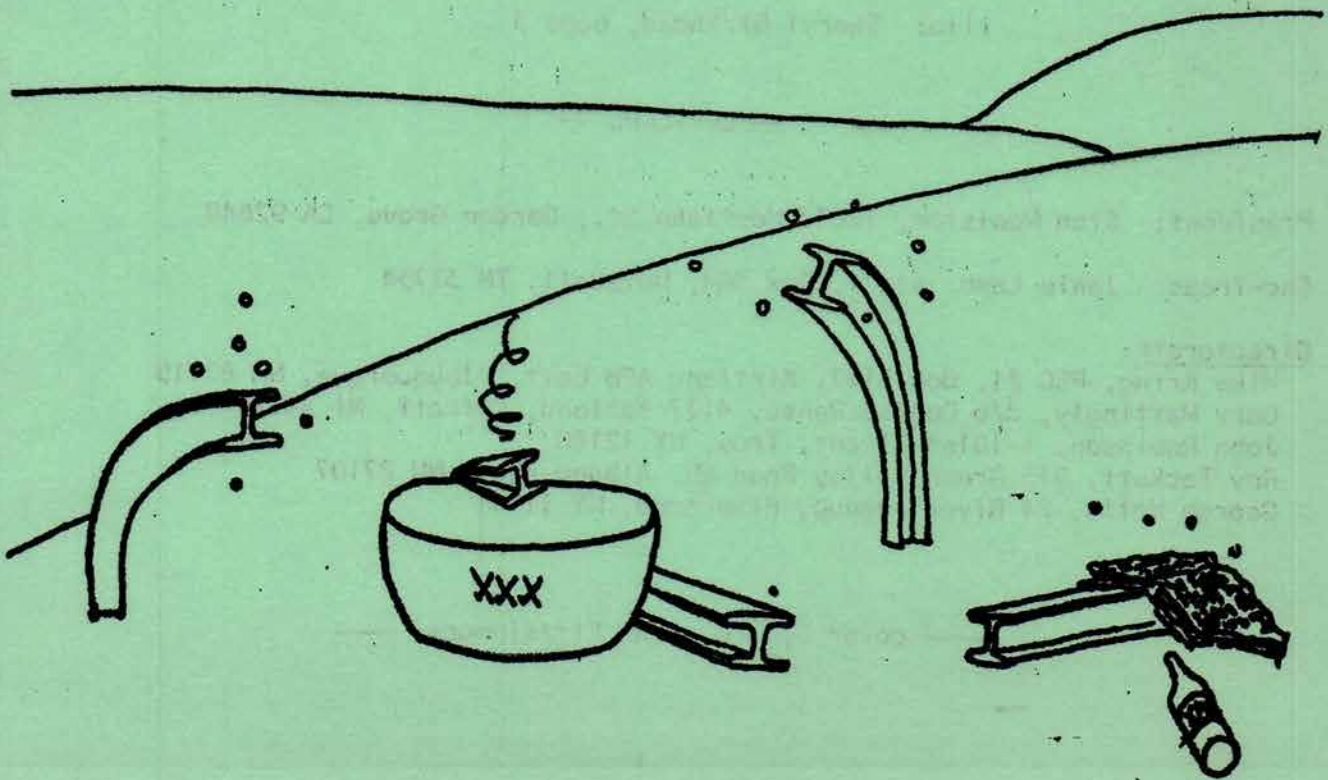
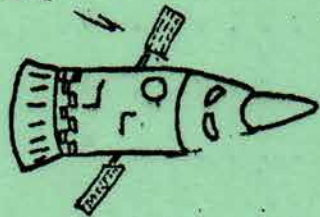


TIGHT BEAM

MARS IS INHABITED
BY TIGHT BEAMS!



TIGHTBEAM

TIGHTBEAM - January: is the letter column of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. TIGHTBEAM is published for the N3F in January, March, May, July, September, November and is distributed to members of the N3F and for trade of other sf fanzines. Persons mentioned in passing are invited to comment, regardless of membership status. Contributions (letters and artwork) should be sent to the editor: BETH SLICK, 9030 HARRATT, APT. 2, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069, not later than the 5th of the month of publication. (Please writer "TB" on envelope.)

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Howdy--

By a wonderful stroke of luck, I will have the use of an IBM Selectric for an indefinite period of time. So, starting with this issue, TB will have a 'new look'. The type face is smaller (it's a 12-pitch machine--for those of you familiar with that sort of thing) so I can fit more on each page. Now that the holidays have passed, let's have more letters to fill up those pages. Also, please, let's have some artwork--sketches or full-page drawings for a cover--(I'm all out of artwork!)

On the movie scene...(The movie and TV industry is my passion--so much so that I have recently moved to West Hollywood and now work for a movie producer/distributor) the new sf movie, DARK STAR, will be in distribution by the time you read this. It is a satire on sf "mission stories" and has some interesting special effects. (Although we won't be handling the distribution, my employer, Jack H. Harris, is executive producer of the film.) Another very funny movie (already released) is YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, which I can't describe in anything but superlatives. If you are a FRANKENSTEIN purist, don't see the film; otherwise, sit back and enjoy.

Congratulations to those who did well in the elections! It seems the Directorate has undergone a minor revolution and it will be interesting to see what new ideas surface. With the current turnover rate for the bureau heads, there are a few opportunities for new members (and old members for that matter) to get involved. The bureaus are listed in TNFF, so take a look--see which ones are open and contact President Stan Woolston. As always, you can contact any of the current bureau heads about getting involved.

I recently received the Writers' Exchange zine (issue J-2) from bureau head Art Hayes (Box 550, Schumacher, Ontario, P0N 1G0, Canada) which is a very informative issue. It contains writing tips, policy comments, and is generally very helpful for anyone interested in writing. Potential writers should write to Art about joining this self-help group. There is no charge to join.

A con that didn't get listed in TNFF is the (are you ready?) Leprecon, March 14 - 16, 1975. GOH: Larry Niven. For Info: Tim Kyger, 702 E. Vistal Del Cerro, Tempe, AZ 85281. \$4 until March 1 and \$5 after that; supporting \$2.00.

*

One last reminder, Tightbeam needs your support in the way of letters and artwork. This is your zine, your lettercol, and your comments are requested.

KEEP ON WRITIN'

Beth Slick

 RTHUR

BOX 550, SCHUMACHER
ONTARIO, CANADA P0N 1G0

 HAYES

18 DECEMBER 1974

Seasonal Hallucinations:

REED ANDRUS. The weak link over the years, for the N3F, has been its publications. For a while now, with Joanne Burger and Beth Slick, we have had regular publishing. With regular publishing, we gain in strength. But, if either or both of these gals dropped out, where is our "back-up"? That is a good question that deserves an answer. For some years, I could be depended upon to be a back-up, but not now. The only way to get real back-ups is for the members who have the time and the equipment and preferably the ability, to volunteer. As volunteers, they should be occasionally used for at least minor items, until such time as a greater use developed for their talent. You, Reed, should assist in getting those volunteers. Sheryl Birkhead did get her publications out with difficulties. In fan publishing, difficulties are to be expected. But, we should have more of a back-up than Sheryl. Possibilities do exist with your Central Publishing House. Are you willing to help in setting it up?

STAN WOOLSTON. N'APA. Sorry I am not willing to assist in this department. Incidentally, for the readers, in case they are interested, I have an offer to make. Will mail, free of charge, one mailing of N'APA. I refer to N'APA #42, September 1969. This consists of 244 pages by such as Joanne Burger, Frank Denton, Kaymar Carlson, Edward Connor, Donald Miller, Stan Woolston, Paul Doerr, Don Blyly, J. Strand, Askold Ladondo, and Art Hayes. I was the N'APA Mailer then. I still have a few mailings left, so let me know.

And, I still have plenty of copies of S.F. Collections Index, by Len Collins, and the Cross Index. Price was set at (for Neffers) 50¢ for the Index (65 pages) and \$2.00 for the Cross Index (122 pages). Unless there is some demand for it, I shall throw away the copies I have on hand. Can't allow it to take up valuable space forever.

Any club that covers a geographic area such as the N3F, requires participating members to be worthwhile belonging to. The N3F can only be a vehicle through which the activities the members want, can be had. The N3F cannot supply those activities. The only can. So, where the activities picture of the N3F is not to your satisfaction, then the fault has to lie on YOU for not getting the activities scene more active. When I was active, I did not let such little niceties as waiting for Directorate approval, N3F subsidies, etc. to bother me. I went ahead and did them. The N3F was just a convenient mailing list through which my own activities could be directed. The N3F did not supply me with activities, I supplied the N3F with activities. It is up to you to join those who are doing the same thing I did, to make sure there is a sufficient number of active bureaus around. Any bureau can be enlarged to encompass anything, since an active imagination can find connections through which one can justify enlargement of the sphere of action of any specific Bureau.

Round Robins? Well, at one time I took RR withdrawals and printed up what I considered interesting excerpts from them. Stories RRs can be the food mill for Fan Fiction zines. RRs of any kind can, and have been used to recruit, to welcome. So, RRs can be the basis for: Correspondence, Story writing, Fanzine publishing of Articles, stories. RRs can be the basis of Welcoming, recruiting. Taperespondence can be done via the same formula that the RRs are run, so now you have Taping involved, and the electronic technicalities there are now included. RRs can directly, or through zines, be used to club politics. The moment, you included club politics, then all barriers go down as to where you enlarge the Bureau. Conventions are taped, can be included in Tape Robins. I've seen Tape sections included in Apas before too. You

go down the list of activities as listed in the Bureau page of TNFF, and you can use the 1 RR Bureau to join in on ANY of them, to some degree. You did not realize how the RR Bureau could be used outside of a narrow sphere of activity? Well, let's take another and see how it can expand.

Birthday Project: Now this has been run down as useless by some, but almost fanatically supported by others since it was first started when Marijane Johnson, a bed-ridden arthritic started it. From the initial activity of sending cards, assistants to the BP can be involved in correspondence, recruiting, welcoming. A birthday calendar has been published each year for some years. With a birthday calendar, you could have a fan biography, another form of Fandon's Who's Who. It can go to Fan photos in the date space, at least some photos. This leads to collecting fan photos, slides, photography. It can then lead to photo trading and the Photo Bureau. It can go into Round Robins, Quads, etc. By the Calendar, it is in publishing already, so who's to say what extra material can or can't be included with the calendar? It can BE the Information Bureau. It can list, in the biographies, who is available to the Manuscript Bureau for stories, articles, artwork. It can go into an Activities calendar, showing when various clubs have their local meetings, conventions. It can list the fanzines being published by the fans in the biographies. Where do you stop the BP, if you want to expand the BP. There is no limit.

I have written before on how far the tape Bureau can go, and it has no more limit than does the Photo Bureau, both of which can be active participants in the Convention programs. The Welcommittee, responsible as it is for presenting information on the other activities, can go as far as RUNNING the other activities. So, if YOU want a specific activity, get set, going, and don't worry about the real specific Bureau you are working in or from. It might be best to tackle the appropriate bureau for a specific activity, but if the Bureau isn't active, then that need not stop you, get that Bureau going by taking it over. Who is to stop you.

((Art is right. You are only limited by your imagination and drive. The N3F (its rules and regulations) serve as a skeleton to its membership. It's up to us to flesh it out with ideas and activities. TIGHTBEAM, for instance, can (and should) be an extension of many of the other bureaus. Writers and artists can explore their craft with an willing and ready-made audience. Informal essays can be the most fun to write as well as read. Drawings, either in a serious or light mood, are equally entertaining. # I am here to publish and distribute YOUR ideas and enthusiasms, or your disappointments and difficulties--whatever--let's hear from you about it. Now.))

ROGER
SWEEN

319 ELM STREET
KALAMZOO, MI 49007

18 DECEMBER 1974

Dear Neffers:

In two years of belonging to N3F, the November TB is the first I have received. Perhaps there have been problems; Stan Woolston has urged me several times to write, and I haven't so it's my fault too.

I read Wertham's The World of Fanzines a year ago after I had been in fandom for 14 months. I thought it was a nice summary of what it had taken me that time to learn. Perhaps there are errors, but I disagree with D'Amassa that Wertham was dishonest. He does mention the general lack of obscenity and drug references, but I don't see that he builds his case on these. Considering the absolute freedom faneds have, I

find them very responsible and certainly wholesome. Dr. Wertham's principle conclusion is that fanzines are a quintessential form of communication. And that is certainly the truth.

I belonged to N'APA for awhile when I was getting into fandom, but the infrequency of the publishing and the seeming distantness of the communication lost me. (I still can't do mailing comments.) I hate to see institutions die though, and wish I had more time for such things.

You mean...
I forgot to WRITE?



I certainly agree with Art Hayes' sensible comments. His suggestions seem to be the only sensible way of dealing with these issues by such a relaxed and loose organization. It seems strange to me to talk about purposes and programs when there is no mechanism to carry them out. But maybe the idea is to talk up an idea until either some consensus action develops or some individual does it.

Nest term I expect to be very busy on my specialist research project. I am doing it on in-house library newsletters (library fanzines, if you will). May my fanac not wane anymore than it already has.

((I am at a loss to explain what has happened to your TIGHTBEAM'S, but foul-ups do occur and we can't know about it unless we're told. So, if you are missing publications PLEASE write the editor. # I'd like to make a comment about Wertham's book, but I have yet to see a copy of it (unless there is some kind soul out there who would care to lend me theirs?)))

((Here's a short note from Sheryl B., whose letter I seem to have gotten out of order.))

SHERYL

BIRKHEAD

23629 WOODFIELD ROAD
GAITHERSBURG, MD 20760

10 DECEMBER 1974

...Your mimeo handled the solid areas quite well, I'm glad to see -- I was concerned that what I had sent you might not be suitable and if not, then you might be stuck without anything to use. But, such was not the case and everything seems fine -- good.

I think Reed's idea is a very good one. There ARE problems (such as who has a permanent enough address to have the mimeo, enough time to insure being able to run off stuff the few times it's necessary) -- but I think an "emergency" system would be very useful and helpful. I hope to see more comment along this line.

The way things look now, I probably can't get to the picture zine -- but I still like the idea and WILL keep it in mind if things work out so that I can put time in on it.

There may or may not be a freebie at Aussiecon. Perhaps, if everything falls together just right, there will be. It's still too early to tell. At any rate, I hope we do have a room and that Neffers are in evidence. Out of curiosity, anyone know who's

planning to go?

...So, that's it. My personal thanks and gratitude to you for your work/time/effort on Tb -- we really need people as willing to work and help as you are.

((Thanks for the nice words. # By the way, I'd be willing to lend a hand with the Ausiecon freebie, if you can get something together. I, too, am wondering who is planning to go to Australia.))

W
WILLIAM W.

5421 ALBRIGHT
CULLOWHEE, NC 28723

G
GOODSON, JR.

20 DECEMBER 1974

It's interesting when you stop to think about it how many people enjoy both mysteries and science fiction.

Similarities between the two genres are obvious, both commonly deal with problems, posing a problem and tracing the central character find an answer. An interesting central character, often with some unusual ability, is another thing usually found in both.

Most important, however, is that both use the "sense of wonder" acknowledged to be the basic attraction of science fiction. The "rules" of both require the presentation of all the facts to the reader. But still we possess a sense of wonder not only about the scientific wonders revealed but about the powers of mind revealed in the protagonist. Compare Holmes hunting around the body and Seaton staring at a hole in the wall of his office. Both leave us breathless at their clarity of mind and just as important, the complexity of the problem. A sense of wonder about the detective's talents plays a much larger role in most mystery fiction than is generally admitted.

Another strong similarity is that the reader expects certain things to occur in such a story, or the reader feels cheated. The science fiction fan wants something strange, futuristic. The mystery fan wants a crime or at least a puzzle, and a solution with in the laws of nature. Always, a solution... One can get so used to solutions in both genres, one tends to accept the protagonist's solution without analysing it properly.

This tendency to stick to one genre because one feels safe knowing what to expect includes other types of stories like gothics, fantasies, romances, and westerns, especially westerns.

((There are, apparently, more similarities between mystery and SF novels than one would imagine at first glance. # However, I don't share your disdain (if I properly catch the drift of your comments) for the fact that a reader of SF expects certain elements in SF novels. Heinlein, Vonnegut, and Dick have all written stories with "something strange, futuristic" in them, yet their stories are wildly different. Just because a group of stories have enough elements in common to be called a genre, does not necessarily make the stories formula; or all the same. Although some genres have become formulas (as Alma Hill showed us so effectively with gothics), I would not think SF novels are read because the reader feels safe because he/she is armed with the foreknowledge of the story's development and outcome.))

BOY

ACKETT

915 GREEN VALLEY ROAD NW
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87107

3 JANUARY 1975

Dear Neffers...

Just a quick note this time. My thanks to all of you who supported me for the Directorate. I hope we will have a good year.

GIL

GAIER

1016 BEECH AVENUE
TORRANCE, CA 90501

4 JANUARY 1975

My first perzine PHOSPHENE will be out soon. This quote from it ought to make a good introduction.

"On the recommendations of several correspondents--Will Norris and Frank Bertrand come first to mind--that I join N3F, I did. The literature has begun arriving. I feel like I've been adopted. If all of their agencies/arms are functioning, I could wander in and lose myself. Evidently, I just missed the big election. The first packet had a voting sheet in it; a few days later another arrived with the results of the election. Now that's what I like--an organization that gets things done swiftly and efficiently. No complaints at all, though. The organization seems to stand with open arms ready to absorb me.

Joanne Burger, one of the contacts, seems to love to write about books, writers, and publishing. Wonderful. We ought to get along fine. (From the N3F literature I've read so far there are plenty more extant just like her. Ghod, I feel like an explorer who's just found the Lost City with all its inhabitants still alive.)

Now I've got to write a few people to get involved in some of their/our keen activities such as the Correspondence Bureau, Tape Bureau, Teach SF Bureau (already have done that), and TIGHTBEAM.

Didn't I say it was like being adopted? The list of new and old members is impressive. So. I don't know what their plots are like, but the cast of characters is tremendous.

The Recruiting Leader is Ann Chamberlain, 3464 Wilson Ave., Apt. C, Oakland, CA 94602.

I'm a high school teacher of SF/F (also 20th Cent. Amer./Civil War/The Wild West and All That). Last September I published BUYING BYRE #1; it was a specialtyzine aimed at HS SF/F teachers and READERS.

At present I'm involved in a fascinating PROJECT that could use advice from those who have done extended reading in SF/F. GG #2 which explains everything ought to be out by mid-January '75. MAYBE YOU CAN JOIN ME. If you're interested, send for a copy; if you're not, send for PHOSPHENE.

Maybe you'd just like to trade zines or correspond (write or tape/cassett); please get in touch. I hope to be around for quite awhile.

The new kid on the block...

((The other day my phone rang and who should it be but Gil Gaier, asking about TB. I encouraged him to go ahead and write in and he promised to do so. A couple days later I got his letter describing his "new Member reactions" to N3F. Thanks, Gil, and with your enthusiasm you should get a lot out of N3F.))

((And, here is an article by another new member with one of those secrets to success that is so painfully obvious that it is somehow pushed aside for complex systems or books. Any writers out there should read this and join the Writers' Exchange.))

JOHN

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CULVER CITY, CA 90230

NOUYE

7 JANUARY 1975

The Secret to Successful SF Writing

Here's a brief anecdote:

One day I was writing out a story, a variation on an old but never completely exhausted sf theme. And then someone came up to me, a fellow sf fan, and said: "Don't you ever run out of ideas?"

So let me say that this stunned me. "Don't I ever..." Hard to believe. Did anyone read that article in Analog by Ben Bova, called THE IDEA FACTORY (it also appears in the Bulletin of the SFWA for Summer '74). What's there left to write about? Only everything: The universe!

So it's apparent why this almost made me laugh. But I dare not laugh, and for good reason.

As an sf writer I've found that old ideas are never "old". Cliches are only cliches so long as they are written that way. How many times have I read a time machine story, all the way from that primordial slime (THE TIME MACHINE--by good ole HG) to THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF, by Tribbles.

So I've worked out a system which could produce literally hundreds of stories in as short or as long a time as you could type them, or rewrite them, or retype them... so on.

It's not a formula system.

There are literally trillions of ideas which a writer could work from. Sometimes it comes from the darkness or brightness of his soul. Sometimes it spurts up from a paragraph or phrase in an sf novel or story...sometimes it just comes from nowhere, from a deserted night street or a newspaper article or...

Or from gazing at the stars themselves.

Inspiration, aspiration...perspiration. With these ingredients the cycle is complete.

Take one idea.

Okay. Let's suppose the world is suddenly obliterated by a nuclear holocaust. Cliche, someone says almost instantly.

But wait!

We have an action-adventure story from this--we skillfully establish the setting, the characters, the plot. What do we have?

Ten, perhaps twenty stories, at least.

Plot: The remnants of human civilization gather in force-regions, domes of walled energy protecting them from the mutants. Another plot: A sword and sorcery tale. The Ernoi are men in vast airships, remnants from the scientists and engineers who manned the bomb-carriers during the Great War.

It's endless.

An idea is as good and as convincing as you could make it.

And the real "Secret" is so simple that it bogs the imagination.

And that is:

WRITE!

Because I've learned that the only way to learn how to write is by writing. Keep this one word in mind, if not anything else. I never got anywhere by reading "How to write" books, or attending hopeless "writing workshops" (the exception is Clarion, which operates altogether differently...students get a greater reality on sf because they're taught by the pros themselves, almost like an apprenticeship or internship of some sort, and the final word is that it produces results. Last year some nine stories were sold by students according to LOCUS, a record number...)

Production, then, is our byword.

It's not exactly that an sf writer should be a "Hack-Machine," a "Story-Factory." This, certainly, is not what's attempted. But he should produce something, whether he's a pro or fan. The secret to success is PRODUCTION. This applies not only to writing but anything.

It could be production of letters, or fanzines, as well as stories.

And we take an idea, two ideas. Believe it or not, some pro writers are one-idea men. That is, most of their stories, at least from what I've seen of them, are one-ideas: Burroughs spent some 70% of his writing time with TARZAN. Get the picture? Or take, let's say, the writer of the THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM. Cummings. How many of those atom-is-a-world stories did HE grind out?

One idea alone is sufficient to launch an entire career in sf writing.

But it's never good to be a one-idea writer, is it? Neither is it good to be a "hack". These have bad connotations for everyone. I imagine that not even Burroughs wanted that connotation, either. But he would have laughed, and rightly so, all the way to the bank.

But the facts are that pros, like Silverberg, Dean R. Koontz, even Ellison are PRODUCERS. One writer that comes to mind is L. Ron Hubbard, who must have punched out dozens of stories a week, and a novel a month.

Now that's production.

But is it hackwork?

Let's not chide ourselves. Any writer wants to be read, no matter how bad. And that's the game we play here--we want to be read. The day's of the one big novel setting the career for a one-novel BNA are over. Things change; society changes. We live in a post-industrial society which has, almost like the scenario of a "things-to-come" novel, engulfed the literatures of men. To say nothing of the media.

Science fiction has its roots in the pulps to begin with--or arguably, at least MODERN, sf. Stories are to be read, enjoyed, thought about. They are to produce an emotional impact.

And then, typical of the mass-culture they're pushed aside, left only for the critics, like scavengers, to analyze and find social, moral, theological (whatever) value.

This applies especially to me, a relative unknown: A writer writes and this means production of stories.

It's strange; how that works. We take one idea and expand it, alter it, modify it with a new plot, a new bent. With that one idea, a rocket to Jupiter, say, (and THIS, I admit, sounds unbelievably worse than clichéish) and then have things touched up. What happens on the way?

What! you say. Rocket to Jupiter! "Touched up", like a hack? Sounds like 1940 all over again...

Well, suppose that on the way, only two astronauts are awake, and the rest are asleep in suspended animation. Let's also say that a mad computer by the name of HAL 9000 suddenly takes control...

But...and then you realize that that's the plot of 2001. And that book, the film, also, were relatively contemporary. Far from the 40ish stuff. Or is it?

Is 2001, despite all the arousings it caused, really different from the Greek tales, or Cyrano de Bergarac's fantasies...any different from Ulysses, Jason?

With that one idea, the dawn of man-rocket to Jupiter, has come an entire flood of stories. And the flood is still not exhausted.

So what's left?

Even if we were to settle the planets-- all of them!--there would still be no end to sf ideas. What about those other universes? What about those micro-atomic planets we've talked about?

Imagination is quite a game.

Although there seems to be a fuel shortage, we can never run out of imagination.

So in a simple conclusion the real secret to successful sf writing is no secret at all. It's obnosis--observing the obvious, which is usually so hard to do that the secrets of obnosis may become a government multi-million, guarded top-confidential secret, by god.

All you do is write and write and write.

Like I've done, hopefully to the reader's content, and hopefully not too long.

I hope this letter can see print in TIGHTBEAM (I wrote it especially for this 'zine). I hope someone might read it and use it.

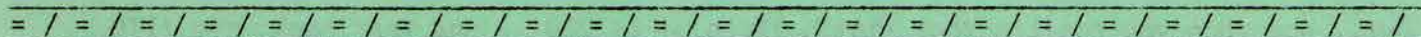
To end off with a bit of a punchline, let's play with a bit of numbers. Here's a stock of popular sf themes:

- War with Extraterrestrials
- First Contacts
- The Gadget Story (Analog)
- Computers Dominate Man (in ten thousand ways)
- Robots Have Feelings
- Aliens Have Feelings (Spock--I hate Star Trek)
- There are other universes besides our own (Have you ever been next door?)
- Genetics--Man into Monster, Man into Man, Monster into Man, Man into Woman, and Cloning
- Cloning, by God! Great Joshua...
- 1934's
- Brave New World's (THX-1138)

So. Let's round those off into ten ideas. Now, we take, let's say, three ideas from each of them, giving us thirty stories (or novles). Suppose one idea really hits it. We start a series on a genetic concept--MAN INTO PRESIDENT through cloning, eliminating the need for the 18 year old vote. We write three books--The Vice President, Gray Mouser, The President, Murky Busby...

We walk down the street and see a wounded cat, and then write another book--this about gods from space who treat us like pets. Would someone help me if I were that cat?

In the end I estimate one hundred novels by anyone willing to write them. And some ten thousand stories. By ONE fan (or pro) who follows one simple principle: WRITE!



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THIRD CLASS