

# CHAT

MONTHLY NEWSZINE OF THE CHATTANOOGA SF ASSOCIATION  
FREE TO MEMBERS OF CSFA; 25¢ TO FELLOW TRAVELERS

PUBLISHED AT:  
MARCH 1978

4207 DAVIS LANE, CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE 37416  
VOLUME 1 NUMBER 6 © NICKI AND DICK LYNCH 1978

"It is absurd to deny the role of fantasy in even the strictest science."  
.... V. I. Lenin

MARCH MEETING-A GUEST SPEAKER....The CSFA met on Feb. 17 at U.T.C. Slan by A. E. Van Vogt was discussed, as were several items of business. Then, the classic SF movie The Day the Earth Stood Still was shown (courtesy of Eric & Jeannie Jamborsky) to a crowd of about 40. The book for the May meeting will be Mindbridge by Joe Haldeman. April's book (chosen last month) will be The Jargoon Pard by Andre Norton. Please note we are ordering books for future meetings at each regular meeting. The March meeting will be Saturday night, March 18, at 7:30 PM, in the Lookout Mtn. Room of the U.T.C. Student Center. We will discuss the book Mission of Gravity by Hal Clement. Also, Dr. George Spangler, of the U.T.C. Physics Dept., will speak on nuclear powered satellites and their dangers, and ---maybe--- we might have a couple of door prizes. A special note to February's meeting: W. G. Smith contributed \$7.00 to purchase a supporting membership to IguanaCon, 1978's World Science Fiction Convention, for CSFA. The club extends its thanks! To get to U.T.C.: Take I-124 to the 4th St. Exit (last exit before Tennessee River bridge). Go on 4th St. for about 8/10 mile to Mabel St., and turn right onto Mabel. Go 2 blocks (bearing right) and turn left onto Vine St. (which is 1-way). Go 2½ blocks. The student center is on the left side; look for its sign. The meeting room is on the ground floor, near the information desk. For questions: Mike Rogers (266-0298). (NWL)

SPECIAL SECOND CSFA MEETING FOR MARCH....There will be a special meeting of CSFA on Wednesday night, March 22. U.T.C. will be showing the movie A Boy and His Dog that night in Grote Hall (students \$1, adults \$2); CSFA will meet at 7:45 PM that night (before the film) in Grote Hall. After the movie, there will be a discussion of the film in the Student Center. (NWL)

CSFA TREASURER'S REPORT....As of Feb. 16, balance (from last report) was \$100.24. Dues from the January meeting were \$23; expenditures for newsletter mailing was \$3.90. New balance is \$119.34. New CHAT subscribers are requested to make their checks (for \$3/year) to Nicki Lynch, rather than CSFA. (Mike Rogers)

CSFA POSITIONS OPEN....CSFA is looking for a member to publicize monthly club meetings. The former publicist, Nicki Lynch, feels she can no longer devote the time necessary to do a good job, and will temporarily assist her replacement. CSFA is also looking for a club member to cover the U.T.C. "beat" for CHAT. The person should attend U.T.C. and report on events such as movies and lectures that would interest club members. Anyone interested should contact CHAT at the masthead address or at 892-5127. (NWL)

AREA SF CLUB NEWS....The fledgling Knoxville club held its first meeting on Jan. 28; about 40 attended. The program was a videotape of The Forbidden Planet. Several door prizes were given away, including a new 1st edition copy of The Silmarillion. All in all a good first effort. The second meeting was Feb. 11; according to Ken Scott about 20 attended. The Atlanta SF club recently elected new officers for 1978. Incoming officers are Cliff Biggers / President, Gary Steele/V.P., and Ginger Kaderabek/Sec.-Treas. (re-elected). The Atlanta club recently held an auction of donated items to raise money for the club. Club member Irvin Koch informs us it was an unqualified success. Perhaps other clubs will also try this in the near future. (DL)



ROC\*KON REPORT - FUN ACROSS THE MISSISSIPPI....This year's Roc\*Kon, in Little Rock, Arkansas, was a party worth attending. From the ~~confusing~~ amusing program booklet to the last good-byes, there were few dull moments. This year's Guest of Honor was Wilson (Bob) Tucker, who spent much of his time talking to fans, autographing books and showing us all how 'smoothing' is really done. Roc\*Kon's Chief Culprit, Margaret Middleton, and her crew of ~~helped~~ fun fans carefully programmed the convention with movies, filksinging and games each night, and panels, costume promenade and 'Tully' tasting in the afternoon and early evening. Tucker gave his GoH speech, "The Golden Years of Science Fiction Are Now!", to a crowded room of fans on Saturday afternoon, ending with a humorous story of how he once launched a rocket at Cape Canaveral. The banquet Saturday evening was a

buffet that featured Boiled Leg of Man (actually, it was Rib), Bouncing Potatoes, Goober Peas, Cherry a la Whipped Cream, Blog and Irish Tea. After the banquet, prizes were given to the Tulsa fans for their Star Trek costumes and to the fan from farthest away. The Saturday night filksinging had to compete with a disco band in the room next door. They were victors

in quality, if not volume. Rounding out the evening, a heavily attended film program included The Forbidden Planet, Young Frankenstein and Flesh Gordon (the X version). Despite the small hucksters room and lack of an Art Show room, Roc\*Kon was a winner. Margaret reports that Roc\*Kon may move to larger facilities next year due to this year's turn-out. (NWL)

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED....First, from Spider Robinson, concerning our review of Callahan's Crosstime Saloon (CHAT, V1, N3; Dec. 1977):

"As one reviewer to another, thanks for the fine & thoughtful review of Callahan's Crosstown Bus - glad you liked it. A sequel is already contracted for (working title: Time Travelers Strictly Cash) and currently in the works (1st two stories complete, printed in recent Analogs). But wait'll you see Stardance, the new novel I'm writing with my wife Jeannie!

Thanks again - hope to see you at Callahan's!"

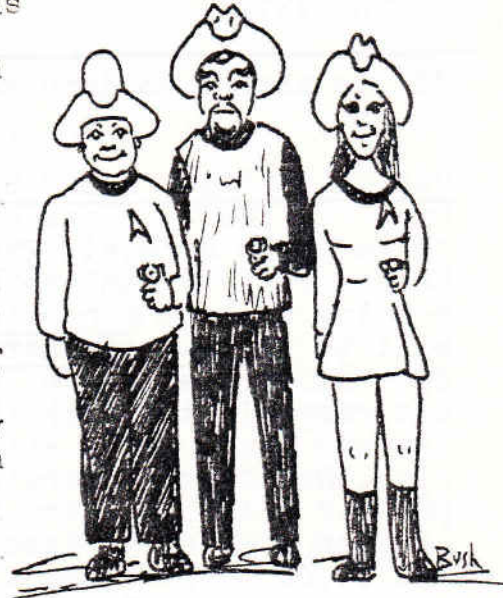
From Richard Garrison (Forest Park, Ga.):

"I like the cartoons inserted in your issues, (and) hope you will feature more." ((Thanks for the kind words. Yes, they will be a permanent feature. CHAT welcomes cartoon submissions; write us concerning our needs.))

And finally, from Margaret Middleton (Little Rock, Ark.), concerning our special 'Close Encounters Section' that appeared in January CHAT (V1, N4):

I liked the issue, but you should have headlined the issue \*\*Special Issue - Three Encounters of the 'Close' Kind\*\*." ((Wish we'd thought of that.))

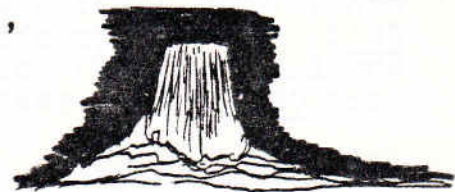
CHAT SUBMISSIONS POLICY....CHAT accepts book and movie reviews, essays, general correspondence, or even short fiction and art. Guidelines are as follows: 1) name, address & phone no. must be on the submission; 2) be brief - aim for 1/2 page single-spaced typed length, although longer submissions will be considered; 3) payment for submissions consists only of a by-line and complimentary copy of CHAT, if you are not already receiving it on a regular basis. All material is subject to editing. Deadline is each regular meeting. Send all submissions to masthead address. (DL)



THE TEXAS TREKKIE INVASION!  
(OR WAS IT OKLAHOMA?)



THE FILK SINGERS  
VS. THE DISCO NEXT DOOR



NO, DID YOU SEE SOMETHING STRANGE?



STORY...by A.J. Barker  
Contact

The Russians had lost another satellite. Third one in two months and over Canada, too. The Canadians were beginning to get paranoid. In fact, Ottawa said, "Enough is enough. One more 'accident' and there would be an 'accident' over Moscow, about one mile up."

In Washington, the State Department was in a turmoil and the Department of Defence ordered Mt. Weather put on Red Alert and all facilities prepared for immediate occupancy. Use imminent.

Meanwhile, deep in the Canadian Wilderness, John Roberts stood on a frozen lake, cursing all three governments. He told them and he told them, three satellites just don't start re-entry at the same point by sheer coincidence. And now he was going to prove he was right!

After tracking Cosmos 1011 to its crash site, Roberts now stood looking at the source of the Russian satellite problem. Not more than a thousand meters in front of him was an alien ship. A 'real live' flying saucer in the center of the lake, supported on three shimmering force beams.

Roberts didn't believe in Santa Claus or the Great Pumpkin, and his students back at Cal-Tech thought he was pretty level-headed. (Or they had thought so up to a week before when suddenly, he announced he was going to Canada to "stop this Russian satellite nonsense, before we all get blown to hell".) Now here he stood looking at something he would have never believed.

The Saucer was huge, covering about a city block. That is, it would if it were sitting in Chicago instead of on a frozen Canadian lake. But what was more important, as Roberts stood quietly freezing beside his dog team, he was about to make man's first contact with beings from another world. Trying to act as if he weren't as frightened as he was, he watched as a section of the hull slid aside and a smaller version emerged. A scant ten meters thick and fifty meters across, it made a high-pitched humming sound as it landed, setting all the dogs to howling, as if it hurt their ears.

A naked, dwarfish looking alien emerged through the top of the small saucer and in his lower set of hands he held what Roberts knew was a weapon. But Roberts didn't have more than a second to worry about it, as the ray caught him squarely in the head and he was dead.

The alien then turned the ray on each dog, and each fell. It then replaced the weapon in the holder under its lower set of arms and pulled its communicator from the pouch on its chest.

"Mgu here. Tell Rfi there'll be fresh meat for supper. The reports concerning the game were correct. Stupid and plentiful. This big one should skin out at about half a nuggle and the smaller ones at a fourth."

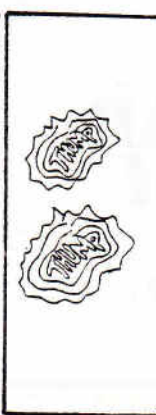
"I think we're going to like our new home once we get it cooled down all over. Plenty of fresh game, anyway. This is the fifth big one this week."

End



AND HOW ABOUT YOU, SIR?  
DO YOU BELIEVE IN U.F.O.S?

krik's universe



by Jeff Mahr



REVIEW...Mike Rogers

THE ISSUE AT HAND by William Atheling, Jr. (James Blish). Advent Pub., Chicago

The Issue at Hand, first published in book form in 1964, is one of the classics of this small field, SF criticism. It is a collection of fanzine articles from the 50's and two speeches given at WorldCons in 1958 and 1961.

Blish is interested in technical criticism--that is, why a story does or does not work. His reviews give solid, rational reasons for his opinions, based on his solid knowledge of writing technique. All readers can pick up valuable knowledge of writing, even though the stories that Blish refers to are often long forgotten.

Blish's aesthetics insist that a good novel must be well constructed, no matter how many original ideas it contains. He also asks that stories have some connection to human ideas and values. Wonders of nature do not interest him as much as man does. Be that as it may, Blish does like idea stories. In this case, he asks that the author think about and show the consequences of his ideas and not just pile them on top of each other.

Blish argues forcefully for "serious" SF. He wants SF to deal with man's problems and not to set plots in the far future to avoid dealing with important issues. He doesn't rule out speculation about the future, since valid speculation would not only consider what will happen but also how these events will affect man.

Blish's criticism is strong because of his knowledge of fields outside SF; he can point to a specific work which illustrates successful solutions to technical problems. He discovers parallels between literary procedures and those of other arts.

I doubt that he changed anyone's mind when he pushed for his concept of what SF should be. Those who agree with him (and I am one) still agree, and he didn't make any new arguments to persuade those who disagree.

If you are interested in the craft of writing or serious discussing SF, The Issue at Hand is worth reading.

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# an interview with WILSON (Bob) TUCKER

On Friday, February 10, 1978, the CHAT staff had a "close encounter" with SF author Wilson (Bob) Tucker at Roc\*Kon in Little Rock, Arkansas. We found out many things about Tucker the person, from his favorite beverage ("Beam's Choice" Bourbon) to his career in SF (he started out as a fan way back when, and still edits a fanzine). A portion of the interview is given below.

**Tucker:** Well, I started in 1896, the year of the big snow. What do you want to know?

**CHAT:** What was your first story, and how did you become an SF writer?

**T:** I started out as a fan.

I was about, oh, 15 years old and I didn't have a chance to go to a fan convention--no money and there were none near me, so I fell into fandom like most people do; writing letters and subscribing to the few fanzines. But every fan, I think, 99% of all the fans want to be a writer, if the neighbors let them grow up, and so did I. I bought a used typewriter when I was about 15 or 16 years old and immediately started writing stories; immediately began sending them to magazines. They immediately began rejecting them. Ten years later Fred Pohl bought my first story, and that was my first sale. It was in May, 1941, in Super Science Novels. And my story was neither super, nor scientific, nor a novel; it was a rotten short story. But the only thing you can do is to keep it up--don't quit. Dammit, if I can keep going and trying for ten years, so can anyone else. And today they're selling a lot faster than 10 years. Think of all the fans you know--Lisa Tuttle is one; two or three years and bing, bing, bing! She's selling like that. You don't have to struggle for ten years today.

**C:** You are best known for novels, such as The Year of the Quiet Sun, Time X, The Warlock, Ice and Iron and others. Why is this?

**T:** After ten years I managed to sell, oh, maybe 8 or 10 stories, I don't remember the number. But they were as few and far between because I'm a poor short story writer

that I turned to novels. And in those days--this was the middle 1940's, near the end of the war--that there was no market for science fiction novels. There was simply not a big enough readership to buy them; probably no more than half a dozen or a dozen novels a year were being published. So I wrote mystery novels; mysteries were as hot in 1945 as science fiction is today. Locus will come out some time soon with last year's report, and I'm willing to bet that there were 1000 science fiction books published in 1977. But in 1944 or '45 maybe there were a thousand mysteries. I wrote a mystery novel, the very first novel I ever wrote and sold it just like that. As opposed to ten years of writing and not selling short stories. So I stayed with the novel.

**C:** Which is your favorite one?

**T:** Mystery or science fiction?

**C:** Take your pick.

**T:** All right. In mystery, it's The Warlock; despite that title, it's a mystery novel. Aaaaand, in science fiction it's The Year of the Quiet Sun.

Oh, say! Please forgive me, can I boast a little teeny, teeny-tiny bit? Guess what happened to The Year of the Quiet Sun! BBC Television in London has bought it for a movie--a television movie. They're going to make what they call a mini-series; it's going to run three or four nights, an hour a night--all week.

**C:** Maybe we'll see it on Masterpiece Theatre.

**T:** Oh, I hope! The only chance we have of seeing it over here is if Masterpiece Theatre or PBS picks it up.

**C:** That's what you want, though. You don't want to put it on commercial



"Smoooooooooth!"



television where they'll hack it up.

T: No! Good Lord, no! This has been cooking since about, almost a year ago; the first letter of interest came in the spring, the contracts were signed last fall, and the money came about three days ago. You see, no matter how many contracts you sign, it's never binding until the money comes because the key clause in the contract says "This contract shall not be in force and binding until the agent has the money in hand." Last Monday, my money came.

C: All right!!

T: So!! (to Ken Moore, chairman of Nashville's Kubla Khan conventions, who was seated nearby:) Ken, this is why I want to say--can I brag just a little teeny-tiny bit. I am so goddam rich I can buy my own bus ticket to Nashville this year!

C: Wasn't Quiet Sun written under different circumstances than other books of yours? The style seems much different.

T: I'm absolutely high on The Year of the Quiet Sun; I don't think I've ever written anything that I like as well, or as important, because it was serious. So many of my books are written as a comedy or as tongue-in-cheek, or as poking fun at somebody or something or even at a cliché or an old plot. In that one, I was serious, because I was scared when I wrote it. You remember the Watts riots about 1965-66? Following the Watts riots, a bunch of other cities--Chicago, Washington, Cleveland--they burned down large sections of the cities. I--I got scared because I truly believed then that we were headed for a second revolution, or a second civil war. On the basis of that, on the

basis of those news stories, I started that book. But by the time I finished the last revision, they were all over and safely behind us. But the book was too good to abandon, and Terry Carr finally published it in 1970. And I think it was the best thing I've ever written.

C: How about your novel The Lincoln Hunters?

T: I'm quite fond of The Lincoln Hunters, because it was pure old out-and-out adventure--you weren't supposed to believe it, you were supposed to go along and

have fun.

Ken Moore: I think that's the problem with most people--they don't take a book for what it is; I think most writers write something for fun or, well, obviously to make money, but I think writers write books to, in a lot of cases, for pure fun. And Tucker's managed to pull this off more times than you can shake a stick at. Some writers write more for fun than anything else.

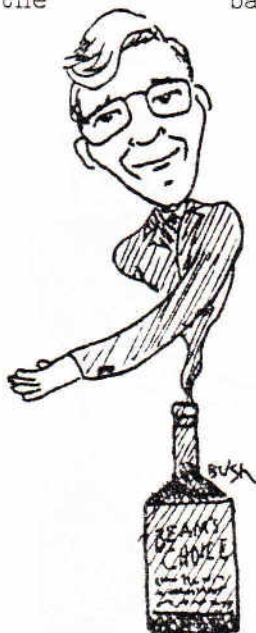
T: I agree. Those who are trying to make a living out of it--van Vogt, Silverburg--you know, you can recognize who is trying to make a living out of it. And you can recognize those people like me who are not making a living from it, their income comes from other sources, or did. In the past I worked in a theatre; my income came from the theatre. Now I no longer have the theatre job; now I live on Social Security pension plus what I write. There's the difference. Sometimes their stuff was good, sometimes it was merely competent. Journey-men work to earn a check that month.

C: Do you feel they were compromising themselves?

T: No, it wasn't a compromise. It was the same was a mechanic or a carpenter would go out and work on a house day after day, he's simply going through it by rote to keep the paycheck coming in. I wasn't in that position. I could take my time, I could spend an entire year on that first book because I didn't depend on that income to live on. And as a result, I had fun. Whereas those guys had to work for a living, I had fun doing the same work. You can see it in The Time Masters, in The Lincoln Hunters, and in some of my mysteries. I'm just having fun, running the hero along, putting him through his paces. I'm doing one now, "Dick and Jane Go To Mars" ((ed. note: an expanded novel of a short story of the same name that will appear in Ellison's The Last Dangerous Visions)) You see, when I sold that short story to Harlan, I got him to agree that I also had the right to expand it to a book, which is what it was supposed to be in the first place.

C: Can you give us sort of a preview of what it's about?

T: Well, in the short story and in the book, a man and woman go to Mars, and



"Smoooooooooooooth!"



they're confined in this little cabin for 7 months. And there's no sex involved; it's a clean story. By the time they get to Mars they hate one another's guts; they cannot stand the sight of each other. They've got cabin fever, they've reverted to bitchery. And they hate one another so much they look for a way to get revenge on each other. I won't tell what it is, because I want to save the ending for you. But the woman finds the perfect revenge on the guy. Now mind you, they are military officers. You know how NASA picks their astronauts. She is a Navy pilot; she's the pilot of the ship and she's a Commander, which is one step above a Major in the Army. He's a Major in the Army. Therefore, she's his superior officer. She always has the last word. In the end she finds a perfect way to get revenge on him. And in retaliation, he finds the perfect way to get revenge on her. They both win, and they both lose. Now if I can bring the damn thing off, it should be the end of all those "man and woman go to Mars" stories. Nobody else should have the heart to write them. I love puncturing balloons.

C: Did you ever have a period when you were writing when it was more difficult than other times to, say, force yourself to sit down and write?

T: Yeah. I fell into--you know what a writer's block is. A couple of years ago I fell into a writer's block and I didn't break it until just about two or three months ago. For a period of about two years I didn't write a damn thing. I was stuck. I could not get off the dime; I couldn't do a damn thing. Until--and this is what broke it--Harlan Ellison called me and asked me for that story I was just telling you about. He said 'Tucker, I'll give you three weeks', and I had to produce. And I did. And now that I've got that short story out of the way, I'm going ahead on the book. It was the only time in my life that I've ever had a writer's block, but when it hit me, it hit me hard; I was tied up for two years. Earlier you mentioned Ice and Iron?

C: Yeah?

T: That came out in, I think, 1974. That's the last thing I'd written; I hadn't been able to do anything since that. I'd been tied up from '74 to '77. Three years!

C: Speaking of Ice and Iron, did you ever consider a continuance of that book?

T: No. I just don't care for sequels. People have asked me for sequels to The Lincoln Hunters; they asked for a sequel to The Loud Silence and they asked me for, um, something else. Maybe it was Ice and Iron. I don't like sequels myself, so I never really considered writing one. I'd rather go on to something new.

C: How do your ideas come to you, mainly?

T: I steal them!

C: That wasn't quite what I had in mind.

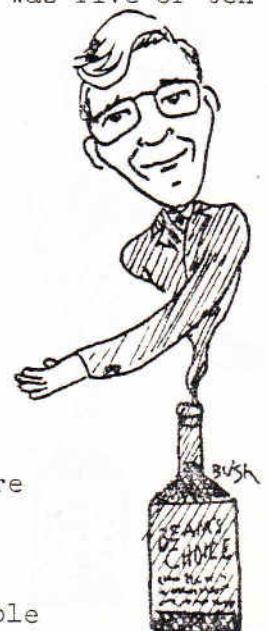
T: All right, I'm sorry. That was a cheap shot. Go ahead.

C: Do you sort of wake up in the middle of the night and cry "Eureka!" or do they gradually come and you wait and wait and develop them in your mind, or what?

T: Well, most often, I get an idea from something I've read. Sometimes I'll read another man's story; sometimes I'll find something in the newspaper; anything. I'm a wide reader; I'm a deep reader. I read every day. I'd rather read that watch TV or watch movies. And I'm constantly finding ideas. One day in a newspaper now dead called The National Observer, I was reading book reviews, and a review for a book which I no longer remember started out in this fashion--and I'll quote you the paragraph. The reviewer said, "They're coming in like stragglers from a lost battle, like flotsam from some great unknown disaster." That was the first paragraph. And I thought, "Hey! Wow! Keen!" And the entire book Ice and Iron...

C: But what book was the review about?

T: I don't remember! That was five or ten years ago and I can't remember what the review was about. But that paragraph sparked the entire idea of the Ice and Iron book. I read the paragraph and I stopped and thought, well, what could be coming in like stragglers? Who would be coming in like flotsam from an unknown war? And from that, I built the idea that far in the future, there was a war going on, and the victors were throwing the losers back on us. We were their cemetery. And the whole damn book was sparked by



"Smoooooth!"



one paragraph in a newspaper.

C: You did the introduction to Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats by DeWeese and Coulson.

T: Yes I did, and there's an interesting story to tell about it. In 1975, I was one of a group of 60 fans who flew to Australia. It was not a charter flight, it was a group flight; that is, we 60 were crammed back into a cabin of 60 seats all our own going from Los Angeles to Sydney, Australia. And if you can imagine 60 fans travelling together, you can imagine what we did to that airline crew. For example, you've seen the "smoooooth" ritual we've done here...

C: Where did that come from originally, anyway?

T: It came from a Red Skelton movie about 1935. I don't remember the title of the movie, but it's on TV now and you may see it on the late show. In one of the segments of that movie, Red Skelton plays a huckster, a pitch man, and he's selling...

C: Guzzler's Gin!

T: Guzzler's Gin! And he keeps drinking it and finally in the end he falls down on the floor dead drunk, and he goes "smoooooth!" I picked it up from there, and I've been carrying it ever since.

So. In 1975, there were 60 of us, all in the same cabin, mind you, going to Australia on an Air New Zealand plane--it's a small airline, relatively unknown. But the habit of this airline is to overwhelm their clients with attention and courtesy. For example, every two or three hours they'd

pass out orange juice to everybody on the plane. They'd come down the aisle with these carts, and every time they'd pour us a glass of orange juice. I don't know what the hell started it, just pure onriness; they gave me a glass of orange juice and I held it in my hand, drank it down and stuck my hand up in the air, like so. And people saw my hand, so they drank theirs and raised their arms the same way. All 60 of us

"Smoooooooooth!" drank our juice and

yelled "Smooooooth!". And that continued all the way to Australia! We had on one leg of the flight--we touched down in Honolulu for refueling--on the Honolulu leg, we had a New Zealand crew and they were just as goofy as we were. So, we took off from Honolulu. We had a good crew--this New Zealand crew. There were about ten stewardesses and one male chauvinist pig steward master, or whatever they're called; a male was in charge of the crew. He walked into the cabin just after the girls had given us our juice and there were 60 hands in the air. He walked in cold; he didn't know what was going on. He stuck one finger under his nose, the other in the air, and went "Heil! Heil! Heil!" And he was on our side from there on.

So by and by, we finally had all the passengers "smoooooth"ing with us; everybody in the plane. Everytime the orange juice went around, 60 hands would go up, then 40 more would go up, and 100 voices would yell "Smoooooth!" So we decided, if these guys would go for this, let's see what else they would fall for--you know how fans are; fans are always pulling somebody's legs. So we started the rumor that there was seven inches of snow in Sydney. Everybody better get your boots and fur hat; it's colder than hell down there! By the time we got to Sydney, stories came back to us from the other cabin where the outsiders were: "By God! Button up! There's seven inches of snow in Sydney!"

So now we're back to the book Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats. Gene DeWeese and Buck Coulson asked me to write an introduction and lead into the story. So I decided to write the story of that flight to Australia, because their book is about what happened to the fans after they get to Australia. And I recount the story I just told you.

Now, may I autograph these books for this man? Here. It's not Beam's Choice, but have some Tullamore Dew.

Ready?

"Smoooooooooth!"

