

You are cordially invited

to

a reception

in honor of

Walt and Madeleine Willis

on

Saturday, September 1st, 1962

2:30 to 4:00 p.m.

The Park View Room



One of the briefest entries in Lloyd D. Broyles' invaluable *Who's Who in Science Fiction Fandom* is that for Walter A. Willis. Walt is a modest man, and has managed to condense into five lines the record of one of the most remarkable fan careers in history. It is remarkable in terms of quantity but more so of quality: Walt has produced two of the most worthwhile fanzines (*Slant* and *Hyphen*) and written at least two of the most entertaining and perceptive documents (*The Enchanted Duplicator* and *The Harp Stateside*) that fandom has ever seen. But even a complete listing of all of his minutest accomplishments would not convey the most remarkable thing about him, which is simply that his wit and wisdom have gained him the respect and affection of virtually every fan who has ever heard of him, and that he has never done a single small thing to lessen the reasons for those feelings.

Born in Belfast, N. Ireland, in 1919, Walt discovered a taste for science fiction about 1934 through the British re-

print edition of *Astounding*. He settled down to a civil service career and married Madeleine, who shared his tastes, and it was their search for back copies of the original American edition of *ASF* that brought them into contact, in 1947, with their first other fan, James White, also of Belfast. This was the birth of Irish Fandom, a group that has remained small but is in its turn remarkable for a couple of things: its continuous existence without the fits of bad temper common to other fan groups and its steady generation of the most complicated and fantastic puns ever heard.

When Walt discovered the larger world of outside fandom, his primary aim was still to complete his collection, but contact with the British Fantasy Society gradually broadened his interests. When chance made him owner of a primitive printing press, he, James and Bob Shaw, the third member of IF, began publication of *Slant*. The first issue appeared in November, 1948. It and the six that followed were crammed with excellent material, much of it humor by Walt himself, and are collector's items today.

When Walt began to write for American fanzines, his popularity was established overnight. In 1951, Shelby Vick of Florida got the idea of raising a fund to bring Walt over to an American convention. It was too late to collect enough money to bring him to the Nolacon, but the "WAW with the Crew in '52" campaign succeeded, not without hardship on the parts of several of the people involved, and Walt attended Chicon II. He told the story of his trip (which incidentally was one of the steps leading to the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) in *The Harp Stateside*, a splendid piece of writing by any standards.

Like that of all fans, Walt's fan activity subsided somewhat in subsequent years—but its quality became even higher.

With various co-editors, he has produced numerous issues of a mimeographed fanzine, *Hyphen*, also particularly noted for its humor. Through its pages, the Belfast group has become known to and beloved by fandom at large. Madeleine, incidentally, while gaining fame largely for her noble struggles to keep IF well fed, has also contributed an occasional article demonstrating high wit and genuine writing ability.

At the end of 1960, Brooklyn fan Leslie Gerber decided it would be a wonderful thing to bring Walt back to the 1962 convention—particularly as it seemed likely that the con would be in Chicago again. Gerber discussed it with Ted White and other fans and the Tenth Anniversary Willis Fund was established with Ted and Sylvia White as Co-Chairmen, Gerber as Vice-Chairman, and Larry and Noreen Shaw as Treasurer and Secretary. The big difference this time was that the group aimed to bring Madeleine along as well as Walt.

Fandom responded to the idea with unanimous approval. The announced minimum goal was \$1,000, but contributions poured in at such a rate that the total in the treasury was well over that mark by Labor Day of 1961 and continued to grow thereafter.

Walt and Madeleine are here. They are here for the same reasons you are: to enjoy themselves and meet as many fans as possible. You can help them now to achieve those goals; if you haven't met them yet, don't be shy about introducing yourself. The pleasure won't be all yours—but we guarantee that it will be one of the greatest pleasures you have ever experienced, because Walt and Mad are two of the most wonderful people, fans or not, in the world.