

Askew



A SLIGHTER VIEW ASKANCE AT THINGS.

January, 2009 (we're planning ahead here, don'tcha know...)

The first issue of the projected FAPA zine by –

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Yet another Mythical Publication, Volume 1, Number 1, Whole number 1 (sheesh... must be the first issue!)



Hello, again.

This issue is being slammed together on Sunday afternoon, 28 September 2008, in order to correct a big mistake that Warren Buff and I inadvertently made: we both reprinted Patricia Rogers' *first* installment of her findings in digging through Jack Speers' collection of stfnal materiel. Therefore, to fix this omission – *Askance #10* was to pub the second installment of “Adventures in Speerology”, and that ish was just posted to www.efanzines.com less than two weeks ago – here is the installment that should have appeared in *Askance #10*. My apologies for this slip-up, but I have relocated the correct second installment (an archeological dig of its own through my e-files), and so here it is now for your edification and enjoyment.

- John

Adventures in Speerology #2

By Patricia Rogers

Friday, 18 July 2008

Wow - Y'all are going to get tired of me using the word "Amazing" while I sift through Jack Speer's life in collecting, but if you were with me you too would find that "Amazing" really is the word that keeps coming to mind. I am glad I have y'all to share these stories with because I am busting to talk about it when I get home and I don't want to forget even the smallest detail.

I didn't get over to the Speer home today until close to 5pm. It is monsoon season here and around 4pm the skies opened up with a heavy deluge of rain and hail, all accompanied by a spectacular show of lightning. The storm had just let up when I arrived at Jack and Ruth's but the street in front of their house was still channeling a deep stream of rushing water. Ruth met me at the door and commented how their front porch rarely got wet yet here it is covered with several large pools.

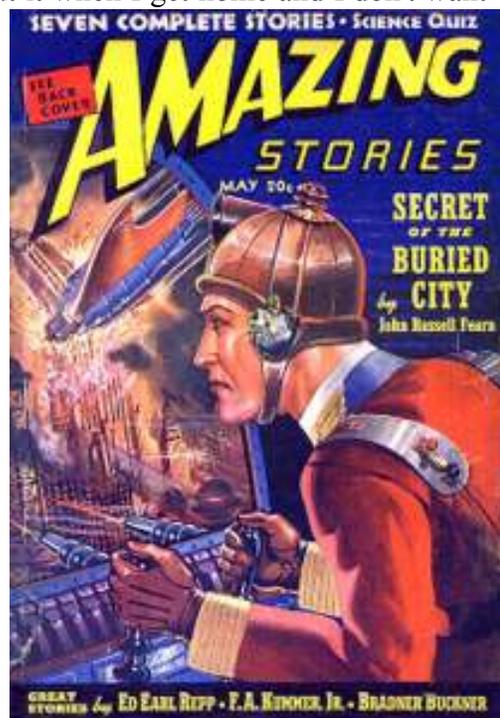
The storm had cooled the afternoon so we headed right out to the garage to check out Roy Tackett's papers. But... On the way to the back of the garage we were grabbed by a large tentacled arm and pulled over to a shelf of Pulp. Now I know a lot of you have collected early SF pulps for many a year. I have long read the authors in them but not collected the pulps themselves. Not even handled many of them as most of the Pulp Cons are in areas of the country that I have never lived near and rarely visited. So here Ruth and I are standing in a dusty corner of a dimly lit garage and one by one Ruth would take an envelope off the shelf, open it, pull out a rare gem cut like a magazine, read the title and date for me, then gently handed me the pulp to look at. Here are a few of the titles she recited to me...

Amazing Stories - August 1928

Wonder Stories Quarterly - Winter 1932

Science Wonder Quarterly - Fall 1929

Amazing Stories - October 1927

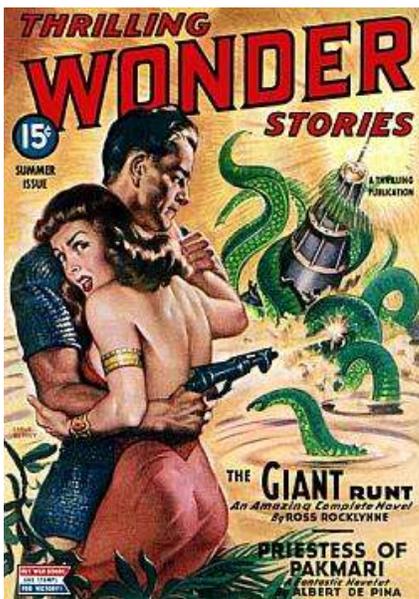


Wonder Stories - March 1933
Science Fiction Plus - run of all of 1953
Wonder Stories Quarterly - Fall 1931
Amazing Stories - October 1930
Vargo Statten - January 1954
Amazing Stories - April 1926 and September 1926
Amazing Stories - May 1932
Terry and the Pirates comics 1950's
Science Fiction - October 1939
Fantastic Novels - March 1948
Fantastic Adventures - September 1952

Also, in an old cigar box there were lots of Buck Rogers comic strips clipped from their original newspapers.

Sure - I have seen pulp art in collections of SF art and on-line and I love the images but there is something magically different about seeing them on the original magazines. Maybe it is the old printing techniques, maybe the size of the image, maybe just the wonderful quality of the art itself but I was completely mesmerized. I could have looked at them for hours and wanted to study each painting to see every nuance like on the cover of *Science Fiction Quarterly* – Fall 1929... Wow - These guys in the plump space suits are tethered to an incredibly cool rocket but the rocket is obviously moving because it has a full thrust flame.... etc...etc. So now I get IT - why y'all collect these fragile old magazines. As of this afternoon in Jack Speer's garage, I truly understand.

The issues I mention here are all in surprisingly good shape, some even in excellent tight clean condition. Others on the shelf had lost covers or been though a flood. But - and you need to remember this - Jack never threw anything away. Ruth said she would occasionally try to throw something away like an old broken lawnmower but Jack would get home just in time to stop this silliness and would lug the lawnmower up to the attic and out of harm's way. I was up in the attic this evening and just the thought of getting a lawnmower up there fills me with respect for Jack's determination.



While we were enjoying the pulps Ruth shared more gold nugget stories about Jack. When looking at one sadly water damaged magazine she said, "This must have been in one of the Oklahoma floods." I said, "There were more floods?" Ruth: "Yes, when Jack was growing up his father did not approve of him reading SF so Jack hid his pulps in the barn and there were occasional floods. The funny thing is that it was Jack's father who introduced Jack to Science Fiction. He felt to be well-rounded you

needed to read and learn something about everything. The trouble was that Jack was really struck from the start by Science Fiction and his father only wanted him to sample it for educational purposes." Jack father was a lifetime military man and Ruth said Jack respected and adored him. His father's love of knowledge and learning was forever a part of Jack's life too. Ruth said Jack loved being a boy scout while growing up and loved learning about nature. He also loved digging in the creek - something his father also preferred Jack not do but that did not deter the young Jack from his creek explorations.

Jack's love of learning kept him going to every science talk he could get too his whole life, right up to the end. He always wanted to learn something new and even when they traveled Jack never wanted to take the same path twice. He wanted to find new ways to get there so he might have a new learning experience along the way.

One more note on floods. When the great basement floods happened (mentioned in the first chapter) Ruth said "You should have seen the backyard." Jack filled every inch of their back yard with wet fanzines and pulps to try and sun dry them. He would even walk up and down turning the pages of individual magazines to try and help them dry out. Poor guy - I know how I would feel if my prized books were in a flood. Looking through some of the water-damaged fanzines today I noted that mimeograph ink just turns into illegible lines with dark blue halos when drenched.

Remember Roy Tackett's stuff? We had started out to look at that - well, not quite there yet, next a detour up to the attic. While looking at the pulps I noticed a skinny metal ladder extending up into a dark opening in the ceiling. Who can pass up the allure of that! I asked Ruth if I could climb up and she smiled and said, "Sure - Just be careful." So up I went. First I plugged in an elaborate set of power cords to hopefully bring a little light to the darkness above. Hey, I've read a lot of H.P. Lovecraft - I know what waits in dark attics.

From what Ruth had said about all the stuff Jack had been depositing up there I expected a large finished attic with a floor. Wrong. There are open beams to be tightrope-walked/crawled on with the always-present threat of falling one way or another through the ceiling into the garage below. A few loose boards and old table tops have been placed between some of the beams to help as wobbly stepping stones. Now you think all this would slow me down. Wrong again. My degree is in Anthropology and I did lots of Archeology field work in college. There is nothing I love more than exploring dangerous difficult places while looking for hidden treasure. And from the looks of it this attic fits all those criteria. Even with the couple of power cords only one flashlight-sized bulb worked and I tugged at the cord to try and get the light to reveal the far corners of the attic. There were boxes here and there, hubcaps, an old leather 1940's briefcase and then a later 1970's hard-sided one close by. Way in the back were large bicycle wire rims more like something from a bike in the 1920's. About 8 feet away from me was a small bookcase with what looked like Fantasy Press size books on it but I just could not see well enough to tell. OK - I have to climb over there... slowly. Sigh. They were just 1970's SF paperbacks which had vinyl covers to disguise their true appearance. At the other end of the attic was a box that looked to be full of art but I just could not see what

was in it from my distance. I tried to figure out a way to get over there but decided it was going to have to wait for another day with better clothing and more preparation. I did not even open any of the boxes so there are still lots of mysteries to be explored up there.

OK, Really - now to look at Roy's stuff. There are 4 or 5 stacks of file cabinet boxes and each stack is over 6 feet high, all full of fanzines. We just glanced at them but everything seemed to be in good shape and well organized. I will move those out of the garage soon and look through them more thoroughly.

Ruth and I headed into the kitchen and noted the time to be almost 7pm and Ruth said she was going to make us some dinner. She suggested, since it was nice and cool, that I check out the outbuilding in the backyard again and maybe I could find some of the papers she is looking for. Ruth and her children have been working very hard the last few weeks to find all the legal papers they need for the estate but as she has smiled and said to me on several occasions, "All we keep finding is Science Fiction papers."

In a serious talk I asked Ruth if she or her children or grandchildren wanted to keep any of the fanzines or fandom papers? Ruth smiled and said no, that her children have come to the point that they have enough stuff in their lives and didn't need to collect anymore. Hummm... Have enough stuff??? "Don't need to collect any more???" I wonder if I will ever grasp this concept. No. Probably not.

In the early evening light I headed out to the shed. Inside there are many boxes neatly lined up, with pathways through them. I checked out a number of drawers and found lots of old video tapes, some games and toys, and lots of fanzines - even some in the boxes marked FAPA. Then I started looking through a box that was marked TBF (To Be Filed, I assume). Not very far in I saw a carbon copy of a letter written by Jack on July 28, 1983. It caught my eye right way because in the first line it mentions The Futurians, Harry Warner's books and *The Immortal Storm*. but it was the last paragraph that really blew me away. Of all the thousands of letters everywhere around me that I should find this one... Well, maybe Jack is still directing things.

Toward the end of the letter Jack is talking about the task of dealing with the life, works, and possessions of his parents' estate. Jack wrote: "...discarding much, sorting some into categories particular to one of them, their ancestors... ..and keeping some papers and things for such use as I can make of them... But it is melancholy how much meaning has been lost."

And the last paragraph in this letter Jack wrote:

"Perhaps because I expect to live forever, I haven't felt your quiet panic to rush things onto stencil, but I do feel bad about projects languishing, such as my promised printing of the balance of Swisher's time-travel thesis, and the decimal index of old prozine stories. I think it was May Wollstonecraft Godwin's husband, who died at thirty, who wrote "When I have fears that I shall cease to be /Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain..." (He didn't reach a very profound

