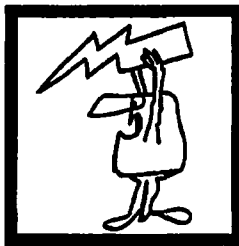


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ANSIBLE 124 NOVEMBER 1997

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0118 966 9914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Bill Rotsler, from *Mimosa*. Available for SAE or the head of H.P.Lovecraft.

THINGS TO DO IN DOCKLANDS WHEN YOU'RE DEAD. Or at least brain-dead: just before World Fantasy Con, Martha Soukup arrived here to lead me gently through a *Wired* 'Head Space' on-line chat, cunningly geared to Pacific time and so starting at 2am. This joins the long Langford list of ways to arrive at a con already dead tired. Glimpses from a commuter's viewpoint.... The Escher-shaped International Hotel is still too hot (but Jenny Campbell and others ranted about no hot water in rooms). Jane Yolen, as promised, danced around me satanically. Christopher Lee loomed. Diana Wynne Jones, disaster-prone as ever, was hauled away to sign books in Forbidden Planet, only to learn: 'We sold all yours on Wednesday.' Jonathan Lethem inscribed a book to an insufficiently admiring fan: WRITE YOUR OWN ENDING YOU BASTARD. Most paranoid episode ... after a boat trip to HarperCollins's party in Greenwich, returning revellers with bursting bladders found themselves trapped on a caged-in ramp whose shoreward gate was locked. Climbing to freedom and heading for Canary Wharf station, I smugly waved goodbye to the piteously whimpering prisoners. But it's hard to outsmug Malcolm Edwards: 'Oh, I came back by car.' Parties raged, deals were struck in smoke-filled rooms (John Jarrold: 'Fuck off, Langford!'), awards were awarded as below, some fun was had, and Leonid Kourits solemnly presented me with four large Ukrainian dried fish. The eternal mystery of WFC—of why a roughly Eastercon-sized event in a undistinguished former Eastercon hotel should charge more than the gigantic multi-ring circus of the 1997 Worldcon—remains to tantalize us all.

The Curse-Word Is Porridge

Simon R.Green reveals how to combine therapy with caution: 'I often put people who've annoyed me into my novels and kill them horribly. It's very therapeutic. But I always change the names. You never know who may have no sense of humour and a hungry lawyer.'

Robert Jordan belatedly cancelled his GoH appearance at Octocon/Eurocon (Dublin, Oct). In a 2 Oct form letter, the con committee explained all: 'This decision was based on reasons of his own.' [SP]

Naomi Mitchison's 100th birthday was on 1 November. [FR]

Ken McLeod spontaneously puked over an ad for the Official (that is, approved by the desperately hard-up Tolkien estate) *Lord of the Rings* Silver-Plated Chess Set—with each £17.95 piece, in the Danbury Mint's own italics, set with a sparkling crystal. 'Did the Tolkien estate approve of giving Galadriel the face of a human-alien hybrid? Providing each hobbit with a sparkling crystal football to dribble? Making Sauron look like something dreamed up by Whitley Strieber? This is a crime against our imaginations.... Onward to the *News From Nowhere* handcrafted heritage Monopoly™ game! No bank, no jail, no money and no facking London, but I can't see that getting in the way of an honest profit.'

Anne Rice was ruled innocent of libel when a New Orleans judge held that her abuse of a local café as 'an abomination ... gaudy, tacky ... less dignified than a flophouse', was constitutionally protected. Horror critics, concerned to describe Rice's works only in legal, constitutionally protected ways, may or may not have been taking notes. [DP]

William Rotsler (1926-1997) died on 18 October: he wrote a clutch of sf novels, notably *Patron of the Arts* (1974), and many novelizations, but was best loved in fandom for his ebullient personal charm and vast output of those deceptively simple cartoons drawn in the unique Rotsler line ... bringing him a 1977 DUFF win and Fan Artist Hugos in 1975, 1996 and 1997, not to mention a 1996 Retro-Hugo for cartoon activities in 1945. 'So goes one of the greatest of fans.... We'll all miss him,' writes Jim Benford; rich brown adds, 'The news was not totally unexpected—we knew, at the last Corflu, that Rotsler had cancer—but I find it unsettling nonetheless; I figured, if anyone could beat it, it would be someone with Bill's passion and gusto. • Bill Rotsler was a wellspring of creativity; I want to call him a giant but something about the image seems wrong. A giant casts a shadow, blocks out the sun, by his presence. The shadow I see is cast by Bill's absence.'

Franz Rottensteiner reports on life as an ex-agent: 'The lawsuit with Mr Lem goes on and on, producing reams of papers. I understand

now why lawyers are usually so prosperous. When everything is over, I'll send you a notice and donate Xeroxes of the whole file to the SF Foundation for the amusement of those students who read German.'

Patrick Tilley's Amtrak Wars series is to be continued by Tilley and Paul Barnett (or possibly Paul's alias John Grant) in collaboration.

Conchite

Until 30 Nov • **SF/Fantasy Art Exhibition**, Grosvenor Museum, Chester. 10:30am-5pm daily; Sun 2-5pm. Contact Steve Woolfall, Grosvenor Museum, 27 Grosvenor St, Chester, CH1 2DD. 01244 402015.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 27**, De Vere Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. £35 at door; postal registration now discouraged. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, W.Midlands, DY9 8SS. 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

21-3 Nov • **Armadacon IX**, Astor Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Colin Greenland, David Hardy. £25 reg (£20 unwaged). Contact 4 Glencagle Ave, Mantamead, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5LL. 01752 267873.

30 Nov • **Starcon97** (*Star Wars*), Town Centre Theatre, Basildon, Essex. GoH Dave Prowse etc. £10 reg; £13 at door. Contact (cheques to R.Miley) Nelson House, 341 Lea Bridge Rd, London, E10 7LA.

13-14 Dec • **Babylon 5 Academic Conference**, York. £75 reg; £48 non-residential. Contact Farah Mendlesohn, Faculty of Humanities, Coll of Ripon & York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO3 7EX.

10-12 Jul 98 • **Infinity** (media-ish), Angel Hotel, Cardiff, Wales. £40 reg to 1 Jun; £45 at door. With Colin Baker and many others. Contact (SAE) 12 Stuart St, Treherbert, Wales, CF42 5PR.

11-13 Sep 98 • **Fantasycon XXII**, Albany Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Freda Warrington, Jane Yolen. £45 reg (£35 BFS members) to 31 Dec Contact (SAE) 46 Oxford Rd, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT.

Rumblings • **Britain in 2005?** Certain fans, chaired by 'Convenor' Kim Campbell, sense our need for a 2005 UK Worldcon bid and plan to 'campaign quietly for the next few years, so as not to submerge the local fandom with Worldcon fever too soon.' [KC] So control yourselves.

Infinitely Improbable

World Fantasy Awards. NOVEL Rachel Pollack, *Godmother Night*. NOVELLA Mark Helprin, *A City in Winter* (not even submitted; one judge happened to hear of it, and it got 24 out of a possible 25 points from the judges). SHORT James P.Blalock, 'Thirteen Phantasms' (*Omni*—the first web-published WFA winner). ANTHOLOGY Patrick Nielsen Hayden, *Starlight 1*. COLLECTION Jonathan Lethem, *The Wall of the Sky, The Wall of the Eye*. ARTIST Moebius. SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL Michael J.Weldon, *The Psychotronic® Video Guide*. SPECIAL/NON-PROFESSIONAL Barbara & Christopher Roden, for Ash-Tree Press. LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT Madeleine L'Engle. • **British Fantasy Awards** were also presented at WFC. NOVEL (August Derleth Award) Graham Joyce, *The Tooth Fairy*. SHORT Martin Simpson 'Dancing About Architecture'. ANTHOLOGY/COLLECTION Thomas Ligotti *The Nightmare Factory*. ARTIST Jim Burns. SMALL PRESS S.T.Joshi, *H.P.Lovecraft: A Life*. SPECIAL (Karl Edward Wagner Award) Jo Fletcher.

Publishers and Sinners. *Lucy Sussex* forwarded the exciting news that 'William Gibson has recently published *A Social History of the Domestic Chaplain 1530-1840* (Leicester University Press, 1997), whose last chapter, "The Decline of the Chaplain", makes some reference to the fortunes of domestic chapels as well as suggesting wider reasons for such decay.' Lucy: 'Somehow I don't think it's the sequel to *Idoru*.'

Wired Tales. More legal fun with *Hardwired* (W.J.Williams, 1986) vs *HardWired* (*Wired* imprint, 1996): see A123.... *Mike Godwin*: 'One of the choicest ironies of this foofaraw is that *Wired* has since abandoned the "HardWired" label for (it says) other reasons—it has become "Wired Books" in the course of the unprofitable book division's being phased out altogether.' • *Walter Jon Williams*: 'Mike Godwin is correct that *HardWired* Books has changed their name to *Wired Books* (as well as fired half their staff, lost their president Peter Rutten, assigned an interest in their trademark applications to a creditor, and moved from their own offices into *Wired's* offices), but they've announced their intention to continue using *HardWired* as an imprint. Lord knows why,

but they're still fighting on. Rational endeavour was never one of their strongpoints.' • *Mark Frauenfelder*, Wired Books sf series editor, feels strong and vital: 'Bruce Sterling's *Artificial Kid* is in stores, and the new editions of Rudy Rucker's *White Light* and Charles Platt's *Silicon Man* are sitting on my desk right now. The other five novels are all scheduled to be published. The two anthologies are likely to be cancelled. [...] Perhaps *SF Chronicle* heard that the anthologies were probably to be cancelled, and assumed that the novels would also be cancelled. Or maybe a disgruntled former *HardWired* employee fed them a line.'

Random Fandom. *Dave & Claire Anderson*, unable to make the World Fantasy Con, splendidly gave impoverished Langford a membership ... thanks! • *Norman Beswick* is 'overwhelmed by the response of fandom to news of my illness. It has proved impossible for me to write, as I had hoped, to each individual.... A splendid haul of fanzines, books, magazines and other reading matter awaits attention. I am immensely grateful. Please accept this acknowledgement of your gift, and my thanks for your kindness.' [via S&J] • *Kathryn Cramer & David Hartwell* report the appearance of small Peter Hartwell on 17 Oct. 'The parents are accepting loud and colourful diapers for Peter, I believe, with matching tie for the father and hat for the mother as appreciated bonus gifts.' [GF]

Superhero Origin Story! *James Thurber* on the agonies of tuning a 1950s radio: 'The box either goes completely dead, or gives a high whiny sound, like "squee-ee-eeen", or says "thog, thog, thog" and stops.'

C.o.A. *Simon Bisson & Mary Branscombe*, Upper Flat, 51 Oakhill Rd, Putney, London, SW15 2QJ. *Wm Breiding*, PO Box 2322, Tucson, AZ 85702-2322, USA. *V&W Wendy Cruutenden's* new phone number: 01707 881399. *Caroline Mullan & Brian Ameringen*, 37 Coventry Rd, Ilford, IG1 4QR—corrected postcode. *Oliver & Jacky Grüter-Andrew* (17 Nov), First Floor Flat, 10 Cavendish Rd, London, N4 1RT; move to Canada ?Mar/Apr 98. *Keith Oborn*, 2 Castle House, 15/17 Castle Cres, Reading, Berks, RG1 6AQ. *Andy Richards* has a second sf shop: The Book Palace, 83 Church Rd, Crystal Palace, SE19 2TA (open 11am-6pm, 7 days).

R.I.P. *John Denver's* Ceefax obit revealed a little-known sf connection: that he was famous for 'soothing country-and-western ballads'. [MKS] • *Andrew Keir* (1926-1997) appeared in several genre movies by Hammer but is best remembered for his lead role in *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967); he was the fifth and most convincing of the six actors who played Quatermass. [PB/SG] • *Lester Simons*, UK con-goer and stalwart of the Tolkien Society and 'Barony of the Far Isles', died of pneumonia on 10 Oct. [MS] • *G.Harry Stine* (1928-1997) died on 2 Nov: he wrote sf as Stine and as Lee Correy, founded the hobby of model rocketry, and promoted space flight in influential non-fiction.

Fanfundery. GUFF nominations are open, says *Thyme*, with Australasian candidates sought for a 1998 Eastercon trip. Nominations close on 30 Nov and, if there's a race, voting on 15 Feb. • TAFF 1998 west-bound race voting (vote Maureen!) is now open, closing on 25 Apr 98.

SF Predictions. 5 Nov 97: Parliament blown up (in *V for Vendetta*).

SF Chronicle Reader Awards. NOVEL *Bruce Sterling, Holy Fire*. NOVELLA *Greg Benford, 'Immersion' (As Recycled With Bolt-On Asimov Insignia In Foundation's Fear)*. NOVELETTE *Bruce Sterling, 'Bicycle Repairman'*. SHORT *James White, 'Un-Birthday Boy'*. DRAMATIC ST:DS9 *'Trials and Tribble-ations'*. PRO ARTIST *Bob Eggleton*. EDITOR (MAG) *Gardner Dozois*. EDITOR (BOOK) *Patrick Nielsen Hayden*. SEMI-PROZINE *SF Chronicle*. FANZINE *Tangent*. FAN WRITER *Dave Langford*. FAN ARTIST *Ian Gunn*.

Outraged Letters. *Legionnaires PLC* (see A123) extended their deadline for me to buy lots of £333 shares, but I failed to locate my carefully hidden cheque book before 31 Oct. • *Alan Winston* and others noted that, besides movies, the late Burgess Meredith had 'multiple appearances in the *Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery* TV series. The most heartrending TZ was the one with Meredith as the last man alive on earth and thus able to read everything in the library at his leisure—until his glasses break. (Brought a tear to my bespectacled eye at age 12....)'

Thog's Masterclass. 'Then Marshall squeezed his eyes shut and nodded his torso a few times ...' (*Ramsey Campbell, The One Safe Place*, 1995) ... 'She gave him her evil eye, and he withered.' (*Christopher Evans, Mortal Remains*, 1995) [PB] • 'Oh, God! His eye had begun to twitch. He leaned his face on his head to hide it.' (*Dave Duncan, Present Tense*, 1996) [LJ] • 'The bat burped. Granny genteelly covered her hand with her mouth.' (*Terry Pratchett, Lords and Ladies*, 1992) • 'For a moment, Guy considered charging them in the hope that the surprise would get him through them, but he quickly realized that the street was too narrow for him to force a passage through them by force.' (*David A. McIntee, Dr Who, The New Adventures: Sanctuary*) [AF] • 'Interviews with various cast members—even those who were in one episode or less—appear.' (*Chris Gregory, Be Seeing You ... Decoding The Prisoner*) [S]

George Hay (1922-1997)

Molly Gillan broke the bad news: 'It is with great sadness I have to tell you that George Hay died on 3 October, following an operation. He hated funerals as he preferred to remember friends in life—so his funeral will be private, no flowers. I would like him remembered in your thoughts and words, so if you want to write to me please tell me about George as you knew him. But don't phone—I've lost my best friend.' (53b All Saints St, Hastings, TN34 3BN)

Brian Aldiss: 'George Hay was a man full of plans for the future. It was as if he had been created on a caprice by H.G.Wells. Some of his plans were excellent, and sunk only by the cultural inertia of society. Of course, his plan for the SF FOUNDATION succeeded brilliantly. Less lucky was that gorgeous idea to have a large replica of a Martian fighting machine from *War of the Worlds* erected on Primrose Hill.

'Our ideas of what SF should be (as if SF cared!) were opposed. I felt strongly SF must exist in its own right, as a literature; George felt strongly it must be used as a teaching tool. Never the twain did meet on that score, but George was always good-humoured and firmly Socialist. A man to be admired and missed.'

Peter Nicholls: 'It comes as a shock to hear about George. He and I agreed about practically nothing, but he was a friend nevertheless. Without his irritating energy the SF Foundation would never have come into being—to give just one example. But if we'd all listened to him at the time, the Foundation would have been devoted solely to publicizing the use of hard sf ideas in the real world, and my job as Administrator would have consisted entirely of pestering the government about ion drives, et al. He was connected to Dianetics (later Scientology) for a while, long ago, but he thought the movement was insufficiently altruistic. I always liked him for that, and I could even forgive his attempts to canonize John W.Campbell. He always nagged you about doing stuff you didn't want to do. It could be alarming to see his face advancing upon you at parties (being tall he loomed), his glasses held together with adhesive tape, but if you stopped and listened he was often anecdotal and interesting, as befits the passionate and omnivorous reader that he was. His death is bad news, especially since I'd not replied yet to his most recent letter. So in death, George continues to inspire guilt in those less energetic than himself.'

Andy Sawyer, SF Foundation: 'It was a shock. It's because of George that I am here. I didn't know George well and only met him a few times, but we communicated a lot. I welcomed his encouragement—even when George would keep me on the phone discussing the collapse of Western civilisation for 20 minutes. We served together on the Arthur C. Clarke Award jury a few years ago, and I remember our discussions afterwards—long before I ever thought that the SF Foundation library would move to Liverpool and that I would dare to apply for the job. Of course, it did, and I did, and so I have both professional and personal reasons for respecting George. I'm sorry to lose him.'

Myself: George's publishing credentials included four 1950s sf novels, several anthologies, and editorial work on *The John W.Campbell Letters* and his semi-spoof *The Necronomicon* (1978) ... fondly remembered by contributors, including me and Colin Wilson, as an 'obviously unsaleable' book that still brings in royalties. Less visibly, George worked hard behind the sf scenes: nagging publishers into reprinting classics; showering us all with ideas, some of them workable, on his famous pterodactyl notepaper; enthusing over new technologies despite writing on an ancient typewriter—he once devised a magazine distributed solely by fax; organizing unlikely events like British Telecom's bemused hosting of sf writers at a lavish dinner and futurological discussion which some of us termed the Drink Tank; bombarding wary politicians with sf-based advice; and, always, opening unexpected doors.

Soundbites. *Martin Hoare:* 'He was a great guy—an innovator and a real character.' • *Paul Barnett:* 'He was one of those people you expect to be outlived by What a damned shame.' • *Chris Priest:* 'George had a great sense of humour, and was always laughing. He was a man of exceeding good nature. When he was in hospital last year, do you remember that bad taste joke I cracked about the medical staff thinking for three days he was delirious, until they worked out he was telling them about the Foundation? The next time I saw George I made the same joke, and he laughed and laughed.'

Ansible 124 © Dave Langford, 1997. Thanks to Paul Barnett, Kim Campbell, Gary Farber, Alison Freebairn, Steve Green, Steve Jeffery, Linnea Jonsson, Sheila Pover, Roger Robinson, Dolores Phelps, SFC, Simo, Maureen Kincaid Speller, Marcus Streets and our Hero Distributors: Janice Murray (NA), SCIS, Alan Stewart (Oz), and Martin Tudor (Brum). 6 Nov 97