

CHALLENGING MOSKOWITZ

1930s FANDOM REVISITED



EDITED BY
ROB HANSEN

Challenging Moskowitz

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Expanded Edition

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Cover photo, left to right: Jack Darrow, Julius Schwartz, Conrad Ruppert, William Dellenback (previously misidentified as Donald A. Wollheim) and Julius Unger at the 1939 Worldcon in New York. From the Ted Carnell collection; actual photographer not known.

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Foreword

Rob Hansen

If you are interested in the history of, say, World War Two, it's possible to find multiple books covering all but the most obscure parts of the conflict. Which is how it should be. The more viewpoints that are available, the more rounded an appreciation you're likely to acquire of the matter at hand. This has not traditionally been the case when it comes to histories of SF fandom. For many years, you went to Harry Warner Jr's books for the history of fandom in the 1940s and 1950s, and to Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* for the 1930s. Apart from Damon Knight's later *The Futurians*, and bits in autobiographical works by members of this particular group, that was it for the decade. However, there were others who covered the period at length in fanzines at the time and whose writings when taken together constitute another viewpoint: hence this volume. Though *Challenging Moskowitz* is, I know, a provocative title, my intention is not to undermine or disparage SaM's work but rather to supply another text that can be read alongside his and provide some contrast.

The Immortal Storm was not the first attempt at a history of fandom to be published. That honour belongs to Jack Speer's 1939 publication *Up to Now*, which opens this volume. For a long time the most difficult of all fan histories to find, this was eventually made available as a PDF at Bill Burns's eFanzines.com courtesy of Robert Lichtman in 2008, who explained that the original was:

“... distributed only to FAPA but some extras were made of *Up to Now* to pass out at the first worldcon in 1939. This would imply a total circulation of around 100 copies.

“The original publication was mimeographed (somewhat spottily, at least in my copy) with cardstock front and rear covers, and was brad-bound rather than stapled. (I don't know if this was because of the Staple Wars or the limitations of Jack's stapler.) It has been reprinted twice in similarly limited quantities: as part of Dick Eney's mammoth *A Sense of FAPA* in 1962 and as an attractive booklet by Richard Newsome in 1994*. The latter's colophon states that 100 copies were produced; no information is available on Eney's print run.”

* This booklet includes two corrections added by Jack Speer as footnotes, which are reproduced in this ebook. [Ed.]

Up to Now opens with an account of the so-called “Staple War” which – like the later GhuGhu versus FooFoo – is an example of the type of whimsical “conflict” popular among early American fans that has always left me cold. Not that they lacked for actual conflict.

It was some years before Donald Wollheim saw a copy of *Up to Now*. When he did, he wrote “The Origin of Fandom” in response. Somewhat surprisingly, this doesn’t address Speer’s negative view of him. Instead Wollheim fills in all the pre-1936 stuff that Speer left out. Given the important role played by the Science Fiction League in kick-starting fandom in the UK, I was particularly struck by how Wollheim saw destroying the SFL as vital to the future of fandom. The other thing that stands out to a Brit is how much of the history described by Speer, Wollheim, and later Moskowitz is one of fan politics, of one fan organization against another and of jockeying for power within those groups.

In 1945, Moskowitz began *The Immortal Storm*, which was serialized in A. Langley Searles’s *Fantasy Commentator* as it was being written, the final instalment appearing in 1952 and the first collected edition being published in 1954. Not having access to a full run of *Fantasy Commentator* I don’t know whether or not Wollheim wrote to Searles concerning what SaM had written about him, but others certainly did including Charles D. Hornig whose own letter is included herein.

After *The Immortal Storm* was published in 1954 it attracted reviews and commentary from such as Damon Knight, Harry Warner Jr, and James Blish, who wrote:

“The most astonishing of these ‘inside’ [*i.e. from within fandom*] volumes is Sam Moskowitz’s *The Immortal Storm*, a history of the publications and internal politics of a small segment of science-fiction fandom, centered upon Mr. Moskowitz himself and written in what appears to be Middle High Neolithic.”

– “S.F.: The Critical Literature” in *SF Horizons* #2 (Winter 1965, edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison)

SaM’s prose has been much mocked over the years, but few have questioned the service he did us in recording that history. One complaint Harry Warner had was that in concentrating so heavily on New York, SaM had given short shrift to Los Angeles in particular, which at the time had a

thriving fan scene of its own and was an important centre of fannish activity. Fortunately, in 1943 the LA fan T. Bruce Yerke began writing his own account of local fandom with *Memoirs of a Superfluous Fan*. Sadly, he only ever wrote the first of the four long articles he had planned. Covering the late 1930s, it is of course included here. It's particularly notable for the harmonious fandom it describes, in stark contrast to that of their fractious East Coast brethren. Not that this state of affairs would last. The following decade would see LA fandom convulsed by its own disputes. Nevertheless, the group that began as Chapter 4 of the SFL is still going today and at the time of writing there's every reason to believe it will be around to celebrate its centenary.

The fandom referred to in these pages is American fandom, the primary focus of both SaM's book and those by Warner, which is one of the reasons I researched and wrote my own history of UK fandom. This is a deficiency Moskowitz later attempted to correct, which leads me to my complaint about every edition of *The Immortal Storm* out there:

They are now incomplete.

In the 1990s, once again in the pages of Searles's *Fantasy Commentator*, SaM started writing a continuation of *The Immortal Storm*. This was titled, inevitably, *The Immortal Storm II*; but he never completed it before his death. However, what he did write was of a piece with *The Immortal Storm* and should in my opinion be included in all future print or ebook editions.

– Rob Hansen, 2019

Expanded Edition, 2024

This expanded edition of *Challenging Moskowitz* incorporates a number of articles that have come to light subsequently, including Redd Boggs's history of early Minneapolis fandom and the collected LASFL/LASFS minutes by Yerke that substitute here for those chapters of his memoirs that he never wrote. Both of these bridge the gap between this volume and *Bixelstrasse*, into which it now rather smoothly leads. British fandom is now represented by Ted Carnell, whose contribution catches that fandom at a particularly crucial moment in its development.

In the letter column of *Innuendo* #11, Harry Warner Jr wrote of *The Immortal Storm* that:

“the fandom of the late 1930s has been grossly misrepresented by the political nature which SaM emphasized and by the fact

that the major historians of that time – Moskowitz and Speer – happened to be in the small minority that *did* view fandom as a sort of battle for supremacy. It was a phenomenon of the times, just as Claude Degler’s superfan movement was a phenomenon of fandom of the 1940s and as G.H. Carr’s commotions have been a phenomenon of the 1950s. They existed, they occupied a lot of space in some fanzines, but they didn’t represent the thinking or principal occupation of the great majority of fandom.”

The pieces that make up the bulk of this volume do I hope provide a counterbalancing view of the 1930s. Terry Carr’s introduction to Warner’s long piece on *The Immortal Storm* in the previous issue has now been added to it, as has SaM’s response.

– Rob Hansen 2024

Acknowledgements

This volume could not have existed without the work of Joe Siclari and Edie Stern at Fanac.org and Bill Burns at eFanzines.com, from where all the material herein was sourced. Their sterling work in putting it online has opened a window into our past that was previously only available to those with extensive collections of old fanzines. And, as always, my thanks to Dave Langford for all the production work needed to present this to you in ebook form. Thanks also to Claire Briailey (2019) and Rob Jackson (2024) for patient proofreading.

– Rob Hansen, 2019, 2024

Publisher’s Note

In a few places where words seem to be missing from sentences in the original fanzines, best-guess restorations have been added in square brackets. For example: “The cover [was] for *Proxima Centauri* by Murray Leinster.” This convention is also sometimes used to smooth over gaps where texts have been rearranged for the sake of clarity and continuity. Footnotes signed [*Ed.*] have been supplied by Rob Hansen and/or myself; others are explicitly credited. Quotations of any length are normally indented, including Terry Carr’s introduction to the Harry Warner article

he published; Rob Hansen's own editorial comments are both indented and italicized.

– David Langford, 2019, 2024

Up to Now (1939)

Jack Speer

A history of fandom as Jack Speer sees it

[Colophon from the original edition:]

Editorial Introduction

Full Length Articles is ordinarily a purely FAPA magazine, but extra copies of this number will be made for distribution at the World Science Fiction Convention of 1939.

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[The Situation in the West](#); [The Order Begins to Crumble](#); [The Decline and Fall of Wollheim](#); [The Changing Tendency Among Fan Magazines](#); [New Fandom's Struggle for Recognition](#); [The Reaction Against Reaction](#).

Preface

A careful analysis of prefaces to histories and other books as well shows them to be occupied, almost without exception, in bemoaning the inaccuracies, limitations, and general worthlessness of the work being

introduced. This will not be an exception.

This is a kind of cross between a set of memoirs and a history. I have tried to cover, at least thinly, all aspects of the purely fan field, but, as a glance at the table of topics will show, I am able to go much more into detail about those parts with which I am better acquainted. You might even become weary with the minuteness of detail in places. I extend my sympathies. I have tried, so far as possible, to make this history as objective as good history should be. I have been hard on my friends when they seemed on the shady side of the ledger, and have, I trust, never failed to give my enemies credit where due. Despite this, however, especially in accounts centering around June 1938, the reader will do well to beware, for at that point I find myself unable to see Wollheim's actions as excusable, when, of course, they most probably are. On the other hand, since the object of this history is truth, rather than to make me popular, I have not leaned over backward with regard to my personal enemies.

In trying to cover everything at least thinly, I have relied upon unreliable memory, upon inferences from unauthoritative accounts, and in some cases, as in the origins of Michelism, upon pure guesswork – fairly good guessing I believe, however.

If I haven't already made it clear, let me say now that this doesn't pretend to be the final history of fandom – far, far from it. I only hope to make a connected beginning, perhaps to slam such a mass of misinformation at you that those who know will be bound to give the true accounts. When those accounts are in, when we have run a course of “vignettes of fan history” in the fanmags – then will be the time for the writing of a dependable history. The eventual historian or committee of historians will thus have a good groundwork for a better, fuller, and more accurate account than could possibly be supplied by any one fan, however experienced, working alone to write “the” history of fandom.

Since I have realized from the start that this couldn't be the history of fandom to stand for all time, I haven't made as great effort to check all points and fill in gaps as I might otherwise have – indeed, a large part of it has been put down from memory, in spare minutes at work. If it succeeds in conveying to new fans a composite picture of fandom, not too irreparably distorted, as one fan sees it, that's about all I have a right to hope for. But I think the old-timers will find interest here, too, aside from the certain sport of picking out mistakes and omissions. Fwun thing, the truth about several matters is here generally revealed for the first time, since I can't put into history anything I know to be false.

I turn now to a more direct discussion of the subject-matter of the

history – or memoirs, as you will.

It will be found to deal almost entirely with American fandom. There is no disrespect to the Tommies, Aussies, et al, in the fact that I have nevertheless called it a history of fandom rather than of American fandom. The latter title seemed that it might force me to leave out entirely all references to English fandom except where it was directly connected with an event in America, a limitation I didn't want.

This is a story, not a handbook, and emphasis is placed on the flow of events rather than the elements thereof. Fans in most cases have been briefly identified personally if at all, fan magazines have not been mentioned as much as their importance would warrant. And professional s-f figures at the absolute minimum.

You will note the division of the history into periods. I acknowledge that the periods are much more strictly delineated than the actual conditions, but I have ample precedent in the writing of general history. And it seemed that it would be easier to recall the nature and context of the Schwartz-Wollheim feud if it were fitted neatly into a definite larger pattern, or of the Philadelphia Conference if emphasis were put on its place in a general trend of the times, and so on.

It might be well to here define my use of the terms “fandom” and “transition”. A transition I conceive of as a period in which old structures are crumbling, new forces coming into being, and the entire nature of fandom in a state of flux. A “fandom” is a fairly stable stretch in which known elements work out to their conclusion thru interaction and development. I have that of no transition before the first fandom, because it seemed to come in pretty much in the shape that would have been expected, without much doubt as to what its interests and activities would be. I may be wrong; I know practically nothing of the early years.

Without further ado, I conduct you to Page One.

The Beginnings

For this writer, mere guesses must suffice for the early contacts between fans. Many, probably, when editors no longer felt like carrying the discussion in the readers' columns, continued arguments over scientific matters in private correspondence, and some controversies on non-scientific points may very likely have also been continued privately after they had progressed too far for general interest. Or a particularly sparkling letter published might cause other readers to desire to write its author,

aside from any particular points brot up. At any rate, many science fiction fans did contact each other, but for a time didn't realize that others were doing the same thing.

Forrest J Ackerman and alias Jack Darrow popularized the letter-every-month habit with regard to the professional magazines, and built up extensive correspondences. Then, according to McPhail, one year in the early thirties Forrest Ackerman took a trip east from his home in Califorrynia, and visited many correspondence friends on the way. This helped unify the field.* Some local groups took to publishing official organs, which became the first fan magazines. The West Coast publication, *The Time Traveler*,** was the first to achieve general circulation. *Science Fiction Digest*, published at the other end of the country, must have gotten some mention in readers' columns, and built up a small circulation that was nevertheless nationwide, with some subscribers in England. This magazine eventually absorbed *The Time Traveler*, and shortly changed its name to *Fantasy Magazine*, to include facts pertaining to the weird fiction field. The issue after its second anniversary, *Fantasy Magazine* began dedicating issues to the Big Three of scientifiction, and to other special fields, including *Weird Tales*. Its first dedication was to the field-leading *Astounding Stories* of Street & Smith, and it received mention in Brass Tacks. When *Wonder's* time came, they did even more, seeing to it that every member of the SFL got a copy of that issue.

* Ackerman's trip mentioned in the second paragraph is mythical. Forry says he made no such trip. [Jack Speer, 1994]

** The Time Traveler was not a West Coast publication. [Jack Speer, 1994]

A bit earlier, taking cognizance of the existence of the fan world, Charlie Hornig, who turned out a few issues of the unsuccessful *Fantasy Fan*, and then teen-age managing editor of *Wonder Stories*, recommended to editor Gernsback the formation of a Science Fiction League. This was undertaken with enthusiasm, and being well featured by a commercial magazine of large circulation, attracted many scientifictionists to the fan field. At the same time a Swap Column and other features of interest to veteran "fans" were inaugurated. Later, the SFL Department began giving semi-annual Bachelor of Scientifiction tests which increased the interest of membership. It was the Golden Age of Fandom.

The First Staple War

In late 1934, Bob Tucker, a Brass Tacker of some standing, reported in *Brass Tacks* the formation of the spwsstfm (the initials were in capitals when used by him, but one of the first principles of the War was that warriors should not capitalize the name of the enemy, and this writer was on The Other Side) – the society for the prevention of wire staples in science fiction magazines.

At the head of the society was one dictator, Tucker. In later issues of *Brass Tacks*, the dictator reported new recruits of his society, and some months later duplicated his original announcement, in *Wonder Stories'* The Reader Speaks. One of the new recruits contributed two doughnuts to the society treasury, and was given a fool title, something like “high nincompoop”. Another neophyte suggested rubber staples to replace the wire ones, and was also given an official title. One ironic sidelight in this war was that the next most prominent member of the spwsstfm was “ol’ doc lowndes”, royal pill roller for the dictator. Few knew that he actually was a medico of some sort, and none, certainly, suspected that one day he was to be the most liberal member of Wollheim’s Michelist group.

And here Wollheim enters, in opposition to Tucker, Lowndes, and the other anti-staplers. We, he declaimed, have listened to this infamous proposition long enough. He therefore proclaimed the organization of the International and Allied Organizations for the Purpose of Upholding and Maintaining the Use of Metallic Fasteners in Science Fiction (which he, mocking Tucker, initialed STF) Publications in the United States of America, Unlimited, and called for support from all red-blooded believers in the efficacy of metallic binders.

There followed a scramble for power and recruits. Espionage and counter-espionage were rife, and neither leader could know for certain that his most trusted lieutenant was not a spy. Membership in the IAOPUMUMSTFPUSA, Unltd, reached around twenty, and doubtless the spwsstfm was about the same. Titles were given to all, usually meaningless: the dictator stood alone at the head of his battalions, but Wollheim, as Grand High Cocolorum, had Kenneth Sterling (whether author of *The Brain-Stealers of Mars*, or another coincidentally having the same name, was never quite clear) as Exalted Grand Booleywag. There were two exceptions to the rule about titles. A recruit whom Wollheim suspected to be a spy was deprived of his, and young Speer was named Lord High Bradder, referring to his suggestion that magazines be bound with hand brads – paper fasteners, such as bind this publication.

Both armies issued official organs, Tucker's *d'journal*, and Wollheim & Sterling's *Polymorphonucleated Leucocyte*. The *PL* was a scream, as was the membership certificate; doubtless *d'journal* was too.

The War entered its penultimate stage, finding several episodes (chapters) of the anti-staplers in existence, and three or four Fortresses of Wollheim's men. It is said that when two Americans get together, they form a club. Two were all that were required to form a Fortress.

It was a crushing blow to the spwsstfm when the second issue of *d'journal*, upon being issued, was found stuck full of staples – sabotage, by spies! Tucker weakly quibbled about the difference between fan magazines, and science fiction magazines, at which his program was aimed, but his prestige was ruined. The New York Episode, in its entirety, went over to Wollheim.

An interesting commentary on the difference in the fan magazines of that day is that *Fantasy Magazine* scarcely mentioned the Staple War. Out in Oklahoma, McPhail wrote in his private magazine, *Science Fiction News*, that fans were growing tired of alphabetical societies. Several anti-alphabetical societies were announced in Brass Tacks, and others expressed their weariness with it all in more dignified ways.

The war came to a sudden end. At the beginning of a Brass Tacks department toward mid-1935, Tremaine broke precedent by commenting on a letter to follow – the commentary in italics – saying some enigmatic things about the reader reading the letter slowly, to get the same feeling from it that he did. The letter was a report by someone of Tucker's home town or nearby, stating that he was dead, and giving some of his last wishes. It shocked everyone. But professional publication moves slowly, and by the time that issue of *Astounding* was on the stands, Tremaine knew it was a fake, and, in private letters to interested fans, said he thought Tucker had known of the trick, and that he would publish nothing more with regard to the First Staple War. One of Wollheim's lieutenants talked with the dictator long distance. "The Staple War is definitely over," said Wollheim, "and we are working on something that will be lots more fun."

...

The ISA-SFL Clash

Wollheim may have, to an extent, regretted his previous connections with foolishness when he launched into a serious and bitter indictment of

Wonder Stories, in long letters to The Reader Speaks, concerning the quality of its pulp paper, type face, word count, and such other matters as the translation of stories from the German; he was anti-Nazi even then. But deeper causes for hate of Gernsback lay just under this.

A story by Wollheim, "The Man from Ariel", was published by *Wonder* and never paid for. In working to get his due, Wollheim ran across many other young or beginning authors who had been similarly cheated. He published his findings in the last *Bulletin of the TFG* (succeeded by the *Phantagraph*).

The TFG, which has not been mentioned hereinbefore, was a small organization of rather more weird fans, which at the time of its change of name from International Science Fiction Guild (it originated as the Impossible Story Club) was headed by Wilson Shepherd of Oakman, Alabama. When Wollheim came in, and Shepherd and Wollheim Publishers formed, the center of power began, unconsciously, to shift to the north. The first *Terrestrial Fantascience Guild Bulletins* were hektographed publications; the last was a large-size mimeo affair. In many respects, the TFG was before its time.

Publication of the facts against *Wonder Stories* resulted in the expulsion of Wollheim and a number of compatriots from the SFL. The last heard of this angle of the case, he had been offered six months' probationary reinstatement, and said he would probably come back in, with his tongue in his cheek.

The XSFL was a name the expelled ones took. Most or all of them were members of the International Cosmo-Science Club, which about this time changed its name to the International Scientific Association. And it was the New York Branch of this Association, supported by other ISA members, which thereupon took up the cudgel in support of its members, and became the rallying point for disaffected elements, rather than the TFG. The staff of *Fantasy Magazine*, also under attack by Wollheim, made common cause with Gernsback and Hornig against the ISA. The result was the climax of the Old Fandom.

This writer regrets that he is unable to give an account of the war that followed, having had nothing to do with it and having heard little of it until much later, when it was referred to rather than described. The NYB-ISA sang songs of their battle against Gernsback; songs that might be adapted for modern singing. In some way they must have gained publicity for their charges against *Wonder Stories*, for to their work is ascribed some of the credit or responsibility for the fall of Gernsback's *Wonder* not many months after.

The NYB-ISA published *The International Observer*, a mimeographed magazine with a rather heavy sprinkling of science. The idea of the ISA in its later history was to harness sciencefiction and science together, and the *Observer* straddled the fence between these two interests.

One day the NYB went off on a picnic and ended up in Philadelphia; the First Eastern Science Fiction Convention had crept up on them unawares. A good time was had by all, we are told, and they agreed that it was a great idea.

The Heyday of *Fantasy Magazine*

For yet a while *Fantasy Magazine* ruled the field. In the later stage of the old period, various vagrant fan magazines began to crop up again, but none attempted to enter into competition with FM. Jim Blish's *Planeteer*, based on an old suggestion of Wollheim's to Street & Smith, put fiction first and Esperanto, etc, second. *The Phantagraph* went thru a number of changes of format under Shepherd & Wollheim, at first mainly club news and ultra-"fan" discussions, and later purely literary. *The International Observer* apparently was not considered to be in direct competition with *Fantasy Magazine*, its contents being mostly science and fan doings rather than news on the pros. Numerous individual publications, single issue and single-copy "pass arounds" were being done, but of course could not threaten FM's primacy. The boys were feeling around.

Even then, pseudonyms ran riot among the fans. The Greater New York Science Fiction League was said to be populated mainly with pseudonyms, half of which were Frederik Pohl. Willy the Wisp flitted around, always wherever Wollheim had been, reporting doings from a suspiciously Wollheimish point of view, as in the fight that resulted in George Gordon Clark's quitting the field.

The SFL continued, gaining new members every month, tho how interested most of the members were is problematical. Two or three B Stf tests were conducted, in all, the returns on the last one never being published. Superficially, all was serene.

Then things began to happen.

The Decline and Fall of the Era

Wonder has been sold! italicized FM's *Science Fiction Eye*.

In subscription, *Wonder* was doing rather badly, even compared to other pulps, and the depression had hit all of them pretty hard. (What depression?) But that is in the history of science fiction, and this is a history of fandom. Some of the life seemed to go out of the SFL toward the last, tho perhaps it is only my fancy. At any rate, with the disappearance of the parent magazine in early 1936, the SFL ceased to be, despite its imposing list of somebodies on the board of directors, which TWS at this writing still carries. The huge Chicago org of 50 or so authors, readers, and fans lost interest in itself. All over the country three-man chapters gave up the ghost; in England the young SFA took them over.

The sale of *Wonder* was almost the last big story FM carried. Conrad H. Ruppert's Printing Service could no longer print the magazine, and the bunch in Everett, Pa, had done one or two issues. But FM was skipping months, and a long interval elapsed before the last one. They didn't know at the time that it was the last, altho they acknowledged the situation to be bad.

The rights to the name *Fantasy Magazine* were turned over to Willis Conover, and it was expected that it would be combined with the *Science-Fantasy Correspondent* of Corwin Stickney. But personal differences arose, and while the S-F C, later the *Amateur Correspondent*, filled out FM's subscriptions, Conover was out of the deal. Many people resented the transfer of their subscriptions to the AC, since it catered largely to weird, as had Charles Hornig's *Fantasy Fan*, which was not considered competitive with FM during its brief life. Presently Stickney frankly stated that he did not aim at fans as such at all; that he intended his magazine primarily to aid young authors aiming at the pros, thinking that that was a larger group. There was a great deal of entirely unstdfic advertising, and a stamp department for which dyed-in-the-wool fans cared not a whit. FM had had, toward the end, no more than 50 subscribers; the *Correspondent* probably had very few of its own. A printed magazine, it cost money to publish. At length, like FM, it appeared less frequently and finally ceased, but the title passed to no one else.

One reason for the decline in fan interest was the decline in the science-fiction field, on which fandom then depended closely. It was a long time after the last *Wonder* before *Thrilling Wonder* appeared. *Astounding* had reached its plateau under Tremaine, and Sloane's *Amazing* sank slowly into the depths. Naturally, interest in a fan field dependent upon these would decline.

Thus the First Fandom slipped away.

New Fan Magazines, Fly-By-Night and Permanent

The European Middle Ages were a period of transition, yet they had a distinctive civilization of their own, even tho it lasted in its full state only two or three centuries and carried in it the seeds of its early destruction. Similarly, the First Transition in fandom was a system that couldn't last, yet was quite distinctive while it did exist.

The Old Fandom was gone, but being a fan had been too much fun to be given up just like that merely because the professional magazines hit the downgrade. Old friends and enemies – those that remained – sought, perhaps unconsciously, a new set of interests under which they could continue their contacts.

There was yet one center of the fan world that seemed as strong as ever. The NYB-ISA was now acknowledged the leader of the fifty or so who remained with the hobby, and the ISA's *International Observer* rose to new heights, putting out one issue specially designed to appeal to science-fiction fans rather than scientists.

But the hegemony of the ISA did not discourage other attempts to take the place of *Fantasy Magazine*. Olon Wiggins' *Science Fiction Fan* ran three printed issues, all at a great financial loss to the editor and associate, and Wiggins was forced to conclude that there weren't enough interested fans left to support a printed magazine's high cost. Others discovered the same bitter truth. Hayward S. Kirby's *Science Fiction World* flared and died. Daniel McPhail expanded his *Science Fiction News*, first published only for his own amusement, into a carbon-copied magazine for circulation in the Oklahoma Scientifiction Association and exchanges outside the state. He was later able to print it, and made a mighty effort for high circulation. Then he moved away from the printing shop. The Philadelphians put forth their effort, *Fantasy Fiction Telegram*. *The Atom* and the early *Helios*, both printed, belong to a slightly later time.

Shepherd and Wollheim's *Phantagraph* continued to mutate with every issue, passing thru a bewildering succession of formats. They also issued the hektoed *Astonishing Stories* and made a bid for commercial publishing with *Fanciful Tales*, from which *Weird Tales* has reprinted Lovecraft's "The Nameless City" (it is not infrequent for professional magazines to take stories that appeared first in the amateur publications). Then Wollheim broke with Shepherd, and took in another ISA New Yorker to form Michel-Wollheim Publications. From their printing press

came the *Phantagraph*, mainly, by this time, for the amateur press associations Wollheim belonged to, and their mimeograph produced the Mijimags, *the book of ghughu*, and other goshawfuls. EgoPohl gave the world two issues of *Mind of Man*. Jim Blish of *The Planeteer* retired with the passing of the old days, and the title *The Planeteer* passed to new fan Taurasi. All attempts at printed magazines were failures.

Well. If you couldn't print them profitably, what was to be done? With the supreme *Fantasy Magazine* gone, every fan could aspire to be an editor, and most of them were. The mimeograph came into wide use, but the cost of the machine and stencils was too much for most fans.

Gradually hektographed publications began to point the way. Which came first after the *TFG Bulletin* the writer does not know. "A Taurasi Publication" appeared on many little hektoed efforts. *The Science Fiction Fan*, after a time, resumed via hektograph. But to the *Science Fiction Collector* should go the credit for elevating hektoed work to a presentable level. One day fans thruout the country got postcards announcing a new fan magazine to be published by a guy named Morris S. Dollens, Jr. They didn't even know how to pronounce "Dollens" but some bought. The first issues were mostly fiction, by the editor. But material began to come in from other sources, and the *Collector* expanded. Several times Dollens wavered between monthly and every-three-weekly issuance, conflicting statements even appearing in the same issue, pages of which were done at different times. The contents never did get very good, but somehow fans liked them.

In conjunction with Hayward Kirby, Dollens tried to organize the Fantasy Fiction League; its organ, *Fantasy Fiction Digest*, was a twin of the *S-F Collector*, and was mailed with it, sometimes combined with it. The organization was a failure, as were many others that "juveniles with Napoleonic complexes" attempted: The Phantasy Legion, the Science Fiction Advancement Association (last to go, tho it died in spirit early), the Fantasy Fans' Fraternity, the Jules Verne Prize Club – many of these began in the old days, but reached their "peaks" in these years of flux. Most of them were never anything more than a name, a membership card (perhaps), and an official organ. Some excitement was added, where there were dues, in charges and countercharges of financial crookedness.

Dollens also did illustrating for the hektoed *Science Fiction Fan* and other fan magazines. And then he had to drop out, apparently due to parental pressure because of the time his hobby occupied. Philadelphia's Baltadonis took over his *Collector* after a lapse of some months.

The Second Convention and the Shift of Power

The Second Eastern States Science Fiction Convention was held in New York, under the auspices of the ISA. Philadelphia attended, and fans from New Jersey and elsewhere in the east brot the attendance up to around 40. It was here, legend says, that there was first suggested a World Science Fiction Convention, by Donald Wollheim.

Says Chief Lotsachatter McPhail, “Then in walk Julius Schwartz and shake hand and smoke peace pipe with Donald and his warriors who have been on war path for many moon.” The handshake ended the last lingering vestige of the old days. But at the same time, the Schwartz group gave way to Wollheim and Sykora as leaders of fandom.

But the days of the ISA were numbered. Sykora was interested in science as well as stf, and had a home laboratory of his own. The name of the group certainly sounded like a scientific club, but here it was, being run largely by and for science-fiction fans. Controversies as to what it was originally intended to be are too vague to go into here. At any rate, not long after, Sykora, getting ready to enter college, there to pursue a scientific course, felt that continuing as President of the ISA, the position he then held, would be an unjustifiable waste of time. In his letter of resignation he worked himself up to a highly emotional mood and, indicting fans for their useless activities, branded them as egotists chiefly desiring to see their names in print, and too lazy to pursue scientific careers. Copies were sent to all ISA members.

Sykora had quite a following, and such a resignation exploded a bombshell in the club. Of the four offices, one was vacant, Sykora resigned another, a third was occupied by a gentleman who was in the hospital at just this time, and the fourth was held by Wollheim. From the other officer and from the NYB he got carte blanche support. Some discussion was carried on with ISA members outside New York. The exact proceedings are obscure, but no formal vote was taken, and Wollheim declared the club dissolved. This legal omission Sykora seized upon in an attempt to reorganize the club two years later.

Financial settlements were made, there were shoddy incidents, and the end of the ISA was anything but glorious. A final issue of the *International Observer* was devoted almost entirely to news of the dissolution, and arguments against Sykora. Down toward the end of Wollheim’s general news column, he suggested that fans who were really

interested join the rising Science Fiction Association, which had headquarters in England. A surprising number did so. Wollheim's prestige was on the rise.

Fantasy Magazine was gone and the ISA was gone. There was no longer any single organization or group which could claim the headship. There was a general concession of prestige to Wollheim personally, but aside from this, all central tendencies were gone.

The Second Fandom Finds Itself

The field had been leveled to the ground; it was time for the emergence of a new order. If no new order did emerge, then fandom was finished.

As there had been a scramble to take *Fantasy Magazine's* place, so there was a scramble to take the ISA's place as leading fan organization. Several New York clubs made only partially successful attempts. Philadelphia always rides thru storms with the least change, and the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society was still functioning as stoutly as ever. They called the Third Convention. As the time for that gathering, October 30, 1937, drew near, there was talk of using it to form a federation of fantasy clubs, since many local groups, such as the Los Angeles SFASFL and the Oklahoma Scientifiction Association, as well as specialized horizontal guilds, were doing or had shown capability of doing well in spite of the collapse of the headship.

Thrilling Wonder's place in the professional field had been found, and things there had steadied down. The SFL was continued, and there was somewhat more incentive to form local groups when they could be part of the larger SFL and their meetings reported in TWS.

The new *Science Fiction Fan* was beginning to be recognized as the leading fan magazine. A multitude of minor publications continued to appear, and more were being projected all the time. The cheap hektograph was definitely the medium. So much for the means. What was to be the end? What were fans to talk about? Most of them were tired of discussing stories; some very active fans no longer bought and read the science-fiction magazines regularly. The fan magazines at this time were filled mainly with news of – themselves. A typical column of gossip would report that A had given B the rights to his magazine's name, that C would illustrate the allegedly October issue of D's magazine, that E and F were going to New York to see G before the Convention, that H had broken his association with I, and would publish their magazine alone, on the hekto

instead of mimeo. The nearest thing to a contemporary recognition of the change that had occurred was Sam Moskowitz's "This Changing Tendency Among Fan Magazines", in which he called attention to their growing independence and asserted that all professional magazines might go out of existence and fandom would continue on its way.

Fans had found a new center of interest: themselves and their own activities.

One Analysis of Wollheim

We have seen much of Mr. Wollheim up to now in this work. We will see much more. It can almost be said that the story of the Second Fandom is the story of Wollheim.

A true analysis of his character would be very valuable, but unfortunately one facet of his nature is to make everyone who knows him either his ally or his enemy, and there are few neutrals. This writer is not one.

Donald Allan Wollheim, known variously as DAW, daw, the W, and "the No. 1 rat of fandom" read science fiction almost from the first days of *Amazing*, and before that, like many sciencefictionists, had perused Burroughs, Haggard, Verne, and Wells. He is thus well grounded in science fiction, tho he could not be said to be by any means unique in this. He is one of the older generation of fans, who turned 21 years in the First Fandom or before. He has frequently shown a contempt for those chronologically younger than he, and makes much of "immature" viewpoints, tho he himself, in his political beliefs, is more like a youth of college age. He entered fandom at its very beginning, and has seen it all the way thru.

In nationality, he is a German Jew. He has lived all his life in New York, and tho he has traveled around quite a bit, in point of fact knows little of anything but New York City and New York City thoughts; and those he sees from the viewpoint of his personal situation.

His physical appearance lends itself readily to caricature. Azygous, a mysterious writer of mid-1938 who turned out to be Wollheim's friend Dick Wilson, described him as "gentlman with teeth". Baltadonis, Philadelphia's premier artist, turned out several hilarious and insulting cartoons emphasizing his protruding teeth and weak chin. A person who disliked him could easily be cruel, and this drove him to return deeper hatred.

There can be little doubt that he rates high in intelligence, but his nature is such that it is frequently misdirected. He showed good ability at judging the effects of use of certain tactics, and was a master of bitter rhetoric, at piling up evidence.

At first he had no extreme political views. Like most people in America, he disliked Fascism and Nazism, and probably distrusted Communism as well. Thru his associations with John B. Michel, however, and later with Frederik Pohl, he came in contact with the extreme Red views of these two, took to attending Young Communist meetings and reading their literature; so that finally, tho in July 1936 he was hoorahing Landon for the Republican presidential nomination, by November he had embraced Communism.

One important element in his beliefs is that “when something is black it is not white”. This implied, unconscious division of the world into two kinds of things, with no in-betweens, led him to hasty judgment, which, once reached, he fiercely defended: willingness to fight at the drop of a hat; and maximum opposition to anything he opposed at all. He resembled E. Haldeman-Julius in this respect, that when he hated something, he turned loose at it with all guns.

He was seldom without several fights on his hands. It is reported that he claimed to get fun from running fans out of the fan field. His methods of attack, moreover, tended to build up hatred rather than break it down. On a few occasions he made up with old enemies, but these cases were never admissions that he had been wrong. Of course, like everyone else, he was justified in his own mind in the things he did, and fought for what he believed right.

Wollheim is a person of high ability whose nature and environmental influences tend to embroil him in fights, without sufficient consideration, and he plunges into them with everything he has.

The Nature of Wollheim’s Dictatorship

So much for the man. What did he do?

New fans will find that Wollheim was frequently referred to as a dictator. How much of a dictator was he, and how did he do it?

It must, at once, be noted that his control was by no means absolute. Not everything that he opposed, during his ascendancy, failed; not everything that he supported succeeded; not every fan he tried to drive out of the field allowed himself to be driven out. But the American Fantasy

Association, an attempt at an American counterpart of the SFA, which was largely British, received no support from Wollheim, and failed, tho had he thrown his weight behind it it might have easily succeeded. The founders – Wiggins, Taurasi, and Louis Kuslan – were at that time more or less friends of Wollheim, and he did nothing to oppose their effort, but he ignored it entirely. And so it goes.

When Wollheim said anything, everyone sat up and listened, whether they liked him and it or not. Consequently, his attacks on fans and institutions were more effective than similar efforts of others. And such was his ability in this line, that he could make his victim feel like an outcast even tho the latter refused to get out.

The W drew around him a circle of fans who, in their own right, would have been counted as leaders in the field, but, in the clique, were overshadowed by Wollheim. He became the symbol for what the group did, and received credit and blame for things that were really the idea and/or work of his friends. These compatriots – Michel, Frederik Pohl, and Lowndes were the most prominent – were frequently referred to as “Wollheim stooges”, with Michel as “prize stooge”. Possibly picking it up from a remark of Speer’s, they called themselves the Quadrumvirate, and also spoke of themselves in general terms of “we” and “our group”. Whether they actually were stooges, slaves to Wollheim’s beck and call, and carrying out his orders, is doubtful. The group managed to keep a united front against dissension in all consequential matters, and this led many to believe that they represented one man’s will. It is most likely that Wollheim was arbiter, overruled only by an overwhelming majority of his satellites and lesser lights, but that, due to a common outlook, divergent views among them were rare.

Besides the principal lieutenants mentioned above, there was a more or less indeterminate group of minor fans who were seriously considered “stooges” of Wollheim: principally, in 1938, Young Communists.

With this group, then, and his own powers and prestige, Wollheim exerted a great deal of influence in the fan world, but to say that he was dictator is to misapprehend the conditions.

The Founding of the FAPA

The stage is set; the dramatis personae are known to you. If the story were now dramatically perfect, the curtain would go up on the Third Eastern Science Fiction Convention.

But another element, full of significance and typical of the Second Fandom, had already been introduced. Among the myriad organizations that dotted the later months of the period of the First Transition, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association did not stand out. Some kind of a fraternity for editors; Dan McPhail had had some such idea. Well, if you're the joining kind, go ahead and see what it's about.

Once a member of the National, United, and other Amateur Press Associations, it was inevitable that a fan should think of adapting the idea for s-f fan use, as it was tailor-made for the hobby. The idea was simple and unusual: Publishers published when and what they desired, and paid the expenses of their own publications, making the required number of copies, which were sent to the official mailing office. In return, each member, at intervals, got a packet containing a copy of each of the efforts that had been sent to the mailing bureau since the previous mailing.

Wollheim early began dawdling with the idea of a science fiction amateur press association, but only on urging from Bill Miller, Michel and others did he move toward its accomplishment. Getting started was the big task, but Wollheim, more than any other fan, was in a position to get it going in a hurry. Nevertheless, he found the going very difficult. Persuading fans to join up, pay the 50¢ dues, and then go to the expense of making up 50 copies of a magazine, for an infant organization, was like persuading them to a tooth-pulling.

Natheless, by hook and by crook and brute strength Wollheim rallied enough material to put out a fair-sized mailing; much of it, of course, Michel-Wollheim special publications, broadsides for new members, and left-over copies of magazines, such as the Mijimags, previously for sale.

The first mailing, going to prospects as well as members, brot in a goodly flood of applications, raising the rolls to over twenty. Another large block held back only until it was made clear that they did not have to publish anything for the FAPA – any fan activity during the preceding year qualified a person for membership.

Thereafter applications continued in a more or less steady stream until, by mid-1938, the full quota of 50 was filled, and further applicants began to be put on the waiting list, to be given places as members might vacate them.

The FAPA mailings were important because they removed from editors the obligation to turn out something that subscribers would pay for. Tho many publishers made sincere efforts to turn out magazines as good, on a small scale, as the subscription fan magazines, the actual compulsion was absent, and an editor, if he wished to brave adverse comment, could

devote his entire magazine to attacks on other fans, sociological declamations, purely personal opinions of hardly any interest to anyone, or very rotten amateur science fiction.

Michelism and the Third Convention

Ethiopia was conquered; civil war was raging in Spain between Right and Left; Japan pressed its invasion of China. Particularly in Communist groups thruout the country, anti-Fascists were saying “Why can’t we do something? Isn’t there some way we can fight for what we believe in?” And that urge was subconsciously afflicting Michel, Wollheim, Pohl, Lowndes, Gillespie, and other Red fans as strongly as it hit their comrades who knew not science-fiction.

As fans, they were used to diverting their energies into their hobby, and it was in the fan field that they found an outlet for their desire to fight for their convictions. Here they were, all science fiction fans as well as Young Communists. There was Rothman in Philadelphia, a fan with socialist leanings. In England *Novae Terrae*, SFA organ, carried world-conscious articles every issue. McPhail and Speer, out in Oklahoma, had been exchanging the *Insurgent Epistle* and the *Loyalist Lion*. Fans were interested in such things; here was a group of intelligent young men who needed only to be shown the Communist program to become its advocates and defenders against fascism. Not until this idea was clearly established in their minds did they call upon past experience for their arguments – the alleged Gernsback delusion that the purpose of sciencefiction was to create scientists – which the collapse of the ISA disproved – when actually it had only resulted in creating dreamers, idealists – whose dreams turned to economic and political problems.

These thoughts they discussed among themselves, but scarcely a whisper of them leaked out before they were ready to release them. Wollheim had asked for time, at the Philadelphia Convention, to read a speech written by Michel, who, owing to a speech impediment, would not have been able to deliver it effectively. But the fact that Daw read the speech, and then, alone, defended it, led many fans to suspect that the article was more Wollheim’s work than he would admit, and that the movement was termed “Michelism” only because “Wollheimism” would have sounded like self-praise.

The gathering was utterly unprepared for it all. There was a long and rather rambling discourse upon Fascist aggression, the purpose of science-

fiction, and other unclear things, concluding with a resolution which, had it been read first, might have enabled the listeners to follow the speech. The resolution proposed to put the Convention on record as favoring a scientific-socialist world state, and opposing military ideologies and “barbarism” in all its forms. It was so worded that rejecting it would be difficult, as placing the rejecters in an unfavorable light – but accept it? What had it to do with stf? Still, standing alone, few people would find much fault with it.

But a very great number found fault with such a subject being introduced into a gathering of science-fiction fans. Unprepared as they were, no very intelligent opposition was put up, but personal enemies of the Wollheim, such as Sykora, led an arguing opposition which tangled the debate down till it was wrangling about possibilities of a World State.

Finally, a vote was taken. Of those who voted, twelve opposed the resolution. Eight, who had previously been lined up to vote for it, did so (“O noble eight! O thoughtless twelve!” quoth Wollheim later). Many of those present, including most of the adults, did not vote.

From a historical viewpoint, this resolution threw whatever else happened at the Convention into the shade, in its lasting effects, but, as we shall see, one other important result grew out of the gathering – the Wollheim-Moskowitz feud.

Later Development of Michelism

The period of secrecy for the Michelists was over; now they discharged all their accumulated broadsides thru every available channel, and for months they had the argument to themselves. In accounts of the Convention, in the *SFFan* and the *SFCollector* (this was before Baltadonis and Wollheim became enemies), Wollheim took a great deal of space to praise the new movement.

In an ill-starred article for *Novae Terrae*, Wollheim committed the program to advocacy of support for the Communist International.

Unfortunate for them, too, was the formation of the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction, which, it appears, never got to be officially going. Two issues of their publication, the *Science Fiction Advance* (“vance”) were published, full of angles on and repetition of their ideology. The CPASF was composed of the New York group of Young Communist Leaguers, plus Richard Wilson for reporter, as editor of the weekly *Science-Fiction News Letter*. The fact that the other members were

Young Communists all, their flagrant advocacy of Communism, and Wollheim's *Novae Terrae* article convinced the great majority of fans that the object of the movement was to Communistize fandom. The initials CPASF were interpreted "Communist Party's Agitators in Scienti-Fandom", and Baltadonis cartoons thus depicted them – very unflatteringly.

Nonetheless, during these months the Michelists made a few half-conversions. Most unexpected of these was Wollheim's rapprochement with Ackerman. Some kind of a feud had long existed between them, apparently over nothing more serious than Ackerman's advocacy of the international language Esperanto, and his bent toward playing with words, as in puns and scientific combinations. Ackerman, like Rothman and others, had socialist leanings, and was willing to be a fellow-traveler with the Michelists and extend them aid.

The leading English readily accepted the appellation of Michelists, tho they were far from advocating the Communist program, and their pages were laid open to Michelism.

Despite all this, the movement couldn't seem to get going, and by Spring 1938, opposition began to take form. Speer, tho perhaps as socialistically inclined as any, elected to defend Fascism in some of its aspects and, gradually becoming better acquainted with Communism and Communist strategy, adopted harrying tactics in his FAPA publications, correspondence, and elsewhere. In the Los Angeles publication, *Imagination!*, Frederick Shroyer haphazardly denied the allegations of the Michelists, and for a few issues a hot exchange of articles took place between him and Wollheim, others joining in. Rothman, tho friendly with the Michelists, preferred to raise objections to many of their statements, and occupied a no-man's-land all his own.

Then the second type of opposition became more vocal, with articles denouncing the introduction of "politics" into "stf", published in magazines of Taurasi, Moskowitz, &c.

We can now trace the various points of departure from the slender line of Michelist reasoning. In the first place, several fans refused to take them seriously. There is so much of mimic seriousness, insincere feuds, in fandom, that they looked upon Michelism as an invention for the purpose of keeping Wollheim in the public eye. Second, the largest group, perhaps half of fandom at that time, questioned the assumption that fandom must needs have any other purpose than the amusement derived from it. Those who did not fully accept this nevertheless had their assurance weakened, and encountering more flaws further along the Michelist line, dropped the

more readily. Another not inconsiderable bloc granted that fandom might have an object beyond that, but claimed that it was success in the professional field by-and-by, self-expression, or the encouraging of fans to pursue scientific careers or perhaps just to teach them more science, in sugar-coated form, than the average man knew. Even among those who accepted the view that science fiction must help create a better world, there were many who did not subscribe to the declaration that the only justification for the activities of fandom was working for a scientific socialist world state. And of those that did, some so disliked the Michelist methods and Wollheim personally that they refused to cooperate. Many who believed in Michelist ideals rejected the hope that fandom could do anything toward furthering them.

At times the Michelists seemed to be saying that their only object was to awaken interest in things sociological. Wollheim made a belated effort to relax the restrictions somewhat when, in an article in the deluxe SFA quarterly, *Tomorrow*, he stated that the lines had been extended to those fans who worked for progress in any form – Esperanto, peace movements, etc, even tho they were not advanced enough to accept Communism as yet. But the damage had been done, and by the fall, 1938, it was felt that Michelism, tho it had left a permanent mark upon fandom, was a thing of the past, and had failed to attain its objectives. The old guard of the Michelists, refusing to admit defeat, continued to plug away.

IPO

Less important than the FAPA, but still significant of the Second Fandom, was the Oklahoma Institute of Private Opinion, which set out to find how fans felt on various questions of the day.

As the name indicates, it was a take-off from the American Institute of Public Opinion (the Gallup Poll). The idea grew out of Speer's curiosity about the average age of fans, and he had given it considerable thought when he remarked to Wiggins, his principal correspondent at the time, "Why doesn't someone start an International Institute of Private Opinion to find out what fans think on such matters?" Wiggins failed to react, but next letter Speer included a depiction of the make-up of a card in such a questionnaire. OFW replied that he would back him to the limit if he should wish to try this trick.

The ballots were to be mailed out with *SFFan*, but at this point Wiggins made the first of his bewildering series of changes of address; as

the first questions were to concern the possibility of a fantasy federation, and the Third Convention loomed near, Speer purchased hekto and pencil, ran off some dim cards, included stamps for return stuck in slits in the cards (a trick tested with Wilson), and sent them out to around thirty scientifictionists, bringing the number up to 40 thru personal correspondence. Thereafter all cards were mailed with SFF (save a month or two when SFF's circulation went below 40), and the number of cards sent was held at 40 except on one or two occasions, when 41 slipped by.

Naturally, returns on the first poll were rather small, many thinking it a practical joke, but the results were printed in *SFFan* and a new batch of cards distributed; and with choice of better questions as a result of fans' votes on what to ask, the popularity of the poll increased, the number of replies rising from around 15 at first to around 30 toward the last (there were twelve polls in all, extending over a period of nearly two years). Speer attempted to get cards especially to those in the habit of answering, but Wiggins gave little cooperation along that line.

In the first poll, sent out by himself, Speer had sought to obtain a balance between top-flight fans, run of the mill, and borderliners, but when the poll went under SFF this was no longer possible; the geographical breakdowns, based on postmarks, proved fairly significant. With the decline of the *SFFan* in the esteem of the non-Wollheimists, the group covered became less truly representative, and returns on several questions less trustworthy.

Several of the results on questions stand out. The ratings of favorite fan magazines, and favorite professional magazines, tho of no permanent interest, were enjoyed at the time, and showed *SFFan* leading the fan magazines, and *Astounding* way out ahead of the other pros. On the first poll asking that the three "top" fans be named, Wollheim's position was shown by his gaining first place with well over twice the points of his nearest rival, and all down the line, ratings showed the general opinion of fans at the time with regard to leading fans. The question all were waiting for was Michelism, but as this was to be presented at the same time as the religious question, Speer found it advisable for several reasons to delay a good many months before presenting them, and by the time they were asked, the Michelist vote was infinitesimal. The age of fans was found to cluster around 18 years; in nationality, German blood held a plurality, with Italian, Jewish, and Russian far down the line, contrary to what the fans' names might lead one to expect; Anglo-Saxon was strong. Not very successful attempts were made to get definitions of "science fiction" and "real fans". Leading fan writers and artists were named.

The last four polls, certain earlier questions were re-asked to determine the shifts of opinion, but the change in SFF's constituency relative to fandom as a whole rendered them of questionable value. Wollheim continued as "top" fan by a narrow margin.

Along the same lines as the IPO were questions of the *Novae Terrae* Panel of Critics, which ran several questionnaires of about 20 questions each. Other similar institutions that can hardly be called imitations were the PSFS inquisition into the best stf author of 1938, and surveys by the weeklies SFNL and *Le Vombiteur* re favorite fantasy films, and best-remembered stf tales.

ghughu and FooFoo

This world-shaking conflict must be looked upon as a Second Fandom counterpart of the First Staple War; indeed, ghughu is probably the thing Wollheim began working on at the conclusion of that war. (Some of the fighters apply the Staple War rules regarding capitalization of the opposition's name – ghughu:FooFoo for this writer.)

ghughu was a burlesque on religion, the combination "gh" being frequently applied in such words as ghod and demighod, gholy ghraile, etc; the cult worships ghughu, who, they claim, is wollheim. FooFooists maintain that the real ghughu is a beetle-bodied monster living on the planet vulcan, and wollheim but his tool. Their organization is essentially ecclesiastical, with high priest john b. michel at its head, and the general title for lower members archbishop for their respective cities. Where more than one is in the same city, other titles come into play, such as archdeacon infernal of all ghu, ghuardian of the gholy ghraile, saint, etc.

FooFoo had Its Origin in the Use of That Syllable by The Prophet Bill Holman, in His comic page, "Smokey Stover" and His daily cartoons for newspapers thruout the country. Schoolchildren took to making up foo proverbs ("foo" is also a common noun) of their own, and the West Coast punsters were not exempt. Mary Corinne Gray, known as Pogo, established the Order of FooFoo with herself as Hi Priestess and Ackerman her Right-Hand Man. The idea having independently occurred to Speer, Ackerman put him in touch with Pogo, and he was forthwith dubbed Royal General of FooFoo and also referred to as the Left-Hand Man. Later, a Midl-Man was appointed, also Handi-Maiden and Handi-Man to the Hi Priestess. Later titles conferred by the Royal General in the Hi Priestess' name, and eventually confirmed by a printed permanent

membership card signed and countersigned, were such as Grand Vizier, Chief Scientist, Poetess Laureate, and enigmatic ones like Proselytus Prime, Sideralis Beta, Vanday Oon, etc.

As can be seen, the titles are more those of a military monarchy than of a church, and FooFoo is more a Burlesque on ghu rather than a Burlesque on that which ghudom mimics.

No more than did the staple organizations, did either of these groups gain a great number of acknowledged members (tho ghudom claims that all who have ever heard of ghughu are thenceforth purple-souled and saved despite themselves, and Foomen claim for their rank and file all who speak foo proverbs), but since, unlike the staplists, they have never come to a showdown, the division promises to be more or less a permanent tradition in fandom. It cuts across other allegiances, and is never taken seriously. Many people regard it as simply silly.

Mention might be made here of other mock organizations which appeared from time to time. There were the Vombi, an unofficial group, who went around saying, "It's utterly Vombish," and explaining the root "vomb" in such ways as, "If that chair you're sitting in turned into a stack of Bar-O at 15¢ for two cans, that would be Vombish." There was the Loyal and Benevolent Protective Order of Wollheim Stooges, which apparently had as its aim the discrediting of use of the term "stooge" by pretending that it was all absolutely true; their ranks were theoretically open to all who had ever disagreed with Will Sykora. Robert G. Thompson, DTm, tried to form a Temponautical Society and was opposed by the Anti-Temponautical Society; both proposed publications but it seems that neither ever saw print ("temponautical" means "timetraveling"). And Bob Tucker achieved some early success with WAFFF!, the meaning of the initials of which is known only to members, who must qualify with a proof that the world is flat.

The Atheism Issue

Especially in view of our examination of ghughu, it is high time we looked at the fan attitude on religion. Many theistic fans joined ghughu without knowing what it was, and tho they subsequently repudiated it, their souls were said to still be dyed a deep purple.

When the November 1937, *Cosmic Tales* carried, as what was to be the last of Wollheim's Phantaflexion columns, an article later reprinted in the first *Science Fiction Advance* as "Science Fiction and Religion", it

seemed that another bombshell had been dropped into fandom from the hand of the genial W. Some months later appeared “Anent Atheism and Stf” in *Imagination!*, which debated the possibly question-begging proposition that scientifictionists were scientifictionists because they were atheists, rather than atheists because they were scientifictionists, as Wollheim argued. “Among Our Memes” in the same publication (“Madge”), frequently had the information, “Atheist.” sandwiched into some obscure place. It became customary for new correspondents to inquire each other’s religious stands, or to state them without inquiry, as a natural part of getting acquainted.

In the old days of the first and second periods of professional science fiction, the readers’ columns had frequently blazed in debates on atheism, but not since fandom began had the question come up as being in any way connected with the hobby.

Curiously, it never became a red-hot issue. McPhail broke with Wollheim over the reprint of the article in *Vance*, where he read it for the first time, but the general sentiment seemed to be to avoid religious controversies before fandom as a whole, as being unpleasant and getting nowhere. Then, too, the issue was in part smothered by the greater Michelist controversy – there is a limit, even for the rabid fan, to the number of things he can get steamed up about at any one time.

But perhaps the most important reason for the flat-falling of the atheism issue was lack of interest – lack of opposition! Wollheim, an avowed agnostic, made a gesture toward obtaining religious support for Michelism, paralleling the simultaneous program of the Communists, but did not follow it up, other than to enjoin against purely destructive criticism of church beliefs. The only prominent fans known to acknowledge church beliefs were Catholic Baltadonis and Episcopalian McPhail, tho doubtless there were others. When the IPO got around to putting the question, agnosticism and kindred showed a definite, tho not overwhelming, majority, with many of those on the other side of the line doubtful, tongue-in-cheek, or indifferent.

The most vociferous anti-religionist was Frederick Shroyer of Los A, who authored “Anent Atheism & Stf”. A “particularly effective piece of god-busting” was rejected by the LASFL board of censors as “too hot”, but some copies were run off, and snatched up as collectors’ items.

In defense of religion little showed up. Who all brot the pressure on *Cosmic Tales* to discontinue the Phantaflexion is a mystery. Chester Fein, just then appearing on the horizon, attacked Wollheim bitterly, and the W came back with a defense. Many fans were more or less on the fence.

Other than this, there was practically nothing of the religious side till McPhail wrote the progressive platform.

There wasn't enough opposition to give any thrill from attacking the churchmen. So atheism was taken pretty much for granted, and fandom rocketed merrily on its way. But there is no guarantee that the controversy may not blaze forth again.

The First Months of 1938

Being now apprised of the more important and distinctive institutions of the Second Fandom, we can pick up the thread of our story.

The Third Convention had been in October, and was followed, thruout November and December, with accounts of same. Under one of his pen names, to which was added his real handle, Moskowitz wrote an account for the *SFFan*. The explosion that followed raised SaM to the top of the anti-Wollheimists because he was the greatest object of vituperation. Wollheim was originally sore because Moskowitz, in contrast with his own accounts, gave little space to the Michelist speech and argument, but he found the account spotted with the inaccuracies always attendant upon haphazard eyewitness accounts, and in some cases pointed to actually true accounts of incidents which he had a false impression of. In his column *Fanfarade* in SFF, noted for attacks on fans, he opened another "hymn of hate" campaign with the blanket allegation that it was the sorriest piece of reporting he'd seen in years, and all too characteristic of that type of fan who "will not think". In the absence of specific corrections, Moskowitz defied him to find anything "unaccurate" in the article. Wollheim obliged with a large-size mimeographed supplement, mailed with SFF, which went into great detail. Moskowitz replied with a similar-sized hektoed supplement (both of these also went out thru the FAPA) in his sloppiest style, denying he had been wrong concerning most of the cases, as checked with other witnesses, and making light of the remainder. The points of disagreement were indeed trivial, and many readers lost sight of their pertinence upon the original disagreement, personal attacks between the combatants having obscured the issue. There came the first wave of resentment against such feuds. Wiggins closed SFF to the argument, and Lowndes published *The Vagrant* for the FAPA, devoted entirely to a pseudo-impartial reconsideration of the whole matter. At this juncture Speer threw himself into the fight, versus Lowndes, but the original disagreement was lost sight of before long among the masses of new

subjects for bitterness.

By the spring of 1938 nearly everyone saw which way the wind was blowing. There would be fights that summer, and more fights. Consequently, the early months saw a great deal of jockeying for position and allies, and inter-fan correspondence reached new heights of volume and fervor. Adding to this was the plank in the CPASF program calling for the greatest possible amount of personal contacts with fans, thru correspondence, for promotion of their ideology. Not all the activities of the early months were of a bitter nature, of course. Fan magazines continued to pop up in that way they have, most new ones now in the FAPA. Wiggins announced *Who's Who in Fandom*, to sell for 20¢. Such departments as Among Our Memos, As Others See Us, and Meet the Boys were popular in a fandom where the chief interest was other fans, and he felt that such a work would be well received. He set the goal too high, however, demanding 50 biographies and 50 pledges of purchase, and the project dragged on for months without this being reached.

With the FAPA functioning, with a good membership, an election was held around the year's end for officers to fill out the terms of those appointed by Michel and Wollheim, the original FAPA. There was not much excitement: Wollheim was a cinch to keep the presidency; there was little choice between Michel (incumbent) and Pohl for Editor – Pohl got it – and if Balty wanted the Secretaryship, he could keep it. For vice-president, incumbent McPhail ran against Philadelphia's Madle, and early returns released by Wollheim indicated Madle in the lead, but McPhail came in ahead at the finish line; Madle seemed to detect some inconsistencies in the counting of the ballots.

Upon his return to the fan field, Sykora had established the Scientific Cinema Club, with the aim of making a scientifiction movie, as the ISA had projected. The Wollheim-Michel group made their way into the club, and Sykora refused to stay in when they were accepted. The group collapsed amidst much petty bickering. The Queens SFL, centering around Wilson and Taurasi and including Sykora, accepted Pohl, Wollheim, and Michel, and others of their clique, an action which paved the way for a much more important schism later in the year.

In Oklahoma, with Speer and McPhail living in the same town, there were hints of OSA revival and golden hopes of a conference of fans from all the southwestern states. The Tri-Cities SFL of Texas, headed by newly active fan Dale Hart, lasted a year, with some successes and a rather large membership.

June 1938

The month of June in this year set a record for vital fan activities that had never been equaled before and probably will not be for a long time to come. It was not the end of the Second Fandom, but it was the climax.

Early in the month came the second half of the Third FAPA Mailing, almost simultaneously with the Newark Convention. Later, the FAPA election ballots were mailed out. Toward the middle of the month the Second British Convention was held. And to end the month came the Fourth Mailing.

The Third Mailing was sent out in two sections which amounted, except legally, to two separate mailings, and a longer time elapsed between them than between the second half and the Fourth Mailing. Mailing 3B marked the end of the first period of the FAPA, when it struggled for existence. There were many fine little magazines, and in general the half-mailing was of great literary interest, but contained much less controversial material than was to follow.

The Conventions

The Newark Convention, officially the First National Science Fiction (or Fantasy) Convention, and called the Fourth Eastern by its enemies, was the first not sponsored by an organization, tho Sykora and Moskowitz said something about Sykora's Committee for ISA Reorganization and Moskowitz's Unofficial Society for the Aid of Fan Magazines in Need of Material (subject of trouble with DAW, who wanted a Manuscript Bureau for the FAPA). Put on entirely by Sykora and SaM, it was a surprise to all. Advertising of the event doesn't seem to have been unusual. There were poster announcements placed in a few libraries and around, and perhaps an announcement or two in the professional magazines before it came off, but previous conventions seem to have had nearly equal publicity. Evidently, it was that the time was ripe for a really big affair. New Yorkers particularly were skeptical of the optimistic preparations for an anticipated attendance of over a hundred; previous conventions had not gone above 40. Wollheim attacked its handling (Michelistic speeches would be barred) in a pre-Convention Fanfarade column, and Wilson, in the *News-Letter*, was generous with slurs at its hopes, the beginning of the Wilson-Moskowitz enmity: perhaps the most reasonless feud of the period.

Despite all this, the real fans, of course, came, and so did the

professional s-f editors of the area – and a veritable cloud of non-fan scientificionists who seemed to just “happen” in. The attendance, none from outside the eastern states, grossed around 125 at its height.

This, however, was the chief and nearly the only success of the affair. The usual talks and promises by the pro editors are not to be counted as losses, but were much the same as at preceding conventions, with perhaps stronger promises of support for fan magazines etc which were half a year in being fulfilled – but that is another story.

The banquet fell flat due to miscalculation of the number to attend – there just weren't enough eats to go around. The amusements were partly successful, partly not, and some entertainments prepared to be presented were not given. Owing to Baltadonis' illness and inability to attend, Philadelphia's secret entertainment (presumably their s-f puppet show) had to be postponed until their annual Conference.

The Convention adjourned with the problem of the World S-F Convention even more unsolved than before. The committee appointed at the last Philadelphia Convention had done nothing in the interim, so Sykora, substituting as chairman when Moskowitz found he couldn't handle the chair, appointed a new temporary committee, which was in turn to choose a smaller permanent one. Fans ignorant of parliamentary law, etc, thot Sykora had no right to appoint the committee. A petition protesting the appointment was successful in securing signatures even of some anti-Wollheimists.

The most unusual feature of the Convention was the flood of special Convention publications, which were sold by the Convention committee. All publishers, both those present and non-attendees, got full sets of the Convention magazines; in this way the Convention was participated in by fans unable to be there, Ackerman, Farsaci, Marconette, and Speer and McPhail jointly, having published, and not able to attend. Wollheim pointed out that all of the publishers of Convention publications were members of the FAPA. Exception was Nils Frome, Canadian, whose magazine arrived too late. Oklahoma's was also late, but only by a hair. Besides the publications handled by the committee the CPASF handed out Internationale song sheets, exhortations to protest *Thrilling Wonder's* discharge of a CIO printer, and similar material, which, it developed, practically ruined the CPASF's prestige: CPASF is only Michelistic organization; CPASF is Communist; therefore, Michelism is Communism.

Despite its successes, there seemed to be something lacking from the convention – probably unity, altho fans enjoy certain kinds of feuds. In marked contrast was the Second British Convention of the SFA (the first

had been called a Conference). There was no question such as the World Convention hanging over this assemblage, and there were no bitterly opposed factions such as marred the Newark affair. Little attention was paid to professional s-f, tho Fearn's talk in this direction aroused considerable interest. There was some discussion of SFA business, and the new Constitution was officially adopted (Los Angeles SFL-SFA cabled OK). But most of the speeches concerned the sociological interest of British fandom. These were for the time devoted to the almost-completed task of waking Britons to social and governmental problems, solution of which was necessary in the search for Utopia. In the following months, when they took up the question of what these awakened fans were to do in furtherance of their Utopias, there was a lowering of spirit and a surge of pessimism.

But at the time of the Convention, the talks hit a very optimistic note. Fans were characterized as Seekers of Tomorrow, and some discussions, abstract enough not to bear heavily on the contemporary ism situation, discussed the attitude that should be taken. The British Convention indicated that among the somewhat more adult fans of the tight little isle the sociologically inclined had won, and were in control of British fandom.

The FAPA Campaign

Madle, Speer, and Baltadonis had been in correspondence for some time over the formation of an opposition party in the FAPA, with the result that the Mailing Manager was sent a leaflet announcing their candidacies for the various offices, calling attention to some infractions of the Constitution of the Association that Wollheim's administration had been guilty of, and suggesting that voters see what the Other Side could do in the saddle.

Wollheim, apparently, found himself in a hole as time for the first annual elections drew near. Due to the constitutional provision that no person could hold the same office twice in five years, it would be impossible for him to be reelected president. He would, therefore, run for Official Editor and Mailing Manager, and had little fear that he would beat Madle for the office. Doc Lowndes had a fair chance at vice-president, against a cloud of younger, mainly New York, fans. For the position of president, however, Wollheim found himself without a single candidate who could win. Michel, as the person he was closest in contact with, was the one he would like to have represent him in the president's chair, but Michel not only was not prominent as an individual outside New York (all

his activities having been in conjunction with the overshadowing Wollheim), but was somewhat unpopular as the supposed author of the Michelist movement, as attested by the mid-term elections. Against Baltadonis, who stood second or third in prominence in fandom, he would have little chance of being elected president, in the normal course of events.

In the Philadelphia group's innocent attempt to inject into the FAPA the light politics that enlivened other amateur press groups, Wollheim imagined an attempt to get control and close the FAPA to all but straight fan and stf material. With that hyper-suspicion common to Leftists, he envisioned an attempt to exercise censorship over the mailings, putting an end to Michelistic discussions therein. And he feared that if Speer were successful in gaining the vice-presidency, which was the "supreme court", this censorship would be upheld. Baltadonis up to this time had not come out openly against Wollheim, but the W knew him to be opposed to the CPASFers, and foresaw that the break would become important.

Michelism now meant everything to him. This Madle-Baltadonis-Speer group must be defeated at all costs. So he turned loose with every piece of artillery at his command.

Baltadonis is well known for his slowness about answering mail. Wollheim, some months before, had made a complaint about this in a private letter to McPhail, but saw no sufficient reason for bringing it before the entire Association. Just preceding the time of the Newark Convention, Baltadonis had been too ill to attend to his work as well as usual, and had not delegated the duty to anyone else. And, to complete the picture, according to the postmarks Michel would fail to mail letters until days or a week after they were written. All this contributed to poor connections between the Secretary-Treasurer's office at Philadelphia and the mailing bureau in New York. Wollheim, probably exaggerating, said the New York end was bankrupt from non-receipt of reimbursements from the treasury. This, and a general charge that he had "just" discovered an attempt on the part of the Philadelphia party to sabotage the FAPA, was put into a mimeographed "Open Letter". An example of its convincing air is "Baltadonis takes his time about notifying us of new members, but in the meantime we take the kicks."

The second half of the Third Mailing had just been sent out; there was little material on hand for a new mailing except some Michelist sheets. But the Constitution required that the ballots go out three weeks before July 1. This deadline had already been passed when Wollheim decided to send the ballots out by themselves instead of with a mailing. But with them went

the Open Letter.

Besides charges against Baltadonis, his chief opponent, Wollheim accused Madle of sabotaging the FAPA outside its pages – apparently referring to an anonymous article, which Madle disclaimed writing, in Moskowitz’s magazine *Helios*, burlesquing Wollheim’s column Fanfarade, and attacking him personally, including his conduct of the half-term FAPA election. Sam Moskowitz was the third candidate for president, having been reported by Taurasi as desiring to run, tho he actually had no intention of opposing his friend Baltadonis. Worrying little about Moskowitz, Wollheim dismissed him with the accusation of participating in the Madle crime by publishing the article. The fourth candidate for president, Olon F. Wiggins, was a friend of Wollheim, and had made such an infinitesimal showing in the mid-term elections that he was passed over in silence.

Tho the Open Letter was devoted primarily to attacks on Baltadonis, almost all the Michel-Wollheim election material in the Fourth Mailing, and there was plenty of it, was taken up with accusing Speer of being a Fascist. Speer had on several occasions defended the acts of the Fascist nations, and opposed Communism, but had repeatedly said his support of the Fascist nations was only partial, and, far from desiring a fascist America, he supported the rather socialistic program of the Democratic New Deal. Whether they could have missed this, both in publications and in correspondence between Speer and themselves, the Michelists took no note of it in their FAPA campaign, referring to him as an “avowed” Fascist (he had facetiously taken the middle initial “F”, which was interpreted as meaning “Fascist”), and drew bloody pictures of an enemy of Democracy in FAPA office (altho, to safeguard themselves from sentiment against Michelism, they had said in the Open Letter that politics should play no part in the election). The contradictory nature and emphasis of the Open Letter and the Mailing material is probably due to a difference in the time they were written but just how is not clear.

The election campaign thus consisted almost entirely of attacks on one’s opponents rather than recitation of one’s own qualifications. On the positive side, Michel pledged continuance of Wollheim’s type of administration, including free press, no censorship, and constitutional government. Philadelphia promised harmony.

The Crucial Period

The *Comet* group was stunned by this barrage. What in the world? they wondered. What's got into Don? All this talk about censorship – has one of the others really advocated such a thing? Sabotage the FAPA? What sense would there be in us doing that? Holy cow!

They made some ineffectual attempts to remedy the trouble. Moskowitz headed off as many votes as he could toward Baltadonis, at the same time that Sykora hastily issued an unauthorized mimeoed sheet in support of SaM, and, to a lesser extent, of Madle. A few cards were dropped by the Cometeers to individuals who possibly wouldn't know what was happening. But, due partly to being mailed later than the date set by the Constitution, there had been on the ballots a request that they be returned immediately. Most of them were in before the Fourth Mailing went out, carrying *Comet's* pitiful little announcement, and the masses of incumbents' literature. After the results of the vote were announced, the *SFFan* appeared with a Fanfarade written before the election, and intended to appear before, which continued the attacks on FAPA anti-Wollheimists.

There was little that Speer, Baltadonis, and Madle could do to change the results of their opponents' actions, and they didn't do all that they could have. For the most part, they simply sat and waited and chewed their fingernails.

McPhail appeared to Speer in Oklahoma City, plunging him into deepest gloom with the statement that he had voted against the Philadelphia ticket, despite his endorsement of Baltadonis for president before the fight got so hot. Not even all the PSFS would vote the straight ticket. Every little indication was seized upon as perhaps showing how the broader current was running. Baltadonis, before the votes were counted, started a check-up to see if the count was honest, but not enough FAPAers were willing to tell how they voted to make this effective.

Regardless of what the returns might be, Speer moved to line up opinion against the methods of the Wollheim group, asking some of his correspondents if they would support a petition of protest, provided the petition didn't call for a new election. Receiving uniformly favorable answers, he drew up such a petition, based on his own observations and information from the Philly group and Dick Wilson, but his moving to Washington/DC delayed circulation thereof.

A week after July 1 when they were supposed to be counted, the ballots began to be counted and checked by various members of the counting committee, to determine the final vote, some counts having been made and standings made known before all the votes were in. Michel came out with more votes than Baltadonis and Moskowitz combined. Due to

disgust at both sides, some five votes had gone to Wiggins. Wollheim had twice as many as Madle. Lowndes shaded into the vice-presidency over Speer and Wilson, who tied for second place. Taurasi was practically undisputed for the Secretary-Treasurer's job, carried that easily. It had been a complete victory for the Michelists.

The Undertow

But it was a Pyrrhic victory, for of that day was come a kingdom's ruin.

The general run of the FAPA does not seem to have become angered, at first, over the unfairness of Wollheim's last-minute accusations in the election, the sending out of the Open Letter with the ballots, but after some four weeks had passed, definite feeling against the administration set in. No one wanted another election, but it was felt that the tactics had been unfair. Perhaps the circulation of Speer's petition, setting forth in definite form the various transgressions, had something to do with solidifying feeling, tho it was not finally published in the official organ till the next spring. A general growing dislike of the Wollheim "dictatorship" was probably a more important cause.

But there were more concrete things behind the detraction from Wollheim's prestige, perhaps the most important of which was the break-up of the second Greater New York SFL chapter, new name for the Queens SFL. There was preliminary trouble when the Red group, with sympathizers among the Queens fans, such as Wilson, wanted to send a science fiction delegate to the Youth Congress, as the resolution provided that all members must contribute toward his expenses. Taurasi, as chairman, refused to allow a vote on it as being unconstitutional. He was impeached (charges brought), but before the next meeting, when the trial was to be held, support for the Wollheim men fell away, and the matter was dropped.

When the Wollheim clique came into the QSFL, it put Sykora in an awkward position for, in the case of the Cinema Club, he had refused to be in the same club with them. While he didn't actually resign from the QSFL/GNYSFL, he attended few meetings, and his dues fell into arrears. Wollheim and Pohl moved that he be expelled for non-payment of dues and nonattendance, but it seems there was constitutional provision that the accused must be present in cases of expulsion. Taurasi, as chairman, refused to allow the show to go on, and was again impeached, and this time removed from the chairmanship, tho by the rules of the Science

Fiction League, he retained the Directorship, as the member with the lowest-numbered SFL certificate of the lot. He chose, however, to resign completely, and exerted some influence on other Queens members, not including Wilson. Sykora took the matter to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, sponsor of the SFL, who decided to dissolve the chapter and grant new charters only on condition Sykora and Wollheim should never be in the same group.

Thus broke Taurasi with Wollheim, and it was more important than Wollheim had imagined. Taurasi, in the Transition, had, with Thompson and Gillespie, formed United Publications. When Gillespie left for more vital things, Taurasi-Thompson Publications quickly turned into Cosmic Publications, with Moskowitz, Kuslan, and several Borough of Queens fans joining. Then Cosmic reached out even further, and even had some connections with Green Jester Publications of the Leeds, England, SFL. But their crowning victory was Wiggins' Galactic Publications, including the field-leading *Science Fiction Fan*. Taurasi, for his part, had established *Fantasy-News*, which forged ahead of the other weekly, Wilson's, in circulation. So when Wollheim antagonized Taurasi, it was the signal for a very large number of fans to turn cold toward the W.

Speer was not in Washington long, making side-visits to Conover, Gillespie, and others, before he arranged for a trip to Philadelphia, which coincided with Wilson's vacation sojourn there. Wilson, long considered in the Wollheim orbit, at this gathering with the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society stated himself as siding with them on Michelism, FAPA politics, and other issues. Tho nothing very concrete came of this, it indicated another weakening of the Wollheim group's grip on fandom, and all the PSFS and Wilson added their names to the Petition of Reprimand, the list of signers of which presently grew to include more than half the total FAPA membership, including many strict neutrals, such as McPhail, Swisher, and Farsaci.

The Situation in the West

In the Los Angeles SFL-SFA was previewed the coming struggle among fans as a whole, like a Spanish Civil War of ideas as to the object of fandom.

After Shroyer and Wollheim and the various accessories had exchanged a blast or two each way, the arguments broke down mainly into repetition and restatement, as those things will, and a howl was raised, not

only among the subscribers, but also within the LASFL. The situation there was a peculiar one, as the leading fans of the group, Forrest J Ackerman and Myrtle R. Douglas (“Morojo”), were inclined toward sociological discussions of a Michelistic nature, whereas the majority of the whole membership was opposed to such things. The result was a disunity of feeling not present in other fan groups, but the LASFL spirit was too strong for it to be at any time threatened with dissolution.

At any rate, the anti-controversialists presently got the upper hand, and established a board of censors to keep controversial material out of *Imagination!* There seems to be some confusion, however, as to their actual instructions in the matter, for Ackerman told Wollheim that well-written Michelist writings would not be barred, and the board of censors included T. Bruce Yerke, who is scarcely one to desire a lid on controversy.

And of course, Madge’s most important feature, *Voice of the Imagi-Nation*, was pretty much laid open to any kind of discussions among the readers.

Charlie Hornig, one-time ed of *Wonder Stories*, guest-edited an issue of the madgazine, putting into it all his ideas for improvement. The result was at first a divided opinion, but presently there was a very definite vote for a return to the Madge of simplifyd spelng, Ackermanese, scientificombinations, and a Voice of the Imagi-Nation running letters in the sequence received, with editorial comments parenthesized. The effect of Hornig’s fiasco was to endear the old Madge to the hearts of many fans who had formerly been very critical of her.

Very shortly after her return to her old dress, however, Madge went into a state of suspended animation. Forrie the J, who had a disproportionately large part in the work connected with publication, became employed with the Government and no longer had time to work on the magazine, and the others couldn’t carry on without him. Later Ackerman is supposed to have lost his job, but there was no attempt to revive *Imagination!*.

After Madge’s demise – or suspension of animation, if you will – Los Angeles published as much material, probably, as a monthly *Imagination!* would have carried, but, because each group publishes the kind of material it desires, and much of it is not charged for, further clash over what should and shouldn’t be published was avoided.

Then came Technocracy. When the facts about it began to be circulated, it was received with astounding enthusiasm by Angelenos from all camps, and shortly they set out to campaign fandom for the coming of

the Technate.

The Order Begins to Crumble

At the same time that Speer's petition was helping build up sentiment against Wollheim, it was by no means making him more popular. People were getting tired of this constant wrangling.

The next Mailing of the FAPA carried voluminous refutation by the Philadelphians and allies of the charges against them, and, mailed in a separate envelope, several 1¢, 1d, and 5¢ printed pamphlets on matters sociological, by the CPASF, the Leeds SFL, and Speer. FAPA members rose up in wrath when they saw the postage that had been expended on this envelope, out of the FAPA treasury, on material which many thought out of place in the FAPA.

But perhaps the most curious development was that Wollheim and Michel made no further attempts to defend their charges (and have not, to this writing) and, instead, made an unsuccessful play for support from those who desired an end to controversy. Speer and the Cometeers were all primed for some fine sarcasms aimed at such method of evading the burden of proof of the election accusations, but found themselves utterly alone. Their former allies, the Flushing-Newark axis, were leading the center group that desired an end to controversy. The Wollheim clique refused to fight. Independents, Dale Hart excepted, felt much as did the Cosmics. Under urging from their friends, the defeated ones agreed to reduce, but not entirely do away with, their replies to Wollheim and Michel's inferences ("Their hands are not clean", etc). But circumstances unforeseen intervened to prevent even this.

Meanwhile, the whole political situation in the FAPA was changing. McPhail was reported as attempting to form a Center Party with Wiggins, which it was thought might hold the balance of power between the two extreme groups. Wiggins, for some reason, held back, not desirous of setting up anything in opposition to Wollheim, and the plan fell thru. When the 1939 elections appeared on the horizon, however, McPhail joined with Taurasi and Marconette in forming the National Progressives, an anti-controversialist, nationalistic group, which was thrown into a turmoil by application for admission by Wollheim's group, on the Progressives' terms. Other definite parties were there none; of little two-man combines, some.

Tho not yet acting upon his observations, Speer foresaw that a new

kind of fandom was coming into being. His prophecies won a contest conducted by the Madgicians, and received some notoriety. Their essence was that there would be a tremendous influx of new fans (afterwards termed “the barbarian invasion”) as a result of the cooperation of the professional magazine editors, whose (the barbarians’) influence would be felt after the World Convention in 1939, making fandom a more dignified place, with a less spontaneous air, and a relaxing of controversy. He was wrong in his placing of the time, for before the end of 1938, the Second Fandom had passed into the Second Transition, which this history treats as continuing to the time of the World Convention.

The Decline and Fall of Wollheim

We have already seen the sentiment setting in against Wollheim, and, separately, against the kind of fandom in which he held dominance. Despite this, however, he was still in control of three of the four FAPA offices, writing for the yet-leading fan magazine of the time, and still acknowledged as the most important fan by a majority of his contemporaries.

When Rothman planned the 1938 Philadelphia Conference, he had hoped to include a discussion on the purpose of science-fiction, by two rivals in the professional field, and Wollheim and Sykora. Wollheim, on the plaint that three of the speakers were to be antiMichelist, declined the invitation. As a result, the Philadelphia Conference assembled one bright autumn day (while the garbage men were on strike) without Wollheim or any of his first-line lieutenants. There were several present who might have sided with him had he been there, but, under the existing circumstances, went along with the majority, who despised or ignored him. The discussion was carried thru without anyone to represent the Michelist views on the purpose of science-fiction, and at the buffet supper afterwards all present drank the toast, “Gentlemen, down with Wollheim.”

To the amazement of all, the coup de grace was administered by Wollheim himself. In a long paragraph of various news items in the NL, reporter Pohl announced, QUADRUMVIRATE QUITTS. The reason given was rather hazy. Wollheim had become disgusted with fandom, discouraged at the results of his efforts to give it a real meaning, and was therefore ceasing his activities in the FAPA, his regular writings and publishing, tho he would continue to issue occasionals and take part in the meetings of the Futurian Society of New York, which was the Wollheim

half of the GNYSFL. Pohl, Michel, and Lowndes were quitting with him.

Months later, more detailed explanations were given. Wollheim, in the *Science Fiction Fan*, told how fans had refused to face his arguments, and instead of answering them, had attacked him. To be longer classed with such a group were a discredit.

Lowndes, in his FAPA magazine, explained that he quit as vice-president because he could not have been an impartial judge in disputes, and as long as his group remained in office, the minority who had opposed them would fill the mailings with vilification, charges, etc.

Wollheim formally resigned; Lowndes took his place and appointed Wiggins vice-president; Lowndes then resigned, with the others, and Wiggins appointed a new slate of officers, following Wollheim's suggestions: Marconette as vice-president and Rothman as Official Editor. For once, the clique had carried out things in good legal form.

But the sins of the fathers descended upon Wiggins. Wollheim had made to break with him for publishing a certain long article by Moskowitz. Wiggins closed the pages of the *SFFan* to Moskowitz and any other writers who would be engaged in disputation of Wollheim's views, in the interest of peace, and Wollheim returned. Cosmic Publications thereupon expelled Wiggins. Around year's end Wiggins also expressed a disgust with fandom and intention to get out, but nothing came of this. Wiggins was now definitely in the Wollheim orbit, and favoring Michelism. He even went beyond them in upholding the Wollheim-dominated committee's right to put on the World Convention when they had already abdicated. In a short time, Wiggins became easily the best-hated man in fandom.

The Changing Tendency Among Fan Magazines

The first newcomers were Harry Warner, Jr, and Jim Avery. All during the Second Fandom, of course, there had been a few new ones drifting in all the time, but the almost total lack of contact between the fan world and the professional magazines with their wider circulation made such neophytes few. Dale Hart definitely belongs to the Second Fandom. But, tho they were almost "old timers" by the time the full rush of new fans arrived, Warner and Avery belonged to the new day. They appeared rather without warning, dropping postcards to various fans, soliciting material for their proposed hektographed magazine, *Spaceways*. Warner was to do the

typing, in Hagerstown, Md, and Avery the hektoing, in Skowhegan, Me. It was, ultimately, to the good of *Spaceways* that the hekto broke down and Warner was forced to purchase a mimeograph. In the more distinguished mimeo format, *Spaceways* was immediately in the top rank.

Under the influence of support from the pro magazines for fandom, and a wider appeal in fan magazine material, many new names began to show up in reports of the meetings of the new Queens SFL (phenomenally successful reincarnation of the Taurasi branch of the GNY fission), credited for items in *Nell*, in readers' departments of fan magazines, and elsewhere, tho but a comparative few of these have become "active" fans at this writing. There were several feminines among the newcomers. In the past, girl fans had usually been sisters or cousins of the male fans, and these neophytes, largely in Queens, were not exceptions. One amusing exception to this rule was Peggy Gillespie, who, it finally leaked out, was not Jack Gillespie's sister but the family cat, with Dick Wilson and amateur astronomer Abe Oshinsky doing the ghost-writing.

Besides the new fans, quite a few of the men prominent in the First Fandom reappeared, some, such as Ray Palmer, as successes in the pro field (at the same time that many newer fans were scoring successes as authors), others, like Bob Tucker, as active fans. Bob had a letter published in *Brass Tacks*, and apparently was immediately deluged with letters asking him to return to fandom. He did so, lining up especially with Warner, Avery, and Wiggins, and began turning out reams of humorous and unhumorous publications. Some of these returns of the oldsters began as early as the Newark Convention, but few became as active again as Tucker.

The boys were getting older, too. Early in 1938 fans had been vastly surprised to hear of the birth of Wiggins' second daughter. Bob Tucker had a family. Ackerman proudly announced he'd come of voting age and registered as a Socialist. Leslie Perri, illustratrix for Pohl's *Mind of Man* and Lowndes' *Le Vombiteur*, etc, and Fred Pohl began to be mentioned as possibly fandom's first matrimonial match; altho some married couples had afterwards begun work in the fan field together, such as the R.D. Swishers, whose *S-F Check-List* undertook to list all fanmags actually published or even proposed.

And at the same time that some old-timers were returning, certain of the prominent men of the Second Fandom were forced to reduce their activities. The results of Ackerman's employment have already been mentioned. Osheroff was forced to completely discontinue his, probably due to parental pressure, and Taurasi took over his *Fantasy Scout* as one of

the myriad supplements to *Fantasy News*. Wollheim's retirement has been dealt with. Speer, on a Thanksgiving trip to visit Kuslan in Connecticut and return via *Nell's* first birthday party (she passed away half a year later, and Wilson began issuing *Escape*), ran his car into a telephone pole, and the resulting financial burden, parental pressure, and loss of typewriter in the shuffle forced him to cut his activities to a minimum. Baltadonis, attending college, had practically no time for fan activities any more. Ted Carnell, high-ranking British fan, announced that after the 1939 British Convention he would have to give up most of his fan activity – reason: newly married. Claire P. Beck, the gloomy hermit of Lakeport, Calif, hitchhiked to New York to visit, where he fell in with Michel's crowd; after his return he announced an end to the *SFCritic*, and lapsed.

The change was reflected in the fan magazines. *Spaceways* was the trailblazer, as its pages were filled with gossip about forthcoming science-fiction, short science stories by both amateurs and professional writers, and almost no “fan” material such as characterized the Second Fandom. Its editorial policy of no controversial material on politics, religion, etc (jeered at by the submerged liberals), was quickly picked up by new and nascent fan magazines throughout the country. *Fantascience Digest*, Madle at the helm, rising to the fore with the *SFCollector's* virtual disappearance, went into mimeographed format and took *Fantasy Magazine* as its ideal. Bob Tucker, a member of Cosmic Publications now, issued a yearbook listing all stf stories in the stf mags and *Argosy* during 1938. *Imagination!*'s mimeographed format was widely copied, but by magazines of an entirely different type in interest. Gossip about collector's items, pro-mag line-up, author interviews, observations on the flood of new professional s-f magazines that gave such an impetus to the change in fandom, were the order of the day, and discussion about sociological systems, religion, etc, rigorously tabooed in most of the leading fan magazines.

The old-line fans now justified their claims to the title of “science fiction” fans by showing that they had not forgotten what they had once known about it, nor lost contact. There was almost a feeling of relief as they turned to something they could be sure they were good in. Practically no one attempted to buck the tide completely; even the *SFFan* began featuring more articles on stf books, etc, to pad out the material written mostly by the Quadrumvirate, which consisted of monotonous repetitions of the Michelist theory thinly veiled as biographies and exchanges of compliments.

“The official organ of the mutual admiration society of Wollheim and Company” the new British school described the *SFFan*. For in Britain, too,

a new race had arisen. Disgusted with the lack of appreciation given *Novae Terrae* by lethargic Britishers and Americans, Hanson had finally given it up, and by the time of the 1939 British Convention, the SFA monthly organ was *Satellite*, a humorous magazine modeled along American lines by the new English fans.

Even that stronghold of subversive propaganda, the FAPA, came thoroly under the dominance of the new order. Controversial material dwindled to fractional proportions; strong literary efforts were put forward, the Swisher *Check-List*, Miske's *CHAOS*, Speer's *Sustaining* program, Michel's *Futurart*, LA's *Sweetness and Light*, and so far, far into the night. A definite date for mailings was established under Rothman, till he moved to Washington/DC to work.

New Fandom's Struggle for Recognition

Another powerful factor in the influx of new fans and the spreading of tranquility over fandom was the necessity to work together for and take part in the World Science-Fiction Convention.

It will be recalled that the 1937 Convention in Philadelphia appointed a committee, in which the Wollheim clique was predominant, to handle this affair. Owing to this committee's lack of activity and the unpopularity of Wollheim with many fans, arrangements were made at the Sykora-dominated Newark conclave for a new committee. The successful circulation of the petition of protest, signed by so many of his friends, convinced Sykora that he had acted wrongly in that case, but rather than yield to the Wollheim committee, he and Moskowitz, plus Taurasi, again took the law into their own hands and formed New Fandom, an organization whose primary purpose and *raison d'être* was the sponsoring of the World Convention as a gigantic affair.

In this they ran counter to the desires of Olon F. Wiggins, who felt that none but dyed-in-the-wool fans, whom he counted at one time as numbering about fifty, should be admitted. Wiggins feared that accepting help from the professional magazines would result in fandom's losing its independence. He was almost the only one who held such opinions, however, and the general attitude was: Wiggins? That old nut? He's the guy that sold out to Wollheim.

New Fandom was a heterogeneous Frankenstein's creation, the core of which was the Science Fiction Advancement Association, an unimportant hold-over from the First Transition. To this Moskowitz added

his manuscript bureau and other odds and ends possessed by the Triumvirs, such as the magazine *Helios*, were announced as formally going into the pot to make New Fandom. All subscribers to *Helios* were temporarily members of New Fandom, but a dollar dues was required for full membership. All members of the SFAA, including Don Wollheim, found themselves, by the magic of former president Raymond van Houten, New Fandomites. The name was derived from Moskowitz's observation that a new order was coming into being in fandom, and he hoped that someday this would be the long-sought organization whose boundaries should coincide with fandom's.

Its administration was most peculiar, as the members had no check on the acts of its leaders, except the possibility that they might turn from the organization and renounce its leadership. This check, while effective in larger matters, couldn't work to prevent the employing of tactics in minor affairs that the majority of its members didn't like, or the making of such blanket statements as that New Fandom opposes all isms. The only office was the appointive one of Secretary and General Manager, held by Moskowitz. He, Taurasi, and Sykora, and to a lesser degree the rest of the QSFL and van Houten, controlled the organization's destinies.

Naturally, with such a genesis and such a nature, the club was wide open to attack, and only the earlier discrediting of the Wollheim group saved New Fandom from an early extinction. At the Philadelphia Conference of September 1938, much dubiousness was expressed over the success of this "benevolent dictatorship" (Moskowitz had used the term "democratic dictatorship", comparing it to a professional magazine, which must respect the wishes of the readers, tho they have no direct control over its management).

The absence of the Moskowitz-hating group from the Conference, however, caused those present to give a rather passive acquiescence to New Fandom's assumption of leadership. Speer proposed a motion which did no more than recognize New Fandom's primacy, and it was passed the way most motions are passed at friendly, half-informal gatherings, without opposition, tho many didn't vote for it.

The wording of the resolution was so clumsy and hazy that it was quickly forgotten, and news reports from the Taurasi-Moskowitz group magnified it into a blanket approval of anything New Fandom might do. At the same time, word went around that, in some way, New Fandom had gotten the support of fandom behind it.

That was all that fandom was waiting for. No one wanted to join a club that had every chance of folding up, but once it was told that it was

going to be successful, the conditions requisite for its success took form. At the same time that the 100% fans were giving it their support, the professional magazines began to put forward their promised support for the WSFC, publishing letters and announcements for fans and scientifictionists desiring to attend to get in touch with Moskowitz. Also, soon after, appeared the first issue of the official magazine, *New Fandom*, whose freedom from the usual Taurasi-Moskowitz errors of language, and general excellence of make-up and content, won grudging admiration even from SaM's foe, Wilson.

Thus the new heads of the fan world came into their own. Heart and soul of this new group was Taurasi's weekly *Fantasy-News*. The magazinewspaper had been begun simply to fill out unexpired subscriptions to Taurasi-Thompson's *Cosmic Tales* when it was turned over to the Kuslans, but *Fanny*'s success had been so phenomenal that it quickly took the lead over *Nell* in general opinion, appearing mimeographed long before the latter did (the era of hektographed magazines was passing), at a lower price, and usually with more pages. The content was designed to appeal to borderline fans who were interested more in the reading of science fiction than in the deep-dyed fan activities. Frequently more than half of the content was written by Moskowitz. In all cases the King's English was murdered, to such an extent in many cases that meaning was not clear, and the viewpoint was narrow, but *Startling Stories* reviewed, with nothing but praise, *Fantasy-News*, every month – a thing done for no other fan magazine. Apparently, there was a working agreement with Weisinger for bringing fandom back into the fold.

Just when the revolution occurred cannot be definitely determined. Up to the FAPA election, the Wollheim group had been the acknowledged heads of the fan world, despite their minority in many matters. Sometime between the close of the FAPA campaign and the Philadelphia Conference, the absolute viewpoint changed, and Wollheim and Wiggins were the "rebels" instead of those who opposed them. The W's attacks at last built up an overwhelming opposition to him, which "assumed" itself into power, once united.

By the spring of 1939, Wiggins was practically the only hold-out. When Wilson and Moskowitz ended their feud, the former expressed, none too enthusiastically, his backing of New Fandom's leadership of the Convention. Wollheim, Michel, and Pohl acquiesced while growling puns like "New Fan-dump" and "New fan-dumb", and Lowndes said that in many ways he favored New Fandom's integration of the fan world, if for no other reason than that it would more quickly bring fans to the end of the

trail of their present activities, so they would have to turn to Michelism (and indeed, many very active fans began to desire to reduce their activity and lead normal lives). Ackerman, somewhat tongue-in-cheekly, joined New Fandom. There was even a move, which didn't get very far, to re-merge the Queens SFL and the Futurian Society of New York, the Wilson-Wollheim-Kornbluth NY faction.

Early in June, the long-delayed OSA Powwow was held, and two-thirds of those present expressed the intention of attending the WSFC (Louis Clark, Oklahoman in Washington/DC also was expecting to go, and Miles McPhail, cousin of the Mc). Dan McPhail, tho financially able, wasn't able to leave his job, the same thing that held back Tucker, Avery, & many more. Others present at the Powwow were Jack Speer, on vacation from DC, and Walter Sullivan, sometime of Queens, plus such astral beings as the Invisible Man, Injun Joe, Lawrence Paschall, Walter Jackson, and John A. Bristol.

The Reaction Against Reaction

From much of the foregoing, it may be justly supposed that the retirement of many fans, including the Wollheim clique, was not as complete as had been at first thot – and intended. Indeed, one member of the Quadrumvirate, Lowndes, after resigning his FAPA offices became even more active, with the publication of a hektographed weekly of opinion, comment, poetry, and whatnot, termed *Le Vombiteur*, or, following the vogue for pet names, *Levy*.

In late May, Wilson, Wollheim, and Michel toured the East in the first-named's car, Maine, Canada, Chicago, and Washington their periphery, visiting fans all along the way. Gillespie and Pohl planned a hitchhike to Washington to visit Rothman, for whom Pohl had been selling stories to the pros, and Jack Speer, Pohl's rival for FAPA vice-president.

In this campaign, Rothman and Taurasi stood opposed for president, and both made mistakes which resulted in ballots being sent out to inactive members as well as active, tho prohibited by constitutional amendment, and the Mailing was long delayed in being sent out. A good, old-fashioned mess resulted.

Meanwhile, Pohl was busy trying to build up an alternative organization to New Fandom, in the Futurian Federation of the World, but even his comrades knew not whether to take the effort seriously, so queer did some aspects of it seem.

But Pohl got some support, and the significant thing is that it included loyal New Fandomites Warner and Avery. In other directions, too, there were signs of pullings away from the Moskowitz clique. Bob Tucker, though a member of Cosmic Publications and New Fandom, established for use of himself, Avery, and some other North Centralites a Vulcan Manuscript Bureau, in competition to New Fandom's, before all their publications were combined into the omnibus magazine, *Nova*. Besides the Futurian Federation support, Avery and Miske and others had other dealings with the members of the Wollheim group, but there seemed little possibility that that clique would head the new opposition building up against the ultra-classicists of New Fandom.

Only for a brief period in the fall had *Cosmic* been in the Center – now they were definitely one extreme, and between them and the old Quadrumvirate at the other was a broad, hazy center group, fading out on both sides from those who had only one or two bones to pick with Moskowitz, as Bob Madle, to those, like Dick Wilson, who varied from the Wollheim line only in a few matters. Nevertheless, into this category come a good many of the new fans, tho of course the majority have gone under the leadership of Newark-Queens.

Another exception to the prevailing trend was the rising popularity of fan fiction – fiction in which the principal characters are fans – either synthetic, type characters, or actual personages. *Cosmic Tales*, under Kuslan, was foremost in this; and “Mickey” also calls to mind another exception to the main current. Tho the leading fan magazines were practically all of the *Fantasy Magazine* type, in the second level were many of the 1938, “fanny” kind.

All of which indicates that the reaction will not be permitted to go to such great extremes – The Third Fandom will not be 1935 all over again.

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– *Full Length Articles #2* (1939, edited by Jack Speer)

The Origin of Fandom (1944)

Donald A. Wollheim

It is constantly surprising to note that in spite of the vast amount of writing and talking done by science fiction fandom today, very little attention is actually paid to the background and history of the field. Notice was brought to my attention that the only attempt at historical research in fandom has been done by one who is admittedly not very familiar with the earliest phases of the field. I refer to Jack Speer's several efforts at fan history – his data does not seem to extend much before 1936.

This artefact does not propose to be a carefully detailed piece of research. It is, rather, a general effort to depict the rise of fandom and covers the period which might be called prehistorical – as well as the Year One of Fandom. That is, from 1929 to 1936.

In his history, Jack Speer has detected what he terms several successive waves of fans, which he has termed First, Second, and Third Fandoms, the present being the tail end of the Third Fandom period (recently Claude Degler was called down for claiming that this was really the period of the rise of the Fourth Fandom. The caller-down denied this. However, consideration of the claim seems to have increasing merit. But that is a different story). Speer determines those periods through different phases of activity such as the changing national organizations and the leading club centers, the leading fan magazines and the leaders in fandom.

While I do not entirely accept Speer's version of fan history, for the sake of the story let us imagine that fandom does operate in recurring waves. In that case there is an entire fandom about which Jack Speer has not heard – or else never recognized. This might be truly called the First Fandom and all the others shoved back accordingly. It covered a period from 1929 to 1933. 1933 to 1934 is what Jack Speer calls an "interregnum" (a period between fandoms, a period lacking direction, order, and definite centralization). In 1934 arose the beginning of the type of fan we know and understand. For that reason one may call the fandom that went before – Pre-fandom.

These definitions are important, for what I wish to make clear is that despite such activity in that Pre-fandom period of dim legend, it did not actually merge into the First Fandom. It supplies mainly the fertile soil for that fandom to grow in. Out of that Pre-fandom also emerged many names

which we connect today with either professional work or certain shadowy occasional fanness. Such names are: Ray Palmer, Julius Schwartz, Mort Weisinger, Lester Anderson, Clifton Amsbury, P. Schuyler [Miller], Walter Dennis, Aubrey McDermott.

But what do I mean by fandom? Fandom is not just the readers of science fiction magazines. If that were so, there was a fandom in April of 1926. Manifestly it means more than that. Fandom means the group of readers who maintain contacts with each other by means *independent* of the pro magazines and who seek to gravitate together on grounds of having certain interests in closer conjunction to each other than to the general public, which interests are also connected with science-fiction.

The “means independent of the pro-magazines” is the all-important binding link. It may be a national fan club, it may be a local one, it may be through mutual [exchange] of fan published, non professional fan magazines. Today, fandom is bound by all of these things, and each fan in many ways. Correspondence rings also play a strong part – but such rings – unless they develop into organizations – cannot be easily traced, do not allow for much expansion, and can not honestly be called a binding link capable of self advancement.

Amazing Stories back in the late twenties had a peculiar feature; it had a letter column which was used by readers writing in commenting on stories and getting their letters published. Eventually, readers would start asking for correspondents. Correspondents on the subject of science. In those days everyone thought the only reason for science-fiction was to teach science in sugar-coated pills. That was the famous Gernsback Delusion and while it lasted, true fandom could not emerge. A fan of those days first had to consider himself a science fan; secondly a science-fiction fan. It was something to apologize for.

By and by, the readers would write in suggesting the organization of a science correspondence club. The editors approved of the idea and every now and then, through 1928, would publish letters suggesting the thing. Various plans for it were paraded out – but oddly enough, nothing seemed to happen. Just talk.

It was not until the November 1929 issue of *Amazing Stories* that a letter appeared finally announcing the formation of the thing. The letter was by Leonard May and it stated that, several months before, the Science Correspondence Club had come into existence. It was then being organized and a club bulletin was in preparation. The organization of the club, which claimed thirty members, was credited to Aubrey Clements and Raymond A. Palmer.

In the January 1930 issue appeared further information by a letter from Walter Dennis. It stated that the club now had fifty members and that the organization was proceeding rapidly. The club was planning on dues of \$3.00 a year. (Remember this was pre-depression.)

The Science Correspondence Club grew rapidly. Fandom was already on its way. Its first bulletin caught fire among the dry tinder of readers and membership grew fast. I believe it reached the figure of almost two hundred before it started on the downgrade. But it remained, in theory, a club for the conduct of correspondence about science, and that was its blindness. Its bulletin had several names but finally settled down to the title of *Cosmology*. Sixteen numbers in all appeared (if my memory does not fail me – it is the one major fanzine missing from my collection). *Cosmology* mainly devoted its pages to simplified science articles; science fiction always occupied a minor place among its pages. It would make exceedingly dull reading to a fan today. Many fans would probably reject it as a fan magazine entirely.

Yet the group swept on. Raymond A. Palmer, Amsbury, Miller, Dennis, and McDermott steered it along favorable channels until a man named F.B. Eason was elected president. Eason appears to have been a curious man, with a Napoleonic complex. Or perhaps a Hitler one. He succeeded in wrecking this club virtually single-handed.

According to a little leaflet put out by Raymond Palmer in 1935 in a last effort to save the club, Eason misused his authority as president by attempting to dictate to the members. Which is to say that he ordered officers and members around by means of telegrams and letters instructing them to do this, that, and the other thing. He levied special dues for objects he alone wanted. He raised hob with the editors of the *Cosmology* and organized local clubs composed of stooges who overrode the wiser decisions of the founding members.

It should be added here that his installation appears to have been due to illness overcoming Palmer, who had been President. Palmer worked so hard on the club that he suffered a nervous breakdown. It was during his enforced absence that Eason got his damage in.

When Palmer returned to activity he found the organization virtually pulverized. The International Scientific Association, which was the name adopted by the Science Correspondence Club in its second year, was reduced to nothing. Its publications had not appeared in many months, its members had mostly quit, refusing to have anything to do with President Eason, its funds were nil. Palmer, Amsbury and McDermott published one last issue of *Cosmology* in an effort to revive the club. It was dated “1933”,

it contained a new constitution, and was entirely devoted to science material. Just to show the wide gap that still existed between the I.S.A. group and modern fandom, I will quote the purpose of the organization as given in its constitution in 1933:

“– to promote the advancement of scientific thought, to encourage discussion and exchange of new ideas, and to establish and maintain better co-ordination between the scientifically inclined laymen of the world –”.

Not a word about science-fiction!

But, independently of the I.S.A., science-fiction had acquired a consciously pro-fiction fandom of its own. It developed in New York in the form of a club called the Scienceers. It was organized in December 1929 by Nathan Greenfield. It consisted originally of four members, but rapidly grew to perhaps twenty or more. Allan Glasser became its foremost leader. Mortimer Weisinger [and] Julius Schwartz became other leaders. In July 1930, it brought out its mimeographed club organ – *The Planet*.

This Scienceers still proclaimed itself a science club but its publication concerned itself mainly with science-fiction. Its meetings were likewise science-fiction meetings. The members were aware of the I.S.A., some of them were members, but their activities never were in support of that club; they were always somewhat independent and outside the I.S.A. movement.

Other local groups were developing, though none had such influence and they left virtually no mark at all on record. I have records of the Junior Scientific Association whose base was mainly on the West Coast. Headed by Jim Nicholson, Forrest Ackerman and Stockton Shaw, it also proclaimed its intent to create a liking for science among young men and women. *But* it proposed to do this by “encouraging the reading of science-fiction”! Glory be! The idea was beginning to sink in!

While the I.S.A. was riding its way through the arid regions of science-hobbying, the Scienceers were learning their way around and beginning to think like fans. Their club was wobbly as an organization – it had changed format several times and there had been treasury trouble among other things. The members, though, had ideas and so in January 1932 there appeared the very first magazine that was not a club organ of any sort, but was published to be a fan magazine for science-fiction enthusiasts. It was *The Time Traveler*, edited by Allan Glasser, assisted by Julius Schwartz, Mort Weisinger and Forrest Ackerman.

The Time Traveler gathered speed and popularity and with its third

issue became printed. It rapidly picked up followers and would-be fan writers, and gradually drew into its course the attention of the more interested science-fiction readers.

In the summer of 1932, the crisis came that split the Scienceers and ended *The Time Traveler*. Allen Glasser and Julius Schwartz had a falling out. Glasser, after a brief fight, was forced out of fandom. Schwartz and Weisinger, joined by Ray Palmer, started a successor to *The Time Traveler* called *Science Fiction Digest*.

1933 found *Science Fiction Digest* growing in strength and fandom still in the days just prior to any real fan organization. For the first I.S.A. was cold and dead. Glasser tried to found a group called the “Fantasy Fan Fraternity” which joined him in oblivion.

But the same stirrings that moved through *Amazing Stories* brought forth a new growth in the same way that the first Science Correspondence Club had come out of the dark. In September 1932, three fans who had come to correspond through the pages of *Amazing Stories*’ letter columns formed a club. It was called the “Edison Science Correspondence Club”. The monitors were E.C. Love, Carl Johnson, and Walter Kubiilius. None of them knew anything about the I.S.A., the Scienceers or *The Time Traveler*.

The new club dawdled on, always small, always limited, receiving little publicity. The name changed to the “Cosmos Science Club”, [which] published an organ called *The Radiogram* – later, one called the *Edigram*. But it was a point of interest that science-fiction was never subdued in their pages as in *Cosmology*. By October 1933 the club began to build itself up. John Michel, a new member, and Edward Gervais reorganized the group and called it the International Cosmos Science Club, and started on an organizational drive. By that time all the other organizations in fandom were non-existent. Besides there was only the *Science Fiction Digest*.

In May 1934 another tiny group made its appearance. Wilson Shepherd of Alabama and Donald A. Wollheim began to push a little hektographed journal called *The Bulletin of The International Science Fiction Guild*. This early fan magazine still exists, having passed through several metamorphoses, and today is known as *The Phantagraph* – a name it took in 1936. It is the oldest existing fan mag. The Guild was originally a local group of three or four around Shepherd’s vicinity, but it acquired a few members during 1934. Wollheim, rapidly assuming a position second to Shepherd’s, was authorized to contact the International Cosmos Science Club, which had headquarters in New York also, according to their letters in *Amazing Stories*.

By November 1934, I had visited and joined the New York Branch of the ICSC, meeting there John Michel, William Sykora, and Herbert Goudket (a fan active in that group until its dissolution).

In September 1934, under Michel's editorship, the I.C.S.C. had published the first number of its official organ, *The International Observer*. It followed the pattern of *Cosmology* rather than that of *The Science Fiction Digest*. It was mainly science articles, and only during the next two years did science fiction gradually edge out the other material.

Now I pause to point out here that the real activity of the First Fandom is to be found here in 1934. For we were not aware of any influence from the I.S.A.'s former members. *The Science Fiction Digest*, which changed its name to *Fantasy Magazine*, was followed by us, but not greeted too enthusiastically. We had at the beginning only sparse contact with its editors and by the end of the year were feuding with them. A feud which lasted until the Second Eastern Science Fiction Convention of 1937.

The feud developed through three reasons – one, though none of us had been associated with the Scienceers, Sykora and Goudket had been friends with the Glasser faction and they felt that Schwartz had acted unfairly (time has caused me to think that any justice was entirely on Schwartz's side); two, Schwartz or his magazine refused to join or approve of the ICSC and acted indifferent to the interest of the creation of a stf organization; three, Schwartz was on the side of Gernsback's *Wonder Stories*.

The last reference refers to a point which was the cause of a point celebre of the First Fandom. Gernsback, at that time, was engaged in shady deals about the stories which he published in *Wonder Stories*. For the most part he preferred not to pay his writers, and there were constant lawsuits and bickering. The ICSC and Shepherd's ISFG wished to publicize this state of affairs. Schwartz opposed it, and his magazine was one of influence.

Fantasy Magazine still held the attention of most of the "fans" of the period and the debris of the ISA. Following the line of *Fantasy Magazine*, they were reluctant to support any new group, including the ICSC. Thus it was rapidly becoming necessary to oppose *Fantasy Magazine* in an effort to push what had become the only real national fan society ahead (the ISFG was destined to remain a small body numerically and to vanish in 1935). Yet remember that the ICSC still maintained that it was a science club first, a science-fiction club second.

In January 1935, Sykora replaced Gervais as president and Michel remained secretary of the ICSC. The club had perhaps twenty members.

And it was now to face the greatest battle of the first days of fandom – a battle which if it had lost might have set the progress of fandom back several years. *Wonder Stories* announced the Science Fiction League.

The Science Fiction League, at its beginning, was by no means the moribund, coupon clipping club that it is today. Headed in actuality by a young fan, Charles D. Hornig, and backed by the wide-open publicity and experience of Hugo Gernsback (who had founded many a successful magazine club), the initial campaign had plenty of vigor and ideas. The S.F.L. offered to help form clubs, to make contact for would-be club directors, and to use its magazine influence for all sorts of efforts. The idea, of course, was to build up *Wonder Stories*, through the subterfuge of building up science-fiction fandom.

Now why should the ICSC have opposed this? Why could the defeat of this program have been essential? The reason lies in certain other aims of Gernsback.

At that time Hugo Gernsback was accorded as one of the least reliable publishers in the business. Which is to say that he'd much rather not pay for a story than do so. Many young writers were being rooked right and left for tales. This was dishonest. It was clearly the duty of those independent fans in the know to put a stop to this – for it was definitely blackening the name of science-fiction throughout the professional world (a fact I confirmed many times in my professional career since then; up to the last few years, stf writers were regarded by most professionals as amateurish idiots – not for their type of writing but for their commercial gullibility).

When Shepherd and myself made an effort to publish news items in regards to this thing, we immediately encountered the hostility of the head of the SFL, Gernsback's paid employee Hornig, and the hostility of the *Fantasy Magazine* crowd too. The ICSC, however, was on our side.

But there is a greater point than this. From the beginning, the SFL was forced to act as an agency opposing the expression of real opinion by fans, if that opinion should prove detrimental to the best interests of the sponsoring publisher. It was their attitude that the world of fandom should be reduced to a servile clique of bellowing juveniles. Applause, not criticism, was desired.

And if fandom had gone into this trap, established a precedent, there at the beginning for servility, it would have marked the end of all that was intellectual, intelligent, creative, or self-sustaining. This the ICSC saw and for this reason the ICSC set itself to fight the SFL along all lines.

We started a publicity campaign early in 1935 to bring out the facts

about Gernsback's non-payment schemes. This fight succeeded. It may have taken another two years to bring about the inevitable, but it is judged to be the factor which started Gernsback on the road to quitting as science-fiction publisher, turning his magazine over to an honest publisher not interested in controlling fandom for his own ends, Standard Magazines. For this campaign brought about the continuous and self-accelerating collection of payment from Gernsback which led him to decide that the matter was not so profitable. Or so I have been told.

But the ICSC fought the SFL in its clubs too, and always won. Presentation of the truth could not lose. The history of 1935 and 1936 was marked by that fight, in which the ICSC alone placed its cause to fandom, now mainly organized in the rash of Hornig-controlled SFL chapters throughout the nation. One after another those chapters either changed their name or fell apart, or changed their structure to independence.

Meanwhile, outside of that, the ICSC achieved in 1935 the first and last actual worldly accomplishment of a science-fiction club. That was the first American rocket mail flight. Two mail-carrying rockets built and shot off by the New York ICSC made national news and established a place in rocket-mail history as the first in North America. Some of the rocket stamps printed by the ICSC for this flight were quoted at \$50 each only a few years later.

In 1936, also, the ICSC changed its name to the International Scientific Association (with permission of that group's last identifiable member, Ray Palmer); took for its own, by permission, the scientific emblem originated by *Amazing Stories* (see Sept 1928 issue); grew larger and became the most influential of independent clubs.

But by this time fandom had definitely emerged in shape. New clubs and new fan mags were booming everywhere. The SFL leaders, shattered out of their *Wonder Stories* worshipping, were starting to act independently. Fandom in 1936 would appear almost familiar to the fan of today.

The first fan convention occurred in October of 1936 when the NYBISA at my suggestion visited the Philadelphia Club and convened with it. From that time on conventions became the accepted thing.

But to sum it up:

1. The first ISA never originated the fandom of today because it could not understand its role as a true science-fiction club. Its members merely learned to know each other – most of them to have acquired a certain callousness to fan idealism through it. At least, so it seemed to me through

what contact I have had with them.

2. The New York Scienceers were the first local group to actually function as a stf club.

3. Its members published the first real fan magazine – *The Time Traveler*.

4. With the death of the first ISA, fandom went through death-and-rebirth, emerging from the cocoon in the first modern fan organization – The International Cosmos Science Club.

5. By the defeat of the SFL, this group moulded the present shape of fandom.

– *Fan Slants* #3 (June 1944, edited by Mel Brown)

The Scienceers of 1929 (*circa* 1957)

Allen Glasser

The First New York City Science Fiction Club, 1929

Long before “science fiction” was called by that name, I had become devoted to it through the Mars books of Edgar Rice Burroughs, which I read when I was only twelve. Then I scoured library shelves for the works of H.G. Wells, Jack London, Algernon Blackwood, and the very few fantasy books available at that time.

To me, incidentally, the terms “fantasy” and “science fiction” have always seemed synonymous. I think it’s silly, for example, to consider time travel scientific and witchcraft fantastic. One is just as possible – or impossible – as the other; and both make interesting and provocative reading, at least to me.

After finishing all the fantasy books I could find in those early days – there were little more than a dozen then – I discovered that *Argosy* magazine occasionally ran a fantastic serial, which they called “different” or “pseudo-scientific” stories. These I followed with faithful fervor. Some of the novels I recall from that period were *The Ship of Ishtar*, by A. Merritt; *The Great Commander*, by Fred MacIsaac; and *The Return of George Washington*, by G.F. Worts – which will approximate the time for fans familiar with that wonderful *Argosy* era.

Weird Tales next engaged my absorbed attention – the first all-fantasy magazine I had ever enjoyed. Then, in 1926, *Amazing Stories* came upon the scene, immediately winning my ardent allegiance.

It was *Amazing Stories* which made me a real science-fiction fan – the kind who wrote letters to the editor, criticized stories, and corresponded with other fans.

However, it was through *Science Wonder Stories*, rather than *Amazing*, that I finally made personal contact with other fans in New York City and with them founded the first of all science-fiction fan clubs – The Scienceers.

The exact date on which The Scienceers came into being was Dec.

11, 1929. The founding members, as I recall, were Warren Fitzgerald, Nathan Greenfeld, Philip Rosenblatt, Herbert Smith, Julius Unger, Louis Wentzler, and myself, Allen Glasser. With the exception of Fitzgerald, who was then about thirty, all the members were in their middle teens.

At this point, in relating my activities as a founder of fandom, I should say that most of this account is based on memory alone. Though my recollections of that early era are quite vivid, some minor details may have been forgotten after so many years. However, I still possess a few treasured clippings from those dawn days of fandom which serve to keep certain basic facts fixed in my mind.

Some readers may dispute my foregoing statement that The Scienceers was the very first fan club in the science-fantasy field. Objectors to that claim may cite the fact that the Science Correspondence Club, founded by Walter L. Dennis of Chicago, existed well before The Scienceers.

While that is undeniably true, I contend that the Dennis organization was – as its name clearly implied – a loose, widespread association of correspondents, with few members ever getting together personally. By contrast, The Scienceers was a tight-knit local group which conducted regular meetings every week. However, I freely acknowledge our debt to Walter Dennis and his Science Correspondence Club as the medium through which several Scienceers' members were brought into our fold.

During the early months of the Scienceers' existence – from its start in December 1929 through the spring of 1930 – our president was Warren Fitzgerald. As previously mentioned, Warren was about fifteen years older than the other members. He was a light-skinned Negro – amiable, cultured, and a fine gentleman in every sense of that word. With his gracious, darker-hued wife, Warren made our young members welcome to use his Harlem home for our meetings – an offer we gratefully accepted.

Early in that year of 1930, Hugo Gernsback's *Science Wonder Quarterly* conducted a prize contest on the subject "What I Have Done For Science Fiction". My letter about the Scienceers' formation won a prize in this contest and was published in the Gernsback quarterly.

As a result of this publicity, our club attracted the attention of Gernsback's editor, David Lasser, and G. Edward Pendray, who wrote science fiction under the pen name of Gawain Edwards.

Both Pendray and Lasser were members of the American Rocket Society, an organization of mature scientists, engineers, and other professional men.

After attending a meeting of the boyish Scienceers in Fitzgerald's

home, Lasser and Pendray invited us to affiliate with their Rocket Society, as a sort of Junior branch. While this offer flattered our juvenile egos, most of us preferred to maintain The Scienceers as an independent group within our own age bracket, rather than become an adjunct to a much more mature organization. Only Fitzgerald, who was closer in age to members of the Rocket Society, joined their ranks.

With Warren's home no longer available for our meetings, we were glad to accept the offer of a new member, Mortimer Weisinger, to meet at his parents' home in the Bronx. There, in a spacious room of their private house which Mort used for his science-fiction library, The Scienceers came into full flower, attracting many new members through publicity placed in magazines and newspapers by myself, as Secretary of the club. One paper in particular, the *New York Evening World*, listed our meetings every week during a good part of that year, 1930; and I still have their clippings of our activities.

It was during this period that we published our club monthly, *The Planet*, which was the first paper issued regularly by any local group of science-fiction fans – although it was preceded by *Cosmology*, organ of the Science Correspondence Club. Some authorities on fandom, including Robert A. Madle, consider *The Planet* the pioneer of all the multitude of amateur publications that have waxed and waned in the fantasy field since our club paper set the pattern 30 years ago.

Editor and creator of *The Planet* was myself, Allen Glasser. I also cut all stencils needed for each issue of four or five pages. Mimeographing was done by Philip Rosenblatt, who never received full credit for making the paper's publication possible. Most of our members contributed items to *The Planet*, including reviews of professional science-fantasy magazines which then numbered only four.

Six monthly issues of *The Planet* were published, from June to December 1930. Since I do not have a single copy left for reference, there is little more I can tell about our club paper. But I do recall that it attracted readers far removed from the Bronx. One was Gabriel Kirschner in Temple, Texas, and another was Carlton Abernathy in Clearwater, Florida – both of whom tried to start branches of The Scienceers in their home towns.

By the end of 1930, dissension among our members caused the club to split into two factions – the smaller group continuing to meet at the Weisinger home while the larger group, led by myself, held regular sessions at the home of Nathan Greenfeld, in another part of the Bronx.

Rather farcically, both factions retained the name of “Scienceers” and

both continued to attract adherents. Notable among the newcomers during this schismatic period were Julius Schwartz, who teamed up with Weisinger; and William Sykora, who joined my own group.

This separation lasted for nearly two years; but by the start of 1933, all members of The Scienceers had reunited at the Greenfeld residence, where they continued to meet until more mature interests drew them away from the club one by one... and The Scienceers became only a legend in the annals of fandom.

– unknown issue of *Sphere* (1956-1958, edited by L.T. Thorndyke and Joe Christoff); reprinted in *First Fandom Magazine* #4 (June 1961). This transcription by Richard Newsome.

The Birth of *The Time Traveller* (1940) Julius Schwartz

Every once in a while some enterprising fan writes an article on the history of the fan magazine movement. It inevitably starts off with the first of these magazines, *The Time Traveller*, but I've read so much misinformation about the origination of this publication that I'd like to set everyone straight about the true facts.

In October 1930, I joined The Scienceers, a New York fan club for readers of science fiction. Wait, I'd better amend that: just as I was about to join The Scienceers the club broke up (one of its many dissolutions). However, I did get to know one of the members, Mortimer Weisinger, and as we had many mutual science fiction interests we became fast friends.

We both prided ourselves on our vast knowledge of science fiction, and we liked nothing better than to send postcards challenging one another with some tough question on the subject. We both had a fairly wide correspondence with many of the science fiction authors and fans of the day, and when we met we first liked to trade what news we had. We found this vastly exciting.

One of us (I forget who) thought it'd be a good idea to get out a "Who's Who in Science Fiction", and with this in mind sent dozens of letters to all the authors we could. The project was never completed; guess we just didn't have enough money.

Then we thought it might be a good idea to issue a little paper containing one of these author biographies in each issue, together with various other science fiction items we had on hand. I personally became so enthusiastic that I got out a one page, one copy, typewritten affair with a biography of Edward Elmer Smith and sundry bits of science fiction news and information. When I completed the job I suddenly realized I had no name. The title, *The Time Traveller*, popped into my head and I typed it on the top of the sheet. (Note to fan collectors: this original copy of *TTT* has been irretrievably lost, so please don't ask me for it.)

Mort was just as excited with the possibilities of *TTT* as I was, and so we determined to get out a regular mimeographed magazine, modeled after The Scienceers' bulletin, *The Planet*. Although we felt capable of issuing

the magazine by ourselves we wanted to have a big fan name as editor to impress our potential readers. We asked our good friend, Allen Glasser, then one of the best known letter writers, to accept the editorship, which he did. We rounded up several other of the big name fans of the day to supply us with news and gossip. These included Forrest J Ackerman, Linus Hogenmiller, and Jack Darrow.

We secured our first subscribers by sending out a circular to readers who had letters published in the various science-fiction magazines. In a short time, we received 30 subscriptions. We were well satisfied and went to work on the first issue. Philip Rosenblatt, who had mimeographed *The Planet*, agreed to do work on *The Time Traveller*. (And please observe that we always insisted it be spelled with two “l’s”!) When completed it consisted of six pages, with Glasser stencilling the first two, me the next two, and Weisinger pages 5 and 6. It was dated January 1932.

It featured a biography of Capt. S.P. Meek, a brief interview with Bob Olsen, a list of scientifilms, the first installment of “The History of Science Fiction”, a science fiction contest, an article giving the inside dope on O.A. Kline’s “The Planet of Peril”, and dozens of news items about authors and their forthcoming stories. It also acquainted the fan world with the mystery that was to baffle them for many years to come, “Who Is Anthony Gilmore?”

All of us felt the first issue was a success and decided to keep it going. Some other time, perhaps, I’ll tell you about its hectic life and how it eventually evolved into the foremost of all the fan publications, *Fantasy Magazine*.

– *Spaceways* #17 (December 1940, edited by Harry Warner Jr)

A Letter (1946)

Charles D. Hornig

The purpose of this letter is to comment on installments two, three and four of Moskowitz's *Immortal Storm*, wherein my fan and professional activities of the 1930s are noted – especially with reference to *The Fantasy Fan* and The Science Fiction League. I think this type of article has an important place in fandom, and my old friend Sam the Vociferous is to be congratulated for his thoroughness and detail. I have a few criticisms, however.

Sam's analysis of Gernsback and his reasons for hiring me to edit *Wonder Stories* show a keen insight on his part, and he errs not there – but he mistook the reason for change of policy in *The Fantasy Fan*. By printing science-fiction stories there I would have been competing with myself in *Wonder*. Incidentally, though the first issue of my fan publication secured me the position with Gernsback, he evidently thought I had dropped it immediately, as he asked me six months after its demise in 1935 if I were still carrying it on, voicing his disapproval. I don't know where Sam got the idea that “much” of my salary went into *The Fantasy Fan*. It was a financial loss, certainly, but only at the rate of two dollars a week; even on Gernsback's payroll, it was not “much”.

As to the Science Fiction League, the idea was indeed originally Gernsback's, as I stated in my autobiography; my ego would never have given way to my subordination to Gernsback in giving him credit for something I had done. However, aside from the idea and an editorial or two, Gernsback left the whole thing up to me. The League, I can well assume, was created primarily to help the sales of *Wonder Stories*, and I would not approve, today, of a nationwide organization in which control was not on an elective, democratic basis. Nevertheless, I think Sam seems to insinuate that such “control” meant something to me – as if I were making money out of it, or dictating procedure to the locals or members. As a matter of fact, as far as I was concerned, the government of the SFL was an almost complete anarchy, each chapter doing as it pleased, with *Wonder* as a clearing house for information; except in the case of the split in Brooklyn, no limiting of chapter locations was ever attempted – and in Brooklyn it appeared at first that the second chapter was merely to be the result of a local squabble. The Brooklyn matter had no connection with

personal friendship for Clark – another case of Sam’s unfair assumptions.

I would like to clear up one other point: that concerning my “alleged pacifistic beliefs”. I feel that the picture given of me is that of a man who worried his draft board and went into the Medical Corps, maybe after the war was over. I never gave the draft authorities any trouble, but was classified in 1941 (not recently) as a conscientious objector upon presentation of evidence of my sincerity. I refused not merely combat service, but all military service and war work. In 1942 I was sent to a CO camp; I left there in 1943, and later that year went to prison as an absolutist. I believe I am more of an absolutist even today – next time I won’t even register for the draft.

The foregoing paragraph will probably have little interest to science-fiction fans, as it does not concern the subject, but I did want to clear up the point for those who might be interested. I am on the inactive list (an ex-fan, you might say, with only a for-old-times-sake interest in science-fiction), but I still think highly of fantasy and the value of scientific prophecy through fiction, although more important things must claim my time now.

– letter to *Fantasy Commentator* #12 (Fall 1946, edited by A. Langley Searles)

London Newsreel (1936)

Ted Carnell

During this year, between April and November, Ted Carnell contributed three columns to American fan Harold W. Kirshenblit's fanzine Arcturus. Taken together these provide the best snapshot we have of UK fandom at that point.

To the initiated, there is a strong undercurrent of rumour and fact, that England is about to break forth into s-f fever, probably as great as it is in the States. In the absence of any governing body for s-f in this country; the leading fans are linked together by correspondence, and the news has gone round, officially, that in the near future England will have its own monthly s-f mag. Also, following this closely, will be published the first fan mag. Details are at the moment a close secret as to the publishers of both. Some of the old-timers may remember *Scoops* and the one or two other mags published here in the past. The new publication will be of similar format to the leading s-f mags, and definitely not like *Scoops*. [This] new s-f mag will be on the stands in about eight weeks.

The first English SFL Chapter paper* has just come out. Called *Novae Terrae* and compiled by members of the Nuneaton squad, No. 22 – Director Maurice Hanson. This paper isn't a bad effort, about half the size of *Arcturus* and dealing mainly with s-f publications in this country, although there are several interesting articles as well.

* Carnell's distinction here between a "fan mag" and a "Chapter paper" is an odd one to modern eyes. Both are now just considered fanzines. [Ed.]

Also in the news is the British Interplanetary Society who are making a big drive for new members before taking on big experiments in rocketry. This society, who have on their governing board a celebrated list of famous men, is somewhat similar to the American Rocket Society. Mr Cleator, the President, has just published a book called *Rockets Through Space*, which will be on sale in your country soon and which should be very well received. I advocate to you buy a copy as soon as you are able. I have read the advance press reports of the book, and they are decidedly good.

The biggest thing that has hit London recently is Mr. Wells's *Things*

to *Come*. It has caused a furore among the critics and is acclaimed the masterpiece of the age, not so much for the acting in it as for its technical side. "...Sheer triumphant filmcraft..."; "...remarkable technical feat..."; "Tremendous, awe-inspiring, and challengingly imaginative..." are but a few of the reports.

At the world premiere here, M. Louis Lumière, who showed the first film in England in 1894, came specially from Paris to see it, and when it was over congratulated Wells and [the film's director] Alexander Korda, saying that it was a realization, and more, of what he had only dreamed of years ago. The opening night was a riot of celebrities, which is an unusual occurrence for this country. (It's an unusual occurrence in any country to have celebrities rioting – Editor.) Having seen the film myself on the second night, I can say that never have I been so carried away by a film before. The climax, which depicts a flight to the moon, made it well worth while being a s-f fan while the whole of the film makes one imagine that he is living in the future. We shall look forward to Mr. Wells's next two productions with the greatest anticipation, in fact, he couldn't write them quickly enough. Perhaps the movie moguls in Hollywood will have a go and bring us something like this.

Strangely enough, *Transatlantic Tunnel* was not a great success here and only had a short run at the Tivoli, [on the] Strand. I believe that it was more than well received in New York. However, that film was not so much science fiction as it was the depiction of an engineering feat. [1]

26 March 1936:

According to Carnell in later accounts it was "after much correspondence" that he

"first met Les [Johnson] accompanied by Eric Russell one evening at Euston Station [...] They had been doing the rounds in Town, had met Prof. Low and various other people, and were then on their way to see Wally Gillings at Ilford. We tagged along with them, and listened to the gabfest which ensued at Walt's place. It was quite an eye-opener, as we hadn't had anything to do with fans in the flesh – in fact we hardly knew what they were talking about half the time." [2]

Being a contemporary account the following also provides a firm date for the meeting, which has been variously reported.

I met a number of the foremost English s-f fans last night, and we discussed many things, among them the new s-f and fan mags to come out. Concerning the professional magazine, the price will be seven pence or

about 15¢, trimmed edges, same size as your mags. Not keen on running an SFL yet, but will do so later if sufficient pressure is brought to bear upon them. I am not permitted to divulge the identity of the Editor or publishers, yet. Sorry. The reason is that they want to take no chances of having a spike put in their wheel by London rivals, or American agents.

The stories are going to be of the simpler variety at first, starting as your own did years ago, and nursing the readers through until they properly understand the type of stories that are being published in *Wonder*, *Amazing*, *Astounding*. So they are accepting stories that don't deal with interstellar travel, something like first trip off the earth, etc. The Editor himself knows nothing about s-f but we'll larn him.

A general discussion ensued in which Gernsback was unanimously denounced. John Russell Fearn was supposed to be present but couldn't make it, or we might have had some choice stories about his not being paid. Fearn is going to be the Editor of our fan mag with the rest of us who were present at the meeting as authors and co-editors. Each is to cover a separate part of the States, with our correspondents.*

* *This never happened, and Fearn was not the editor – see below. [Ed.]*

Some other interesting items: Our famous Professor Lowe is a fervent s-f fan (has now been made Vice-President of the BIS) and he promises to get many titled people interested in s-f. So it certainly looks as though s-f in this country is going to get a big boost for a start.

Les Johnson does most of the hard work of the BIS while Mr. Cleator, the President, gets the credit. 22, fair, well spoken, just taken up writing stories for the English publication, in collaboration with Russell. Has cushy job in Ministry of Health, Liverpool, and finds plenty of time for s-f activities. He's single.

Eric Russell is married. About 28 and 6' 3". Tough, and has a humorous, forceful, character and an amazingly receptive mind for storing items, etc., about s-f. Can quote authors, stories, and anything one wants to know from memory. A sound lad, with some bright ideas for new s-f stories.

Walter Gillings is also married. About 27. Medium build, fair. Journalist, reporter or columnist, what you will. The most ardent s-f fan I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Has been writing "On the Other Side of the Pond" for *Fantasy* for the last five months. Is financing the fan magazine which is to follow the s-f mag.

The last fellow, Len Kippin, I found out very little about, in the short

time at my disposal. He is an ardent enthusiast, about 30, quiet, well spoken, connected with several fans in America. Believe one of them, our little friend, Forrie. [1]

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I must have travelled up the Time Line into the future for now, back in Summer 1936, I find that all my remarks in last month's issue about the hope of a forthcoming professional s-f magazine in England are hopelessly before their time. So far ahead that my advice to those of you hoping to have still another mag to collect is to forget about it, because so many hitches have arisen that if you hibernate for a year or so you will still wake up in time to hear of its arrival in this world.

This seems to sound the death knell to British fan's hopes, but there is a ray of sunshine behind it all – that the idea hasn't as yet been entirely discarded, so perhaps, sometime –

Though the proposed fan mag was awaiting the arrival of the proposed professional mag preparations are now being made for the publishing of the former. Advance leaflets giving the aims and the intentions of the publisher are already circulating in this country in an endeavour to ascertain the number of copies required.

It is to be called *Scientifiction*, "The British Fantasy Review", published and edited by Walter H. Gillings, will contain sixteen printed pages, and at first will be issued bi-monthly. The price will be approximately fifteen cents. It will contain many interesting features, articles on, and by, John Russell Fearn, John Beynon Harris, Benson Herbert, Festus Pragnell, and many prominent fantasy fans.

Primarily for the English fans, *Scientifiction* will contain much that will interest the American fans – latest developments and news, film and book reviews, scoop interviews and articles.

American fans desirous of obtaining copies can communicate with me through this mag or D.A. Wollheim and D.S. McPhail when further information will be forwarded.

The enthusiasm of the English fan element is an unknown quantity, and for this reason, before launching the mag, [Gillings] deems it advisable to know the extent of the popularity it will receive. Needless to say, "No popularity – no mag." [3]

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One advantage of living in London is that most stf fans in other parts of the country pay a visit at some time or other to the Metropolis. Two weeks ago Eric Russell, BIS Councillor from Liverpool, paid a surprise business and pleasure trip to this burg, coinciding with a stf conference of Wally

Gillings and myself.

Also present was Art Clarke, a newcomer to reside in London, but an old and enthusiastic fan, whose home has been in Devonshire, 200 miles south.

Uncle Eric – to his intimates, as he is the oldest fan in England – has been spending most of his spare time writing stf stories, many of which you will be hearing more about in the near future. He has some unique thought-variant ideas tucked away in his dome but mentions that all of them are nothing compared with Olaf Stapledon’s latest “classic”, which is now well under way. Stapledon, if you remember, knowing nothing about stf, wrote *Last and First Men* and *Last Men in London*, back in 1930 [and 1932].

Eric was officially here to fix up the transfer of the BIS HQ from Liverpool to London. To help him in this respect, we all met the next day at the Radio Exhibition, where J. Happian Edwards, London’s enthusiastic astronaut and radio member, was displaying the latest radio tube designs from his brain. The meeting lasted all afternoon, during which we sank deeper and deeper into the realms of rocketry discussions – the one bright spot, apart from that, was a complete explanation and viewing of the latest television sets available here – the BBC having completed experiments this year, and will be televising full time programmes from the Fall.

Uncle Eric departed in a cloud of cosmic dust – he’s as dynamic as the combustion in a rocket chamber – and for a few days there was comparative peace in the land. Then Maurice Hanson and colleague Denny Jacques, the two pioneers of *Novae Terrae*, arrived from Leicester. Wally Gillings met them, and parked them in John Beynon Harris’s flat for the afternoon while he did some mysterious business elsewhere. Later they met Art Clarke and myself and we spent the evening migrating from one restaurant to another, while Clarke and Jacques thrashed out some obscure scientific point which was still unsolved when their train steamed north five hours later.

Looks as though England’s most prominent stfans are moving to London. Clarke is already here, so is Jim Barnes, one of Hanson’s SFL members from Leicester, and Hanson himself will soon be joining us and probably Jacques later on.

Leeds SFL, in the far north, have circularized all prominent fans and authors in the country with the idea of holding a convention in their city on January 2nd 1937 for a discussion on how best to advance stf in this country. Said fans and authors have agreed to rally round, but dissension has arisen over having to travel such a long way to Leeds. It is thought best

that the convention should be held in London, or one of the midland towns more central.

Gillings's fan mag is still being held up owing to the amount of other important items that seem to be occupying his time. He had hoped to be able to publish by the beginning of October, and judging by the enthusiasm shown over his idea, the mag will be more than welcome in the British Isles.

An instance of the sort of cooperation we have to put up with over here – somewhere in England are three collegiates from Harvard, members of either the American or Cleveland Rocket Societies, on vacation. Their arrival was known only to Phillip Cleator, President of the BIS, and he preferred to entertain them and keep their identity secret, after which, no trace has been found of them. I should say here that any Americans, either rocketry or sfans planning a trip to England will be extended a warm hand of welcome, providing that we know when they are arriving, and that I shall be only too glad to make any arrangements for them that they wish.

The July issue of *Novae Terrae* found [the editors] in trouble with John Russell Fearn over an article in their "Hymn of Hate" series in which they said a few hard things about him. Fearn threatened legal action for libel unless a retraction was forthcoming – which followed in the August issue. The "Scientijazz" Contest evolved by them in the last issue aroused much enthusiasm, and we are hoping that the winner will be an English fan – I notice that Irving Koslow more than fancies his chances – good luck, Irv, but I ought to beat you.

Thrilling Wonder is not on sale anywhere in England owing to Standard having no agents here yet – perhaps that's a blessing in disguise.

H.G. Wells's second movie *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* had an adverse criticism from all the film critics when it appeared on August 28. Seeing the film myself three days later, I quite realized why. It was dull, with very few bright spots of either acting or cameracraft. The "miracles" appeared as if they had been shot by an amateur, and the dialogue was flat and unimpressive. After the wonders of *Things to Come* this second one was about as thrilling and magnificent as the early British films eight years ago. *Food of the Gods* is now in production – let's hope that it will be better than this one. [4]

Novae Terrae, the first British fanzine, appeared in March, the same month as the historic first meeting between Carnell and Gillings, two very important figures in the history of SF in the UK. This is the fullest account we have of that meeting, which we now know took place at Walter Gillings's Ilford home at 15

Shere Road on Wednesday 25 March 1936. Also present were Len Kippin, Les Johnson and Eric Frank Russell; but how odd to see Russell described as a fan. He would make his first sale (to Astounding) in 1937 and thereafter was only ever described as a pro. Also intriguing is the (new to me) info that John Russell Fearn was originally going to be the editor of what became Scientifiction.

The professional SF magazine whose appearance Ted announced prematurely was almost certainly Fantasy, and its editor T. Stanhope Sprigg. After fifteen months and a lot of indecision the project was put on ice, but it's intriguing that there was already enough contact between publishers and early UK fans for them to get such advance notice. The first issue of Fantasy eventually saw print in July 1938, after the example of the Gillings-edited Tales of Wonder proved there was a market for it.

And finally there's what may have been the first in-print announcement in an American fanzine of the world's first ever organized SF convention. Carnell's horror at how far Leeds is from London ignored the fact that Leeds fans would have to travel the same distance to get to London. This would not be the last time fans in the capital would make the same complaint, to the bitter amusement of their northern counterparts.

This then was British fandom on the cusp of becoming nationally organized, an apotheosis they would achieve the following year.

[1] *Arcturus* #4 (April 1936, edited by Harold W. Kirshenblit)

[2] *Sands of Time* #8 (January 1943, edited by E.J. Carnell)

[3] *Arcturus* #5 (July 1936, edited by Kirshenblit)

[4] *Arcturus* #8 (November 1936, edited by Kirshenblit)*

** According to the indispensable Pavlat-Evans index, Arcturus #6 and #7 were never published, so there are no missing instalments of Carnell's column. [Ed.]*

The Birth of FAPA (1942)

Donald A. Wollheim

In 1936 fan magazine publishing first began to enter into the phase of growth that marked the transition from the club organ period to that of amateur journalism. Prior to that year only few fan publications were attempted, and outside of the famous *Fantasy Magazine* and two or three less successful ventures, the only fan publications were club organs, often of a local nature. But the growth of fandom and its gradual acquisition of certainty in itself and independence of mind resulted in a larger and larger output of fan publications everywhere. Fandom took on something of the aspects of today with new magazines appearing on all sides and old ventures collapsing or combining. A certain amount of chaos grew.

In that year, while corresponding with the late H.P. Lovecraft, I first heard of the existence of national amateur press associations where persons interested in publishing and editing for the fun of it and not for profit would exchange magazines in general mailings. I joined the National, the United, and several local Amateur Press Associations. Likewise some of the New York fans, primarily John B. Michel and Frederik Pohl.

Gradually it grew upon me that an amateur press association modeled after the decades-old national types and specializing in fantasy amateur journalism would be an excellent thing. So many fans wanted to bring out magazines “for the hell of it” and for indefinite periods. They did not like to have to depend upon dubious subscription lists which they might never be able to live up to or to repay. They did not want the bother of commercial fan publishing. They wanted to bring out fanzines for the fun of it. In cautious discussions with various fans, it became clear that fandom would welcome the creation of an organization for the free exchange of amateur non-subscription fantasy magazines.

I discussed this at length one night in the Spring of 1937 with fans Bill Miller and Jim Blish and it was there that the Fantasy Amateur Press Association was first formulated, named and planned. However, affairs having to do with the dissolution of the I.S.A. kept me from further work on it until June.

In June John B. Michel and I decided to start definite work on the organization of the FAPA. We decided to have a simple clear workable

constitution already written, to have an emblem prepared, to get a nucleus of enthusiastic members and to prepare a first mailing with which the campaign for organization would be formally started. We determined to start it with a bang in order to give it the best chance for survival.

After studying the constitutions of existing general amateur press groups, I took the Constitution of the New England Amateur Press Club as the simplest and best model, and wrote the first FAPA Constitution. It followed the wording and organization of the NEAPC in most particulars. The present revised FAPA Constitution is still essentially the original document in general.

After correspondence, the following accepted the posts of organizers: I took the presidency as it was my job to direct the work and co-ordinate things. Michel undertook the Editorship so he and I could work together on that. Bill Miller agreed to handle the secretarial work of registering applicants and collecting dues. Daniel McPhail undertook the Vice-President's task of booming up membership.

I wrote Morris Dollens, at that time foremost fan artist, requesting designs for an emblem. He sent three of which Michel and I picked the one which has remained official. I then had engravings made of this emblem and we printed membership cards on the Michel-Wollheim press. One of these engravings I kept, the other cut I presented to the FAPA to remain in the custody of each Official Editor. When last heard of Milton Rothman had this cut.

Correspondence was beginning to bear fruit and we had a few applications in before any mailing appeared. The first fan to pay dues and receive a card was Frederik Pohl. Among the original members of pre-first mailing status appear the names of Edward Carnell, Harry Dockweiler, J.M. Rosenblum, Robert A. Madle, Robert W. Lowndes, and James Taurasi.

The first mailing was due to come out in July 1937. Time did not allow Michel and I to prepare a first *Fantasy Amateur* so instead I mimeographed a three page magazine entitled *The FAPA Fan*, the third page of which was an application blank, the first two pages of which contained an explanation of the FAPA and a request for members. *The FAPA Fan* did duty as a semi-official organ until the appearance of the first *Fantasy Amateur*, which was not until after the first regular election.

The first mailing appeared in July. It contained mostly excess copies of older fan magazines, [and] some new material done for the occasion such as two or three "Mijimags" and stuff. It wasn't a bad bundle considering.

Response was very encouraging. But Secretary Bill Miller unfortunately chose that moment to lose interest in fandom. He allowed his work to lag and finally resigned in September turning material over to me. I undertook the work of Secretary-Treasurer for the rest of the year as well as the president's post. Oddly enough, it can be recorded that our first Secretary, Miller, never became a member of the FAPA.

Another organizational mailing came in October and the first election was held in December. The first *Fantasy Amateur*, dated spring 1938 and sent out in May 1938, contains the results. Myself and MacPhail remained in our organizational offices. Baltadonis took over the secretaryship and Fred Pohl relieved Michel as Editor. The number of ballots received reveals that by January 1938 we had about 25 members. By May 1938 we had 243 members and had reached healthy maturity. A host of new FAPA magazines were appearing and healthy discussion was permeating the ranks. A heated contest was forecast for July and the FAPA was 100% alive and kicking.

– *The Fantasy Amateur*, vol.5 no.4 (June 1942, edited by Donald A. Wollheim)

Memoirs of a Superfluous Fan (1943) T. Bruce Yerke

Note. This is with very few exceptions the original version of “Memoirs of a Superfluous Fan”. It includes some material from Yerke’s 1992 revision of the text – mostly footnotes, plus one revised paragraph. From his introduction to the “re-issued” edition:

“The Memoirs were written at a very rancorous period in the history of Los Angeles science fiction fandom, deep in wartime, when all of us were more stressed than we knew from the pressures and restrictions of life on the home front and the fatigue of sixty hour weeks in wartime jobs. I had just resigned from the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society and was very bitter about a lot of things and about certain people. There was much criticism of Forrest J Ackerman by some of us; apparently no one stopped to think that for Forrie life in the military, even in so fortunate an assignment as editor of the newspaper of the 9th Service Command at Ft. MacArthur in San Pedro, was very stressful. He had to cope with this just as the rest of us coped with ours. These circumstances explain some of the remarks and asides in the Memoirs.”

Editorial notes by Rob Hansen and/or David Langford are signed [Ed.]. Yerke’s own 1992 footnotes are all signed [TBY 1992].

Volume One: The Old L.A.S.F.L.

THE LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

This is to announce that on November 13, 1934, the LOS ANGELES SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, Chapter Number Four, was formed and organized by E.C. Reynolds, the Director. Charter members include the following (member number follows name): William S. Hofford (285), Alfred H. Meyer (502), Donald H. Green (96), Alvan Mussen (871), John C.

Rohde, Jr. (401), Roy Test, Jr. (417), and E.C. Reynolds (316).

The first meeting of this Chapter was held at 8:00 p.m. on October 27th, 1934, by Mr. Reynolds, the Director. All the members were present and two visitors, Edward Hightig and Jack Hogan. Mr. Meyer suggested that the next meeting be held on November 12th at 8:00 p.m. for the purpose of electing officers and drafting by-laws. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rohde and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. and followed by general discussion. The minutes were recorded by William S. Hofford, Acting Secretary. Members who wish to join this Chapter should address: LOS ANGELES SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, E.C. Reynolds, Director, 3235 1/4 Descanso Dr., Los Angeles, Calif.

– *Wonder Stories* (February 1935)

It has been my intention for some time now to record in as much and interesting detail as possible the long, long time during which I was an active member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) and its predecessor, the Los Angeles Chapter Number 4 of the Science Fiction League (LASFL). My recent action in resigning this Society, and along with it all my active offices, is no way the sole reason for the writing of these memoirs. For whatever good or bad science fiction fandom may eventually serve, it ought to have a comprehensive record of its oldest and largest component.

I was a member of the LASFL and LASFS for very nearly seven years. In it I met many of my best friends, and through it I passed many interesting hours and discovered many interesting things. The LASFL was beyond a doubt the greatest and most active scientifiction organization of all time... it had the most members, some of them now well-known in their respective fields, the most publications, and very often the most fun.

I saw the twin-clubs at their best and their worst: as a haven for wayward characters, as an inspiration for incipient authors and artists, as a storehouse of inestimable value to the serious scientifiction and fantasy hobbyist, and as a gathering place for good fellows in general. But I have also seen the LASFL, and especially as the LASFS, as a rotting ground for fine minds, a harbinger of psychopaths and morbid misfits, a circle of futility and frustration, a trap full of bickering and petty jealousy for those within it. These two conditions have existed side by side for virtually as long as the Society.

When I was very young and had first joined I used to wonder: in what

manner would I finally leave this group of strange people? Who would turn out to be my best friends? Who would be the first of us to die? How long before something took me away from the entire environment? I spent seven years in intimate association with the group, and all my questions were answered. Now the seven years are a closed book, full of many fond and many disappointing memories.

Withal I feel a great vacancy in “fan” history will exist unless someone records the long years in which the LASFL and LASFS were at one and the same time the greatest and best, and yet often the smallest and worst, of all scientifiction fan groups.

What follows are my own personal memories. I do not pretend that they are unbiased or presented with hair-line accuracy; but I do hope they will prove to be interesting to the more serious followers of this avocational field.

Any person who grows up to attain a reasonable position of achievement in the science fiction fan world through the constant and prolonged association with other science-fiction fans in the same area must necessarily have a more personal outlook on the subject than the fan who has at best been only in sporadic contact with the specie. It was my own particular experience to have literally and actually “grown up” in the environment furnished by the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League and subsequently the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

From the last Thursday in January, 1937, until November 14, 1943, I was in constant association with the ever-changing membership of the club. This period of my life covers high-school, a year of work, then a year of college, and lastly a year or more in the so-called “business world”. Unlike many unfortunate cases in this field, wherein the individual comes out of the world and gradually draws more and more into the veil of fantasy fiction and its hobby activities, I am fortunate in having had the rather unique experience of growing out of that world into the dull, presumably plebian planet of ordinary people.

My acquaintance with the field of literature was firstly the usual juvenile books, followed by a comprehensive reading of Wells and Verne when I was about 12 years of age. I somehow skipped Burroughs, and have never gone back to read him. It was in 1935 that I first came across a scientifiction pulp magazine, the April issue of *Astounding Stories*. The cover [was] for *Proxima Centauri* by Murray Leinster. As I was at the time an avid Buck Rogers follower, I immediately recognized a spaceship control room for what it was. I purchased this issue with a thrill of discovering a long-lost friend. The natural course of evolution set in, and I

was shortly purchasing second-hand *Wonder Stories* and I quickly came across letters by Forrest J Ackerman. Meanwhile, my own first letter appeared in the May 1936 *Astounding*, right next to the first published letter of Leslie A. Crouch.

Late in 1936 the family moved from the outlying suburb of Huntington Park into Los Angeles, and I realized with a sudden start that I was going to school two blocks from 236½ New Hampshire Ave! It was but a matter of course that I wrote this Mr. Ackerman a letter and eventually received an invitation to drop in at the fantastic place on my way home from school early in January 1937. From then on, things simply evolved, and as Little Abner would say: "It war most remarkable."

This is all the chronological history I care to indulge in. Any numbskull can sit down and write things by date and sequence. Since these are memoirs more than a pretense at accurate bibliography, I must have the liberty to look back on those days and events with the advantage gained by a more mature person* and with more insight than I possessed at the time of the actual occurrence. For that reason we are going to jump back and forth from henceforth on.

** I was age twenty when this was written. Nearly fifty years later, the phrase "mature person" comes across almost comically. [TBY 1992]*

The names that were extant in the LASFL of early 1937 are strange to the eyes of current readers. They are, with a single exception, now non-active. Aside from myself, Forrest J Ackerman is the only survivor. Morojo and Paul Freehafer had not yet joined the Chapter; Daugherty and Bradbury were unheard of. The group that met at Clifton's Cafe in 1937 is no more the group that meets now at 637½ than the Congress of 1776 is resemblant of the Congress of 1943. The title is self perpetuating, but outside fans should realize that the gang which made the LASFL the greatest without a doubt of all science fiction clubs, then and now, has been broken apart for many a long month and year.

The minutes for the meeting of August 19, 1937, show the following persons to have been present: Forrest J Ackerman, Russell J. Hodgkins, Bob Olsen (yes, the author), Henry Kuttner, Arthur K. Barnes, Morojo, Virgil Smith (her son), Roy A. Squires, Mr., Mrs., and Roy Test Jr., Karl Edward Furst von Lutz and wife, Hal and Victor Clark, Perry L. Lewis, Francis Fairchild, Bruce Yerke, Karl McNeil, Vernon W. Harry, Eddie Anderson, Maurice DuClose, Don Green, Al Mussen, and George Tullis.

That was the big meeting of 1937, at which Dr. David H. Keller was

guest. As can be seen, there was a liberal sprinkling of authors present, all of whom were more or less regular attenders. It was a different crowd... not only by person, but by department and behaviour. The average age was perhaps 23. Average meetings ran about two-thirds of the above number of persons. I cite this meeting mainly to give a morphological cross-section of the structure of the LASFL during 1937.

When I first walked into the Little Brown Room in January of that year, Perry L. Lewis was my immediate discoverer. "Is Mr. Ackerman here?" I queried timorously. Mr. Lewis, enjoying the situation immensely, let out a whoop of "Mr. Ackerman?!" and shooed me down the room to where Forrest was sitting.

At the time I thought Lewis to be an obnoxious person. Now I wish I had been old enough to appreciate the character. Lewis was one of the Glendale SFL, a triumvirate of Squires-Fox-Lewis. He worked in a stationery store. I imagine he was a typical aggressive, intelligent, cynical high school graduate of the day. My later impressions of him, up until he finally dropped out sometime late in 1939 or early 1940, were always enjoyable. He was sarcastic, but an interested fan of the type that existed then in large quantities: reading, corresponding, and collecting, nothing much more.

That night I met David Fox, Roy Squires, Russ Hodgkins, Al Mussen, Roy Test, and Vernon Wilfred Harry. The others who were present I have forgotten, and these few I remember because I later had dealings with them and with Hodgkins a good friendship. My interest in science fiction magazines was avid. The sight of those huge quarterlies and old *Science Wonder Stories* which Squires and Ackerman, and I guess Test and Harry, were trading sent me reeling. I wanted to possess them, to read them. I presume an archaeologist being allowed to view undestroyed Mayan relics drools and slobbers no less than I when wallowing in piles of quarterlies and the like back in 1937.

I was immensely flattered when these "experts" asked me to read "The Tale Which Hath No Title", a sort of *Alicia in Blunderland* affair which was one of the projects of the Chapter at that time. When Ackerman asked me my opinion of it I gave a very sober literary analysis which must have been screamingly funny to the others. And my appreciation of these people knew no bounds when Vernon Wilfred Harry, with great magnanimity, asked me to join the WORLD GIRDLERS' INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE LEAGUE CORRESPONDENCE CLUB. The conscienceless villain rooked me out of some dues on the spot, and I was given some stationery to boot. All in all I was very proud.

Other events of the meeting are lost to obscurity. The world of the future seemed awfully close, though. Here were people who thought about it, much as I did. Schoolmates laughed at such things, but when I could tell them that I knew adults who spent their time in such a manner, I felt that my own interest was justified. There was something remarkably exhilarating in going up to the Ackerman den and looking at movie stills from *Metropolis*, *Deluge*, *Things to Come*, *The Golem*, *The Girl in the Moon*, and countless others. It seemed to make a faith in the future justified.

The Los Angeles Chapter, #4, of the Science Fiction League, led a most sedate sort of social life in 1937. The primary contact between members were the first and third Thursday meetings at Clifton's Cafe, 648 S. Broadway, in downtown Los Angeles. On these occasions, when there was no scheduled speaker, the topic of current and past stories was a valid and always interesting basis of discussion. One of my earliest staunch friends at the Chapter was David L. Fox. We had a common interest in the exploits of Bill Barnes, an air Ace who built his own forerunners of P-38s and Flying Fortresses back in 1934-35, through the medium of a Street & Smith pulp of the same name. I remember his Flying Fortress, which carried a whippet tank or else a small airplane, after the Macon and Akron style. It was all very amazing, and Fox and I could and did discuss them for hours.

Roy Test and Squires were old-style scientifiction collectors. But much of the chapter was old style, in that there was a proper respect for visitors and authors. Even the Director and Secretary were paid attention. Guests were always introduced to the membership during the meeting. At a later date guests and even authors were often left to shift for themselves in a very awkward silence. The impressions I carry from those early days, though, are that the crowd was quite a well-behaved bunch of serious-minded, intelligent, science-fiction readers and collectors. I carried then and now an admiration for those persons, since I had been taught to respect my elders.

I was fortunate to join the Society just at a time when it had its first deluge of celebrities passing through. The frequency of visiting authors and editors was not equalled or surpassed again until the Summer of 1940, three years later. Aside from David H. Keller, we managed to lure Arthur F. Burks and Joe Skidmore, who died shortly afterwards. There were occasional lectures by such persons as H. Atlantis Sudburry, a well-known Horologist, and Dr. Feeley of Los Angeles City College. In addition, we had the resident attendance of Henry Kuttner, Arthur K. Barnes, and the

artist Tom Mooney, who lent their unique and witty presence to the chapter at frequent intervals. At the time the club was keeping a scrapbook of important advances in science, the prize item being the *Los Angeles Herald-Express*' account of the discovery of Pluto.

The club is different now. (NOTE: These lines were written late in December 1943.) Keller could drop in and he would probably be left to stand around in the background, unintroduced, much as the eminent Dr. Adolphe DeCastro* was neglected at the Open House meeting in June 1943 when the present quarters were dedicated. In 1937 there was usually someone of interest to meet. Kuttner was always bringing in a character or so, and while I was much too young to appreciate the hilarious discussions that went on between members, I know they were first rate... current fans enjoyed no better in those riotous stags in Art Widner's room at the Shirley-Savoy during the Denvention.

* Years later I discovered to my astonishment that "DeCastro" was actually Adolph Danziger, intimate friend of Ambrose Bierce, who, when Bierce was thought to be dying in New York, rushed across the country in a special train to be at his bedside! [TBY 1992]

I still don't know what to think of Vernon Harry. My own opinion is that he was a sort of genial scoundrel. I was interested in the 1st issue of *Wonder Stories Quarterly*, and he offered to sell me his copy, inviting me over to his house on S. Grand Ave one Saturday to pick it up. Once I arrived, after a few awkward moments, he produced the thing which I grabbed avidly, and then discovered he had no change. (I think I paid him 75¢ for it.) While I stood sweating for fear he would want the magazine back, he very generously offered to let me take out the change in dues to the World Girdlers' International Science League Correspondence Club. I think I gratefully took out change for several month's dues. Promptly thereafter, the W.G.I.S.L.C.C. folded up completely as Harry went to work on a night shift.

Shep's shop was a favourite hangout for SFL members in them thar times. Lucile B. Sheppard did have a fabulous collection of scientifiction magazines up on Hollywood Blvd, and through the endless prying of Ackerman, it was stocked with Esperanto literature, fan magazines, and a general welcome to SFL members. I considered the place to be quite a paradise. I often dropped in after school to enjoy this rapture, this virtual wallowing in vast piles of *Air Wonder Stories*, *Science Wonder Stories*, *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, and endless piles of later *Astoundings* and *Wonder*. I often cursed the cruel fate which had left me too young to read

these vast, thrilling magazines in that what seemed to me glorious day when they came out on the newsstand each month.*

* *At the sight of the originals of many of the covers of those old magazines at the Ackerman mansion during a recent open house, I re-experienced the delicious thrill that I felt in my adolescence. No other relics from that epoch can do this for me. [TBY 1992]*

Eventually as a good boy selling newspapers and the Post, I earned from time to time sufficient money to purchase these exotic magazines, and through much effort eventually acquired all of the *Science Wonders*, and *Air Wonders*, some of Vol I *Amazing*, and a representative assortment of *Amazing Quarterlies*, later issue *Wonders*, and the like. For some reason early *Astoundings* held absolutely no fascination for me, and I never acquired any prior to my first newsstand purchase in 1935.

I don't know if fans like Washington, Schmarje, Smith, Lazar, and a host of others who are newcomers to me, have ever seen an *Air Wonder* or experienced that thrill which comes to a teen-ager of actually owning one. Perhaps it isn't necessary, but the experience of collecting and reading these stories of the future was an integral part of my earlier political-sociological explorations. I did believe that mankind was capable of following these stories in a few years and making a glorious world of the future, where science and sanity would be the governing factors. The primary thing that science fiction did for me as a teen-ager was to make me think along sociological lines, and when my friends were all wearing Landon or Roosevelt buttons in 1936, I was looking far beyond political party stuff.

The old-style science-fiction novel with the emphasis on science had a definite educational value to the properly attuned mind. Through them I knew that mankind's lot could be better, and while I lacked all the data which subsequent years of study has given me, I at least had a glimpse of what might have been, while the rest of my schoolmates were busy swallowing the official version of the Revolutionary War.

Some meeting between my joining and August 1939, I was frightened by a lurid affair which either Roy Test or Roy Squires brought to a meeting. It was one of the last copies of Morris S. Dollens' *Science Fiction Collector*. Since I was taking journalism in school, the idea that people could publish little magazines on a hekto pad was interesting to me. I scanned the *Collector* at that meeting and was fascinated. Ever since I had been given a copy of Van Loon's *Story of Mankind* in 1935 for my birthday I had been possessed with a desire to write *après* Van Loon. In fact, I had written many little booklets which I typed and sewed together

by hand for the amusement of my immediate circle of friends. *Yerke's Almanac* and *Yerke's Hip Pocket Dictionary* still evoke chuckles on my part to this day. The possibilities of making fifty copies of such a venture on a hektograph, for only a few dollars, was a sort of tinder that eventually produced *Imagination!* I went without a hamburger the next day and sent a dime to Dollens for a copy of the *Collector*.

Meanwhile, my first fan correspondent turned up. As I was addicted to writing endless letters to the editors of the three scientfiction magazines then extant*, it was natural that I began to receive letters from other fans of the day. John L. Chapman, of the original Minneapolis bunch, dropped me a letter saying that he was looking for a pen pal. I wrote back that while I wasn't especially looking for a pen pal, I had no religious scruples against one. This began a protracted correspondence lasting from the middle of 1937 to and through 1940. I presume this could also be selected as the particular instance which precipitated me into the fan arena.

** I was very successful in this activity, having an average of one letter every three months in each of the three magazines. In the lurid slang of the present, I would be called a "letter junkie", as were a number of other fans of the 1930s. [TBY 1992]*

The languid tempo of my science fiction life began to increase towards the middle of 1937, and shortly I was put in touch with John V. Baltadonis through my good friend Chapman. By now I had received two issues of the *Collector* from Dollens and by going through Ackerman's collection I acquainted myself with former amateur ventures. Claire Beck dropped me an issue of *Tesseract* and I seriously considered joining the Science Fiction Advancement Association, mainly to get that professional rubber seal which that organization used to stamp MEMBER SFAA on all their letters. I also sent a silly and stupid article to Julius Schwartz's *Fantasy* magazine, the theme of which was that science fiction was not widely recognized because it did not come out in books. I often get this ridiculous thing out and laugh riotously over it all.

By August 1937 I was fairly well established in the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League as a rather young but not unduly obnoxious member. I even grew so bold as to contribute to the discussions and arguments. My good friend David Fox gave me much low-down on the dirt of the club, a hobby which I have enjoyed ever since. My turn to write chapter number eight of the "Tale Which Hath No Title" came around, and I was highly gratified that the members accepted it to be as funny as any other. My introduction of the two moons "Oglethorp" and "Arglethorp"

caused much hilarity.

I can never thank Russ Hodgkins enough for treating me in those days as an intelligent person. The condescending attitude of Lewis and a few others kept me away from them at first, though in retrospect I cannot blame them in the least. Hodgkins managed to make me feel not so much a waif in the midst of all these activities. The same goes for Forrest J Ackerman. He was undeniably the leading and outstanding fan and figure in the field in those days. I could ask him questions about scientifiction and scientifiction fandom which I know were inane and mayhap stupid, but he managed to patiently explain the mysterious world to me. That this preoccupation with scientifiction could be indicative of other conditions never occurred to me for several years. My admiration for Ackerman then as the prototype of a better kind of person was endless.

Somewhere between my joining and April 1937 Myrtle R. Smith (or Douglas) was brought to a meeting by Ackerman. He had first met her at an Esperanto Club meeting. At that time her scientifiction name was Morogo.* Her son Virgil was a schoolmate of mine, one or two grades below me. This and the coming of Paul R. Freehafer, who was previously a pen friend of Ackerman's, noted for his reading and collecting activities, rounded out the few fans who have survived to the present day from early 1937. Freehafer came from Payette, Idaho, to attend the California Institute of Technology, and his visits to the club were more or less sporadic for several years before he commenced active membership sometime in 1939 with the publication of *Polaris*.

* This form of the name was shortly changed for phonetic reasons to the familiar "Morojo". The "g" had stood for "Grey", a family name. [TBY 1992]

Late in the summer of 1937 my interest in the science fiction fan magazine field was at a high pitch, and I began to wonder why Los Angeles had never produced a fan mag on its own initiative.* With brilliant reasoning I deduced that with Ackerman, Roy Test, Squires, Paul Freehafer, Russ Hodgkins, and Morojo all here in Los Angeles, we should be able with little difficulty to put out a top flight fan publication. My correspondence with Baltadonis suddenly took a technical turn, as I pumped the obliging fellow dry of all the information he could send via post on the subject of hektography. Older fan readers will recall the Baltadonis *Science Fiction Collector*** as one of the highest attainments of the hektographers' art. His colour reproduction was superb, the pictures themselves far above the average, and the layout superlative. I still marvel at the results he obtained,

especially as contrasted with the first *Imagination!*

* *Actually, about two years earlier Roy Test had endeavored to produce a fan magazine, which I remember was called The Tesseract, not to be confused with a later fan magazine bearing the same name. One or two issues were actually produced but the attempt belongs to the cryptohistory of Los Angeles fan publishing. [TBY 1992]*

** *Baltadonis took over the magazine from Morris Dollens, to whom it is ascribed earlier in the text. [TBY 1992]*

One afternoon at Ackerman's, the habitu  where I used to spend most of my afternoons... a nuisance which Forrie tolerated in a most admirable spirit... I broached the "elaborate" plans which I had conceived for a local fan magazine. The original title of the venture was to have been *Odds & Ends*. This was a carry-over from a small one-copy rag of fantastic Munchhausen material I used to get out for my schoolmates. The first agreement was drawn up with Ackerman financing the thing, and he and I acting as co-editors. Material was collected and work progressed in August 1937. I wrote and edited; Forrie did the proof-reading and dummy work. He also obtained the title-rights of *Imagination!* from Roy Test, who had planned to use this title for the official magazine of the World Girdlers' International Science League Correspondence Club, which folded earlier in the year along with my dues as Vernon Harry went to work nights.

Just where the idea occurred that *Imagination!* ought to be the chapter organ, I do not know. I believe that this, too, was Ackerman's idea, but in any event, after I read to the chapter letters from Baltadonis explaining in lurid details the use of the hektograph, Russ Hodgkins fell for the idea and the chapter voted \$7.50 on September 2, 1937, to cover the cost of the initial hekto equipment.

The heroic story of the first issue of *Imagination!* is related in my editorial in the second issue. It was a small-scale nightmare of those New York publishing houses who do all their desk work in New York and then send their material to Chicago for the press run. In our version, when I arrived home from school in the afternoon, I would write up the material of the day, and then hop a street car to Ackerman's flat. My typewriter was an old three-decker Underwood with elite type (to which I am very partial), but the magazine was slated to come out in pica. Ackerman would have to spend an hour or so correcting spelling and indulging in other editorial adjustments, after which he copied the stuff on the hekto carbon, first having made another short car-trip to Morojo's apartment which boasted a standard typewriter, best for uses of this nature. Then her son

Virgil made the trip all the way back to my house, usually arriving at 10:00 in the evening, catching me in the process of shaving, a habit I acquired at a very early age, damn it. As the LASFL only had two hektograph pads*, this madhouse routine continued for ten nights, after which we were all quite ready to retire in grace from the publishing field.

* After being used, a hektograph pad has to sit overnight before it can be used again. The ink of the latest master carbon needs to diffuse into the jelly before a new one can be transferred on to the pad. [TBY 1992]

It is said by learned ones that ignorance of one's own ignorance is inexcusable. Up until the first issue of *Imagination!* I had been ignorant of the fact that I did not know how to spell. To this day I am especially weak in the matter of double consonants and adverbial ending changes, but in 1937 my spelling was incorrigible. My habitual use of British and quasi-French variations, as in "civilization, encountre, discovour", and an occasional unorthodox doubling of consonants is no doubt due to the fact that the dictionary which I used during the formative spelling years was a Century dictionary rather than the more standard Webster. Another cause was my advanced reading in my later elementary school grades. As I pored through semi-technical books on science and chemistry, not to mention the Wells and Verne novels, I naturally came across great quantities of words which my ordinary school studies would never encounter until the last years of high school. When, in putting these words back into my own sentences, I spelled them as I *thought* they were spelled, the results were garbled; hilariously so, I may add. I still maintain the British system, since my earliest readings were British science and chemistry textbooks, and, of course, all, the Wells and the Jules Verne translations, are in British letter.

It became obvious after the first issue of *Imagination!* that my ideas were a bit too grandiose for my technical ability to carry them through. For this reason it was imperative that the club come to the rescue of the magazine before it was too late. Further, as Hodgkins was and is an addict to rigid punctuality and order, the magazine not only had to be letter-perfect, but it must come out on a monthly schedule, and for this last requirement, the hektograph was considered too ancient a machine for the purpose.

Whereas the first issue of *Imagination!* had largely been between Ackerman, Morojo, and myself, the entire club now burst forth with ideas and suggestions. In fact, all through October and November 1937 the club dickered and bickered over *Imagination!*, though the contributions of such skilled cynics as Kuttner, Lewis, Fox, and Hodgkins made the entire affair

a little less than delectable. Among the major battles was the Chapter vs. Ackerman re: simplified spelling.

This is a matter on which I have always been phlegmatic. Perhaps I am a reactionary, but there has been one tendency about the club which has deeply irritated me the many years I associated with it. I do not nor have not at any time been able to adopt any but a smirking distaste for simplified spelling, Esperanto nicknames, and the more rabid scientific abbreviations. One bit of hell which I raised and kept raising for months was the changing of the club's name to the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society on April 4, 1940. Perhaps due to my own faulty spelling, I have always stood in awe of a language which was so cantankerous and wrapped-up in itself that it blithely bowled over in rapid succession every conceivable sound and sane concept of phonology. This feeling of accomplishment at being able to spell English at all was strengthened after my dilatory [research] into such phonetic languages as German, Dutch, Russian, Greek, Finnish, and even French, which though not phonetic is more regular than the King's language.

I have always had a sane respect for language, and such prostitutions as Morojo, Fojak, Tobojo, stfen, stfette, etc., have merely called up a feeling of contempt for persons whose minds were so unstable that they had to try and make their observations interesting by googoo tricks under the guise of neo-modernism. I can see the legitimate use of scientifiction, a term I use myself, and I have accepted stf, as a properly justified abbreviation of the same, but I do not pronounce the abbreviation "stuff", or whatever you will. This mad desire to warp and spice-up every possible word change on the part of a large faction of the local group has galled me for years.

The great battle of 1937 was Ackerman's mad desire for simplifying the English language. His rabid attempts became virtually out of control. There was editorial friction from the first as I flatly, at that early age, refused to dummy the magazine in his jargon... and Forrie was equally insistent that simplified spelling be only one of the many unique things about *Imagination!* Even before the first issue was out the Happy-Acky was calling it "Madge". Oh, the horror of it all.

As I recall, Russ Hodgkins and the Glendale SFL (Squires-Fox-Lewis) were with me to some extent; at least to the point of agreeing that Ackerman must limit his horrible mangling to his own work unless the authors of other material request their submissions be subject to horrible mangling into Ackermanese. To this stupid backwardness of the Chapter majority, Ackerman and his disciple conceded grudgingly.

The work of getting the original equipment which has been part and parcel of the group for years, is a bit out of my category. The mimeo and over \$50.00 of accessories were purchased over a period of time by Hodgkins and Morojo. I admit that I felt hurt when *Imagination!* exploded out of my hands, but it was for the best. In any case, I can claim the dubious honour of being the founder and co-editor of the first all-Los Angeles fan magazine, and God-father to all the rest.

The great difference between the Chapter #4 of the SFL and the present LASFS is a subject of many ramifications, the product of an evolution of some years' length, and a very interesting study. Perhaps it may be summed up in brief by the observation that the club in 1937 had no social life to speak of. The Chapter centered about meetings held roughly every other Thursday. Otherwise the members contented themselves with occasional Sunday gatherings of a highly informal and unofficial nature. Often groups of three or four attended shows together or went book hunting en masse, but that was virtually the sum of it. For the most part, members saw nothing of each other between alternate Thursdays, save the vicarious mediums of post and telephone.*

* And in 1937 not everyone could afford a telephone. I had none until 1944. [TBY 1992]

Thus it was that when *the* Thursday night rolled around, there was a lot of business to be transacted. Book and magazine trading occupied much time, discussion of the latest sciencefiction magazines received prime attention, and were greeted eagerly and not with the cynicism often displayed by the present group.

The meeting itself was operated along a modified parliamentary procedure which called for reports from the Treasurer, Librarian, and the Secretary and his minutes. After this there was the matter of business, which in 1937 constituted little more than answering letters, collecting dues, and a few items of club transactions, mostly the library, but after the founding of *Imagination!* the mimeograph and supplies.

After that there was a never-ending source of entertainment. One thing which I have deplored about the Society of later years is the lack of mutual respect among members, especially at meetings... a crime to which I am as guilty as any other. I believe that in 1937 and 1938 the members respected each other as fellow-travellers. And they most certainly had a taciturn respect for the author-members and their guests, who contributed to the conversations and discussions. There is no native genius left in the club such as was furnished by Henry Kuttner, Arthur Barnes, Fred

Shroyer, Perry Lewis, Ray Bradbury, Tom Mooney, and even Hodgkins himself. All of these people were excellent conversationalists, any one of them capable of entertaining the Chapter for an entire evening. Kuttner many times led discussions on fantasy. Shroyer is an incomparable character; one is drawn to him much in the manner of a bird hypnotized by a snake. One detests and at the same time envies Shroyer for his complete lack of anything faintly resembling conformity.*

** Fred, an outspoken atheist, wanted to start a magazine to be called God Busters. This blatant title shocked some of us more pious atheists. After distinguished service in World War II, he went on to a successful academic career and it was my pleasure to know him in this capacity in later years. [TBY 1992]*

Aside from such resident talent, we had a tortuous string of visitors that year. They included Arthur J. Burks, Dr. Keller, and Jos. Skidmore. But above all, there was an almost naive interest in science fiction and the world to come; the world, I sadly, sadly say, of those glorious years between 1940 and 1950. Ackerman would give accounts of the latest movies to be released with a scientific slant. He was always prepared to present some sort of scientific or scientifically slanted news items. He was in touch with virtually every fan of the time.

When the meeting adjourned, cliques of us would break apart and drift down into the cafe part of Clifton's, again ordering giant malts, or sponging off of Mr. Clinton's sherbet mine. A lot of the members at the time were just out of high school, or else simply and flatly unemployed. Perhaps that is why we took such flagrant advantage of Mr. Clinton and his generous cafe. There was no rent and all manner of free nourishment in his endless Limeade waterfall and the automatic sherbet mine, both nationally advertised items.

During this idyllic period, just before our publishing venture would make a profound change on the future course of the club, a change still in progress, the characters which were to hold forth on this new stage began to filter into the chapter. As editor of *Imagination!*, I got in touch with a fan who had been cornered at Shep's shop by one Robert L. Cumnock, an avid but short-lived* meteor on the local scene for two or three months in 1937. As editor of the club organ, I wrote to Mr. Ray Bradbury, telling him of our club, urging him to come and visit us, and explaining by what manner I had come in touch with him in the first place. At the next meeting, a wild-hatted, enthusiastic individual burst into the Little Brown Room, demanding: "Is Mr. Yerke here?" This fantastic creature became endeared to all of us henceforth, and though often the victim of assaults

with trays and malted milk canisters by infuriated victims of his endless pranks and disturbances, remained a primary figure in the club all through 1938, 1939, 1940, and 1941.

** Short-lived because his mother, whom he brought to a meeting, determined that we were a bunch of nuts if not worse and certainly not persons whom she wanted influencing her son. [TBY 1992]*

Another fan who was destined to stay in the LASFL and LASFS for quite some time made his appearance at the meeting of November 18, 1937. This was a Beverly Hills fan who in some horrible manner obtained Henry Kuttner's old Canon Drive address. Presenting himself at the Kuttner maison on a Thursday night, Henry, at a loss to do anything else, brought Franklyn Brady to the Chapter. He stayed until 1942.

I can now see that *Imagination!* couldn't have done anything but change the entire nature of the club. With the lack of social perception which seems to be typical of most persons, neither Ackerman nor myself for a moment imagined that *Imagination!* would do more than require a bit of work from four or five of the members. Things seem to have a natural way of making their own evolutionary pattern regardless of how much or how little planning is done by the promulgators of various projects. From a languid, old-style book and magazine collectors' clearing house, the main energy of the club began to be turned more and more to that of amateur publishing.

After the first hektographed issue of the magazine, the second and I believe the third were run off on Saturday afternoons on a mimeograph at the office where Morojo was employed. In as much as I was still nursing my fancied wounds over my change of status with the magazine, I was not around to witness these proceedings. It soon became apparent, however, that *Imagination!* was going to make a heavy demand on everyone's time, and an especially heavy demand on the treasury. After considerable discussion at several meetings, it was decided to take a big jump and purchase our own mimeograph and equipment. This machine was acquired on a monthly instalment basis and cost the chapter \$50. After a short time it found a permanent residence at Russ Hodgkins's home, at the other end of the city.*

** Around Manchester Blvd. and Western Avenue. Beyond that in those days it was pretty open country. [TBY 1992]*

The national fan field at that time was going into a brief and temporary lull; at least that is the way I recall it from the Los Angeles end of the

continent. *Fantasy Magazine* had just folded officially, as had the *Tesseract* and the *Science Fiction Digest*. Furthermore, the last vestiges of the Gernsbackian Science Fiction League was fading away under the new ownership of Margulies and Co. FAPA had hardly been set rolling; I had received an invitation to join but turned it down on the grounds that the contents of the first mailing were the most abominable trash I had yet seen. With the exception of a few hektographed magazines such as Baltadonis's *Collector*, Wiggins's *Science Fiction Fan*, Richard Wilson's *The Atom*, and a very few others, late 1937 saw a sort of hush. An ebb-tide between one epoch and another was in progress.

I think it marked at that time the close of the era of old-style science-fiction fans... the readers and collectors who corresponded, and many of which were valid literary critics. Publishing in the amateur fan field prior to 1938 was of a much higher quality than the present day new fan imagines. For one thing, there were more printed magazines and they came out regularly. And the contents were of a nature to warrant thorough reading. In addition, the authors of the day were willing to contribute, perhaps because most of the editors then were older, mature persons. The old *Fantasy* had set the standard for years. *The Science Fiction Critic*, Claire Beck's printed magazine, was of excellent quality, even by present standards, as was the first issue of Olon F. Wiggins' *S.F. Fan*, the first issue of which was also printed, as was Richard Wilson's first *Atom*. Wilson, by the way, was my third regular correspondent... we got mixed up in a trade ad for *Imagination!* and wrote back and forth for a year or more.

Imagination! had the luck to be uniquely blessed. Russ Hodgkins is one of the most methodical persons I have yet to meet, and under his exacting care the mechanical aspects of the magazine became rapidly superb. Morojo functioned as chief assistant in the early days in view of her office technique and experience. Aside from mechanical excellence, the magazine was liberally blessed with material by such gifted and witty authors as Kuttner, Barnes, Shroyer, Bloch, Mooney, Hodgkins himself, and later by the more responsible fan writers of the time. Native talent also developed, giving Los Angeles a set of indigenous writers, one of which turned professional. Ray Bradbury, who joined about this time, soon produced a ribald and fantastic humour which had an odour all of its own, albeit loved by all. Even Brady made a few literary attempts under the fearsome name of Dr. Acula.

The bulk of the editorial work on *Imagination!* fell to Forrest J Ackerman. I have personally never cared much for his material because of

my detestation of simplified spelling and googoo nicknames. But the content is, or was, such as to outweigh the abominable literary style. To Ackerman, who was still fortunate in not having to work for a living on an hourly basis, fell the job of stencilling, dummies, corresponding, and a good bit of the editing. The rest of us turned the crank, learned the Speed-O-Scope, assembled and stapled or else sat on the side-lines and read from the Hodgkins collection of fantasy*, one which is certainly comparable to any of the best in the country.

** By late 1937 the gatherings at the Hodgkins house once a month to finish putting the forthcoming issue of *Imagination!* together had begun to rival if not surpass the downtown meetings in sociability, and sometimes in attendance. [TBY 1992]*

The meeting of December 16, 1937, concluded my first chronological year in the Society. Looking at the roster for that meeting, I see a list of names of people, most of whom not more than three persons now affiliated with the Society could remember. And furthermore, knowing them as I did, I doubt if they would fit into the Society as of December 1943. They were a different type of scientifiction fan.

One of the very few social events of the year 1937 was an extra meeting at Morojo's to celebrate the first issue of *Imagination!* It was here that Hal Clark brought his brother Victor Clark.* Hal Clark, an occasional attender in those times, was a little rotund, red-faced creature in his mid-thirties. Whence and whither of him I know nothing. I seemed to like him for virtually no reason at all, except that he reminded me of one of those small, round, mannequins that teeter and loll precariously about on a half-spherical bottom, always smiling and never upsetting. His brother was quite the opposite. Like member Franklyn Brady, he had and has a speech impediment.** His attempts to discuss complicated sociological or psychological matters are thus often rendered difficult. Victor Clark was a full-time student and he has been going to U.C.L.A. ever since I first met him, working towards a Ph.D. Vic was around the bunch a bit even as late as 1943.

** Incorrect. See p. 4, para. 3 [\[link\]](#) re: meeting of August 19, 1937. [TBY 1992]*

*** In the 1950s we had in the German Department at UCLA a native German graduate student with a serious lisp who insisted on studying Hegel. It is very difficult to pronounce "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" with a lisp. [TBY 1992]*

There are other characters that fit into the Chapter at the close of

1937. Mary Corinne Grey was rather regular in her attendance; she was a junior at Los Angeles High School. She later became known as Pogo, now signing her name as Mrs. Russell M. Wood. She has a baby son, name of Kurt.* Charles Gurnett was another obscure figure that flitted in and out of the club until late in 1939. I remember him vividly for the sole reason that he reminded me in a faint manner of Lovecraft. He seemed to have the respect of the Kuttner-Shroyer clique, and they would all sit together talking weighty matters together for many hours of an evening.

** Pogo was present at the 70th birthday celebration party for Forrest J Ackerman in 1986, and appeared with a grown daughter at his 65th in 1981. [TBY 1992]*

Guests at that last meeting in 1937 included an obscure young artist, a friend of Ray Bradbury, names Hannes Bok! Emil Petaja made his initial appearance on the same occasion. The officers of the club stood as follows: Russ Hodgkins was reelected to a second term as Director, a dual secretaryship comprising alternately Perry L. Lewis and Roy A. Squires, Hodgkins as Treasurer, and I believe Alvan Mussen (now missing on Bataan)* as Librarian.

** Mussen died on the infamous Bataan Death March. [Ed.]*

We used to have a Christmas party on the night of the election, which included a scientific grab-bag. At the first party I received a Buck Rogers water pistol. The following year it was a bottle of whiskey which I was too young to appreciate. And the last party the following year saw me make off with a useless book. My luck in grab-bags and the like has always been abominable.

As I look back at that first year and its impressions, I wonder if I would have remembered the club any other way, had I been, for instance, of my present age and nature. I might have found it unutterably boring. But I don't think so.* I like to think that the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League was at its best then, and in the year following. One looks back on the society of the nineteenth century and imagines that it possessed something more stable which is lacking today. Most likely this is so much balderdash. None-the-less, I'm glad I was a member of that bunch of people, because I can thus appreciate an aspect of fan history altogether missing from present day activities, be it for better or worse.

** Over half a century later I find those early LASFL years among my most delightful and cherished memories, and that is not the statement of a maudlin old sentimentalist. [TBY 1992]*

• • •

I think that 1938, at least in its earlier half, marked the period in the club during which the most members were in the most accord over the most things. *Imagination!* was accepted without question as a serious project, necessitating the fullest support from the membership. There was no question raised, as there was two years later, over whether or not the club organ had first call on the spare time of the members. The bi-weekly and often weekly pilgrimages were made to the Hodgkins' maison in high spirits by everyone.

The fourth issue of *Imagination!* contained material by Ackerman, Bradbury, Hodgkins, Kuttner, Lovecraft, and a cover by Mooney. It was dated January 1938. By now the Chapter had amassed quite a few accessories to our original purchase, numbering mainly the Speed-O-scope, numerous stencil alphabets, styli, and several pattern screens. These were kept out at Russ's, along with the paper stock and other material, since the publishing was more or less permanently established there.

Here was the incipient beginning of the trend which has over a period of years changed the LASFS from a bi-weekly meeting-night affair to (as of summer 1943) its present twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven days a week, theory of function. On a Sunday in 1938 by two in the afternoon upwards of fifteen persons would have congregated out at Hodgkins'. During the week I had seen Ackerman occasionally of an afternoon while he was working on stencils for the magazine. Ackerman and Morojo were in fairly constant communication, as were Hodgkins, Kuttner, Shroyer, et al. On Sunday the various ideas that had been conceived "in committee" would be broached then rather than on Thursdays.

The Glendale SFL was absent from all but a very few of these meetings, due to the extreme distance involved... something over 26 miles including one interurban trip, a street-car, and a bus ride. The gradual inversion of the club to *Imagination!* and the preoccupation with the problems of running a regular monthly magazine which was then, with the exception of the British *Novae Terrae* and its luminaries, of the largest volume being produced, created a rift in the interests of the Glendale group with our own which made it only a matter of evolutionary course that Fox, Squires, Lewis would find less and less in the SFL. In truth, by the end of the year their attendance had become extremely irregular. However, there was no ill-feeling whatsoever involved.

My own particular part in *Imagination!* at that time was negligible. As a matter of fact, it was not until April 1938 that I survived the first *Imagination!* fiasco and wrote a "Reply to Michelism". This launched my

writing career in the science fiction fan field, and unfortunately, I seem to have been mixed up in controversial items of one sort or another ever since. While my attitude on fan affairs, after the initial blind enthusiasm passed off in 1937, has been one of a detached sort of arm-chair General, others who submerge themselves in the fracas have made it rather hot at times. "Never a dull moment," I always say, and what with "Reply to Michelism", "The Tale of the Hooten", "Open Letter to Daugherty", "Stagger on, Pacificon", "Report to Science Fiction Fandom", and lastly "The Knanve", it is no wonder that Jack Speer, when he met me late in 1943, was moved to observe that I was surprisingly moderate in my opinions. However, I see I am getting ahead of the story a bit too much.

Adolescence was very far along with me in 1938. I happen to have been a victim of Progeria, a term meaning premature aging. At sixteen I am supposed to have looked nineteen, and from my eighteenth to my twenty-first birthday only one bartender asked for my draft card. The youngster outlook with which I entered the club gave way gradually to a more tempered view of the situation, and while only twelve months previous the sight of original cover illustrations, scientifiction cinema stills, and the rarer magazines sent plain and unadulterated thrills of excitement throughout my nervous system, a year later I had a much more controlled view on the importance of fan activities in a person's life.

Contact with mature but unconventional persons such as Henry Kuttner, Shroyer, and their group within the club, and later Charles D. Hornig, made me more quickly aware of the difference between teen-age behaviour and adult behaviour. Naturally I cannot say that I grew up overnight, or that I ceased being stupid or juvenile at times, but my outlook not only on scientifiction but "outside" life as well was greatly influenced by a premature desire to get over the growing-up process, urged on by a wish to imagine myself as developed a conversationalist as the abovementioned figures of the old LASFL.

Russ Hodgkins had a meticulously well-kept scientifiction collection, plus a well-rounded library on technical and sociological subjects. One of his characteristics was an incessant filing, cross-filing, and counter-filing of all the various items in his shelves. One could find any given story by either magazine, author, or title, and there was still a fourth file where stories were listed by type. This order-mania was conveniently extended to the LASFL mimeograph and equipment, which received far better care than they have had at any time since. Hodgkins at the time was employed by the Bank of America, which may account somewhat for his preciseness. He had been there for nine years since graduating from high school.

Ray Bradbury, who played a prominent role in the local Chapter until late in 1941, was one of the many interesting persons to acquire the Sunday-at-Hodgkins' habit. In the same manner that my outlook was tempered by contact with the older members, it was tempered by closer association still, with the late teen-agers of the club such as Bradbury* and Brady. In 1938 Ray was attending Los Angeles High School. His ambitions were along the theatrical line, but the feature which marked him among the members of the group was his mad, insane, hackneyed humour, which was the especial anathema of Hodgkins. But underneath this ribald and uncontrollable Bacchus, which produced such things as "Hollerbochen", "Hollerbochen Returns", "Mathematician Minus", "Formula for a Stf.-Story", "Verse of the Imagi-nation", and many others in the old mag, was a deep understanding of people and the signs of the times.

* *Ray is three years older than I. [TBY 1992]*

Bradbury was a natural semanticist and possessed an excellent ability to see through the shams of the political and economic game of hide and seek which were characteristic of those last years before the outbreak of the war.* We knew that this present war was coming, that it was a deliberate machination, and that we would probably have to fight it. And at the same time we were always living and talking of man's possibilities, of the worlds we could build. In early 1938 I wrote an article for the high school paper speculating on the effects on Los Angeles if war were declared with Japan and the city bombed. The Dean of Boys called me to his office at the request of the journalism instructor and asked me if I didn't think this too fantastic and disturbing a subject to put before the tender minds of high school children. So you see, we knew which way the wind was blowing, but unlike my non-scientifictional extra-intelligent friends, we SFL members had the nostalgia of seeing the world we believed in deliberately being destroyed, thus postponing the finale of *Things to Come* for perhaps the rest of our lifetimes.

* *His burlesque of President Roosevelt's "I hate war" speech was a devastatingly funny classic. [TBY 1992]*

Aside from a few pictures taken out at Hodgkins' house, there is little to record these days in official LASFL archives. Squires and Fox, who were the Secretaries until May 1938, never included these extra-meeting activities in the minutes for the simple reason that they were never present. It will be seen from this account, however, that a very subtle change was

taking place in the structure of the Chapter. Whereas, prior to *Imagination!*, all discussions and activities were centered at Clifton's on alternate Thursdays, the scene of real activities began to move out to 84th Place. It is true that official motions and disbursements of monies occurred Thursdays, but most of the spontaneous discussions started up at Russ's place. This is more or less natural, since they evolved around the publishing activities of the club, and the problems which arose were considered there on the spot. Therefore, when Thursday nights in Los Angeles came around, members had less to talk about and subjects ranged far afield from scientifiction. The business meetings often became cut-and-dried affairs, all the details having been worked out in advance. While this trend did not come into full force until late 1941 when the members were seeing one another three and four times a week, the incipient motive began way back in 1938. I shall elaborate on this long-term trend as the account of the group progresses into the 1940s. Actually, there was still plenty of good, interesting, scientifiction talk and personages in '38, and no immediate cause of worry was even remotely imagined.

George Tullis, who later made a splurry in Chicago scientifiction circles, had been to LASFL meetings as early as mid-1937. He made another brief appearance at the SFL during February 1938. I rather liked him, as he was genial and down-and-out along with a lot of us at that time. He spent the meeting night of February 3 deluging the club with accounts of Sun Valley, Idaho. At a subsequent meeting Tullis and I amused the gathering with a concert played on two 10¢ fifes. We were amazed with each other's dexterity on the instrument, each having previously assumed himself to be the only person extant to play the fife (10¢ variety) according to classic musical precepts.

A few meetings featured talks by Shroyer, Kuttner, and Hodgkins, and finally, in the middle-spring of 1938, the Michelist Movement broke upon fandom. My journalistic endeavour in *Imagination!*, "A Reply to Michelism" caused me to be hailed by the opposition (ref. *Imagination!* letter pages) as "the first to take the Michelist bull by the horns". My information at the time comprised the January issue of *Novae Terrae*, the monthly of the British Science Fiction Association, which I joined along with most of the other members of the Chapter in 1938. What I was actually trying to do then was not to take political sides in Fandom over the question, but to question the advisability of attaching to fandom any pseudo-political importance, a stand which I have maintained to the present day.

Time dims my familiarity with the Michelist movement at that time.

Since this involves by analogy the NEW FANDOM movement, it is no desire of mine to drag up this ancient and bitter feud for a personal review. My article at the time started the ball rolling, but in subsequent correspondence with Wollheim we both reached an agreement of aims, and the entire affair was settled without enmity on either part. I maintained a casual correspondence for some time with Doc Lowndes and with Wollheim himself. The important point about this issue in my own personal memoirs is that it again launched me into active fan writing and especially political writing. And at the same time it was the first venture on the part of members of science fiction fandom to attach a sociological significance to the hobby.

Through the fortunate contact with Hodgkins and the others I have mentioned, I had managed to learn enough that I did not make an ass of myself in the short-lived excitement. My career as a science fiction fan might have taken a different turn then, if another event of local importance had not occurred in May 1938, just after I was on the way to precipitating myself into the arena of political discussion. The Squire-Lewis secretaryship at last petered out. Squires resigned as an active member and officer, and Lewis, his unofficial aide-de-camp, concurred.

When this vacancy opened, Hodgkins acting under the authority of the constitution of the Chapter, appointed me Secretary. This happened on May 8, and I was so elated at the prospect that whether the appointment was one of well-considered forethought over several prospects, or simply due to a dearth of material at the moment, I cannot yet decide. Both Brady and Bradbury were regular and enthusiastic attenders at the time and would have been logical substitutes. This new responsibility naturally turned my interest in fan activities from the growing national field to those of the local Chapter. For that reason, my position as a national fan has been rather derelicted for the next five and a half years. My standing was augmented only by *The Damn Thing* of 1940-41, the two Fywert Kinge poetical pamphlets produced by Joquel, and occasional items in other magazines, mainly Bronson's *Fantasite*. For the next three years after my appointment to the Secretaryship, my fan activities were devoted to recording in all their humorous phases the activities and exploits of members of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League and its later form, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

Since many others have not constrained themselves in praise of the Yerke minutes, I do not feel obtuse in making a few remarks about them myself. As a Secretary, I had absolutely no training whatsoever in the business world, nor in the proper form and method of writing minutes. Like my idol

of the time, Van Loon, I wrote history as I thought it should be written, with emphasis on the personalities involved rather than the dull business proceedings in all their monotonous glory. As I was then the assistant editor of the school paper, and author of a very popular column titled “Moozik Nooz”, which was devoted to the doings of the Music Dept., though more often pregnant with the scandals of the various orchestra and band members, I simply adopted my columnar tactics to the writing of the minutes, growing bolder and bolder as my familiarity with the task increased. The “task” lasted in an unbroken stretch from May 8, 1938 to March 31, 1941, when the press of work made it impossible for me to give them their usual attention. Due to a very genuine dearth of material for the job in 1942, I was again appointed Secretary, which position lasted irregularly through 1943.*

** The collected Yerke minutes follow these memoirs. [Ed.]*

Being in the position of club historian for this lengthy time, I saw many familiar faces come and go, many business machinations become repetitious; but above all, this protracted tenure gave me an insight into the nature of the club and its membership that is possessed by none of the other members.* Ackerman and Morojo, the only other members of comparable seniority, have no ability to view the situation from a perspective, being so thoroughly wrapped up in the club itself. I watched the club change in purpose, membership, concept, and nature. Further, all this time, my mind was growing up, following the normal evolutionary course as I grew out of my teens into my twenties. The longer I held the job the more interesting it became to me... especially as I went to college and took up the study of abnormal psychology and sociological behaviour. Then the club ceased to be a club at all; it was instead a priceless proving ground, a never-ending demonstration of half a dozen common psychological types in action at one time.**

** This was written in late 1943 when other persons of comparable seniority were no longer members of the club or completely dormant, e.g. Hodgkins, Bradbury, Shroyer, Brady, etc. [TBY 1992]*

*** My original paragraph about this aspect of the club in 1943 is overblown and reflects my own prejudices about the turn things were taking. It was written from anything but an unbiased perspective, as I tried to imagine I was doing. [TBY 1992] (The original paragraph ended “...it seemed to me that the club ceased to be a ‘club’ at all, and had become a kind of crash pad for displaced fans moving about the*

country in the war-economy and an asylum for a new breed of local fans, some of whom seemed almost to live in the clubroom and, in my opinion, had emotional problems.” [Ed.]

Though in the latter half of my regime, such priceless characters as Shroyer, Kuttner, Mooney, Hodgkins, Lewis, Gurnett, Henderson, etc. had all but totally disappeared from the scene, new ones took their place... Helen Finn, Jack Dowdle, Henry Hasse, Arthur L. Joquel II, Walt Daugherty, Ed Chamberlain, and Dave Elder, George Hahn, and Bill Crawford. The antics of this mad, insane, diverting procession was closely observed by myself sitting in the chair next to Director Hodgkins, later Director Daugherty, and then Director Finn, Willmorth, and lastly Paul Freehafer. Therefore, when I claim to be able at any given time to discern more about what the club is doing than the body of the membership, I imagine I know what I am talking about. I feel that I put in a good turn of work for the Chapter during those three years, though the extent of this service is mainly unknown to fans outside of Los Angeles.

In June 1938 Charles D. Hornig arrived in Los Angeles for one of his more lengthy stays, the first of a series of shuttles between Elizabeth, N.J., and California, which lasted until March 1942, at which time he was sent to a camp for conscientious objectors. Hornig will probably not be remembered by newer fans as the founder of the Science Fiction League, and as such, the gentleman who signed the charter in 1934 which brought the LASFL into existence. Between 1938 and the present time it has been my pleasure to enjoy a very staunch friendship with Charlie,* though the reciprocal interest did not crystallize immediately in the first year. While Hornig and I attended much of the foolery of the American Legion Convention together, it was not until his following stay in the city two years later, when I was much more mature, that we were able to meet on equal intellectual grounds.

** Which continues to this day. He lives in San Jose, and we see each other several times a year. [TBY 1992]*

Those who have known Hornig will recall him as a man of uncommon conversational proclivity, able to talk delightfully on virtually any subject under the sun. His witty observations and parodies endeared him to the members of the LASFL, and his interest in Esperanto and World Peace, both lost causes, put him on firm grounds with Ackerman and Morojo, a mistake for which he is most fully forgiven.

His arrival in town at the time put some life into the club at a moment when it was ever so slightly dull. He guest edited the July 1938 issue of

Imagination! and engaged in some interesting excursions in the direction of Pogo. However, the Hornig influence over the club in general – and Bradbury and myself in particular – did not become an influence of any import on the trends of the Chapter until his second visit in 1940.

While the summer of 1938 saw the Chapter organ *Imagination!* ascend ever higher on the list of top fan magazines, the first of what has since been periodic slumps in the activity of the club occurred. The activity of the club simply dropped to a very low ebb, meetings attracting only perhaps six or eight persons. The minutes of the time record despair at this trend, which became a familiar cry as occasional slumps of activity occurred every year following. As I have mentioned before, the social activity of the club revolved more or less around scientifiction and its ramifications, the summer of 1938 inaugurated the first of many following all-club social adventures. The classical beach party which occurred on August 13 (and the morning of the 14th) was recorded with unusual and spontaneous enthusiasm by myself as Secretary. As I am at the moment without the convenience of the Minute Book, I remember only part of those attending. I know that the whole affair was remarkably enlivened by our rapidly-forming group of impromptu entertainers. Brady, a Pepsi-Cola fiend, waded down to the shore to watch the grunions float in and stepped in a clam. Kuttner was seen chasing a scantily clad Pogo, brandishing a simmering Weiner on the end of a long stick in the general direction of her buttocks. Antiquarians interested in such wry accounts of the numerous LASFL outings may visit the clubroom and read the entire story in the Special Events section of the minute book.

Incidentally, this particular event set off a reorganization of the minute book and other club records to which I had fallen heir as Secretary. In August I set about in a burst of enthusiasm to record and transcribe the pre-historical Secretaries, such as Wanda Test, extant during 1936. These had been irregularly kept in a notebook, but in a handwriting not conducive to leisurely reading. My enthusiastic energy sufficed to transcribe several such sets, about the ancient days when the Chapter met in the Pacific Electric Bldg., with William L. Hoffard as Director.

When the Beach Party took place, my high-school-trained news instinct detected an interesting story for future generations. However, there was no provision in the records for noting this event. Under the heading of Special Events, it filed this and subsequent social write-ups, which, to date, include three more beach parties, numerous picnics, theatre excursions, including the private showing of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and publishing sessions. It was my habit to record such extra activities in as

interesting detail as possible until sometime late in 1940 when they had become so commonplace in the club's life as to be superfluous.

Up to this point I have stressed the tempo of the day rather than amusing the reader with illuminating anecdotes, of which there will be plenty in the next four years' accounts. My effort through the entire series is to point out as clearly as possible the nature of the transition of a once-every-two-weeks LASFL to a full-time madhouse LASFS. I will back-track for a moment and insert some events of interest during 1938, which was, on the whole, a quiet year, lacking either notable additions to the club or an imposing list of celebrities such as had graced numerous meetings the previous twelve months.

On January 20, 1938, copies of a new mimeographed constitution were passed about. With few subsequent alterations, this document functioned as the sole legal document of the club until late in 1943. This novice attempt as legislature was all right for the old nature of the club, but it was totally unadaptable to a group maintaining a regular quarters, and so when the problems of maintaining a clubroom reach an impasse, the entire legal structure fell down about an unsuspecting membership.

February 17 was the date of the first visit to the LASFL of the Pomona fan, Thomas R. Daniels. Daniels is another one of those many persons who never quite got up sufficient steam for a good launching. Off and on for a number of years Daniels was sometimes heard of, in *VOM*, in some local magazine, through a deluge of letters, but never quite enough to become even moderately recognized. At present residing in Washington (state), he is chiefly remembered for his attempt in 1940-1 to assemble a comprehensive photo-library of scientifiction fans. I engaged in some correspondence with him regarding my own extensive file of local and visiting personages, but nothing ever come of it from either side of the parley.

March 3, 1938, witnessed a discussion of the Supernatural, led by Fred Shroyer. This date was a fine time for such a discussion, as the supernatural falling of unprecedented amounts of water from the sky at this time came the nearest yet to washing the entire city into the Pacific Ocean. I was in a particularly unreceptive mood that night, as during the morning while walking up to the busline on my way to school, my saxophone case suddenly opened up and dropped a \$165 gold-plated Alto Sax into three feet of rapidly running, muddy, silty gutter water. Supernatural, indeed!

The following meeting, March 17, popular author-member Arthur K. Barnes related the havoc caused in his home district of Tujung Canyon by

this deluge and told a never-to-be-forgotten yarn of his hilarious journey out of the flooded area on an earthworm tractor. While sitting, along with many other washed-out residents, on the hood of the engine, Art was intrigued by the sight of several copies of old *Amazing Stories* (pre-1930 vintage) floating down the swollen river. He never did find who the collector in them parts was.

April 1 was a Fool's meeting. Paul Freehafer passed about tickets for an open house at CalTech, which a number of members visited, lured chiefly by the spectacular demonstrations in the electrical laboratories. A month later we had one of our few speakers for the year, Mr. John J. Parsons of CalTech, who discussed the rocket experiments at that institution where he was on the research staff.

One of the interesting characters of the old LASFL was Charlie Henderson, who stood for the club as long as the club stood for him, roughly 1938-1939. Henderson was an irresponsible person of Shroyer's tastes but totally lacking the latter's intelligence and personal attraction. Charlie worked for Shep's Shop, the former scientifiction haven, and eventually is alleged to have run off with Lucile Sheppard's huge Packard coupe and an unspecified amount of cash.

Henderson's contributions to the club consisted of ribald discussions and fantastic ideas for putting the club on a paying basis, a bad habit often dreamed of by his counterpart, as far as ideas go, Walter J. Daugherty. The meeting of May 19 ended in a verbal riot with Henderson proposing that the club purchase a professional story for \$100 and run in it *Imagination!* for ten or twenty issues. The flaw in this reasoning as a circulation booster in fan circles is obvious. There are plenty of professional stories to begin with. Finally, with the assistance of demons Kuttner and Shroyer, the meeting concluded with everybody going hog-wild, finishing off with a proposition that newsboys be given copies of the club organ so they could walk down the streets shouting: "*Examiner! Times! Imagination!*"

After a few meetings of peace and quiet, politics reared its ugly head. Old timers will recall the great furore raised by Wollheim and CPASF over McCreary's story "After 3000 Years" in *Astounding* during 1938. When copies of the Wollheim letter reached the local fans, we were off again on the old merry-go-round. The contention of Bradbury, Brady, and myself was that: what if 3000 years was pro-capitalistic, etc.; it's only a story. The fracas only succeeded in getting the discussion of Michelism banned from *Imagination!*, a procedure which embittered feelings on both sides of the continent for some time. The upshot of the thing was to get me into a protracted correspondence with Tremaine and then Campbell, which I

prized very highly... especially my letters from Campbell wherein we engaged for a brief while in an interesting psychological discussion.

Bob Olsen was an author-member whom I particularly liked. He was a small jovial Swede, a sort of everybody's grandfather. His contribution to the earlier history of magazine scientificfiction was well-earned and established in Gernsbackian *Amazing Stories*. His first story appeared in the June 1927 *Amazing*, "Four Dimensional Roller Press", and this was followed by a host of dimensional stories, "Four Dimensional Surgery", "Four Dimensional Robberies" etc., for a long time. During the three years from 1937 to 1939 when Bob Olsen was an irregular follower of Chapter doings, his genial, rotund figure was welcome at all times. He was always willing to talk to any of us, especially to wee youngsters like myself. Shortly after the beach party of 1939 he became afflicted with an obscure bone ailment which incapacitated him for many years. In 1941, just after the Denvention, Ackerman, Morojo, Erle Korshak, and myself visited him at the County Farm, and then I saw him again on the campus of Los Angeles City College sometime in 1942, quite well again. His formerly perfectly globular bald-pate, a feature which was his chief attraction at times, now had some unsightly lunar undulations. Alas, this enviable cranium never recovered from the affliction.

The meeting night of June 7, 1938, witnessed an interesting lecture by Olsen on hydroponics, the art of growing plants in chemical solutions. Bob at the time was an agent for a local company promoting this sort of thing. The club, in a grandiose burst of enthusiasm, proposed an attendance of 50 persons, but succeeded at a very late hour in getting only 25. One of the guests at that time was A. Ross Kuntz, who made in and out appearances along with his friend Melvin Dolmatz, until just last year. (1943.) And then the following meeting witnessed a blow that seemed to presage the beginning of the end... but eventually turned out to be merely the darkest hour before the dawn. The minutes for the meeting of August 17, 1938, open as follows:

"One of the most discouraging, down-hearted, disgusting, dreary, disconcerting, disabling meetings in the history of the local Chapter. Only 12 members were present at this sad assemblage, the meeting at which one of our most popular members died: beloved by all, the enlightener of many dreary hours, of service and assistance to the cause of scientificfiction many times, missed and mourned by all members of the local Chapter; yea, of all the scientificfictional field, we take this

moment to bow our heads in silent memory of our former beloved member *Imagination!* (Sniffle, sniffle)”

The object here, one might guess, was to make the feeling of disaster communicable to all. What did happen? Apparently, since the death of grandpere Ackerman earlier in the year, the Ackerman fortune had not run so well, and thus in August 1938, at the age of only 22, Forrest J Ackerman had to give up scientifiction as a full-time occupation and go to work on the swing shift for either the government or Standard Oil as a typist. This was, to the best of my knowledge, Forrie’s first real job, and it hit him as hard as it hit the rest of us. Since he was the mainstay on the editing and stencilling end of *Imagination!*, a fact which until then had been begrudgingly admitted only as necessary, it became suddenly obvious that the magazine would have to do some rapid telescoping.

After rapid, though sometimes vapid, discussion, the club showed more good sense than on any similar occasion since, and decided to suspend the magazine, rather than make a slow and agonizing descent from one of fandom’s top periodicals to the ignominious status of a hanger-on. However, plans had been in the offing for some months to make the anniversary edition a giant of its time, replete with top-notch articles by some of the shining lights of the time, both professional and amateur, plus a full page of lithographed pictures of the Chapter’s members. In addition, there was a large accumulation of manuscripts scheduled for future issues, including submissions for a contest on the topic: the future of scientifiction. (These make interesting reading, especially Jack Speer and his “After 1939, What?”.) When the news of Ackerman’s having to work hit the club, everything had to be instantly frozen until it could be ascertained just how much spare time Forrie was going to have available. The situation came as a very hard blow, and many a near-tear was to be seen in the eyes of the twelve attenders. I noted it all down in the minutes with a sense of foreboding, and for a while it looked as though I was right. Letters of protest and condolence began to flood Box 6475* from all over the fan field; and on the home front no one seemed to be getting over the shock.

* Box 6475 Metro Sta in downtown Los Angeles was the club’s mail address until 1941. Ackerman or Morojo picked up the mail every day and distributed it to club officers and other intended recipients. [TBY 1992]

Finally, on November 3, 1938, “Madge’s Prize Mss.” was issued, the first bit of fan literature to come out of the LASFL since the crash. But at

the same time attendance at the meetings was dropping. Members of the LASFS who imagine the club to be much more active now (late 1943) than formerly will be interested to note that in the minutes of November 17, 1938, it is seriously observed that the club was facing the startling ultimatum of *disbanding* since the attendance was down to only fifteen per meeting and showed no signs of getting better: Now, an attendance of 15 is considered better than average! A long discussion was held that night between the “faithful”, which comprised Hodgkins, Ackerman, Morojo, Bradbury, Freehafer, and myself. It was pointed out that many of our active members, such as Mike and Corinne Ellesworth, Pogo, Wilbur Stimpson, Freehafer, Grady McMurtry, the Glendale group, etc., were not attending because of work and the distance involved. A representative of the Glendale bunch flatly told the assemblage that the club had been degenerated into a boring, uninteresting tedium, and at the moment I fear he was right. (This was a long, long time before some of the more “loyal” members admitted the same thing themselves.) The absence of *Imagination!*, the lack of new interests or active members, saw the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League approaching the end of 1938 at a very low ebb. In fact, the next meeting, December 2, saw only eight – an all time low – in the Little Brown Room. Again we decided to postpone disbandment until after the Christmas party two weeks hence. But it was a dreary occasion for the eight present. The Floor Manager for Clifton’s kept peeking into the Brown Room and was highly annoyed at the sudden lack of food revenue which the group was not producing. The Brown Room was designed for thirty persons, and through the years we have just managed to hang on to it. Indeed, the scene was very black indeed.

One of the more interesting personalities of 1939 made his appearance during this year-end depression. That was Ray Foulkes, who made his first visit at this time, arriving from Seattle. Not noteworthy as a fan, he became for a short while another of the innumerable fascinating characters which have graced the LASFL and LASFS during their history. He dropped from the rolls as silently as he came, and for the life of me I can’t remember a thing about him save that, like many others, he was a diverting and unusual person to talk with. His part in the Chapter affairs will be detailed in the next volume.

Faith in scientifiction and Los Angeles fandom was again restored on December 15. Despite a rain which did some \$25,000 (pre-war prices) worth of damage to the city and environs, twenty-four old-timers turned up for the annual Christmas party. Gifts for the grab-box were in great

profusion, and the sudden reappearance of our enlivening professional authors and their friends, plus the Glendale SFL, made everyone jubilant. Charlie Henderson conducted an auction which was hilariously funny, much discussion and feasting occurred, from the middle of which Russ Hodgkins was called by his father to help push the family car out of a downtown mud-sink. This left me in charge of the whole affair.

When *Imagination!* became the club organ, dues had been raised from 10¢ to 15¢, but with the demise of club publishing, Pogo had raised the motion that the levy be reduced to its former level. Settling this hagggle was my first experience at the helm of the LASFL, a position which I have assumed on numerous subsequent occasions, much to the dissatisfaction of many members who are annoyed at my insistence on carrying out the business at hand with no side-show, or to hell with it all. Finally dues were kept at 15¢ on condition that the club design a coat of arms and produce some stationery for members' use. Stationery came two years later and the coat of arms after three years. Hodgkins returned at the end of this, and everyone proceeded to reach into the grab-bag, and to gab far into the night.

There was one more meeting of the LASFL that year, a fifth Thursday affair in Hollywood. This meeting started something new and far-reaching, and properly belongs in the 1939-40 section of this narrative.

Nineteen thirty seven and 1938 go hand in hand in my interpretation of the club's chronology. Though the latter year differed from the previous in the matter of publishing activity, the stage was peopled with essentially the same characters, and the same plot, and the same spontaneity among the membership. I like those days and weeks, partly, I suppose, because there was a certain element of newness about associating with a group of that nature. We actually did live in comparative harmony then; there were few if any frictions, and very little gossip. The Old LASFL was perhaps the ideal fan organization, because each and every member had an earnest, sincere interest in science fiction and its hobby aspects. The activity was therefore undiluted with cynicism, vicarious motivation, and petty jealousy which later wrecked the LASFS. And there were no members whose presence was undesirable to the rest, another feature of the late LASFS which caused much unpleasantry.

In this first volume of my memoirs I may have waxed pedantic and dull at times. I was young then, and I can only record my emotions and remembrances as they seemed at the time. In the next volumes things pep up, with remembrances and anecdotes about the many professional authors that flocked to Los Angeles at one time, visiting fans, social events, and

the like. But if the reader has come this far with me, he will appreciate in the following volumes why it was necessary to go into such minute detail of the years 1937 and 1938, for it is on this framework that the history of the next four years rested.

The coming year of 1939 saw many sudden, abrupt changes... the beginning of the two years transition period from the LASFL to the LASFS. The following December was to see the face of Rome greatly changed.

T. Bruce Yerke,
December 14, 1943

This "mission statement" originally appeared in the introduction and has here been moved to the end. [Ed.]

It is my intention of dividing these memoirs into four volumes of two years each. They more or less conveniently divide themselves as follows:

VOLUME ONE	The Old LASFL	(1937-1938)
VOLUME TWO	The Transition (LASFL to LASFS)	(1939-1940)
VOLUME THREE	The LASFS	(1941-1942)
VOLUME FOUR	The Beginning of the End	(1943-1944)

I wish to have the bulk of these distributed through the FAPA because I believe that, with but a very few exceptions, the bulk of the more mature and reliable members of the field are covered by this instrumentality. For this purpose the press work for those volumes is proceeding under the FAPA frank of Mel Brown-Francis T. Laney-Phil R. Bronson, who have been kind enough to do the majority of the mimeography for me as I am employed nights and unable to do so myself. The stencils, with the usual errors, were executed by the author.

I trust the present members of the LASFS will be big enough to let me use my own minutes for this project, and I hope I will be able to pull through all four volumes.

This first throw is rather general, because it's a long ways back and specific incidents tend to blur into one another. But as we approach the

present, conversations and anecdotes will be recalled in profusion, full of stories about Charlie Hornig, Jack Williamson, Bob Heinlein, Art Barnes, Henry Kuttner, Julius Schwartz, Otto Binder, Bill Crawford, George Hahn, Edmond Hamilton, E.E. Smith, Morrie Dollens, Erle Korshak, Milton Rothman, Kornbluth and Cohen... and many others that made Los Angeles a scientifiction fable. I was there with all these guys, drank with a lot of them... so bear through, chums! It might be worth it.

T. Bruce Yerke,
May 19, 1944.

– originally published by The Outsiders for the FAPA

Minutes of LASFS (1942)

T. Bruce Yerke

MINUTES OF THE LOS ANGELES SCIENCE FANTASY SOCIETY, 1938-1942 or, Why Science-Fiction Fans are Science-Fiction Fans. by T. Bruce Yerke (edited by Arthur Louis Joquel II).

In the beginning –

The Los Angeles Science Fiction League had Secretaries before the advent of T. Bruce Yerke. They included, the old records show, such individuals as Wanda E. Test, K.E.F. van Lutz, an obscure individual who signed themselves “FJA”, Perry L. Lewis, and Roy A. Squires. The minutes signed by these scribes during the period of February 1935 to May 1938 have only one peer for thrilling, dynamic, gripping, breath-taking reading – and that is the financial page of my Sunday newspaper. They were faithful reports – they just lacked ummph!

But with the advent of the boisterous Bruce, matters picked up considerably. Members, who had been a bit erratic in their attendance, now came steadily, in order to be in on (or just in) the informal, chatty, sometimes slightly censorable minutes that TBY [hence his nickname “tubby”] produced steadily for three years. Herewith follow some of the highlights from the files of this unique chronicler of a science-fiction organization.

– Arthur Louis Joquel.

May 19, 1938...

There developed a minor riot on the subject of “What Can IMAGINATION! Do To Enlarge its Variety of Articles?” The argument soon drifted to the fantastic side. The final bomb was having the newsboys going down the streets Sundays yelling “Examiner, Times, IMAGINATION!”

June 2, 1938...

Many members, hearing mysterious rumours of what happened at Morojo's house on a special meeting in September 1937, flocked to Morojo's new abode.*

** It's possible this answers the question of just when Morojo took up residence on Bixel Street. [Ed.]*

The entire meeting was an air of utmost informality. Finally the *expected* refreshments were served. Ice Cream and... ROOT BEAR? (It is called Root Bear to avoid any embarrassment.) After the Ice Cream was consumed Ye Secretary, who had no chance to repent his meeting stunt of last year, when he crammed down nine doughnuts and three glasses of Root Bear, he beat it for, he reasoned, "Science-Fiction fans are batty enough without Root Bear, think what it'll be like with everybody full of Root Bear." On his way out he turned out the hall lights in hopes some fan would break his neck.

While across the street waiting for a bus he heard loud shouts and hysterical laughter coming from a brightly lighted room directly above a Drug Store, and now and then a bottle or some confetti would fly out. As the bus rounded the corner he saw a long black car loaded with uniformed men pull up to the Modern Apartments. "No Sir," he reasoned, "the League ain't wot it used to be."

Saturday, August 13 and Early Sunday the 14th (1938)...

First, but by no means least, official beach outing of the local chapter. The party went to the desolate sand dunes of Playa del Rey. Here all victuals were unloaded and the party climbed down the treacherous cliffs, picked their way across the railroad tracks, and slid down to the 50ft beach. Here the members hastily turned clams and built a sturdy sea wall to keep back the ever coming closer King Neptune.

The average consumption per capita was two bottles of Pepsi Cola, not less than three hot dogs, several Potato Chips and as many marshmallows, all sprinkled over with delicious sand. After the eating had died down the party, at usual, split up into separate groups. Frank Brady wading down to the sea to watch the bunions, or whatever those fish are called, float in; Harryhausen, Yerke, and Pogo, discussing why we were here, what for, and because of what? Finally it was decided to go home if anyone was going to be able to work on IMAGINATION! the following day.

August 18, 1938...

One of the most discouraging, down-heartening, disgusting, disconcerting, dreary, disabling meetings in the history of the local chapter. The meeting at which one of our most popular members died: Beloved of all, the enlivener of many dreary hours, of service and assistance to the course of scientifiction many times, missed and mourned by all, we take this moment to bow our heads in silent memory of our former beloved member, *Imagination!*

Not much business was discussed. Later Pogo requested that the usual sherbet be brought up, which turned out to be plain putrid. From an old malt mixer Ray Bradbury and Ye Sec mixed up a glass of that highly delectable and rare treat, Ghoul's Broth; which goes, so says the menu, thusly: One half glass of old lemonade; 1/4 glass of stale coffee; 1 strawberry sherbet float, sprinkled with pepper, salt, sugar, and topped with ten drops of green ink. To this sprinkle some vinegar, stir, and add another float, more ink, a dose of pepper, some vinegar, torn paper, a stale tea bag, and juggle between glasses; then put up in a malt jar and let it rot. When putrefaction has set in hold nose and drink, then run like he – for the nearest hospital. All members were nauseated by the mere sight.

September 1, 1938...

After due nonsense the meeting was called to order and the minutes were read and approved, after some controversy over the recipe for Ghoul's Broth. The things I get away with.

April 28, 1939. (Special Activity – Metropolis)...

Members proceeded to the New Academy Review Theatre where the showing of the (to quote from brother Ackerman) “greatest of all scientifiction films, even superior to Stuff to Come, and oh boy, that city!” was being held. In short *Metropolis*, film epic of 1926.

Metropolis alias *Ten Nights in a Barroom* or “How to Laugh off that Loggy Feeling”. It seems that public taste has changed sufficiently in the last thirteen years to make Forrie's masterpiece of cinemaphantasy appear on the level of a Flash Gordonized Great Train Robbery. It was a gala night for film jokesters, and everybody came out with a sore throat, though all were glad to have seen what scientifiction was like on the screen in 1926.

May 2, 1939...

Minutes were read and approved.

No old business.

No new business.

No entertainment.

Nothing on the Program.

No reason why members should come.

Meeting adjourned.

Members walked out, leaving a glass of water upside-down on the table.

June 1, 1939...

A total of nineteen people showed up. There was nothing to do, but members were so glad to see something besides vacant chairs that they stayed and stayed. Speeches were given, but nobody was listening.

Saturday, August 12, to Early Sunday, the 13th, 1939...

Approx. one year ago to this date, the Science Fiction Chapter in L.A. held its first Beach Party. Last year fourteen persons went. Showing the great popularity of those occasions, fifteen people went this time.

When it was decided that all who were coming were present, the members flowed out en masse to the waiting buses. There were two of them. One was Hodgkins' official TECHNOCRACY CAR, with the rumble seat full of fire wood, and the front seat full of food. Capacity: TWO. The other, Capacity: SEVEN. Stf. fans wished ardently for a size reducer. Volunteers to ride the fenders were signing NO RESPONSIBILITY contracts when a terrific noise was heard and a huge thing, as big as a streetcar on wheels, roared up the street, and rumbled to a stop. This proved to be Herman Doepke in a '29 LaSalle, Capacity: TWENTY OR THIRTY. Those riding in the Doepke Giant had the invincible feeling that one has when riding on the front of an avalanche.

Those who went to the party last year were quite glad to see that the strip of beach this year was more like Kansas, whereas the site of our last year's outing resembled nothing so such as the Matterhorn.

There was no pitched sand battle as of last time. Possibly the intellectuals present had this effect. Hodgkins, Ackerman, Morojo, Binder, Schwartz, Bradbury, and Kuttner formed a human pile during the greater part of the evening. They said that they were comfortable, but our guess why they didn't unpile sooner is because they were so tangled up that they couldn't.

After several hours of this and other trivia, it was found to be 2:15, though members were inclined to favour Olson's watch, which said 9:20. The lucky ones got home between 3:30 and 4:00.

August 24, 1939...

Conversation changed to individual groups, Wojo and Tobojo talking about tobacco, and Pojo, Fojo, Morojo, Roloho, and Hoko talking about

various topics. (I hope there are plenty of newcomers this meeting, so that the true asininity of the famous Esperanto nicknames will come to the fore with abrupt and embarrassing vigour.) Finally, it was decided to have a meeting, which started off and ended with the minutes.

September 21, 1939...

Friction was occurring between the Director of the organization (Hodgkins) and the Librarian (Bradbury). It seemed to be in the form of a little game. The Librarian would say something aimed to make the Director quite highly excited. When this had proceeded far enough, the Director would then try to hit the Librarian's hand with the club's meat cleaver, most often missing, and causing a great dent to be made in the fine table work of Mr. Clinton's Cafe.

September 29, 1939...

Ackerman had with him a Polish version of *Flash Gordon* which was read aloud to all by Bradbury. It was flippantly remarked that it sounded something like the Secretary reading the minutes. After this the minutes were read and Morojo asked that they be re-read as she hadn't been listening. They weren't.

October 26, 1939...

The biggest news of the year. Headlines in the *Hollywood Gazette* announce that the first rocket to the moon has returned. "Moon rocket returns. 4sj Feted." 4sj looks at the headlines and gasps: "At last. I knew man could do it. We've reached the moon!!!" Then he noticed that 4sj is not a team member of the rocket at all but one of the numerous horrible nicknames that he and others have thought up for him. The *Hollywood Gazette* also has some vulgar gossip about a cult raid of some sort – utter balderdash. (ED. NOTE: headline was: "Yerke, Pogo, and Morojo Arrested in Cult Raid.")

February 1, 1940

The Treasury was at a new low, and the embryo Technate at 638 S. Broadway was faced with a problem somewhat like the government's, only uniquely different. Whereas the government is trying desperately to balance the budget, the SFL is trying equally as desperately to have a budget to balance.

The club is stuck. What will the new magazine be named? Such concoctions as *Shangri-La*, *Terra*, *Revel*, *Criterion*, *Futurian Fantasia*, *Terrestrial*, *The Damned Thing* and numerous others too trivial to mention. The discussion continued for a while, but the more names that were

suggested, the worse they all sounded. Finally, the whole thing was covered reverently with a wet blanket (to keep all the smell in) and shelved to be ironed out again some other time.

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER, SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE,
LOS ANGELES CHAPTER, AND CHARTER CHAPTER NO. 1,
THE SCIENCE FICTIONEERS

LOS ANGELES ANGELES BRANCH AND OVERSEAS
BRANCH NUMBER ONE,
THE SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION, FIRST SCIENCE
FICTION LEAGUE CHAPTER,
TECHNOCRACY INC., 11834-33.,
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 15, 1940 are now
in order...

God!

Around the usual hour, the meeting was called to order. The reading of the minutes followed, with due criticisms.

“Any unfinished business,” inquired the Director (Daugherty). (Who knew damn well we had a horrible mess to clear up this meeting.) The Secretary was requested to re-read the list of the names from the preceding minutes. After the reading of the names... (Well, well, here come the Heinleins...time out while the usual felicitations are passed about) the field narrowed down to two names... *The Damned Thing*, and *Shangri-Blah*! The sweet title of *Shangri-Blah* was inaugurated and L.A.’s little bundle of innocence and tranquillity will flow from the honey dew of the southland once every two months.

The Losse Angellese Pchappterre, Ye Psychyense Phicktion Leaggue,
Congregation of Februearrey 22, 1940...

The club had been expecting Chas. B. Hornig, that tall, blond Scandinavian, at this meeting, but in his stead, totally unannounced, we had Robert A. Erisman.

Los Angelus....Well, what’ll I call it?, Meeting of March 7, 1940...

When the Secretary walked in, he found that member Ackerman was struggling to keep a picture on top of one of the fancy torch-holders which the brown room is adorned with. The picture would no sooner be set up than the draft from the ventilator just above it, would blow it down. This battle between science fiction and the brute forces of nature continued until the very manifestation of Christian Science appeared – Mr. Mind-Over-Matter Daugherty, who with the air of one used to besting nature, reached up and pulled a chain, thereby shutting off the damned thing.

However, at this time Mr. Ackerman decided the picture would look better over on another torch, so all the work was in vain.

There were a number of items which had to be thrashed out, the most important of which was/and is What in the Hell are we? Are we a Chapter of the Science Fiction League, or are we a chapter of the Science Fictioneers, or are we something else? At the present time the club has no name. It merely IS.

LOS ANGELES YOU NAME IT CLUB, Meeting of March 14, 1940...

Some pantywaist objected to the use of such religious words as Hell and Damn in the official records, which objection was sustained, the religious phrases being turned into American Hecks and Darns.

Discussion about entertainment took up the rest of the meeting. Members suggested things such as trips to the LaBrea Rotting Stuff Pits. The Librarian knows where the picture Her was filmed, and also the location of the triple-mouthed tunnel where Flash Gordon was photographed.

Meeting of March 2, 1940...

The meeting was called to order, and the reading of the [minutes] was called for, and executed. (Don't take advantage of the double-entendre of the last word.) The present crucial matter facing the Patdoyn a Drandascii Club, that regarding the new title was delved into.

LOS ANGELES OH GOD, THAT NAME CLUB, Meeting of March 27, 1940...

On this occasion, the title of the club was changed from the Los Angeles Chapter, Science Fiction League, a somewhat coherent and sane-sounding title, to the ungodly horror of Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. After a gruelling contest in which all names with the slightest bit of normalcy or saneness were voted down, a Semantic Blank was foisted off on the head of the club. (Mad laughter)

April 11, 1940...

"Any old or new business tonight?" None. No cooperation. No enthusiasm. No spirit. Dead, dead, dead.

"Well, how about moving the mimeograph?" Yes! No! Yes! No! Yes! No! He's up. He's down. He's up. He's down. Left Right Left Right. All right, we'll leave it at Hodgkins's.

WHOP! Director Daugherty's gavel falls limply to the table. "The meeting's adjourned! And so am I!" he says, which means that he has quit. However, that isn't official as yet, since it was done after the meeting.

What meeting? Welllll. (Listlessly reported.)

April 25, 1940...

The Round & Round We Go Club met again on Thursday. Why? QUIET! The Director Pro Tempore (Yerke) let drop the gavel on the table, and the meeting was in order. Minutes were called for. The Secretary gave a weak excuse to the Director that the minutes had been misplaced at home, but that they would surely be present next time. The Director P.T. gave the Secretary a dirty look, and the Librarian (Yerke) sat back and laughed and laughed, because he knew that the Director knew that the minutes had been misplaced all the time.

May 2, 1940...

Mr. Daugherty announced that he would run against Mr. Ackerman for the coveted position of Director of the LASFS, LASFL, LSF. By a vote of (?) to one, Mr. Daugherty became the latest President of the Latin-American-Like-League. We now have a whole host of ex-officers: Ex-Director, Ex-Ex-Director, Ex-Director Pro Tem, and Ex-Ex-Ex-Director, reelected. (Doubtfully Submitted.)

May 30, 1940. (Special Fifth-Thursday Meeting)...

About 7:00 the first bell rang, betokening the first of the thundering horde. Opening the door timidly, I quickly closed it. Outside was a country bumpkin in a red hat. Something from an Egyptian tomb, in clothes. Dracula's Daughter. "Oh Well," I sighed, "I guess war isn't much worse," and I stepped aside to let them in. (A group of unsympathetic neighbours across the street were enjoying the situation immensely.)

A picture was taken. Mr. Daugherty decided to assist the photographer in the manner of illumination. First taking the light and securing the illumination, he removed the Mazda Light and quite gaily proceeded to screw in the flash bulb. There was suddenly a blinding flash of light, a startled yelp from Mr. D., and fifteen cents had been spent. While the crowd was laughing, he must have turned the power off. The photographer, seeing what had happened, quickly leaned over and pulled the switch which shut off the power, he thought. However, Mr. Daugherty having already turned off the power, the photographer's actions turned it back on again. Quite gaily, Mr. Daugherty commenced to screw in the light. Another blinding flash and startled yell. Fifteen cents had been spent. Members were in stitches.

The Entertainment Committee left for Hollywood to get foodstuffs. This little side excursion is of interest due to the effect that costumes had on the worthy burghers of Hollywood. When we assured the policeman

that it was only a costume party, he let us continue on our way.

Comparative quiet reigned while partaking of the pastries. Then the dancing started again. Finally the jiving jivers were pulled out of the rut, er, the groove, and made to pose for a group-shot. Announcers on the radio were now saying, "Good morning, Kiddies."

June 6, 1940...

The meeting was called to order, and commenced with the pledge of allegiance – er, what am I thinking of – commenced with the reading of the Minuteses. (Since the word Minutes goes for one set, it is only obvious that Minuteses should apply to two sets.) At any rate, the Minuteses were read, first for the meeting of two weeks prior to the meeting of June 6, or three weeks prior to the date of the reading of these, or two weeks prior to the date of the second set of minutes as of the date of the reading of these minutes, herein printed above, or else a week after the date of the date above or two weeks before this date and a week before that, making a total of twenty-one days ago as of the date being read or a week later than the date printed above. After that the minutes of the meeting one week later than the minutes of one week before, or one meeting before the meeting for which these are being written or else two weeks after the date of the occurrence of the second set, or perhaps better legated by saying one week after the week of the date printed above, and one week before that – in short, the week after the first set of minutes mentioned above were read. (You know, the house party.)

Well, they were accepted (both the minutes of one week before the house party or four weeks ago by date above, one week afterward, and the minutes of the house party taking place two weeks ago, or one before the date above, or a week after the first set of minutes taking place four weeks ago to the date above...)

June 20, 1940...

Items included the announcement that the meeting of July Fourth happens to fall upon some obscure holiday, celebrating an occasion several centuries ago or less when some rebellious farmers and merchant men staged a revolt against the organized Government and set up an illegal affair which is today the champion of all status quoos. Anyhow, it seems that everybody celebrates this occasion by blowing off fingers, ears, teeth, and eyes, so that finally we got around to making preliminary arrangements to final arrangements for a 4th of July Beach Party on the 4th of July. We were now puzzled by the strange actions of Mr. Ackerman, who shortly followed by the Librarian arose and dashed out of the Brown

Room. They both came back shortly, and whatever Mr. Ackerman was toting was completely concealed by a large cloth held over the object by the Librarian. When they nonchalantly got as far as Morojo they suddenly stopped, whirled, stripped off the covering, and thrusting a cake in her face, they shrieked in her ear “Gutten Nachmittag!”

Being of a small stature, it was decided that the cake was too big for Morojo, so after some more scurrying, a knife, forks, and paper towels were produced and forthwith the cake was divided equally among those present.

Meeting, or whatever you want to call it, of July 4, 1940...

At the home of Hackerman, the fireworks were being discussed when a phone call was received, an S.O.S. to be exact, from [Fay] Dishington & Party, who were trying to find the Ackerman House. They requested that something that they couldn't miss seeing be sent down to flag them in. Being a democratic organisation, voting was taken, and Pogo, adjourned in a sort of ridiculous beach attirement, was elected to act as lighthouse. Dishington eventually docked.

We were now wondering if Hodgkins would be coming or not, so it was elected that he be called up. The first time, nothing but a series of Bronx Cheers could be heard, and the Secretary decided that if that's the way Hodgkins felt about the matter, we were glad he isn't coming. However, Michael Ellsworth enlightened the matter somewhat by explaining that the alleged “Bronx Cheers” were simply the “busy signal.”

Beachward wending, the little party of hardy fans soon approached Santa Monica. Then, they froze in their tracks. What was that?? To all outward appearances, it was the Barrier, beyond which lay Coventry. Huge, wicked looking fogs were inching in from the beach. Lights were turned on. Members began to wonder how we would know when we were at the shore. It was finally figured out that as soon as the fog started to leak in through the floor boards, we would be quite on the shore. The caravan kept closely together as they wended their way up the dunes.

Doors were quickly flung open, and the adventuresome party leapt out, to sink waist deep in the sand. Madly crawling forward, a few of the group got to the top of a plateau-like place, where it was decided to make camp, as at this spot one only sank in up to the knee bone. The food, the armoury of high explosives and what not were ferried up to the encampment, and a fire was started. Members now felt like the first explorers on a foreign planet. Sitting in the cool sands in a mist-enshrouded world, with the sound of a vast ocean in the distance and the solitude of the desert around us, it was as cold and damp as hell, and if half

the members don't show up with rheumatism or double-pneumonia it will be a miracle.

Lest the strange planet be invested with dangerous monsters, the armoury was opened and grenades were brought out. From across the lonely plains, a feeble beacon was seen, What manner of life held this beacon? Was it Intelligent? At the same time large flashes of light and thunderous detonations from neighbouring dunes betokened the fact that the desert was alive with life. To demonstrate that we, too, were armed, members began to set off our own grenades.

When the works had been shot off, things died down awhile. With nothing to do, it was decided that the encampment of the habitués of this strange world be hailed. Answering yells were heard – IN ENGLISH! Mlle. Holliday faded into the gloom. Time passed, and she failed to return. A searching party was sent out.

The desertites were fascinated by our civilization's song when expressed by Miss Holliday. After each series of song, they would give her a container of some sort of brew, labelled ECKERTS. Seeing that there wasn't any danger, the searching party returned. A short time later Miss Holliday returned. With her she brought a science of this race, of telling the physio-psychological complex of a person by the person's name. Whether this science was inspired more by the visit or the bottle, we were unable to tell.

Finally, after all the members and guests had been analyzed, Bradbury suggested that we go to some sort of Pier on the neighbouring planet of Venus.

July 18, 1940.

The meeting was written in Andante time, starting out with a slow introduction in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. A discussion on the futility of watermelon was held. A trumpet entered this slow movement and the tempo changed to a light Allegretto when Ackerman entered.

The tumpanni [tympani?] began to rumble, which meant that the tables were being re-arranged, and a peculiar noise from the Basson Gonique section introduced Daugherty. A rasping on a bass viola was written into the theme, to represent the minutes.

Now a Bacchanial lilt entered our Opus. There was to be a scientific dinner. Nothing definite was done about it however.

August 1, 1940...

After the Forryspendence had been taken care of, a matter of \$3.50 was brought up, to be spent to secure a generally blank space in a

convention booklet. Why the club should buy a blank space in the booklet is a perplexing problem. From all indications it will be a blank, for nothing to put into this half page has as yet been decided on.

About this time, Unser Fuehrer stalked through the door and a helluvaboo, erh – cough, cough – a hullabaloo arose.

August 15, 1940...

Supporting the belief of Einstein and similar worthies who think in circles, or at least, think that the universe is a circle, we need only to refer to [the] minute book (that Egyptian Rosetta Stone without the key, into which all happenings are entered but out of which it is quite impossible to glean the faintest idea of what occurred at such and such a meeting without first consulting the Secretary as to just what in hell that particular sentence is supposed to mean) (in case you are now lost because of the lengthy parenthetical insertion, we are now picking up where we left off before going into the long parenthetical insertion) to find that local doings seem to travel in yearly cycles. In short, for no good reason we had eighteen present.

No one, hardly, expected the presence of Tom Wright and J.J. Fortier. However, the two chaps sitting on the wall side of the table were none other than Tom and J.J.

The matter of photographs at the beach party was brought up and all appeared to be going smoothly until that inquisitive chap Hornig asked for a detailed and technical account of why members were going to be soaked 6¢ per print. This led into a discourse which was quite a dark mystery to all present, and was an utter waste of wordage since the price will still be 6¢ per print.

Daugherty arose and began a long valedictory about Tom Wright and J.J. Fortier and *The Mercury* and *The Comet* and *Dawn*. On and on. Yes, we know all about the magazine, and the hard struggles of our poor friends in cruel, isolated Northern California. All about the excessive cost of stencils. All about how Shangri-La watched these two struggling fans strive to produce a fan mag attempt. And then Director Daugherty related in tearful tones how ashamed we down in Shangri-La became. Here we are with a mimeograph and stencils, and there they are with nothing! And we all felt like dogs, depriving these two struggling youths of their chance to make a fan magazine. With magnificent compassion Director Daugherty told us how we had \$38.98 in the Treasury. What will we ever do with all that money? Wouldn't \$28.98 be enough? An awful sense of guiltiness crept through us. What right had we to \$38.98, when these two fellow fans had nothing! Such a situation was unbearable. Were we Wall Street

Autocrats to sit calmly by with \$38.98 in the Treasury. NO! By all means no! Let us indeed give these struggling young publishers the sum of \$10 from the bulging coffers of our Treasury. As that great profit Karolo Marxo once said: “’Tis better to stand with only \$28.98 than to sit with \$38.98 while a fellow worker has nothing.” This tremendous offer left everyone dumbfounded. Especially our visitors.

September 12, 1940...

It seems a common human trait to have an aversion to doctors. The doctor is the last person anyone wants to have a run in with, and here on the register we find that there was a doctor featured as the Guest of Honour. The fellow was named Dr. Edward Elmer Smith, Ph.D. Not only that, but he was given a seat at the executive head of the table. All very strange, until it was discovered that he had written some scientific stories in the past.

After Walt Daugherty got through introducing everybody to everybody, the Secretary arose and introduced Walt. Walt then arose and introduced our featured guest. Doctor Smith arose and in a witty manner told people how dull he was, that he didn't want to talk all night, and sat down.

Mr. Daugherty then re-arose and announced that Mr. Forrest J Ackerman, a visiting celebrity from Hollywood, California, would tell us all about the convention. Mr. Ackerman took Mr. Daugherty verbatim, and told us ALL about the convention. He took five minutes telling us about the time they arrived. Fifteen minutes on the Friday before the Chicon. Twelve and a half minutes on the Saturday before the Chicon. Twenty minutes on the first day of the Chicon. Eighteen minutes on the Second day of the Chicon. Ten minutes on the day after the Chicon. And spent another fifteen minutes winding up his stay in Chicago. Everyone heaved a sigh as he got on the train for Los Angeles, and we were all there to see him off.

October 17, 1940...

Director Daugherty was not present, and therefore it was up to the Secretary to start the meeting. All eyes turned attentively on the Secretary, who proceeded to read the minutes. After they were through, Hodgkins sat blankly for a moment and then said: (quote) “They're not funny.” (unquote) The Secretary replied that if nothing funny happened, how could the minutes be funny.

November 14, 1940...

FORM FORTY SEVEN, the form which Bradbury, Joquel, Hornig,

Crawford, and Yerke will fill out on Draft-Day, was passed around by communist, pacifist, coward, louse, slacker (as he will eventually unjustly be called) Joquel.

The five fore-going members of the club are already making plans for the Concentration Camp 5, Chapter SFL when the day comes.

January 2, 1941...

As the Secretary had laryngitis, Mr. Ackerman was called upon to render the records redundantly. After a false beginning, which was a malicious reflection upon the resounding, bell-like clarity and unimpeachable rhetoric of the Secretary, he assumed his own voice (thereby losing most of the touch that makes the minutes allegedly famous) and read the account.

January 23, 1941...

A by-law had been suggested to the effect that non-dues-paying members, ex-members, guests who keep coming on and on, etc., etc., be dealt with accordingly.

The discussions regarding this measure were as momentous to the SFL as the present Declaration of Near-War in the Congress is to that Corpse. Every conceivable, and a number of inconceivable items and angles, were thoroughly delved into by Joquel, Bradbury, Morojo, Hodgkins, etc., etc. The promulgator of the thing, to wit, Hodgkins, backed by the chief and most drastic supporters; Daugherty, Joquel, Ackerman and Yerke, became so harsh and unsympathetic to the pleas of the chief non-paying filchers present, Bradbury, Dolmatz, and the latest, Chamberlain, that the latter resister, Chamberlain, who had resigned this very meeting because he didn't want to pay dues, was eventually screaming and grovelling on the floor, sobbing pitifully that "I'll pay my dues, I'll pay my dues! Anything! I'm sorry!"

After several hours, it seemed, of discussion, nothing definite was decided, except that there appeared to be so many exceptions to a flat, strict ruling, that a committee should be appointed to judge upon all cases of individuals who might be so hard up that they couldn't pay dues. Requirements which have to be met before a person is judged sufficiently hard up to avoid paying dues were tentatively set at: 1/ An accessed yearly income of not over \$10. 2/ A house that consists of, at the most, one large packing box on the Los Angeles River. (The person is allowed to keep one bundle of excelsior for bedding). 3/ No means of transportation save the large digit on the right hand. 4/ A minimum daily caloric consumption of 1500 calories. 5/ No job for the past five years. 6/ No living relatives who

might be able to pay dues for him. 7/ Not more than one pair of pants, one ragged shirt (patches allowed), underclothes optional, no shoes, and only rags from the freight yard to bind feet with, one large and exceedingly dirty canvas for a coat, and 8/ A record of petty theft (due to starving condition) of not less than three counts.

When and if a person can qualify under those conditions, he will be allowed to come to meetings without paying dues, but he will be unable to vote, unable to use club equipment at club rates, and unable to sit with the rest of the members. That is how the situation stood at the end of this meeting.

The Interregnum...

On March 20, 1941, Yerke pleaded lack of time to devote to being Secretary, and resigned, amid howls of protest. Joquel accepted the appointment on a strictly temporary basis. Then Ed Chamberlain held the post until his reports became both illegible and illiterate. Alojo then filled in for a few more weeks, and was followed by Walt Daugherty for about the same period. Then Russ Hodgkins joined the procession, and was followed by Daugherty. Jack Rhodes took over for a time, and Gus Willmorth took the books over from him.

When Willmorth was elected Director on May 28, 1942, a frantic quiz failed to reveal anyone who would willingly accept the post of Secretary. So Bruce, who happened to be in attendance that evening, was drafted for the position. His minutes for that meeting tell the story.

May 28, 1942...

Due to the fact that the Secretary didn't know all this was going to happen, the first half of the meeting is rather hazy, as all good meetings should be.

Main bout of the evening was the ever-tiresome task of electing a Director. Someone did nominate Willmorth, who clamped on his ever-present hat even tighter. Being uncontested in the race, he received most of the votes.

First official action on the part of the Chelan Kid was to drag an old, slightly used Secretary out of the storage closet. Weak and dizzy with an array of afflictions rivalling John Barrymore himself, Yerke, veteran of many a year's battle with the club over the keeping of the minutes, once again received the position which he had vacated only a little more than a year ago after a three year incumbency. Yerke is now recumbent, usually upon his back.

So then we went to play miniature golf. Next instalment of this

thrilling story will be recounted next Thursday night and be sure to attend, or there will be so few around that nothing will happen.

Extra Special Activities Department (Picnic), July 5, 1942...

Confusion existing between God's time and Delano's time, and other confusions existing in the minds of the participants, which is to be expected anyway, brought two conflicting schools of thought into existence, one arriving an hour later than the other.

"Why, I thought all along," genial Bob Hoffman deprecated, waving his nose in the air gaily, "that we were supposed to be here at 2:00."

"One," said Daugherty, a sweat bedraggled, broiled creature standing at bay after an hour's wait.

Gus Willmorth complicated the scene no end. Daugherty, on hearing that there were some other fans on the top of the Southwest Museum set out to show these enlightened people where we ignorant ones were waiting, Willmorth set out hunting for Daugherty. Shortly thereafter Daugherty returned. They set out hunting for Willmorth, This caused a sort of long-distance merry-go-round which confused the elevator keeper no end.

When we got to the top of the elevator shaft, several Daugherties and Frehafers got in and a number of Willmorths and Yerkes got out and started looking, for each other. This melee was fixed up and no one noticed the difference. (P.S. It's done with mirrors.)

Food was abominable. The wieners (named American Stuffed Pig Intestines for patriotic reasons) were perpetually cold.

Conversation went from secret mutterings about Crawford to a discussion of Brahms's works. The Secretary left shortly and the page has run out. (ED. NOTE; So has this one), so, FINIS.

– *Shangri L'Affaires* #5 (August 1942, edited by Gus Willmorth and Art Joquel)

Giants in Those Days (1961)

Redd Boggs

Minneapolis Fandom (1926-1943)

I'm not sure that the history of fandom in Minnesota needs to be written. Certainly fandom has never developed characteristic identities circumscribed by state boundaries, and even regionalism has been largely lacking, despite the formation of the Southern Fandom Group and early attempts to organize the National Fantasy Fan Federation along regional lines. It is convenient, however, to consider fandom in Minnesota as an entity in itself. Such a segment is small enough to cover in relatively brief space, and large enough to contain a great number of interesting people whose achievements are worth chronicling.

While Minnesota has never been the home of teeming fan groups such as those in California, for example, Minnesota fans have played prominent, if not leading, roles in the Immortal Storm since the mid-1930s, and some of the top fanzines have been published here. Minnesota authors, many of them former fans, have contributed more than their share to the body of science fiction literature. Above all, the science fiction personalities in Minnesota have usually been unusually fascinating people – “altogether lovely, but slightly wacky”, as Jack Speer expressed it in the original Fancyclopedia – and it would be a shame if they were forgotten.

Most of them are gone now: gone from the state itself, and gone from fandom. This article is an attempt to tell a little about the fun they had long ago, when they were still fans, in the state of Minnesota.

Note: the original version of the following section listed every letter by a Minnesotan in early prozines that Boggs could find, including their addresses. I have edited this down substantially. For those interested in that level of coverage the full version can be found at fanac.org.

1. The Age of the Letterhacks

There was at least one science fiction fan in Minnesota even before the founding of the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926.

We can state this with some assurance on the basis of black-and-white evidence, for in the June 1935 *Wonder Stories*, Edward R. Manthey of Minneapolis stated that he had been a science fiction reader ever since the days of *The Electrical Experimenter* and *Ralph 124C41+* (i.e., 1911 or thereabouts). Manthey is the first Minnesota fan your Gibbon knows about, though Manthey's only fannish activity consisted of writing a couple [of] letters to *Wonder*. With his second letter, September 1935, Manthey was encouraged, in an editorial note, to become a regular letterhack of the likes of Don A. Wollheim, but apparently he never wrote again.

Not till the mid-1930s did real letterhacking develop among Minnesota fans, and nearly all these letterhacks later became fans in a more modern sense, playing active roles in organized fandom. First of the great Minnesota letterhacks to appear was Oliver Saari, 1342 First Street 6.E., Rochester, whose letter in *Amazing*, November 1934, was probably his initial effort. He soon followed it up with letters in *Amazing*, for February, April, May, and August 1935, and February 1936. By the time he wrote the last-mentioned letter he was residing in Minneapolis at 1712 East 34th Street.

Born in Finland, Saari came to the United States in 1927 at the age of nine, and first began to read science fiction two years later, in the summer of 1929. One of Minnesota's first trufans, he also became one of her first science fiction writers when in 1937 he sold three stories to the Tremaine *Astounding*: "Stellar Exodus", "Two Sane Men", and "The Time Bender". Over the next few years he sold stories to *Captain Future*, *Super Science Stories*, *Future Fiction*, and other magazines. During the 1950s he made a comeback, and sold to Campbell and elsewhere, but has disappeared again in recent years. A graduate in mechanical engineering from the University of Minnesota, he lived at last report in Chicago.

The first fan letters of Douglas Blakely, another famous Minnesota trufan, began to appear late in 1935. During those years he was still a junior high and high school student, and in the December 1936 *Amazing's* Dr Sloane roguishly scolded him for being a "naughty schoolboy" because he confessed that he read sf magazines at school behind an open notebook. Most of Blakely's later fan activity was on a purely local scale, but he became famous among Minneapolis fans as an impromptu entertainer and as an actor in the numerous skits recorded by the fan group. He also played alto sax in various orchestras around the Twin Cities. His only professional writing was with "The Time Bender", which was largely Blakely's work but was given a rewrite and final script by Saari and published under the

latter's byline.

The same *Amazing* (December 1936) in which Blakely was chided by Dr Sloane also contained a letter from John Chapman, another of the famous Minnesota fans who were beginning to emerge. He had opened his letterhack career in the June 1935 *Astounding* (an issue which also contained a Saari letter), but at that time was living in Minot, North Dakota. By the time of his next letters (*Astounding*, February and April 1936) he had moved to Minneapolis and was living at 500 15th Avenue S.E. In 1937 he was at 1521 Como Avenue S.E., which became a famous address to Minneapolis fans over the next half-decade.

Born in North Dakota, Chapman became a fan of Nick Carter at an early age, and attempted to write sequels to the stories in the magazines, in which he put his hero through more and more dangerous scrapes than his creator ever imagined. When Chapman discovered science fiction, he started writing voluminously in that field, and finally sold quite a number of stories. Nine stories from his mill appeared in the early 1940s, and he sold others during the boom of the '50s. Like Blakely, Chapman was a musician of sorts, and played a "battered clarinet". He also collected a large record library that was famous among Minneapolis fans.

In April 1937 Arden E. Benson, 4011 Emerson Avenue North, Minneapolis, had a letter in *Astounding* and at the same time joined the Science Fiction League; another famous Minnesota fan had made his bow. Benson, whose nickname was Buns, spelled that way but pronounced Bunce, had begun to read science fiction in 1934, and like most fans of the day carefully built up a comprehensive collection of the magazines published before he became acquainted with the field. He was once called "the tallest man in science fiction" and "perhaps the most amiable during his amiable moments". Like other local fans he became an engineering student at the University and owned a record collection – this consisted largely of old-time records in the days before this was a common possession.

An interesting letter appeared in *Astounding*, June 1938. Signed jointly by Oliver Saari and Arden Benson, it begins, "Being the only science fiction fans in the city of Minneapolis (far as we know)..." and ends, "we should like to get in touch with other science fiction fans living in the Twin Cities. We hate to think that we may be the only two of that select society in these parts. So let's hear from you, fans!" This was a year after a disastrous attempt to form a SFL chapter in Minneapolis – an episode described later in this history – but it is not clear where the other local fans had disappeared to. Apparently some of them were still on the

scene, for in the very next *Astounding*, letters from both John Chapman and David L. Dobbs of Minneapolis appeared. August 1938 was the month I moved to Minneapolis from Fargo, North Dakota.

[In] the December 1939 *Astounding* were two other letters of interest to this history. The first was written by Charles W. Jarvis, 2097 Inglehart Avenue, St. Paul, who had become one of the most prolific and talked about letterhacks in “Brass Tacks” since his first letter, April 1939. Jarvis dabbled briefly in fandom – he mentioned receiving news about “Grey Lensman” from the fan magazines in a letter published October 1939 – and he attended a number of meetings of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society before entering the service during the war. Now a doctor in St Paul and one of the few old-time fans residing in this area, Jarvis told me in March 1961 that he gave up reading sf years ago – largely because of Campbell’s espousal of Dianetics, apparently – though he bought *Galaxy* during its early days. Professional reading consumed most of his time at present, he said, but he mentioned some of the old sf “classics” such as “Triplanetary” and various stories by Clifford D. Simak with great nostalgia.

The other letter of interest in the December 1939 *Astounding* was written by Bill N. Campbell, 1015 West 32d Street, Minneapolis, who mentioned reading science fiction “for several years as a silent fan”. Like Jarvis, Campbell attended some fan meetings, but never stayed around to play a very active role in fan affairs.

Despite the increasing activity on the part of Minneapolis fans as the 1930s drew to a close, it remained for a fan on the eastern side of the Twin Cities, in the suburb of North St Paul, to publish the first fanzine in Minnesota and thus become well known to leading fans around the country. He was Morris Scott Dollens, who had begun letterhacking with the February 1936 *Astounding*, revealing in his letter that he liked to colour the interior illustrations of science fiction prozines using a 10 cent box of water colours. His artistic talents were given a more public display when he published, that same year, a halfsize hektographed fanzine titled *Science Fiction Collector*, the first issue dated May 1936. (Sam Moskowitz’s *The Immortal Storm* describes the history of this fanzine.) After publishing thirteen monthly issues of the *Collector*, Dollens turned the magazine over to John V. Baltadonis of Philadelphia and disappeared from the fan scene till early in 1941.

2. Minneapolis SFL

Anyone who reads back-issue *Wonders* of middling age – the last few years of the Gernsback magazine and the first few years of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* – will find several pages in each issue given over to an organization called the Science Fiction League. In *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz gives an excellent account of the SFL, which he calls “more beneficial and important to fandom than any organization which preceded or followed it”.

In introducing the club, Gernsback described the SFL as “a non-commercial membership organization for the furtherance and betterment of the art of science fiction”, and among its functions to that end was the chartering of local chapters to be affiliated with the parent organization. Many such chapters were formed, since only three members were required to start a local chapter, and the SFL column in *Wonder* was soon filled with news about groups that were being formed or proposed. Various charters, such as those in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Leeds (England), were soon established on a firm footing, but many others were either proposed and forgotten or else organized, only to fall into inactivity almost immediately.

The Science Fiction League was announced in the May 1934 *Wonder* (with a preliminary announcement the previous issue), but it was not until more than a year later that the organization of a Minnesota group was reported. The June 1935 *Wonder* listed a proposed Minneapolis SFL chapter headed by Alden E. Stafford, whose address was 200-288 Civic Arts Building, 305 South Street. By some coincidence, this building now houses part of Farnham’s school and office supply store, which contributes to local fan activity these days by functioning as the Minneapolis Gestetner agency and seller of mimeo supplies to Gafia Press and other fan publishers in this area. Though this SFL chapter was mentioned for the next seven issues – for as long as the Gernsback *Wonder* survived – this early and abortive attempt to organize a Minneapolis fan club constitutes a “forgotten chapter” in the history of Minnesota fandom. Later fans seem never to have heard of this proposed SFL chapter and never, to my knowledge, even referred to it when describing fan activity in this area.

Even more curiously, a Mr. Alden E. Stanford still resides in Minneapolis, but when confronted in March 1961 with the evidence of his part in the incident he could not remember having attempted to form a fan club. He confessed to having read science fiction at one time, and finally recalled having been acquainted with a Mr. M. R. Keith, who once had an office in the Civic Arts building sometime during the 1930s. He suggested that Mr Keith may have had something to do with the matter. Mr. Keith,

an attorney, did indeed remember this long-ago incident, though he had forgotten the details. He believed that he and Mr. Stafford had discussed the formation of a SFL chapter and that Mr. Stafford had written the letter to *Wonder*, using his (Keith's) business address. However, the chapter "never got off the ground", Mr. Keith recalled, and no meetings were held.

This proposed SFL chapter was premature, but only by the narrow space of a few months or a year at the most. Oliver Saari moved to Minneapolis late in 1935 or early in 1936, as did John Chapman, and Doug Blakely announced his existence to the fan world, about the same time. The presence of these young fans would have given the SFL chapter a nucleus from which to build, and the history of Twin Cities fandom might have been quite different. As it was, two years passed before another attempt to organize a Minneapolis group was made. On page 124 of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, June 1937, this report appeared:

MINNEAPOLIS CHAPTER

At the preliminary meetings of the Minneapolis Chapter of the Science Fiction League held recently, members present were: Oliver E. Saari, who was elected temporary director; Douglas Blakely, assistant director, John Chapman, secretary; Vern Dinkelman; and Jack Burgess.

Honorary guests present at this meeting were Mr. Donald Wandrei and Mr. Carl Jacobi, well known science fiction authors, who gave interesting talks on various sidelights of fantasy fiction.

SFL members in the Twin Cities who are interested in joining this chapter please get in touch with Oliver Saari, 1427 Logan Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The "preliminary meeting" reported here was also the only one ever held by the Minneapolis SFL chapter, but local fan activity nevertheless received a stimulus which had many long-term effects. Messrs. McKinnon, Dinkelman, and Burgess are obscure fans whose fate is unknown to your historian; presumably they were never seen again in active fan circles. But the others – Saari, Blakely, Chapman, Madsen, and Benson – became fast friends and during the next three years and more, except for some brief lapses, met frequently and "carried on almost all the activities of a club except the two that distinguish a club from a casual gathering – viz, organization and publicity". (So reported Samuel D. Russell in "The Minneapolis Fantasy Society", an article appearing in *The Fantasite* #2, February 1941.) Bob Madsen is perhaps the least familiar name of the five

because he played little part in later fannish developments in Minneapolis. About the time a formal fan group was organized at last, he was appointed to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He was listed as an honorary member of the fan club for several years, however.

Although Oliver Saari was elected temporary director of the SFL chapter, Doug Blakely provided much of the impetus behind the venture.

Blakely, it seems, deserves credit for stirring up fan interest in Minneapolis, having lured Saari away from his recluse with the aid of several disintegrators, flame throwers, bombs, and a brief, somewhat inaccurate letter which touched Saari deeply. From all this sprang the Minneapolis SFL, and so to Doug goes a bouquet for his well meaning.

– Squanchfoot, “MFS Members”, *Fantasite* #4, July 1941

During the interregnum period of 1937-1940, “the chief literary activities of the Unholy Five,” as Sam Russell wrote in the article already mentioned, “were the composition of innumerable Silly Stories – brief nonsensical satires or, current assinities in science fiction.” Thus was founded a great tradition in Minnesota fandom: henceforth, as long as two fans met in the Twin Cities, the MFS Silly Story formed an important element in their transactions. Jack Speer described the Silly Story in *Fancylopedia I*:

They are said to have been composed back in the days of the First Transition, when the MFS had virtually no contact with fandom, but when read at meetings, they set the morons rolling on the floor with laughter. They are the source of such exciting words as fout, nark, and Twonk’s disease.

In 1939 Clifford D. Simak arrived in the Twin Cities. Born in Millville, Wisconsin, Simak had followed a newspaper career from Iron River, Michigan, to Brainerd, Minnesota, before landing in Minneapolis, where he still resides, employed as news editor of the *Minneapolis Star*. His first science fiction story, “The World of the Red Sun”, had appeared in *Wonder*, December 1931, and after a hiatus of several years, he returned to the field in 1938, selling such stories as “Rule 18”, “Reunion on Ganymede”, and “Hunger Death”. He was already a famous science fiction writer when, he arrived here, and when the local fans “became acquainted with him and began visiting him regularly, their interest in science fiction was intensified”, as Sam Russell reports. “It was inevitable that the

thought of starting another organization should seductively rise and tantalize.”

3. The Minneapolis Fantasy Society

Dear Mr. Campbell: Science fiction enthusiasts in the Twin Cities would like to announce the formation of an informal independent organization to be known as the Minneapolis Fantasy Society. Monthly meetings are being held at the home of its director, Clifford D. Simak. Other prominent members include Carl Jacobi, Oliver E. Saari, Charles Jarvis, and Phil Bronson.

Fans in the immediate area who are interested are urged to contact the secretary at the following address – John L. Chapman, Sec., 1512 Como Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.
– *Astounding*, April 1941

It was on 8 October 1940 that John Chapman sent out the first invitations to fans in the Twin Cities area to attend the initial meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society. This act signalled the end of the three-year period of informal fellowship among the “Unholy Five” that had continued since the failure of the Minneapolis SFL and the beginning of the most active and productive era in the history of Minnesota fandom.

The first meetings of the club took place on Friday, 29 November 1940 at the home of Clifford D. Simak. The total attendance was nine (“Ten if you want to count the Simak pooch, Squanchfoot”), with several other interested fans being unable to attend that evening. Simak was elected temporary director, and Chapman temporary secretary-treasurer. They were elected to full terms with the third meeting; Saari became assistant director. Carl Jacobi, Samuel D. Russell, and Chapman were given the task of drawing up a constitution for the club, and this constitution – largely written by Jacobi – was adopted at the second meeting, 20 December 1940. Although the MFS was intended primarily as a social organization, “simply to let us enjoy one another’s company”, the MFS constitution also set down two definite aims: to stimulate interest in fantasy in the Twin Cities; and to make the name of Society notable throughout fandom. The first aim was probably never realized but, as Sam Russell foretold in an early article (*The Fantasite* #2, February 1941), the MFS did make its mark during the next few years.

The names of some of the attendees at the historic first meeting are

unknown to your historian, but Bronson was probably present, and Arden Benson surely was, for he is said to have inaugurated, with this very first meeting, the famous MFS custom of winding up the evening with a visit to the New Elgin Cafe in downtown Minneapolis for a bullfest over coffee and sandwiches. “Regardless of the time,” reports John Chapman in “MFS Notes”, *The Fantasite* #4, “it’s accepted that the better half of the crowd will drift for the New Elgin after each meeting. Unless the management brings a complaint. You see, we’re still wondering how Bronson accidentally (?) didn’t pay his check a couple of months ago.” (Thereupon Bronson promised to pay the management “their nickel the very next time I’m in town”.) The New Elgin Cafe disappeared years ago, but it probably occupied the space occupied today by the Cafe DiNapoli, across the street from the State Theatre at 816 Hennepin Avenue.

A group photograph was taken of those present at the third meeting, 10 January 1941, and was published on the front cover of the February 1941 issue of *The Fantasite*. In the picture Arden Benson (holding Squanchfoot, Simak’s scottie, adopted as the club mascot), Charles Albertson, Oliver Saari, Ken Peterson, Sam Russell, John Chapman, Clifford Jacobi, Cyril Eggum, Douglas Blakely, and Phil Bronson. Not present, and so not in the picture, were Fred Magner, Sherman Schultz, and Bill Campbell.

Cyril Eggum went south with the National Guard soon afterward and was stationed at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. To my knowledge, he played no further part in fan affairs. Bill Campbell, a one-time *Astounding* letterhack mentioned in a previous chapter, soon dropped out of the MFS, but all the others continued to play active roles in it for years to come. Carl Jacobi was the well known fantasy and *Weird Tales* writer who had also been present at the 1937 SFL meeting reported in the last chapter. One of the few Minneapolis-born members of the MFS, Jacobi had been a successful author of weird, fantasy, adventure, and detective fiction since his student days at the University of Minnesota, where he had known Don Wandrei, another well known fantasy writer. One of Jacobi’s earliest stories was “Hive”, written for a contest but eventually printed in *Weird Tales*. He later became a *WT* regular, contributing such stories as “The Phantom Pistol”, “The Satanic Piano”, and “Revelations in Black”, the latter being the title story of his Arkham House collection. Besides freelance writing, Jacobi edited various publications, including *Mideast Media*, a local trade journal. He still lives in Minneapolis.

On 23 May 1941, an MFS meeting was held at Carl Jacobi’s cabin on Red Cedar Point, Lake Minnetonka, which he had built as “a place to work

in quiet and solitary retreat, a place where great masterpieces would be written". (He admitted that, though he went there to write, he preferred to fish or putter around, and "not one yarn has come from the cabin on Red Cedar Point".) A photo of the attendees at that meeting was taken by Morris Dollens by the light of kerosene lamps. In the photo are Simak, Russell, Dale Rostomily, Dollens himself, Jacobi, Albertson, Saari, Chapman, and Peterson.

Though one of the earliest MFS members, and one who remained a member for many years, Dale Rostomily is one of those fans who is severely local. He wrote little or nothing for any of the club publications, and his reputation as a "character" was thus limited to those who met him face to face. Morris Dollens had reappeared in fandom at one of the early meetings of the MFS and, as Chapman remarked, he seemed to have spent the four years since turning the *Science Fiction Collector* over to John V. Baltadonis in making "a thorough study of cinema arts, photo arts, and just plain art". He worked in a St Paul photo studio, was an excellent cameraman and cinematographer, and an accomplished engineer and sound man as well.

Dollens showed up at MFS meetings lugging many suitcases full of photographic and sound equipment, and fascinated MFS members soon found themselves scripting and acting in brief science fiction movies and recording science fiction plays. While many hundreds of feet of documentary material concerning MFS activities were shot over the next three years, few of the more ambitious film projects that were planned seem to have gotten under way. One of these, a movie to be titled "A Day in the Life of an SF Fan", snagged on the difficulty of persuading Ollie Saari to play the lead. Some of the record plays put on shellac by Dollens's disc recorder were more successful, and several of these plays were sent around fandom during the 1941-1943 era. The first attempt at recording a play took place at the 14 June 1941 meeting at which a short script by Sam Russell, "The Soaksack" was recorded, the principal roles being played by Russell himself and Doug Blakely. Later sessions produced "Stroke", a science fiction play by John Chapman (printed as a story in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, Summer 1942) and "The After-Life", a fantasy by Oliver E. Saari. Many impromptu ad lib recordings, "too numerous and undignified to mention", were cut as well, though Dollens's disc recorder was far less useful for this purpose than the tape recorder, developed years later.

Not all recordings were dramatic or casual in nature. Many recordings were made of MFS activities, including a speech given at the 21

September 1941 meeting by Donald Wandrei. The author of numerous fantasy and science fiction tales such as “Colossus”, “Blinding Shadows”, “The Red Brain”, and co-founder, with August Derleth, of Arkham House, Wandrei had been a member of the Lovecraft circle, and his talk was a fascinating account of various fantasy notables he had met. These included HPL himself, Clark Ashton Smith, Farnsworth Wright, Harry Bates, August Derleth, and many others. One of the highlights of this speech was Wandrei’s description of “an ice cream orgy” indulged in by HPL and Wandrei at a Rhode Island establishment that stocked 28 flavours of ice cream. Lovecraft insisted on sampling all 28 varieties before he quit. (This incident and others relating to HPL are told in Wandrei’s “The Dweller in Darkness: Lovecraft, 1927” in *Marginalia*, Arkham House, 1940.)

Another recording, made almost impromptu at the 3 July 1941 meeting, on the eve of the Denvention, consisted of greetings from the MFS to the fans gathered at Denver. The idea was brought forth, probably by Director Simak, halfway through the meeting, and the record was promptly cut, hurriedly wrapped and sent airmail, arriving at the con hotel about 16 hours after the idea was conceived.

Shortly after its founding, the MFS began to meet biweekly rather than monthly, and this custom continued with only a few interruptions for as long as the “old” MFS survived. Meetings continued to be well-attended through the summer of 1941 despite the absence of some members on vacation. Phil Bronson spent the summer on the west coast, and attended the Denvention over the Independence Day weekend, becoming – so far as your historian knows – the first Minnesota fan to attend a science fiction convention. Bronson stayed at the home of Lew Martin in Denver, and later spent a week in Oakland as the guest of the well known Bay Area fan Tom Wright. During this excursion, Bronson made many fan contacts that helped bring the MFS and his fanzine, *The Fantasite*, to national prominence.

Bronson had arrived in fandom late in 1939, appearing as a letterhack with letters in the January and February 1940 issues of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. (The latter letter showed his address to be New York City, but this was presumably a printer’s error.) Bronson was an artist of considerable talent. His first attempt at publishing a fanzine was *Scienti-Comics*, an imitation comic-book first issued in May 1940. This fanzine folded after two issues, and Bronson’s second attempt, *The Fantasite*, was launched about the same time that the MFS, with Bronson as a charter member, was organized. Bronson never wrote fiction for the prozines, but in later years he became a newspaperman, partly as a result of his experience in writing

and editing *The Fantasite*.

Bronson lived in Hastings, Minnesota, during this early period, commuting to meetings and between-meetings events. He was largely instrumental in introducing several new members from Hastings, most notably Rod Allen, who planned a fanzine to be called *Fanotes* which seems never to have appeared, and Frances Blomstrand, a 17 year old girl who became associate editor of *The Fantasite* for several issues and, incidentally, one of the few female members in the entire history of the MFS.

Your historian attended his first MFS meeting sometime in the late summer or early autumn of 1941 and, while memories have grown vague after 20 years, a few facts remain in mind. John Chapman drove me to the meeting, which was held in North Minneapolis, probably at the home of either Arden Benson or Sam Russell. I remember confronting Simak, Bronson, Saari, Russell, Benson, Dollens, Peterson, and probably others at this meeting. Peterson, I remember, was lugging an original painting he had just finished, which depicted a scene from “At the Mountains of Madness”; perhaps he intended to auction it off. I cannot recall the details of the programme for that evening, but I do remember listening to a record (“The only fanzine with round edges”), a disc produced by Walter J. Daugherty, Forrest J Ackerman, and the LASFS. I also heard some of the recent MFS recordings, including Chapman’s “Stroke”. This play contained the famous bit of dialogue that fascinated MFSers for months and years to come: “What is *that*?” “It’s a machine.”

After the meeting, many of the members descended on the New Elgin Cafe where a bull session continued for an hour or two, and later, as an impromptu piece of skylarking, we organized a touch football game which was carried on with great zest and hilarity in the wan moonlight of the athletic field of some public park. This game and further high jinks continued far into the small hours of the morning.

4. Great Days of the MFS

Although Cyril Eggum of the National Guard was lost to the MFS early in 1941 and Bob Madsen had become a midshipman at Annapolis shortly before, the only leading MFS member who was drafted into service before Pearl Harbor was Doug Blakely, who became Private Blakely of Camp Callan, California, in September or October 1941. (Later he was stationed at Fort Baker, California, and visited various Bay Area fans while on

pass.) Before leaving for California, Blakely was treated to a final night on the town by Saari and Benson and was poured aboard a Fort Snelling streetcar after the last bar closed up. His departure from the Fort was delayed and he turned up at Saari's next day firmly insisting that he had wakened in a taxicab the previous night, with the driver loudly demanding his fare. The mystery of how he had ended up in a cab after being hoisted aboard a trolley was never cleared up.

Blakely was widely regarded as the sparkplug of the MFS; nevertheless, his departure did not noticeably reduce the rampant enthusiasm exhibited by the club as it passed its first anniversary. Samuel D. Russell took over as MFS director for 1942, and interest continued so high that in the intervening week between regular meetings an informal gathering usually took place. The Hastings contingent often travelled up to North St Paul on Sunday afternoon to make use of Dollens's endlessly fascinating cameras and recorder or merely to listen to his "millions of records and albums". Other weekends Dollens transported his photographic and sound equipment down to Hastings for a session at Bronson's. Other groups in the MFS often met informally as well, but despite such tendencies the club never subdivided into warring cliques as so often happens with such organizations.

Sam Russell, the new director, was known as the scholar of the MFS and became famous among members as an author, playwright, critic, and actor. He had graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1940, and afterward attended business school, meantime working also as a script writer for the University radio station, WLB (now KUOM). He had begun to read science fiction in 1934 and since then had amassed an impressive, almost encyclopedic knowledge of the literature by reading every book and magazine he could buy or borrow. It was proverbial among MFS members that the bookcard for every fantasy book at the U or the city library was inscribed with Sam's name. "He's our briefcase boy," reported Squanchfoot in a profile of SDR, "always ready with the facts or perhaps a brief history of fantasy or an anthology of H.G. Wells or a new recording script or almost anything of unusual interest.... And his vocabulary is as inexhaustible as his dignity, the latter being one of his better contributions to the society." One time he wrote a letter of comment on *The Fantasite* – which in the magazine ran two full single-spaced elite-typed pages – on a single postal card, writing in a "microscopic hand" that could not be read without the use of a powerful magnifying glass. Russell, sometimes known to MFSers as E. Throttletwitch Gankbottom, became famous to fandom at large as a literary critic, partly because of his painstaking book reviews in

The Fantasite and partly from his contributions a few years later to Laney's *Acolyte*, which he served as associate editor during most of its California period. His long and penetrating article on M.R. James in *The Acolyte* was particularly important.

John Chapman gave posterity an excellent picture of the "old" MFS at its zenith in the instalment of "WFS Notes" he wrote for *The Fantasite* anniversary. At the meeting he reported, that of 23 January 1942, no fewer than 19 fans showed up at Sam Russell's house, arriving from St Paul, North St Paul, and Hastings, as well as Minneapolis. Members began to arrive about 7 p.m., and lounged around, watching Dollens assemble his "maze" of recording equipment, or inspected Russell's fantasy collection (adjudged second only to Saari's in the Minneapolis area; Russell's was superior on *Weird Tales*, which Saari disdained), or discussed the latest *Astounding*. Director Russell called the meeting to order about 8:45 p.m. There followed a discussion on the question of whether the 1942 Pacificon should be held, and the club put itself on record as favouring the cancellation, of all "world" cons for the duration of the war.

Uncertainty about the future, due to America's recent involvement in World War II, was perhaps the keynote of the meeting. Bronson was struck by a brainstorm, suggesting that everybody present record a message to the *next* MFS – "the organization that exists after the duration". This was done, although it is unlikely that this disc has survived or at least was ever played for the benefit of the postwar MFS. A science fiction quiz followed, and Donald Wandrei was stumped frequently on questions that concerned his own stories. "Did I write that?" he asked more than once. Bronson proved to be the quiz kid of the group.

The meeting broke up about 12:30, and everybody who could cram into Saari's '35 Nash headed downtown for the New Elgin Cafe. Some time afterward, concludes Chapman, "we managed to thwart Rostomily's urge to lead us into a shooting gallery, boarded the Saari auto once more, and limped home."

During the meeting, four new members had been voted into the Society, although for some of them it was their first meeting and the MFS constitution decreed that a new fan had to attend two consecutive meetings before becoming eligible for membership. This difficulty was removed when Director Russell adjourned the meeting and immediately called another meeting to order. The four new members were Don Wandrei, Paul Koppes, Manson Brackney, and Gordon Dickson. Wandrei was drafted into the service shortly afterward, and Koppes, a Hastings friend of Bronson's, soon disappeared from the fan scene, but Brackney and

Dickson became important MFS members. Both were University students whom Saari had recruited on campus.

Manson Brackney is another MFS member whose local fame overshadowed that of several other members better known to fandom at large. Although he wrote for MFS publications, was on the staff of *The Fantasite*, and even published two issues of his own fanzine, *B-r-r-r-ack!*. “Manse” or “Brack” as he was called was even more fabulous in person: “Squanchfoot” characterized him as “a friendly chap, with an overabundance of energy” and was of the opinion that he would make a good travelling salesman, mentioning his “unequaled fondness for blondes, brunettes, redheads, blondes, redheads, brunettes, and women”. One of his main interests in life was “‘corn’ of any size, shape, colour, or variety”, particularly honky-tonk piano. Sometimes forgotten in later years, when his interest had declined, is the fact that Brackney began reading the prozines as early as 1935 and had a wide knowledge of early science fiction. Incidentally, he had intended to reply to the old Minneapolis SFL announcement in the June 1937 *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, but neglected ever to mail the letter he wrote.

One of the old MFS members who made good in later years as a professional writer, Gordon Rupert Dickson was a friendly, cheerful eighteen-year-old in 1942. He had begun to read science fiction in 1938, and the first fan he ever met was Manson Brackney, a fellow student at the U. During those years it was said that the easiest way to contact him, or Brackney, was to go up to the balcony of the Union, where he spent most of his time. Dickson soon became a prolific contributor to *The Fantasite* and other MFS publications, his “Fan Scratchings” column becoming particularly popular. His first appearance in fanzines outside those published locally was in the September 1942 *Spaceways* which ran the MFS chapter of the round-robin serial, “If I Werewolf”, largely the product of Gordy’s pen. Dickson contributed one of the most famous of “Famous Sayings by Club Members” on Halloween night 1942 when the MFS threw a combination meeting and surprise party in honour of his birthday. Everybody presented him with a pack of his favourite cigarettes, Philip Morris – except one person who somehow brought an alien brand. Ignoring the imposing heap of Philip Morris packs, Gordy’s first comment was, “Who brought the Old Golds?”

The meeting of 8 February 1942, at John Gergen’s, saw a less astonishing turnout than the one for 23 January, and the program was far more informal. The only item of importance was the beginning of a comprehensive review of Weinbaum’s science fiction given by Sam

Russell – although possibly this talk was not begun till the meeting of 22 February. The records in this case are ambiguous. At any rate, Russell’s “Weinbaum talk” became part of the MFS legend, not alone for its excellence and general interest, but largely for the reason that Russell so frequently managed to postpone continuing it at later meetings. After some success, luck ran against him at the 17 April meeting, and he was, he reported later, “forced to discourse interminably on SW’s hackier work, while members wandered idly in and out of the room”. This still did not complete the talk, and on 19 July he managed to evade the necessity of continuing it only by delivering another talk he had prepared, this one on the science fiction of Frank K. Kelly. He finally concluded the Weinbaum talk at the meeting of 13 November 1944 – nine months after beginning it.

One of the main events in the history of science fiction during this era – at least for MFS members – was the publication of the short short story “The Door” in the November 1941 *Astounding*. John Chapman admitted, “There’s nothing unusual about it – it’s just like any other short short story you’ll come across. You may not like it at all.” But the story had an unusual history: it was, essentially, an MFS silly story, and it had been born in the feverish minds of two Minneapolis fans in the winter of 1938. Other fans were introduced to the joke, or the story, and the yarn was gradually developed by being tossed around at every fan gathering for the next two years, till nearly every fan in the area had a hand in it. The very first meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society, in November 1940, saw the discussion revived yet again after having been dropped for a time. At the second meeting Oliver Saari decided in desperation to write the story and thus dispose of it once and for all. He not only wrote it, but submitted it to Campbell. He nearly keeled over when a check arrived by return mail. “The Door” was published under Saari’s byline, but since the MFS as a whole had helped write it, Saari turned part of the check over to the MFS treasury.

By the autumn of 1942 the great days of the “old” MFS were drawing to a close. Now that America had entered the war members were being drafted at an accelerating pace, and other MFSers were talking about migrating to the west coast. There was time, however, for one more happy event, this being the trek of a quartet of MFS members to the Michiconference, held at the Otsego Hotel of Jackson, Michigan, on 26 September 1942. Phil Bronson, Sam Russell, Manson Brackney, and Ollie Saari drove down in Saari’s ’35 Nash that had once belonged to Doug Blakely, stopping en route on both the outward and the return trip to visit Illinois fans (Walt Liebscher, Frank Robinson, Niel DeJack, Bob Tucker,

and others).

This epic journey, described at length by Brackney in MFS Bulletin Vol. 1, No. 6, and at even greater length by Bronson in an article titled “Via Stfnash” in *The Fantasite* #10, took four days and was, according to Bronson, even more enjoyable than the Denvention. During the trip Bronson won the nickname of “The Shamrock Kid” due to his sudden predilection for a green beverage of that name. Possibly under the pleasant influence of this concoction the Shamrock Kid almost hurtled to his doom at the Otsego Hotel by dashing blindly through a door that turned out to lead to the fire escape. When the MFS cavalcade passed through Jackson en route to the Torcon in 1948, Brackney pointed out to your historian where the X marking the grease spot would have been drawn had not Brackney grabbed Bronson just in time to prevent him from soaring off into space.

5. Last Days of the MFS

For nearly a year after Pearl Harbor, it looked as though the Minneapolis Fantasy Society (MFS) might survive World War II without too much difficulty. New members like Gordon Dickson, Manson Brackney, Art Osterlund, and Sheldon Araas were being recruited faster than the armed forces were grabbing the old ones. Oliver Saari and Arden “Buns” Benson, as seniors in the Institute of Technology at the University (1942-3), were exempt from the draft; John L. Gergen was too young to register; and many MFS members were rejected – so many, in fact, that at the end of 1942, Manson Brackney remarked wryly, “If things in the MFS keep going as they have been...we shall have to be known henceforth as the M(4F)S.”

As you will remember from the previous chapters, Doug Blakely had been drafted shortly before Pearl Harbor, while Cyril Eggum went into service with the National Guard and Bob Madsen accepted an appointment to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. After 7 December 1941, many MFS members received draft notices, but Donald Wandrei and John Chapman were the first to leave. Wandrei left shortly after formally joining the MFS in January 1942. Chapman had married in February 1942, but this did not prevent him from being inducted a few months later. Incidentally, he and I were members of the same school squadron at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, presumably at almost the same time, but neither of us was aware of the other’s presence till too late. Rod Allen was

drafted during the summer of 1942.

Though eligible for the draft, Clifford Simak was accepted for a civilian job with army intelligence soon after Pearl Harbor and was sent to Seattle, expecting to remain there for the duration. Carl Jacobi and Morris Dollens expected to be drafted shortly, and Director Samuel D. Russell received his notice at the end of April 1942. Against this background of uncertainty, a hastily convened meeting took place on 8 May 1942, and the attendees decided that the MFS should suspend till after the war. They vested authority to reconvene the MFS after V Day – or whenever appropriate – with Phil Bronson. Unfortunately a quorum was not present at this meeting, and some of the members objected to the sudden action taken; therefore, another and larger meeting was held on 22 May to reconsider the matter. At this meeting, the MFS lost no time in reversing the original decision and reactivating the club. The new-found optimism derived largely from two factors: Director Russell announced that he had been rejected by the army, and Clifford Simak suddenly decided to return to Minneapolis for the duration.

For several months thereafter, the MFS vibrated with almost unprecedented energy and enthusiasm. Meetings and between-meetings activity continued at a steady pace; as in the palmiest days. John Gergen brought out the first issue of his general fanzine, *Tycho*, and followed it with the first issue of a newssheet titled the *MFS Bulletin*. Phil Bronson published the ninth issue of *The Fantasite* shortly afterward, and the MFS found itself faunching for new projects to tackle. In the autumn of 1942, at the Michiconference held in Jackson, Michigan, the MFS agreed to publish Jack Speer's *Fancyclopedia*, then in the planning stage. Unfortunately, the MFS became moribund before this work [which was then] published in 1944 by the LASFS. That same autumn the MFS also divulged plans to complete at last the long-proposed MFS History. This was intended to be a booklet running about thirty pages, with the writeup done by Sam Russell and Gordon Dickson. To the knowledge of your historian, this history was never published, and the present work is the only one that has been written.

In the autumn of 1942, Phil Bronson decided to migrate to the West Coast. This was a momentous decision for the MFS, because the club ultimately wound up losing almost as many members to the LASFS as to the U.S. Army. "Phil is rather pessimistically inclined toward the draft situation," reported the *MFS Bulletin* Vol. 2, No. 1, "and wants to be with his family in Santa Monica when he has to go." After making and scrapping several tentative plans, Bronson announced that he intended to

leave on Thursday noon, 13 December 1942, and that Morris Dollens – who had recently been placed in 4F – had decided to accompany him.

Bronson, who had been living in Minneapolis, moved back to Hastings to prepare for the migration, and during the weekend following the regular MFS meeting of 28 November – held Saturday instead of Friday so that members could attend the Minneapolis Symphony concert at which Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony was performed – Bronson played host to the hordes of Minnesota fans who descended on Hastings to wish him bon voyage. He claimed after that the mob consumed “two hundred sandwiches, eight troughs of potato chips, six jars of pickles, six dozen doughnuts, and 95 cups of coffee”, not to mention the numberless bottles of beer, conveniently chilled on the back porch, which they guzzled. The party was so lively and so well attended that a sheet was hastily mimeographed to proclaim the occasion as the First Hastings Stf Con.

The tenth issue of *The Fantasite* partly mimeoed by Bronson and Brackney before the HastingsCon began, was published before Bronson left for California. This was the final Minnesota issue of this famous fanzine, although two more issues (May-June 1943, and February 1944) were published from Los Angeles. Bronson left as scheduled, despite Saari’s last-minute attempts to dissuade him, and though there seemed to be some uncertainty about his plans right up to the last minute, Dollens accompanied him (Dickson accused Bronson of Dollensnapping). Four nights later the two migrants attended a LASFS meeting – about twenty fans, in all were present – and the day after that held an MFS rump session in Santa Monica when Private Rod Allen, on a three-day pass from Camp Young, California, called on Dollens and Bronson.

A regular MFS meeting was held in St. Louis Park the same evening, at the home of Clifford D. Simak; only six members were present. The following meeting, at John Gergen’s, drew eight attendees, but it was obvious that the era of large gatherings was over for the duration. The emphasis henceforth was on informality. “Instead of attempting to hold regular meetings with the sparse attendances, what with most of our members gone or going into the armed services, we get together and have interesting time talking,” reported John Gergen, adding, “and indeed, we had a very fine meeting.” During this period, Sam Russell, Manson Brackney, Gordon Dickson, Oliver Saari, Charles Albertson, and Art Osterlund were the most regular attendees aside from John Gergen himself. Arden Benson, Carl Jacobi, and Clifford Simak were still in Minneapolis but were seldom able to attend meetings.

Meetings were often held at Gergen's home in Southeast Minneapolis and were held at frequent intervals. Gordon Dickson wrote in the *MFS Bulletin* #18, February 8, 1943:

The MFS is at present a little bewildered – and who can blame us? Our compound befuddlement is the result of the frequent meetings Gergen has been calling of late.... Our meetings of late have been on the rapid-fire order. I bumped into Saari on the campus today – and Benson. “Coming to the meeting at Gergen’s Sunday?” I asked. “God!” shrieked Ollie, “another? I just left the last one the other day!” He collapsed into a snow drift. Buns threw a handful of snow in his face. “Poor boy,” sighed a passing coed sympathetically and dropped a nickel into Ollie’s famous hat, which was lying upturned on the icy sidewalk. It’s little episodes like this that give the tenor of our feelings in the frozen northwest.

With Dollens gone, the recording of science fiction plays, a familiar activity for nearly two years, perforce came to a stop. MFS members even found it difficult to reply to a recording sent them by Bronson, Walter J. Daugherty, and the LASFS, but finally discovered “a little recording shop” in downtown Minneapolis which on several occasions they patronized for recording discs intended for the LASFS and others. In March 1943, the MFS contemplated cutting “a last greeting to fandom” as a farewell gesture, but the disc seems never to have been made. While Dollens was still in town one of the last recording sessions resulted in a record of chatter which was put on a new “glass” record and sent to Bob Tucker. “Fortunately,” Gergen reported, “it broke on the way.”

Probably the last movies of the old MFS were taken at the HastingsCon of 29 November 1942. Dollens managed to film part of a poker game, showing one member holding a hand of five aces, and a scene of fannish horseplay in which Bronson sprayed various people with a fizz bottle and got his comeuppance from Ollie Saari, who zapped him in the face with a water-pistol charged with beer.

Before the extinction of the prewar MFS, most of the members had grown old enough to enter taverns, and in these latter days Delaney’s Bar began to rival the New Elgin Cafe as the after-meeting hangout of MFSers. A proposed letterhead for MFS, shown in *B-r-r-r-ack!* #2, featured Delaney’s Bar, beer bottles, and a rocketing hip flask, though early meetings were largely stag aside from the incidental presence of mothers or sisters, various MFSers had now discovered the opposite sex, and a

number of female guests were present at various meetings, in particular the Halloween 1942 party.

After trying twice to enlist and being rejected for poor vision, Brackney was inducted into the army on 22 February 1943. Before reporting for duty, he made a last trip to Joliet, Illinois, to visit Walt Liebscher whom he had met at the Michiconference of 1942. At the MFS meeting of 11 February, members sat around the table and listened while Manse detailed his trip...exchanged messages, and told the latest news from Illinois. Gordon Dickson soon followed Brackney in donning an army uniform, though he did not make a farewell trip to Illinois. He became, according to Bronson's reckoning, the eighth MFSer in uniform.

Meetings continued to be held, in the now-familiar hasty and helter-skelter fashion, into 1943; the last meeting reported in detail in the *MFS Bulletin* took place on 17 February of that year. Probably the club would have disintegrated even before that had it not been for the enthusiastic support of John Gergen who had assuredly become the sparkplug of the MFS during these last days. A youngster of only 13 or 14 years of age who had first appeared in fandom early in 1942, Gergen began to play a pivotal role in MFS affairs by founding the biweekly newssheet *MFS Bulletin* in June 1942. Although this fanzine was intended only for the edification and entertainment of MFS members, it was exchanged with a few "outside" fanzines from the beginning, and after issue 47 (undated, but published in November 1942) it widened its appeal to become a regular news-magazine:

We had hoped at first to publish a two-to-eight-paged *Bulletin* promptly every two weeks, featuring news-items and notes of MFS interest. The idea proved unfeasible. So a new policy is in effect immediately: The *Bulletin* is to appear as a regular biweekly newssheet, featuring countrywide news, from the various fan-clubs, fan centres, and fans.

On a modest scale, the *MFS Bulletin*, or Mafusby, as Walt Liebscher dubbed it ("Mafusby, Mafusby my blue-eyed Mafusby"), became almost as famous throughout fandom as *The Fantasite*, and Gergen soon garnered a measure of fame far beyond the boundaries of Minnesota. The last wartime issue of the *Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 11, whole number 23, dated March 15 1943, was a single-pager wholly devoted to news of "country-wide fandom", without a single reference to MFS doings. This issue was the last whisper of fanac in Minneapolis for exactly four years.

While the MFS was riding high, fan activity in outstate areas had not

loomed large, but a few fans had appeared. One was Robert Mastell of Hibbing, who was a letterhack in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* about 1939 and later became a well known fan. Another Hibbing fan, appearing a few years later, was Art Saha, who began to subscribe to fanzines around the country early in 1943, but soon after he became active he joined the Westward migration and appeared in Shangri-LA. Later he moved to New York City, where he still resides.

Gordon Dickson regarded the war, he said in *MFS Bulletin* #20, as a “god-given opportunity” for the MFS to expand its influence world-wide. He pointed out that, early in 1943, in addition to the original MFS, at the time still active, there were branches of the MFS strewn everywhere: John Chapman headed the India branch; Cyril Eggum the Africa one, and there were many branches right in the United States, including Annapolis (Bob Madsen, director), Indio, California (Rod Allen, director), Oakland, California (Doug Blakely, director), Somewhere South (Don Wandrei, director), and Alamogordo, New Mexico (your historian, director). But by far the most important MFS bunch during the war years was the one in Los Angeles.

By June 1943, Sam Russell and Buns Benson had migrated to Shangri-LA to join Bronson and Dollens. While still identifying themselves as MFS members, these four fans joined the LASFS upon arrival and continued to play an active role in fan affairs.*

* *The part they played in Los Angeles fandom is covered in Bixelstrasse. [Ed.]*

Meanwhile, back in Minnesota, the MFS had ceased to exist as an active club sometime early in 1943. However, there were a few faint signs of life afterward. In September 1944, Carl Jacobi, John Gergen, Art Osterlund, and Clifford Simak met in the Marine Room of the Rainbow Cafe, Lake and Hennepin, for an “informal meeting”. Jacobi reported the death of A. Merritt, and a discussion of his works followed. Afterwards a story by Jacobi was read for comments and criticism. On a later occasion, a small gathering took place at Simak’s house when Brackney and Dickson came home on leave. Gergen was again present, but Jacobi was unable to make it that evening and, by that time, Art Osterlund was in the Seabees. Four years were to pass before the MFS was recalled to life.

– first serialized in *Neolithic* #19-#21 (1961-1962, edited by Ruth Berman)

Microtome – On *The Immortal Storm* (1955)

Damon Knight

In 1930 there were three monthly science fiction magazines, and two fan clubs. One of the magazines was Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories*; one of the fan clubs was called The Scienceers. When they met, the results were world-shaking. Sam Moskowitz tells the story in *The Immortal Storm*:

... Gernsback ran a contest in *Wonder Stories*, offering prizes for the best reports on the question, "What am I doing to popularize science fiction?" A prize-winning entry by Allen Glasser mentioned his work in The Scienceers, and, impressed by the concept of fans forming clubs, Gernsback requested that the organization send a representative to visit him.... Glasser was chosen to act in this capacity, and he returned with the startling news that Gernsback had arranged for a group of authors to address the club at New York City's Museum of Natural History, all expenses paid.

When the day arrived no less than thirty-five members had mustered out for the occasion.... Gernsback himself was unable to attend, but he had sent in his place David Lasser, then editor of *Wonder Stories*, [and] Gawain Edwards Pendray, author and rocketry expert, Dr. William Lemkin, also a well-known author, as well as lesser lights of the Gernsback staff. They lectured eruditely to the Scienceers on their individual specialties, and finally departed amid much pomp and ceremony. The day had been a heady one for most of the neophyte fans, and they wandered to their homes in a happy daze.

At the club's next meeting they were rudely awakened, however, for they were then presented with a bill for the use of the room at the museum....

Trufandom was off to an appropriately ambiguous start.

"Through some misunderstanding," Moskowitz goes on, "Gernsback had not paid the museum rental"; and, one gathers, he never did.

Debate over this and cognate questions grew so heated that the club

had to be disbanded. However, the demoralized remnants of the Scienceers crept gradually out of hiding and drifted together by twos and threes. Along about 1932, Glasser, Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger discovered Conrad H. Ruppert and his wonderful printing press, and the first printed fanzine, *The Time Traveller*, was born. Early in 1934 the first fragment of the first issue of William L. Crawford's piecemeal zine, *Unusual Stories*, was mailed to helpless subscribers; and in April of the same year, Gernsback announced the formation of the historic Science Fiction League. The dark ages followed, and the hectograph. Then came Michelism, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, and at last, in 1938, the time was growing ripe for the crowning event, the first World Science Fiction Convention.

A photograph from this period, on page 61, shows a group of professionals – Campbell, de Camp, Binder, Long and others – lined up against a brick wall, looking for all the world like delegates to a Central European trades union congress. The resemblance is accidental, but suggests an interesting line of thought.

In his early chapters, Moskowitz gives a wealth of detail about the first fans and the wonderful mixed-up things they did – the grandiose projects, some of which actually materialized; the short-lived organizations with the long names, the pitiful one-issue magazines. But the largest part of this book is concerned with fan politics.

What kind of politics was it? Let's see.

There were the splinter groups. ("The membership never exceeded the original five, and since these five promptly split into two factions...")

There was the East New York SFL *putsch*, which Moskowitz describes in these terms:

... The second meeting of the reorganized New York chapter was in progress, with Hornig presiding, in a New York school room. Suddenly the clumping of many shoes was heard, and in burst Sykora and Wollheim at the head of eight other youths (not all science fiction fans) recruited from the streets for rough action if necessary. Sykora... with the aid of his comrades... chased Hornig from the platform. Producing a gavel of his own... [he] proceeded to call the meeting to order in the name of the New York branch of the International Scientific Association.

That was in late 1935. A year later, Sykora and four other ISA members joined a rival group, the Independent League for Science Fiction, and proceeded to torpedo it by propaganda and group resignations.

So the comparison is not really as ludicrous as it sounds: This was European power politics in a hatbox – scaled down, but still a politics of force, deceit and treachery. The same types emerged: the Booster; the Organizer, who frequently became the Wrecker.

Moskowitz himself, who first enters the story in Chapter XX, is a Booster. Although he performed a minor miracle of organization in 1938, when almost single-handed he cobbled together a huge club called New Fandom, to win sponsorship of the Nycon from the Michelists, his central motive was not power, nor any fannish ideology, but simply the growth and greatness of science fiction fandom. Nobody who didn't take fandom with almost maniacal seriousness could ever have gone to the trouble to write this history: moreover, the test of the Organizer and Wrecker in fandom is that when power wanes and wrecking palls, he drops out. Moskowitz is still with us.

And yet, when Moskowitz found himself embroiled in a feud with Wollheim & Co., it was impossible to distinguish one side from the other by the tactics they used.

In 1938, the debate was being carried on in the pages of Olon F. Wiggins' mimeoed magazine.

To both factions the problem was clearly one of discrediting or silencing the leading spokesman of the opposing group... In the next number of *The Science Fiction Fan*, editor Wiggins made a simple direct statement...: "Beginning with this issue there will be no more material by Sam Moskowitz in the pages of the *Fan*."

Moskowitz goes on to note that shortly thereafter, Wiggins, who coveted the presidency of FAPA, was elevated to that post by a series of sudden Futurian resignations; and he adds:

Moskowitz himself was stunned by the ingratitude and callousness of Wiggins' decision.

But this is only half the story. It appears on page 190; for the other half, we must go back to page 128, where we find this:

At this point Wiggins informed Moskowitz that both Wollheim and Lowndes had sent him long rebuttals of the "Reply to Wollheim." Moskowitz... realized that his opposition was rallying and that, given a little time, he might well be smothered by its very volume. So he induced Wiggins to drop the feud in the *Fan** (although it was tremendously interesting to readers),

hoping that Wollheim would find difficulty carrying on outside its pages.

* *He doesn't say how; we are left to infer that Wiggins's dependency on Moskowitz's Manuscript Bureau had something to do with it.*
[Damon Knight's footnote]

It's the September 1938 issue of *The Science Fiction Fan* that Moskowitz is talking about on page 190; it's the *March*, 1938, issue of the same magazine that he's talking about on the earlier page.

Moskowitz nowhere connects the two incidents nor acknowledges his own equal culpability. This is the moral failure of his book: in spite of an attempt, and I think an honest one, to write impartially, Moskowitz demonstrates that he's learned nothing from his own careful record-keeping.

The chapters on the Nycon and the celebrated Exclusion Act are the culmination of Moskowitz's story, and the most exciting, best written part of the book. But what emerges from this account, pretty clearly, is that the Futurians bluffed Moskowitz & Co. into excluding them from the Convention, with the object of making martyrs of themselves and so discrediting New Fandom.

If it happened that way, was this underhanded? Yes, indeed. Were Moskowitz and his associates more open in their dealings? The record does not show it.

All the same:

This is a monumental work, fit to put beside the *Checklist* and the *Index*. In spite of the author's comic pomposity ("There is little available information on Bloomer the man"), his innumerable misspellings and grammatical errors, his remarkable talent for the mixed metaphor ("an article no intelligent mind could stomach"; "to funnel new faces into fandom") and his healthy admiration for himself – or perhaps partly because of them – he tells an engrossing story, livelier than ninety-nine per cent of mundane history, and most novels.

Anyone who takes fandom seriously – even if not quite as seriously as the author does – will find *The Immortal Storm* an invaluable sourcebook; a mine of odd information (from the origin of *Thrilling Wonder Stories'* column title, "The Ether Vibrates", to the care and hand-feeding of professionals); and above all, fascinating fannish reading.

– *Hyphen* #3 (March 1955, edited by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris)

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All Our Yesterdays – On *The Immortal Storm* (1959)

Harry Warner Jr

Editorial Note by Terry Carr

Harry Warner's column this issue is one of his best, I think, and I'd like to make a few comments right now, more in passing than by way of argument. I just want to mention that even though I agree with Harry that Sam Moskowitz apparently overemphasized the political aspects of fandom in *The Immortal Storm*, still I got the impression from it that SaM was searching for either a meaning in the early history of fandom or a theme for the book, or both. It seemed to me that the fans of the early days were deeply concerned with *why* they were fans – for remember, science fiction fandom, while it does have partial counterparts in such groups as The Baker Street Irregulars and mundane APAs, is still a group without real parallel. We don't think of that much these days, because we take it simply as a hobby and it seems natural to us, even though there is no such group surrounding Westerns, detective stories, or the love magazines. But in the thirties the concept of fandom and fanac simply as a hobby was far from widespread, if ever thought of at all.

And so there was soul-searching by the entire body of fandom. What was the purpose and use of fandom? To bring science fiction to the attention of the public at large? To better acquaint its members with science? To provide a breeding ground for future stf writers? And so there was the international Scientific Association, and New Fandom, and the Michelists, etc. These were groups with strong ideas on what fandom was for, and it was natural that they should argue and battle for supremacy in fandom with groups and individuals who disagreed with them. It was a real battle for supremacy, because the idea of an anarchic fandom was undoubtedly as unthought-of as the idea of fandom as a goddam hobby; it must have seemed natural that

fandom should become an organized body with one aim or group of aims, and each group felt that *its* aims should predominate and therefore that that group should take over the leadership.

So I regard *The Immortal Storm* as a chronicle of that facet of early fan history, and a rather fascinating one. Of course, I'm a late-comer of *circa* 1950, and don't know very much really, about early fandom. As a matter of fact, most all of what I know of the fandom of the thirties is what I've read in *The Immortal Storm* – but viewing it in the terms I've outlined above, it makes sense to me. I'd be interested in further words on the subject from Harry, either in his column or in the lettercol. And if any of the other veteran fans in the audience would like to join the discussion, I'd be overjoyed.

This instalment of the column will be different. Instead of poking at the corpse of a deceased fanzine, I intend to jab lightly at a publication that in itself is a sort of sarcophagus for ten years of fandom. It's *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz's history of the first years of fandom.

There are several reasons for the temporary change in subject matter. One reason is imperial decree from the boss of this particular fanzine. Another is the desire to point out the need for more history-writing, as the years pass in such swift profusion. Finally I'd like to suggest changes in the approach to this hypothetical continuation of fandom's history.

The Immortal Storm is so unique in fandom that we're apt to forget the fact that it covers only one-third of the history of fandom, from the chronological standpoint. All remarks that follow are based on the 1954 edition of the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization Press. The history was so long in the writing and so slow in making book form incarnation that it's easy to overlook the giant gap between this final form and the end of the period it covers: a full fifteen years. After a passing glance at the pre-history of fandom, through a sketch of the early professional publications that contained science fiction, *The Immortal Storm* really begins extended coverage of events as fanzine fandom began to emerge in the early 1930s. It concludes at the outbreak of World War Two.

So it's obvious that someone somewhere should start to do something immediately about the chronicles of fandom in the 1940s and 1950s. I respectfully submit the opinion that there is nobody who can do for either decade the accomplishment that Sam achieved for fandom's first ten years. I can think of nobody who was constantly active through either the '40s or '50s, possesses the time and patience to write the history of those years, and has retained, in good order, the fifty foot stack of fanzines that would

be required for reference purposes. It is true that Sam wasn't active in the first years of the period that he covers; but fandom was so small and its events were so thoroughly reported in the early fanzines that this did not prove to be too serious a handicap. By 1940, fandom was so large and varied that the person who would write its history should have a good memory of conversations and large boxes filled with letters and the patience to ask for information from other survivors of the period, instead of relying on the contents of fanzines. I think that the only way we shall ever obtain a continuation of *The Immortal Storm* with this book's thoroughness and accuracy is by assigning specific aspects of fandom to various people, with an overall editor to compile and align these historians.

Fortunately, fandom seems to be entering into another period of reference work publishing. There are the new edition of the *Fancylopedia*, Tucker's revision of *The Neofan's Guide*, and several bibliographical projects concerned with professional publications. It isn't inconceivable that someone will get ambitious enough to take up the historian's pen where Moskowitz dropped it, either as a determined do-it-yourself writer, or as the co-ordinator whom I've suggested. In that event, I hope that the respect which *The Immortal Storm* has won for many fine qualities doesn't cause the next history to become too slavish an imitation of attitude and principles.

From now on, this article may seem more and more like an attack on Sam Moskowitz as a fan, as a writer, and as a historian. I don't mean it as an attack, but I can see no way of achieving my purpose, other than by concentrating on the flaws of *The Immortal Storm* in some detail, after briefly summarizing its excellencies. To my knowledge, nobody has proved that it contains a single inaccuracy of any importance, and that is a claim that few historians could make. Moskowitz is reputed to have the necessary documents to back up every sentence in the book, and his goal of a history of fandom at a time when he was obviously losing more and more of the old-time fannish enthusiasm is a miracle in itself. The old antipathies and feuds from his personal experiences in fandom can be sensed in the book, but they do not cause serious harm to his obvious efforts at impartiality in describing these events. Over and above all its other merits, *The Immortal Storm* is important because it preserves for all time many facts that could have been lost altogether to fandom, as the earliest people in the field drifted out of sight and the tiny circulation publications of the 1930s became more and more difficult to locate.

Please keep all that in mind, while I try to explain my reasons for believing that the next history of fandom should differ completely from

The Immortal Storm. The basic flaw in Sam's idea of history is that it is almost entirely political in a field where politics are frequently evident but always absurd. Partly as an out-growth of this concept of fandom as a power struggle is a subsidiary difficulty: the preconception of the book with certain types of fanning and specific geographical areas of fandom to the neglect of equally important activities and cities.

Obviously, the easiest way to write a history of fandom is to use the same method that is normally adopted to write a history of a nation or the world: describe the struggles for supremacy, the activities of those who won out, the tactics of those who were defeated. However, I don't believe that it's the right way, because of the basic nature of fans and fandom. To paraphrase one of Chesterton's remarks, it is quite accurate to consider a fan as a biped, as long as you don't fall into the error of considering fifty fans as a centipede. All through the history of fandom, there have been individuals who formed organizations, sought to run them, helped to break them up, and in general acted in the microcosm of fandom like the politicians of a nation. But here the parallel between fandom and a nation ends. These power-minded people really had no power to achieve. Fans are individualists. They won't be ruled, dictated to, or stamped. They might join organizations, but they continue to act in the same manner after joining as they did before; their characters and habits do not alter. The fans who achieve the presidencies and directorates accomplish the same success as the celebrated flies who conquer the fly-paper. They have spent many hours, raised their blood pressures, and made enemies to achieve an accomplishment that is nothing but a list of titles and entombment in a work like *The Immortal Storm*. The whole history of fandom from the International Scientific Association to the World Science Fiction Society proves it. The only organizations that have more concrete existence than a campaign platform are those which have been created to relieve an existing need: a central distribution point for fanzines, like FAPA, or someone to accept contributions for bringing a fan across the ocean, like TAFF. Fans refuse to be governed. The politicians of fandom may be getting valuable practice for later activities in the great outside world. That's the best that can be said for their investment in time and energy.

Let's take New Fandom as an example. It is mentioned on page 54 of the 252 pages of this book. It does not bob up until page 174, which means that it appears on more than half of the final pages of the volume. Whole chapters are devoted to it. Moskowitz obviously worked hard on New Fandom, took a great interest in it. But if I were given the task of assessing the amount of space that this organization should receive in a 252-page

history of fandom in the 1930s, I would award it two medium-sized paragraphs, no more. It was purely a political organization, whatever its noble purposes. Fandom in the 1940s was the same as it would have been if New Fandom had never existed; fandom of the 1930s had no evidence of its passing aside from a small stack of fanzines and much bitter wrangling.

I think that it is the essentially political viewpoint of the book that caused its dramatic, super-charged style of writing to receive so much criticism. Take a paragraph like this one:

“Upon reading such words Donald Wollheim probably felt them to be stirrings of a credo similar to Michelism but stated in more cautious terms. He felt, too, it would seem, that this British periodical did not represent merely fertile ground, but a crop soon ready to be harvested; so, in one of the most daring, self-indicting and honest articles of his career, Wollheim pulled the cloak away from the body of Michelism and revealed it in completely positive terms.”

This kind of description might be justified if it were applied to the real struggles that went on in fandom. Jack Speer’s attempt to remain active in fandom after he annihilated a telephone pole in Connecticut with his automobile or Ray Bradbury’s dogged persistence to pull himself up from a fanzine writer to a serious professional writer were typical things that might merit the treatment. But John B. Michel was a sickly teenage boy who had read a few books and had emitted a philosophy that was as hopelessly unrealistic as that of Claude Degler. I admire Degler more than I do Michel, because the former had enough belief in himself to go out and personally campaign for his ideas, crazy as they may have been. To dignify at this late date Michel with such a serious attitude is to be more royalist than the king.

There is another difficulty with the political viewpoint on fandom. Almost inevitably, it causes the writer to magnify the events in which he had personal connection, and to skim lightly over the power struggles in which he had less involvement. The index to *The Immortal Storm* gives damning evidence of the situation. Entries for New York City and for the organizations of its various boroughs occupy perhaps eight times the space required to list the references to Los Angeles. Yet by any standpoint that I have been able to imagine, Los Angeles meant more to fandom at the time of these events and had a more lasting influence on the fandom that followed. Even in the late 1930s, Cincinnati had an active fandom, but in

The Immortal Storm you will find only one reference to the Ohio city in the index. That reference is there because a Cincinnati fan attended a meeting in New York. A complete nonentity, Mario Racic, receives twice the attention given to either Bob Bloch or Henry Kuttner. He lives in New York; they didn't.

Or consider the early years of FAPA. Even in 1945, when *The Immortal Storm* began its serialization in *The Fantasy Commentator*, it must have been evident that FAPA's first years were important for two things. The organization quickly became something that distributed magazines that were specifically produced for it, rather than fulfilling Wollheim's dream of a mechanism for avoiding the fuss and bother of mailing lists for all general fanzines. And FAPA members promptly discovered that they liked to talk in their publications about things that were not directly associated with science fiction and fandom. But you will look in vain in *The Immortal Storm* for summaries of the discussions that sprang up in the organization's publications and the special innovations that were found in its bundles. Instead, you will read endless accounts that sound like a famous Lewis Carroll poem, such as:

“The opening gun was Madle's small FAPA periodical *The Meteor*. This carried 'A Reply to Donald A. Wollheim' in whose first paragraph Madle labelled Wollheim 'a liar'. He denied authorship of the 'Panparade' burlesque he had been accused of writing. He indicted Wollheim for using the 'Fascist club' against Speer after he had stated at the campaign's opening that 'political views of the candidates have no right to be taken into consideration', and intimated that this pronouncement had been designed by Wollheim to prevent charges of being a communist levelled at him. Madle then revealed that in the penultimate election, English fan J. Michael Rosenblum had never voted. Further, he claimed that the one who had cast the deciding vote for vice-president was Harry Dockweiler, a friend of Wollheim's, who was not qualified to take part in the election at that time.”

It's a great temptation to suggest that this history should have taken into consideration the events that followed the time at which it cuts off. Sam's readers were not living in a vacuum. They knew that Ray Bradbury became the most spectacular fan for his climb to professional writing. Ray did not justify any more space than he did on the basis of what he did up to 1939; but I don't think it would have complicated materially the task of

verifying this book to pay more attention to him for what came after 1939, both for his own sake and for the manner in which he typified the entire great fan-to-pro movement of the 1940s.

At this point, we have come to the task of deciding what to emphasize if more fan history volumes are to be produced.

For one thing, it would be desirable to make it easier for a non-participant in the years involved to read the history. The participants in fandom appear in *The Immortal Storm* pretty much as they did in fandom itself: gradually, at first receiving a bare mention here and there, slowly working their way to prominence. Only in the case of a few particularly titanic personalities are we given a direct, concentrated look at the individual. It seems to me that much more attention should be paid in the next histories to describing the individuals who form the cast: something of their family and environment, vocation and education, economic status when relevant, and what happened to them after they left fandom. Occasionally, Moskowitz does it, like this:

“Sykora first appeared on the scene during the latter days of the Scienceers. Indeed, after the dissolution of this group he approached Glasser and Unger early in 1934 in an unsuccessful attempt to bring about its revival. To understand him best, it must be realized that William Sykora was an old-time science fictionist. He epitomized the Gernsback ideal that all readers of the genre should consider the advancement of science their serious aim. He had amassed a solid scientific background, and his cellar boasted a well-equipped laboratory. Beside an excellent science fiction collection rested an imposing assemblage of scientific tomes. Several short articles by him had appeared in *Science and Mechanics*, including ‘A Scientific Paradox’, a prize-winning entry in a contest sponsored by this magazine. He garnered yet another prize in a similar contest published in *Mechanics and Handicraft*. Undoubtedly he was a person of intelligence and capability.”

But too often, a person who wasn't active in fandom of the 1930s cannot even guess at the age of this or that person referred to in the book.

The Immortal Storm deals almost exclusively with fanzine fandom, a defect which must be remedied if more histories are to be written. It does not contain a mention of such an important venture as Richard Frank's booklet series, which put into professionally printed form such fantasies as “Three Lines of Old French” and “The Thing in the Cellar”. The semi-

success of this was a clear forerunner of more ambitious ventures in the 1940s when fans went into the book-publishing field. R. Swisher is mentioned three times in *The Immortal Storm* but without reference to his importance as one of fandom's first indexing giants; he was the first to produce a thorough fanzine index, the ancestor of the one that Bob Pavlat is continuing today. Similarly, *The Immortal Storm* ignores almost all bibliographical work that was being done by fans, although the same fans may bob up because they were involved in power politics. Collecting fandom receives short shrift, even though the changing habits of fans as collectors and the different methods that they adopted to acquire their treasures as the years progressed could fill many interesting chapters. Necessarily, *The Immortal Storm* contains the success story of Charles D. Hornig. But the line between fandom and professionalism in the 1930s was not as great as we may think today. Sam was obviously aware of this. At one point he writes:

“Operating behind the scenes during these times were private literary organizations of whose existence fandom at large was scarcely aware. One such group was the Calem Club of New York City, whose members included H.C. Koenig, H.P. Lovecraft, Frank Belknap Long, Jr., F. Morton, Samuel Loveman and others, all drawn together through a mutual interest in fantasy. This was actually the nucleus of the Lovecraft circle with an ever-widening number of adherents throughout the country in the persons of such men as E. Hoffmann Price, Farnsworth Wright, Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner and August Derleth, becoming intimates who knew Lovecraft best. For a long time this circle held its meetings somewhat aloof from fandom at large, and yet, possessing common cause with it, working in much the same manner. It was not until 1939, in fact, that its existence was expressly revealed. A similar organization calling itself The Outsiders Club was subsequently discovered to have been operating in Washington, D.C.”

The fact that people like Koenig and Kuttner were not fans in Sam's circle should be no reason for slighting them.

Finally, the most difficult thing of all might be to remember to put into the histories the things that are so self-evident that the historian may not think of them. I don't think that *The Immortal Storm* lists anywhere the facts about the economics of fanzine production in the 1930s. But to understand why early fanzines were small and hectographed, it is

necessary to know how much hectograph goo and mimeograph stencils and different types of paper cost before World War Two, and how much money the majority of fans received in their pay check each week. How did fans wander into fandom during the first decade of fandom? Through letter columns, conferences, or local club meetings? How many letters would a leading fan of the period receive and write in a week? These things sound trivial, if you lived through the period. But the fan world has changed so much since 1939 that today's younger fans might be quite startled at the facts that such inquiries would produce.

A guide to pronunciation of fannish terms and proper names is a must for future histories. Look at some of the names that are found in the index of *The Immortal Storm*, and try to pronounce them with certainty that you have the long and short vowels at the proper spot and the accents on the proper syllables: Goudket, Jacobi, Kosow, Rimel, Anger and Boosel.

There is the subsidiary question of what to leave out. There are things in *The Immortal Storm* that could be quite damaging to wives and children of certain fans of the time, because of the political organizations in which the fans were active. Here again I think that the political approach to fandom has been injurious to the history; a more rounded look at fandom would bring forth so much new material that there wouldn't be room to tell too much about these subsidiary indiscretions of the fans. The problem will increase as the 1940s are chronicled; fans weren't as fond of the Communist organizations in that decade, as more of them got sent to jail for various crimes.

With all this carping and criticism, I insist that *The Immortal Storm* remains something unique and valuable. If read in conjunction with the *Fancylopedia*, and with an old-time fan at your side to answer questions, it's just wonderful. I just wish that it were written in such a manner as to make the *Fancylopedia* and old-timer unnecessary.

– *Innuendo* #10 (December 1959, edited by Terry Carr)

“All Our Yesterdays Have Light, Fool...”

Sam Moskowitz

Introduction

This article was originally sent to Terry Carr, editor of *Innuendo*, as a reply to Harry Warner’s column in that magazine, “All Our Yesterdays”, which devoted seven pages to an “analysis” of *The Immortal Storm* in the December 1959 issue of that publication. In sending it I made the following condition: “As you know, the first I was aware of Warner’s new viewpoint (I say ‘new’ because he first began reading *The Immortal Storm* 15 years ago and just now has revealed these opinions) was when I read them in *Innuendo*. I trust the same conditions apply for Warner, that the first information he will receive concerning my reply is when he reads it in *Innuendo*.”

Eventually Terry Carr replied: “I’m sorry, but certain considerations compelled me to check out the publication of one section of your article with Warner, so he won’t be surprised when he sees it in print... I’d like to change the title of the article...”

I immediately demanded the return of my article and when Carr asked for an explanation in view of the fact that he had obtained Harry Warner’s “clearance” I replied:

“In publishing Warner’s article, you *took it for granted* that there was nothing in it that could injure me and saw no reason to check with me in advance to make certain that was true. In my case, you had no intention of publishing the article at all in its original form without getting the approval of Harry Warner. The kindest thing that can be said about this sort of a double standard is that it is highly unethical.

“Further, your desire to change the title implies there may be other changes in the text. I have no desire to be hanged for something I never said.”

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It appears that every time someone gets around to suggesting that science-fiction fan history be brought up to date, they feel that the only way they can encourage someone *else* to do it or summon the courage to do it

themselves is by submitting *The Immortal Storm* to microscopic critical examination in an effort to reveal flaws.

The truth escapes them, that any flaws in *The Immortal Storm*, imagined or real, will help no one write another history of the field or bring the events up to date. That can only be accomplished by someone with the will and interest to spend thousands of hours of time and possibly as many dollars as hours in the hope that he or she may bring satisfaction to a potential audience numbering only in the hundreds.

When such a project has been completed, it will still have to be judged on its own merits. As Langley Searles stated in introducing the first installment of *The Immortal Storm* in the Fall 1945 issue of *Fantasy Commentator*: "... for as Johnson once remarked, those of the reading public are the ultimate judges: if they are pleased, all is well; if they are not, there is no point in telling them why they should have been."

I wrote *The Immortal Storm* as a labor of love over a period of eight years. My only remuneration, beyond personal satisfaction and some very kind words from readers, was 10 free copies when it was published in hard covers in 1954. I told the Atlanta fans who formed a publishing company just for the purpose of printing that volume and who labored so hard on its presentation that if they ever saw their way through to a profit I wanted no part of it. Shortly after his attack on *The Immortal Storm*, Harry Warner, Jr. announced that he intended to complete the history of fandom from the year I left off, 1939, and bring it through to 1960. This is a commendable project and one that normally would have elicited my encouragement. I hold no exclusive option on the writing of fan histories and would have been glad to have helped Warner over any rough spots in his research if he needed such help.. His compulsion that he had to downgrade my effort in order to enhance his own coupled with the fact that he needed the "incentive" of the 1/3 of a cent a word offered by *New Frontiers* (a better-type fan publication) in order to write it, scarcely inspires confidence.

To be quite candid, I feel that criticism of the nature of Harry Warner is sparked more by hidden vanity than logic. He would like to pattern future histories in a direction that would ensure that his achievements show conspicuously and copiously and that his errors and failings are forgotten. Since he discontinued publication of *Spaceways* in the Summer of 1942, the bulk of his activity has been confined to The Fantasy Amateur Press Association. He strongly criticizes the amount of space apportioned to FAPA in *The Immortal Storm* and suggests that it should have been greatly expanded.

If the History had been continued, there would certainly have been

more of FAPA. I didn't even have a chance to bring it up through 1938. However, if we are to be quite honest, FAPA's relative importance in an ever-growing fandom has declined every year since its formation. It was originally intended to accomplish two things: 1. Become all of fandom itself. 2. Do away with subscription fan magazines. It accomplished neither and instead has become *another* fandom within fandom.

In writing a history of the Forties, only those things in FAPA which obviously affected the pattern of thought and development of the entire science-fiction fan field or the issuance of publications of outstanding merit should be considered. A rundown of its internal discussions and problems is the subject for a separate history of FAPA, but not the pattern on which a history of fandom can be woven or even embroidered.

Harry Warner's charge that *The Immortal Storm* is concerned *through choice* primarily with political aspects of fandom as opposed to fan publishing and bibliographical efforts is provably false not only through fandom's general knowledge of my own very deep bibliographical interests, but through anticipations of future Harry Warners in the pages of *The Immortal Storm* itself. Let me quote the last paragraph of Chapter 6 of the History:

“It may be felt by some readers that this professed history of fandom is too *bibliographical* in nature. If so, let them reflect upon the fact that the early fan publications were not only the pride but the very foundation of the field; more, they were the existent proofs that the fans were capable of more than criticizing the professionals and quarrelling among themselves, that they possessed the ability to think and act constructively. The lives of these publications is consequently more important than 90% of the rest of fandom's history. For, since history is essentially a systematic record of man's progress, we turn to their magazines to discern the story of science-fiction fan's progress – and progress it was. The outgrowths of the publications all too often bore the stamp of degeneracy and decadence.”

That paragraph was written as justification of the very *heavy* quantity of bibliographical material in the early chapters, since those publications comprised the bulk of fandom's achievement at that time. Later, fandom issued relatively less of bibliographical importance and focused its attention on creating organizations (the foundation of today's conventions and club meetings), a social set-up and philosophy so turbulent as to

inspire the title *The Immortal Storm*. I wrote the History as it happened, not as I wished it, and it was primarily a history of science-fiction *fandom*, not science-fiction bibliography.

Further, while I include associational fantasy groups where known, *The Immortal Storm* was never intended to be a repository of the discussions of authors and reader groups having so little connection with active fandom that their existence was all but unknown until I unearthed a record of their reality. You will search in vain through other science-fiction periodicals for reference or information concerning the Kalem Club which I summarized in *The Immortal Storm* and which Warner implies I deliberately played down. I can scarcely be criticized for not including in *The Immortal Storm* more information about organizations of the type of the Kalem Club, which had so little influence on fandom, that they were unknown to the great mass of fans at large!

Despite this, Harry Warner's incredible statement that *The Immortal Storm* "ignores *all* bibliographical work that was being done by fans", deserves a challenge.

I think it no more than reasonable to suggest, that in a history like *The Immortal Storm*, which obviously is unfinished, the author must be given the benefit of a doubt on what he intended to include in the Chapters to follow.

The author must also be permitted his own method and plan of introducing material, since only he can see the aggregate in perspective.

As a point of fact, the Chapters to follow *The Immortal Storm* were intended to bring British fandom up to date, since I had only previously gotten it into 1937; to introduce Australian fandom; bring FAPA up to date; review outstanding fan magazines and special publications and then proceed with the mainstream of events.

Swisher's *SF Check-List*, which ran October 1938 through 1943, can scarcely be said to have left behind considering the History terminated in later 1939! *The Bizarre* Series*, which Warner also mentions as a significant omission, the first of which appeared in 1938 and the other in 1940 and 1941 respectively could also have waited their turn without damage to the progression of the History. Keeping the foregoing in mind, since Warner says I ignored "all" fan bibliographical material, rather than requiring me to list the hundreds I did include, I think it would be much fairer to ask him to list *one* of importance I didn't!

* *Sic: it is unclear whether this is a typo or a whimsical fannish spelling. [Ed.]*

Let us now take up the fact that Warner would only have devoted two paragraphs to the role played by *New Fandom* if he were writing a history of fandom.

Jack Speer, before I wrote *The Immortal Storm*, published in his FAPA magazine *Sustaining Program* in 1943, a synoptic history of the period covered by my book, utilizing 15 paragraphs. *Five* of the paragraphs, or *one third* of his outline, involved events that integrally concerned or were influenced by *New Fandom*. That's still *three* more paragraphs than Warner would have given the organization in a *comprehensive* history. Considering that *New Fandom* aside from its political schisms sponsored and put on The First World Science Fiction Convention you can imagine the value of Warner's hypothetical History.

But the prize example of Warner's bizarre sense of values is displayed in his criticism of my dramatic presentation of the fact that Donald A. Wollheim, head of the Michelists, a movement that had the best part of fandom of that period tearing at each other's throats because of its insistence that political action be taken for a "World State", revealed that it was anything but a Utopian-minded group in the following statement:

"Michelism believes that science fiction is a force; a force acting through the medium of speculative and prophetic fiction on the minds of idealistic youth; that logical science fiction inevitably points to the necessity for socialism, the advance of science and the world state; and that these aims, created by science fiction idealizing *CAN BEST BE REACHED THROUGH ADHERENCE TO THE PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL.*"

The Michelists, later better known as *The Futurians*, was one of the two most dominant forces in fandom of the late thirties. Suddenly it openly and blatantly admitted *in print*, that it was a Communist Front organization which was powerfully working to unite all fandom into a political tool for Communist propaganda.

Warner thinks such material should be omitted and suggests greater emphasis be placed on the fact that Jack Speer hit a phone pole with a car while driving from Washington, D.C. to New England, with the results that his parents kept him out of fandom for a few months!

There is a limit to absurdity and gullibility. What are Warner's *real* motives for wanting this matter played down?

The answer is simple and backed by documentary evidence. Simply, because in 1939 Harry Warner was a dues-paying member of *The Futurian*

Federation of the World; an affiliate of *The Futurian Society*, official Michelist organization whose leader in the statement preceding admitted was a Communist Front. Interested parties may verify this fact by referring to the April 7, 1939 issue of *The Futurian Review* which contains a letter from Harry Warner displaying a very substantial enthusiasm for the entire thing. The letter follows:

“I’ll anxiously await the first issue of the *Review*, and send the next installment of my dues with my next letter. If I can help in any way, let me know. To be perfectly frank with you, I think that there is more need today in stf for a really good fan organization than anything else. The *SFL* is practically worthless, except in less than half a dozen cities; the *FAPA* and such doesn’t go far toward organization; the various strings of publications mostly exist in name only...; and *New Fandom* I fear won’t have any great amount of activities after the Convention. So best of luck to you. I’ll do my best towards interesting several others in joining.”

Since *The Michelists* had publicly confessed in print that their aim was the spread of Communism in *Novae Terrae* for January 1938, more than a year earlier, it was scarcely a secret. Warner also plugged the organization in the March and May 1939 issues of his magazine *Spaceways*.

Does this make Harry Warner a communist?

Not at all, but I do think it’s an early example of poor judgement on his part which he would prefer to have forgotten. I do think it helps explain his distaste for portions of the History which bare the true nature of *The Michelist-run Futurian Society* with its affiliate *The Futurian Federation of the World*. I do think it is why he so emotionally excoriates the emphasis on “politics” in *The Immortal Storm*.

Let’s stick to nice, safe bibliographies!

And while we are on the subject I may as well take this opportunity to clear up one other “moral flaw” which Damon Knight reveals in *The Immortal Storm* on page 114 of *In Search of Wonder*.

Knight builds his case around two happenings described in *The Immortal Storm*.

First he cites a circumstance where I am publicly *barred* from the pages of *The Science Fiction Fan*, an influential fan publication of the late Thirties. My opponents, The Futurians, are granted unlimited space to give me the “business”. Since I had previously contributed prodigiously towards sustaining that publication when it was ready to fold through the

use of my Manuscript Bureau; “I was stunned by the ingratitude and callousness of Wiggins’s (the publisher’s) decision.”

Knight then quotes a previous incident where I had convinced *The Science Fiction Fan* that they should refuse to publish *all* material relating to fan feuds, *mine* as well as *The Futurians*.

He comments on this: “Moskowitz nowhere connects the two incidents nor acknowledges his own equal culpability. This is the moral failure of his book.”

Evidently Knight honestly feels that there is no basic difference in the two events described.

I respectfully* submit, the moral blinders in this case should *scarcely* be attributed to the *book*.

Science-Fiction Times #345 (September 1960, ed. James V. Taurasi)

* SaM probably meant “respectfully”, but this is what he wrote.
[Ed.]

Bibliography and Copyright

The two existing sourcebooks for 1930s fan history mentioned in the [Foreword](#) can be purchased in ebook form as below. Also included is Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*, which reprints his *Hyphen* review of *The Immortal Storm*, used in the present ebook by courtesy of InfinityBox Press LLC.

- Sam Moskowitz: *The Immortal Storm* (NESFA Press)
<https://www.nesfa.org/book/the-immortal-storm/>
- Damon Knight: *The Futurians* (ReAnimus Press)
<https://reanimus.com/store/?item=1423>
- Damon Knight: *In Search of Wonder* (ReAnimus Press)
<https://reanimus.com/store/?item=1412>

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New items added in the 2024 Expanded Edition are marked below with a paragraph sign (¶).

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