

February 27, 1947

Dear Mr. Abbot,

I've been meaning to get at the write-up for you all this week, but have been caught in a rat race. We are leaving for the desert tomorrow morning; I want to get this off. I'll simply make it a letter to you, with plenty of over-run, and you can cut, select, rearrange, etc., to suit yourself. As for pix, I'll be home on the evening of the 13th, present plans. Call me on granite 3845 and make a date to suit you.

I greatly enjoyed the time spent at your telescope shop. My regards to Messrs. Garvey, Gardner, and Smith(?).

Biographical data: born Butler, Missouri, 1907, public schools, pre-engineering U. of Mo., then to Naval Academy class of 29, served in fleet, aircraft carriers and destroyers, disabled out in 1934, graduate work in physics UCLA, dabbled in politics, took up writing, spent war in laboratories of Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, as a mechanical engineer in research and development, mostly in synthetic organics for aircraft and radar uses, returned to California following the war to resume writing.

Married Leslyn MacDonald, Hollywood, 1932. She is graduate of UCLA, Master's degree philosophy USC. We courted by reading science-fiction together. No children.

Writing---I was an avid reader of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, and the like as a kid and as a young man. Tried my first story, more or less by accident, in 1939---a science-fiction time story. It sold, as did the ones that followed it and I was hooked. I had planned, as a kid, to be an astronomer, because of

a deep interest in other planets and the possibility of life elsewhere in the universe. This interest continues in my stories. Some of my book-published stories appear in Random House's Adventures in Space and Time and in Crown Publishers Best in Science Fiction and in the PocketBook of Science Fiction. I've used several pen names; the name Anson MacDonald is as well known as my own. At present I have more stories coming up in the Post and a boy's interplanetary adventure book "Rocket Ship Galileo" ~~coming out~~ coming out on Scribner's 1947 fall list. I have several other books scheduled with publishers here and in London for reprints of magazine stories published before the war. The market in science-fiction is booming as a result of the war.

I wrote the first uranium-235 story, Blowups Happen, reprinted in the Crown anthology.

Later (Oh, much later; ---April 1st, in fact) I have been caught up in a concatenation of events which have given me no peace for the past month. This unfinished letter has been pushed to the back of my desk while I strove to attend to the things I had to do and had no time for the things I wanted to do. I'm sorry and I hope I haven't inconvenienced you. Perhaps it is just as well that there has been this delay, for the timing is a little better for a feature article on me, i.e., my next interplanetary story in the SatEvePost will appear shortly, in the April 26th issue, on sale about the 22nd. Title, Space Jockey. It is quite a different story from Green Hills, being a domestic problem story of an Earth-Moon rocket pilot who is having trouble with his wife because he is away from home so much. It is a matter-of-fact sort of story, in which I try to

get the reader to take space flight for granted and realize that ordinary human beings will be taking part in it, people with problems very like their own. I'm trying to get away from the "Gee Whiz" school of science-fiction. I'm not trying to take the romance out of it---oh, no! On the contrary the more real space flight seems to people the more romantic it will be, for it is romantic, the greatest and finest adventure now facing the human race.

It is even possible that space flight and the ensuing golden age of interplanetary exploration which will follow with certainty and <sup>with</sup> speed the first flight to the Moon may prove to be the salvation of the human race. We now have a planet torn with dissension, crowded, sickening toward another global war, a war which might well destroy us. Space flight will at least open new frontiers, a good thing in itself in relieving our tensions. New frontiers might ease the economic tensions now building toward war for a sufficient period for us to build the global political controls which could prevent war.

But I think it could have another, greater effect on us; space travel could make us all, white, black, yellow, and brown, aware of the rest of the universe and thereby aware that we are all sons of Terra, our planet. We may see the development of planetary patriotism, pride in this globe as contrasted with others.

If, by chance, we encounter other intelligent races on Mars or Venus or the Jovian moons, this feeling of planetary brotherhood is a cinch to come about. Just as we now take pride in

being Americans primarily, with local pride of little importance when it comes to a showdown, such a war, it may very well be that other strange and dominant, and (to us) grotesque, life forms may bring the children of this planet to a feeling of mutual brotherhood in being terrestrials.

It would be a sad and sardonic thing, though, if it took an interplanetary war to unite this planet!

How soon will all this happen? Soon, very soon! The experiments are now going on, all over the globe. The problems remaining to be solved are engineering problems only, not basic science problems--the remaining problems are the sort we can predict with absolute certainty will be solved. And quite a few people are already aware that there is the grimmest military necessity in solving the problems of space flight, for the nation first first to conquer space has an unbeatable advantage in the atomic age.

Now I don't want space flight for military reasons and neither do you--but there it is, the fact remains, and it is sufficient to drive us out in to space even if there were not pleasanter reasons pulling us out there as well. All reasons combined and present technology being what it is, I'm willing to bet on space flight within ten years. Anybody want to put up any money against that prediction? I feel very sure of it.

Let's talk about the pleasanter reasons for space flight. There are economic reasons of course. Some are obvious---physical research of all sorts, especially electronics; weather observation stations in permanent orbits around the globe, possibly mining on the Moon, souvenir and tourist trade in any case. But I'm

betting that the most important economic reward in space travel is not yet guessed---and I can't guess it. I'm simply certain that it's there, from past experience. Columbus sailed west for spices---and came back with Boulder Dam, Detroit, and the Empire State Building. Every great new adventure of the human race has produced totally unexpected new profits. The same inquisitive, questing, practical spirit that crossed the plains and conquered the air will turn up new wrinkles to make space and space flight pay.

But what of that? You and I would go if there were never any dollar-and-cents reward in it. There is the greatest reason of all---the itch to go take a look. New horizons, new lands, strange places, adventure and wonder. The long, long trail of the human race, our monkey curiosity, scientific zeal, boyish delight in the need to explore. It's stronger than the hunger of the belly or of the loins; it brought us down out of the trees, made us experiment with fire, took us out over the frightening uncharted oceans, and up into the stratosphere---and now it calls us out into the depths of space. And out we'll go, with Galileo and Eric the Red and Columbus and Peary cheering us on, rooting for us---from the parched, airless soil of the Moon we'll try the mists of Venus and then to the thin, cold air of Mars, and on out, even to the lonely night of Pluto---someday, even to the stars.

But I don't expect to see the last; I'll be happy enough to see the headline in the Herald-Express RADIO CONTACT WITH FIRST MOON PARTY.

Note: Could you let me see the copy before publication---or call me up and read it to me? I would greatly appreciate it.

Kindest regards,

Bob Heinlein