

BACK NUMBERS CAN BE EASILY PROCURED

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Mailing Comments

Mailing #68

Another Part of the Forest #7

Mike Ashley

You ask Ray about being an Argosy completist. For myself, I'm mostly interested in the period from about 1927 or 1928 when it changed from a general interest pulp to a "men's" pulp. Before this period I find that there are fewer interesting stories than uninteresting ones, so it's not a good investment. I collect up to the end of the pulp era, when it becomes a slick. I'm still interested in some of the fiction, and in some cases in the non-fiction, from beyond that time and I certainly have a couple of representative issues from the later run, but I don't collect it, any more than I collect the men's magazine version of Adventure or True or any of those. I'm just not the target audience for those magazines.

El Dorado #24

John DeWalt

I agree that it would be nice to have more information on the Howard books, but it's a little beyond the scope of my checklist. What we really need is an updated version of "The Last Celt". I understand that Glenn Lord is working on the same with some assistance. I'm very much looking forward to it.

Re: the Undersea books by Pohl and Williamson. Well, I read one, and now I don't need to read any more.

I'll run a picture of the cover of Empey's "Over the Top" this time. It's a odd book. It's very upbeat and obviously intended to inspire Americans to support the Allies and join up like he did. It's strange reading the flip-pant way he describes the horrors of trench warfare. It's jolly annoying, don't you know, picking body lice off in between almost dying during gas attacks and having the chap next to you get his head blown off.

Hey, I found an old roll of film from when I came out and visited you for Pulpcon 1999. I'll toss in a photo of Mike Chomko, Bob Flowers, John DeWalt and Al Tonik at rancho DeWalt here someplace. I've also got a photo of Rusty Hevelin and two pulp paintings from the same time.

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Sons of the Blue Wolf #44

Kevin Cook

But I did include Robert E. Howard's Fight Magazine. I had a hard time figuring out just where to draw the line. When in doubt, I opted to include an item in the list. What we really need is a checklist, or better an index, of all the Howard fanzines and related material. And no, I'm not crazy enough to even think about taking on that project.

T'rilling Action Vol. 3, No. 3

Duane Spurlock

I wouldn't be surprised if there were a third, if not more, biography in Argosy of Max Brand. My list came from the Cook index to Argosy, which only records the items that were run as a separate feature. I'm finding there are a lot of biographies, some more extensive than the ones run as "The Men Who Make The Argosy" that appeared without notice in the letter's column.

I too was impressed with Roger B. Morrison's art, but it seems that he didn't have a very long career, or at least not a long career in the pulps. I'd love to find out more information on him.

SULPH Vol. 2, No. 64

Norm Metcalf

The website at www.howardworks.iwarp.com does what you suggest: list Robert E. Howard stories and details where they can be found. While the site is a little out of date, I understand there are efforts being made to update it, and a couple of other projects designed to do much the same thing. I'll keep you posted as to when and where these projects appear.

Hidalgo #70

Brian Earl Brown

Thanks for the Pulpcon

report.

You might want to check out Lulu.com for Print on Demand services. I know that the Howard Review is being printed by them.

Even over on the REHInnerCircle mailing list we're having trouble figuring out just how many Conan pastiches there are.

The Dan Turner chapbooks are definitely not reprinting the series in order, so I stand by my complaints.

Here's Mike Chomko, Bob Flowers, John DeWalt, and Al Tonik at John's place before we drove to Pulpcon 1999 and Rusty with two famous pulp paintings.



The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian**Robert E. Howard****Del Rey****\$14.95****Review by Richard J. Berman**

Whenever I heard the name “Conan,” I would think of an overmuscled, barbarian killing machine who only spoke in grunts. Too many years of pastiche stories and terrible movies have watered down the original Conan character into a flat stereotype. I first encountered Howard and Conan in “The Frost Giant’s Daughter.” Unfortunately, this story was amidst a sea of tales by L. Sprague DeCamp. I wasn’t getting the full impact of this character. In fact, the pastiches were presented as part of the official history of Conan. This made him out to be somewhat disjointed and very dull. After reading the pure Howard found in this volume, I have to say that he is a dynamic and interesting character.

The stories in this collection are put in order in which they were written, rather than some fictitious chronology based on Conan’s “life.” By reading the stories in this fashion, one can see how the character and world of Conan developed.

As if this weren’t enough, *The Coming of Conan* is profusely illustrated by Mark Schultz (*Xenozoic Tales*). His clean, detailed art style really adds to the stories. He dispenses with the stereotypically garbed Conan with the loincloth and fold-over boots first seen in the Marvel comics, and draws him as Howard describes him in the story. The only complaint about the art is that the color plates, which appeared in the Wandering Star edition, are in black and white and are a bit washed out.

The introduction by Patrice Louinet is informative in that he discusses the origins of some of the Conan stories, but he goes over the same information in greater detail in an essay in the back.

“Cimmeria”—This first entry is a poem about a gloomy landscape. It is interesting that Howard had the land of Conan’s birth in mind before the character.

“The Phoenix on the Sword”—The first actual story is actually about Conan as king of Aquilonia. In it, Conan fends off a bloody coup attempt. He comes across

as someone with good humor but a quick temper. This is a refreshing change from the flat depiction in many of the pastiches. For example, Conan is a patron of the arts. Hardly the image of a dull, humorless warrior that stumbles from one battle to another that has permeated the character. Lots of great art from Schultz is present in this offering, with a full-page illustration of Conan battling the conspirators. My favorite image is of Thoth-Amon claiming his Serpent Ring of Set from a dead conspirator.

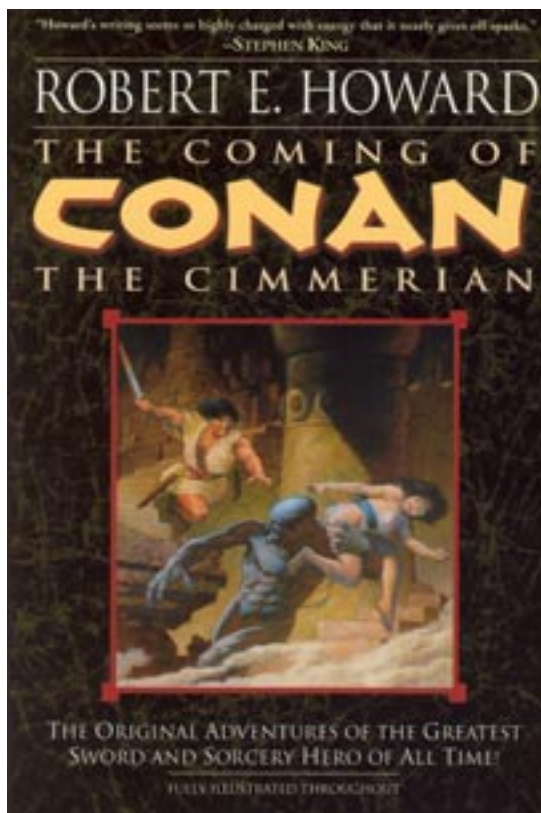
“The Frost Giant’s Daughter”—In this story, we see a younger Conan being led into a deadly trap by the

title character. Of course, she gets more than she bargained for. This was the first Howard story I ever read, so it was nice to revisit this piece. I am struck as to how Howard opens the story. Conan is on the losing side of a battle. In fact, he was just a mercenary in the outlaw band. He hadn’t acquired the leadership skills that became a hallmark of the character. The Schultz showpiece is of Atali, the frost giant’s daughter, ascending to the heavens before a stunned Conan.

“The God in the Bowl”—While attempting to rob a temple, Conan gets caught up in a murder plot. This leads him into his first written battle with a giant serpent. I’m fascinated by this story for a couple of reasons. First, Conan doesn’t act like a berserk killing machine as in the pastiches. When cornered by the guards, he tries to reason with

them rather than hack his way to freedom. He probably could have outfought them, but chooses to prove his innocence instead. Secondly, Conan acts human. When he finds that he is battling, and ultimately defeats, a monstrous snake, he flees the temple in horror. No grunt or scowl of surprise here, just full-blown terror. The full-page Schultz picture is of the characters discovering the empty “bowl.” Good details on the faces.

“The Tower of the Elephant”—My favorite Conan story. Again, Conan breaks into an impregnable temple, but teams up with a master thief. After the thief is killed, Conan discovers the temple’s secret. He sets things right, even though it’s at a tragic price. Howard spends a lot of time setting up some of the secondary characters in this story. This adds to the richness of Conan’s world and builds up an attachment to these people with the reader. When Taurus, the master thief, is killed, it comes as a



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surprise. Also, Conan's feelings of remorse after killing the Elephant God make him a more rounded character. The illustration of Conan encountering the elephant being is fantastic!

"The Scarlet Citadel"- A King Conan story where he gets betrayed and captured after a battle. He then escapes to wreak vengeance on his captors. A good, exciting story with lots of action and intrigue. The main piece is of Conan on horseback in the midst of battle.

"Queen of the Black Coast"- Conan joins the crew of the pirate queen Belit and explores a lost city, with tragic results. A very good, poignant story that shows the depth of feelings that Conan had for Belit. There are two, large illustrations in this piece. One is of Belit seducing Conan on the deck of the *Tigress*. Very good but the details are washed out since it was a color plate in the other edition. The other one is of Conan confronting the ape demon with Belit's spirit above.

"Black Colossus"- Conan saves a princess and her kingdom from a sadistic sorcerer. One can see Conan's evolution as a soldier to an actual leader of armies in this piece. Conan's military prowess is a staple of his tales. The main illustration is of Conan leading his army through the city gates.

"Iron Shadows in the Moon"- Conan rescues a damsel and encounters pirates on a haunted island. Although vapid damsels are now appearing with regularity, it is interesting that Conan doesn't confront the monsters to save the girl. Instead, she saves him before the monstrous statues wake up. There are some great illustrations with this story. One, which was a color plate that transferred well, is of Conan and Olivia, the damsel, escaping from the doomed temple. Another good one is a smaller picture of a dagger-wielding Olivia. Schultz is great at capturing facial expressions.

"Xuthal of the Dusk"- A flimsy story of Conan and a beautiful woman encountering an evil god and a Hyborian Age dominatrix in a lost city. I say flimsy because too much time is spent dealing with the damsel's state of undress and the S&M torture scene. The full-page illustration is of Conan and Natala, the heroine, crouching behind a pillar while the dark god is in silhouette around the corner.

"The Pool of the Black One"- Conan becomes part of a pirate crew and encounters a race of inhuman monsters on a haunted island. Sound familiar? All joking aside, this outing does have some interesting twists. Conan takes the first opportunity he can get to kill the pirate captain in a duel so he can become the leader. This is the most cold-blooded I've ever seen him. Sure, the pirate is no good, but Conan's motivations are purely selfish. The damsel in this story has a little more substance to her than the usual helpless heroine. She doesn't pretend to be pure and innocent like some of the other female characters that have appeared. The full-page illustration

is also the cover art for the book: a monster carrying off the girl with Conan in close pursuit. This isn't one of my favorite images since it is washed out and the damsel actually looks like she is enjoying being carried off to be sacrificed! A better illustration is of the ghoulish monsters carrying off the pirates.

"Rogues in the House"- Conan makes a deal with a nobleman to kill an evil priest in return for the barbarian's freedom. I really enjoyed this story due to the many twists and turns Howard throws at the characters. This is definitely not a formula story. Anyone who thinks that all Howard stories are just "blood and thunder" needs to look at this tale. I won't ruin the twists for new Howard readers, but this was a refreshing change of pace from the last four stories. My favorite Schultz illustration of the book is in this story. It is of Conan locked in mortal combat with the ape-man, Thak. Another great image is of Thak seated in a chair. Great stuff all around!

"The Vale of Lost Women"- Well, we go from one of the best stories in the collection to, quite easily, the worst. Conan rescues a particularly obnoxious damsel from tribesmen and otherworldly creatures. I believe it to be the worst because of the racism Conan and Livia exhibit towards the black tribesmen. Conan even says, "But I am not such a dog as to leave a white woman in the clutches of a black man..." This kind of attitude may have been accepted then, but it's hard to stomach now. A weak story to begin with, but quickly becomes repugnant. The full-page image is of Livia being tempted by the lost women.

"The Devil in Iron"- Due to an assassination plot, Conan gets lured to an island by a beautiful woman and battles an iron-skinned sorcerer. You know, he really needs to stay away from these haunted islands. This story has a few more plot twists than the formula stories earlier in the book. The villain is especially formidable. The main illustration is of Conan and the girl being taken by surprise by the title character. Also, there is a very creepy picture of a giant serpent coiled on a throne.

After the stories, there are plenty of interesting extras. There is a draft of "The Phoenix on the Sword," where one can see a major difference in the way Howard began the story. The first draft plopped the reader down in the midst of the conspirators' meeting. I believe the opening in the published version is much better because he gives the reader a chance to settle in to the story.

Also included are Howard's "Notes on Various Peoples of the Hyborian Age" and a complete version of "The Hyborian Age." "Notes" is just that. Howard gives details only on three races: the Aquilonians, the Gundermen, and the Cimmerians. The information is good, but relatively brief. "The Hyborian Age" is a fascinating look at the history of Conan's fictional world from the twilight of the Pre-Cataclysmic Age until the end of the Hyborian Age. The theme of the rise and fall of empires

is very prevalent in this work. Any fan of Conan should definitely read this particular history.

There are untitled drafts, synopses, and one fragment of stories included. Two of these were developed into stories, those being "Black Colossus" and "The Scarlet Citadel." One draft is a little over seven pages long and starts a complicated tale of Conan caught in the middle of some political turmoil in Kush. There is a very good synopsis of the story included before this untitled draft.

To close out the Howard material, there is a short list of names and two pictures of Howard's hand-drawn maps of Conan's world.

In the appendix, Patrice Louinet has an interesting essay titled "Hyborian Genesis: Notes on the Creation of the Conan Stories." In it, he gives his opinion on the possible inspirations of the stories in this collection and the "story behind the story" of the publishing history of these Conan tales. Louinet suggests that many of the Conan stories were derived from *Bulfinch's Mythology*. It

seems like a sound theory, especially when the works are compared. My major disagreement with Louinet is his handling of "The Vale of Lost Women." He calls the overt racism of the tale, "violent ethnocentrism." I see no need to create fanciful euphemisms in an attempt to spare Howard's image. Call it for what it is, and move on.

I believe that this collection would be invaluable to both the veteran Howard fans and new readers alike. Seeing Conan as he was originally presented without the interference of any pastiches is a very pleasant experience. One can see the depth Howard puts in to the first batch of stories, to fall into a rut with some of the formula tales, and finally regain some of the spark of ingenuity with "Rogues in the House." An interesting ride to say the least. Also, the art by Mark Schultz greatly adds to this work. The stories have lent themselves to great visual moments which Schultz takes full advantage of. I give this book my highest recommendation.

The Men Who Make The Argosy



BEDFORD-JONES, H.

Author of "Cyrano," "The Seal of Solomon," "John Solomon, Supercargo," etc.

H. Bedford-Jones is a Canadian by birth, but not by profession, having removed to the United States at the age of one year. For over twenty years he has been more or less profitably engaged in writing and traveling. As he has seldom resided in one place longer than a year or so and is a person of retiring habits, he is somewhat a man of mystery; more than once he has suffered from unscrupulous gentlemen who impersonated him—one of whom murdered his wife and was subsequently shot by the police, luckily after losing his alias.

The real Bedford-Jones is an elderly man, whose gray hair and precise attire give him rather the appearance of a retired foreign

diplomat. His hobby is stamp collecting, and his collection of Japan is said to be one of the finest in existence. At present writing he is en route to Morocco, and when this appears in print he will probably be somewhere on the Mojave Desert in company with Erle Stanley Gardner.

Questioned as to the main facts in his life, he declared there was only one main fact, but it was not for publication; that his life had been uneventful except for numerous financial losses, and that his only adventures lay in evading adventurers. In his younger years he was something of an athlete, but the encroachments of age preclude any active pursuits except that of motoring. He is usually to be found poring over his stamps, working at his typewriter, or laboring in his California rose garden, which is one of the sights of Cathedral Cañon, near Palm Springs.

Bedford-Jones has written sto-



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ries laid in many corners of the earth, but among his most popular tales were the *John Solomon* stories which started many years ago in the Argosy. After an absence of ten years, *John Solomon* is to stage a come-back and in the near future will reappear in Argosy.

Of late years, Bedford-Jones has distinguished himself with the Dumas type of story—the romantic adventure tale of the days of Louis XIII of France. “Cyrano,” which begins in this issue is the latest novel of this type.

—The Men Who Make the Argosy, November 16, 1929

PURCELL, ART

A Newcomer

Art Purcell, author of “The Mysterious Mascot,” in this issue, stands up to introduce himself:

I was born in Oakland, California, at the usual age. Survived reading, ‘riting’ and ‘rithmetic and in college learned not to be bashful. (It was a co-ed institution.)

I decided to study music seriously and then came the war. Was in the Army Transport Service out of Newport News and joined the Navy, in which service I was placed in Naval Intelligence and was as much a doughboy as a gob. Then something happened and after four months’ training I became one of those eyesores to all old salts, i.e., an Ensign. U. S. N. R. F.

Got some interesting war sea atmosphere on the Atlantic coast when the German subs were doing their stuff on the coast trade shipping. Decided that we needed some more German atrocities when I picked up a boatload of survivors so full of liquor—the survivors were full of liquor—which the sub commander had given them to keep warm, that they couldn’t talk.

The war knocked all my plans haywire by exposing me to the bite of the travel bug. I make a few trips to the Orient in ’19 and ’20, including Vladivostok, Harbin, Japan, the Philippines, Guam and many to Hawaii, and landed with a plop in Las Angeles in 1922. Got in on the tail end of the Signal Hill oil boom and after the usual crash went to the Colorado oil fields just in time to hear the wind sizzling out of the oil situation there.

I got out of there by means of a twenty-dollar Ford and with a cook, an old geologist and a bootlegger who had just been knocked over, as passengers, all broke. We

made Los Angeles by weaning the Ford near Flagstaff.

I have been writing off an on for some years, recently depending upon literature for my living.

I have learned about Hollywood first had, and how, and have lived the unromantic, though precariously interesting, life of a movie extra.

Decided on a trip to New York, and wishing to get some atmosphere for a story as I went, I shipped as an able seaman in Pedro. I never knew how soft I had grown in the last few years until all my muscles began informing me of the fact. I was kicked of the ship here in Portland because I had no life boat ticket (take notice, you salts). Now with a L. B. T. I’m waiting for another ship to the east coast.

I’ve read Argosy since I knew the alphabet and feel quite proud of a mention in “Argonotes.”

Art Purcell

—Argonotes, September 13, 1930

De POLO, HAROLD

Author of “Jethro Makes a Dicker,” “Good-Advice McGo-nigle.” “Lost,” etc.



I had thought that I had been handed some tough assignments in my life, but when the amiable editor of the Argosy asked me for a biographical sketch I knew that I had been wrong. This, take it from me, is the toughest. Six or even sixty yarns would be easier to pound out, for

it is my utterly unalterable opinion that when man tries

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to write about himself he sounds like either a conceited prig or a poor sap.

But when the boss speaks— (Don't blame *me*, please!)

Why did I fasten on the fiction trade? It's this way: I like to spend my summers on a lake fishing for bass and I like to traipse through the woods in the fall with a gun in the crook of my elbow in search of the elusive partridge. You can't do this if you hold down a regular job, I discovered. I did this discovering when I was twenty, which was just twenty years ago.

There's the age, given unblushingly. The place was what I always think of as the Miracle City of the World. Tammany Town. I do *not* mean Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx or Richmond, either. I mean Manhattan.

I tried some acting, for a few years; some gold prospecting in Mexico and South and Central America; some two business stabs in my own home burg—but I learned that the only way in which one could properly fish and hunt was to kidnap a typewriter and try to rap out and sell some stories.

Well, I've sold close to two thousand of 'em and one of the very first was bought by the Munsey Company back in 1911, so if you blame *me* for boring you with this blurb, you can much more justifiably blame the Argosy publishers for having encouraged a budding author nearly twenty years ago.

How?

Of course. What good man isn't? The daughter is sixteen, and although she took the cup for the best all-round athlete in Bermuda a couple of years ago, I can discern from her coy remarks that she wants to write. Maybe the son won't. Let's hope so. One pupil will be sufficient, thank you. He's fourteen, and at present he thinks that sending an outboard racing hull over the lake is about the best sport there is.

There you are.

Apologetically,
Harold De Polo

—The Men Who Make The Argosy, Sept. 13, 1930

HOPPER, LT. JOHN

Author of "Jolly Flies the Roger," "The Jungle Arena," "Those Navy Ways," etc.

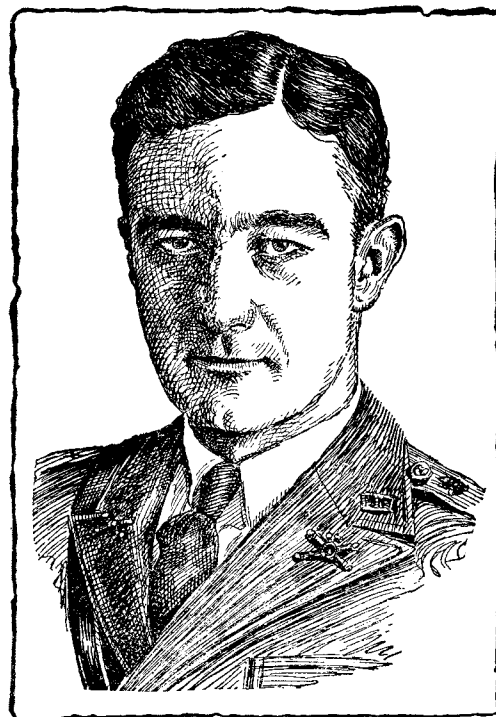
To write interestingly of an uninteresting subject is one of the most difficult tasks in the world. That is why I am having such a hard time writing this. But anyway, here goes.

Like Ralph R. Perry and Calvin Coolidge, I was born in Massachusetts—Pittsfield, to be exact—which makes me a co-Yankee of theirs. It is surprising that our State, having the reputation for strictness, morality, etc., that it has, should produce so many story tellers. And, if you don't believe that an author is a natural born story teller, ask his wife.

I was born a little late, November 6, 1903; at fact which has caused me much sorrow; in that I missed the big event of the century, the World War. I tried to get a ride on the caboose, however, and was removed by an irate father and a weeping mother. I often wondered who became the youngest man in the regiment after I—er—left.

My urge for the life military, however, was unquenched. I recall very clearly the day I left the war-time army. My company ycommander looked at my private's univorm, and roared, "Why, Hopper, you can't wear those clothes to West Point." What he was after, you see, was the uniform. As I couldn't very well travel several hundred miles in my B. V. D.'s, he had to let me have it.

Five years later, I reported to the United States Military Academy, facetiously known by its inmates



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as “Sing-Sing-on-the-Hudson.” For four long years I studied mathematics, paraded, drilled—and sweated. And, last, but not least, saw the Navy get licked twice and tied twice. Finally, in 1927, I blossomed forth as a spick-and-span, brand-new save-tail. Glory was mine, the world was a hard-boiled egg, and I had a nutcracker in my hand.

Alas! The sad futility of a young man’s dreams! I found our Uncle Samuel far more generous with his orders, and “thou-shalt-nots,” than with his dough. The problem of a young officer trying to keep up a front to match his position and responsibilities with only a hundred and a quarter a month to do it with, provided to be the last mathematical straw. Although most authors are considered to live in a world of imagination, and to exist on romance and love, I found out that my stomach was too darned prosaic. It was not satisfied with being covered by nice uniforms; it had to eat also.

So on Friday, the 13th of June, this present year, I resigned my commission in the Regular Army—and have been eating three times a day ever since. Some-

times, however, when I see how hard-boiled some of these editors are I almost yearn for even the stingy hand of Uncle Sam.

When the military longing will seize me again, I do not know. At the present time I am considering an offer to join the army of one of our sister republics in Central America. A colonel’s commission, no less, am I offered. Think of that, Uncle Samuel! An pay and allowances accordingly! Now, if I don’t have a head-on collision with the vice-president, who might be like our friend Dr. Julio Villalobos in “Those Navy Ways,” and wind up all my careers against a stone wall, I’ll be all right.

Perhaps you will get a better idea of me if I end this thing with some of my likes and dislikes.

Likes—Adventure (of any sort), accepted stories, beans, writing, ladies.

Dislikes—Adventure (when I get the worst of it), unaccepted stories, Limburger Cheese, writing, ladies.

—The Men Who Make The Argosy, October 11, 1930



Cosplay Fanzines

Instead of doing work on Back Numbers, I’ve been attending a number of local anime-related conventions. The result is two more issues of Cosplay. I franked issue one through here last time, but I think that I won’t annoy those not interested in such stuff by doing so again. Both issue two, with con reports and photos from Fanimecon, Baycon and Tales of Anime, and issue three with con reports and photos from Silicon, The Japantown Anime Faire and the Sacramento Anime Show are up on the Back Numbers page at www.efanzines.com. Issue four, with photos and con reports from the Metreon Festival of Anime, is in the works.

I know that I promised my general Science Fiction zine would be up as well, but I’m still working on it. Look for it soon at www.efanzines.com

I’d like to thank Rich Berman for submitting his review of the new Conan book. Without his contribu-

tion, there simply wouldn’t have been an issue of Back Numbers for this mailing.

Here’s the DJ for Over the Top that I told John I’d run this time:



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