THE AUTHOR MEET HIS CRITICS?



ASKED BY--  
ISAAC ASIMOV

I suppose there comes a time in the life of every novelist when he feels brought face to face with the messy problem of what to do about the critic who feels he has a license to indulge in personal insult, and does not feel bound by accuracy and simple fact.

When that time comes, what can the author do? His book is out. Custom allows it to be fair game for anyone who can crank up a pencil and make legible marks on paper. Custom draws no hard line between legitimate professional criticism on the one hand and fishwifery on the other.

The science-fiction novelist, I am glad to say, is more fortunate than most. Such reviewers as Groff Conklin, P. Schuyler Miller, Villiers Gerson, Anthony Boucher, Damon Knight, J. Francis McComas, Robert L. Lowndes, L. Sprague de Camp, Mark Reinsburg, Sam Merwin, and George O. Smith, are gentlemen who have cut their eye-teeth on science-fiction. What they do not know about the field has not been yet thought up. Most of them have the inestimable advantage of being able to write science fiction themselves, and they have turned out first-class stuff, too.

In discussing a novel of which they disapprove, they point out succinctly what it is of which they disapprove. They balance that by such merits as they believe the novel to possess. Their language is restrained and they feel no need to salvage their own ego by personal attacks against a target which they know in advance to be in a poor position to defend itself.

Unfavorable reviews from a reputable and capable critic are of the utmost service to the novelist. I have myself learned a great deal, by carefully considering some of the thumbs-down reviews of my own books, notably Anthony Boucher's comments on my FOUNDATION books and George O.



Smith's remarks on THE CURRENTS OF SPACE. I did not agree completely with what they said, but I was very grateful to them for having said it.

Damon Knight, in particular, is a dissector of novels who has no parallel in science fiction. The pains he takes to illustrate his points, the care with which he achieves objectivity, and the cogency of his reasoning, makes every one of his reviews a virtual course in writing technique. His remarks may make the writer wince, but so does iodine on a cut.

Unfortunately, we now come to a reviewer whom I shall refer to only as The Nameless One. The Nameless One, safe behind his barricade as "Critic" aspires, apparently, to be as witty and fearless as Damon Knight. He doesn't succeed, of course, because he substitutes invective for reasoning and personalities for analysis. He manages (and this he does admirably) to be inaccurate and insulting.

In a review of one of my books, for instance, he states that although I am educated and articulate, I am neither a writer nor a story-teller. He doesn't say that Isaac Asimov is not a good writer; he says he is not a writer.

He is welcome to his opinion, but how does he define the word "writer" now? Certainly I put words on paper. Certainly I sell my fiction. In the last thirteen years of my sixteen-year writing career, I have sold every word I have written, and to decent markets. On the whole, reader comment and reviewer comment has been kind to me. Will The Nameless One tell me what else I must do to be classed a "writer"? Not a "good writer" mind you; I lay no claims to that. Just a writer.

In a review of another one of my books, The Nameless One states in rather shrill exasperation that someone must like my books because they pour out in an endless stream. He admits that some people may claim they like the book, but he insists they can't have waded through it. The implication, to me, is that no one can both have read the book and liked it; that The Nameless One does not understand how I could possibly get the book published. A person who knew nothing of me or my work but what he read in the review by The Nameless One might easily conclude that I got my books published by a combination of threats and bribery.

What are the facts? The novel he denounces in this manner was liked well enough by Horace L. Gold to be serialized in Galaxy Science Fiction. It was liked well enough by Walter I. Bradbury to be published as a Doubleday novel. It was liked well enough by Truman M. Talley to be slated for publication as a Signet paper-back. These three gentlemen read the books they buy, and they are not as easy to fool as The Nameless One may think.

Do the readers approve of the book? In its first three months after publication, 28,000 readers bought the book. I dare say some of them knew what they were doing.



Do the reviewers approve of the book? With Lee Riddle's kind permission, I would like to quote a random handful of reviews of the book in question. Bear with me.

"...accomplishes something various science-fiction writers have been trying to do for a long while--it tells a first-class detective story in terms of a future and very advance technology. Even his robots are completely believable..."

---SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"...a good fast-moving murder mystery which will hold your interest right up to the last page. This is one you shouldn't miss."

---FANTASTIC UNIVERSE SCIENCE FICTION

"...a first-class thriller--- The book has a fast pace and the inventiveness is logical and mentally stimulating."

---SOUTH BEND (IND.) TRIBUNE

"...fascinating glimpses of the world to come..."

---HONOLULU STAR BULLETIN

"...the first wholly successful balanced blend of science fiction and the strict detective story."

---NEW YORK TIMES

"It's a first rate detective...story, too---a suspense novel that will leave you breathless."

---GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION

"...the tale...is an excellent suspense type thriller..."

---SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

"...If you want reading to set you free from the shackles of every day drudgery, try this prescription...a copy...a comfortable chair and about four hours of reading time."

---FORT WAYNE (IND.) NEWS SENTINAL

"...It has remained for Isaac Asimov to write the purest science-fiction-detective-story yet....an exceedingly good one."

---NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

"...not only thrilling, but believable."

---BOSTON GLOBE

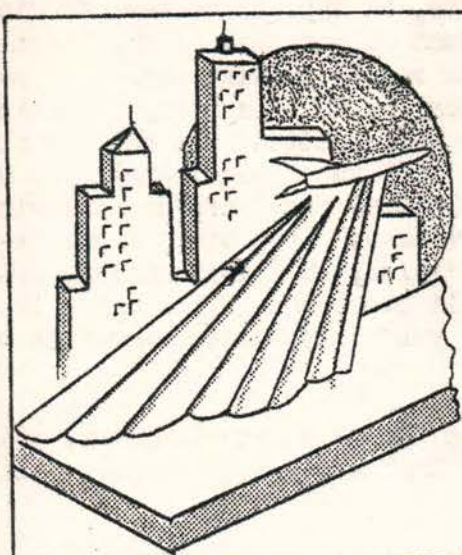
You may think all this is beside the point and in a way it is. Even if everyone in the world loves a book, a reviewer would have a perfect right to dislike it and say so.

My point is that his dislike ought not to extend to the point of untruth. He ought not imply that the author is an imposter. He ought not imply that no one likes the book when that is palpably false. For God's









# The Fan Press

---IAN T. MACAULEY

The policy here is simple. All fanzines received by yours truly are immediately considered for review in PEON. Without further ado, I'll get on with it. But, don't forget, all fan magazines intended for review herein should be addressed to Ian T. Macauley, 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta 5, Ga.

A BAS, Vo. 3 No. 3. Boyd Raeburn, 14 Lynd Ave., Toronto 3, Ontario, Canada. Mimeographed. Irregular. Pay After Reading.

This is a comparatively new fan publication, neatly put together by the notorious Derelect club of Toronto, which yields towards the lighter side of fandom. A good percentage of the magazine each issue consists of meaty-jazz-type articles; and, if you should like meaty-jazz-type discourses, this is your magazine. But, the consistent humour is what makes A BAS such an interesting and enjoyable publication, and this issue features a hilarious fannish play starring such characters as Sally Dunn, Norman Browne, Howard Lyons, Boyd Raeburn and others.

BLOODSHOT. John L. Magnus, Jr., and Dick Clarkson; 9312 - 2nd Avenue, Silver Spring, Md., and 410 Kensington Rd., Baltimore 29, respectively.. Mimeographed. One time only. Free.

"BLOODSHOT", the one shot that is bloodshot" is a welcomed and highly successful follower to its predecessor, HALFSHOT, which was produced last year by the same, erstwhile editors. The mimeography and format is better than seen in most fanzines, bringing to the eyes of its readers a hilarious collection of material by Messrs. Magnus and Clarkson.

DIMENSIONS #14, March-July 1954. Harlan Ellison, 41 East 17th Ave., Columbus 1, Ohio. Mimeographed. Quarterly. 20¢.

Harlan Ellison's bright successor to his reknown SCIENCE FANTASY BULLETIN, while under-handedly might be called a quantity publication, is definitely



a magazine of infinite quality. In this issue, as typical of the preceding SFB's, there is present an unbelievable amount of material of high magnitude. The material is neatly presented to a reader in sixty-three pages, all of which are well-produced. The lead story by Charles Ryan, centering on the parallel-world theme, is extremely well written and not at all hackneyed. Marion Bradley is also present with the first installment of her engrossing serial, and Joe Gibson and Fletcher Pratt are on hand with two highly entertaining and informative articles. The other material--such as that by Stephen Schultheis, David English, Ellison himself, Dean Grennell, Dave Ish, and Gregg Calkins--is all excellent. You can't lose by sending off for this bargain--that is, if you're fortunate enough to be placed on Ellison's limited mailing list.

HYPHEN #9, July 1954. A. Vincent Clarke and Chuck Harris (editors, this issue only), 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, England. Mimeographed. Bi-monthly. 2 for 25¢.

Vin and Chuck have a turn here at the helm of the good ship HYPHEN. And, a well-produced issue affronts the reader's eyes. Actually I can find no difference between this number and the ones Willis editorialized. The same zany material is present complete with the usual multitude of inter-lineations. W. A. W. is here with his delightful report of the recent Supermancon, Vin Clarke reuminates through his column of "Grunch", Harris wanders around with his "Random", and Bloch, Geis, Burbee and others fill out a very well-rounded issue.

PHANTASMAGORIA #1, June 1954. Derek Pickles, 197 Cutler Heights Lane, Bradford 4, Yorks., England. Mimeographed. No price or frequency of publication listed.

Old-timer Pickles returns with his well-to-do journal which folded, I believe, slightly over a year ago. The first issue of this new series is rather skimpy, obviously suffering for a deficit of material. The material that is featured seems basically dwelling on convention talk and satire, but, nonetheless, editor Pickles is sure to build his resurrected periodical back to its old and esteemed position.

PSYCHOTIC #15. Dick Geis, 2631 No. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon, Dittoed. Now bi-monthly. 10¢.

PSYCHOTIC is its usual and hilarious self and definitely seems to be the leading fan journal of the current fan era. This number features a long-winded and blatant commentary by Harlan Ellison, who violent exclaims the "Seventhth" fandom will never fail as long as his persistent spark kindle the flames of fandom. The article is well written, though. Jim Harmon innocuously reveals his story behind one of the more merrier incidents at the recent Midwescon, and Bob Tucker also spins his account of "The Business at Bellyfountain." The remaining material is all enjoyable, especially "Section 8", the letter column. This magazine of Geis' shouldn't be kept away from your eyes too long. It's good for posterity--whatever that is!



SCINTILLA #16. Larry Anderson, 2716 Smoky Lane, Billings, Montana. Dittoed. Bi-monthly. 10¢.

This issue is a slip in the bucket for Anderson's formerly fairly entertaining publication. The reproduction is average, certainly legible enough; but there is an extreme dearth of material. The entire contents, with the exception of a brief editorial and a short poem, are a poor bit of fiction and an article reprinted from SPACESHIP.

SPACESHIP #25, June 1954. Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery St., Brooklyn, New York. Mimeographed. Quarterly. 10¢.

An excellent twelve page article by Redd Boggs on the history behind Doc Smith's "Skylark" series saves this issue of Silverberg's inimitable SSHP. Boggs' article is the only piece of material in the issue with the exception of an editorial and a FAPA mailing review. Yes, unfortunately, this fine amateur journal is lost to the throes of an apa. Nevertheless, for the material featured herein, I would spend a dime and heartily suggest that you do the same.

SPIRAL #8, July 1954. Denis Moreen, 214 Ninth St., Wilmette, Illinois. Mimeographed. Bi-monthly. 10¢.

Moreen's publication seems to be one of the better amateur journals presently available in fandom. The mimeography is neat, as is the format, and featured in this issue is a lengthy review of "The Creature from the Black Lagoon" by Dick Geis, and a lengthy editorial by Moreen. Also present are interesting articles by Mari Wolf and Ed Cox. Moreen's editorial is alone worth the price of the issue for it is one of the best commentaries on fanmags, fandom, and science-fiction magazines that I've read in a good, long, long while.

STF TRENDS #15, June 1954. Lynn Hickman, 705 West Main St., Napoleon, Ohio. Mimeographed. Quarterly.

STF TRENDS is one of the pre-eminent standbys of fandom, always featuring an attractive format. In this issue, Joe Gibson writes an entertaining guide to New York and New Jersey fan clubs, and Jim Harmon reveals more of the surreptitious happenings of the past Midwestern Convention. Hickman's readers present one of the most delightful letter sections that I have had the pleasure of reading in many a month.

VARIOSO #10, June 1954. John L. Magnus, Jr., 9312 Second Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland. Mimeographed. 10¢.

Hal Clement leads off this issue with a highly interesting and entertaining article on "How to Characterize an Alien". Dick Clarkson writes of letterhacking; and Redd Boggs, the perennial fannish critic, lambasts the previous Magnuzine (VAMP #9). All in all, VARIOSO is a nicely colourful fan publication, although I do wish John L. wouldn't change its title with each successive issue.



PEON NOTES::  
(continued)

being picked up by the wind and flung around as if they were paper. I hope we don't have to go through one of these again! I just had a thought about this matter...since I've started publishing PEON, I have gone through an earthquake, typhoon, tidal wave, volcano eruption, airplane crash, and now a hurricane! What next?

-oOo-

PEON READERS' VIEW AND NEWS:: PEON now has a reader in 14 foreign countries what with the addition of a new subscriber in Norway. Our new subscriber is a young lad of 17, is very interested in science fiction, and writes excellently in English. He would like several correspondents; and if you are interested in adding a new correspondent, please write Cato Lindberg, Skogerveien 69, Drammen, Norway.....If you've written Lyell Crane down in Australia recently, and not received a reply, here's why--he's given up fandom entirely (or so, he says, but I bet you he'll be back with us in a short time because it's very hard to give up something like this!)....Congratulations to Ken Slater, who is evidently back into civilian dress again. His new address is Riverside, South Brink, Wisbech, Cambs., England, and after the usual period of getting settled down, he will be back in full swing with Operation Fantast--one of the better run fan organizations....Another foreign PEON reader who would appreciate receiving copies of fanzines, etc., is Basil P. Coutis, 45 Charilkou Trikoupi, Athens, Greece, who has organized Athenian Science-Fiction Club over there....Jack Gill Margraves, 1511 Cooper Street, Brooklyn 27, N. Y. would like to hear from anyone wishing to dispose of Lovecraft material.

-oOo-

Credits for artwork go this issue to Jerry Hopkins and members of the Fantasy Art Society, whose officers, Alan Hunter and Harry Turner, have been more than cooperative in furnishing me with artwork. The cover on this issue and the column headings are primarily their work. This is an excellent organization for bringing the fanzine artist and editor together, and if you are interested in obtaining some artwork for your fanzine, then I suggest you contact Harry Turner, 10 Carlton Avenue, Romiley, Cheshire, England, for further details.

-oOo-

Last issue was not one of my best, appearance-wise, and I am not too proud of it. However, if I may brag a little bit, I think this particular issue this time is one of the best PEON's I've issue. However, I did goof a little bit this time--especially, with the listing on the index page of "Peon People" on page 20. This feature will not appear in this issue. I had planned to have a page of photos of the regular columnists in this issue, but just learned that it wouldn't be ready as quickly as I'd wish; so it will appear in a future issue--and I hope it will be the next one.



Incidentally, there are several thought-provoking articles in this issue of PEON, and I'd like to run several pages of reader comments in the next issue. There's a prize available for the best letter published, too! It will be the original manuscript for Isaac Asimov's article in this issue.

-oOo-

To those of you who are members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and who plan to vote in the forthcoming elections for officers of that organization, I'd like to recommend that you reelect Don Susan as the president. As you know, Don was my worthy opponent last year (I am NOT able to run for any office this year), and has done a magnificent job this year, especially with the officials he picked to help him, practically all resigning before their job was finished. They sort of let him down--and I am ashamed to say that I was one of them. However, Don has done more than could be expected of any one member, and I think he deserves re-election in order to carry out his programs. Some of the things I was supposed to do to help him out were (1) Furnish the Emsh cover from PEON for an issue of the N3F official organ; (2) Mimeograph the Fan Speak booklet for distribution to the members; and (3) Re-publish Redd Boggs' "Astounding Story Key" and distribute it at nominal cost to the members. Well, I did manage #1, but did it on PEON's off-size pages, so it's lost to the members for the time being. #2 has just been completed after many months delay, and probably too late for Don's purpose; and #3 will be completed as soon as I have the time. I apologize herewith to Don and the membership of the N3F.

-oOo-

If any of you live within a reasonable distance of New York City, may I recommend you read the announcement on the last page of this issue of PEON? Then, make your plans to attend this convention, where I am sure you will have one of the best times of your fan-life. From what the Conference Committee tells me, this is going to be a wonderful affair, and I am certainly not going to miss it. I will be there from Friday night on, would be most happy to meet all of you there who can make it. There will probably be a gathering in my room that night, so come on up and make yourself known...will we see you all there? Certainly hope so!

-oOo-

Just discovered another "goof" in this issue--this is Volume Six, Number Four, not Three as shown on the index page. Perhaps the occurrence of two hurricanes in ten days in this area caused the mistake! At any rate, we have survived both Hurricane Carol and Edna here, and as I said before, what next, Mother Nature?.....And, that, I believe, winds this issue up. There will be probably one more issue of PEON before I go out to sea-duty early next year, but there will be more issues of PEON after that--don't worry! Happy reading, and hope to see all of you at the Metrocon!



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THE

# METROCON

The Metropolitan Science Fiction Conference  
at the Hotel Empire, New York City  
Saturday and Sunday---October 23 and 24, 1954

WHAT IS THE METROCON? That's the short way of saying the Metropolitan Science Fiction Conference--a gathering of science fiction enthusiasts. Fans and pros alike will have a two-day opportunity to get together... ..and in two different ways: formally and informally. Serious sessions will be held afternoons, with a party-dance Saturday night where you will renew old acquaintances and make new friends.

THE PARTY-DANCE on Saturday night will, perhaps, be the most exciting affair. We have the use of the exclusive Lotos Club and its ballroom. A bar to serve refreshments will be specially set up by the Club for us--at reasonable prices and with no obligation to buy. Only part of the evening will be spent dancing as some special entertainment is planned, so have no regrets if you don't dance.

THE EMPIRE HOTEL is located at 63rd Street and Broadway. It is ten minutes from the Pennsylvania and Grand Central Stations, with bus, subways and all transportation lines handy, as well as the bus terminals. Out-of-towners already are expected from as far away as the Mid-West.

Daily rates are: Single room (one person).....from 4.00 to 5.50  
Double room.....from 6.00 to 8.00  
Twin beds.....from 6.50 to 8.50

Special Convention Rates may save you some money if your reservations are obtained through the conference committee before October 19th.

YOU ARE INVITED IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SCIENCE FICTION IN ANY FORM!

WHAT'S THE COST? A membership card entitles you to attend all the sessions and party--for one dollar. By sending your dollar to the Metrocon now, you save yourself any disappointment. There may be an additional charge for the Lotos Club party if you don't join the Metrocon early enough for us to reserve a place for you. Save yourself an extra expense and save us extra problems by joining today.

PROGRESS REPORTS, just like the world conventions, will be sent to members ahead of time, announcing the latest information and giving inside news of the Metrocon. Two "Reports" will be published, one in August and one in September. Don't miss these special publications--free to members--by delaying. Join NOW and get BOTH Progress Reports.

CO-CHAIRMEN are Sam Moskowitz and David Kyle, both old-time fans and both professionally active in s-f as editors, writers, and publishers!

THE METROCON

P. O. BOX 272

RADIO CITY STATION, NEW YORK 19

PEON WILL BE THERE -- WILL YOU?