

Origin 17

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History and Research Bureau

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Origin is our chief contact with the membership, whom we seek to interest in the nature and history of science fiction, fantasy, science fiction fandom, and the N3F. In order for the organization to function to its capacity, we have to thrive, and that's what we seek to do here, have a thriving history and research activity. We work at our own speed, of course, but we want to put a lot of concern into what we do. Some big historical discovery or research fact is a bonus, and we want to have those from time to time; at the present time all matters of the NFFF's history are bonuses. Always trying to get the membership involved, I would like to point out that questions may be asked here, and it's best to ask questions of the whole staff so that all four of us can see if your questions can be answered. We have the computer capacity to go looking for your answers. The questions would be about the nature of fantasy, sf, or fandom, or our own organization, or something in the history of science fiction. If you don't research well, perhaps we can do it for you. The email for the zine is my own email address. I've thought there should perhaps be a Mr. Answer Man column for Origin to focalize any incoming questions, but the readers might wonder why we'd have something like that and be worried about writing to a fictional "answer man". Maybe they'd have had some experiences with "Ask Jeeves" that they didn't want to relate to any more. Other than possibly being totally unsuccessful, that seems like it would be a good idea, trying to make a sort of game out of asking questions. The idea's too new yet, but I'll think it over. Meantime, perhaps there's something you'd like answered—sport with us and see if we can find you your answer.

So, take stock of us, see what we write, and we'll see you this month and next month.

Editorial



WE NEED TO GROW—WELL, WHAT'S THIS, WE HAVE GROWN

Science fiction fandom has, as of this decade if not before, been around for a long time, so there are passages of people through it who have come and gone. When I was first in it, it hadn't been around that long, and had a young look to it, as if the average age of a fan might be 25, a young man. I recall talking about something like that with George Wells. The writers were perhaps older and we worried about their health. HG Wells might no longer be with us, Jules Verne wasn't around any more—we got hung up with this thing. SF Fandom seemed very time conscious. In fact, a whole lot of people are still hassling on the net about when something was, arguing about the placement of stories and events in time. If they heeded Time and Events, rather than just worrying about it, they'd feel more secure.

So anyway, here we are, many of us having spent a lot of time with science fiction fandom, and when we look around us, we see that there is much to be done and much to be developed in science fiction fandom, because over the years so much has been lost and so much of what there was, wasn't any more, and we see that we'd have to establish again what we once had been doing and perhaps gotten done, and so what's all this about doing something twice?

I think what we need to do at this time is reconnoiter, go over what there has been in the past of science fiction and what there may have been or still be that we didn't know about that would be an expansion of our interests. And that's what the history and research bureau is all about. Many fans ARE doing what I said we need to do, and this bureau looks for awareness of this, be it on facebook or with the Fancyclopedia or even the Wiki; and we need to consolidate things that are in our interest so that we will once again be able to work with them. The results are many—such as a clearer consciousness.

Let's read a story by Jeffrey Redmond, it'll give you a closer look at our new staff member and be a pleasant diversion in the contents of the issue.

The Widow

An anti-war story

From the ancient Er-Dan manuscript (Codex 300) as translated by Ed-Mon



On the planet of the three moons there was an elderly woman who lost her second husband in the third war of the Central Empire. She had also inherited wealth and property from her first husband, who had been killed in the second war, and from her father who had been killed in the

first war. She had also saved and invested her own resources, and was thus very well off financially and materially. Her second husband had been a commander in the Emperor's Guard, and she also lived very comfortably on the annual survivor's portion of his military service pension. The widow was still in fairly good health, had no debts or liabilities, and had no concerns about not being able to enjoy her long remaining time on the planet. However, the shortage of surviving males, and these survivors usually just marrying younger females, precluded any chances of her having any more husbands.

The widow thus lived alone and was lonely. Her offspring by her two husbands were all grown and living in other parts of the empire. They seldom communicated with her, and seldom went to visit her. But they did agree amongst themselves that they would evenly divide and equally share all of the inheritances they would get from their mother. And they waited impatiently for the time when she would die. As time went on and the old widow continued to live, her offspring became increasingly bitter and hostile toward her. They stopped all communication and never visited her at all, complaining bitterly to everyone about how miserable she made them by not dying and giving them her wealth and property. When she heard of this her already lonely and aching heart finally broke, and she was very, very unhappy. She was heard to cry almost every day, and often at night as well.

However, there finally came the time when she became very old, and her neighbors took it upon themselves to inform all the offspring of this. These reluctantly went to visit her, but they arrived after she had already died. However, they had a good funeral for her and the lady was burnt up upon a high pyre. The male offspring carried the fuels and kept it lit, and the females danced around it. The winds then carried her spirit away to the sky deities, and all physical traces of her were gone from the planet.

The offspring then assembled at the local lawspeaker's office to hear the formal reading of her will. They had wonderful plans about how they'd spend their shares. But the lawspeaker informed them that all of the wealth was going into a permanent trust fund, and would be managed by local trust officials. They were to be used only for the care and upkeep of her many house pets. She had collected numerous creatures of ground, water and sky and had domesticated them. They were placed into a zoo-like sanctuary to provide a permanent home for them to breed and thrive. She had been very lonely, but, thanks to all her pets, was never really alone.

During the fourth war, which destroyed the Central Empire, her male offspring were conscripted and killed trying to halt the enemy invasions. Her female offspring became widows too, but without any surviving offspring of their own. The invading forces bypassed the zoo garden as being of no logistic or tactical consequence to their battle plans. Long after the other inhabitants of the former empire had marched or migrated away, the zoo-creatures remained in their park, thriving and safe, in their well-preserved sanctuary. And they continued to breed and dwell there long after most of the other inhabitants and creatures of the planet had ceased to exist.

Well, there you have it, you saw it here. This is the only time Origin will ever print a story, because we are devoted to business, but for just this issue, enjoy.

HISTORICAL VIGNETTE: POSTWARP by Jon D. Swartz

Before there was **Tightbeam**, there was **Postwarp**, the first official N3F letterzine, known to club members of the time by the nickname "Postie" (and later called "Posie" or "Posy"). This historical vignette will look closely at some early Postwarps and then compare them with Tightbeam, our current letterzine.

Postwarp, the N3F letterzine, began in 1949, with the initial issue edited/published by Arthur H. Rapp. Rapp, later club president, eventually turned the zine over to Al J. Lewis, who turned it over to Bob Johnson, who, in turn, turned it over to Doug Fisher—who, according to at least one letter writer, let it die.

Contributors

Of particular interest to me were those club members who had the time and inclination to write lengthy letters during the early 1950s.

Letters from S.M. Carr, E.H. Appleman, Janie Lamb, Alan M. Grant, Shelby Vick, Derek Pickles, and Roger N. Dard are in an issue dated 7/6/1950. Only Dard, A. Edward Cooper, and Chas. Heisner had letters in a later issue, also seemingly dated July 1950—but they were long missives, and there was also an anonymous letter that contained only negative comments about the other members. Names such as Rick Sneary, Bill Berger, Grant, Ev Winne, McCain, Vick, George Andrews, and Lamb appeared in Vol. 1 #3, dated 8/18/1950. At this time there were forty subscribers to Postwarp, and it sold for ten cents an issue (or 6 for 50c), Neil Wood, Eva Firestone, Vick, Winne, Paul Rehorst, Andrews, Berger found time to contribute to Vol. 1, #5.

All four of these so-called monthly issues were edited by Bob Johnson of Greeley, Colorado—with the assistance of Ella Lee. Johnson's issues were oversize (14 by 8.5 inches), four to six pages in length, and sold for 10c to subscribers. Apparently a sub was not included in the regular annual club dues, although Postwarp was "sponsored" by the club—and a subscriber to it had first to be a member of N3F. Johnson stated in each issue that he reserved "the right to delete any extraneous material, or any language which I deem unfitting". Somewhere late in 1950 this initial version of Postwarp ceased to be.

The letterzine was revived, however, in September 1951, now selling for fifteen cents, and now nicknamed Posie (sometimes spelled Posy). In addition, the editor stated that it was no longer sponsored by the National Fantasy Fan Federation and that each issue would also contain book, movie, and fanzine reviews, ads, *etc.* Nevertheless, many of the same names appeared, and almost all the letters were related to club concerns, including a letter from their president, Rick Sneary. In his letter Sneary wrote of current fanzines, awards, upcoming club elections, and the directions in which he thought the N3F was heading. I'm not certain just how successful this new version of the letterzine was, as the next issue to come into my possession was dated nearly three years later.

Moreover, circumstances had changed again, as indicated below.

In May 1954, Postwarp was mailed with the May 1954 issue of The National Fantasy Fan (actually stapled to it) and was now again part of the regular club publication. Contributors to this issue included Capt. Kenneth F. Slater, Jim White, Sam Johnson, Stan Woolston, Tom Walsh, Dottie Hansen, Emili Thompson, Russel Brown, Richard E. Geis, W. Paul Nowell, and M. McNeil. The mailer was Stuart S. Hoffman, and apparently John Magnus was editor of both zines. Longtime fans will recognize many of these names.

The only artwork in the early issues of Postwarp/Postie was on the front covers.

Contents

What was discussed in the early 1950s in the letters to Postwarp? As might be expected, events of the day in science fiction were discussed, and some of the topics mentioned are still with us. These include Hubbard's Dianetics, Donald Keyhoe's flying saucers ("The Flying Saucers are Real"), Frank Sculley's "discs" ("Behind the Flying Saucers"), recent events in science (earthquake and volcano activity in the world, reports of the ocean floor rising in various places, *etc.*), conventions (*e.g.* Norwescon), problems the club was having (including its name; why do we call it "national" when it's international?), the election of a Miss STF, communications (and the lack thereof) among fans, *etc.* One method of fan communication being tried at the time was the use of wire recordings that were mailed to interested fans. While a few members liked this method of communication, most didn't and cited several problems—including recordings that got lost in the mail.

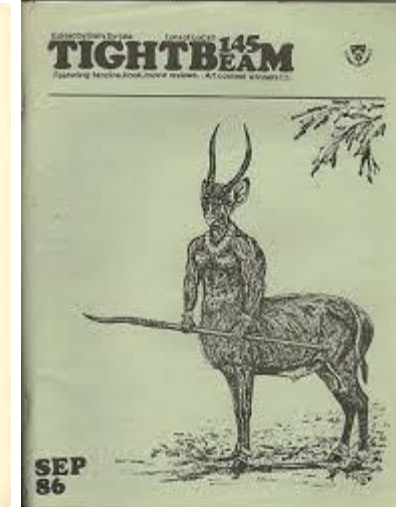
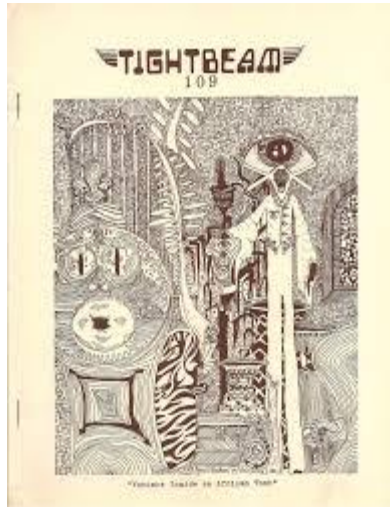
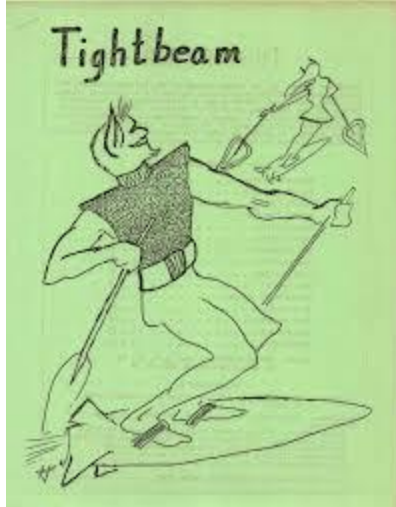
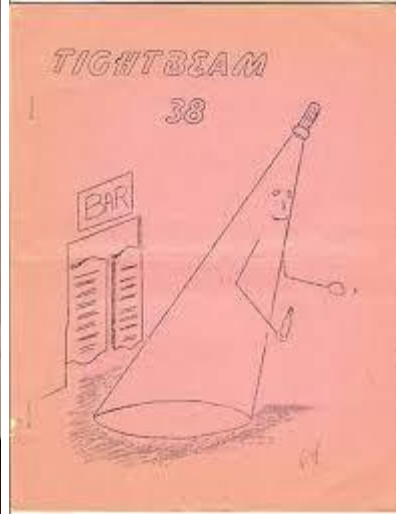
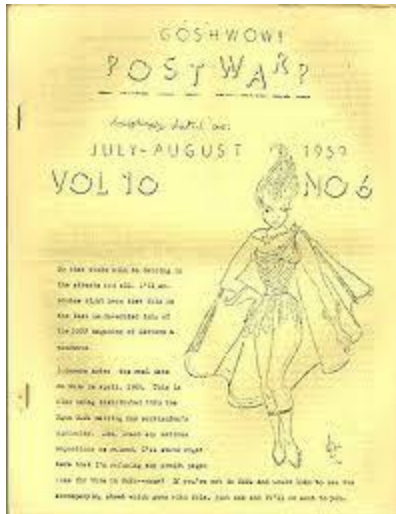
Of course, other gripes were also expressed, many of them common to all the zines of the time (*e.g.* issues weren't long enough, they didn't appear on time, the editor didn't date a particular issue and/or didn't include his return address, *etc.*).

Comparing Postwarp and Tightbeam

An obvious difference between the two is that members today seem reluctant to write long letters of comment, either to the print version of Tightbeam in TNFF or to the Tightbeam website, although I suspect emails to fellow members have fulfilled this need somewhat. An obvious similarity is that Tightbeam, like Postwarp, started as a separate publication and then later became part of TNFF, as it is currently.

The present arrangement has been in effect since 2001 when then editor Janine Stinson made the decision to combine the two zines. One obvious difference is in the methods of reproduction. Because of the use of computers, today's issues of TNFF/Tightbeam are easier to read, have better artwork, and, in general, are much more attractive publications.

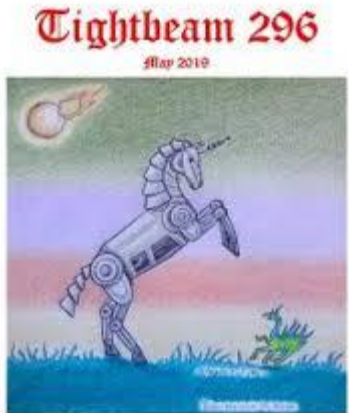
Note: This article was written several years ago. In 2019, TNFF and Tightbeam are once again separate publications. N3F President George Phillies currently edits TNFF, and he and I co-edit Tightbeam.



Tightbeam #288

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This is issue #288, September 2010, and is open to all writers. Letters of approval are published from our readers. Your selection of items must include your own original work, including fiction, poetry, and any other form of creative expression that would be of interest to our members in this magazine. Please contact our publisher at fabfictbk@aol.com or by regular mail at 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01546-2035. The May 2010 issue of the FBI is going to our website at n3.org



Cover Art Robo Unicorn by Miren --- Angela K. Owen



Quote from a fanzine review column in THRILLING WONDER, April 1951

“Charles Stewart, in an article called TABOO which appeared in the second issue of the fanzine entitled somewhat ambiguously ALEPH-NULL, published bi-monthly by Bill Venable, 32 Park Place, R.D. #4, Pittsburgh 9, Pennsylvania, tees off on the use or rather non-use of sex in stf. He leads with the following paragraphs—

“The forbidden subject of science fiction is sex. Sex may not be used as the basis for motivation in any stf story, and if it is referred to at all, a mere passing comment on its existence will suffice. Quoth the editor, ‘Nothing more!’

“In a recent speech in San Francisco, Anthony Boucher remarked that sex alone was a taboo subject in the fantasy field—the same field in which all restrictions limiting the author’s wildest ravings on such controversial topics as politics, religion and sociological themes were non-existent.

“Why the present day editorial ban on more sex stories in fantasy? The line of research leads us into the past, a past in which sex *was* used and abused in such a way as to bring on the censorship of the postal authorities.

“Mr. Stuart then delves into the ecdysiatic techniques of the past which resulted in the alleged taboo, then cites examples which have crossed it, chiefly the works of Thorne Smith, and gives nods in passing to some of the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Margaret St. Clair. He concludes—

“Sex in science fiction and fantasy has once more reared its head. Its future course will be an uphill battle against the past, and only the enthusiastic support of fans in their letters to the editor can make sex science fiction a legitimate theme. If the stories to come follow the Smithian and St. Clair modes of treatment, sex will be here to stay. If not, then the postal inspector cometh.”



Issue's end