

# FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

No. 34

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## ● NOVELET

- CLOAK AND STAGGER** ..... *Gordon R. Dickson* 18  
It would have been hilarious if Earth's acceptance into the Federation hadn't depended upon how Turm Lindsay carried out his mission—because no one, particularly Lindsay, had the faintest notion of what he was expected to do, or not do!

## ● SHORT STORIES

- STAROBIN** ..... *Margaret St. Clair* 6  
They needed a hero like Starobin—but a hero like Starobin was just the kind who didn't care...
- THE LONELY STARS** (illustrated on cover) .... *Scott Nichols* 42  
Would humanity ever be able to undo that worst of blunders?
- FORCE OF MORTALITY** ..... *Robert Silverberg* 56  
The greatest boon can also be the deadliest curse...
- LAST MEETING PLACE** ..... *Thomas N. Scortia* 68  
Garth was one of the few who understood history—but could he avoid repeating it?
- THE PROFESSOR FROM PYJM** .....  
..... *Bruce Tucker & Irving Cox, Jr.* 89  
Was Mytohell just another "crazy scientist" or...?
- A GUN FOR GRANDFATHER** ..... *F. M. Busby* 103  
So you have a time machine, so you can go back in time and shoot grandpa? But why bother? Barney had a reason...
- THE ROUND PEG** ..... *George R. Hahn* 116  
Ba-ll Thorpe was the most bizarre of phonics...

## ● FEATURES

- AUTHOR, AUTHOR** (a roundup on contributors) ..... 5
- THE EDITOR'S PAGE** ..... *Robert A. W. Lowndes* 83  
Continuing our backward glance at "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow: 1927".
- FREEDOM—A DISCIPLINE** (Special Article) .. *Donald Bower* 98
- INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION** (department) ... *Robert A. Madle* 111
- DOWN TO EARTH** (Letters and Comment) ..... *The Readers* 124

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A Department For The  
Science - Fictionist

# INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

Reports and Reminiscences

**By Robert A. Madle**

News and Views

**T**HE ELEVENTH anniversary meeting of the Eastern Science Fiction Association attracted approximately 150 attendees. The majority present were flying saucer proponents, most of whom attended because of the announced theme of the meeting, "Flying Saucers—After Ten Years." They

probably went home quite unelated after hearing Lester del Rey, L. Sprague de Camp, and Dr. Thomas S. Gardner take the flying saucer theory apart at its seams. However, Hans Santesson, editor of *Fantastic Universe*, spoke in the affirmative. Those interested in attending a meeting of the Eastern Science Fiction Association should write to Allan Howard 101 Fairmount Avenue, Newark 7, New Jersey. (For a detailed article on the ESFA, see the August *Science Fiction Quarterly*.)

Illegal activities become legal if they are conducted in a space ship—at least 50 miles up! This is the opinion of P. K. Roy, of the International Civil Aviation Organization, who spoke before the American Rocket Society in Washington on April 5th. International

laws, said Mr. Roy, extend upwards into the sky only so far as there is sufficient air to support aircraft. Therefore, above the 50 mile limit anything could go—even murder, according to this interpretation.

Another interesting aspect of the near future, expounded at this same American Rocket Society meeting, is a method of exploring the solar system with unmanned ion-propelled rockets, the cost of which would be quite moderate. This rocket, called the "Snooper," would be boosted into space by a tug, similar to the one which will be used to get the earth satellite into its orbit. Once up there, it would then be sent on a path toward a planet, and orbit around it, collecting data of vital importance. Mr. Martin I. Willinski, spokesman for the group of research engineers who developed "Snooper" while working for the Rocketdyne Division of North American Aviation, said the rocket would attain a speed of about seven miles a second, propelled by the electrically charged atoms and molecules being discharged.

*The Challenge of Outer Space* is the title of a recently released Office of Armed Forces Information and Education film. Dr. Wernher von Braun is featured in this government-sponsored depiction of what life will be like in a space sta-

tion, more than 1,000 miles above the earth... Fredric Brown gets Anita Ekberg! Yes, he does—as the star for his fabulously successful detective novel, "The Screaming Mimi." Harry Joe Brown, the producer, says that no punches will be pulled in the filming of this flicker.

### THE PRO TURNED FAN

QUITE OFTEN you read in this department a statement about a "fan turned pro." In recent months, Robert Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Randall Garrett, and other have been referred to in this manner. This time, however, the reverse is occurring—the next few paragraphs will discuss a top-flight science fiction and fantasy author who became an active fan after a decade of professional writing! The name of this outspoken member of the beanie-brigade is Robert Bloch.

Yes, Robert Bloch, whose first professionally printed story appeared in *Weird Tales* for January 1935, is one of today's most popular science fiction fans. (Incidentally, Bob was only 17 years old when he sold his first story, so he isn't exactly a granddaddy yet.) In reality, however, the qualification should be made that Bloch spent a long time on the fringes of fandom. Before mak-

ing his first sale to *Weird Tales*, he had been a reader of s-f and fantasy for quite a few years. Through his correspondence, and contact with Raymond A. Palmer, he discovered the fan magazine of its day, *Fantasy Magazine* and, in 1935 and 1936, wrote several pieces for it. A short quote from his first, "The Ultimate Ultimatum," will display that Bloch possessed his keen sense of humor even as a youth. Also, without actually being a fan, he predicted the first s-f convention! The next paragraph is Bloch, word for word, from *Fantasy Magazine*, August, 1935:

It was a big convention. Lovecraft was there. So was Clark Ashton Smith, August Derleth, and Otto Binder. Ray Palmer was present, and Stanley Weinbaum. Also there was I, thrilled and proud at attending this gathering of masterminds. We met in an old family crypt of mine. Outside the moon was shining, the stars were gleaming—and I was lit up, too.

Typical Bloch, eh? But, as mentioned, he contributed just several items to *Fantasy Magazine*—more or less as a preliminary to his professional success. After selling his first to *Weird Tales*, he was not to

be stopped. Farnsworth Wright, then editor of WT, bought Bloch's stories almost as fast as Bob could write them. For Robert Bloch was just what WT's readers wanted—someone who could write in the style of the master himself, H. P. Lovecraft.

**B**LOCH SAYS that it was during this period that he again almost became a fan—or, at least, was exposed to it. He went west to visit a former fan of his, just turned pro, Henry Kuttner. And, as Bloch puts it: "He introduced me to a fan named Fritz Leiber. I attended as LASFS meeting and met a fan named Ackerman... and an obnoxious young kid whom they tolerated for his puns—a Roy Burberry or Ray Bradley, or some such name." But, even though exposed to fandom, he was only vaguely aware of it and "...the idea of visiting a fan club, or aligning myself with the feuds and factions of time meant nothing to me." For Bloch, being a dirty old pro, was interested only in money.

And, at this time, Bloch became a science fiction writer. (He had been strictly a weird fiction writer up until 1938.) Raymond A. Palmer, whom Bloch had known for years, became editor of *Amazing Stories* and its new companion, *Fantastic Adventures*. To make

this phase of his s-f'ish life brief, Bloch became one of Palmer's mainstays and wrote scores of stories for him, the most popular of which were his humorous "Lefty Feep" series. And he's been writing science fiction ever since, although he will be quick to tell you that fantasy is still his favorite. In this day and age, however, the market for fantasy is just about non-existent.

Then, in 1946, after successfully dodging and skirting fandom for about fifteen years, Bloch "discovered" fandom. He attended the 1946 World Convention in Los Angeles and met many of the popular men of the day, including a Mr. Bob Tucker. Says Bob, "One look from his patriotic eyes (red, white, and blue) and I was hopelessly smitten." Since then, Bloch has attended most all of the big conventions, including every one since 1951, and every Midwestcon since that date. And he has become completely enmeshed in correspondence, fanzine articles, convention programs, and like that.

**I**T HAS CONSTANTLY amazed us how Bloch has been able to find time to write the scores of fan articles he has written during the past several years. Very few fan editors are turned down when

they request an article from Bob, and he is always among the first to promote worthy fan projects. Lately he has been promoting fandom in the professional magazines. When Bill Hamling found that he was going to have to obtain someone to conduct "Fandora's Box" (due to Mari Wolf's resignation), Robert Bloch was his immediate first choice. Then Bob sold a long article on fandom to Tony Boucher—probably the most comprehensive ever to appear in a professional magazine. ("Some of My Best Fans Are Friends," *F&SF*, September, 1955.) His crowning achievement however, was the story, "A Way of Life," which depicted a future civilization with a fan-oriented political and social system! (*Fantastic Universe*, October, 1956.)

Bob Bloch, although becoming an active fan comparatively late in his science-fictional life, is one of the most sincere members of fandom. He firmly believes that fanzines are the only remaining outlet for a free exchange of personal opinion in the country. On this point Bob is particularly emphatic, and in a recent letter to us he said:

In fanzines you find people of all ages, all walks of life, all backgrounds, all outlooks, going at it

hammer and tongs. Sometimes they're vulgar, sometimes they're banal, but they're always interesting. And they do find that free exchange of ideas which constitutes the working principle of a democracy. To me this is the most stimulating aspect of fandom...the degree of free communication it affords. And, as I say, I've met so many fine and interesting people in the field.

The science fiction world certainly appreciates those comments, Bob. It's a distinct pleasure having you with us.

#### THE FANZINES

**SCIENCE-FICTION FIVE-YEARLY:** 25¢ for a five-year subscription from L. Shaw, Ltd., 545 Manor Road, Castleton Corners, Staten Island 14, New York. Edited and published by Lee Hoffman Shaw and Larry Shaw (married-up critters), this is a side-

splitting (maybe even front-splitting, too) burlesque of some of today's science fiction magazines. Two new serials start this issue: "Stars of the Slave Giants," by Calvin Aaargh, and "Nissassa," by Nalrah Nosille. These are good examples of the type of stories once featured by the now defunct *Tenalp*, and now being featured by another L. Shaw magazine. (We hate to mention a competitor's title, but this one is a companion to *Infinity*.) SFFY has complete stories, too. As well as article, readers' departments, and even book reviews. It's real fun, and we advise you to send for a copy. Might mention that Calvin Aaargh and Nalrah Nosille are Robert Silverberg and Harlan Ellison, former very active fans, now big-time pros.

Send all fanzines for review to Robert A. Madle, 7720 Oxman Road, Palmer Park, Hyattsville, Maryland.

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