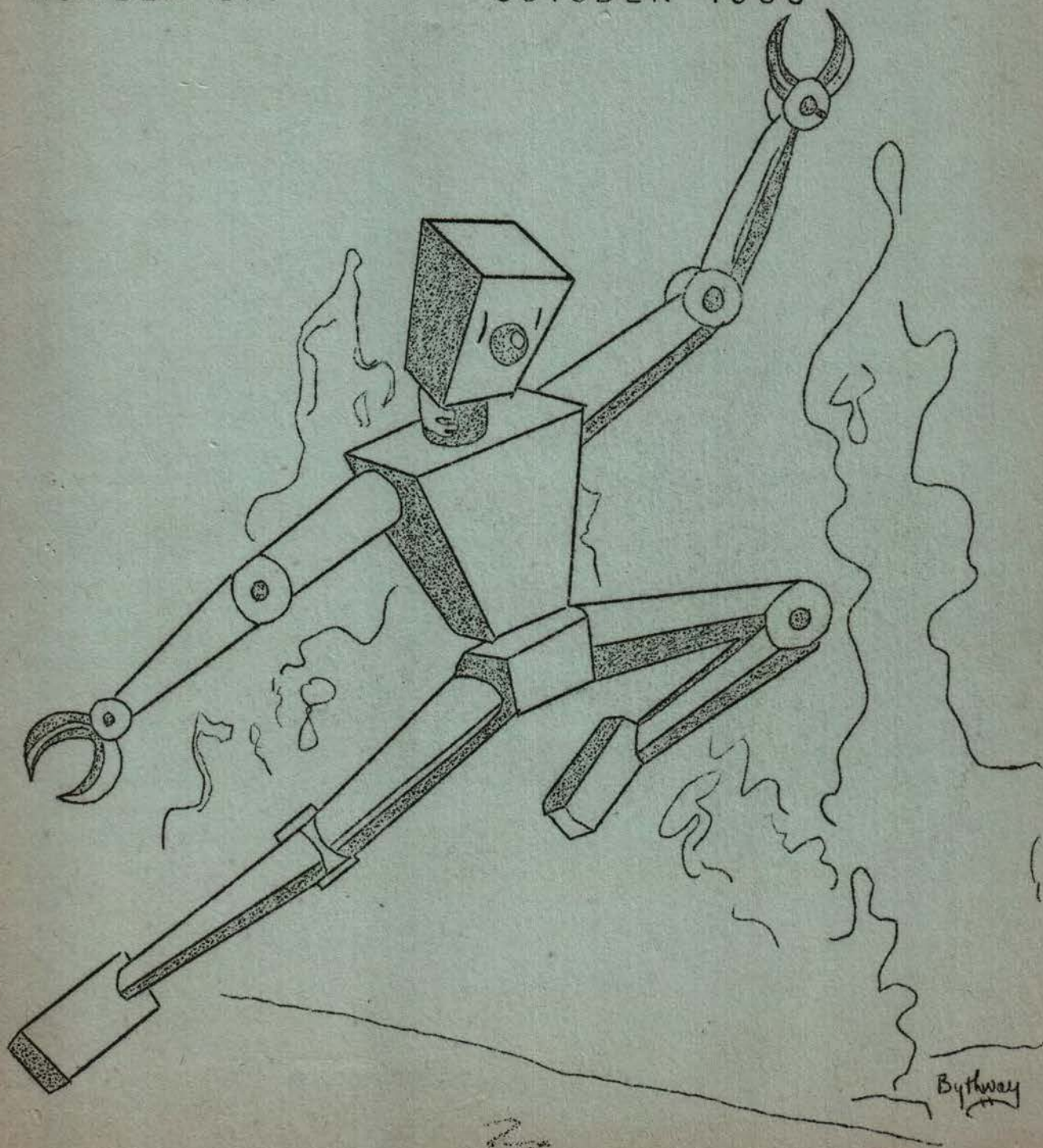


# PEON

NUMBER 37

OCTOBER 1956





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PEON 37  
VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1

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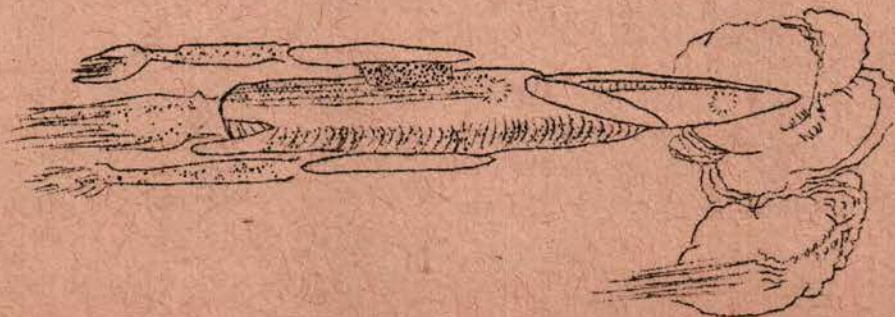
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# PEON NOTES



The primary reason that PEON has not had a letter column in recent years is that I haven't had many letters to print. When I first brought out PEON back in July of 1948, I intended it to be a letter zine, a successor to the then recently defunct VOM. It was only by accident that I included a few stories and articles and developed the format of the present day PEON. When the first two or three issues were then mailed out, I was flooded by the way of letters of comment and criticism. The flood soon trickled down to perhaps ten letters per issue and of late years to about five or six. There are several readers who have been with PEON since the first issue, and I can always count on an occasional letter of comment from them. But it was the newer readers who received PEON and as far as I was concerned, that was all--nothing in the way of a word of how they like the issued or how they disliked it.

All this, coupled with the fact that my new job aboard the USS CASCADE was taking up most of my time, brought the matter of suspending PEON to the fore. For the past year I have been greatly discouraged about PEON. Somehow I felt that I had slipped into a rut in the type of material being published, the format--well, everything that went into it. And--to be completely frank about this--I began to lose interest in publishing it. I've always said that when PEON became a chore, I would quit. And I was feeling that way about it now. Since I was getting practically no reader-response, I believed that PEON wouldn't be missed for a year. I also felt that a year's absence from the field and the necessity of putting out an issue would give me a much better outlook on it. So, I announced the suspension of PEON and offered to refund the balance of the subscription money to those who wanted it back.

My friends, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am never at ease in print--I think a great deal of the time that I sound rather stilted and formal and more or less stuffed-shirtish in these Peon Notes. But this expression of thanks is sincere. I didn't realize that so many of you looked forward to receiving PEON and liked it so much that none of you asked for your money back. The response in the short time since I mailed out the announcement has been most amazing. All of you have said you were willing to wait until the next issue of PEON -- and most of you offered a great deal of encouragement. So much encouragement that you see

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 21)



Miss Lillian Odds was a very pretty and very descriptively named young woman. She was a gambler, which wasn't odd in the least. Half the population of the Universe were gamblers. It was the life blood of the whole Earth civilization, which stretched from the Sol system throughout the Milky Way. The human race had expanded to all parts of the known Universe--beyond the frontiers was only the blackness of space and the other galaxies, which were, as far as most people were concerned, unreachable. The race was sated. They had seen everything, experienced everything that in the immeasurable past the science fiction writers had imagined. As a consequence, people's imaginations were no longer imaginative. Everybody was bored.

So, naturally, they turned to gambling--and here, at least, their imaginations did not fail them. They invented thousands of new games and variations on old games. There was Trill and Blowing Wild and Galaxy Roulette and Nebula Roulette. The list was endless. Especially were the games popular during interstellar travel. Such trips were particularly boring, people having grown inured to the wonders of space and the stars. In fact, they had no sense of wonder at all for now everything seemed commonplace.

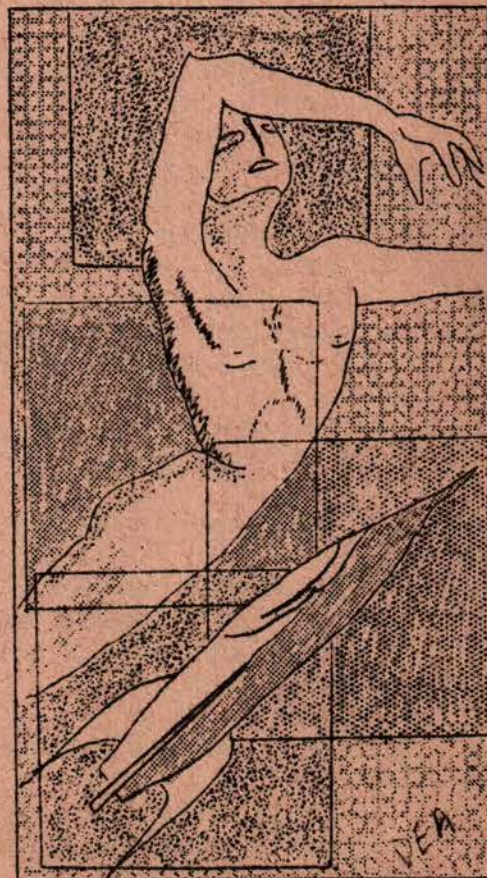
"Fifty credits on Saturn," said Lillian Odds, placing a richly decorated cube on the proper space on the long green table. The croupier pressed a lever which rotated the five wheels simultaneously. They spun, each stopping within seconds of each other. The croupier calculated the tangents on a large blackboard and then announced the winner loudly.

Miss Odds watched her cube disappear behind the croupier's stick and sighed an almost inaudible sigh of regret.

"Bad luck, eh?" said the young man who was standing alongside and watching her.

# THE ODDS AGAINST YOU

ronald smith





"Oh, hello, Mr. Johnson," said Miss Odds. The young man was the son of a rich uranium tycoon, who owned mines all over the Adonis arm of the galaxy. She'd met him casually during dinner the wake-period before, but they had exchanged a few words only. "Yes, I'm afraid so. I haven't had any luck all night."

"That's too bad," he said sympathetically.

She shrugged. "Here goes the last." She placed the 25-credit cube on one of the bright squares. Four minutes later it was gone and the wheels were spinning again.

"Oh, dear" she squealed, as she suddenly realized the extent of her losses. It was all the money she had had, and now she was broke. She didn't even have a return ticket to her home planet. She was lost!

"Oh, dear."

"Don't worry about it," the young man smiled cheerfully. "Your luck is bound to change. Here." He shoved a small pile of credit cubes toward her.

"Oh, no--" Miss Odds began, and then stopped herself. After all, she would pay it back as soon as she had won enough for her return ticket.

She reached out and took the stack of cubes. "Thank you," she said.

Thirty minutes later, she turned to the young man, still standing beside her. "Would you mind," she began slowly. "That is, you don't know me very well, but would you loan me a thousand credits until I can win some of my money back? I've simply got to get it back."

The young man smiled agreeably. "Of course, Miss Odds. My pleasure." He walked over to the cashier, bought some cubes and brought them back to her. "Here you are," he said.

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Odds, smiling. "I really do appreciate it. And I will pay you back, of course."

"Of course," said the young man.

The wheels continued spinning and Miss Odds continued betting. And loosing. In an amazing short time she had lost the thousand credits, too. When the last cube had disappeared into the bank, she turned miserably to the young man.

"Oh! Oh!" was all she could say.

"Don't worry about it," said the young man, putting his arm about her waist reassuringly. "Come on, you've had enough of this. I'll walk you to your cabin."



They walked across the gambling hall to the stateroom corridor. At last, after various twistings and turnings, they arrived in front of Miss Odds' cabin.

She turned to him, not knowing what to do, what to say.

"Oh, what am I going to do, Mr. Johnson?" she whimpered. She suddenly buried her face in his chest, sobbing.

The young man looked at her helplessly. She continued to cry. He pried the key out of her clenched fist and fumbled for the lock. Opening the door, he helped her inside and seated her gently on the bed. He sat down beside her.

"You mustn't let it get you down," he assured her.

"Oh, Mr. Johnson," she cried, "I'll never be able to pay you back. I don't know how I'll ever be able, and it makes me feel awful. I've never been in debt to anyone before." Her shoulders heaved with her sobs.

She turned tear-stained eyes toward him. "But that's not the worst of it," she said. "I'm broke. Completely and terribly broke. I didn't have a lot of money to begin with--just enough to get me to Deneb. I was planning on living there, I had enough money for a few months, time enough to find myself a job. But now," she began crying again, "but now," she continued between sobs, "I have nothing--no job, no money, no way to go back home. Oh, Mr. Johnson."

The young man patted her on her left thigh. "Now, Miss Odds, don't fret so, you can pay me back. And I'll be glad to advance you enough to get started on Deneb."

"No, Mr. Johnson," she cried, "it's impossible. I'll never be able to. I'm lost. There's no place left for me but the Poverty Control. And you know what that means to people with no money and no support--indenture. That's what!" She looked at him miserably. "Under the circumstances, Mr. Johnson, how could I ever pay you back?" She hesitated for a fraction of a second and then shook her lovely head. "No, Mr. Johnson there's no way that I can. I'll never be able to pay you back."

The young man smiled at her agreeably and leaned closer to her, quietly placing his arm about her shoulders. "I'll lay you odds," he said.

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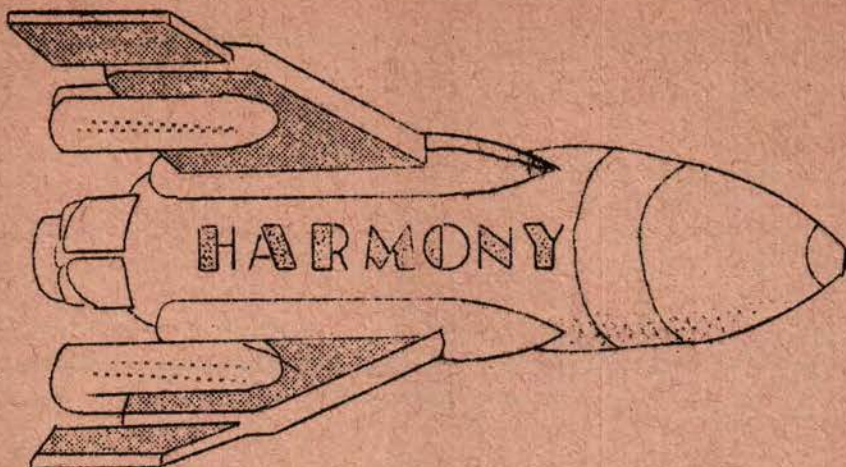
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by  
JIM HARMON

It seems that everyday fanzines come to my Ebony Tower with articles telling how bad current science fiction stinks, and what unlovely odors Galaxy, Imagination, and certain authors have in particular.

Some of these criticisms are valid. Some I regard as highly dubious such as Richard Geis' opinions that science fiction is immature because it doesn't contain as much pornography and obscenity as life. This is not an unfamiliar complaint.

Our society has so abolished mental flexibility that people even demand absolute realism in fantasy. The average person can't comprehend abstraction, parable, the frankly impossible, the unrealistically beautiful. I don't think Evan Hunter has set the final standards for modern literature with either "Malice in Wonderland" or "Blackboard Jungle." I'll still take William Faulkner with his beautiful blend of reality and fantasy, or Ray Bradbury, or Robert Heinlein (a very romantic realist, he).

Fans are utterly unaware of what is really wrong with science fiction. The pros know and most of the editors have secretly admitted what is wrong, but they don't admit it in public because they have particular critical drums to beat. Sam Moskowitz rants "Bring back the Good Old Days!" Bill Hanling screams "Entertainment!" Howard Brown shouts "Action!" Actually these and all other critical analysis of what is wrong are interesting and debatable, but not deadly serious.

What is wrong with science fiction is an economic cycle. Repeat: what is wrong with science fiction is an economic cycle. That's my opinion but the editors and publishers know that it is true.

It's kind of a self-sustaining feedback circuit. One facet of it: Do you know why "everybody" says the wonder has gone out of stf? That it's old hat? Because due to the economic slump stf readers and stf fans are old timers. I've been reading stf for about sixteen years. During the last ten or twelve I've come across exactly two ideas I didn't encounter during the first four or six years -- the ideas in Samuel Mines'



"Find the Sculptor" and Fritz Leiber's "A Pail of Air". Mind you, in a sense, the stf stories being published in one of the "golden periods" present day fans look back upon were old hat to me. The present-day-reader and fan has been around long enough to read all the basic plots and ideas. They come across them much faster than we used to do because there is a great deal more stf being published.

Even in our slump, we are publishing over three times as many magazines than then. Most of these were quarterlies; during most of the history of stf, Astounding has been the only monthly. Our five current monthlies alone are equal to fifteen quarterlies. The Pre-Boom average was Astounding, six quarterlies, and maybe two bi-monthlies. Incidentally while the field has gone from 39 titles to 14 titles, we have actually cut production only a third. Most of those boom-time titles were one shots, irregulars, and quarterlies. The boom year offered only 30 to 40 per cent more total stf magazine issues per year than will the slump year of 1955.

The economic cycle I refer to is one against fiction magazines. Pulp or digest or slick, if it's mostly fiction the breaks are against it.

As I have said before, immature readers of fiction magazines have gone to the comics, many mature readers have gone to the pocket novels, lots of readers who didn't particularly like to read anyway just watch television. That leaves for fiction magazines, only readers who like a specialized form of it and a variety of shorter lengths. Fiction magazines got hit by everything at once: comic books, pocket novels, and television plus the batch of Brade B men's slicks with the unshaven GIs and explorers which drew off more readers.

Please note that not only science fiction is in a slump, all other kinds of fiction magazines are in it. And here's an accurate statistic that may surprise you. There are as many stf magazines published a month as detective fiction, western, sports, and love magazines combined. Again, the number of titles is misleading -- most of these otherpulp are quarterlies, too. This shows pretty clearly that all of science fiction's gains in popularity have not been lost. Ten years ago science fiction, fantasy, and related subjects equaled literally only about 1% of all the fiction magazines published.

Naturally, the slump in magazine sales affects book sales, etc.

Does this have anything to do with the quality of stories? To a certain extent. When Heinlein and Bradbury were actively contributing to Astounding and Planet respectively, Luke Short was writing for Dime Western and Raymond Chandler regularly appeared in Dime Detective -- well, the later pulp Short and Chandler overlapped the early Heinlein and Bradbury. The economic facts of life are that no specialized fiction magazine can pay enough these days to regularly draw the top writers in its field. And no amount of critical analysis is going to change this.



Again, let me point out that much of criticism of current sf is due to the fact that low circulations have not conjured up bright-eyed young readers and fans to drown out us cynical oldsters. Remember, there are letterhacks who write in to Imagination and say that they have read every story for a certain number of issues and found them all awesomely magnificent. And bless their bloody little hearts, every word is absolutely sincere.

I suspect that many of the fault-finders with current science fiction will stop reading it. You have to be a great deal more perceptive or a great deal less to read it steadily all your life. Resign yourself to the fact that blindingly original concepts won't hit you often again -- you're too jaded. You'll have to start reading science fiction for the different approaches in literary development, philosophical comment and scientific variations.

As a stinking contributor to the stinking prozines, I have one other point to charge against us fans (if you follow me). Prozines aren't the only things not as good as they used to be. There are few fanzines that can match the fannish charm of Art Rapp's original SPACEWARP or the eloquent literiteness of FANTASY COMMENTATOR. You probably can't realize the vast gulf between today's book and magazine reviews in the fan press and the exhaustive research, true knowledge of the entire range of human literature, and love of fantasy and science fiction in Langly Searles' FANTASY COMMENTATOR. I had one article in one issue; I worked three years on it. And there is no comparison between today's lithographed fanzines and Don Day's THE FANSCIENT and Stan Mullen's THE GORGON. I'll say this much for you devils; you can't help it, either.

A few days before Christmas, I was walking out of one of my several aunts' houses in a smudged trench coat, bleary-eyes and unshaven, in need of a haircut and manicure, and otherwise looking my charming self when a Cadillac swoops up to the curb and a hearty voice encased in a Brooks Brother's suit hails me. "Hop in, Jim!"

This is Thomas N. Scortia, a research chemist and Astounding contributor, a part of my secret life right there in my home town! I am really delighted to see Old Tom (as I call him) albeit apprehensive. This is almost the first time Jim Harmon, small town unemployed-type character, has had to become Jim Harmon, drunken, over-sexed ox-like science fiction fan, in the twinkle of one of Scortia's merry (if somewhat reddened) eyes. I felt like Clark Kent watching a bank robbery without a phone both in sight.

Scortia is a rather remarkable person. As I told him, the first time I met him, I thought he was a phoney. It seems impossible that anybody could know so much about so many things. But he does. He is built along the same jovial lines as Isaac Asimov. The basic difference is that Tom thinks a Goose is a aerophobic fowl indigenous to certain adaquos land areas of the North American continent and points east, whereas we all know what Asimov feels a goose to be.



O, THIS

BLASTED

DASHED

AIR AGE!!

--JOE GIBSON

"...And he landed the 'copter on the roof...."

Plucked smack out from any one of several recent s-f novels, 'tis. And you've been indoctrinated, chums, to accept it as believable. Helicopters are the coming thing. They can hover, go up, down, forward, backward, and sideways. They can land anywhere. They are absolutely safe. Someday, people won't drive automobiles; they'll fly helicopters.

Well, chums, they'll fly all right. But sure as hell, it won't be the 'copters.

You may have dug into this thing deep enuff to hear about how the present 'copters are in their Model T design stage, and why. Today's whirleybirds haven't much speed--for most models, it's just a bit over 100 mph tops, which means your cruising speed is somewhat below that. This means that a 3-hour flight isn't going to get you much farther than 300 miles distance; and a good day's flight won't get you much more than 500 miles--this is piddling small when you figure fuel costs. It also means a whole week of flying to get from coast to coast.

And the reason 'copters can't go faster is that the whirling blade pushes ahead every time it swings forward. The pitch levers tilt it to get more push when it swings back, of course, or the 'copter wouldn't move ahead at all. Unless it had a tailwind. But this resistance from the rotar-blades swinging forward is the present problem with 'copters. They are licking it with shorter blades, heavier blade-loading and what-not and someday they'll have it reduced to a scant minimum. But they'll always have it so long as they use whirling blades.

A hovering craft with a good speed is the convertiplane that tips the rotars so they become propellers and the craft skins forward on stubby high speed wings. Bell Aircraft already one in test-flight.

These rotary-wing craft are very useful in some ways. But Popular Mechanics, Sunday supplements and science-fiction to the contrary, they will never do as common vehicles. Even when they're developed out of the Model T stage, they'll still be a craft demanding much skill, caution, and training.

Y'see, there's one little catch you may not have heard about these



windmills: from 100 feet to 1,000 feet altitude, they're dangerous.

Below or above those heights, they are the safest aircraft ever designed. If you're cruising at 3,000 feet and the engine quits, you'll float down to a landing as if you were on a parachute. As the craft starts falling with a loss of power, the wind against the blades keeps them whirling fast enough to slow the craft's descent.

But 150 or 800 feet up, it can kill you.

The inertia of those rotar-blades is the cause. If engineers can ever lick inertia, they'll have antigravity and star-drive and you won't need any helicopters. But until then, it's the one black mark against 'copters for if your engine quits in that 'danger zone', your craft starts falling. It starts slowly, of course, as the blades slow down from loss of power. But then it keeps falling, and the blades keep slowing.

It has to fall far enough, and get falling fast enough, to have enough wind hitting those blades to overcome their inertia and get them whirling again. If you're under 100 feet in height, you won't hit the ground hard enough to do more than smash the undercarriage. If you're over a thousand feet up, you have far enough to fall to get those blades going on wind, and slow her up for the touch-down. But anywhere in between, you'll hit the ground like a ton of bricks. It'll be like 60 mph head-on into a solid concrete wall.

This is something any one of our s-f authors with a string of technical degrees tacked onto their names for formal occasions could have looked up. They could also have dug up a few other little items concerning recent experiments with fixed-wing aircraft.

Fixed-wing, naturally, means the plain, old airplane. It's been discovered that by speeding up the boundary-layer airflow over the top of the wing, they can increase the wing's lift so much that it'll fly a plane at a mere 12 mph. You get that much speed gunning off your foot on a motorcycle. And there are some cute ideas in the works for speeding up that airflow. One's by "bleeding" the air in thru tiny perforations, sucking it thru the inside of the wing to a blower or turbine that shoots it out the tail. Some guys covered the top of a glider's wing with cloth, then installed a blower in the belly run off a li'l 2 horse putt-putt engine--- and it increased the wing's effective lift by 20 per cent.

And when you cut power on these craft, they automatically become gliders. There's no lag. Don't matter what height you are. Full development of this gimmickry could undoubtedly result in a glider-type aircraft that can haul itself upstairs from a standing start...and, under power, come down the same way. It won't hover over a spot, tho. But neither does a 'coter if there's much of a breeze. Both craft could fly into a breeze and appear to be hovering.

If you go sightseeing in a 'copter over the local nudist camp, there's



not much to see from 1,000 feet up--and if you're below 100 feet, you'll probably chase the nudists indoors. So just hope to hell your engine does not quit. If it does, they'll merely have to fill in the hole you make and mount a gravestone on it. But in the glider-type aircraft, you need not worry. If your engine quits, you'll sail down and maybe smash up somebody's picket fence, but with any kind of luck at all, it certainly won't killyou.

Furthermore, there is some scant possibility that all glider-type craft needn't be full scale vultures with 30-foot wings to hold up that plexiglass fishbowl cabin. There is just a hint of a chance that a little saucer-shaped job slotted amidships, with an open bucket seat up front, could boost one passenger off the ground and go skimming over the hedges in fine style.

But every time I come on this crap about skies full of teeming "copter traffic", I start looking for some other story to read. Like as not, the author will have the sky-cops using radar surveillance and a ground observer corps when there's not a police force on Earth, including Russia's MVD, that has the kind of budge to afford such a set-up. To fully blanket the traffic with it, the costs would boost taxes so high we'd think the Armed Forces were cheap!

And if a writer wants airboats, hell, he can have 'em--and without antigravity, too. Of course, the size of those floating barges will have to correspond to today's Navy blimps and they'll have to be streamlined as a Bonestell rocket with midget-sized delta fins. But you could build a damned good flexible hull for an airship with fiberglass. The stuff is malleable; but more than that, when it's bent it then tends to snap back into the shape it was molded in. And you can lick other problems easily enough. No dumping sand ballast to go up or releasing gas to come down, no pumping the helium gas in and out of the bags from high-pressure bottles and leaking it out of valves, pipe fittings, and pumps. Just fill the boat with enough chilled helium to give it a slight bouyancy on the ground and then to go up, heat the gas so it expands. Then cool it again to come down. We know enough from atomic research, right now, for a suitable heat exchanger to be designed for this job.

Gotta figure you'll need a damn big barn for this tub, natch, but she's nothing more nor less than the conventional, old airboat of the antigravity tale. Only thing is her helium bags take up a lot of room inside, and you'd best have the cabin in her belly, not topside.

Sometimes I think these technical-type writers like Ike Asimov work too hard for particular-type editors like Gold and Campbell. Of course, it is very definitely a task to develop 'good characterization' in today's "mature" science fiction yarn. So okay, name me the leading character in "Caves of Steel." Go on, what's his name? Now, try this one: Kimball Kinnison.

Somebody missed the airboat, chums.



# SCIENCE FICTION AND THE READER'S DIGEST

JAMES E. GUNN

I have a tender spot in my heart for Dave Dryfoos. That is because we both broke into the science fiction magazines at the same time, and our stories were being sold by Larry Shaw. But the San Francisco convention was my first opportunity to meet Dave and exchange views with him.

This, then, is a continuation of that opportunity - an exchange of views.

Let me set forth first our areas of agreement. There is one big area: that of subject matter. When Dave says that contemporary political events and controversies are the fit subject of science fiction, I second the suggestion. I will immediately qualify it. I agree with Dave not for the reasons he advance nor, possibly, with the type of story he had in mind.

To take last things first, the story material - to be science fiction, must be transmuted; in Shakespeare's words, "it must suffer a sea change." Dave asks for a broader definition of science fiction to include accounts of contemporary events. That properly belongs to what has been called the "main stream" of modern literature, and it will do no good whatsoever to call it something else.

It reminds me of Lincoln's question: "How many legs would a sheep have if you called its tail a leg?" And he answered: "Four, because calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one." We don't make definitions as writers or editors or even readers; just as Webster doesn't. Webster records usage; and we accept what we find.

Calling a story science fiction wouldn't make a million or so readers accept it as such.

But if Dave will transmute his current events, extrapolate from then into a future in which present tendencies have reached their logical and dramatic conclusion (as C. M. Kornbluth did with the problem of official secrecy in "Takeoff"), then I will follow along with him all the way.

Dave Dryfoos, in his thoughtful, stimulating talk at what was officially the Westercon, suggested that through this type of story science fiction might reach the circulation heights of the Reader's Digest and a few lesser magazines of the Saturday Evening Post and Collier's ilk. These magazines had a positive editorial policy, he said; they were for the



"American Way." (I may be misquoting, but this written sometime later -- without notes.)

I am afraid that the only way to reach the circulation of the Reader's Digest, and this takes a bit of prestidigitation -- our most earnest researchers for fantasy stories have been unable to discover. There are a dozen or more imitations, but none of them have equaled the RD's circulation -- or even come close.

There's a good reason for this. The RD has a unique way of saying the things that 19,000,000 people want to hear. That is not the same as saying that the RD publishes better articles or better fiction than other magazines; but it has found the magic touch. And it doesn't demand that the reader think.

This is a great discovery, and it has been suitably rewarded. The science fiction magazines might well improve their own circulation if they adopted it. But they would no longer print science fiction.

It is very simple to be for the American Way. As a matter of indisputable fact, I don't know anyone who is against it. It is quite another thing to be for or against McCarthy - in print - or, even more controversially today, for or against the use of the H-Bomb in case of war. Any stand the RD takes on these issues will be taken well buttressed by emotions and prejudices.

After all, they have to look out for 19,000,000 readers.

The interested reader can look up the series of articles run as a New Yorker profile of the Reader's Digest and its publishers some years ago. The RD hasn't changed since. It can't; it has to carry the weight of 19,000,000 readers.

Dave has struck on half the secret of mass circulation: be for the American Way; the other half is be against -- well call it "unamericanism", call it sin. There's an old publisher's saying: the only thing it's safe to attack is the man-eating shark.

Nineteen million readers can't be wrong. Not one of them.

Science fiction can be wrong; it can offend all the powers that are and may be. It can speculate about any situation and demand that its readers bring some unoccupied gray cells to the consideration of the matter under dramatic consideration. That is its strength; that is why it's science fiction.

It won't lose any readers. They read science fiction for this very thing they're getting.

But it's not a way to mass circulation. It can't be. Perhaps a mill-



ion people or two have read a science fiction magazine at one time or another. Possibly a hundred thousand or two of those are interested enough to devote some time or thought to dramatic speculation.

But 19,000,000 people don't want to think. They can't. They aren't equipped for it, and besides - it hurts too much.

The science fiction published in mass markets and converted into movies and plays for radio and TV is notable for an absence of ideas. When the general public gets science fiction, it is first made safe - emasculated, denatured. The public will take science fiction primitive.

Science fiction appears in the slicks because it's slick - true. But it also appears there because it is shorn of that troublesome thing, significance. Ideas.

No, Dave, controversial subjects are not the way to a mass circulation. The only way to a mass circulation for science fiction is a slow process of education. Bring up a generation that isn't afraid of speculation, that can swallow an idea without getting indigestion.

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### zonderlay

Three days walk from the great canal  
lies the city of Zonderlay.  
Where in the sand the fairy spires  
of crumbled towers lay,  
Where dance the maddened crimson sand  
along the rubbled streets,  
The sand that grinds and chips away  
to mould the walls in pleats.

At times when all the desert sleeps  
no wind to stir it 'bout,  
The city stands in quiet grace  
while the dunes appear to pout.  
And midst the stillness of this time  
a babble from the ghostly past,  
through the air abounds.

And Zonderlay, although long dead  
reflects the glory of before,  
When Man, a beast in slime, abode  
and knew not of star-lore.  
But Man will never conquer Mars  
ne'er mind how long he stay,  
And though the restless sands attempt,  
they'll never hid Zonerlay.

-- don wilson



# SO LONG, JOE

*bob tucker*

An eager, alert little busybody who goes poking about fandom or prodom with his eyes and ears open eventually learns a lot of dirt that isn't fit to print-- but if this busybody happens to be a fanzine editor he usually prints it anyway. Libel laws seem as far away as the moon. The present generation of fans may have never heard of the incident, but several years ago one young fan --and editor-- was quite literally 'run out of fandom because he opened his mouth at the wrong time, repeating in print false information passed on to him by a questionable source.

This fan--let's call him Joe--eagerly published a hot rumor that a certain well-known pro magazine was on the financial rocks; he was exclusively given that misinformation by a Big Name Fan in New York, a gentleman who certainly should have known better and probably did. It seems probable that the BNF concocted the rumor because of some personal axe in need of grinding. But our Joe, in sweet innocence, made the mistake of printing the "news" and then mailing the fanzine to his readers. In due time, the sizzling little paragraph of libel came to the attention of the pro editor, who waxed exceedingly wroth. The following events made fannish history. Either the publishing company's lawyers paid a visit to the fan and his parents, or wrote a stinging letter amounting to the same. I'm unsure now which happened, but they delivered an ultimatum. Joe Fann was of course, underage, and somewhat irresponsible for his blunder, but pressure was applied nevertheless. An apology was given, and Joe silently faded from fandom never to be seen again. That was the terms of the settlement.

Today, thirteen or fourteen years after the incident, the BNF who supplied the misinformation still sails merrily on in the ranks of prodom, the magazine said to be on the rocks is still publishing and is up front among the leaders, while Joe has vanished and his short-lived fanzine isn't even a collector's item. The moral of all this: keep your big yap shut.

The influx of fanzines into Box 702, piling up daily, causes me to wonder why that lightning hasn't struck twice. It can hardly be denied that fan editors are the prize mud-slingers, rumor-mongers and libel-spreaders of all green creation. Apparently they don't care what they say so long as they can vent their spleen at the magazines, at the book publishers, and at other fans. Love lives are trotted out for display with no attempt at anonymity, the term "allegedly" doesn't exist in fan vocabularies, the business practices of professional editors and publisher are reviled and misrepresented, personalities are smeared with mud and again financial positions are questioned and rejected. Frankly, I marvel



that today's fan editors get away with what they do. On three or four recent occasions the post office inspectors have banned some fan magazines or parts of magazines from the mails, but such banning was caused by the alleged obscenity in the pages, not by the remarks of editors directed at others. So I wonder what will happen when some magazine editor grows a little weary of the malicious dirt flung his way?

This may come as a cruel blow, but magazines publish on a strict budget and seek a mass circulation. They strive to reach as many people as possible while spending as little money as possible.

A few hundred people who call themselves "fans" mean nothing more than a few hundred copies sold. If those fans happen to object to an editorial staff loaded down with pen-names--that's tough. A budget is a budget. Where a magazine has a monthly budget of eight hundred dollars, say, then that eight hundred dollars must be spread thin enough to buy a cover, buy the interior artwork, buy the fiction, and then pay the editor. When a magazine is operating on this kind of scheme, the editor frequently publishes his own fiction under various pseudonyms and may even load down his "staff" with more such pseudonyms, because he likes to eat the same as you and I. He dislikes the idea of working for thirty dollars a week--all that may be left over after the budget is expended for material--so he buys his own stories, or fills the magazine with his stories and keep the budget left-over for himself.

Of course, this is not a healthy nor a desirable practice, and I am not defending it, but short of giving up his job and walking out I see very little else for an editor to do until the time comes when a magazine starts paying off and financial pictures improve. Not all magazines operate on such a basis; all operate on a budget, but in some cases, the editor's salary is a separate and assured thing, and need not be subtracted from the monthly budget. This editor seldom or never publishes his own fiction in his own magazine.

I once heard (without learning the actual truth of the statement) that a certain editor fired his secretary in order to collect her salary; I also heard (again, unconfirmed) that another magazine had a total budget of \$600.00 which was paid on publication date--meaning that not only a writer, but the editor, collected when the magazine went on sale several months after it was made up. I do not blame the editor at all for writing the entire contents himself (as was alleged to have happened), but I look askance at his doing that much work and then waiting all that time to collect only \$600. I would have been tempted to tell the publishers to shove their magazine and their budget up their collective asteroids.

Therefore, the next time young Joe Fann, editor or columnist, is tempted to rush into print with a libelous blast at some figure in the publishing world, he would do well to stop and take stock. What he considers a cheap trick may be only a standard practice, and who he considers an s-o-b for participating in such tricks, may resent the remarks and apply pressure. Joe may be left holding the bag....So long, Joe.



## AMAZING TRUE FACT ARTICLE:

I TALKED WITH THE CAPTAIN OF A FLYING SAUCER FROM VENUS AND HERE IS THE HONEST-TO-GOD TRUTH BEHIND THE SECRET OF THE SAUCERS FROM THE MOON, MARS, OUTER SPACE AND LEMURIA, REVEALED AT LAST AND UNCENSORED!

A Personal Record Of An Incredible True Experience Given Here By The Man Who It All Happened To, In His Very Own Truthful Words

by

MAX XRVSLPQWRXNVRGSK

(AS TOLD TO LIN CARTER)

EDITOR'S NOTE: On November Eleventh, at 3:39 (EST) the Most Amazing True Experience of All Time happened to a simple, untutored Max Xrvslpqrwnvrgsk, a child of nature, honest, innocent, pure, of the backwoods of Tennessee. We are proud to present his unedited-on-the-spot notes of this Great Historic Event, given here for the first time anywhere and in his own simple pure words:

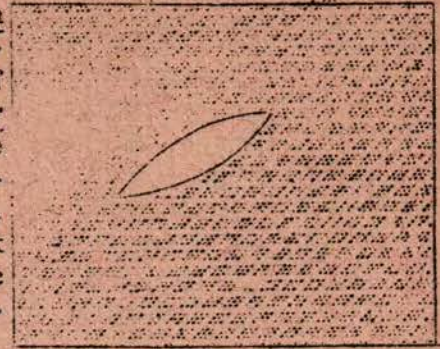
O had I but known, that fateful morn of 11 November 1955, what strange and wondrous events would soon thrust an hitherto-unprecedented responsibility upon my rugged shoulders, perhaps I would have avoided it all. Yet, after all, can any of us ever really avoid the responsibilities of a Just and Benevolent Almighty God (assisted, perchance by certain Powers of Lost Lemuria and Ancient Mu) is wont to thrust upon such as we?

At any rate, it was exactly 3:39 (EST) on the above -mentioned date when I stepped forth from the barn with a rude, ceramic container of Southern Comfort (which it was my kindly intention to bring into the house to my elderly, ill, paternal Grandmother). The afternoon was ablaze with all the wondrous beauties of Nature: the vast Sun above my thatch of sandy-colored locks (through which the late autumnal breeze combed its fairy fingers) spread its fiery and beneficial beams down to the growing corn. From the nearby woods, the simple call of a meadowlark soared ecstatic to the azure valut of Heaven.

Of a sudden, a strange humming, not unlike the sound made by many bees assailed my startled ears. Glancing up, I saw an oddly-shapen cloud hovering, hawk-like, above this lovely scene, and from this convoluted mass of water-vapor extended a Ray -- a beam of multi-coloured light, which probed, questingly, about the landscape, as if impelled by some Intelligence unknown to our ignorant Earthly learning. I was --curiously-- reminded of Certain Writers of Antiquity who in their extant works described just the same, similar sort of manifestation and super-natural phenomenon. Could it be (thought I) that some Vestige of Long Lost Lemuria or Sunken Atlantis or Hidden Agharti still lurked in some far-off corner of the Earth? Upon some legendary peak of secret Tibet, perchance,



as certain legends in the Book of Gha-Ngha-Ptah relate? Or in the ice-bound and unvisited arctic wastes, where mythic tales yet whisper of Far Hyperborea --as in the Lost Records of Ghor Nghor-Pthor? And as I stood awe-struck, the beam of opalescent luminance impaled itself upon my ~~eye of faith~~ container of spirits, and drew it from my startled grasp! Awe-struck I watched it as it was drawn up the Magnetic Ray into the oddly-motionless cloud and vanished forever from my sight!



For a full hour (est.) I stood watching for some further Manifestation of Unearthly Power, when what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a Flying Saucer hovering clear! Out of the cloud it came, wobbling strangely, a curious disc-like Space Vessel apparently of solid gold, with a dome-like turret of crystal plastic (from which flashes of magenta and aquamarine-tinted light came intermittently). And as I stood, the multi-colored Magnetic Ray swept forth yet again to bathe my head within its rainbow-hued illumination!

HERE Is Your Proof  
Mr. Scientist!!

I seemed to hear a voice speaking within my very own mind, and these, the following words, are the exact words it spoke:

"Son of Earth, we contact you for you have been Chosen as the Leader of a Spiritual Revolution which shall sweep the entire Earth in years to come! Follow the prompting of your Inner Soul--and be guided by the extant writings of the Sages of Antiquity! Seek wisdom from the ancient works of Atlantis, Lemuria, Mu, Hyperborea, India, Tibet, Egypt, Babylon, Tiahuanaco, Zimbabwe, Agartti and Shamballah!

"We come from the distant star Ghoo-Nghoo-Ptoo, which your earthly science calls MJ-3-BLG in Andromeda. You have been chosen as the Pendragon of this, the Third Sun Age! You are the Messiah who shall lead the Vegetarian-Antivivisectionist-Theosophical-Rosicrucian-Hermetic-Sons-of-Lost-Lemuria to World Power. Through our Prophets--Moses, Christ, Isaiah, Mohammad, Buddha, Iliawathae, Zoroaster, Appolonius, Confucius, and Shaver--we have Announced Your Coming! Now we blast off to our home-port, the Planet Ghu-Nghu-Ptu (which your Earthly "Science" calls "Venus")! Farewell!"

And with those words the Star-Ship (which now, curiously, seemed to be made of solid silver and studded with rubies) returned to its cloud, which instantly seemed to be drawn into the Interplanetary-Traveler. Wobbling oddly, as if the Pilot found himself suddenly unable to operate his Stellar-Craft, it began to rise, and as it did so it lurched against the barn, completely demolishing it, and recovering it sped away directly North by North-East at a velocity of roughly 17,432.41 mph (est.). As it







A REPORT FROM SOUTH AFRICA:

# SCRAPING THE BARREL

BY P. KRUIS

Science fiction fandom in South Africa recently got the shock of their lives when the Government restricted the import of books from overseas countries. South Africa has always relied on her supply of science fiction books and magazines from England and America. Now that the import has been restricted the South African fans are having a hard time in obtaining their favourite literature. A specific permit from the Customs Department is necessary for the import of these books, and the possibility of obtaining such a permit is very poor indeed.

Recently, in Johannesburg, a man was fined fifteen pounds or ten days imprisonment for being in the possession of a publication liable to forfeiture under the Customs Act. A Johannesburg Queens Councillor expressed the view that possession of a banned publication which was not wilfully received or invited by the possessor does not constitute an offense. If, however, the banned publication is retained by the recipient --whether or not he knows that it has been banned-- he would be committing a punishable offense. Ignorance of the law in this case of whether or not a publication is on the prohibited list, would be no excuse. That should give you fans overseas an idea of how we fans in South Africa are struggling to obtain science fiction books and news from other countries.

In South Africa, a Science Fiction Club seems to have no attraction for the general public. It seems that the people do not want to believe in the possibility that man will someday conquer space. The Interplanetary Society of South Africa recently held a very interesting exhibition with models of Dr. Wernher von Braun's Space Station and the Moon Ship. All the interesting lectures and demonstrations by the Society's top experts including Dr. H. van den Bos of the Union Observatory seems to have been wasted on the public of Johannesburg. The lack of interest is amazing, and it seems that no one can give an explanation why the idea of space travel does not appeal to them.

With some luck and very hard work we managed to start a small club in Johannesburg. The club deals mainly with the distribution of Science Fiction books and magazines (the few that we have) between members of the club and other enthusiasts. We fans here in South Africa are scraping the bottom of the barrel, and it looks like we'll be scraping it for a long time to come.

PEON #31

That's the March 1954 issue--got a copy that I can have to complete my own files? 50¢ for the first.



## Peon Notes

(continued)

the present issue of PEON before you right now--much quicker than I had thought possible. This is not one of my better looking issues. I don't have quite the facilities at hand that I would have had back in the states and am forced to use what materials I can get over here in the Med. I hope when we get back to the states that I will be able to start using white paper again and the reproduction will be as good as PEON has been known for in the past. So, please bear with me for the next two or three issues.

I want to resume bi-monthly publication with PEON. I feel that my problems with official duties are getting resolved now, and since we will be in port most of 1957, I will have more time than before to work out a bi-monthly PEON. My biggest problem is going to be to obtain enough material to warrant six issues a year. So once again, the call goes out for material. I need fiction, articles (especially the semi-humorous type such as Lin Carters does in this issue), and will even look at fantasy poetry I prefer the shorter type of fiction (I plan to use one or two pieces per issue) and the articles can be on any phase of the science fiction and fantasy field that might interest the reader--not put him to sleep. PEON has never been known for slapstick stuff, but I'd like to see some of that also.

Also needed is about two or three more semi-regular columnists. I'd like to bring back the fanzine reviews again, plus an occasional book review or two. If you'd like to try out for the job of fanzine reviewer, let me know, or if you feel that you could handle a regular column each issue--let me know what type of column you have in mind. With the exception of Jim Harmon, PEON's regular columnists are not represented in this issue. Mainly because I lost or misplaced their material. I haven't heard from them either about the bi-monthly schedule, but I trust they will be with me in the future. Tom Watkins has been with PEON now for almost four years, while Jim Harmon and Terry Carr practically started out with PEON for all practical purposes.

So, kind friends and gentle hearts, you have another issue of PEON at hand. I hope you like it, and again my thanks for all the kind words of encouragement. Incidentally, this marks the end of the 8th year and the beginning of the 9th for PEON, but I don't feel that any special mention should be made of the fact. Wait until next year when I can celebrate the beginning of my tenth year.

-peon-

I hope you will notice the new subscription prices. While I am not going out and solicit new subscriptions because I want to keep my mailing list down to about 200 paid subscribers (just about what it is now), your renewals will be welcome. All subscriptions have been advanced two issues, to adjust for the new prices of a dollar for eight issues instead of six.



One of the things aboard the CASCADE that has been taking up quite a bit of my time up to now has been the fact that I have been appointed editor of the ship's newspaper, THE CASCADER. When the subject of a ship's newspaper was first brought up, I took myself up to the Executive Officer and volunteered to assist in its preparation. I was then informed that I was the editor already! We have had a good time getting the paper out these past few months and now that I have a good and capable staff, I am able to sit back and relax a little bit. Occasionally, we do have a few spare copies of each issue and if you'd like to see what a ship's news paper looks like, I'll be happy to send you a copy upon request. We're also in the midst of preparing a Cruise Book covering our trip to the Med, and again, I have my little fingers in the pot.

I imagine that most of you by now have gathered the impression that the USS CASCADE is operating in the Mediterranean. I have been having a grand old time touring these costal cities and tourist spots, but, give me the good old USA any day. Strange how many small things you take for granted back in the states that you miss very much out here. For example, I find it exceedingly difficult to get the waiter in the local restaurants to serve water with the meals. I also miss good cold American beer over here. And the long-stemmed American beauties (and I don't mean roses!) It's beautiful over here this time of the year, and I've managed to tour Nice, Monaco, Pisa, Florence, and a few other spots (and have Barcelona and Athens to look forward to), but the most beautiful spot in the world will be the sight of that pier in Newport, Rhode Island, in the middle of November.

Incidentally the Riddle family no longer lives in Connecticut. Just before the CASCADE sailed for Cannes, France, I moved the family up to Newport, Rhode Island. Please do not use the Connecticut address any longer, but the ship address. In the event that any of you come through Newport after November, be sure to look us up at 124 Sims Street. We have a telephone, but it will be a new number when I get back, so you'll have to look it up in the directory. The latch-string is always out, as it has always been in the past, for visiting fans.

Well, I guess that winds up this issue of PEON. It's been great talking to you all again via these notes, and I hope you are looking forward to the next issue of PEON. Again, a plea for material, and for your letters of comment. Until the next issue, then, good reading from.....

#### SPACE OPUS, CONDENSED VERSION

Carrying supplies,  
Running beyond Mars;  
Underwear and razor-blades,  
Dental floss and candy-bars.

Crashed on an asteroid,  
Ran out of sky;  
Ugly place and desolate,  
Dismal way to die.

Comes a cryptic message,  
Rescue won't be late;  
Up and back to earth again,  
Death will have to wait.

--Art Wilson