

CHALLENGER

No. 20



FBI

CHALLENGER #20

Summer 2004

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The secret of Julius Schwartz

was not very secret. He wore it all his life, all over his face. His smile.

I think I realized this for the first time when I was researching my article about him for **The Amazing World of DC Comics**, published 30 years ago and reprinted here. Julie brought his photo album to the DC office and led me on a tour. For a science fiction fan, it was like walking in glory: photos of Schwartz as a fan with the Scienceers in 1932, as an agent with a host of SF legends five years later, with Ray Bradbury, Ray Palmer, Otto Binder, with his partner and lifelong friend Mort Weisinger. When my article saw print, we'd added photos with Len Wein, Elliott Maggin ... and me. In each and every, Julie wore the genuine smile of a guy who loved being alive.

Julie inspired smiles, too. I've never known anyone who was so universally loved. Just read the eulogies. Many tout his astounding resume – as a fanzine fan, as an agent, as a comic book editor. He caused revolutions as each; no one, anywhere or anywhen, has been his equal as any. Look at the fandom he helped build. Look at the careers he helped

launch. Look at the Silver Age of Comics, which he brought to be. But more of those memorials will talk about *him* – about his ebullient personality, his generous good nature, his wry (and corny) wit. Julie Schwartz was a man who loved people and inspired love in people. Alfred Bester, when I interviewed him for the **Amazing World** article, cautioned me that it was hard to write about someone whom I so obviously worshiped. But when he read the piece, I was told, he said that if he still worked at **Holiday**, he'd hire me. I regard that as one of the highest compliments I've ever received.

Even before I met Julie, he was one of the most important people in my life – he was, after all, the first adult to pay attention to what I had to say. Through all those letters of comment he published in **Flash-Grams** and the **JLA Mail Room** and all the others, he gave me encouragement to express myself – and cast my hopes not only to the world outside my immediate home, but to the chartless reaches of imagination to which he had devoted his life. *He* did that for me. Before my job at DC, before our friendship of years, he was already The Man.

Someone once saw the 1973 photograph of Julie and me that ends my **Amazing World** article and asked if he was my father. They did meet once, during my year at the comics, a great moment for me, as you can imagine. For like the man says in **All the King's Men**, we are all sons of a hundred fathers.

Genius, gadfly, good and generous friend, old boy, you couldn't live forever. But I will never think of you without demanding, Why not? *Why not?*



That's Lillian van Hartesveldt with Julie on the previous page. I took the photo at MagiCon in 1992. I wasn't able to attend DC Comics' memorial service for Julie, held in New York short days after his death. But my oldest friend in comics fandom was there. I told my story of the accident of July 9, 1966 in Challenger #5.

JULIE SCHWARTZ: THE MEMORIAL SERVICE

Mike Friedrich

On a snowy New York March 18, 2004, approximately 200 comics professionals and fans met to remember a man who had touched their careers and inner fantasies for 60 years.

A few attendees like Irwin Hasen, Joe Kubert, Murphy Anderson, and Irwin Donenfeld had known Julie from the Forties. Others like Brian Tomsen had met him in his retirement in the Nineties. Neil Gaiman delivered the remarks of his contemporary Alan Moore, who'd first met Julie during his final professional decade of the Eighties. The largest contingent was those who had encountered him as fans, free-lancers and fellow staffers from the late Sixties and early Seventies.

Perhaps because this last group was my own cohort I paid the most attention to the speakers from them: Denny O'Neil, Mike Uslan, Jack C. Harris, Len Wein [delivered by Bob Greenberger], Guy H. Lillian III [delivered by Harris], Anthony Tollin and Paul Levitz. O'Neil noted the affinity Julie had for double-identity characters, as one who kept his professional and personal lives very separate. Uslan spoke for his fellow baby-boomer fans who thought of Julie as a series of magic numbers denoting turning-point issues in the development of what came to be called DC's Silver Age. Wein described how Julie "taught me plot structure and ingenuity and the persistence to keep at a story until it was right, until it was ready, until it was done". Levitz twisted O'Neil's comments inside out by noting that Julie had taught him "to marry the prettiest girl in the office", alluding to the famous red hair of Jean Schwartz as well as Levitz's own wife Jeanette.

Perhaps the most satisfying moment of the event personally was discovering that my own life-long pen-pal, Irene Vartanoff, had come up from Maryland to attend. She and Guy Lillian were "introduced" to me by Julie through his letter columns around 1965 and I've stayed in touch with both of them through correspondence and very occasional visits ever since. It was Guy who first called me within hours to let me know of Julie's passing. Seeing Irene completed a circuit.

Although I'm barely a footnote in Julie's career, as the first [1967] of the baby-boomer writers he hired, in the life story where I'm the star, Julie was the one who published 50 teen comments of mine in his lettercols and then gave me my first job.

My letter-writing began around the time the "new look" *Batman* was introduced, though I'd been a fan of Julie's for two or three years before then. A couple of years later it turned into a bit of correspondence as Julie began to send short replies.

As I grew during high school my comments began to contain suggestions for how stories could have been improved. As I neared my summer vacation in 1966 I off-handedly wrote asking if I could try writing a script. Julie quickly affirmatively replied and just as quickly rejected my first effort, an Elongated Man story.

Not long after this, by coincidence Julie and his wife were taking a vacation to San Francisco. Guy Lillian and I arranged to come in from our suburban homes to see him together. Unfortunately we had a near-tragic auto accident on the way and wound up at the hospital instead of his hotel.

Undeterred I continued to submit ideas and scripts, and the following spring [May 10, 1967] he bought my first one, a Robin, Boy Wonder story that eventually saw print in *Batman* #202.

As I was graduating from high school the following month, I took the script payment [\$10/page] and used it to go to New York for the summer before entering college.

I finally met Julie by showing up on the day that DC conducted tours [I wasn't old enough to know about making appointments] and then once in the office introducing myself. He was as many have described, a straight-laced formal guy with a white shirt and tie. My wardrobe was t-shirts and jeans.

Despite this generation gap, he was straightforward, friendly, and amazingly tolerant.

That first summer he worked with me on a handful of scripts, including the one that was first to be published, *Spectre #3*, drawn by Neal Adams. I can't think of a better way to start a multi-decade career.

Nolacon II's "Other Forms" Hugo was a precursor of today's "Related Book" category – and here's the winner of that award, talking about the man who helped inspire Watchmen.

FOR JULIE SCHWARTZ

Alan Moore

Just off the 'plane from England, anything except fresh out of Kennedy, within an hour or two we'd all been introduced to Julie, all us early eighties economic migrants, awestruck, wide-eyed, staring like religiously-converted lemurs as at last we met our childhood's god, the intergalactic cabby who wouldn't shut up, the curator of the space museum.

We loved Julie in the way that we'd love anyone we'd known since we were small, who'd shared with us that secret, rustling, flashlight-dazzled space beneath the midnight counterpane. We loved him in the way that we loved covers with gorillas on. We followed at his heels, a quacking flock, along the migraine-yellow dot-toned hallways at the DC offices, and if he thought of us as irritating Carl Barks nephews, as the Hueys, Deweys and Louies that he's never really wanted, then he didn't let it show.

Quite the reverse. Julie indulged us like a visiting school-trip for pale, consumptive English orphans, fragile coughing invalids at Fresh Air Camp. He sneaked us presents, file copies of some treasured *Mystery in Space* pulled from the morgue drawers in his office, from which rose the perfume of his life, long decades of pulp pages, fifty thousand comic racks in every corner magazine store that you ever visited or dreamed about. He knew a captive audience when he saw one, and appreciated our appreciation. All the anecdotes were new to us, the creaking chair-bound jokes fresh as this morning's lox. The funeral for a much-feared fellow editor he told us of, whereat the section of the service set aside for testaments and kindly words concerning the deceased stretched into long, embarrassed silence until someone at the back stood up and ventured the opinion that the late lamented's brother had been worse.

We were a pushover. He made us laugh, he knocked us dead, and then there was the scrapbook, with its pages full of letters, pictures, signatures. "I am, sir, your devoted servant, H.P. Lovecraft." Photographs of Julie, young with diamond cutter eyes behind wire-rimmed spectacles. Men in dark coats and Homburg hats on winter corners in New York, grey vapour twisting up from manhole covers, from cigars. "You see the crewcut kid, the newsboy there? That's Bradbury." We'd gape and nod, could not have possibly been more impressed if he'd said, "See that old guy in the toga, standing by Ed Hamilton? That's Zeus."

And now we hear that Julie has been...discontinued? Cancelled? But they said the same about Green Lantern and the Flash back in the early 'fifties, so we can't be certain. This is comics. There'll be some way around it, be some parallel world Earth-Four Julie, born thirty years later to account for problems in the continuity, and decked out in a jazzier, more streamlined outfit. A funny, brilliant, endlessly enthusiastic twelve year old got up in an old man suit, Julie spent his life mining the gold-seam of the future; is too big, then, to be ever truly swallowed by the past. He was a friend, he was an inspiration, was the founder of our dreams.

He ruined my reputation as a gentle pacifist by claiming that I'd seized him by the throat and sworn to kill him if he didn't let me write his final episodes of Superman, and how, now, am I supposed to contradict a classic Julius Schwartz yarn? So, all right: it's true. I picked him up and shook him like a British nanny, and I hope wherever he is now, he's satisfied by this shamefaced confession. Goodnight, Julie. It has been our privilege to have known you. You were the best.

EDITORIAL: IN THIS ISSUE

Summer, 2004

Now that the DUFF election has passed, and New Zealand's Norman Cates has been anointed the new delegate from the Southern hemisphere, Rosy and I can let our duties towards the Down Under Fan Fund relax ...

Except for such minor matters as providing Norman with spending money while he's in the States, working with TAFF and the worldcon folks to set up a Fan Funds Reception at Noreascon 4, and gathering more material to peddle for the fan fund auction (tentatively scheduled for Sunday at 2). *Everyone show up.* We have toys and books and zines and Australian stuff and many, many Tuckerizations to exchange for the unimportant contents of your wallet. A Tuckerization, as you know, is a mention of your name in an author's story or novel. We have pledges of such honors from Catherine Asaro, Jack McDevitt, Mike Resnick, Greg Benford, Robert Sawyer and many others.

C'mon, of what value is a bank account next to immortality in print? *Remember, Tuckerizations will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no Tuckerizations.*

Before we even think about Noreascon, though, there is the project on which we labor in its name: the souvenir/program book. I'm the editor, Rosy's the copy editor, and we're in it, up to our jawlines.

In early May, the brilliant fanned and book designer Geri Sullivan flew down to Nawlins to hash out some of the vital questions of book-building – fonts, style, final contents, art. We accomplished a *lot* – but daily there is more to do, more to think about ... many great talents to draw forth and deal with, many disparate styles to meld, many considerations and expectations to juggle. How do we avoid duplicating the contents of NESFA's special books about the Guests of Honor? Do we run bibliographies? Is "worldcon" capitalized? Having begged people I admire and respect for contributions, dare I pester them to get them in on time? A daunting task. Fortunately, Geri and Rosy are well up to it, and together, they're keeping me from blundering into *too* many walls.

Only thing I can assure you is, it's going to be *one beautiful book*. The artwork is eclectic, from such disparate geniuses as Jeff Potter, Charlie Williams, Marc Schirmeister, and of course, our cover artist, Bob Eggleton – but it's all superlative. The text is likewise exceptional. And best of all, judging from the mountain of advertising accumulated by Judy Bemis (fan) and Eve Ackerman (pro) – the book may well be *paid for*.

Come to Noreascon 4 – and pick one up.

Hugo nomination

One other special thing about Noreascon 4 – **Challenger** is nominated for its Hugo as Best Fanzine.

The Hugo means a lot to me. Reading of it in Schuyler Miller's "Reference Column" in *Analog* forty years was what seduced me from the anonymous comfort of a mere *reader* of science fiction into the dangerous ecstasy of actual *fandom*. The Hugo ceremony has been the highlight of almost every worldcon I've ever attended – surpassed only by winning the worldcon as part of the New Orleans bid in 1986, and falling in love with Rose-Marie Donovan at Confederation, that same year. Those were special moments indeed. But the Hugo is a special moment that happens *every* year.

And for the fifth year running, **Challenger** is part of it. *Thank you, everyone.*

I do have some serious endoskeletal fragments to gnaw at concerning the Hugo awards, and pick those bones I must. Fannish inertia has kept some people and some fanzines from this year's ballot which should, by justice, be there. All I'll say now is that, after seeing the artwork for the Noreascon 4 souvenir book and the art in this **Challenger**, if fandom doesn't put Charlie Williams and Marc Schirmeister and Randy Cleary and Jeff Potter and Kurt Erichsen on the Hugo ballot *next* year, then there *ain't*, repeat *ain't*, no justice.

Anyway, my repeated humble, amazed, and o'erwhelmed thanks. **Challenger** will keep trying to deserve your kindness. And someday, maybe we'll win...

This issue

A mess of a mix, as always.

But what a *nice* mix. Joe Green, author of **Gold the Man** (a.k.a **The Mind Behind the Eye**) and co-creator of Rose-Marie Lillian, joins the host of generous **Chall** pals with a funny piece on his worst – and most enduring – professional mistake. Mike Resnick is once again with us, casting a pained look at the movie screen. Greg Benford considers the future of space exploration. Alexis Gilliland tackles, through Morrie the Critic, some eternal questions. Taral Wayne expounds upon the monstrosities Hollywood will probably wreak upon the Sfnal love that brought him into our ken. Fan friends Albert Hoffman and Tim Marion contribute evocative – and in Albert's case, *scary* – pieces.

There are photo pages, as always – including a look 'way back at the Nebula ceremonies of 1970, for which I was official west coast photographer. I know the repro on these pages isn't what it should be, so may I suggest that you check out our website, the creation of Rosy's brilliant stepmother, Patty Green: www.challzine.net. There, the photos are as sharp and clear as if I were handing them to you across a table. (Excuse here to hail Patty's able and generous work with **Chall** online, as well as **The Zine Dump** and the DUFF website, www.DUFF2004.com. And – an exciting development – Patty has worked up a **Challenger** blog – <http://challpals.blogspot.com>. Be one of the first to post!)

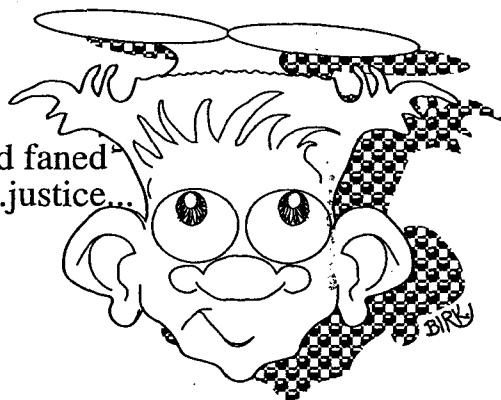
Along with me, as you've already seen, Mike Friedrich and Alan Moore remember one of the founders of this fannish feast, Julius Schwartz. The pages from **Amazing World of DC Comics** which close the issue are copyright DC Comics, 1974, and are reprinted by their generous permission (and the kind intervention of Paul Levitz). If you're wondering, I put the memorials to Julie at the start and finish of this issue for a specific reason. In the interior, I deal with the death of Ronald Reagan and the obscenities in Iraq. Frankly, I hate having to mention Schwartz in the same breath.

Missing from these pages are a chapter from our DUFF trip report and an article on the Symphony Book Fair that I've been working on for months. I apologize – but as you see above, it is a *busy* summer. Those matters will keep until the fall.

Ah, yes, our art – Frank Wu's epic cover, great interiors from Randy Cleary and Kurt Erichsen and Alexis Gilliland and Taral Wayne and Sheryl Birkhead. I found an illo by Mercy van Vlack, from the golden days of my comics fanac. The brilliance of William Rotsler and Joe Mayhew survives them. As for the work of Sidney Paget, illustrating Craig Hilton's article on "The Resident Patient" ... one of the illos reprinted here originally decorated another Sherlock Holmes story in **The Strand**. A special No-Prize to the reader who guesses which!

So: enjoy. Twenty issues! Five Hugo nominations! Whoever would've thought it?

...and who...disguised as mild faned
and reporter fights for truth...justice...
and the fanish way!

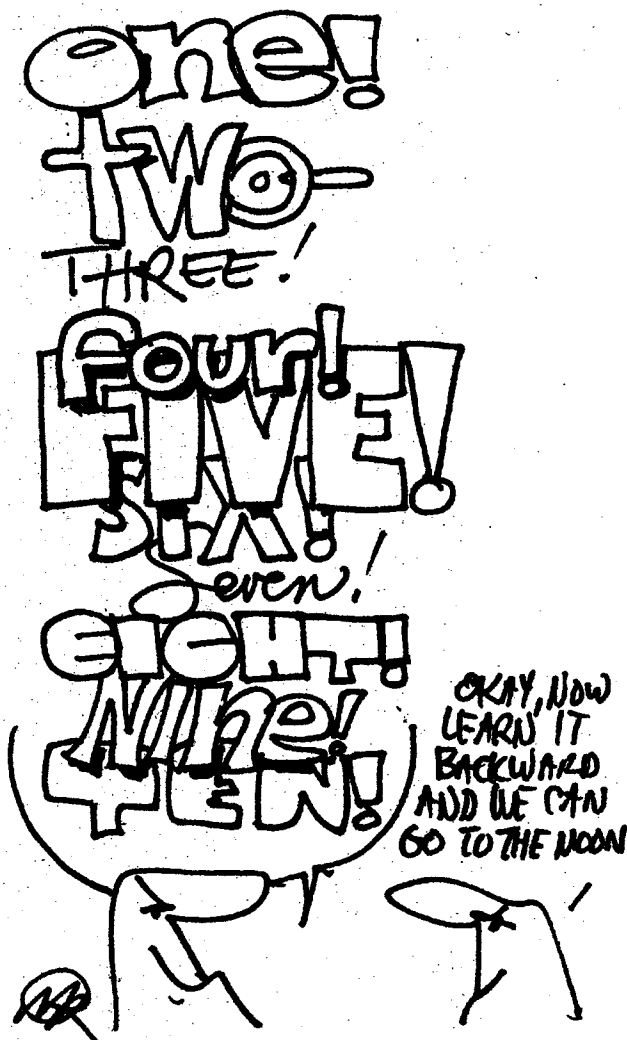


Joe Green has been my friend for thirty years and my father-in-law for three. What an honor to welcome him to Challenger's pages.

THE MISTAKES TECH WRITERS DO LIVE AFTER THEM, WHILE THE GOOD . . .

Joseph L. Green

In my feckless youth I made a mistake – a technical error. I've lost no sleep over it, and only a few people know, despite the fact a certain incorrect figure I established has become an accepted, world-wide standard. I was reminded of this recently when I saw the term appear in an on-line European magazine, reporting on a recent space launch. The figure they gave for the planned geosynchronous orbit was wrong – and it's all my fault.



It came about this way.

The first 18 of my thirty-one and a half years at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC), before I accepted a serious reduction in salary to join NASA, were spent working as an engineering, or "tech" writer, for various contractors. In 1971 I was working for Boeing, supporting NASA's Unmanned Launch Operations Directorate (ULO) on Cape Canaveral. My title was "Project Writer," and it meant I did all the technical documentation for the NASA branch responsible for Atlas-Centaur vehicles (the data was supplied by NASA engineers, of course). I also manned a console during launches of my vehicle. Two other experienced tech writers supported the Delta and Atlas-Agena, and all of us worked with the spacecraft and telemetry branches. The contractors who built and launched the three vehicles had their own tech writing staffs, and produced different, though sometimes overlapping, launch documentation.

I had worked in ULO for two previous years, 1966 and '67*, in the same position but for a different contractor, before transferring to KSC Headquarters to support the Apollo Program. Though operating in the giant shadow of Apollo, and not drawing that much interest from the general public, ULO had continued to grow while I was away. The major growth area was communications satellites, and the primary emphasis was on those designed to operate in geosynchronous orbit (which would be called "Clark" orbits, if this was a just world). "Geosynchronous" means positioned above the equator and in line with it, at the exact altitude and orbital velocity needed to complete one orbit every 24 hours. Since the equator also rotates once during those 24 hours, the net effect is that the satellite appears to remain motionless in the sky. This is very desirable for people sending data to be retransmitted over a large area, such as television signals. Three correctly located spacecraft transmitting the same signal can cover the entire Earth, except for the polar regions.

One of my duties as Project Writer in the earlier two years was to prepare a little one-page sheet of basic facts on each planned launch of the Atlas-Centaur. It was distributed only "in-house" -- to ULO and contractor employees. When I took it

over again, after returning from the Apollo Program, I expanded it to provide a fairly comprehensive overview of the entire mission. I carefully prepared this factsheet in "layman's language," comprehensible to anyone with a high school education. Other employees outside of ULO heard of and wanted it. Distribution expanded, going from an initial figure of about 100 copies eventually up to 2,000. NASA Public Affairs Education and Press branches started giving copies to educators and news media. It became so popular I was asked to prepare ones for Delta launches as well (by then the Atlas-Agena had been discontinued) – though another writer continued to handle the purely technical documentation.

Shortly after I arrived back at ULO, the Atlas-Centaur was scheduled to launch an INTELSAT communications satellite into geosynchronous orbit.** This was not the first NASA attempt at placing satellites there, but it was the first for the Atlas-Centaur. When I did my usual study of the voluminous technical documentation, in preparation for writing the mission fact sheet, I had my first encounter with geosynchronous orbit parameters.

I knew the general operating concepts, of course, but hadn't paid much attention to the exact figures. There they were in front of me, an apogee (highest point) of something over 22,400 statute miles above the Earth's surface, and a perigee (low point) of under 22,100 miles. The Centaur stage would place the spacecraft in that orbit, and over the equator, after which our job was done. INTELSAT operators would make the final height adjustments, using the spacecraft's own small thrusters.

Looking at those figures, I realized that I needed to round off the actual planned final orbital altitude to the nearest hundred. That was as close as most people, and in particular the news media, would ever remember. So I selected 22,300 miles as the figure for the planned altitude, and used that.

My fact sheet sailed through the routine checks by NASA engineering managers without a problem, and was published. The idea of a satellite that could sit apparently motionless in the sky was still very new. INTELSATs, the first satellite system designed to provide communications over the entire world, were receiving a lot of attention. Story after story appeared in the media about the advantages of geosynchronous orbit. And all of them used the figure I had supplied as the final altitude, 22,300 miles. Within a year or two, it had become the established standard. Everyone, from knowledgeable newsmen to devoted space program fans, used it.

ULO continued to launch space vehicles, the only civilian U.S. action around after the last manned flight for Apollo, the Soyuz Test Project, in

1975. Among them were several in the swiftly growing area of spacecraft operating in geosynchronous orbit. And going over the figures for another one a couple of years after my first, I discovered something.

There is an altitude which is perfect for a geosynchronous orbit. Few spacecraft attain it, because exactness isn't that important. A satellite can move slowly up and down in orbit (the only visible effect of not being in a perfect circle) forty or fifty miles, without seriously affecting the received strength of signals from antennas on the ground, or the coverage area of its broadcast signal. Spacecraft operators don't waste precious fuel trying to keep a satellite continuously at an exact altitude; here, close is good enough. (They do have to spend fuel keeping a satellite in line with the equator, because the Earth is slightly pear-shaped, and has more weight below its waist than above it; but that's another story.)

But the perfect altitude for a Clark orbit, it turns out, is 22,238 statute miles above mean sea level. (And it is of interest to note that the master visionary, in his famous article "Extra-Terrestrial Relays" in the October 1945 "Wireless World," called for an orbit "with a radius of 42,000 kilometers." That works out to about 22,100 miles above the surface of the sphere; very close.) That meant I should have rounded off geosynchronous altitude as 22,200 miles, the closest hundred. Using 22,300 miles was a mistake.

By the time I recognized my error, everyone was using the 22,300 mile figure, even engineers and others who were experts in orbital mechanics. Not wanting to openly admit my goof, I tried to correct the mistake by using the exact planned apogee and perigee figures on ensuing factsheets. It was too late. The news media ignored the exact figures, as I had known they would when I chose to round off in the first place, and stuck with the 22,300 number.

It's wrong. And it's all my fault.

It's probably also my only real claim to lasting fame (er – infamy?), except that no one but a few people to whom I've spoken – and now, the readers of **Challenger** – know the real facts. Ah, well.

*An article on what it was like to man a console as a member of a launch team, one of the first reports going out to the SF community, appeared in the March 1967 **Analog**.

The Centaur was the most powerful stage for its weight then in existence, due to using hydrogen as its fuel. The INTELSATS had increased in weight until the less powerful Delta could no longer loft them to geosynchronous orbit. See my article on developing hydrogen as a fuel, written with a NASA engineer, in the January 1968 **Analog.

Making his first appearance as a writing Chall pal is the multiple Hugowinner and convention bon vivant Alexis Gilliland ... along with his friend Morrie.

Morrie the Critic Discusses Love and Death

Alexis Gilliland

Illos by the author

"Men will involve themselves with a woman, usually," said Morrie, taking a sip of beer. I raised my eyebrows, because this was a bit out of Morrie's usual beaten zones which were generally books and movies, religion and politics. He caught my look and shrugged. "It's my birthday, and I'll go off topic if I want to. You're old enough to remember the joke that God gave man a big head and a small head, but only enough blood to run one head at a time, right? That joke is a skewed view of an essential truth: The brain is the seat of sexual excitement, and once engaged with sex, it loses its focus elsewhere. Evolution, which is God's solitaire, selects out the brains that don't have the urge to reproduce--a process going on all around us, even in this very bar."

"Even at this very table," I added.

He gave me a chilly smile. "God's fault, and none of our own, surely, predestination holding that that was because of the way we were made."

"What about free will?"

IJTIHAD, THE STRUGGLE
TO UNDERSTAND ISLAM, HAS
BEEN SUBVERTED BY
WESTERN TECHNOLOGY.
TIME WAS IT TOOK THE
IJTIHADI 20 YEARS TO
MEMORIZE THE KORAN AND
SUNNA, AND NOW THE WHOLE
THING IS ON THE INTERNET
WHERE EVEN WOMEN CAN
USE IT!



"Free will unnecessarily complicates a universe already too complicated. Besides, enforcing it would give an omnipotent God a pain in the omniscience."

"Says who?"

"Men's poor, weak brains are hard wired to do the reproductive thing," he continued, ignoring the question. "Some are defective, yes, the brain being a complicated organ, and sometimes the installed software -- parental or religious, usually -- disables the system, but for maybe 90-percent the driving forces are lust, the simple but powerful urge to fornicate; romantic love, the complicated but powerful fixation on one individual; and pair bonding, the less strong . . ." He hesitated.

"Maybe less swift is more accurate. In the nature of things pair bonding is useful for the raising of children, and bringing up kids takes time, so pair bonding doesn't need to hurry." He shook some salt in his beer and watched the head rise before taking a sip. "Or maybe it can't. All three forces are mediated by brain chemistry, the powerfully addictive endorphins which were selected to propagate the species."

"You're saying sex is drugs?"

He sighed. "No, sex is sex, and drugs -- the kind you buy on the street, anyway -- mimic the effects of the chemicals the brain produces to encourage people to have sex."

"Otherwise we're talking about aspirin and

pepto-bismol, drug store stuff," I agreed. "Go on."

"Where was I? A naive male – if he's lucky – goes from fornication, to fixation, to being an old married guy with kids, who doesn't care where he goes as long as he's in bed by ten. If he is differently lucky, our boy gets quote-unquote smart. He loses his naivety and develops the knack for getting laid. We will ignore the non-negligible health hazards, which include violent death and an impressive array of loathesome diseases. Our boy is in the habit of screwing around, and after a couple of times getting burned because the particular chick upon which he has fixated dumps his two-timing ass, he learns what? To be faithful? No, he despises fidelity, so he learns to avoid fixation instead." He contemplated his glass of beer. "So he never achieves pair bonding. Marriage? If he gets married, he is unfaithful because he knows how. He has achieved a mastery of technique, and for the master, love – more properly womanizing – is easy because he knows all the moves. He makes them all too, even when he knows it isn't right, even when he knows it could get him seriously killed, because he is besotted by lust, addicted to the rush he gets from sexual conquest, and in time his wife – or wives – will dump him, sticking him with a string of serial divorce settlements that must surely diminish his wealth and may inhibit his libido. Eventually he gets old and enfeebled by years, and the only women who will have anything to do with him are long past their expiration date. Alas, they are all he can then get in the unlikely event that he is even up to making the effort. So my question is: Does the memory of dozens or scores of easy lays compensate the guy for winding up alone?"

"Casanova wrote his memoirs, which are still in print," I noted taking a tiny pretzel from the bowl. "Which endowed him with a kind of literary immortality. But generally, no, nothing compensates you for growing old – the shipwreck of old age someone called it." I ate another pretzel and pondered the matter. "Well, maybe conspiring with your grandchildren against their worthless parents would be a minor compensation, a sort of consolation prize for survivors. Your first guy, the one who pair bonded because he never figured out the art of seducing hot babes, his wife dies, and he's also alone, right?"

Morrie pulled at his nose. "If he was really lucky he'd predecease his wife? What you're saying is, if his luck runs out he doesn't have the memories of the easy lays of his youth to fall back on, right?"

"Right. So virtue only pays off if you die young?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Morrie replied at last, taking a sip of beer. "Our first guy may not have the memories of easy lays, but neither does he have the bad habits and health problems from being a ladies man. So what has he got? Pair bonding skills. Which means he is not only comfortable in a stable relationship – hell, everybody is, unless they're scared of marriage – but he also knows how a relationship is stabilized. Newly widowed, he is inclined to remarry because he has kind memories of the married state, and women are willing to take up with him because he's already broken to harness."

I raised my eyebrows. "Broken to harness?"

"A metaphor from training horses," said Morrie, who had recently reviewed several Dick Francis books. "Horses and guys are a lot alike in that you can't depend on them to stick to form. A widower from a happy marriage is known to have been a good husband, and is therefore a good bet to be one. He isn't a sure thing, but at least his rough edges have been knocked off. Think about it, if a woman has the choice, who is she going to choose?"

"The guy she's in love with?"

"Women don't always make rational choices," agreed Morrie, adding more salt to his beer and watching the foam rise. "And sometimes there isn't a choice to be made, so she has to make the best of what she can get. But we are talking about a non-naive woman, maybe with a kid or two, looking to do the best she can, okay?"

A slow nod. "Men are romantics, women are cold blooded realists," I conceded. "Well, we have



to be. Your woman, what choices did you want to give her?"

He took a sip of beer and put his glass down. "A, B, and C, all other things being equal. A is for Alan, a serially divorced guy with a history of infidelity, B is for Ben, a single guy who lived with his mother till she died, C is for Carl, the married man who recently buried his wife. Who is going to make her the best husband? The one who does pair bonding is who, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist or even a cheer leader to figure it's going to be Carl."

"So you say virtue always wins, even if the virtuous don't have the good fortune to die young?"

"No, no. People are different, they want different things, and it always helps to be lucky. Take Alan, for instance, his tao – his truth, the essence of his being – is that he is highly sexed and adventurous. He enjoys having a lot of women, and maybe he even enjoys the fights that provokes. But. When he gets old, and his libido dwindles to manageable proportions, he might, if he gets lucky, settle down to pair bonding with an appropriate female."

"What about Ben?"

Morrie sighed and looked pensive. "Some guys have a low sex drive," he said at last. "And some guys, maybe they don't like women. So perhaps Ben used his mother as an excuse for not getting serious with a woman. Or another guy, if that's the way he was inclined, because with a low sex drive the matter isn't terribly urgent. Taking care of mother is a good excuse for avoiding pain, and maybe that's the best that can be done in Ben's case. Push him into a marriage when he doesn't like women, and he'll get depressed ... " There was a long pause. "My dad was depressed, you know. There would be these big arguments with my mom, and she would be screaming and dad never said a thing. By the time I was ten, he had been drinking for awhile, but I'd never seen him falling down drunk before, and on my sixteenth birthday he ran his car into a bridge abutment. But he'd sent me a birthday card with a hundred dollars in cash ... "

"That was generous," I said, feeling a little awkward at where the conversation had gone. Morrie had never talked about his parents before.

"It was cash," said Morrie taking a swig of beer. "Always before he'd give me a check, and that made mom think his death wasn't an accident." He finished the glass and put it down. "On my birthday card he wrote: "Dear Morrie, Love on your sweet sixteenth. Marry because *you* want to, never because someone tells you you should. All My Love," and he'd crossed out Benjamin and signed himself "Your Father.""

"Is that why you never married?" I asked.

"None of your damn business," he growled. "Do I ask why you never married?"

"To paraphrase Groucho Marx, I'd never marry any man dumb enough to ask me."

Morrie smiled with the right side of his face. "Yeah, sure. Some lucky guy out there doesn't know you've done him a big favor. Are you afraid of dying?"

"Not really," I said. "Why do you ask?"

He laughed, and ordered another beer, and changed the subject.



From A SCIENTIST'S NOTEBOOK, by one of our preeminent Chall pals ...

THE REAL FUTURE OF SPACE

Gregory Benford

Opera Meets the Accountants

Space opera is big these days. Myriad authors send us into distant futures where vast interplanetary or interstellar societies struggle, their cause manned (nearly always; not womanned) by masters of vast ships that sail to operatic destinies.

Since the term was invented in 1941 by Bob ("Wilson") Tucker, space opera has had a grandiosity we pedestrian scientists could long for but seldom believe. Lately, however, developments in our rather plodding space program have provoked in me some hope that such futures make sense.

The best argument against space is its cost. The price of getting into orbit (\$1 million per person-mass to reach low Earth orbit) is so high that few commercial ventures make sense. So far, only communications satellites at geosynchronous orbit have made economic sense. They have lowered the cost of intercontinental calls by orders of magnitude.

Yet space opera boasts giant spacecraft and huge space colonies. Who pays for them?

Another way to pose the problem is, what would a viable, economic space program look like at the end of the 21st century?



The British have acquired a taste for the recent style of space opera – note Ian M. Banks' series, Ken Macleod, Colin Greenland's **Take Back Plenty**, Peter Hamilton's popular mega-scale space operas, and more recently Alastair Reynolds and Charles Stross – all working with futures fragrant of gargantuan techno-sizzle. Interestingly, all these authors and futures are somewhat vaguely socialist. In this they contrast with the sober, often nostalgic near-future looks at the spaced program by Stephen Baxter, notably **Titan**.

A greatly expanded economy will surely be necessary to afford the vast space resources beloved of epic drama. Real-world moderate, welfare-state socialism, as seen in Europe, can afford no grand space operas. Europe has no manned space program at all. The investment for economic benefit is too steep – hundreds of billions just to set up a single solar power satellite in near-Earth orbit, for example. The second such satellite would cost far less, of course, since the infrastructure would be done – but that first step is a killer.

Unless one envisions a society with limitless wealth (say, by matter duplication using the transporter, that *Star Trek* staple), there will always be limits. And the sad lesson of most advanced societies is that they get fat and lazy. Both anarchist and libertarian societies may avoid this, because they aren't top-down socialist. But nobody knows that, because they haven't been tried.

In these operatic futures the classic criticism of left-socialist economics has gone unanswered: that markets provide far greater information flow than do top-down, directed economic systems. Through prices, each stage from raw materials to finished product has an added cost attached, as an increased price to the next step. This moves economic information through great distances and over time, which feeds back to the earlier stages, all working toward higher efficiency. Classical socialism ends up starved for feedback. Committees or commissars are not enough to replace the ever-running detail of prices.

Politics does not offer simple maps, but one should distinguish between the Banks/Reynolds/Stross pole and the Macleod pole. The BRS pole seems Libertarian/anarchist, and by Libertarianism I mean anarchism with a police force and a respect for contract law. Macleod is the closest thing to a true classical socialist, as in **The Stone Canal**. But even Macleod is all over the board. Though socialism was his earliest fancy, he experiments with multiple social structures. In later works he espouses variants of libertarianism and anarchism, and even occasional capitalism.

The BRS pole is very muscular, quite capable of militarism and imperialism when necessary (consider Banks's **Use of Weapons**). Socialism isn't just cradle-to-grave security here. Contracts count for a lot (Reynolds' **Revelation Space**), and mild anarchism is often the preferred social structure of the major protagonists. In Charles Stross's **Singularity Sky** the aliens are capitalists who value everything in trade in terms of its information content, a breath of hip economics.

The whiff of welfare socialism in these novels contrasts with the bright, energetic atmosphere. This calls into question whether advanced socialist societies could plausibly support grandiose space-operatic futures.

In some ways, popular socialist thinking parallels Creationism. Unable to imagine how order and increasing complexity can arise from unseen competitive mechanisms, socialists fall into the belief that advanced societies must come from top-down direction – often, in practice, from a sole master thinker, the Chairman-for-life so common in totalitarian states. In politics, everybody is entitled to their own opinion. But everybody is not entitled to their own facts – especially not in economics.

In SF, economic dodges began well before *Star Trek*'s moneyless economy. Idealists have always hated mere money. It seems so, well, *crass*. Still, with no medium of exchange, there is no way to allocate scarce resources, so inevitably politics and brute force dictate outcomes.

Typically in such regimes, one can still amass wealth, just by owning things. To avoid state controls and taxes, barter returns – presto, we're back in the Middle Ages.

Money isn't the object of people's lives, it's just how we keep score. Money measures economic matters. Without it, we can't see what works and what doesn't.

Few in SF ever go beyond this simple truth. Certainly *Trek* seems oblivious to it.

Granted, there are still too many future societies where one doesn't even get to see how the plumbing works, let alone the economy. However odd the future will be, it surely won't be a repeat; economics evolves. The leftish space operas of recent years have plenty of quantum computers and big, Doc Smith-style planet-smashing weaponry, but the hard bits of real economics they swerve around. Maybe because they

haven't any real answers, or aren't interested. Opera isn't realism.

Though New Wave SF had a leftist tinge, it had no real political/economic agenda. The common association of hard SF with libertarian ideas, on the other hand, may have sprung from a root world view. Science values the primacy of the individual mind, which can do an experiment (thought experiments, as with Einstein, or real ones) to check any prevailing theory.

This heroic model lies deep in Western culture. Individual truth and a respect for facts is the fulcrum of libertarian theory. Of course, anarchist societies (not socialist), as in Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed*, can depict the struggle of the lone physicist against the collective, received wisdom. But *The Dispossessed*'s logic is not about economics – it is a deeply felt story about a single man's sacrifice and discovery. The social satires of Pohl and Kornbluth have more bite, and probably more useful truth for today. *The Space Merchants* by its title foretells much we may learn from.

I speak first of economics because it is something of a science, with its own Nobel Prize, and it influences the science of space – real space, not the SF operas – quite crucially. In the end, the accountants want to know who is going to pay for all this, and why.

What possible economic motive could a space-faring society have?

Mining the Sky

Motives answer needs.

Within a century we are going to start running out of two essentials: metals and energy. Within about 50 years most of our oil reserves will be gone—farewell, SUVs! The Middle East will cease to be a crucial tinderbox, simply because countries there will be poor and doomed. Most policy makers know this but seldom speak of it in public—half a century is unimaginably long for a politician.

I will deal with the vast problems of energy supply in my next column. Less well recognized is that many metal ore deposits in the crust of the earth will be mined out within a century. Of course, substitute materials can be and have been found. But some are crucial and to substitute something else changes the world for the worse.

My favorite example of this is oysters. In Dickens novels you can read of poor people forced to eat oysters, then a cheap, easily found, but somewhat lower class food, while the rich ate beef Wellington. Now we gobble down McDonald's burgers and oysters are a fancy appetizer. Sure, we're well fed – but I prefer oysters, which as a boy I ate for breakfast in my fisherman family, little appreciating my luxury.

Technology can help us greatly in the uplifting of humanity—the great task confronting us. A century ago, aluminum was a rare metal more costly than silver; now we toss it away in soft drink cans – then recycle it. But inevitably the poor nations' growing demand will overburden our demand on the Earth's crust and we will surely run short of the simplest metals, even iron.

As it turns out, both metals and energy are available in space in quantities that we will desperately need.

We also need a clean environment. Mining for metals comes second to fossil fuel extraction in its environmental polluting impact. Coal slag is the #1 water pollutant in the U.S., with runoff from iron mines the second.

Detailed analysis shows that metals brought from the asteroids will be competitive with dwindling Earthly supplies. Better, by refining them in space, we prevent pollution, particularly of another scarce resource – water.

There is money to be made in that sky. An ordinary metal-rich asteroid a kilometer in diameter has high-quality nickel, cobalt, platinum and iron. The platinum-group metals alone would be worth \$150 billion on Earth at present prices. Separating out these metals takes simple chemistry done every day in Earthly refineries, using carbon and oxygen compounds for the processing steps. Such an asteroid has plenty carbon and oxygen, so the refining could be done while we slowly tug it toward a very high Earth orbit—a task taking decades.

Steam Rockets

Crucial in all this is the shipping cost, so attention focuses on how to move big masses through the

deep sky.

Certainly not with chemical rockets, which have nearly outlived their role in deep space.

Liquid hydrogen and oxygen meet in the reaction chambers of our big rockets, expelling steam at about 4.1 km/sec speeds. That is the best chemical rockets can do, yet to get to low Earth orbit demands a velocity change of about 9 km/sec – over twice what the best rockets can provide without paying the price of hauling lots of added fuel to high altitude, before burning it. This means a 100-ton launch vehicle will deliver only about 8 tons to orbit – the rest goes to fuel and superstructure.

Moving around the inner solar system, which takes a total velocity change of 20 or 30 km/sec, is thus a very big deal. Current systems can throw only a few percent of their total mass from ground to Mars, for example. Big velocity changes (“delta-V” in NASA speak) of large masses lies far beyond any chemical method. To get from Earth to the biggest asteroid, Ceres, takes a delta-V of 18.6 km/sec, which means the payload would comprise only half of one percent of the vehicle mass.

Using chemical rockets to carry people or cargo anywhere in deep space was like the Europeans discovering and exploring North America using birch bark canoes--theoretically possible, but after all, the Indians did not try it in reverse, for good reason.

For thirty years NASA ignored the technology that can answer these challenges. In the late 1960s both the US and the USSR developed and ran nuclear rockets for hundreds of hours. These achieved double the exhaust velocity of the best chemical rockets, in the 9 km/sec range. These rockets pump ultra-cold liquid hydrogen past an array of ceramic plates, all glowing hot from the decay of radioactive fuel embedded within. The plume does not carry significant radioactivity.

Those early programs were shut down by nuclear-limiting treaties, appropriate for the Cold War but now out of date. We will need that technology to venture further into space. NASA has gingerly begun building more of the nuclear-electrical generators they ran many missions with, including the Voyagers (still running after over a quarter of a century, and twice as far away as is Pluto) and the Viking landers on Mars. These are simple devices powered by the decay of two pounds of plutonium dioxide, yielding 250 Watts of heat. Indeed, simply heating spacecraft in the chill of space is the everyday use for small radioactive pellets, which were embedded into every spacecraft headed outward from Earth orbit.

Even this tentative step back to the past seems to acutely embarrass NASA. They elaborately describe how safe the technologies are, because we live in a Chicken Little age, spooked by tiny risks.

Far bigger accidents have already happened. Four large nuclear reactors have fallen from orbit, none has caused any distribution of radioactive debris. In fact, a Soviet reactor plunged into the Canadian woods and emitted so little radioactivity we could never find it. Embedded in tough ceramic nuggets, the plutonium cannot be powdered and inhaled.

Beyond this return to our past capabilities, NASA is considering building a nuclear-driven ion rocket. This will yield exhaust velocities (jetting pure hydrogen) of 250 km/s – a great improvement. But the total thrust of these is small, suitable only for long missions and light payloads.

Using hydrogen as fuel maximizes exhaust velocity (for a given temperature, lighter molecules move faster). And we can get hydrogen from water, wherever it can be found. We’ve discovered from our Mars orbiters that Mars has plenty of ice within meters of the surface. Comets, the Jovian ice moons – all are potential refueling stations.

But holding hydrogen at liquid temperatures demands heavy technology and careful handling. Water is easier to pump, but provides only a third the exhaust velocity. Many believe that ease of handling will drive our expansion into space to use water, not more exotic fuels.

Living Off the Land

What could our space program be like right now, if we hadn’t shut down the nuclear program? The road not taken could



already have led us to the planets.

The key to the solar system may well be nuclear rockets – *nukes* to friend and foe alike. The very idea of them had of course suffered decades of oblivion, from the early 1970s until the early days of the 21st Century. Uranium and plutonium carry over ten thousand times as much energy per gram than do chemical rockets, such as liquid hydrogen burning liquid oxygen.

So in the end, advanced rockets may well be steam rockets, all the way from the launch pad to Pluto. Chemical boosters can get a nuke rocket into orbit, where it turns on. Whether with liquid hydrogen married to liquid oxygen, or with water passing by slabs of hot plutonium, they all flash into plumes of steam.

Real space commerce demands high energy efficiency. Realization of this returned to NASA in 2002, with the hesitant first steps of its nuclear Project Prometheus (bureaucracy loves resplendent names).

The first rush of heavy Mars exploration will probably prove the essential principle: refuel at the destination. Live off the land. Don't haul reaction mass with you. Nuclear rockets are far easier to refuel because they need only water – easy to pump, and easy to find, if you pick the right destination. Nearly all the inner solar system is dry as a bone, or drier. If ordinary sidewalk concrete were on the moon, it would be mined for its water, because everything around it would be far drier.

Mars is another story. It bears out the general rule that the lighter elements were blown outward by the radiation pressure of the early, hot sun, soon after its birth. This dried the worlds forming nearby, and wettened those further out – principally the gas giants, whose thick atmospheres churn with ices and gases. Mars has recently proved to be wet beneath its ultraviolet-blasted surface. Without much atmosphere, its crust has been sucked dry by the near-vacuum. Beneath the crust are thick slabs of ice, and at the poles lie snow and even glaciers. So explorers there could readily refuel by melting the buried ice and pumping it into their tanks.

The moons of Jupiter and the other gas giants are similar gas stations, though they orbit far down into the gravitational well of those massive worlds, requiring big delta-V to reach. Pluto, though, is a surprisingly easy mission destination. Small, deeply cold, with a large ice moon like a younger twin, it is far away but reachable with a smaller delta-V..

Of course, there are more sophisticated ways to use water. One could run electricity through it and break off the oxygen, saving it to breathe, and then chill the hydrogen into liquid fuel. That would be the most efficient fuel of all for a nuclear rocket.

But the equipment to keep hydrogen liquefied is bulky and prone to error – imagine the problems of pumps that have to operate in deep space at 200 degrees below zero, over periods of years. An easier method would be to use that hydrogen to combine with the Martian atmosphere, which is mostly CO₂, carbon dioxide. Together they make oxygen and methane, CH₄, both easy to store. Burn them together in a nozzle gives a fairly high efficiency chemical rocket. A utility reactor on Mars could provide the substantial power needed for this.

Still, that would demand an infrastructure at both ends of the route. Genuine exploration – say, a mission to explore the deep oceans of Europa, Jupiter's moon – would need to carry a large nuclear reactor for propulsion and power, gathering its reaction mass from the icy worlds.

NASA is studying an expedition to Europa using a nuclear-driven ion rocket, which would carry its own fuel. It will have to fire steadily for *seven* years to get to Europa, land and begin sending out rovers. Testing the reliability of such a long-lived propulsion scheme demands decades of work, effectively putting off the mission until the 2020s.

Far better would be a true nuclear fission rocket throwing hot gas out the back. If it could melt surface ice on Europa and tank up with water, it could then fly samples back to us.

The true use of a big nuclear reactor opens far more ambitious missions. The real job of studying that deep ocean is boring through the ice layer, which is quite possibly miles thick, and maybe even hundreds of miles. No conceivable drill could do it. But simple hot water could, if piped down and kept running, slowly opening a bore hole. Hot water has been tried in Antarctica and it works.

To test for life on Europa would demand that we send a deep-sea style submarine into those dark, chilly waters. To power it we could play out a thick, tough power cord, just as do the undersea robot explorers that now nose about in the hulks of the *Titanic* and the *Bismarck*. Only nuclear can provide such vast powers in space.

Dreadnoughts of Space

This leads to a future using *big* nukes. The payload would be a pod sitting atop a big fuel tank, which in turn would feed into the reactor. Of course, for manned flights the parts have to line up that way, because the water in the tank shields the crew from the reactor and from the plasma plume in the magnetic nozzle. To even see the plume, and diagnose it, they will need a rearview mirror floating out to the side. The whole stack will run most of its trajectory in zero gee, when the rocket is off and the reactor provides onboard power.

A top thick disk would spin to create centrifugal gravity, so the crew could choose what fractional gee they would wish to live in. Perhaps forty meters in diameter, looking like an angel food cake, it would spin lazily around. The outer walls would be meter-thick and filled with water for radiation shielding. Nobody could eyeball the outside except through electronic feeds.

Plausible early designs envision a ship a hundred meters long, riding a blue-white flare that stretches back ten kilometers before fraying into steamy streamers. Plasma fumes and blares along the exhaust length, ions and electrons finding each other at last and reuniting into atoms, spitting out a harsh glare. This blue pencil points dead astern, so bright that, leaving Earth orbit, it could be seen from the ground by naked eye it.

Ordinary fission nuclear power plants are quite good at generating electrical power but they are starved for the neutrons that slam into nuclei and break them down. That is why power reactors are regulated by pulling carbon rods in and out of the "pile" of fissionable elements – the carbon can absorb neutrons, cooling the whole ensemble and preventing overheating.

The next big revolution in nukes would then come with the invention of practical thermonuclear *fusion* machines.

Fusion slams light nuclei like hydrogen or helium together, also yielding energy, as in the hydrogen bomb. Unlike fission, fusion is rich in hot particles but has trouble making much energy.

Most spaceflight engineers have paid little attention to fusion, believing – as the skeptics have said for half a century – that controlled fusion power plants lie twenty years ahead, and always will. Fusion has to hold hot plasma in magnetic bottles, because ordinary materials cannot take the punishment. The most successful bottle is a magnetic donut, most prominently the Russian-inspired Tokamak.

To make it into a rocket, let the doughnut collapse. Fusion rockets are the opposite of fusion electric power planets – they work by letting confinement fail. Ions fly out. Repeat, by building the doughnut and starting the reaction again.

The rocket engine core is this come-and-go doughnut, holding the plasma, then letting it escape down a magnetic gullet that shapes the plasma into a jet out the back. Rather than straining to confine the fusing, burning plasma, as our so-far-unsuccessful power plant designs do, a rocket could just relax the magnetic bottle.

So these fusion nukes are a wholly different sort of vehicle. They can promise far higher exhaust velocities than the fission nukes.

Leaving high Earth orbit, such ships will not ignite their fusion drives until they are well outside the Van Allen belts, the magnetic zones where particles are trapped--or otherwise the spray of plasma would short out innumerable communications and scientific satellites ringing the Earth. (This actually happened in 1962, when the USA Project Starfish set off a hydrogen bomb in the Van Allen belts. People have trouble believing anybody ever did this, but those were different days, indeed. The ions and electrons built up charge on our communications satellites, most of which belonged to the Department of Defense, and electrically shorted them out. Presto, billions of dollars lost in surveillance satellites gone dead within the first hour. A colossal embarrassment, never repeated.)

The Long Prospect

So will we have a space operatic future? If that means huge spacecraft driven by spectacular engines, maybe so. Interstellar flight lies beyond the technologically foreseeable, alas.

But the rest of the space opera agenda depends on your political prognostications. Will Ian Banks anarchist/socialist empire arise from remorseless economic forces? Or perhaps Robert Heinlein's libertarian frontier?

Humanity's current dilemma is exploding populations amid, and *versus*, environmental decay and

dwindling resources. Of course we've dodged most of the bullets, thanks to the engineers and scientists. But we cannot count on them forever to solve our social problems.

Rick Tumlinson, a leading space advocate, put it this way:

Ultimately, nearly anything you want to do in a "sustainable" world will be something someone else cannot do – and that will mean limits. Limits to when and where and how you travel, how much you consume, the size of your home, the foods you eat, the job where you work, even how long you are allowed to live... Yet Earth's population continues to grow.

Quite Heinleinesque. Robert Zubrin, an eloquent exponent of space as the last and greatest frontier, puts it eloquently:

We see around us now an ever more apparent loss of vigor of American society: increasing fixity of the power structure and bureaucratization of all levels of society; impotence of political institutions to carry off great projects; the cancerous proliferation of regulations affecting all aspects of public, private and commercial life; the spread of irrationalism; the balkanization of popular culture; the loss of willingness by individuals to take risks, to fend or think for themselves; economic stagnation and decline; the deceleration of the rate of technological innovation and a loss of belief in the idea of progress itself. Everywhere you look, the writing is on the wall.

This is a neat way to summarize the agenda of an entire culture: the space frontier revolutionaries. They tend to be Heinleiner-style libertarians. It galls them that the future of space still lies in government hands.

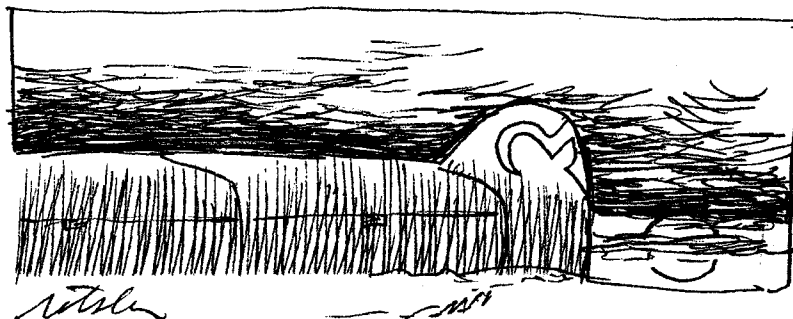
I've been talking about the nuts and bolts of moving large masses around the solar system, for exploration or economics. But the ultimate agenda is one that has lain at the core of our society for centuries: the promise that expanding spatial horizons in turn opens those enlightening horizons of the mind that have made the modern age.

Many concepts will fail, and staying the course will require leadership.

Consider how John F. Kennedy voiced the goals of the Apollo program:

We choose to go to the Moon in this decade, and to do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard. Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.

Comments to gbenford@uci.edu.



In the Oakland Tribune, Saturday, 10/22/66.



RONNIE

*You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool **all** of the people **all** of the time.*

The bespectacled profile in the lower left hand corner of this photograph belongs to me. And Ronald Reagan sure had *me* fooled, back in 1966, when I was 17, and he was running against the obnoxious mealy-mouthed incumbent Pat Brown for California governor. That night he signed my placard and a copy of **Time**, and my high school pals and I exulted. You should read my diary entry for that day. I gushed over every detail.

And the next time I saw him, I was fooled again, at a meeting of the Regents of the University of California. When he showed at a doorway I took his photo, and he raised a hand in hello, as if just plain delighted to see *me*. They let anyone into Regents' meetings

back then, so I got to sit in the same room as H.R. Haldeman and Robert Finch and Jesse Unruh and Patty Hearst's mother – who smiled at me. And yes, Ronald Reagan, who barely opened his mouth throughout, and only seemed conscious after some feeb came in and served him with a subpoena. Then he sat and twirled a gold pen between his palms and glared into space, pissed as hell. When he walked out the door he was instantly transformed – all smiles, all waves.

And the *next* time I saw him was even better, or even worse. In 1968 I crashed a Republican dinner at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley, later that year the site of the worldcon, and was leaning against a post in the middle of the dining room, amongst all those rich and respectable Republicans, when my gaze wandered up to the table in the front of the room, and my eye caught that of Ronald Wilson Reagan, governor of California, and the sonuvabitch *winked and smiled* at me. Shook hands with him that night. "Third time I've seen you, Governor," I said, and "Well, nice to see you again," *he* said.

And then it was 1969. The creepy Third World students rioted to get a Third World College at the University – just what they'd tried across the Bay at San Francisco State. The cops tear-gassed the whole school, including me, and I wondered, why would Ronald Reagan, whom I still thought incapable of such things, permit that? And then it was *May 15*, 1969, the day of People's Park, and Ronald Reagan would never fool me again.

I saw him once more after that. Another Regents' meeting. This time they didn't let us in. This time we stood around outside and a clown brought a huge bowl of eggs to throw at Reagan as he left. Once

more the back of my head made the newspaper with Ronald Reagan. You can see Reagan's hand inside the car, waving, and a guy with a moustache winding up to pitch an egg at Ronnie's car. Even then I figured he was probably one of Ed Meese's *agents provocateur*.

As Reagan's car drove off, I saw through the back window to another quintessential Reagan moment. He leaned over and waved at a hippy couple walking up the street. The girl waved back. And now that Reagan is dead and deified – or vice versa, because he's long been a demigod to right wingers in this land of ours – I have to wonder, *did he mean it?* That wave to the girl, that wink to me? If so, how then could he send cops and National Guardsmen and helicopters to spew acid gas on us, with a clear conscience and ringing contempt? Did he mean that, even, or was the carnage he inflicted upon my college and my city only a calculation, designed to win favor with the wingers in Orange County – and out in America? Did he mean it? Did he mean *any* of it?

I really, truly, have my doubts. Did you see that **Rolling Stone** where Richard Avedon published photographs of the most powerful people alive? Exquisite insights into his subjects' souls. Carter, about to weep. Reagan, grim, closed. *A man may smile, and smile, and be a villain ...*

In 1980, when he was running for President, and Meese and his grisly crew really had him primed, he came to Greensboro, North Carolina to give a speech. I lived there, then,, so I popped over to the Municipal Auditorium to see him again – and couldn't get in. By then security was everywhere, and the paranoid smell of revolution. Cops, apologizing for the security people, asked me to leave the grounds. I never got near Reagan again.

Okay, credit where due. You can give him credit for playing Gorbachev so adroitly, so the man with the birthmark would dismantle his failed society without a shot – although I'd credit the Pope with the cultural miracle that persuaded Europe that communism was a dead duck. But Reagan had his part in that, and it was a big, visible part, and credit where due. I should look at the Big Picture and forgive Reagan for People's Park and the tear gas I had to eat in my days of youth, for every man who is larger than life steps on a few toes on his way up, right? Even Eisenhower helped trash the Bonus Marchers. So it isn't important that Reagan made class hatred acceptable in America again. I should forget that film of him and his wife chatting with the Queen of England – going on and on in sniffing disgust about American *welfare cheats*. Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, mocking and degrading his country's poor to the richest woman in the world. I shouldn't remember that. I should let it slide that "Dutch" Reagan, the poor kid from Illinois, loathed poor people.

Such insights, memories such as people's Parl, have no place, of course, in the Big Picture. There Reagan shines, the Conqueror of Communism, and so we should only look at the Big Picture. Tell you what. *You* look at the Big Picture. I'll look at my own pictures, the snapshots I took on forgotten days long ago when truth rode through the streets of Berkeley, days when it meant your life to have hair past your shoulders or oppose Richard Nixon's war, when Ronald Reagan said it was all right to beat and even kill us – and cheered when they did. . May 15th was the 35th anniversary of the assault on People's Park. On June 5, 2004, the day Ronald Reagan died, I remembered that day. I've never forgotten it. I'll never forget it. *Won't get fooled again.*





Just for the record, I disagree with Mike about the Lord of the Rings trilogy ...

WHY CAROL WON'T SIT NEXT TO ME AT SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES

Mike Resnick

Illo by RANDY CLEARY

Carol has a high threshold for embarrassment. You can't be married to me for 42 years and *not* have one. But recently she has announced that she will no longer sit next to me at science fiction movies, that indeed she will sit on the far side of the theater and do her very best to pretend that she doesn't know me.

She's right. I'm just not much fun to be around at science fiction movies. I don't know quite how this came about. I used to love them when I was growing up. I forgave them their lack of special effects and their B-movie casts and budgets. OK, so *Them* paid no attention to the square-cube law; except for that, it was as well-handled as one could possibly want. And maybe *The Thing* wasn't quite what John Campbell had in mind when he wrote "Who Goes There?", but it was treated like science fiction rather than horror (the same cannot be said for the big-budget remake), and the overall ambience was rational. As for *Forbidden Planet*, nothing I've seen in the last 50 years has stirred my sense of wonder quite as much as Walter Pidgeon's guided tour of the wonders of the Krell. A decade and a half later Stanley Kubrick made a trio of wildly differing but excellent science fiction movies – *Dr. Strangelove*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *A Clockwork Orange* – each of which treated the field with respect.

Then, just about the time I became a full-time science fiction writer, Hollywood started turning out one intellectually insulting science fiction movie after another. I mean, these things were almost dumber than network television shows. And I started muttering – louder and louder with each movie, Carol assures me – things like "No editor paying 3 cents a word for the most debased science fiction magazine in the world would let *me* get away with that!" Before long audiences would pay more attention to my rantings than to the movies.

I keep hearing that science fiction movies are getting better, that once George Lucas showed what could be done on the big screen we no longer have anything to be ashamed of when comparing ourselves to other genres.

That makes me mutter even louder.

So let me get it off my chest, which is a figure of speech, because actually the stupidity of science fiction movies is much more likely to eat a hole in my stomach lining.

And let me add a pair of stipulations:

First, I'm only interested in movies that aspired to be archbishop, which is to say, movies with major budgets and major talent that really and truly meant to be good movies. I will not consider such epics as **Space Sluts in the Slammer** (yes, it really exists), as it seems not unreasonable to assume it was never meant to be a contender for the year-end awards.

Second, when I speak of stupidities, I'm not talking about the nit-picking that goes on in outraged letter columns. If the math or science are wrong only in area that scientists, mathematicians, or obsessive science fiction fans would find fault with, I'll ignore it. If George Lucas doesn't know what a parsec is, or Gene Roddenbury and his successors think you can hear a ship whiz by in space, I'm willing to forgive and forget.

So what's left?

Well, let's start with **Star Wars**. First, has no one except me noticed that it's not pro-democracy but pro-royalty? I mean, all this fighting to depose the Emperor isn't done to give the man on the street (or the planet) a vote; it's to put Princess Leia on the throne and let *her* rule the galaxy instead of him, which is an improvement only in matter of degree. And it drives me crazy that in 1991 we could put a smart bomb down a chimney, and that in 2002 we could hit a target at 450 miles, but that computerized handguns and other weaponry can't hit a Skywalker or a Solo at 25 paces.

Return of the Jedi? Doesn't it bother anyone else that Adolf Hitler – excuse me; Darth Vader – the slaughterer of a couple of hundred million innocent men and women, becomes a Good Guy solely because he's Luke's father?

And what could be sillier than that final scene, where Luke looks up and sees Yoda and the shades of Darth Vader and Obi-wan Kenobi smiling at him. That was too much even for Carol, whose first comment on leaving the theater was, "Poor Luke! Wherever he goes from now on, he's a table for four."

Then along came **E.T.**, which, for a few years at least, was the highest-grossing film of all time, until replaced by an even dumber one.

You think it wasn't that intellectually insulting? Let's consider the plot of that billion-dollar grosser, shall we?

1. If **E.T.** can fly/teleport, why doesn't he do so at the beginning of the film, when he's about to be left behind? (Answer: because this is what James Blish used to call an idiot plot, which is to say if everyone doesn't act like an idiot you've got no story.)

2. What mother of teenaged children walks through a kitchen littered with empty beer cans and doesn't notice them? (Answer: in all the world, probably only this one.) This is the blunder that started me muttering loud enough to disturb other moviegoers for the first time.

3. While we're on the subject of the mother and the kitchen, what is a woman with an unexceptional day job doing living in an \$900,000 house in one of the posher parts of the Los Angeles area? (Even I don't have an answer to that.)

4. Why does **E.T.** die? (Answer: so he can come back to life.)

5. Why does **E.T.** un-die? (Still awaiting an answer, even a silly one, for this.)

6. When **E.T.** finally calls home, the lights in the room don't even flicker. I'm no scientist, but I'd have figured the power required would have shorted out the whole city.

Cheap shots, Resnick (I hear you say); you're purposely avoiding the films that were aimed at an adult audience, films like **Blade Runner** and **Signs**, for example.

All right. Let's take **Blade Runner** (and someone please explain the title, since I never saw a blade or a runner in the whole damned movie). Great future Los Angeles; it really put you there. Nice enough acting jobs, even if Harrison Ford was a little wooden. Wonderful sets, costumes, effects.

But the premise is dumber than dirt. We are told up front that the androids are going to expire in two weeks – so why in the world is Harrison Ford risking his life to hunt them down when he could just go fishing for 14 days and then pick up their lifeless bodies?

But that premise looks positively brilliant compared to the critically-acclaimed Mel Gibson movie **Signs**, which grossed about half a billion dollars worldwide two short years ago.

Consider: would *you* travel 50 trillion miles or so for a little snack? That's what the aliens did. If

they're here for any other reason except to eat people, the film never says so.

OK, let's leave aside how much they're paying in terms of time and energy to come all this way just to eat us for lunch. What is the one thing we know will kill them? Water (which also killed the Wicked Witch of the West, a comparison that was not lost on some perceptive viewers). And what are human beings composed of? More than 90% water.

So the aliens come all this way to poison themselves (and then forget to die until someone hits them with a baseball bat, which Hollywood thinks is almost a nifty a weapon against aliens of indeterminate physical abilities as a light-saber.)

By now I didn't just mutter in the theater, I yelled at the screenwriters (who, being 3000 miles away, probably didn't hear me.) But I figured my vocalizing would soon come to an end. After all, we all knew that the sequel to **The Matrix** would show the world what real science fiction was like; it was the most awaited movie since Lucas' two all-but-unwatchable sequels to the Star Wars trilogy.

So along comes **The Matrix Retarded** ... uh, sorry, make that **Reloaded**. You've got this hero, Neo, with godlike powers. He can fly as fast and far as Superman. He can stop a hail of bullets or even bombs in mid-flight just by holding up his hand. He's really nifty, even if he never changes expression.

So does he fly out of harm's way when a hundred Agent Smiths attack him? Of course not. Does he hold up his hand and freeze them in mid-charge? Of course not. Can Neo be hurt? No. Can Agent Smith be hurt? No. So why do they constantly indulge in all these easily avoidable, redundant, and incredibly stupid fights?

Later the creator of the Matrix explains that the first Matrix was perfect. It only had three or four flaws, which is why he built five more versions of it. Uh...excuse me, but that's not that way *my* dictionary defines "perfect".

You want more foolishness? The whole world runs on computers, which means the whole world is powered by electricity to a far greater extent than America is at this moment. So why is the underground city lit only by burning torches?

I hit J above high C explaining to the screen what the least competent science fiction editor in the world would say to the writer who tried to pawn **The Matrix Reloaded** off on him.

Now, you'd figure Stephen Spielberg could make a good science fiction movie, wouldn't you? I mean, he's the most powerful director in Hollywood's history. Surely if he wanted to spend a few million dollars correcting flaws in the film before releasing it to the public, no one would dare say him nay.

So he makes **Minority Report**, and to insure the box office receipts he gets Tom Cruise to star in it and announces that it's based on a Philip K. Dick story. (Dick is currently Hollywood's favorite flavor of "sci-fi" writer, this in spite of the fact that nothing adapted from his work bears more than a passing resemblance to it.)

And what do we get for all this clout?

Well, for starters, we get a future less than half a century from now in which the Supreme Court has no objection to throwing people in jail for *planning* crimes.

We get a scene where Tom Cruise escapes from the authorities by climbing into a car that's coming off an assembly line and driving off in it. That one really got me muttering at a ten- decibel level. Has *anyone* ever seen a car come off an assembly line with a full tank of gas?

We are told that the three seers/mutants/whatever-they-are can only foresee capital crimes. Even bank robberies slip beneath their psychic radar. But in a crucial scene, one of them predicts a necessary rainstorm. (I hit 12 decibels on that one.)

It's also explained that they have physical limits. If they're in Washington, D.C., they can't foresee a crime in, say, Wilmington, Delaware. But the villain of the piece, who knows their abilities and limitations better than anyone, plans to use them to control the entire nation, which the last time I looked at a map extends even beyond Delaware. (14 decibels that time.)

OK, I'm too serious. These are just entertainments. I should go see one made from a comic book – Hollywood's intellectual Source Material Of Choice these days – and just sit back and enjoy it.

Good advice. So we went to see **Hulk**. You all know the story; it's swiped from enough science

fictional sources. I didn't mind the poor animation. I didn't mind the idiot plot that had Bruce Banner's father responsible for his affliction. I didn't mind this; I didn't mind that. Then we came to Thunderbolt Ross, the 5-star general – and suddenly I was muttering again.

I was willing suspend my disbelief for this idiocy, but alas, I couldn't suspend my common sense. Here's this top military commander, the film's equivalent of Norman Schwartzkopf or Tommy Franks. And here's the Hulk, who makes Superman look like a wimp. Now, you have to figure that even a moderately bright 6-year-old ought to be able to conclude that if attacking the Hulk and shooting him doesn't hurt him, but just makes him bigger and stronger and angrier and more destructive, the very last thing you want to do when he's busy being the Hulk rather than Bruce Banner is shoot or otherwise annoy him, rather than simply wait for him to change back into his relatively helpless human form. That, however, seems to be beyond both our general and our screenwriters.

Even the good science fiction movies assume that their audiences are so dumb that logic means nothing to them, as long as you dazzle them with action and zap guns and aliens and the like.

Take *The Road Warrior* (a/k/a *Mad Max 2*), which is truly a fine movie: well-acted, well-conceived, well-directed. And yet...

In *The Road Warrior's* post-atomic future, the rarest and most valuable commodity in the world is refined oil (i.e., gasoline), because the distances in Australia, where it takes place, are immense, and you can't get around without a car or a motorcycle. The conflict takes place between the Good Guys, who have built a primitive fortress around a refining plant, and the Bad Guys, a bunch of futuristic bikers, who want to get their hands on that gasoline, which is so rare that it's probably worth more per drop than water in the desert.

So what do the bad guys who desperately need this petrol do? They power up their cars and bikes and race around the refinery for hours on end, day in and day out. If they would have the brains to conserve a little of that wasted energy, they wouldn't have to risk their lives trying to replace it. (And, while I'm thinking of it, where do they get the fuel to power their dozens of constantly-running vehicles?)

Then there were Spielberg's mega-grossing dinosaur movies, *Jurassic Park* and *The Lost World*. The former hypothesizes that if you stand perfectly still six inches from a hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex he won't be able to tell you're there. I would like to see the screenwriter try that stunt with any hungry carnivore – mammal or reptile – that has ever lived on this planet. The latter film shows you in graphic detail (and with questionable intelligence) that a T. Rex can outrun an elevated train, but cannot catch a bunch of panicky Japanese tourists who are running away, on foot, in a straight line.

Although these two films are the prime offenders, simply because Spielberg has the resources to know better, I am deathly tired of the superhuman (uh...make that supercarnasaur) feats with which Hollywood endows T. Rex, who seems to be the only terrifying dinosaur of which it was aware until someone told Spielberg about velociraptors. (Give them another decade or two and they might actually discover allosaurus and Utahraptors.)

T. Rex weighed about seven tons. By comparison, a large African bull elephant weighs about six tons, and could probably give old T. Rex one hell of a battle. But no one suggests that a six ton elephant can throw trucks and trains around, break down concrete walls, or do any of the other patently ridiculous things T. Rex can do on screen.

And the list – and the intellectually offended muttering – goes on and on. In *Alien* they all go off by themselves to search for the creature; haven't they learned *anything* from five centuries of dumb horror movies? At the end of *Total Recall*, Governor Schwarzenegger is outside for maybe six minutes while Mars is being miraculously



terraformed. Just how long do you think *you* could survive on the surface of Mars in 100-below-zero weather with absolutely no oxygen to breathe?

Some "major" films are simply beneath contempt. I persist in thinking that *Starship Troopers* was misnamed; it should have been *Ken and Barbie Go To War*. And if that wasn't a bad enough trick to pull on Robert A. Heinlein after he was dead, they also made *The Puppet Masters*, which was handled exactly like a 4th remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Then there's *Armageddon*, which seems to make the case that it's easier to teach hard-drinking functionally illiterate wildcatters how to be astronauts in a constricted time period than to teach highly intelligent physically fit astronauts how to drill for oil. And Ghod help us, it was Disney's highest-grossing live action film until *Pirates of the Caribbean* came along.

And when I was sure it couldn't get any worse, along came the stupidest big-budget film of all time – *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Consider:

1. Allan Quatermain can hit a moving target at 900 yards in the year 1899 A.D. With a rifle of that era.

2. Bruce Banner – excuse me: Dr. Jekyll – changes into the Hulk – oops: make that Mr. Hyde – and suddenly he's 15 feet tall and even his muscles have muscles. He's a bad guy – except when, at the end, the plot requires him to be a good guy and rescue all the other good guys at enormous personal cost, which he does for no rational reason that I could discern.

3. Mina Harker is a vampire. She's Jonathan Harker's wife, and Jonathan, as you'll remember, is the guy who visits Dracula and sells him an English estate. (I always felt Dracula shouldn't have stopped killing realtors with just one, but let it pass.) Well, Mina is a Good Guy, and certainly, given her physical features, a more Extraordinary Gentleman than any of the others. She can fly (Dracula couldn't), she can cross over water (movie vampires can't), and she can command a combat team (honest) of half a million bats. She also drinks blood, but only of Bad Guys.

4. The Invisible Man joins the team. Well, no one reads H. G. Wells any more, so they announced that the original Invisible Man was dead and this cockney guy has replaced him. He spends most of his time being invisible in sub-zero weather, occasionally mentioning that it's chilly without his clothes on, but he never gets dressed or goes inside.

5. Dorian Gray. Well, he's got this picture, see? Oh, and he can't be harmed. Cut him, shoot him, and two seconds later he's whole, unharmed and unmarked. But if he should ever *see* his picture, he turns immediately and gruesomely and eternally to dust. Funniest action scene in the picture is a fight to the death (honest!) between Dorian Gray, who literally cannot be harmed or killed, and Mina Harker, who is *already* dead.

6. Captain Nemo is a bearded Indian who is a master of karate.

7. The only Victorian figure missing is Sherlock Holmes, so of course the youngish villain turns out to be Moriarty (who Sherlock killed when he was an aging professor a few years before 1899.)

8. And, oh yeah, there's an American secret agent named Tom Sawyer, who's about 22 years old – a really nifty trick since he was a teenager before the Civil War.

I think it's nice that the screenwriter brought back all these Victorian and pre-Victorian characters. It would have been even nicer if he'd ever read a single book in which they appeared.

How do they travel? In a half-mile-long 20-foot-wide version of the *Nautilus*. (And as this 2500-foot-long ship is going through the canals of Venice, even Carol couldn't help wondering how it turned the corners.)

There is a convertible car. (After all, this is 1899. They hadn't invented hardtops yet.) Allan Quatermain and two other Extraordinary Gentlemen have to drive down the broad paved boulevards (broad paved boulevards???) of Venice. There are 200 Bad Guys on the roofs on both sides of the street, all armed with automatic weapons. They fire 18,342 shots at the car – and miss. Allan Quatermain and his ancient rifle don't miss a target for the entire and seemingly endless duration of the film.

What are the Extraordinary Gentlemen doing? They're stopping Moriarty from getting rich by

selling weapons to rival European nations. And where is he getting these weapons? Easy. He has built a two-mile-square fortified brick city/fortress in the middle of an ice-covered Asian mountain range, and filled it with thousands of machines capable of creating really nifty weapons. I figure the cost of creating the city, shipping in the tons of iron he has to melt to make weapons, and building/importing the thousands of machines required to build the weapons, set him back about \$17 trillion. But he's going to make \$200 million or so selling weapons, so he's in profit. Isn't he???

Every single aspect of the film is on this level. Nairobi consisted of two – count them: two – tin-roofed shacks in 1899, but it's a city in the movie. And it's a city in clear sight of Kilimanjaro – which is passing strange, because every time I've been there it's a 2-hour drive just to see Kilimanjaro in the distance. Quatermain lives in a place which I suppose is meant to be the Norfolk Hotel, but looks exactly like an anti-Bellum Southern mansion, complete with liveried black servants who speak better English than Sean Connery (who plays Quatermain and will be decades living it down).

It's mentioned a few times that Allan Quatermain can't die, that a witch doctor has promised him eternal life. In the end he dies, and despite his having repeated this story about the witch doctor ad nauseum, the remaining Extraordinary Gentlefolk take his body – unembalmed, I presume – all the way from the Asian mountains to East Africa and bury him there, place his rifle on the grave, and walk away. Then the witch doctor shows up, does a little buck-and-wing and a little scat-singing, and the rifle starts shaking as if something's trying to get out of the grave. End of film. My only thought was: "It's the writer, and they didn't bury him deep enough."

OK, I've really got to calm down. I'm starting to hyperventilate as I write this.

(Pause. Take a deep breath. Think of flowers swaying in a gentle breeze. Pretend they are not about to be trampled by a 45-ton Tyrannosaurus that has just eaten a *homo erectus* that looks exactly like Raquel Welch, make-up and wonder bra included. Return to keyboard.)

I prefer science fiction to fantasy both as a writer and a reader. I prefer the art of the possible to the impossible, the story that obeys the rules of the universe (as we currently know them, anyway) to the story that purposely breaks them all.

And yet...and yet, for some reason that eludes me, Hollywood, which seems unable to make a good science fiction movie to save its soul (always assuming it has one, an assumption based on absolutely no empirical evidence) has made a number of wonderful fantasy movies that are not intellectually offensive and do not cheat on their internal logic: **Field of Dreams**, **Harvey**, **The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit**, **The Devil and Daniel Webster**, **Portrait of Jennie**, even **The Wizard of Oz** and the Harry Potter films (well, the first one, anyway).

No, this is not blanket praise for all fantasy films. As I was walking out of **The Two Towers** I complained to Carol that I'd just wasted three hours watching what amounted to spring training for the *real* war in the next film. And about three hours into **The Return of the King**, as I was watching the 20th or 25th generic battle between faceless armies that I didn't care about, I had this almost-unbearable urge to find an usher and say, "Let my people go!"

But for the most part, I find that fantasy movies don't raise my bile the way science fiction movies do. How can big-budget science fiction films be so ambitious and so dumb at the same time, so filled with errors that no editor I've ever encountered (and that's a lot of editors, including some incredibly lax ones) would let me get away with?

Uh...Carol just stopped by. She said she heard me muttering and cursing and wondered what the problem was. I invited her to read a bit of this article over my shoulder.

Sigh Now she says she won't sit in the same room with me when I'm *writing* about science fiction movies.

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VISITORS

Our spring has been graced by some grand visitors to our humble abode – among them **Peggy Rae Sapienza**, shown here with *la belle* **Rose-Marie** at Mandina's, one of the best local restaurants.

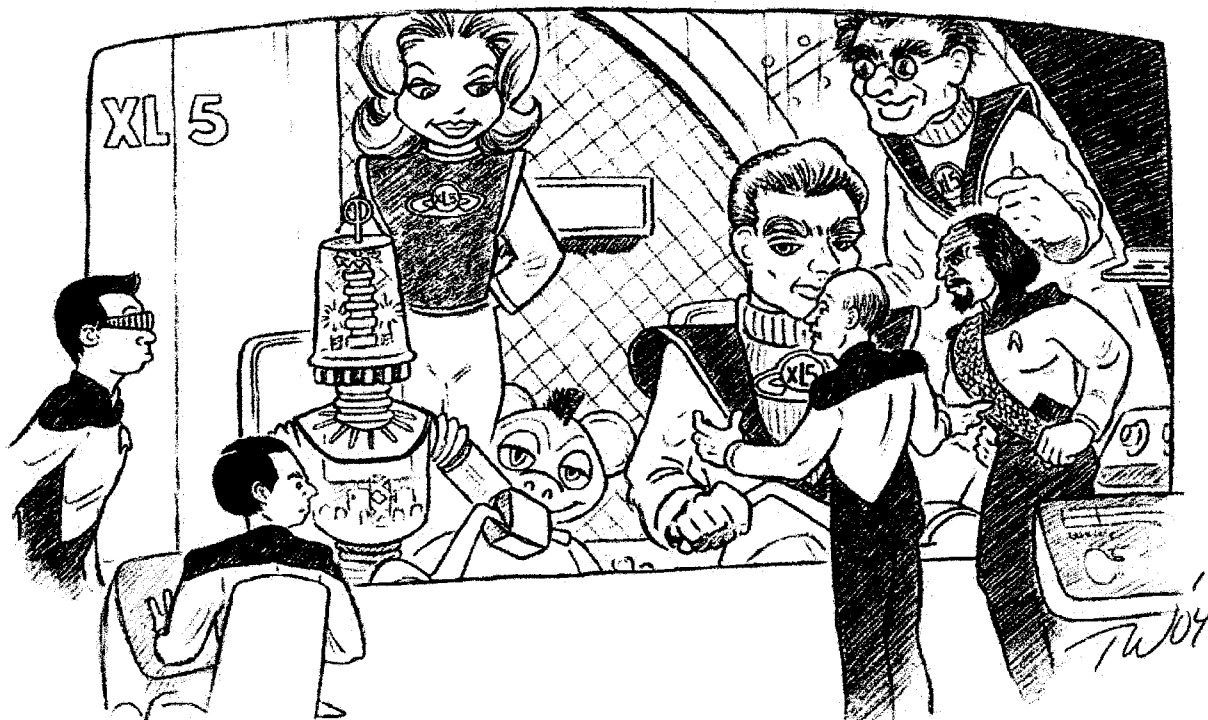
And when **Geri Sullivan** came to town to work on the Noreascon 4 program book, we had to treat her to a New Orleans snowball – two rare treats meeting for the first time.



Joe and Patty Green came over for Mardi Gras this year – shown here beaded-up with Rosy at the Endymion parade.



L.A. fan **Bob Faw** regaled New Orleans fandom with the terrible tale of losing his house in the Southern California wildfires – and left with the story of New Orleans fandom eating dinner – *almost* as terrifying!



Challenger is about the things that fans love. Even when they go desperately wrong ...

Thunderbirds Are..... No Go!

Some notes on Supermarionation

text and art by Taral Wayne

The **Thunderbirds** Movie is coming.

Be afraaaaid!

Actually, I was never that all that fond of **Thunderbirds**. The hour-long format allowed puppet master Gerry Anderson to pander to his weaknesses, but didn't add to his strengths in any way. Instead of better stories or characterizations, we just got to watch tiny remote control mecha crawl over unconvincing plaster landscapes for longer stretches. Given half a chance, I like to make fun of the typical action scene from **Thunderbirds**. Substituting a toy tank or Dinky Toy for one of the Thunderbirds, I push it along my coffee-table at about one inch a second, rocking it back and forth, carolling "dat da da dah! dat da da da daah! dat da da da etc." for about two minutes, until finally getting to the edge, and letting the toy fall over. But that's about as much respect as I had for that sort of nonsense. Special effects are great, but won't stand by themselves.

The other thing about the **Thunderbirds** were the Mickey Mouse costumes. Here we have this secret organization of pseudo-fascist rescue agents all dressed up like gas-station attendants! In powder blue yet. Q: which Thunderbirds guy is gay? A: Which of them is *not*? Equally questionable -- how does even a multi-millionaire invent all this stuff, which is clearly far in advance of the technological achievements of the world's many thousands of scientists and engineers? Typically the first mission to Venus will get in trouble eight weeks after launch in some way even an idiot would have foreseen -- like a giant flaming meteor belt you could see from Alpha Centauri, or a reactor motor comes loose from the two staples holding to a wall. Brains will say, "I was afraid that would happen" -- not that he considered for one moment telling anyone that it might, apparently. Then the cloned family of Thunderbirds will slide down nifty ramps into their super-rockets, and catch up with the faltering Venus ship in a couple of hours. How'd they do *that*? And can't anyone track them back to their base with radar, and confiscate all those neat super-science gizmos so the rest of us can use them? At least to ensure that the next Venus mission won't be an equal botch?

Now I know it's only a show for kids and simplistic, but at that time Anderson was trying to develop a more "serious" style of puppeteering. I found that the story-lines and premises just didn't live up to more serious treatment. Better he stuck to **Fireball XL5** or **Stingray**, which were so obviously cartoons that you didn't ask questions. (Like how come an explosion on another planet can be seen at Fireball HQ, Space City? Or how you can walk on a planet whose gravity is so powerful it yanks the Moon out of Earth's orbit.)

Oh well, at least **Thunderbirds** wasn't as ponderous as some later shows, like **Captain Scarlet & The Mysterions**. Or as wooden as **Space 1999**. Still, I thought the earlier Supermarionation puppet shows -- **Supercar**, **Stingray**, and **Fireball XL5** worked better, precisely because they were more cartoony. Even Anderson seemed to recognize this when he said something about how his "big head" puppets seemed more popular than the marginally more realistic puppets of later shows like **Captain Scarlet**. I think we can accept absurdities easier when there's no pretence of being serious, and can set aside our critical faculties willingly.

But to make a live action film of such material? It would make the **Scooby-Doo** movie stand out as a paragon of mature content.

Fireball XL5 was my first favourite SF show. Before Will Robinson and Captain Kirk there was Steve Zodiac! I taped all 39 episodes from TV a few years ago, and still find myself going back to them from time to time. I've even devised later marks of Fireballs, the XSs and XTs. My secret ambition is to direct **Fireball: The New Generation**. Computer animation maybe, rather than puppets -- like **Jimmy Neutron**, but not so Art Clokey retro.

Stingray was pretty good too. I always thought they failed to give any sense of the ocean being a big place, though. It seemed like the submarine base (with its HQ buildings that sank into the ground on a gigantic elevator) and the secret lair for the bad guys, were in a pool about the size of a Hollywood swimming pool. Which come to think of it, was likely the case. In one very surreal episode, the submarine **Stingray** actually sailed through a mysterious tunnel to surface in someone's living room fish tank!

But of course **Fireball** had similar problems coping with reality. My guess is that **Fireball's** is not our universe, but one in which "planets" are actually planetons... flat, floating islands like those in Roger Dean paintings, that drift in space like a huge south seas island archipelago. That way it made perfect sense to patrol space as if it were two-dimensional, had no gravitational influences, and all distances were on a scale convenient for rocketing back and forth. The XL5 had a patrol route in Sector 25, just as though a spaceship were a Spitfire patrolling the English Channel. This is not space as we know it.

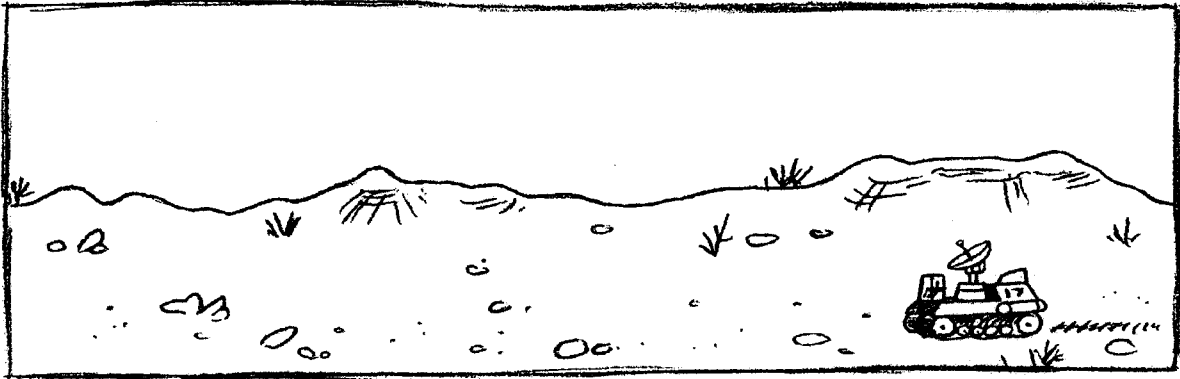
If Ralph Bakshi can be given millions of dollars to produce films anyone in their right mind would know in advance would bomb, why not me? Perhaps with the right pitch, and a dot.com investor who can be convinced any pop cult item is potential box-office, and I too can realize a dream.

PS -- I can do a mean imitation of Steve Zodiac walking, so I might want to star as well as write, produce and direct.

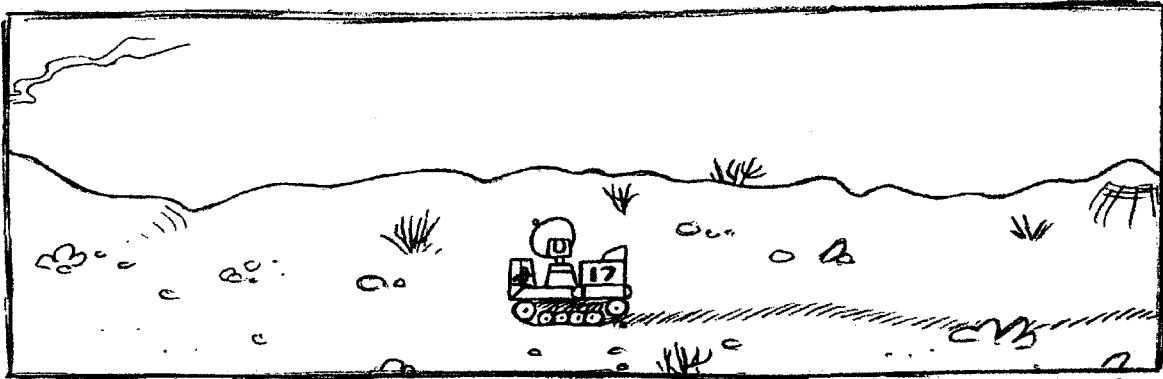
"Fire main boosters, Robert!"

"Unnnnderrrrrrstooooood."

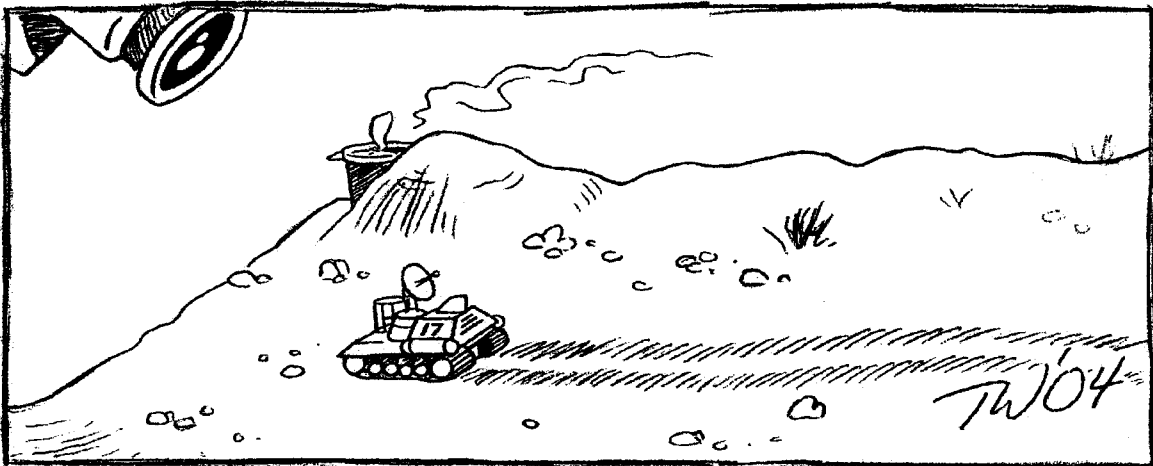
THUNDERBIRDS...

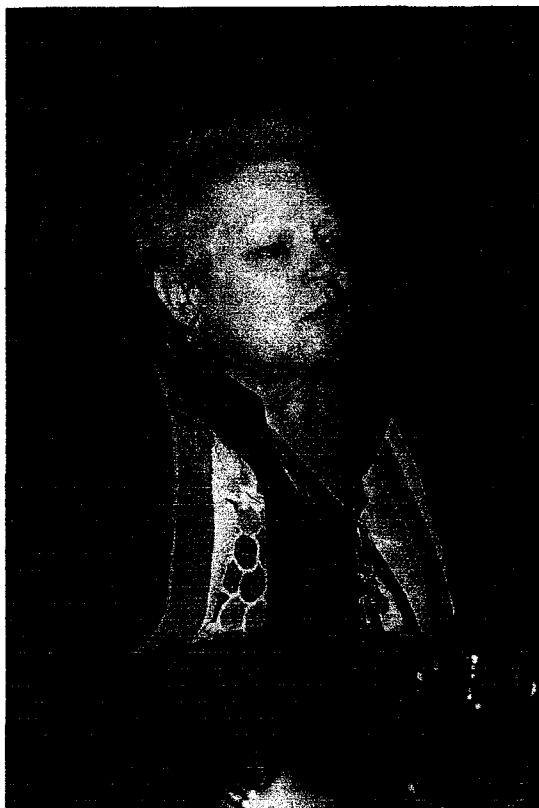


ARE...



... REAL SLOW!!!





The Challenger Tribute

The MIGHTY QUINN

"When I marry her, I'll adopt you!"

That's the short version. The "I" in that sentence was Harlan Ellison. The "you" was me. The "her" was Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. Harlan didn't know it, but on that night in 1968 he created a friendship that has illuminated a lifetime.

What happened was that in the midst of an acrimonious panel discussion, hosted by Berkeley's Little Men, on the merits of *Dangerous Visions*, during which the editor and moderator of the book and the panel, respectively, Mr. Ellison, had approached the borders of apoplexy, Quinn had asked an intelligent question and I had asked Harlan if he'd been thinking of *Ulysses* when he came up with the idea for the collection. Gimme a break; I was 18.

Ellison immediately calmed down. He said two things which have resonated with me ever since. One I'll

save for another time. The second is the line quoted above.

Quinn was like me a member of the Little Men, and true to the title and responsibility left-handedly bestowed upon her by Ellison, she became my "fannish mama" – guiding me through the labyrinths of our ridiculous and wonderful hobby. Appointing me – and Ton Whitmore – "Feet" for the press office at St. Louiscon, in 1969, she tried to make sure I didn't annoy the pros too much. Over the next two years, as you see from "Photoing the Nubble Bubble" in pages to come, she gave me the job as official SFWA photographer for the west coast Nebula banquet – and had my pictures posted in the *SFWA Bulletin*. (When she came to my co-op dorm, the infamous Barrington Hall, to pick up the photos, my girlfriend asked, "Are all your friends so neat?")

That was early on. In the years since, she has always been around.

She was at Iggy in Phoenix in 1978 and read my palm. (*Three careers? I could stand one.*) She was at DeepSouthCon in 1983 when I was Fan Guest of Honor, and this guy she's charming below (Stephen ... Queen? Jack? Joker? Some card or another) was Pro GoH. She returned to Knoxville in

1992 when I was barreling through Tennessee on a case – and I got to show up and surprise her. And just this year, her plane paused in New Orleans en route to Florida, and the International Conference of the Fantastic, and we met her at the airport, and she got to meet Rosy. The 36 years since Harlan had brought us together had brought her fame, if not enough fortune, as the chronicler of Count St. Germain, Charlie Moon and the mysterious Michael. But they had never taken us far from each other's ken.

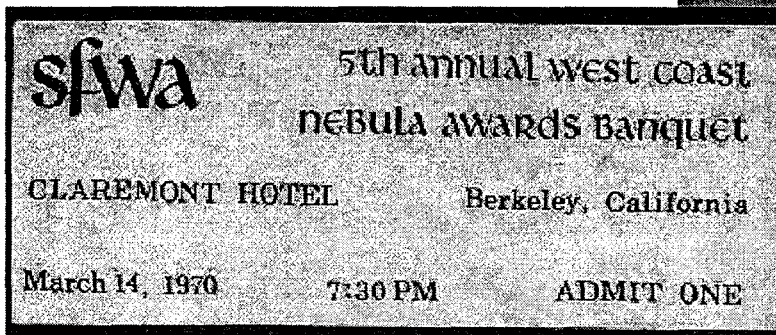
And wait till you hear the story of the college girl from Georgia ...

Quinn, you are a treasure. Whenever you read this, *happy Mother's Day!*



Behold an adventure from my early life in fandom ...

PHOTOING THE NUBBLE- BUBBLE



Imagine: you're 21 years old. A student at Berkeley. A science fiction fan. You've managed to ingratiate yourself into one of the most fabulous SF clubs in the country. One of your friends therein – one of the most terrific people you've ever known or will ever know – taps you to come to the west coast meeting of the Science Fiction Writers of America ... as its Official Photographer. You are to record for posterity the events and the personalities, and their awards ... the "Nubble-Bubbles" ... the *Nebulas*.

Imagine ...

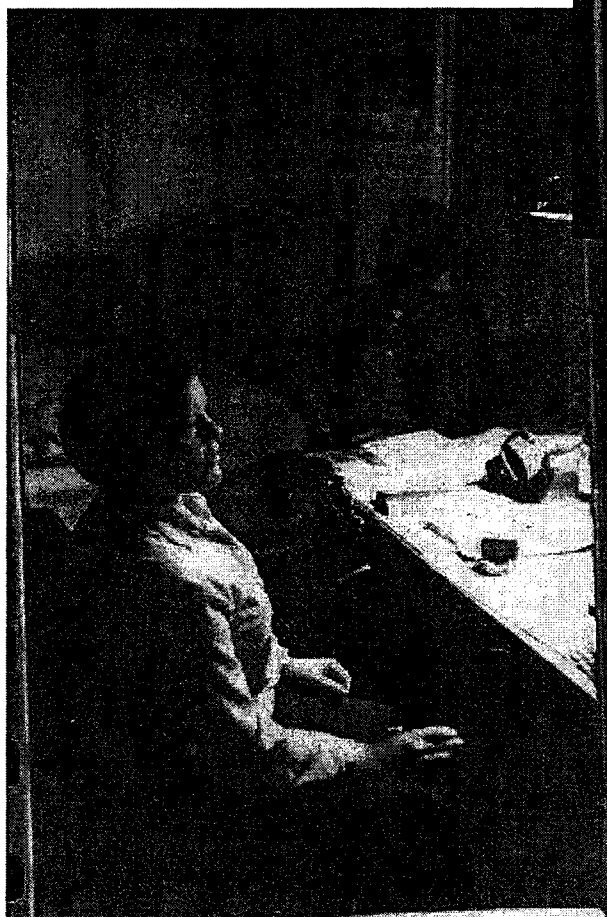
The skinny, hairy creature to the left is that self-same 21-year-old – me, **Guy H. Lillian III**. The friend was **Chelsea Quinn Yarbro**. The year was 1970. And here are the photos I took that magical moment with the SFWA – one of the grandest days of my youth.



THE LITTLE MEN

was my first exposure to real science fiction fans, and my adventure at the 1970 Nebula Awards began with them. Weekly we met at J. Ben Stark's house for a talk – Greg Benford spoke at my very first meeting – and then retired to the bar underneath the bridge on the Berkeley waterfront. **Sid Rogers, Jerry Jacks**, and the beloved **Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow** were among the necessities ...

To the right, Jerry again, with **Mike Ward** behind him. We lost Jerry some years ago, but Mike is still with us and still pitchin' ...



There is no way I could overstate the warmth and the wonderfulness of the inestimable **Quinn**. The story of our meeting is legendary – and will ride a future **Challenger**. Here, at Quinn's home, **Samuel R. Delany** sits in the shadows ... another gentle genius far too kind to me in the nervy days of my young fanhood..

Count St. Germain still in her future, Quinn it was who asked me to take photographs of the Nebula banquet, who gave me the ticket on the previous page, who watched over my neoish nonsense and kept the assembled artists from tossing me out, bodily. Yes, someday I'll tell the story of how she'd become my fannish Mama, thanks to my fannish Papa ...

HARLAN

It was with the redoubtable Ellison that the Nebula weekend really hit its stride. I accompanied Quinn to the Oakland airport to retrieve Harlan and his girlfriend and convey them to the Claremont Hotel, site of the conference. I remember bumping Ellison's portable typewriter into a wall. "Hey," he said, "you trying to ruin my career?"

Quinn took Harlan and his lady to her place, where, with some disgust, he scanned a fanzine, eventually quoting one of its lines to the SFWA. And now I get to tell an Ellison anecdote ...

So we reached the Claremont and piled out and went in – Harlan in his L.A./Carnaby Street best, the lady six feet of blonde class and beauty, and the squalid hippy wretch that was GHLIII, toting a bag. As we were crossing the lobby a hotel flack ran up and grabbed Ellison by the arm. "Where are you playing?" he demanded.

Squawk! Screech! "Oh! You're guests!" The man fled. Livid, Harlan proceeded to check in. Norman Spinrad called a hello from the elevators. "And where are *you* playing?" asked Harlan.

Ellison, then as always, was the star of the show, granting interviews (*viz* right), touting The New Wave, doing his thing for sci- ... excuse me, *speculative* fiction. Hey, it was the way the future was. I'd have those days back.

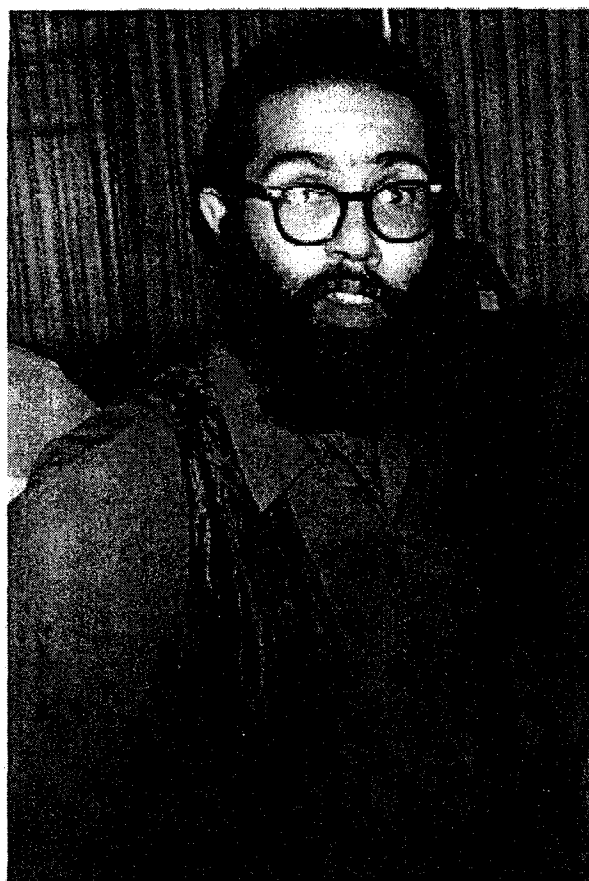




I had met most of the great names who showed up at the SFWA event at Little Men meetings and at St. Louiscon, the previous year – not that it wasn't always a major hoot to see **Fritz Leiber**, flanked here by **Dorothy Jones** and **Astrid Anderson**.



Randall Garrett and his wife were always entertaining – never more so when they set up shop on the terrace outside the main meeting room and let fly with some righteous filk.



Chip Delany seems surprised by the flash. I had been clued into the Nebula winners by Quinn, and told to make sure I had lots of pictures of them – no problem when it came to Delany and Ellison, but the Best Novel winner was a photophobe. I felt like a sadist snapping away at her ...

On hand for the proceedings were some of the most famous names in the field, like **Leiber**, **Robert Bloch** and **Forry Ackerman**, to the right, and **Norman Spinrad**, clowning around with some clay "glasses" below. (See **Avram Davidson** behind him?)



SFWA's business meeting was closed to the public, but my semi-official status gained me entrance. Harlan got howled at when he adjusted the microphone.

Giving a shop talk, **Poul Anderson** shares a laugh with Quinn.





THE AWARDS

I remember the Nebulas themselves very well. Quinn gave me a banquet ticket and I sat at Fritz Leiber's table. He spoke with a gent there about the death of his wife. Bloch, on the dais, lamented the ink and paper wasted on fanzines – but delighted **Marilyn and Chip Delany** when he announced

“Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones” as the winner of the Best Short Story Nebula.



Ellison won the Best Novella honor for “A Boy and His Dog”. He simply thanked the crowd and sat down.



Winner of the big Nebula of the night was Ursula K. LeGuin, for her masterpiece, **The Left Hand of Darkness**. Quinn had told me to snap candid shots of her during the conference, which – since Ms. LeGuin was so camera-shy – made me feel like a heel. She was so pleased by the award, however, that she endured my flash with charm. She also autographed my copy of the book, viz:

*Regards to a fellow
Berkeleyer
Ursula K. LeGuin*

Ellison tells the story of The Great Nebula Switch in his introduction to "The Word for World is Forest" in **Again, Dangerous Visions**. I saw the whole thing, and it was as he describes – while LeGuin was being surrounded with well-wishers after the awards, Harlan switched trophies with her and pretended to sneak away – his way of congratulating her. Someone made a snide remark, Harlan felt putdown – but Miss LeGuin made it all better with a smile. Class act.



Quinn was pleased with my photos and when '71 rolled around, asked me to do the job again. I did – but my camera malfunctioned. Still, a few shots came out – like this one of Ted Sturgeon, who won the Short Story Nebula for "Slow Sculpture". Some of the others appeared in the SFWA **Bulletin** No. 33.



Sturgeon was a latecomer to the Nubble Bubble banquet – in fact, he arrived after the awards had been presented. I never will forget the door to the banquet door opening and that shy, small figure coming in, alone, astonished at the hubbub caused by his entrance, and even more so by the Nebula that Forry Ackerman pressed into his hands.

Later, I met Sturgeon and his wife as they went to their room. He had just finished **Godbody** and he stood talking with me about it for several minutes. I was, of

course, completely gassed – and thanked him for it years later.

Ellison, Sturgeon, Yarbrow, Anderson ... I owe a debt to these people I can never adequately repay, because they were generous and kind to me when I was young.





KE
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Albert Hoffman, a chiropractor, has been a valued member of New Orleans fandom for decades. This is his first contribution to Challenger.

the night I saw *Death*

Albert Hoffman

In 1981 - 1983, I worked as a Nurse Tech at a well known local hospital, here in New Orleans. The hospital I worked at covers a city block of the Garden District in uptown New Orleans (e.g. up-river from the Vieux Carre or French Quarter). New Orleans has been here for over 285 years, and this hospital celebrates the 158th anniversary of its founding this year, and is famous as the site of the St. James Infirmary of the legendary Jazz song. The complex of buildings is, itself, now almost 100 years old.

As I was the only male Nurse Tech on duty from 11 pm to 7 am, I was given a beeper, and expected to "float" to those units where I was needed, or to which I was called. Also, I filled in overnight as the Diener (or morgue attendant), and was responsible for preparing and transporting deceased patients to the morgue, and securing their remains in the morgue cooler.

As there was an excellent medical staff library on the 10th floor of the hospital, I would spend whatever down time I had there catching on on my journal reading, or sometimes just catch 40 winks in the marvelously comfortable Scandinavian bentwood easy chairs. The library had been decorated by the staff physician's wives, and they had *excellent* taste. The medical staff library has floor to ceiling, 12 foot high, glass windows that look North towards Lake Pontchartrain, out over up-town New Orleans. During the day, these windows offer a magnificent view of an incredibly green city, with numerous large oaks and other trees crowded between the houses, and lining the boulevards as far as the eye can see! At night, the exterior darkness and the interior lights of the library create a "mirror" effect, and these floor to ceiling windows clearly reflect, in great detail, the interior of the room; as you will see, this fact is very germane to my story.

It was the middle of the night, and sometime around my lunch break, I had just settled down into one of the easy chairs in the medical staff library to try and catch a short nap, with my beeper, as was usual, clipped to my left smock collar under my ear; this to wake me if I was paged. I had dimmed the room lights to a comfortable level, but there was still plenty of light to see by, though it was a kind of golden candle-light glow, and the entire room was reflected quite clearly in the floor to ceiling glass that made up one entire wall of the room. I was sitting facing these windows, and I could clearly see the wall behind me, which was covered, floor to 3/4 up the wall, with current magazine and medical journal shelves. I had been sitting quietly for awhile, with my eyes closed, trying to fall asleep, with no luck, when I opened my eyes and, in the reflection of the floor to ceiling windows in front of me, I noticed a stirring in the darkness above myself and the periodical shelves behind me.

As I sat there *very quietly, not moving a muscle*, the stirring in the darkness *over my head* began to grow larger, spreading, and then it (kinda) unfolded/unrolled, revealing the classic black robed, no face visible, hood wearing, "The Seventh Seal" chess playing *Grim Reaper*, completely filling the space behind me from floor to ceiling, the lower part of the reaper disappearing into a light dark mist across the floor, again all of this *clearly* visible in the reflection seen in the floor to ceiling windows across the room from me.

I want to say that, at this point, I was most definitely *NOT* asleep! Yes, I had been trying to fall asleep, but I was in full control of my faculties, and was wide-awake (Oh boy! Was I *now* wide awake!); this was, most definitely *not a hypnagogic/ hypnopompic dream or hallucination!*

The Reaper I saw (and it definitely *was* death come a calling) had no face; all I could see was a bit of a diffuse red glow coming from within the depths of the hood, where the face should have been. His robe was black, an intensely dark, light absorbing black. Also, I saw no hands, only gently churning mist, where his billowing sleeves, hanging at this sides, ended.

Brother, if you think I was sitting quietly before, I was now petrified. Though, for some reason, I was not afraid, but I was still *not* about to move a single muscle! I sat there very quietly, watching through slitted eyes, waiting to see what would happen next; but, strangely, as I said, I felt no fear. Instead, I felt that this was not of concern to me. It was at this point that things really began to get interesting.

At the feet of the towering black robed Reaper, a much smaller figure began to take shape in the dark mist that covered the floor behind me. It was clearly a man, in his mid-30's, standing with his back to me, a bit less than half the height of the Grim Reaper. His hair was a sandy blond, and he was wearing blue and white vertically striped pyjamas. While his back was to me, as he was facing the Reaper, I could make out his features as he moved and gesticulated, while he spoke with the Reaper. While I could hear no words, in the silence of the medical staff library, I could sense the gist of their exchange, as I could literally feel their emotions. The man was pleading with Death, not out of fear but, rather, that it wasn't his time yet, and that this was not fair, in that he had much left to do. While I could put words to the emotion of the man's pleas, there are almost no words to convey the depth and breath of emotion emoted by Death in that tableau. The Angel of Death was projecting the most overwhelming sense of empathy, compassion, love and understanding that I have ever felt, before or since; there was also great sorrow on the part of the Reaper, as Death understood and empathized completely with the man's plight, yet there was nothing he could do to change the circumstance, as he was "only" an escort, a guide if you will, to assist the man on his way, but that he, they, needed to go.

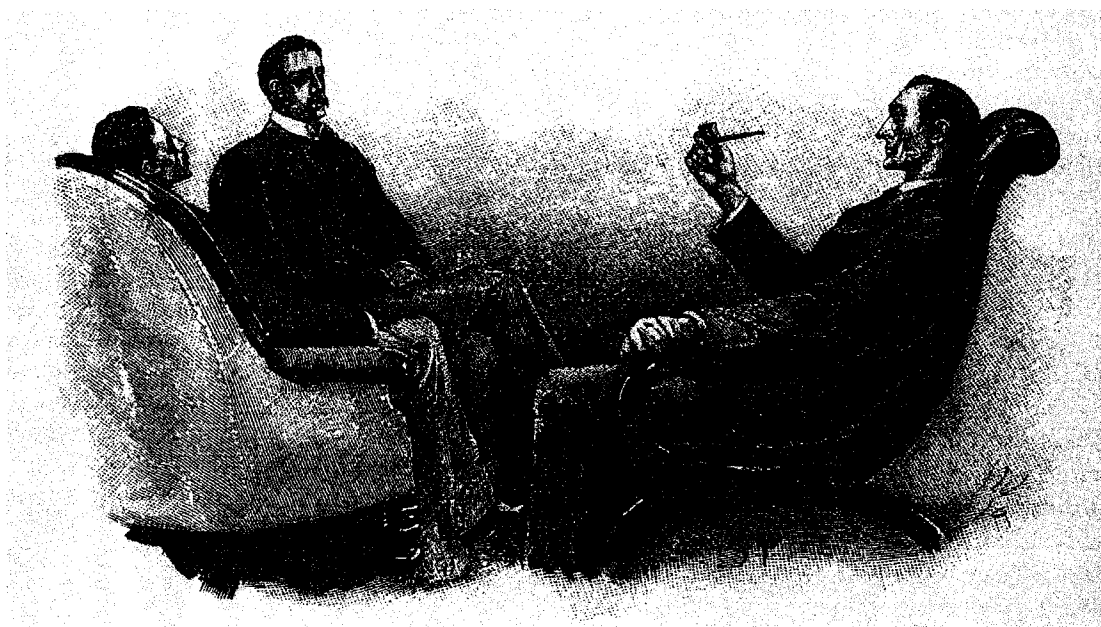
With that emotion, the Angel of Death, and indeed this *was* an angel, swept his great billowing sleeves forward and down, crossing them between myself and the man. As the Reaper crossed his arms behind the pleading (but *not* struggling) man, he drew the man forward towards his bosom. With that, the tableau behind me, and the image of the Angel of Death and the man he was hugging to his chest became transparent and somewhat wispy, and then the entire tableau rolled up like a billowing cloud, through the ceiling, to disappear, leaving nothing in its wake!

I sat there very quietly, still not daring to move, thinking to myself: "Man, there is some really weird stuff that goes on in this place!" I decided the best thing to do was to just close my eyes and get some sleep.

About 15 minutes later, my beeper sounded off. I had not fallen asleep, but had just sat there with my eyes closed, resting. I then got up, and checked the area behind my chair, of course finding nothing! I walked over to the phone, called the paging operator, and when she answered I immediately asked "Where's the body?" She responded with "What makes you think that I'm calling you to pick-up a body?" To which I answered: "Why else would you be calling me at 3:15 in the morning?", and she did answer that with "I don't know how you knew, but there is a body, it's on the 5th floor diabetic teaching unit, and they would like you to come as soon as possible" I told her that I would, of course, be there ASAP, and hung up.

Do I really need to tell you the rest of this story? I went and retrieved the morgue cart, and went to the In-patient Diabetic Teaching unit, where I found that the deceased was not a diabetic patient, but had been placed there because of the high hospital census, and shortage of beds elsewhere in the hospital. He had just been admitted that afternoon by his primary care physician (PCP), for fairly routine cardiac testing because of some suspicions that his PCP had about the patient's cardiac status. It turned out that the PCP was right, as the patient had a cardiac event while on the diabetic teaching unit, and that while the staff did call a code, it was to no avail, and *the patient passed quickly and unexpectedly*, about the same time I saw death at work in the medical staff library. When I went to prepare the body, I really was not that surprised to see that he was a man in his mid-30's, about 5'8" with sandy blond hair, who was wearing blue and white vertically striped pyjamas. He was, of course, the same man I had seen pleading with the Angel of Death, half an hour before, in the medical staff library. I had not been on the Diabetic Teaching Unit that night, nor had I ever seen that sandy haired man before that night.

I have no explanation of what I saw that night, other than the obvious, that this was indeed Death at work, guiding a passing soul to the other side. As I said above, this is a true story that I have related here, without embellishment, exactly as I saw it occur.



Dr. Craig Hilton chimes in from Melbourne with another medical look at Sherlock Holmes ...

The Resident Patient

- A Medical Opinion

Dr Craig Hilton

Illustrations by Sidney Paget

The case of the murder of Mr Blessington is chronicled in the story *The Resident Patient*. Although Holmes' role as a detective this time is not greatly influential, the story provides the inquiring clinician some opportunity for analysis on the matters of human illness, medical practice and details of the crime.

Blessington was murdered by a collaboration of three men, who subdued him and subjected him to a lengthy verbal confrontation, proceeding then by force or intimidation to hang him. The deed was perpetrated in the early hours of Thursday 7th October 1886¹, in the first-floor room Blessington had turned into his "safe-house" or fortress, in Brook Street, in the fashionable Cavendish Square district in London. It thus earned the popular name of the Brook Street Mystery, although any mystery as to the circumstances of the crime or its executors was

dispelled very early on in its aftermath, partly thanks to some apt advice from Holmes at the scene. As tragedy would have it, the day prior to Blessington's murder, Holmes had conditionally offered him his assistance face-to-face, to have the offer spurned by the ever-fearful target.

Blessington, as it happened, was an invalid who was living in a constant state of apprehension of being run to earth by three former members of his criminal gang. The three had gone to prison – and a fourth hanged – on his Crown evidence, and their betrayal by him was what bought his own freedom from prosecution. He and his gang had robbed the Worthingdon Bank in 1875 and murdered the caretaker in the process. The haul was seven thousand pounds. British justice caught up with them swiftly, and before too long, the prisoners were languishing under fifteen-year sentences,

later commuted to (probably) eleven.²

Blessington, or Sutton to give him his true name, *was the worst of the gang* – Holmes states this unequivocally. And yet how did this ringleader get off Scot-free when the others paid such a high penalty? *The evidence against them was by no means conclusive*, we are told. The chances of any convictions under law were uncertain, but with Sutton's evidence, serious prosecutions could be made. As the crime was known to have been committed by a gang of five, the Crown must have decided four scalps (three imprisonments and one capital punishment) were enough. Whether the Crown was fully aware of the leading part played by Sutton/Blessington in the crime is not clear. Certainly from the way Holmes remarked about the fact, he was aware of it.³ Perhaps he had followed details reported in the paper. (Remember – back at the time the bank robbery was actually committed, detection was still only something of a hobby for him, and it would be another two or three years before he started consultative detection as a career.) He may have discussed the matter and shared and refined his conclusions with Scotland Yard over the following years, as by then he would have gained a higher reputation. By the time the story takes place, it seems Sutton is widely accepted as numbering among the criminals. Holmes matter-of-factly says he is *well known at headquarters*, and Inspector Lanner, at the drop of the names Biddle, Hayward and Moffat, can chip in with the name "Sutton" as the gang of five's missing member.⁴

The importance of this detail is two-fold. Firstly is the question of whether the stolen seven thousand pounds was ever recovered. The evidence suggests it was not, and Blessington ended up with it. When he offers an arrangement with Dr Percy Trevelyan to be his personal physician, he boasts of having a few thousand to invest. As an invalid, and therefore probably having been not gainfully employed for some years, he could only have been living off savings and/or investments. Therefore, he had substantial funds in 1886. Conversely, prior to 1875, he had little money – a legitimately rich man (or at least one with a substantial nest egg or a well-earning job) is hardly likely to take on the

hazards of leading a bank robbery, especially if just for a split of the proceeds. These things are done out of need, and not for the increment on top of some honestly accumulated capital. There is the possibility that Sutton had a career as a big-time criminal, that the Worthingdon bank job was one of many, and that although he did not get any of this loot in the end, he had ample from others. The hypothesis is worth considering, but there is no hint from Holmes to support it. A more likely scenario is a financially desperate Sutton – no criminal mastermind on the one hand but no stranger to crime on the other – putting together a gang to pull off the biggest robbery of his ignoble career. The job was botched, a caretaker was killed and the police were onto them all. So Sutton sold the others out, took the money and ran.

The second question is whether he remained a marked man as far as Scotland Yard was concerned. Surely with the booty still missing, the authorities would have tried whatever was possible to keep tabs on him in the hope of something turning up that would lead them to it. One can imagine Sutton's assurances of his purely peripheral role in the affair as he doled out his damning testimony against the other four robbers, but the men at the Yard were not completely gullible. So what could he have done next? Kept his head down, attempted no more crimes on this scale, indeed phased himself out of crime completely, lived modestly on the money and tried not to spend it all at once. Changed his name to Blessington and gone into hiding from both the law and his mates.

Did he succeed, and give the Yard the slip? Especially in the later years, when he was identified as one of the five, could he live in London and get away with it? It seems so.

Did he give his mates the slip as well? They would have had the strongest of grudges, not to mention the sure knowledge of his involvement in the gang from the beginning. It is always possible for the well-connected inmate to "get to" someone on the outside, via a proxy. However, while they were still under lock and key, Sutton/Blessington was simply cautious, and not fearful, indicating that he knew they were not well-connected at all, and

that they could only come after him themselves after release. Even so, he correctly guessed how quickly they would be able to locate him when they did.

Whether he stayed the whole eleven years in London, hid out somewhere else in the British Isles or spent time abroad could form the subject of another article. The fact is that in the final years, he chose London for his home, for one reason or another, and was duly condemned to a life of concealment and confinement. Possible reasons may include sentimental love for the city, a compelling social liaison, a compelling business liaison and the impression that the metropolis could offer him an unequalled level of service in many fields, including medical.

The plan, it seems, was to live on the dividends of his capital, remain safely secluded and have his ongoing health needs attended to. This is when he put his proposal to the receptive young Doctor Trevelyan. Blessington would provide the consulting rooms and lodgings, and Doctor Trevelyan in return would work hard to earn as much money as possible, dividing the proceeds between the two (disproportionately in Blessington's favour.) Additionally, Blessington had the permanent on-call services of the doctor for his infirmity. *'His heart was weak, it appears, and he needed constant medical supervision.'* The clinical reader asks: what was the nature of the heart condition?

Dr Trevelyan does not so much as hint at it, nor does his fellow Doctor Watson probe him for details. Professional confidentiality may have been the reason, or the thought that it may not have been relevant. Neither is very convincing. It is necessary to look elsewhere for clues.

When Holmes and Watson first lay eyes on Blessington, he is described as follows: *'...we saw before us a singular-looking man, whose appearance, as well as his voice, testified to his jangled nerves. He was very fat, but had apparently at some time been much fatter, so that the skin hung about his face in loose pouches, like the cheeks of a bloodhound. He was of a sickly colour, and his thin, sandy hair seemed to bristle up with the intensity of his emotion.'* Later, when the body of the

unfortunate man is found hanging, it is described thus: *'It was a dreadful sight which met us as we entered the bedroom door. I have spoken of the impression of flabbiness which this man Blessington conveyed. As he dangled from the hook it was exaggerated and intensified until he was scarce human in his appearance. The neck was drawn out like a plucked chicken's, making the rest of him seem the more obese and unnatural by the contrast. He was clad only in his long night-dress, and his swollen ankles and ungainly feet protruded starkly from beneath it.'*⁵

So Blessington, who was very fat, had lost a lot of weight even at a minimum level of exertion. This would imply he was taking little food, or his illness was consuming him, or both. There are only a few heart-related illnesses that burn up body fat. Some conditions such as cancer would have damaged him faster. He could have gone off his food through fear, depression, illness, side effects of his medications or even a conscious effort to reduce weight. There is also the possibility that he had lost muscle instead of fat. An invalid's chronic inactivity leads to wasting of the muscles, which in itself can make him look flabby.

His skin was sickly in colour, implying he looked pale. Anaemia – weak-quality blood – can give this appearance, but then so can fear. Or standing under a gaslight. Anaemia at any rate can cause heart failure due to the fact the heart has to pump more poor-quality blood around the system than it would blood of normal strength.

His ankles were swollen. Even adjusting for the fact that ankles do swell when someone has been hanging for a few hours, this still suggests heart failure. Fluid in the feet and ankles is almost an essential part of a failing heart, once it has been going for any length of time. As the heart is failing in its strength to pump sufficiently for the body's needs, anything more than mild activity is exhausting. Moreover, fluid accumulates in the lungs (hence the name *congestive* cardiac failure), reducing their ability to oxygenate the blood. Anything more than mild activity causes severe shortness of breath.

A doctor's mention of swollen ankles

is tantamount to a diagnosis of congestive cardiac failure – *a weak heart*. This is a starting point, but before we continue, one could ask: “how weak?” Well, by Trevelyan’s description, Blessington chose his rooms on the first floor, a level higher than the ground floor consulting rooms, that is, typically two flights of steps. Every evening, Blessington came down to the consulting rooms to examine the books and take his share of the earnings back up to the strong-box in his room. Two flights of stairs would be quite a challenge to someone of Blessington’s size if he had moderate failure, and totally impossible if it was severe. Additionally, Blessington’s daily habit was to take a short walk before dinner, at about six o’clock. (He was out of the house at the time of the quarter past six appointment.) It seems that from the ground floor consulting office there was a descent to street level, as Dr Trevelyan’s page boy *‘waits downstairs, and runs up to show patients out.’* Walking at a gentle pace on level ground is not taxing at all, but once again climbing all the way back to his room would be a substantial challenge to a weak heart. Surely if Blessington routinely collapsed into his chair, gasping for breath for half an hour, twice a day, his doctor would considered this significant enough to make note of it. The fact that he does not leads the clinical reader to guess that we are dealing with a longstanding case of no more than mild congestive cardiac failure.

So, what can cause congestive cardiac failure? Quite a lot of things, among them a heart attack (from atherosclerosis or fatty blockages of the arteries, considered a modern-day illness but more generally associated with over-indulgence in fats), high blood pressure (existing alone or itself the result of another condition, perhaps the diseased kidneys that would take away the appetite), malfunctioning valves (including the result of rheumatic fever, a disease of the poor), anaemia (from many causes, although if due to poor nutrition such as lack of iron it would have been remediable by the doctor) and disordered heart rhythm (such as atrial fibrillation, which in turn can be secondary to such maladies as an overactive thyroid gland – one of the abovementioned diseases that burns up body fat.)

For someone with no more than mild heart failure, Blessington seems to have been very worried about it – worried enough to set up this arrangement and imprison himself in the midst of London for ‘constant medical supervision’. What he appeared to be receiving was simply a daily physical check-up on a regular, scheduled basis. They were obviously not very demanding, as evidenced by the description: *“I have got in the way of late of holding as little communication with him as possible.”* One could picture the scene of the sessions: brief, silent and businesslike.

Blessington may have wanted medical availability not because of his usual health status but for times of unexpected need. Sometimes a heart condition can be unstable: all can be going well, until a sudden attack of angina pain or a dangerous (or simply frightening) heart irregularity demands immediate remedy. But no mention is made of any call system – such as a bell – to alert Dr Trevelyan of the need for urgent assistance, either when he is busily consulting during the day or sleeping during the night. An alarm system surely did not exist, otherwise its highly significant presence would have been commented upon by Holmes. And as for an angina treatment – amyl nitrate – Dr Trevelyan kept it downstairs in his laboratory, where (as we know) it took him five minutes to locate. No, Blessington seems to have had mild cardiac failure, purely and simply, with no unexpected crises. Why then did he so want the permanent availability of a doctor?

Here is another suggestion. He wanted it for reassurance. To an extent, Blessington’s incapacity may have been his *conviction* that he was incapacitated – he feared for his heart and strived to protect it accordingly, with strict rest and avoidance of stressful situations. Strange as the remedy may seem, this was consistent with standards of the time. Ironically, the more a man in this condition is told he has to rest his heart, the more he fears for its well-being, and becoming attuned to every symptom, daily he senses his fears being borne out. As Blessington went to the trouble of setting up a secret hideaway, structured around the permanent availability of a private doctor, his fear for his heart must have been

substantial, to have given it such priority.

What, then, was the medical diagnosis of the resident patient? Many possibilities cannot be eliminated, but doctors and detectives work by the motto: *Common things occur commonly*. I think Blessington had hypertension, that is, high blood pressure. I think he had a nervous and insecure personality, hidden by a veneer of bluster and bullying. The blood pressure gradually weakened his heart and led to congestive cardiac failure. Perhaps along the way, the heart was dealt another blow with a myocardial infarction, that is, a heart attack, further weakening it and further shattering his confidence in his tenancy on this mortal coil. While digitalis may have ameliorated the severity of the failure, it robbed him of his appetite and made him feel listless and sour. Despite medical care, his health continued to deteriorate slowly, although when news came to him of the release of his betrayed comrades, the unrelenting anxiety that now racked his system was enough to raise his blood pressure still further, and worsen his heart failure. I cannot prove this conclusively, but it is a reasonable best guess.

At the end of the nineteenth century, cardiovascular conditions were poorly understood. The sphygmomanometer (blood pressure machine) and electrocardiograph (heart trace) were still yet to be invented. Julius Cohnheim associated heart aneurysms with blockage of blood supply via the coronary arteries. Carl Weigert gave one of the early, classic descriptions of a heart attack in 1880. Even by 1892, Sir William Osler still described coronary disease (that is, heart attacks and angina) as 'relatively rare'. In terms of treatment, the little that was available since the mid-eighteenth century for heart failure was digitalis, identified by William Withering.

In 'The Doctor, The Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle', Martin Booth says; *"doctors educated in the 1880s were the first 'modern' doctors. They were the first to be trained in the use of simple diagnostic methods, were the first in their profession to wear stethoscopes round their necks, shake the mercury down in their thermometers and time their patients' pulse against a pocket watch*

with a sweep second hand. Basic laboratory techniques were taught, microscopes were in common usage in pathology classes, and medicine was moving ahead in leaps and bounds with the more obscure fundamental functions of the body being studied and understood for the first time. As never before, diagnoses were being made upon considered detail and interpretation of symptoms, not just on educated guesswork or quackery: observation was, however, still the key word."



Booth is not gentle on the realities of medicine as a profession, for the young doctor trying to start out in a career. *"After [a demanding] course of study, he then had to buy himself into a practice, or set up one himself from scratch, had to follow a set code of dress and behaviour and, in general, appear to be of a solid and trustworthy nature. Few doctors ... ever became rich."*

Just such was Dr Percy Trevelyan's situation, when he looked to move from distinguished post-graduate research into private practice. He had what he judged to be an excellent earning potential, but very little starting capital. He settled for general practice, but had an eye to moving to specialise in

neurology. In order to gain the following of the most lucrative clientele, it would somehow be necessary to demonstrate the semblance of success and prosperity, until he could reinforce this with a sound professional reputation.

This was the situation, when Blessington approached him with his "strange proposal." As it goes, in this day and age, the proposal is not strange at all. How times change. Under the arrangement, Blessington would set the doctor up with rooms in the best area, that would include presumably the staff – maid(s), cook and page boy – equipment, consumables and of course accommodation. For this, he would give the doctor one quarter of everything he earned. In modern terms, this is similar to a corporate medical organisation providing a doctor the wherewithal to practice and taking a 75% service fee. Considering the quality of the location and the provision of staff, and with accommodation thrown in, the figure of 75% seems quite supportable. In any case, it was in Blessington's best interest to make the offer attractive – he would be the loser if it fell apart.

The Blessington who first makes the offer comes across as a brash, confident and personable businessman, and not the fearful invalid he seems later to have degenerated into. Yet there is one small hint of pressure. The act of approaching Dr Trevelyan is an obvious case of seizing the moment, upon spotting just the right little earner. Why else would a man fearful of his heart choose someone famous for his excellence in neurology? And while claiming to be "*perfectly frank*" in the presentation of the business offer, Blessington omits to mention his need for constant medical supervision. "*His heart was weak, it appears,*" says Trevelyan, almost as if it was thrown into the deal as an afterthought. Well, thank you for telling me.

"*I won't weary you with the account of how we bargained and negotiated.*" On the contrary. Questions such as who would take over and who would own the rooms when Blessington died would have been of the highest interest to Holmes. At the end of the story, so much remains unaccounted for.

When did the first meeting take place? It is not stipulated, and again surprisingly,

Holmes does not pick the point up for clarification. In Trevelyan's words: "*I may say with confidence that he never had occasion to regret his speculation. From the first it was a success. A few good cases and the reputation I had won in the hospital brought me rapidly to the front, and during the last year or two, I have made him a rich man.*" Allowing a short time before he built up a profitable client load, the set-up was probably two or three years prior to the case, therefore 1883 or 1884.

At twenty-five per cent of the wealth, Dr Trevelyan would have been doing very tidily. By all appearances, he was not spending it on women or high living. It would have been sensible to save up for the day his resident patient died and he had to start up a place of his own. This was likely the case.

Similarly, Blessington was evidently raking it in on his investment, although unlike his doctor, he had little prospect of using for a happier life. "*He was a man of singular habits, shunning company and very seldom going out. His life was irregular, but in one respect he was regularity itself. Every evening at the same hour, he walked into the consulting room, examined the books, put down five and threepence for every guinea that I had earned, and carried the rest off to the strong-box in his own room.*" Blessington would not bank it, but kept it all in the box in his room, as he later told Holmes ⁶.

Whether he had a visiting intermediary, accountant, solicitor or other professional in his time shut away in a couple of rooms in Brook Street, to help him carry out the routine necessities of a business, is a mystery, as are the security arrangements for his protection. The count of people with access to the house includes Dr Trevelyan, one or two maids, a cook and a page boy at least.

Furthermore, Blessington would lock himself in his room. But for the sake his medical supervision, surely his doctor would have had the ability to get in. It is also mentioned that the maid could get in, to bring him his morning cup of tea, as it was she who found the body hanging. Exactly how many keys to the locked room were floating around the place? A few weeks prior to the case, when Blessington unaccountably went into a state of

considerable agitation, having heard that his comrades had been released early from prison and being in mortal dread of their vengeance, he ordered stronger bolts on the windows and doors. But he still does not seem to have solved the problem of the weak human link in his administration.

Blessington's pre-dinner walk may have been the innocent daily constitutional it is put up to be. However, it is fun to speculate on some surreptitious, deeper purpose. Was there a shady contact he used for keeping in touch with events in the underworld? Indeed, was he paying someone off, to keep under wraps the expensive secret of his hidden identity?⁷ When he heard the news at first, Blessington ceased taking his walk for a week, either because he would not or because he could not. If it was from the fear of being seen and pounced upon, then he regained his confidence in due course. If it was because his blood pressure had risen to the point of worsening his congestive cardiac failure, then he was doomed to stay indoors, even when there was 'hush money' to be delivered. Indeed he may have believed his final hour had come whatever the case. But the crisis passed. Unfortunately, the gang managed to track down Blessington (alias Sutton) in short order, even though Scotland Yard had failed for all those years. Perhaps there is something in the hush money theory after all.

A word about catalepsy. It is a disease in the family of epilepsy. When there is a wave of uncontrolled electrical activity over the surface of the brain, it can cause generalised convulsions, seizures either in one part of the body such as the arm, hallucinations, lapses of attention, sleep or complete paralysis, depending on the pattern and location. Some people are prone to these unwanted 'short circuits', and may have the same pattern on a recurrent basis. When the sole effect is paralysis, it is called catalepsy, and it is rare.

Dr Trevelyan was particularly interested in neurology⁸, and although he started out in general practice, his goal was to specialise. The late nineteenth century saw immense strides in the untangling of the complex knot of phenomena that is the nervous system. People such as Moritz Romberg, Guillaume Duchenne and Jean-Martin Charcot

studied disorders in movement, feeling and behaviour, caused by everything from injury to syphilis, and tried to make sense of how they originated from malfunctions in a well-ordered brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves. Until the end of the century, no clear distinction had been made between what we would understand as the problems of the body and the problems of the mind – neurology and psychiatry.

This is understandable, given the complexity of what they had to work with: general paralysis, neuralgias, seizures, epileptiform fits, spastic symptoms, tabes dorsalis and hysteria. Indeed, the catch-all title, 'neurosis', is now reserved as a specific psychiatric term. Sigmund Freud graduated in 1881 and specialised in clinical neurology, until the 1890s, from which time he ventured into his ground-breaking work that virtually invented the discipline of psychiatry. Other workers such as Paul Broca, Hughlings Jackson, H. C. Bastian and Carl Wernicke contributed to the understanding of the higher functions of the cerebrum, which demonstrated for example how a person with damage to a particular spot on the surface of one side of the brain would be able to do everything except talk.

These were the heady (if you'll pardon the pun) times of neurology, and by now you'll have some feeling for Percy Trevelyan's fascination with the science. For example, when someone is sitting unresponsively in a chair, there is all the difference in the world between being frozen with fear in a severe case of emotional shock (hysteria) and an epileptic attack (catalepsy).

Once Blessington's former gang members had done their time inside, they were intent on finding him and wreaking their revenge. The finding was achieved in short order, but as to the next step a more inept band of executioners would be hard to imagine. For all the long years they spent brooding in prison, they seem to have been remarkably light on for planning, when it came to action. Two of them arrange to enter the house, posing as a patient and his son, in an appointment specially booked for the end of the consulting day. While one occupies the doctor's attention, the other gives his excuses to leave the room,

and then is free to roam the house looking for the target. He may or may not enter Blessington's room the first time, but he does the second time, the following day. Later that night, or rather in the early hours of the morning, both men and a third find their way into the house by stealth, enter Blessington's room, subject him to the pretence of a trial and hang him, having brought the necessary equipment with them in case they cannot not find what they need in the room.

They have located Blessington's residence. They know he spends nearly all his time barricaded inside. Obviously they have not spent any time staking the place out, nor asked around, or they would have known he goes out for a daily walk at that time. On the first intrusion, by a thin, elderly man and a



large Hercules of a specimen, the Hercules does the secret prowling. He would fully expect to find Blessington in his room, so no doubt he plans to handle the confrontation as it happens, to assault and kill him single-handedly. The door to the room would certainly be kept locked while Blessington went out for his walk, so when the Hercules enters the room the second day, he must have picked the lock. (If he entered the first day, he must pick the lock then, too.) Stupidly, he leaves muddy footprints on the carpet. So much for the element of surprise. He also fails

to find the hook in the ceiling, the rope under the bed and the money in the strong box.⁹

Furthermore, what could be more ridiculous and unnecessary than a puny, low-life ex-con posing as a Russian nobleman? Or a large jail-hardened thug play-acting the part of a loving son of such a sensitive disposition that he may die if he were to see his father have an attack of catalepsy in the consulting room? Or the likelihood that the doctor will let the thug wander unsupervised around Blessington's fortress? Or the likelihood that Blessington does not have a gun at the ready, or a way of calling for help? What possesses the old man to try to fool an expert in neurological diseases by feigning an attack of an exceptionally rare neurological condition? Indeed why does he imagine the best way to cover the sound of mayhem, bludgeoning and possible gunshots upstairs is to sit in complete silence for an indeterminate period of time? Why does he take the chance to scarper as soon as he is left alone in the room? It is all very strange. The next day, the two return, laughing off the previous day's absconding as a minor misunderstanding,¹⁰ before going through a repeat performance, this time *without* catalepsy. The complete lack of forward planning has all the hallmarks of ineptitude.

On the third venture, in the middle of the night, the gang members have a confederate in the house to let them in. The page boy, recently commenced in service, is blamed. Given such a lack of inside knowledge of Blessington's arrangements in the first two attempts, it seems likely to me that the insider was recruited only on the final night, so truthfully it could be any of the staff and not just the member with the shortest length of service.

Once again, the questions: why the sudden change of plan, with the third man, the inquisition and what could have been a very clumsy hanging? Had the man just caught up with his two mates that evening and taken charge of the operation? When they were picking the lock¹¹ to Blessington's room, did they really expect that he would remain asleep or paralysed by fear, instead of taking aim with his gun, or rousing the other occupants of the house, or climbing out of the window? If they

took the trouble to make it look like a suicide (arranging for the door to be bolted behind them), why were they careless enough to leave their cigarette butts and tools behind? What would they have done if Blessington had objected to being strung up? In the eleven years they were banged up in prison, did they do *any* preparatory work at all?

I think that, based on their track record, the Worthingdon Bank Gang were a group of bungling, second-rate crooks who got lucky. The fact is that chance played a big part in the success of a very flawed assassination, yet chance also put Sherlock Holmes onto it, without whose help the case would undeniably been mis-recorded as a suicide.

The clumsy bungling in the 1875 bank raid led to an innocent man's death and the end of a criminal career. Even accounting for his crimes, the reader can be forgiven for having some empathy with Blessington/Sutton for having sold his unreliable and dangerous colleagues into prison in the first place. Thereafter, even if only for a few years, he paid dearly by becoming a prisoner thrice over – a prisoner of his walls, and a prisoner of his mind, and a prisoner of his body. Holmes' final comments are: *"However, wretch as he was, he was still living under the shield of British law, and I have no doubt, Inspector, that you will see that, though that shield may fail to guard, the sword of justice is still there to avenge."*

Sadly, human infirmity can imprison a man without regard to justice. It can be relied upon not as a fair law to those who deserve correction, but a lock in need of a key. On this principle Dr Watson, Dr Trevelyan, their antecedents and your humble clinical reader would be in total accord.

Footnotes

1. According to Baring-Gould
2. Again, Baring-Gould's estimate.
3. Alternatively, Holmes was mistaken.
4. The fourth was Cartwright, later to be hanged.
5. With such a vivid description, it would suggest Sir A.C.D. had witnessed a similar

scene.

6. Unless this was one of his many lies.
7. In which case, he *may* have been poor, as he claimed.
8. To be more precise, neurology is the study of the normal nervous system. The study of diseases of the nervous system is neuropathology, and a doctor who treats people in this field is a *clinical* neurologist.
9. On the third and final intrusion, the gang of three have brought screws and a hook they did not need, a block and tackle they did not need, and completely fail to do anything with the stash of money that this was about in the first place. Honour amongst thieves would hardly extend to refusing to make off with a dead man's loot!
10. These days, when an unsupervised patient wanders out in a confused state and disappears, a doctor's first port of call would be the emergency services, and the second his medical defence organisation!
11. What they did was to force the *lock*. Holmes says: *"With the help of a wire, however, they forced round the key."* This cannot be true, since if Blessington left the key in the lock, neither the maid nor Dr Trevelyan would be able to get into the room themselves, even with a key of their own. We know on this occasion the maid certainly did, as she found the body in the morning. Either Holmes was mistaken in his comment or Watson in the documentation.

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Subject: The Summer of 1989. Addressees: the author's own.

Dear Jef, Darrell, Walt, Elaine, Bruce, Ned, Bill, Dave, Dick, Michael, Merv, Eric, Jack, D. Gary, Tesser, Marty, Michele, Joe, JonArthur, Andy, et al.:

I FINALLY REMEMBERED JOE...

Tim Marion

I was so disappointed when my parents announced they would be selling the house in which I was raised and would be moving "back to the mountains," as they put it. My mother had, all her married life, missed the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, where she was raised. My parents would occasionally kick around the idea of getting a new home in another suburb, but always my mother would say that she wanted a home with a mountain view. Therefore, when my father retired, my mother and he sold the house in Newport News, Virginia and ultimately ended up settling in the extreme western end of the state on the outskirts of nowhere (Stuart). Both my sister and I were bitterly disappointed by this, and were convinced that our parents would come to regret this decision. For my part, living with my parents had been such an unpleasant experience that visiting them was a chore that was livened only by getting to see my friends in the city. I made up my mind that I definitely would *not* visit them in Stuart, Virginia, as there was absolutely nothing to do there except be a captive in their house.

Nevertheless, one day in the late 1980s my parents informed me of their fears that the Commonwealth of Virginia would be building a major new highway which would cut right thru their property. They wanted me to come down and visit and admire their massive property (23½ acres) and see what they had done with it, before it was (possibly) decimated. Since I found New York City to be a "Hellzone" during the July 4th weekend, I made up my mind that I would escape from New York and be in the country at that time.

I have to admit, seeing the house that my father constructed let me see my father in a new light - now I began to see him as the creative, artistic individual that he is, as opposed to the forceful, arrogant side with which he had bullied me all my life. I was incredibly impressed, not just by the outside beauty of the house, not just by the outside beauty of the grounds (which my father had laboriously cleared off), but also by the interiors of the house. The ground floor was all wood-paneled and immaculate. He took me into the basement and showed me how he had supported the house with double-reinforced beams. It was all quite neat, tidy and artistic. I should have known, but didn't, that he had that side to him.

It was quite a walk over some minor hills to the end of the property, at which there was a tobacco barn (left there by previous owners) and a pond which my father had set up and for which he had inserted various kinds of fish. It was hot and uncomfortable and the air was full of bugs. I spent time outside closer to the house laying out under the sun in my men's bikini briefs. The property is so isolated that there was only occasionally someone driving down the narrow, paved road.

At one point, my parents took me out to an old property where my cousin Loretta was living with her husband and, apparently, a host of other people. My parents were happily talking to relatives out in the yard while I let myself into the house. It had been many years since Loretta had seen me, and at that time I had been a diminutive boy with incredibly pale skin and huge horn-rimmed glasses. I doubt that I was even remotely recognizable as a full-grown man with a great tan, long blond hair and a musculature that showed I was obviously into weight-lifting. There were a number of people my age (early 30s) in the

house, and among them I saw Loretta sitting on a couch. "Loretta, right?" I asked. She didn't answer and looked nonplussed. One of the several guys there asked me who I was, and I answered forthrightly, "Oh I'm Loretta's cousin, Tim." Loretta didn't confirm this. Not only was I probably not recognizable, for all I knew she probably didn't even remember she had a cousin named Tim. Still, I refused to let myself feel uncomfortable. I knew my parents would come in the door soon, and then they would Understand.

Later, after my mother was in the house and speaking with Loretta, I somehow came to understand that I had at least one cousin on the premises, Loretta's younger son, Joe. Since I am interested in meeting all my cousins, I asked how to find him. I was told that he was up in a room on the second floor, and that some young girls, who were older and bigger than him, had been playing a bit too roughly with him and that he had been getting hurt.

I went up to the second floor of this marvelous old, renovated, Civil War era house. It turns out that this house was a facsimile of a nearby house where J.E.B. Stuart was born and raised. In the large field next to the house, Civil War reenactments were held each summer.

I followed the noises of children squealing and screaming. In a bedroom, I found my little cousin Joe, with at least two bigger, older girls piled on top of him, practically torturing him. "HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE?!" I loudly and imperiously demanded, and the girls immediately jumped off of him. "We're just tickling him," one of the girls insisted. Joe had scratches up and down his little chest and back. I introduced myself to him and told him that my mother had told me that he had a fancy bow and arrow set and I was wondering if we could go practice some archery.

A little while later we strode across the hot, overgrown field where the Civil War reenactments usually took place. Joe was taking me to a target he had set up. "Audrey says you can shoot bull's eyes!" he said to me excitedly, referring to one of my mother's boasts about me.

"Oh good grief, I don't even know why she told you that. That was only once and a long time ago." Thirteen years previous, to be exact.

Joe showed me how to use the fancy sites on the bow. Every time my arrow barely even landed on the target.

"Well I've tried using the bow's sites, now I'm going to use my eyes," I announced. I almost immediately got something very close to a bull's eye. Joe was suitably impressed.

I miss Joe as a little boy. I'm sorry he grew up to wreck cars on drugs. It's possible that even if I reminded him of our tiny bit of bonding above, he wouldn't remember, so why should I bother? When I saw him last Christmas, my impression is that he is someone whom I should avoid, rather than trying to bond with again.

But ... it was good seeing all my other relatives. To Recap from then, my father has since sold a lot of the property and used much of the money to add onto the house, as the house he had built, although beautiful, was relatively tiny. The Commonwealth of Virginia never put a highway through their property.

Thanks for reading, if you have this far, and have a Happy New Year.

TiM





An editorial you knew was coming.

WHAT ABOUT THAT DITCH?

Do you feel disgraced? Do you feel shamed? You should. You are. We all are – all we Americans.

It's the *incongruity* of this photo that makes it so obscene. The girl is gorgeous, all-American dimples and smile,

giving the all-American thumbs-up over the butchered body of a nameless Iraqi corpse. We'd like to think it incongruous, anyway. Apart from the absurdity of such a beautiful creature expressing glee and pride over such a grisly trophy, there's our whole conception of ourselves, of Americans – a happy, pretty, superior people, who *don't do things like that*.

But there is no incongruity. There's merely truth. We are a happy, pretty people who *think* we're superior, fully capable of things *just* like that – and grinning over them.

Remember the ditch at My Lai, and Jack Lemmon's portentous line about it from *Save the Tiger*: "What *about* that ditch?" What did that ditch tell us about our American selves? What do these hideous photographs out of Abu Ghraib tell us about ourselves? If this sickening behavior is un-American, as we are assured by Bush and his administration, then who are these people? If Americans are not torturing prisoners, then who *is* torturing prisoners? If this isn't our failure, our responsibility, our doing – then whose is it?

A corrupt war corrupts its warriors. I knew this was coming when the first film from conquered Baghdad reached American TV. A panicky G.I. is ordered to lower his weapon as he pointed it at a group of Iraqis on the street, people who, Saddam or not, did not take kindly to having their country invaded. More panicky G.I.s slaughters a carful of Iraqi women and children for misunderstanding shouted commands – in English – at a checkpoint. Panicky G.I.s bomb and strafe wedding parties firing celebratory guns into the air. Panicky G.I.s raid Iraqi homes looking for anything suspicious – including loose money. And goon squads in uniforms are given *carte blanche* to get creative with outright torture, because it will "soften up" Iraqis – Iraqis who may have heard stories about American evil before, but who will never harbor doubts about it again. Don't be naive. Don't be mistaken. For as long as we live, the rest of humanity will despise us for the crimes at Abu Ghraib.

But as an American, I must protest. In this *Challenger* I celebrate wonderful Americans – Julie Schwartz, Quinn Yarbrow, and yes, Harlan Ellison. In this summer my wife and I have dealt with other really excellent American people – Geri Sullivan, John Guidry, Fred & Mary Ann van Hartesveldt, Joe & Lisa Major, Joe & Patty Green, not to mention our whole boisterous American community of science fiction. On a personal level, my American family has kicked in with love and support during a rough patch, stunning me with their decency. Such as these are the true heart of America. It sickens me to my *core* to associate them with Abu Ghraib. But: here are the pictures. What choice do we have?

I'll tell you what choice. We don't allow this. We don't rationalize it. We don't accept it. We *reject* it. We prosecute Abu Ghraib right up the ladder, starting with sadistic little shits like Buchenwald Barbie here and climbing all the way to the suits who either ordered such behavior, or enabled it.

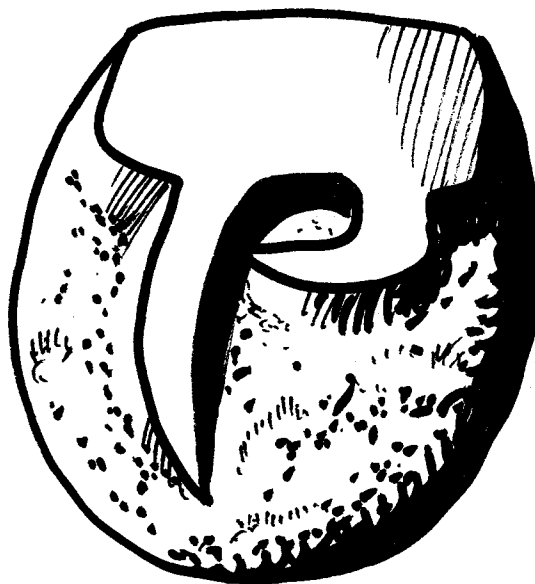
The Secretary of Defense tells interrogators to get touch on John Lindh and other "enemy

combatants"? He's a disgrace to our country and a menace to our people in uniform – because how dare we protest atrocities against them? Get rid of him. John Ashcroft's Justice Department issues memos justifying torture and mocking the Geneva accords? He's a disgrace to our country and a menace to everyone's civil liberties – because if all we have to rely on is our might, then what will befall us when we are not the mightiest? Get rid of him. Their inarticulate, mean, shallow boss relies on the word of a con man and a known fantasy of Weapons of Mass Destruction as a pretext for war? Creates the atmosphere which enables an Abu Ghraib? He's a fool *and* a disgrace to our country, and we have an election coming up: *get rid of him.*

To erase the shame of Abu Ghraib, in fact the disgrace of the whole sick dumb lawless lie that is the war in Iraq, *erase the administration that took us there.* Prove to mankind that we've been saying in protest is true in practice: *Americans are not like that and will not tolerate such behavior.*

Are we like that? You tell me. Better still, tell Sandra Bond in England, Lloyd Penney in Canada, Inge Glass in Germany, Craig Hilton in Australia. Tell my nephews in Buffalo, or Naomi Fisher's baby, in the future. What *about* that ditch? Is it a chasm into which we simply throw body after body, or do we close it up forever?

Are we a country of bullies and thugs – or a people who believe in justice?
The world awaits our reply.



RITUAL OBJECT . WR

Why do you think they called it

DOPE COURT

GHLIII

I've always had a *difficult* time with recreational drugs, and I'm not sure why. I went to college at Berkeley, fergawdsakes, in the late '60s, fergawdsakes, and in that time and place, marijuana was more popular than beer. I remember spring days when you could walk along the streets and smell those sweet, potent fumes wafting from every open window – not to mention one track or another of *Abbey Road*, almost as ubiquitous and almost as popular.

Yet I never tried it (marijuana, that is; like everyone else alive in 1969, I *memorized Abbey Road*). I wasn't hostile to it (marijuana, that is), just not interested, nor particularly social – for grass was the great social lubricant of the era. Who knows, if I'd been less chicken-livered, or less sensible (take your pick), I might have convinced my high school fantasy redheaded J----- that I was more than a hairy-palmed stalker. She'd grown into a *Berkeley* fantasy, you see, and smoked weed like a chimney.

Anyway, I'm already off-subject, which isn't really about how I've never been comfortable around recreational drugs. If that *were* what I was writing about, I'd talk about my New Orleans girlfriend from the '70s who went insane on speed and slashed her wrists, or the catastrophic consequences when friends – and one person far more than a friend – got into cocaine. No, all this chatter is mere prologue to the tale of my most intimate relationship with drugs, my seven years as public defender in the Jefferson Parish, Louisiana Dope Court.



Officially, its title was *Drug Court*, but lifelong Joycean punster that I wish I was, *Dope Court* is what it's always been to me. It began as an experiment, to take some of the weight off the other divisions of the 24th Judicial District in Jefferson Parish. It made sense. A huge percentage of the parish's criminal cases weren't, after all, respectably complicated crimes like murders or robberies, but simple matters which we came to call "throwdowns" or "hand-to-hands" – possessions or sales, usually of cocaine or its sinister offspring, crack. Devoting a court solely to disposition of drug crimes would free the other courts for less tedious, less repetitive work. So a retired judge was given a fat federal grant and a courtroom and a staff and two public defenders, one of which was me.

I backed into the job, drawing the assignment as an alternative to unemployment. It was July, 1993. Between then and June, 2000, when political sleaze – and other judges' lust for the federal money – closed the court, I handled hundreds, perhaps more than a thousand, "throwdowns and hand-to-hands" – and it taught me one thing above all else: *why do you think they call it dope?*

Those hundreds of defendants accused of drug crimes had a lot in common. Most – by far – were black. Most – by far – were male. Most – by far – were young. Many – a good slice – had

FRAGMENT OF ILLUSION. MR

attitude.

My clients made no distinction between the white people prosecuting them and the white people defending them; that I was the one talking to them only made me a convenient outlet for their annoyance. Tell a defendant the sentence he was facing and I was "selling him out." When he drew jail time, it wasn't the judge or the D.A. or his own screw-up who gave it to him – it was "y'all" – all of us in the system, all of in the master race. A few issues ago I told the story of the former Angola boxing champ who grew so enraged when I told him what the district attorney wanted that he *spat* at me – and missed. It took five deputies to put him on the floor. That pitiful loser was the extreme edge of a typical hostility, but – can you blame him? Look at what such people faced when they made it into our division.

If the guy in the dock was charged with simple possession, the evidence against him was usually simple indeed: the cop who'd pulled the contraband out of his pocket during a search, or who claimed to have seen him drop or throw it down during a chase. Sometimes the officer would insist that he'd seen the "throwdown" from a distance of many yards, in the midst of a milling crowd, or in the dead of night – I encountered more examples of super-vision at Dope Court than I ever did when I worked at DC Comics.

If the miscreant were charged with distribution, a more serious crime, he often had a more reliable witness against him: videotape.

Most distribution cases I saw – and still see – were undercover buys made from unmarked police cars manned by narcs and equipped with miniature video cameras. The narcs would cruise suspect – read: black – neighborhoods, trolling for street corner dealers. They'd spot one, pull over, and when the target stuck his face into the window, ask for a twenty. That's street slang for a rock of crack cocaine. Crack, for those blessed with ignorance of the subject, is powdered coke mixed with baking soda or some other agent to make a hard, taffy-like "cookie," every piece of which, when smashed, can be suspended in a wad of Brillo or other mesh, melted, and inhaled. The first rush, I'm told, is heavenly. And hellishly addictive.

Anyway, upon hearing the officer's fatal question, the soon-to-be-defendant would produce a rock, from palm, pocket or his own cheek, and trade it for an engraving of Andrew Jackson held up by the agent. The exchange would preferably – from the cops' point of view – occur in front of the miniature video lens, and the record of same would be produced in court.

(Strangely enough, the most successful undercover narcs were pretty policewomen who claimed to be strippers from Bourbon Street. For some reason dealers flocked to *their* windows. Wonder why ...)

The movie wouldn't be the prosecutor's best evidence, of course. The tape only verified the testimony of the narc. Even if the actual hand-to-hand sale occurred off-screen, if the agent was solid in his testimony, the defendant was toast. But the movies were the great closer. When we showed them to the jury box crammed with "pumpkins" – defendants in Jefferson Parish wore orange jumpsuits, along with their accessories, handcuffs and leg irons – some wag always called for popcorn, and the defendant involved almost always chose to cop a plea. What can you say when it's obviously *your* face up there?

If there were funny moments in Drug Court, they came from the videotapes. There was the woman who made her sale wearing a D.A.R.E. tee shirt advertising a local anti-drug campaign. There was the transvestite who made *his* sale in drag. The judge, worried the poor schnook would be butchered in jail, called the state capitol to find out where vulnerable gays were segregated, and ordered him sent there. There was the girl who spotted the camera and smiled, "Y'all got me on tape, don't you?" (She got probation – the D.A. liked her.) Best of all was the goofball who sold crack to a narc, on camera, while barechested. He was covered in tattoos, which was fatal enough, but one on his shoulder gave his *name*. *Sigmund*. "Uhh, Sigmund," I asked him, "what am I supposed to do?" One pitiable dude was on video for 39 minutes riding hither and yon with an undercover, but the D.A. had to *nolle prosequere* – release – a gal who did the same thing, when the idiot agent shared his cocaine with her – thus becoming a distributor himself!

Suggested defenses to the tape evidence sometimes wandered into ridiculous realms. It was bad enough when a guy with tattoos or scars on his face would protest, "That's not me!" – but after some jailhouse genius spread the term "special effects" around the cellblocks, lunacy reigned. We defense

lawyers were *ordered* to tell our juries – with straight faces – that the state of Louisiana had paid Disney millions of dollars to morph Danny Doper's face onto an actor's body – just to convict him. No wonder I began to resent many of my clients. No wonder I made up my own bitter, private verse:

*Take yo' plea / and do yo' time
And shut yo' lips / you piece of slime.*

(Not that the tapes couldn't help a client as well as hang him, or her. One girl beat the rap when the tape showed a typically skeletal crackhead slinging rocks to the undercover narc. The defendant had spent months in the pokey stuffing her face with starchy jail food. She'd gained so much weight the jury couldn't recognize her!)

The pumpkins' resistance to plain fact was certainly an irritation, but who could blame them? During the '90s the Louisiana legislature went berserk and ordered high mandatory sentences for cocaine sales. Five years hard labor, first offense, no parole or probation or suspension of sentence. Even with good time halving the actual jail stay, that was still ridiculous – every non-violent first offender deserves a shot at probation. Matters grew even worse when Jefferson Parish elected a new and ambitious district attorney.

This guy saw drug prosecution as a ticket to greater popularity – and power. Dope Court was the train where he cashed that ticket. One of his policies was simply annoying: boost statistics by forcing a trial per week. The deputy D.A.s assigned to Drug Court would offer sham plea bargains to bully our people into trials – or condition acceptable pleas on our joining a charade. We'd call in a jury pool, select the first twelve butts to hit the seats, then plead out. The jury members looked at us like we were crazy.

That was ludicrous, but it was also harmless. *Not* harmless was the D.A.'s policy to charge everyone who could be charged as a repeat offender as a repeat offender. This led to some true injustice.

Under Louisiana law, a person proven a repeat offender is given a radically increased sentence – one half to twice the maximum sentence available for the base crime. So someone charged with possession of cocaine, which ran from zero (or probation) to five years in prison, could get a sentence of two-and-a-half to ten years in jail for being caught as a repeater. *Without* good time: no time off for good behavior. Guys accused of selling drugs – cocaine *or* marijuana – as a second offender faced *fifteen* to *sixty* years behind bars. For third offenders, it was even worse. For fourth offenders – well, forget it. The sentence ended when *he* did.

The deputy D.A.s had no leeway. If they didn't crucify the defendants according to their boss' policy, they faced being fired. And while I got along well with most of the guys I worked with on a regular basis, some special cases were handled by gleaming robots from "upstairs" – who judged their success by the number of decades they could take from the defendants' lives. When I remember the sheer sadistic joy with which one D.A. announced that he'd found a law allowing for a 25-year sentence – and applied it to a sweet, dumb street kid who had simply led the narcs to a dealer – well, remember my mantra: dopers who think they're cool impress me as assholes; *fascists* who think they're cool impress me much less.

The people getting hurt, too, were often addicts themselves. The hardcore dealers who made a living off the crack trade had caught on quickly to the videotapes and their clout. So they would corral addicts who needed their wares, hand them five rocks, and say, "Sell four, keep the fifth." Or they'd approach locals on fixed incomes and offer to help them out with a little street corner job. Their own faces never showed on tape – so in the seven years I worked at Dope Court, I can count the times the state prosecuted *real* dealers on one hand. It's as true on the streets as it is in Iraq: the backline creeps keep the profit, while the frontline shmos take the heat.

You could fight, of course, but dope cases were hard to win. D.A.s in Jefferson generally screened their cases carefully, which meant that few defendants reached the courtroom who weren't slam-dunk losers.

The D.A.s had an additional advantage: they practiced in one of the most conservative venues in existence. JP jurors were *fierce* Republicans and occasionally overt racists. Never to be forgotten was the pitiful woman who acted as a juror in one possession case. The client was an intelligent kid, not at all aggressive or nasty – and had been in the class *she taught* when he was in the second grade! She

approached the D.A. after convicting him – on minuscule evidence, to my way of thinking – and, her voice quivering, asked, “You don’t think he’ll come *after me*, do you?”

Need I add that she was white and the defendant was black? Verily, Dope Court taught me more about race relations in New Orleans than anything else in my thirty years of living here.

Still, all is never lost. That client was charged with possession after a tiny packet of powder was found behind the seat of the police car in which he was transported. Another client, a young lady I’ll call **Tanesha** – I love African-sounding names; they’re pretty and creative – faced a similar case.

Tanesha had some factors on her side. She was sweet, attractive, not threatening in the slightest. The jury that we sat turned out to be six white women, nary a balls-to-the-wall/hang’em-high/law’n’order nut in the group. The cops who had found the dope in their police car, after taking Tanesha in on an unrelated matter, were young and inexperienced witnesses, who didn’t tote their logbooks into court.

The purpose of the logbooks would be to answer obvious defense questions: “Who else rode in the back seat of your vehicle that day?” “How long had it been since you’d tossed – i.e., searched – the car for planted contraband?” Relying on memory alone, the cops didn’t know. When Tanesha took the stand in her own behalf, the D.A. couldn’t shake her – I fretted that he’d call attention to her long, long fingernails, perfect for pushing a cocaine packet deep behind the seat. However, instead, he shed his suit jacket and, mimicking having his hands cuffed behind his back, pushed his fingers down into his pants.

The D.A. was trying to demonstrate that my client could have reached cocaine she had stashed in her jeans, however tight they were. He danced around with such enthusiasm that I was tempted to ask the judge, “Your honor, does the State intend to show us the *Full Monty*?”

I didn’t think of another obvious line for my closing: “Ladies, if the jeans fit, you must acquit!” But we won anyway. It was a signal moment: my only Not Guilty verdict in Dope Court.

Drug Court was frustrating in more ways than that. For one thing, the cases themselves were *dull*, presenting no interesting legal challenges, requiring no research – hand-to-hands or throwdowns, phooey. It was stagnant and stagnating. I liked the judges, though, especially the ex-priest who advised the pumpkins, “Y’all thinks I’s a *big pussy*, but hey, I’s *tough!*” – which knocked the D.A. and I to the floor. I got along well with most of the district attorneys, too – seldom whupped, but occasionally scared.

But the major frustration was with dope work itself. If it would make any difference, I’d like every smug, self-satisfied druggie I’ve known – in college, in fandom, in normal life – to see some of the faces I saw there. True, the prosecutions were occasionally malicious, and the sentences often unnecessary, even sadistic. And, on the other hand, there is no denying that most drug criminals, like most criminals, period, wore their orange jumpsuits out of their own choice, their own folly. But, dear Jesus, the *suffering*. The Jamaican “mule” who had transported balloons full of cocaine to America inside her stomach. The exquisitely beautiful young mother whose addiction drove her to live in a derelict trailer and turn tricks to buy rock. (Nearly got into a fist fight with a bailiff over her, when the thug laughed at her plight.) The girl I got released who was a headline the next week, blown away in the projects trying to buy cocaine. The depthless, endless march of gutted lives.

As I say, in 2000 other judges, perhaps jealous of Drug Court’s federally-provided budget, killed it off. They substituted a limited – very limited – system of psychiatric evaluations and supervision. It wasn’t a bad idea, of course, but I could’ve filled it to capacity in an afternoon.

The drug laws have been mollified by the legislature – the minimum sentence for a first time cocaine sale is now *two* years, not five, although marijuana sale still draws a nickel, go figure.. Our chief judge, retired again, sued Exxon for dumping radioactive material on his land – and on paper, is now the richest man in Louisiana. The D.A.s still work their will in Jefferson, which remains the least racially friendly venue in the United States. Me, I’m upriver in St. John, earning less money but defending better and more challenging cases – winning a lot more, too. I still draw the occasional drug case, because dope is here, too, as accepted as beer, death and failure in America’s loathed and self-loathing underclass. And why not? Human greed, folly and despair are constants, after all, in this best of all possible worlds.

THE FORUS LINES

WAHF: Alexis Gilliland, Cathy Cupitt, Henry Welch, Sheryl Birkhead, Ned Brooks, Tim Marion, Rodney Leighton, Lloyd Penney



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I remember the Hugo Losers' Party at Baltimore, where Evelyn Leeper, Bob Devney, and I sat around a table running down the nominees. The Best Novel nominees, that is. The spaceport

operator in Blighty on the other hand . . .

Burroughs also had a subtle talent for satire. Or sometimes not so subtle; the Venus Series is properly downgraded for having such a passive hero, but the evisceration of, er, the Zani Party (Maltu Mephis!) is cuttngly insightful; and (the horrific touch is always desirable) contains a prediction of the Holocaust. Reality could be nastier. Consider Burroughs' grim story of life (if you could call it that) in a Sovietized America, **Under the Red Flag**. Of course, to read it, you have to read **The Moon Men** and ignore the bit about where the Kalkars came from, not to mention spelling "Tevios" backwards. In spite of the Red Scare, the original work did not sell, but Burroughs could rewrite it as an interplanetary adventure. That didn't come from a dream, it came from a nightmare.

Talking about Lord Kelvin's theory of planetary cooling: in the first sequel to **The War of the Worlds**, namely **Edison's Conquest of Mars**, Lord Kelvin was the man who reverse-developed the Martian science so Edison could reverse-engineer their spaceships, flying machine, Heat Ray, etc. (Then Wells did his own sequel: **When the Sleeper Wakes**.)

Checking IMDB reveals that Peter Cushing only did 43 out of 134 total roles after 1970, so I guess you could say he was retired. He was Abner Perry (to talk about Pellucidar) in the 1976 production of **At the Earth's Core**.

Driving from Detroit to Toronto was fun. We tried to be good visitors and obey the speed limit. It was same as home, keep the needle on 100 kph and watch everyone blow past us on the left. Not to mention lunch in Kitchener: nice restaurant and evidently either no one saw our car or saw the mess and fled in horror. (We left a door open while eating lunch.) Mike, you looked a lot better after losing that weight, I tell you.

Hey, I have a program item for Noreascon. "What Can We Do with the Torcon Program Committee?" Bring your own rope, tar, feathers ...

Ressler and Douglas seem to have the age-old problem of old partners. I call to mind the crossing of Antarctica by Fiennes and Stroud. Each wrote a book calling the other a disgusting incompetent. I was not the worst hiker in our Scout troop. Though going through rhododendron tangles might have been more than we could stand.

Sure I know what Steve Victor was talking about when he said "Alum be damned!" It dries out things and is used in doing the wash. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

The leaf scene in **The Harrad Experiment** was pretty cool, and the cover with the young couple interesting. If putting a toilet in the middle of the living room (whatever will the plumber say?) bothers you, the desensitization scene in the thrilling sequel, **The Premar Experiment** will really hit you where it hurts. Actually, I was talking about Robert Kennedy's greatly appreciated – though rather more than I deserve – praise of me.

It's interesting to read Vincent Bugliosi's book on the Simpson case, **Outrage**, and Dominick Dunne's book with all the essays on the Simpson case, **Justice**, and note how, coming from such divergent backgrounds with such divergent approaches, they so often make the same points. P.S. both Bugliosi and Dunne think Simpson was guilty.

Then there was the T. Cullen Davis case where a jury even more obtuse than the Simpson one (there were *two* eyewitnesses to if not the actual murders the aftermath thereof, where he came out shooting) acquitted him. Then his ex-wife (one of the eyewitnesses, mother of one of the victims and lover of the other), sued him for wrongful death – whereupon he conveniently went bankrupt.

One does have to consider the problem of legal harassment. Our local murderous creep Mel Ignatow got off for the murder of his girlfriend in spite of there having been an eyewitness to the murder itself, his other girlfriend. She didn't impress the jury. But when they found pictures of the murder, they started getting him for perjury. He did his time and now they want to imprison him again on another perjury charge. It's never the nice ones who are first to run up against the fringes of civil liberties.

I remember reading **The Field Guide to Extraterrestrials** by Patrick Huyghe and recommend it; a most interesting book. E.T.'s seem to range from about an inch to nine feet high and until the nineties were most splendidly diverse in appearance.

You ask regarding the creatures on Saturn who had an eye in front and an eye in back, "Who'd sin with them?" Other Saturnians. People with saturnine visages.

Josef Mengele, ex-M.D., ex-Dr.Phil (he was stripped of his degrees after WWII) died on February 7, 1979. **The Boys from Brazil** movie was released October 5, 1978. He could have read a review of it.

Maximilien Robespierre was the man for imposing virtue on people whether or not they wanted it. His name was originally "Derobespierre". When he first started practicing law he started spelling it "de Robespierre", bogus nobility being almost as good as the real thing. Then acting noble became passe and he became just "Robespierre", that not being the last time something personal of his was abridged.

The CIA was not modifying intelligence reports during the Reagan administration to paint the collapsing Soviet Union as a greater threat than they were. They really believed that that was the case. The CIA believed that East Germany had a higher GNP per capita than West Germany did. Really.

My condolences on the loss of your great-aunt. Lisa still has two great-aunts left; my last one died back in 1987. I should have talked to her more.

Jerry Kaufman
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You're probably already sick of hearing about it, but I do have a message for Mr. [Mike] Glicksohn: Let this be a wake-up call – cut your hair, trim your beard, and you will no longer be mistaken for a guy thirty years your senior!

(If you use a magnifying glass on his name badge, you can even see Mike's name.)

Just to keep the record clear, I did not identify the photo of Mike Glicksohn as being one of Rusty Hevelin. I merely mentioned, in a caption near Mike's photo, that I went to the same junior high school as Rusty. It wasn't the clumsy misidentification of a bewildered oaf, it was the clumsy non-sequitur of a bewildered oaf. And may I interest you in a few square acres of swampland on the Louisiana/Texas border?

I enjoyed reading about how Sue Mason received the news about her Hugo, especially because it involved new friend Mary Kay Kare.

I read all of Burroughs' work I could find in high school – reading *William Burroughs* was more

of a college thing – so I was glad to see Greg Benford's appreciation of his Pellucidar work. The ERB stories I thought were the most inventive were his "Land That Time Forgot" trilogy, in which an island's entire ecosystem consisted of one species that went through a life cycle recapitulating all of evolution's history. The books must be read to absorb the full strangeness of this concept. If I still had them, I might reread them just to be able to explain it better.

Even though he writes about interesting subjects, I'm still struggling with Richard Dengrove's writing style. I think the idiosyncrasy that gives me the most trouble is his frequent use of sentence fragments. One every so often is okay – it can add a bit of spice. But Rich uses them so often that I have trouble following his thoughts.

In your further notes on your DUFF trip, what excited me the most were your comments on Norman Lindsay. People spoke very highly of his work when I visited, but I didn't get to see much of it. Thanks for reminding me – I can finish this letter and go surfing.

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In **Challenger** #19, Sue Mason's description of receiving a phone call informing her she had won the Hugo reminded me of something Walt Willis wrote. In his book **The Improbable Irish**, Willis describes a similar situation with the poet William Butler Yeats receiving a call informing him he had just won the Nobel Prize. After the caller had rambled on for a couple of minutes about the great honor of winning the award, Yeats interrupted with the question "Are you daft man, How Much?" Even for mystical poets, honor isn't everything.

Back when Yeats won the Nobel Prize, it was probably worth something like fifty thousand dollars. Today, I think it's worth over half a million. If the Hugos were ever similarly endowed, the Hugo losers party would make the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem look like a comedy club.

Even before I read this issue of **Challenger**, I had noticed you were going to be doing the souvenir book for Noreascon. Maybe concons are getting the idea they should ask

fanzine fans to do publications, because I was asked to do the progress reports for L.A.con IV. This surprised me, since I'm not really a graphics person. All I know about graphics I learned by producing some really ugly newspaper pages in high school and college journalism. Back then, we did paste-ups with actual paste. As of the time I was asked to do progress reports, I had never used desktop publishing software.

Fortunately, I can always teach myself how to use another software package, and PageMaker proved to be really neat stuff. Actually doing a progress report led me to think about some aspects of worldcon publications which have always bothered me. Like, why do we publish long lists of names in progress reports and then publish them all again in the souvenir book? Back when worldcons only had a couple hundred members, it might have been reasonable. Publishing five thousand names doesn't seem so reasonable. Of course, I know the official reason: *TRADITION*. Presuming all of fandom would disintegrate into dust if we didn't publish all those names, why would we want to publish membership numbers? Those seem to have no value whatsoever in publications. I'm still discussing that issue.

Your mention of **The Wicker Man** reminded me that Craig Miller did some of the promotional work on the film. This led to Craig's then girlfriend Linda Miller (no relation) doing a cartoon cover for *Apa L*. In the cartoon, Craig is in front of a theater looking up at something just outside the frame. Someone else is slapping Craig on the back and saying "Gee Craig, great idea to have a human sacrifice for the premiere." The obviously evil Craig is thinking to himself "I only hope he's acceptable."

Linda Miller was a great fan artist whose work delighted LASFAPA for many years. Her "Darth Vator" illo ran as the cover to Challenger #18.

Unlike Joseph T. Major, I never wondered why TV detectives couldn't catch the Unabomber. I would find it remarkable if they were able to catch a bus. However, Joseph left out one TV police type, Vic Mackey in **The Shield**. If Mackey was assigned to the case, he would immediately de-rail a train, commit piracy on the high seas, burn down a pre-school, torture a few nuns, and then decide he didn't give a shit about the Unabomber anyway.

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About Ned Brooks' article on Cavorite, I read somewhere where anti-gravity would mean we would be going backwards in time. Thus things would fall up. With any real Cavorite, we would think we were falling to Earth. Then the field would stop and we would find we were on the Moon.

Just an idea.

Once again I should not mind criticism too much. I find things to criticize in my article on Evil Aliens. For one, the Alien Grey may not have come from Betty Hill's "abduction" in 1961, but, on looking at my source a second time, I found it came from Barney Hill's "abduction."

Some people believe that he must have been watching an **Outer Limits**, which had recently featured a Grey-like being. However, Barney could have picked one up elsewhere. The being with the large head and small weak body has been a staple of science fiction.

No matter how hard I try, I cannot get my facts 100% straight. Of course, whenever I have investigated, no other researchers have either.

I think Dr. Craig Hilton was being a little harsh on Dr. Watson. Perhaps Watson was a better physician than he was a detective. When you are not geared to do something, you are often completely lost. Dr. Watson might know the diseases of a patient on sight, although not their financial circumstances.

At Mike Resnick's Torcon, good things that were expected did not happen; good things that were unexpected did. The Torcon committee made a complete hash of the scheduling, not acceding to Mike's requests at all. Even then, things scheduled did not take place. Or there was confusion over time and place.

However, by serendipity, Mike met old friends, struck up new friendships, and made new business deals.

I have to be skeptical about one thing J.G. Stinson says. Murderers have *dead eyes*? I know that is the folklore. However, this may be a case of "If ye look, ye shall find." My mother, while she was doing court sketch work, believed that murderers had dead eyes. Looking at her sketches, I cannot see any difference in their eyes for the life of me.

Guy, after the come-on to your Australian trip, which you have given away for free, is there anything left to sell? Come to think of it, there is a madness in your method. It was so good I would like to find out if there is anything left. You also left me so grateful I might be willing to spend the money anyway.

I plan on combining my DUFF reports, along with Rose-Marie's input and perspective, into a single zine – eventually. In the meantime, Challenger sees chapters.

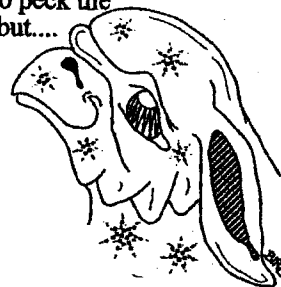
I know we have been led to believe that the Iraqi War was between democracy and tyranny. Saddam, being a tyrant, working hand in glove with bin Laden. I gather in the Middle East it was seen as the Crusaders vs. Islam. With Saddam as the lesser to two evils; at least he was a Moslem Arab.

Our real war since 9/11 is with Al Qaeda. If we'd been serious about pursuing justice and eliminating bin Laden, we should've done the truly unthinkable – and approached Saddam for help. What better ally in the war against Islamic terror than the world's most powerful Islamic despot? The sleazy monster had already proven himself for sale a hundred times over; it's one reason he was so loathed throughout Islam.

What's that? By working with a scumbag like Saddam we'd have been supporting torture and flaunting human rights? Point taken. True Americans don't do such things.

The issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which liberals have spent so much time on, always was a red herring. As I said, it did not move most people here. It did not move most people across the sea. The issue was American imperialism. It was only important to American liberals, many of whom were bamboozled.

I'm not trying to peck the editorial apart, but....



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In correspondence, Ned Brooks joked that perhaps "Alfred", the disappeared policyholder in my insurance article, had been kidnapped by aliens. Of course that was not the issue on the table, and producing the evidence would have been a problem ... In general, commercial insurance companies don't deal in kidnapping. However, on research, I found that there have been cases where American business executives assigned to dangerous parts of the world, have had it in their employment contracts that if they were kidnapped, the company would ransom them. The employing company has then had that put into their corporate insurance.

Joseph Major queries, re: the Pablo vs. Pablo case, "Did the hospital where the real Pablo was born take infant footprints?" Good point, I (or someone gathering initial evidence) did look into that. No. It was not routine custom at the time; I'm not sure if it is universal practice even now ... Milt Stevens questions about the ex-wife not receiving the money even though she was still listed. This is something of a grey area. There are different kinds of policies. There are some policies in which the designation of beneficiary is irrevocable. Such was not the situation in the case I described; in that case there were two sets of claimants for the same money, or to put it another way, the correct beneficiaries were in dispute, in which case it fell to the company (me) to decide who got the money, within the laws, the nature of the policy in question, and general questions of equity.

Striking color cover on **Challenger #19**; the more striking in its simplicity, the bright colors against the plain white. The lady seems entirely unconcerned over the fact that she is about to lose her dress. Is there a story that goes with the art?

Artist Ned Dameron told me that the piece was a panel from a graphic story, with a scenario too mad to be believed. I suggest Chall's readers compose their own tales to go with it.

I was of course pleased to hear that Sue Mason had won the "Fan Artist" Hugo – an uncharacteristic moment of sanity among voters. And it's appropriate that you two should have been chosen as presenters. This year, Steve Stiles! One would be delighted to see **Chall** receive the Hugo it deserves, but you and I know, as the debased

system stands, that is not likely.

Interesting observation by Gregory Benford, "The 14-year-old was still there" with regard to returning to E.R. Burroughs. In my case, I went straight from Andre Norton and the Heinlein juveniles, to Bradbury and early Moorcock, to Zelazny and Delany; my inner 14-year-old manifests by re-reading some of those early books from time to time, though like Dr. Benford I now have a much clearer view of their deficiencies.

The only note that comes to mind about Ned Brooks' deconstruction of Wells' "Cavorite" is to observe that a five pound bowling ball would be used only in duckpin bowling, a dying sport even here in Maryland which was the epicenter of its popularity. A bowling ball in tenpins, much the more common game today, weighs from 12 up to 18 pounds or so. Upgrade the physics as you will.

Andre Norton anticipated the "Greys" of modern UFO-cultology (and it's a religious cult, or a plethora of related cults) with the "Baldies" of her "Time Trader" series beginning in 1958. They were more humanoid than the "Greys", but had pale skin, bulging skulls, spindly limbs, etc. This may be the true source of the conventional representation.

Mike Resnick says you could do the [Toronto] shoe museum in two hours. I'm left wondering why anyone would spend two hours on such a thing, but of taste there is no disputing ... Best wishes to the newlyweds, Pat and Janis.

Nice pictures from Torcon. Suzanne Murdoch is indeed a cute Hobbit. Who is "fan publisher Anne Murray" and what does she publish?

The beautiful lady publishes MidFanzine from 509 Dartmoor Rd., Ann Arbor MI 48103, e-mail editor@midfan.org. And I'm not sure if it's "Murray" or "Murphy."

Guy says, "If I ever run a worldcon ..." Easily solved, dude.

No ... no ... NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

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[About **Challenger #18**:] I'm glad that you and Rose-Marie enjoyed Australia. It's one of the places I would like to get to someday.

I haven't read *Vulcan's Heart*. I have read some of the ST books, but not most. Frankly most of them don't look interesting. But, my point here is that if you are one of those people who likes continuity of plot, then Saavik marrying Spock isn't blasphemy, it's necessary. If you remember the movie, *Search for Spock*, Saavik and Spock are handfasted in the sequence where the regenerated Spock is rapidly aging. The handfasting is a reaction to the initial youthful stages of the *pon farr*. It would seem for the logical Vulcans that marriage is a biological imperative.

I can't believe two grown men are discussing this, but that's not the way I interpret the way Vulcans deal with a boy's first pon farr. Rather than being a sexual or quasi-marital ritual, it is something to be handled – by handfasting – by any adult female, preferably a loved and trusted relative, teaching the boy – for his entire life – that women understand and do not fear his masculine nature; indeed, are his friends. Which would seem to be not only a logical, but humane

(dirty word!) perspective on the matter.

Michael Morse (in response to my comments): I both agree and disagree with you. (How's that for my famed consistency.) I disagree that there are two (or at least only two) "things to consider when punishing a criminal: the rehabilitation of the criminal, and restitution for the victims." The philosophical basis for the justice system is neither, it is to defend society. There have been whole civilizations without a jail system. Most of the ancient Judaic legal system was civil in nature. The vast majority of "punishments" dealt with restitution for the victims (which does agree with at least part of your thesis). There was some capital punishment, mostly not used, and the punishment for most truly nasty crimes was exile, not jail and not death. The purpose of that was to make the rest safe from the criminal hurting anyone else, no rehabilitation and no restitution!

Now in reality and modern society, there is something to be said for rehabilitation of the criminal in many cases. But not in the case of

murder! (Please note that I differentiate between murder and all forms of homicide.) Insanity is no excuse for murder, frankly in my opinion (although I have rarely been known to be humble) you have to be insane to murder someone. As far as rehabilitation of the criminally insane, you cannot reliably do it, so that's out. Would that we were concerned with the victims (and restitution), but we're not.



That's why you are seeing a whole series of separate civil suits for wrongful death, because the criminal courts don't really concern themselves with restitution, they concern themselves with "justice", a whole different concept, bubbi. As far as people being sorry for what they did. Pardon me for being a cynic, but most aren't sorry for what they do intentionally (unintentional harm is something else), they're sorry they got caught.

Anyway, let me tell you what I've been up to. From August to the 1st of December I had a special assignment. I was the 311 HSW's (that's Human Systems Wing in militarese) CFC loaned executive. CFC is short for Combined Federal Campaign (the government's version of a plus-sized version of the United Way). What that means is that I was loaned out to work with the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County for that almost 4 month period. What a great experience! P.S. I volunteered for this...

The function of the loaned execs is to handle the majority of the accounts. That means, go out to the businesses and sell the idea of contributing. This involves working with the businesses campaign coordinators and giving a lot of presentations to people around town. We also worked a lot with representatives of the local UW charities who came out as invited to a lot of these presentations. Well, as I said this was a lot of fun. I enjoyed giving these presentations. I am not a salesman by nature, and even though what I was doing was sales, it was something I could really believe in.

Along the way I met a lot of nice people. We formed some good friendships with the staffers and with our fellow LEs. LE by the way nominally stands for Loaned Executive, but what it really stands for is "Let's Eat!"

I thought it was "Lance Elliot" – i.e., my brother.

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Thanks for your e-mail of Feb 9th 2004 advising change of your website name to **www.challzine.net**. The first thing I did was what everyone else undoubtedly did; and that is to activate the new link and access the latest issue, **Challenger #19**.

Unfair, Guy. The e-mail gave no warning. Alan White's striking but oh so apposite logo sent me spinning into reverie before I could get my bearings. There is a kind of Nordic splendour in the idea of space ship *Challenger* blasting into the sky with a Valkyrie at the prow that is, by analogy, a fitting tribute to the essential wholesomeness of the literary **Challenger** and its distinguished editor, Guy H Lillian III.

Loved your editorial, especially the rant about the Hugo Nominees Party at Torcon. You

rant with the best of us, Guy.

Keep the DUFF blowtorch going. Need any more outrageous Aussie hats for auction? Or maybe as giveaways to tireless supporters who beaver away at conventions for this most worthy of prestigious fan charities.

I read "Pellucidar Revisited", Gregory Benford's romp through his reading list of yesteryear, with unalloyed pleasure. His rereading of fantasists – "the verve of whose visions," to paraphrase the author, "recedes into the distant glow of the > twentieth century" – is close to my own. Randy Cleary's Tarzan illustration is appreciated. What stays in the memory is Benford's admiration for Edgar Rice Burroughs' mastery of "the language of dreams" juxtaposed with his whimsical expose of the dodgy science in "Pellucidar".

Australians remember Professor Greg Benford as the principal Guest of Honour at Aussiecon Three, the 57th worldcon held in Melbourne in 1999. He is also Guest of Honour at Conflux, the 43rd Australian National Science Fiction Convention in Canberra over the Anzac Day weekend, April 23-26, 2004. The conclusion is unmistakable. Aussies, as do **Challenger's** discriminating readers, like his style.

Greg resides in California, of course, and there is where I'll always think of him, but his Southern roots recently won him the Phoenix Award at the DeepSouthCon. See photo elsewhere.

Greg Benford is not the only personality that draws me to Canberra in April. Charismatic Nick Stathopoulos, the 1986 DUFF winner and genial host on your visit to Sydney last year, will be toastmaster. FFANZ laureates Maree and Mathew Pavletich will be there. (FFANZ is the Fan Fund of Australia and New Zealand.)

It's a pity the American Lake – after 1942 and the Battle of the Coral Sea, that is what we call the Pacific Ocean – is so wide. Otherwise North Americans could flock to Conflux, which is shaping up to be an event not to be missed by millionaire spendthrifts dismissive of the deleterious effect a free-falling US dollar has on their finances.

Those not in that happy position who find the tyranny of distance insupportable and whose hunger for vicarious participation is all consuming



should feel free to visit the website on www.conflux.org.au.

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I was particularly drawn [in *Challenger* #19] by Jeff Copeland's short piece on Iraq. It's interesting to hear discourse and dissent coming from a country that I only know of from sound-bites of George W. Bush – "Coalition of the Willing", "the freedom-loving people of the world", "Disarm Saddam Hussein!" and the like. Given its momentous impact on the course of world affairs, and for all the fluff of extraneous words in which it was dressed up, the invasion of Iraq was based on simplistic and insular thought processes. With regret, I'm coming to feel this manner of thinking and of viewing the world is commonplace in the United States, and is not necessarily transcended by education, sophistication or high office.

A year after the televised tank race to Baghdad, Iraq is still a dangerous country in turmoil, and it would seem the only way the Coalition can 'finish the job' and get the troops out is first to send more in. Remember the pre-invasion peace rallies around the world? They weren't saying: "Saddam's not all that bad." Millions of people banded together to shout: "If you plan to do what we think you plan to do, in the manner you usually do things, it will end up as a never-ending, smouldering disaster. Isn't it obvious?" Well, the easily-predicted came to pass, and is still happening now. How did the minds in charge of the world's only superpower not foresee it?

And now, the September 11 post-mortem is being held, putting each of the agencies and officials on the stand in turn, to find out who could have stopped the al Qaeda attacks and didn't. De-briefing is a useful process, but in my view, they have gone past the point of catharsis to national breast-beating. The bottom line is simple: It was only after the horrors of that day that the unreal became real and the unthinkable conceivable. To look back and say that an urgent and sustained regime of security measures could seriously have been imposed on all members of the public in guard against a terrorist attack the like of which had never been seen before is just plain silly. Revisionist and silly. But more importantly, it's a focus on *process*

to distract from *substance*. The far more pressing issue I don't see being tackled is why the USA sees itself as the paragon of societies, to the extent that they are the international Good Guys, admired universally other than by the villains in black hats. Much better is to ask: "What does America look like from the outside? Why are so many people unhappy with what we do?" ("Because they hate our love of freedom" is *not* an acceptable answer.)

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Another outstanding issue.

Your "Christopher Leewards" sent me out to find the movies you mentioned. I was able to rent *The Wicker Man* at Blockbuster. I found *Paths of Glory* at Hollywood Video. So far I have been unable to find *Dark Places*.

Not that good a flick. Watch Paths of Glory a few more times. How about that last scene, eh?

I especially enjoyed Richard Dengrove's "Evil Aliens and H. G. Wells" and Craig Hilton's "John Watson – The Good Doctor". Mike Resnick's report con report, this time on Torcon 3, was appreciated as usual. Isn't there some way in which we can get rid of the perpetual awards to Dozois and Langford?

Vote for other people!

Having voted for Los Angeles in 2006, I am glad that it won. As I have mentioned here or elsewhere, I am not willing to go over about 1,000 miles for a Worldcon. San Antonio and Chicago were exceptions. I may make other exceptions, but probably not.

I attended both of the worldcons you mention – drat the fates that we didn't run into one another at either.

Joe Major's "Why TV Detectives Couldn't Catch the Unabomber" was great. Joe continues to show why he deserves a nomination for Best Fan Writer as well as the Hugo itself.

Amen to that. The only reason people like Joe – or Milt Stevens, or Lloyd Penney, or other sterling voices of the Chorus – aren't perpetual entries on the Hugo ballot is because fanzine fans don't vote! And dammit – they/we should!

J. G. (or is it "N") Stinson's "Stirring the Darkness" was interesting. She has known at least

one male about whom she says: "May he rot in hell." Well, I've known a couple of females about whom I could say the same thing.

Gary R. Robe in "Kevin and the Mountain" refers to snipe hunting. I still remember my first snipe hunt. It was really something until a couple of us figured out what was really going on and got us back to camp. It was much more fun in future years when we sent others out on snipe hunts. Sheryl Birkhead's commentary (p. 54) further indicates why I keep nominating her for Best Fan Writer as well as Best Fan Artist.

Wonderful photos. But, did you really have to put yourself in so many of them? We could use less of you and more of Rose-Marie. ☺

No argument there.

One of these years you will win a well-deserved Hugo. Hopefully, you and Rose-Marie will be able to see your way clear to make it to Los Angeles (actually Anaheim) in 2006.

Rosy's wanted to drive west with me since reading my account of my Confrancisco journey, The Scenic Route, and I've yearned to take her. You know, before our DUFF trip, with its stopovers in L.A., she'd never even been to California?

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Thanks for your review supplement (The Zine Dump), and kind words about Data Dump.

Us Dumpers gotta stick together.

Rather neat paradox, in one review you complained of an article's author being uncredited -- potkettle city!

I write all of the reviews in TZD myself. Who else do you know crazy enough to spend all day reading fanzines?

Re the comment about the negative view of **Stranger in a Strange Land** quoted in **Ansible** being a view never seen in fanzines -- taht may well be true, but I'm sure I wasn't unique in my view when I postreviewed **SIASL** for some anniversary of it in the Brit SF mag **Strange Adventures** back when, I described it as belonging to that particular group of badly-written books which are nevertheless highly socially influential. the wise old sexguru figure in particular (presumably Heinlein's

self-projection) must stand proud among the most tedious know-alls in all of fiction.

Dan Galouye told me that Heinlein had based Jubal Harshaw on their mutual friend Hermann Deutsch, a long-time columnist for Dan's New Orleans newspaper. I'm sure Deutsch was suitably pleased -- and embarrassed. You'll find horny old bores like Harshaw all over later Heinlein.

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Many thanks for **Challenger 19**. What an interesting photo of you and "Duffman" on page 42. So balanced, so *artfully* composed. I wonder who took it *koff* *koff* *koff*

Joseph T. Major reminds me why I don't find the insights of would-be detectives very interesting. In the fall of 2002, I was living in the middle of the "serial sniper" shootings. many many profilers offered their insights about where the killers would strike again. All were wrong. No one guessed that the killers were black. No one guessed that the vehicle used to commit the murders was a beat-up old car that the killers transformed into a mobile platform for shooting. And so many people offered ludicrous theories about where the killers would strike next that a LAPD sergeant, writing in national Review Online, jokingly predicted that the killers were recretaing their favorite **Mannix** episodes. I doubt that great fictional detectives would do any better. All of this leads me to conclude that if this horrible crime happens again, the last thing I need to do is watch cable news to see "experts" blivate about what it's like Inside the Killer's Mind.

J.G. Stinson's memoir about a killer she knew in high school was interesting. But I question her assumption that multiple personalities are commonplace. I remember a column by the Straight Dope's Cecil Adams that said that it was true that one or two people a year in the U.S. might have multiple personalities, but that most were fakes. It may be that Garrett Wilson claimed he was suffering from "disassociative disorder," but everything in the article suggests that he was guilty of insurance fraud and manslaughter. I see that a jury agreed.

Mike Resnick's diary of Torcon 3 was enjoyable. I'm sorry that he was shafted by what appears to be an extraordinarily incompetent con committee.. I had a good time at Torcon, but I avoided nearly all programming except for the Hugo Awards. I had much more fun hanging out in the Fan Lounge, watching fen come and go.

Guy Lillian was right to reprint his entertaining account of his encounter with Christopher Lee. It confirms that Lee is a well-read person, with a deep knowledge of fantasy and horror. I read in *Cinefantastique* that on the set of *The Lord of the Rings*, Lee entertained other cast members by telling how he met Tolkien. I can also recommend his recording of Tolkien's poetry with the Tolkien Ensemble, a Danish orchestra that has composed original Tolkien music. [*You lost me. Do you mean "Tolkien-inspired music"?*] But I hope Guy next tells us about what happened when he met Fritz Lang!

It will happen.

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I've just found time to respond to your letter in issue #377 of *Detective Comics*. Sorry it's taken so long. I've just re-read the comic (36 years later ... misleading cover, don't you think? Robin doesn't in fact taunt Batman in the jail cell). I agree that the art in "The Fearsome Foot-fighters" in the February 1968 *Detective* is superb. Neal indeed produce a great cover and I think he may in fact be one of the best new artists in the business.

Keep up with writing such insightful letters.

(Tongue planted firmly in cheek -- have a great day.)

Coming in the season when I have to say goodbye to the fella who printed that letter, as well as

many many others, and who put me on the road to fandom, your note is not only hilarious but wistful. Thanks for making my day!

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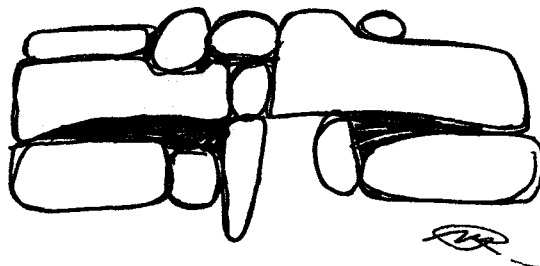
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Faye Best was one of the friendliest and sweetest of my writing students at Greensboro, North Carolina's Guilford College in the early '80s. She's kept in touch, and sent the following.

It's Me, Katy, Talking

Faye Best

It's me, Katy, talking. I live in Granny's house. I used to live at sears on a shelf with lots of other dolls. We were in see-through boxes. When I got pushed to the back of the shelf I slept a great deal, even though my eyes were open. It was boring back there.

Then one day a clerk straightened up the shelf and I ended up on the front. I could watch all the shoppers come and go. That was fun. I listened to them talk and learned lots of new words to think about.

A woman called Granny was shopping in the store. My box says, "has new-born eyes – somewhat out of focus". I heard Granny read it out loud. I winked at her so quick she didn't know she had seen me do it. It was my magic wink and it made her pick me up and go pay twenty-five dollars for me at the check out. I was on sale.

I couldn't see out of the bag on the ride to Granny's house. So I relaxed and listened to the music playing on the car radio.

At Granny's I came out of the box and she laid me on a daybed. I had on beautiful white long lacy dress with a bonnet to match, a diaper and white socks and booties on my feet. I was just gorgeous; Granny said so. My bed was a wicker basket with a ruffled pillow for a mattress.

After I looked around real good and saw everything in the room, thing began to get pretty boring at Granny's house too. Sometimes she would throw a robe or some sewing across me and I couldn't see anything. But sometimes she would run the sewing machine and play the portable TV. I learned even more words watching those shows Granny called "her soaps." But then sometimes she wouldn't come into the sewing room for days. So I practiced my new words to myself and slept a lot.

Then one day Granny came in and a little girl was with her. They were talking about a Halloween costume. Granny rummaged away in the old trunk she kept clothes in.

"Look Hannah," she said and began to pile cloth on the daybed. Granny can make the biggest mess when she does that. Soon cloth was draped everywhere all over the daybed and some of it on me. She just left my head sticking out. "What do you think of this for a Princess outfit?"

While they were deciding, real quick I winked my magic eye at Hannah. "Granny," she said, "can I play with your doll?"

"Well, now, i don't know," said Granny. "I really wanted to keep her pretty. Like a keepsake."

"I won't get her dirty," promised Hannah. She picked me up and held me and smoothed down my long dress. Right away I worked more magic and soon I knew Hannah loved me lots and lots.

We went into the living room while Granny folded up her cloth and stacked it back in the trunk.

Hannah made up things for me to say to her Barbie dolls that she had brought with her. I didn't like them Barbies much, skinny long-legged old things. So I jumped up and down on them and made them yell. Hannah put me in time out. I didn't care. I just sat there and giggled.

Hannah got out the Teeny Beanie Babies that Granny collected from McDonald's. She tied a shoestring on the end of my wicker basket and soon the Beanie Babies and me were riding around all over the house. Wheel! That was fun. Hannah dragged us so fast that Snort, the red bull, fell out.

I was so happy and tired that night that when Granny put me back up on the daybed in my basket, I just wiggled real good one time under my clothes where she couldn't see me and fell right asleep with my eyes open like always.

Soon I found out that Hannah was going to come to Granny's to stay after school. "Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy," I said to myself.

Hannah is holding me by one hand and on her other side she has an old rag doll called Elizabeth. She walks us up to Granny and I say, "We are orphans and we are looking for a family. Our mother was a deer and a hunter came and shot her. Santa came by and turned us into humans. But we don't have a Mama and Daddy. Can you help us find one? This is me, Katy, talking: Hannah's lips are moving but she talks different from me."

"Well I can't be your Mama and Daddy because I'm just an old Granny," says Granny. "But if you all get together you can make a big family." Hannah makes us a family place on the couch along with two Barbies and the Beanies. I still don't like them Barbies so pretty soon I make Hannah take them to the other end of the couch. Then we have parties and go visit each other a lot.

Today's one of my mad, bad days. Granny says she has to wash the dishes and can't play. I say, "Old pooh pooh."

Granny says "What?" real loud.

"Old bag of booty," I say.

Granny says, "Hannah, now that's enough of that."

"This is me, Katy, talking, not Hannah," I say.

Granny says, "Well, Katy, how would you like to go sleep in the storage building with the spiders?"

I say, "No! No! No!"

Granny says, "Well, stop talking ugly then."

"Yes Maim," I say in my Southern talking voice that is not a bit like Hannah's even if you can see her lips moving while I am talking.

Granny says she has to go down to the store. Hannah asks, "Can Katy go?"

Granny answers, "I guess so, if you'll look after her. I don't want her to get lost."

There was a light snow falling when Granny, hannah and I went to the drugstore to buy Halloween candy. I never saw anything as magical as snowflakes, all those tiny pieces of white fluff falling straight down from out of the sky. Hannah had put on my red velvet cape and I wasn't cold a bit even though she had forgotten my shoes and socks.

We were headed for the Food Lion store to get milk and stuff when hannah got tired of carrying me. "Here," said Granny and held open the little shopping bag full of candy for Hannah to drop me in.

The checkout line at Food Lion is slow and long. "Munch munch" is coming from the drugstore bag. I am eating all the Halloween candy. "Crunch, munch, munch," Hannah stands close up behind Granny where nobody can see her mouth making chewing wrinkles. I am still munching in the bag. *Grrumph*-uh-oh, I ate too much and now I'm throwing up inside the paper bag.

People in the line turn around and look at Granny and Hannah. Hannah steps closer behind Granny and hides her face in the back of Granny's blue wool coat. I keep on munching on some more candy. Granny doesn't say anything or act like she sees the people looking at her. I can't see what's going on cause I'm still in the bag but Hannah told me all about it later. I eat up all the Halloween candy but I magic it all back and clean everything up before Granny even opens the bag.

After Granny puts me in my bed, I giggle, hee, hee, hee a long time, just thinking about eating up all that candy. Granny didn't even see that chocolate stain on my white dress.

My stomach is still so woozy the next day that I didn't even make Hannah come get me up. I just let Hannah and Granny paint and color all evening at the kitchen table and sing real loud about "Down By the Bay".

Most days while we wait for Hannah's Mom to come pick her up, Granny has Hannah do exercises on the long front walk. She goes all the way down and back doing hops, skips, jumps or running or galloping. When she takes me, I always win. I get out in front every time.

On Thursdays, we go to the library to hear a lady read about customs of different people. We have a snack there. We check out books to take home. We like library day.

One day Granny takes us to the mall to see a dinosaur exhibit. I stay close to Hannah. Those dinosaurs have big mouths.

Then Hannah stops coming to Granny's every day. It is summer and Granny stays busy canning tomatoes and beans. I sit on the daybed and get sadder and sadder. I begin to sleep a lot like I did at the Sears store.

After what seems like a very long time, Katy hears voices from the kitchen. Another little girl has come to stay with Granny after school.

"Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy," says Katy to herself. "I am going to magic her. I am going to magic her real good and we are going to have the bestest time together. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy."





DC COMICS

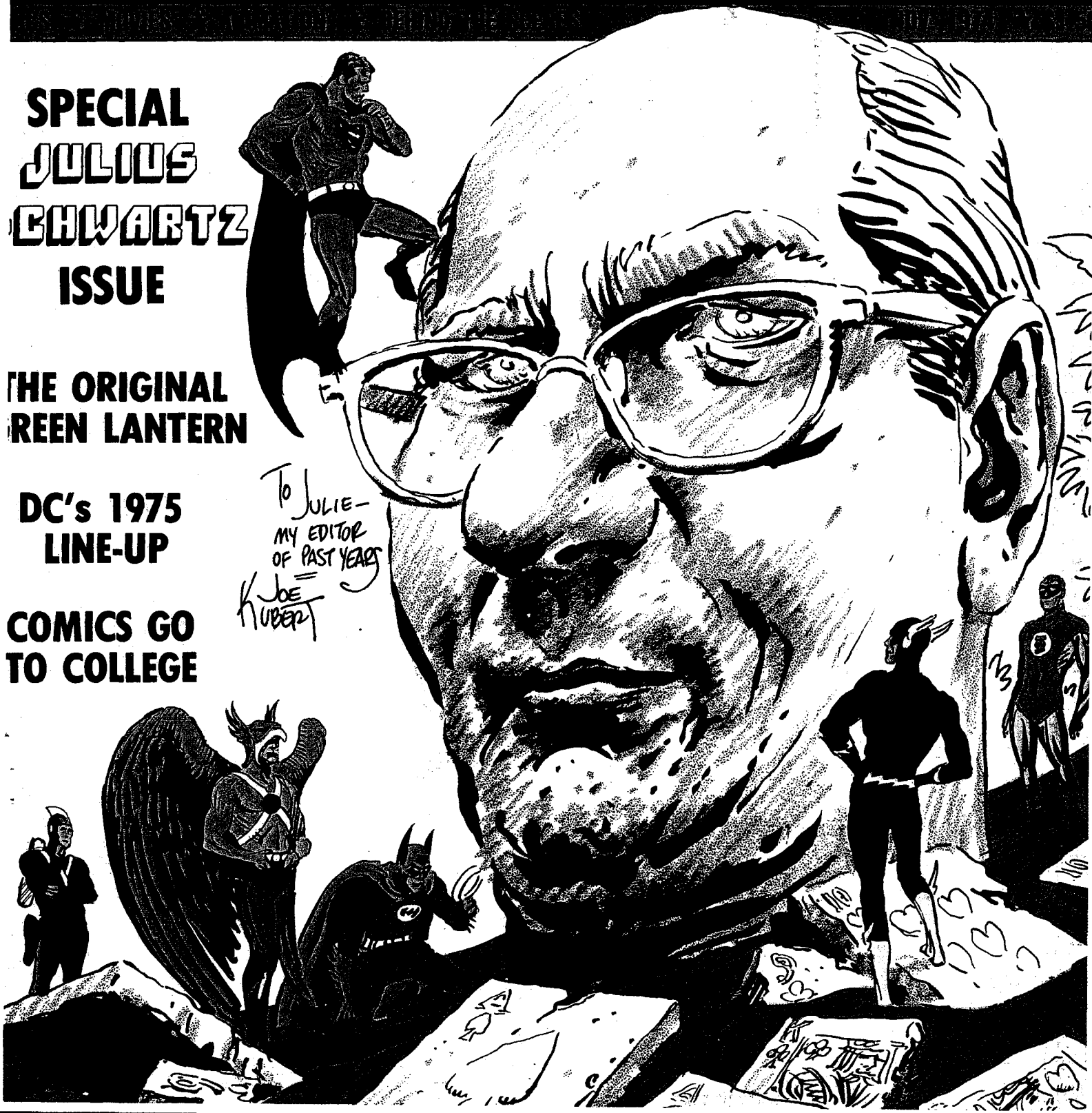
**SPECIAL
JULIUS
CHWARTZ
ISSUE**

**THE ORIGINAL
GREEN LANTERN**

**DC's 1975
LINE-UP**

**COMICS GO
TO COLLEGE**

*To JULIE—
MY EDITOR
OF PAST YEARS
JOE KUBERT*



Sometime during my year as an editorial assistant at DC Comics – 1974 – Paul Levitz came to one of our lunch meetings of the junior staffers. (We called ourselves the Junior Woodchucks, prompting the younger Disney people, according to Mark Evanier, to dub themselves the Justice League of America.) Instead of our usual chowtime entertainment (viewing one of the brilliant Max Fleischer **Superman** cartoons from the '40s), we pondered Paul's words – a suggestion from On High.

Our great rivals, Marvel Comics, had recently published a so-called fan magazine, **F.O.O.M.** (For "Friends of Old Marvel"). Figuring that anything they could do, DC could do better, The Powers On High gave us a new assignment: a magazine about DC for DC fans.

It was a super idea – and *yuck*, that was a stupid, though inadvertant pun. Under the leadership of the great Sol Harrison (and after gently, i hope, turning aside his suggested title, **Fanzine**), we began work on **The Amazing World of DC Comics**.

AWDCC had a great beginning – I interviewed Joe Kubert – but a rocky sophomore outing, involving an inferior printer, in issue #2. Issue the third, however, was spectacular. For that one I'd staked out my territory well in advance, an article about ... well, it's obvious.

I walked into Kubert's office and asked him to draw the cover. I wrote to Ray Bradbury and asked him for a quote about his first agent. (He sent a mini-article which I incorporated into my text.) I interviewed Alfred Bester at his gorgeous two-level apartment on Madison Avenue, ostensibly about his friendship with Julie but actually, about everything. I took photos around the office of Julie with Len Wein, with Elliott S! Maggin, with Mort Weisinger, Julie's lifelong comrade, who dropped by one day. (Months later, I'd interview him for "The Man Who Not Be Superman" in AWDCC #7. And Julie himself brought in his famous scrapbook and photo album, souvenirs of his magnificent career. From it I was allowed to draw photos of Bradbury, Bloch, Kuttner and many others, plus caricatures and tributes ... Only Robert Kanigher, that brilliant,

goofy genius, threw in a discordant note. Anyway, I wadded it all together, and out came ... this.

I left DC after a year. New Orleans beckoned and I thought ... well, it was a mistake. Even though the company had to endure shakeup after shakeup in the year after, and I never earned more than a pittance – it was a mistake. I loved DC and the woodchucks and the inexpressibly valuable experience of working with brilliant and creative people, bringing new life to immortal characters. My next job saw me handling jars of piss and tubes of blood at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. It didn't *quite* measure up.

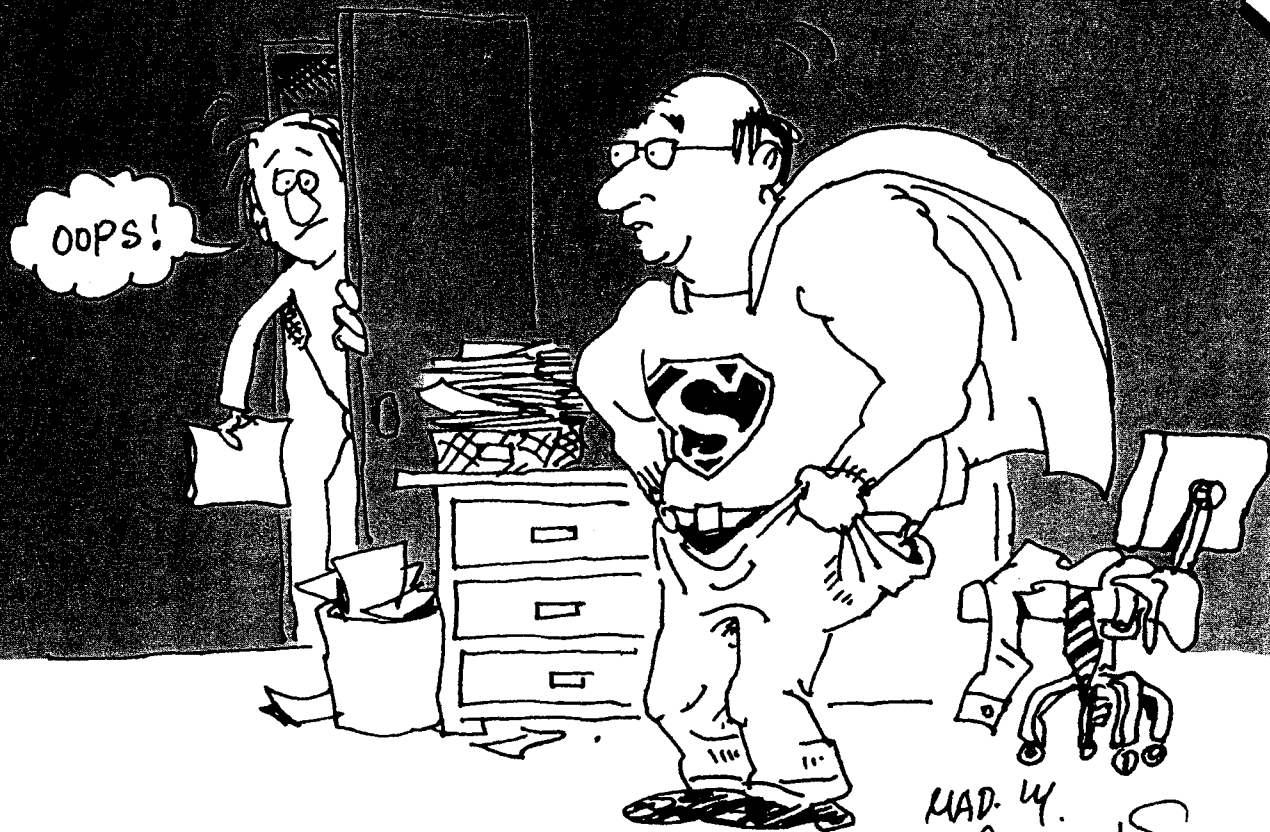
But at least I left a small mark at DC Comics when I left – a small appreciation for the company, and the fella who made it a home for me. This is it.

This article appears with the permission of Paul Levitz and DC Comics. Thanks, guys. Keep'em flying.

Illo by Mercy van Vlack



STRANGE SCHWARTZ STORIES



BY GUY H. LILLIAN III

It was promotion day at school, and Julie Schwartz was late. He ran through the streets of the Bronx, five years old and scared. Finally he arrived at P.S. 5 and found his prospective classmates marching from the kindergarten classroom to the proud room where they would begin the first grade. Huffing a bit in relief at making it, Julie went to the back of the line.

But it was not to be. The teacher appeared and, in Julie's still-vivid recollection of that terrible event, said "You're not going to be promoted because you're late; you're going to have to go back and stay in kindergarten."

And so Julie Schwartz had to sit all by himself in the kindergarten room. Now, fifty-four years later, he realizes that he was probably too young for the first

grade, and that's why he had to be left back. But nothing could have convinced the child Schwartz that being five minutes late wasn't the reason for his trauma.

"As a result," he says, "I get very nervous every time I have to go someplace and I'm late. That's why I say I'm never late, the subway's late."

Julie is truly a creature of deadlines. Though artist Curt Swan calls Schwartz "very reasonable" about them, Julie likes to tell the story about how he once kept newlywed Frank Giacoia from going on his honeymoon until he'd finished an inking job. "I hadn't seen his wife in over twenty years," he reminisces, "and when I saw her last year she came over and (kiddingly) said 'I'll never forgive you for what you did to Frank and me!'"

All nonsense. No one could ever hold

a grudge long against Julie Schwartz, no matter how stringent the deadline pressure. His deadlines make sense and his books are among the finest in the field, and the editor himself... well, no man stands above Julie Schwartz in the high feelings and reputes of his fellow professionals and all the people who have worked for him and whom he has worked for.

He has been a comic book editor for thirty years plus. Prior to the day on which he was hired as story editor for NPP back in '44, he had never read a comic book. That he has gone on to such a height of excellence and esteem is only part of his story.

To understand Schwartz the editor of BATMAN, THE FLASH, JLA, SHAZAM, SUPERMAN and all the others, one must look back into the past, to the

eons-gone days prior to his employment at National, when Julie was known as the pre-eminent agent in the science fiction field. A roster of his clients reads like a sci-fi version of the French Academy: Ray Bradbury (the author of *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*, *FARENHEIT 451*, *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*, and probably sci-fi's best-known author), Robert Bloch (Hugo-winning author of *PSYCHO*), Edmond Hamilton, Henry Kuttner, C.L. Moore, Otto Binder, Manley Wade Wellman, Alfred Bester ... and even H.P. Lovecraft, the king of kings in the weird fiction genre.

Back before his days as an agent, Julie was one of the world's foremost science fiction fans, and with erstwhile *SUPERMAN* editor Mort Weisinger, a lifelong Schwartz comrade, founded *THE TIME TRAVELLER*, the first nationally distributed science fiction fanzine and, in a way, the great-great-granddaddy of *AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS*. Long paragraphs ... but they only describe what Schwartz did in his life before comics entered the scene. Julie's impact on the fields he has touched has been almost too enormous to be judged. But let's take a crack at it ... and let's start back in the New York City of the 1920's ... more specifically, a place called "Ruthville" ...

"I was the world's biggest science fiction fan," says Schwartz, "and also the world's biggest Yankee fan. In those days it cost a nickel to go to Yankee Stadium from where I lived by subway, and 50c to go in. I sat in the bleachers of right field ... which in those days was called 'Ruthville.' I'd be fairly close and I could watch my idol ... Babe Ruth.

"I'd have dreams, fantasies about Babe Ruth. I'd imagine that when the Babe, greatest home run hitter of the times, would hit a ball, the outfielders would go up in helicopters with **butterfly nets**. When the ball was in the air they would **swoop** in on it and catch it and Babe Ruth would be called out."

Besides baseball, science fiction was indeed Julie's other childhood passion. As a boy he read Frank and Dick Merriwell dime novels, and at one "critical point" in his life someone offered to trade a copy of Hugo Gernsback's *AMAZING STORIES* for one of the Merriwell adventures. Julie was at the age fans everywhere know as that most hookable time in their lives—early adolescence. And that's just what happened: "I read it ... and I was hooked."

The letter columns of *AMAZING STORIES* in the late 20's were filled not only with critiques of the various yarns

but pleas from newly-formed science fiction clubs for members. One of these was located in the Bronx, wonder of wonders, and bore a name that would later appear in many Schwartz-edited comics: **The Scienceers**.

Julie immediately wrote asking for membership, but alas, the Scienceers had a rule: members must be at least 16 years of age.

"So on my 16th birthday I sent a card saying I was ready to join, and got an answer back inviting me to a meeting at Mort Weisinger's house in the Bronx. When I got there I found everyone storming out of the basement clubhouse. Seems there was some kind of an argument, and they were breaking up.

"I stayed behind and became very friendly with the host, Mort Weisinger." It was a friendship that lasts to this day ... an association that had total effect not only on Julie and Mort, but on the fields of science fiction and comics as well.

Mort Weisinger is one of the great names in American popular culture. In his career he has written a best-selling novel, travelled the world on writing assignments for many magazines, and incidentally, edited *SUPERMAN* through much of his history.

As he talked with Schwartz, he discovered "common denominators between us. We despised formula stories ... 'the dress off the girl, the mask off the villain' was a formula in those days." Their friendship and activities grew.

"Mort and I used to play challenge games all the time, asking trivia

questions back and forth. We considered ourselves two of the foremost experts on science fiction in 1931.

"We began to write to the sci-fi authors whose work appeared in the magazines, *AMAZING STORIES*, *WONDER STORIES*, asking them 'what stories of yours are going to appear next' and so on. They'd write back and tell us a little bit about themselves.

"One day I remember sitting at the typewriter, and whether Mort suggested it or I suggested it—probably we both suggested it **together**—we decided to put out a fan magazine which would put all this news we were getting together. The first thought that touched me was H.G. Wells' *THE TIME TRAVELLER*." That was the title Julie typed at the top of the dummy issue ... and so the first generally-distributed "fanzine" was born.

Julie wrote up a biography of prominent sci-fi author Edward "Doc" Smith (whose best-known books are the "Lensman" and "Skylark" series) from a letter Smith had sent them. But both he and Mort were too young to have enough confidence in themselves to put out a magazine. They sought help and found it in another member of the Scienceers, a prominent letterhack "who even pre-dated Forrest J Ackerman" (much later to edit *FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND*), Allan Glasser. Glasser was made chief editor, and Weisinger and Schwartz called themselves something else. A fourth editor made his way into the credits when John Zumbach provided them a mimeograph machine for that first six-

THE SCIENCEERS: 1935. Teenager Schwartz stands in center of early sci-fi club, which also includes Mort Weisinger and Allen Glasser (first and second from right, 2nd row).



page issue: he became Contributing Editor.

It was January, 1932. The enterprising publishers sent copies of the first *TIME TRAVELLER* out to the various names and addresses found in the letter-col of *AMAZING STORIES*, and sold future issues for a dime each. After a couple of mimeograph issues a fan named Conrad Ruppert who owned some typesetting equipment offered to print the magazine, and *THE TIME TRAVELLER* went into class print.

"Julie pioneered," Weisinger maintains, "a new sort of fan journalism. People would read science fiction stories, but they never wondered who was behind the bylines. Julie came up with some remarkable scoops involving pseudonyms of very famous authors. He was the Winchell of the science fiction world. This is what made our magazine very vital and exciting. We didn't just have news; we dug behind the news."

Eventually the fans left *THE TIME TRAVELLER*, but not the field of fan publishing. With Ruppert, Ackerman and Maurice Ingher, Julie and Mort each put \$25.00 into a project known at first as the *SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST*. This was a fanzine that is legend today and which Sam Moskowitz, in his brilliant study of early sci-fi fandom, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*, says "has never been surpassed . . . for all-round quality."

The magazine featured reviews, articles, collection information, bibliography, science notes, and even original fiction by such titans of the field as A. Merritt, C.L. Moore, and P. Schuyler Miller (who now reviews books for *ANALOG*). H.P. Lovecraft and *CONAN* creator Robert E. Howard combined their story-telling geniuses with three other greats—Clark Ashton Smith, Murray Leinster, and Stanley Weinbaum—to produce work for the magazine. The most amazing thing *SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST*, later called *FANTASY MAGAZINE*, published, though, was an 18-part "round robin" novel called *COSMOS*, in which 18 different writers wrote sections. The grandest names in sci-fi took part, and Schwartz & Co. had a feather in their collective cap that no fan in all the years since has been able to match.

Mort recalls a terrible event from those days Julie does not. "We were hiking in New York's Palisades Park," says Weisinger, "Julie, Otto Binder, myself and some others of the Scienceers. When suddenly—we woke up in the hospital! A car had hit us and knocked us over like a row of clay pigeons. We could have all been wiped out but were very fortunate. I often wonder, im-



A SCI-FI GALAXY FROM 1937 . . . Standing: Jack Williamson, L. Sprague deCamp, John D. Clark, Frank Belknap Long, Mort Weisinger, Edmond Hamilton, Otis Adelbert Kline. Kneeling: Otto Binder, Manly Wade Wellman, and our hero, Julius Schwartz.

modestly, what would have happened to science fiction and comics if we'd all been obliterated there."

Julie was still in high school while most of this was going on, and true to his nature, joined the editorial staff of Theodore Roosevelt High's newspaper, *THE SQUARE DEAL*. Humor editor, he wrote a column called "Jest a Moment" (even then, the Schwartz love for rotten puns was blooming). Editor-in-chief on *THE SQUARE DEAL* was Norman Cousins, whom Julie calls "the best editor I've ever known." While Cousins never made a dent in science fiction or comics, he is famed today as editor-in-chief of *THE SATURDAY REVIEW WORLD*, one of America's foremost mainstream magazines! "He taught me a lot," Julie says, "about editing. I owe quite a bit to him for breaking me into that type of field."

But Julie had years—and a whole career—to pass through before he could call himself a professional editor. The outstanding activities of Julie Schwartz as the foremost agent *ever* in the science fiction field were a direct and natural outgrowth of his "fanac" (fan activities).

"Carrying on with the fan magazine," Julie recalls, "Mort came up with the idea that, as long as we were so familiar with the field's writers, and were always going up to see editors . . . we might as well make a living at it.

"We knew the editors quite well from asking for information, much like fan magazines do today. And we knew what limited field there was quite well. So we wrote to a number of writers inviting them to send their stories to us. Mort and I would act as their agents," doing

the actual legwork involved in selling a story for ten percent or so of the writer's check. And so was born the Solar Sales Service.

The prominent sci-fi magazines at the time were *AMAZING*, edited by T. O'Connor Sloane (who once told Julie to his face that "man will never reach the moon"), *WONDER STORIES*, and *ASTOUNDING*, precursor to today's *ANALOG*. The duo had a number of successes and were en route to dominance in the field when Weisinger was lured away by an offer to edit *Standard Magazines*. In 1936, then, since Weisinger felt it unethical to sell stories to himself, Julie bought out the partnership and set out on his own as an sci-fi agent. He made history.

Not to mention, began a number of fabulous careers. One of these was that of Stanley G. Weinbaum, an early great whose "Martian Odyssey" was voted by *ANALOG* readers several years back as one of the ten greatest science fiction stories of all time. F. Orlin Tremaine, editor of *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, had read and raved over the yarn in its first publication, and told Julie when he visited that any story from Weinbaum was a surefire sale.

Problem: Julie did not know how to contact the author. It was a dilemma he solved with frank sneakiness.

"My friend Charlie Hornig, who put out the second fan magazine, *THE FANTASY FAN*, was the editor of *WONDER STORIES*," where "Odyssey" had first appeared. Julie went to Hornig and "mentioned—lied, actually—that Weinbaum was a pseudonym, a pen-name for a well-known writer. Charlie said, 'You're kidding.' I told him to look

up the address. 'I bet you'll get a hint of who he is,' I said.

"He looked it up. 'Milwaukee,' he said. 'I bet it's Ralph Milne Farley.'" Farley, author of the RADIO PLANET stories, was a prestigious force in sci-fi in the '30's. "What address did he use?" I asked in all innocence, and wrote it down in my head. I went back and wrote to Weinbaum and told him that if he had any sci-fi stories I had a sure market for him at twice the rate he was getting from Gernsback.

"And so Stanley Weinbaum sent me his every story from then on, all of which I sold."

Through the same sort of craftiness Julie also sold a story of his own. Knowing that Harry Stephen Keeler, editor of a magazine called TEN-STORY BOOK, was a freak for eggs (for some reason), Julie wrote "While the Eggs Fell," about a man dropping eggs down a stairwell. To further insure the yarn's success, he remembered that a pencilled "X" in the corner of the first page meant that the staff had already approved the submission, and gleefully put the "X" there himself. Mort's editing earned him a place on the byline; it was Schwartz's first printed story.

Julie's clients had been hinted at before. To science fiction freaks they are the supremacy of "old time" writers ... although at that time, of course, they composed practically the entire field. One of the most famous was Edmond Hamilton, who is still active today and whose wife, Leigh Brackett, is the author of some of moviedom's greatest screenplays (case in point: THE BIG SLEEP, Bogart and Bacall's famous vehicle, which she co-wrote with William

Faulkner). Hamilton recalls their association as a close friendship, tinged of course with business:

"Julie was my agent ... and I was laboring hard on CAPTAIN FUTURE novels," which appeared in a pulp magazine of that title. "In afternoons, while I was beating the typewriter, Jules would sleep peacefully on a couch. He said that every time he heard my typewriter ping, he realized that I had written ten words more." And since Hamilton was getting a cent a word for the stories, and Julie got ten percent for his agency, Schwartz would shout, "Another penny!"

This anecdote became the most famous about the agent Schwartz. It found its way into the incredible sci-fi detective novel by the brilliant writer and editor Anthony Boucher, ROCKET TO THE MORGUE.

Every summer in the years just before America's involvement in World War II, Julie and Weisinger would journey with Hamilton or others from the sooty climes of New York to sun-flushed Southern California. Julie recalls that he earned the nickname of "The Owl" on the first trip from Mort, whose driving "scared him to death": he didn't sleep on the practically non-stop journey.

Out in Los Angeles the science fictioners stayed in a house rented for them by a man whose professional and personal impact on Julie Schwartz's life were staggering, the great sci-fi writer Henry Kuttner. "He was one of my best friends ... and I sold a lot of his stories." Later, when married to writer C.L. Moore, Kuttner would occasionally get tired while working on a story to retire, only to find the next morning that his wife had finished or continued it for him. "Kuttner was a better plotter than Catherine," his wife, says Julie, "but in many ways she was a better craftsman in literary ability."

Whatever Kuttner's qualities as a writer, and they were sizable, his friendship mattered a great deal to Schwartz. Julie's normally ebullient manner sobers when he speaks of his friend. "Kuttner wrote a story once about a fellow who meets a Martian in a bar. I was very taken with that story for some reason. When I heard in the early fifties that he had died suddenly, I'd have recurring dreams about him, that he was still alive.

"I'd meet him at a bar, or walking down the street. I'd say, 'Henry!' but he'd never admit he was Kuttner because he was afraid of this Martian.

"Even to this day I dream from time to time that Kuttner is still alive."

While in California Julie enjoyed the

good life. He wrote heartrended fan letters to his secret sorrow, actress Frances Langford (whose first film, EVERY NIGHT AT 8, he would eventually see 20 times!). He would sit on the beach with his science fiction buddies and make up endless cliffhanger serials, each writer handling a chapter and trying to stump the next man in line with an inescapable trap for the villain. "We would play this game for hours," recalls Mort. "If we'd only been smart enough to keep notes of those escapes, it would have been an anthology for BATMAN!"

The standing game continued; Julie earned the title of "Super-memory Schwartz" for his knack of recalling author and issue number of any sci-fi story published since 1926.

And Julie and Mort continued agenting, and Schwartz performed perhaps his greatest feat for posterity, a feat perhaps best described by the object of the achievement:

JULIE: by ray bradbury

My memories of Julie Schwartz go back to my late teens when I heard about this mysterious, because far-removed in New York City, man who represented some of the best writers in the weird, fantasy and science fiction field, was impossible to reach, and would never, never ever in all my life become my personal agent. When I went to New York for the First World Science Fiction Convention, I traveled four days and nights on the Greyhound Bus with my ten dollar typewriter and a copy of Hartrampf's Vocabularies under my arm, studying synonyms and antonyms and wondering about the magical names of Leo Margulies and Mort Weisinger and John W. Campbell, and, of course, Julius Schwartz. I felt if I could meet these people one look in my sunburst face would blind them, they would know my talent, grab me, work with me, and we would all be famous together. Of course, that's not what happened. All that happened was that I carried Hannes Bok's paintings and drawings from editor to editor and finally sold him to Weird Tales, but in the meantime I kept bugging Julie to become my agent and he looked at my manuscripts and said Come back again, later, keep writing, keep moving, and some day—

Someday. Meanwhile there was the World's Fair on three or four days and nights, most of it spent with Julie Schwartz. If you asked me to pick out some days and nights in my life that are memorable, I would pick two very special occasions. Fourth of July

"Julie Schwartz as I remember him"—SHELDON MAYER.



evening in 1939 at the New York World's Fair, and fireworks in the sky and the threat of war in Europe, everything beginning, and everything threatening to end, but being there at the Fair with Julie and Ross Rocklynne and Charlie Hornig, feeling myself among friends who would pet me and bulwark me and encourage me so I could make it through those terrible years ahead somehow. For the first time I had an island to live on, if I had to, and the island was made up of these warm and lovely people.

My second largest memory was a day in the summer of 1941. Julie had finally agreed to represent me and Henry Hasse. We had collaborated on an idea of mine called THE PENDULUM. Julie drove to the Coast that year with Edmond Hamilton and by a fine coincidence moved into a bungalow court two blocks away from where I sold newspapers on a street corner each afternoon. It was the greatest summer in history because with his arrival, Julie brought the news, the superb surprise, that our story had sold to SUPER-SCIENCE. The story was published on my 21st birthday, August 22nd, that year. I ran to Julie's apartment with the copy of the magazine and we sat around, Julie and Ed drinking beer and myself downing 5 or 6 cokes, jubilant.

From then on I wrote a story a week, starting on Monday and finishing on Saturday and putting the story into the mail every Saturday night so as to start a new story the next Monday. Late each week, a brief postcard would come back with some terse comment from Julie: "Well done, I'm shooting this straight over to Mary Gnaedinger," or: "This goes to Weird Tales tomorrow." Or, on one occasion, God help us: "this reads like

The grin of an intelligent chipmunk
—IRWIN HASEN.



a fag Martian story. Don't do this again!"

The last comment was about a story I had written concerning some sort of flower creature on Mars. I blushed furiously, filed the story forever, and, I hope, never committed the same crime.

A final memory. A Chinese Moon holiday parade in China Town, Los Angeles in the summer of 1941 and Bob Hope as Grand Master of the Parade and as Hope passed in his car, Julie yelling: "Are you kidding?!" And Hope looked surprised and laughing a great roar of laughter and pointing at Julie so we all looked and loved him.

So even as Hope pointed to him, I point now, half a life time later. He started me on my way, he kept me in good spirits, he sold all of my first stories for me to all the magazines during all those early, lonely years. My debt is immense. My love remembers him.

The precise number of stories Julie sold for Bradbury, who has gone on to a fame unmatched in the field, is unknown. Schwartz estimates that he sold "the first 70 stories Bradbury wrote." When Ray's first book, DARK CARNIVAL, appeared from Arkham House in 1947, Bradbury sent Julie a copy inscribed from the memory and the heart:

FOR JULIE—

In fond remembrances of
Norton Street—"The Piper"
—the moon festival in China
town—L'il Abner—"Are
you kidding?" That old
song—circa 1941: "Daddy"
—the beach—the burlesque
—and then New York and
George Brunis—God, what a
beautiful night!—

—And because you sold
almost every story in this
book for me—

WITH LUFF

from
RAY BRADBURY
May 10, 1947

Every man writing science fiction and weird fantasy seemed to know the man to come to if they wanted their work in print. Robert Bloch, whose PSYCHO later made cinematic history, placed some 80 pieces through Julie, including the world-famous "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper."

The single most important sale Julie made, though, was two stories by Bloch's mentor, Howard Phillips Lovecraft. As it had been with Wein-



RAY BRADBURY presents a story to his demon agent.

baum, Julie had a standing offer for anything Lovecraft wrote. Meeting the "shy, reserved" genius—whose writing ability, in Julie's opinion, far from equalled his galactic imagination—Schwartz passed on the opportunity, and in a flash sold "At the Mountains of Madness" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" to ASTOUNDING STORIES.

"Their first check," Julie proudly boasts, "was the largest Lovecraft ever received." As HPL, as his fans know him, was known to fill penny postcards with tiny script—"you almost needed a magnifying glass to read it"—as an economy measure, the service to the emperor of the occult and his devotees was indeed enormous.

The service was enormous but the fee was not. Julie had gone through City College of New York, majoring in math and physics, taking five years to earn his degree because of his outside activities. World War II was on, and the resulting paper shortage dealt death to many magazines. That meant fewer fees for agents. Schwartz survived till 1944 on what he made, but when opportunity in a separate but adjoining field tapped early in that year, he was quick to answer.

His employment as an editor grew from his agenting. Several years earlier he had met a young writer named Alfred Bester at an informal luncheon of sci-fi writers in New York. Bester later became senior editor at HOLIDAY magazine, wrote radio scripts for THE SHADOW and CHARLIE CHAN, and won awards and fame for two of sci-fi's finest novels, THE DEMOLISHED MAN and THE STARS MY DESTINATION. He had been brought into comics with Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff from Standard Magazines. Later Julie agented him to what he considers his most important sale, a long fantasy called "Hell is



HENRY KUTTNER and ROBERT BLOCH
in the 1930's.

Forever."

"He sold it to John W. Campbell for UNKNOWN," Bester recalls fondly, "and this was an electrifying experience for me. It was more-or-less an accolade to be accepted for UNKNOWN. That was the singlemost big, big step up in my confidence. I thought, 'Well, if I can make it with UNKNOWN, then maybe I'm a writer after all.' The only way you know you're good is the pat-on-the-back of having other people approve of what you've done."

As it was with many of Julie's clients, his relationship with Bester was deeper than ten percent of a check. "When my wife Rollie and I were first married and very poor," says Bester, "Julie used to come to our place and teach us to play cards. He taught us to play bridge, and pinochle. I remember he used to tease Rollie when she used to sit and puzzle over her cards: 'Rollie will now oblige us by making the wrong lead.'"

Julie also gave Bester a Christmas gift the writer has used to this day, THE VAN NOSTRAND SCIENTIFIC ENCYCLOPEDIA. The inscribed edition from the '40's sits beside the busy Bester typewriter and had been in constant use.

The intimacy was there, finally, and when Bester found that Dorothy Roubicek, an editor with what was then called the All-American Comics Group, was leaving for the bonds of wedlock, he thought of his old friend. "There were other awfully nice editors up there, so I recommended him to Shelly Mayer."

Sheldon Mayer, still active in comic-dom, was then editor-in-chief of M.C. Gaines' All-American Group. He remembers well the circumstances and Julie's fateful first interview ...

When Julie Schwartz first walked into my office thirty years ago, I was look-

ing for a man who understood story, and who was flexible enough to learn the techniques of telling stories in pictures. Added to that, he needed to be the kind of a guy who would be sympathetic to the needs of writers and artists ... and yet be able to cajole, coerce, and/or inspire them to do their best work. Page rates were beginning to rise at that time, but they never seemed to equal the kind of effort a good man could put forth when he was excited about an assignment. That can't be bought. Only the right kind of editor can get it. The other candidates I had interviewed, had been pulp editors. Tho' they didn't say it, in most of them I had detected hints of an attitude very common in those days ... Comic books are only a fad that can't possibly last. So why knock yourself out? Do your job, take your money, and forget any crazy ideas Mayer might have about the importance of the medium.

So here sat Julie Schwartz, looking at me patiently, as I looked him over and sounded him out about his background. And sounded off about my own notions of what made good comic books.

Julie was a slender young man in those days ... Reddish brown hair, receding prematurely, except for a stubborn widow's peak in the center. Horn-rimmed eye-glasses, tho' the rimless kind were in fashion then ... In his neat blue serge suit, he made me think of a balding Harold Lloyd. Same whimsical look in his eyes, whether the rest of his face was smiling or not. When he DID smile all over, the Harold Lloyd impression dissolved into what Irwin Hasen later called "the grin of an intelligent chipmunk." As I recall, Irwin meant that as a compliment, because he added "... with a very strong jaw." Most accurate, perhaps, was the observation made by our lovely red-haired secretary/receptionist, Jean, who confided later that "Mr. Schwartz has a handsome dignified look to him." Still later, she backed up her judgment and married Mr. Schwartz. Anyway ... that morning, tho' I liked him at once, I remember feeling that background-wise, Julie didn't have too much going for him. He had been a literary agent, specializing in science-fiction pulps. He had a working knowledge of writing, but he was not a writer. He had a working knowledge of pulp-editing, but he was not an editor. And I don't think he had ever read a comic book before he had bought a few of ours and read them in

the subway on the way to the interview. All this, he admitted freely. But it would not have been fair to say that he was batting zero. He had a few things going for him. He had a quick intelligence ... His responses to my comments were sharp and discerning ... And above all, there was that patient look to him ... I think that's what finally sold me. I remember making the silent observation that there were, in my view, two kinds of writers' agents ... the sharpies who had no interest in their clients beyond the profit motive ... and the other kind ... The gentle ones who nursed their charges like infants and often taught them aspects of their craft that they couldn't learn alone. If Julie fitted into the second category, he MIGHT just be the perfect guy for handling talented people and getting the best out of them.

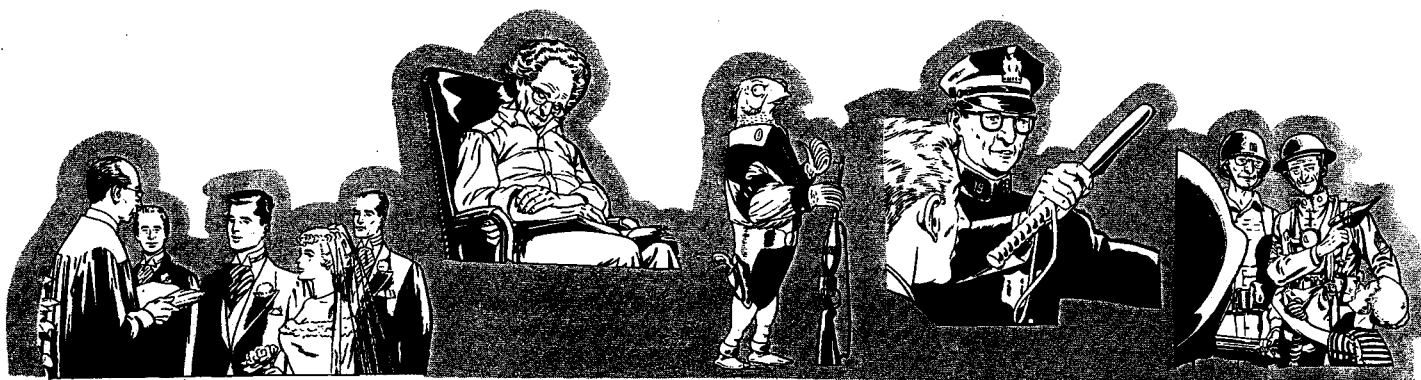
Certainly Julie's motivation seemed to be of the gentlest sort. He had indeed been a very successful writers' agent till the pulp field fell apart. And his clients were very fond of him ... One of 'em had sent him to me. The only thing left to decide was ... "Can he be taught what he needs to to know about our specialized field? Will he learn 'comic-books' fast enough to be useful in a hurry?"

I guess he must have. Because here it is thirty years later, and he's still making himself useful. Not only that. For some time now, people in the business have been calling him a "LEGEND"! Who can do better than that?

The day was February 21, 1944. The next day was Washington's Birthday, and as America had not yet decided that if holidays did not fall on a Monday they would be put there, nobody worked. February 23rd, however, was a regular

GARDNER FOX as drawn by GIL KANE.





Artist SID GREENE never failed to sneak a Schwartz caricature into the *STRANGE ADVENTURES* he illustrated . . . no matter what the pose!

day in the comics industry . . . the first of thirty years of them so far for Julius Schwartz.

Among the staffers then in the office was a man Julie just knew he'd met before. "City College?" he asked. "Pratt Institute," Sol Harrison, now National Periodicals' vice-president, answered. Schwartz still swears he knew Sol in his college days, and Harrison still swears he could not have.

His duties at the start dealt with plotting stories with the various writers, a job well-suited to his abilities, even though he had never read comics. He had, in his own words, "nothing to do with artwork." "I liked plotting with writers," he says. "It was like a mental exercise. I just became fascinated with that type of literary endeavor."

For the next several years not an issue of *SENSATION*, *ALL-AMERICAN*, *ALL-STAR* (where the *JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA* ran rampant), *GREEN LANTERN*, *FLASH*, *ALL-FLASH*, *COMIC CAVALCADE* passed without Schwartz working out the plots with the writers. Bester left the *GREEN LANTERN* scripting after Julie had been with the company for a year or so, and Schwartz turned to his science fiction writing friends, whom the death of the pulps had likewise hurt.

"After Al went over to radio," Julie says, "I introduced Kuttner to comics, and he wrote it for about a year. He loved every minute of it. His wife, C.L. Moore, was wild about Doiby Dickles."

Kuttner was followed into the pages of the Schwartz-edited comics by a writer named John Broome, who stayed with Julie for better than twenty years. He also had been a Schwartz client in the agenting days.

GREEN LANTERN, obviously, was receiving special attention. In fact, Julie himself wrote one of the *Green Guardian's* adventures, a takeoff on a Harold Lloyd movie called *SAFETY LAST*. He got the villain's name from a "good Dixieland trombone player named Miff Mole." The story vanished and Julie "hardly remembers anything about it"

. . . although if he'll look elsewhere in this issue of *AMAZING WORLD*, he can acquaint himself with it at leisure.

"Safety First" wasn't Julie's first script. He'd written one earlier story. "Shelly Mayer got the idea of putting out a mammoth comic featuring all our characters. He'd call it *THE BIG ALL-AMERICAN COMIC*, featuring one story of each of our characters. I was assigned to write the *JOHNNY THUNDER*. I haven't seen it since it was published and, in fact, we don't even have a copy in the office."

Obviously scripting wasn't Julie's cup of mocha . . . editing was, and engaging in plotting sessions with writers. Those sessions are fondly remembered by the one writer who worked most closely with Schwartz for the longest time . . . the man who wrote the one story Schwartz has said was truly historic, "Flash of Two Worlds" . . . Gardner Fox:

I remember with nostalgia those old plot sessions of ours. From nine until twelve noon, we wrestled with plot intricacies, character delineation and other story matter until everything was fixed firmly in my mind.

I can still hear him shout, "Let's go, let's go!" when he was ready to sit down and go to work. Those were happy days, believe me.

Very occasionally, we had to plot after lunch, which we always took together, sometimes still fighting a moot point in the story. Once—only once—in all that quarter of a century, do I recall a story that beat us. It was a cover yarn for *STRANGE ADVENTURES* and we couldn't seem to get a story to go with it. I came back the next day, and we got the story in about an hour. Funny how things work out that way, on occasion.

Julie Schwartz is, in my mind, the perfect editor, he is conscientious, thorough, painstaking. I feel I ought to know.

In the later forties Julie's activities at National took a turn for the broader. "When I became an editor," he explains,

"I never looked at art; didn't know a thing about it. When Mayer knew that he was going to leave, he said, 'From now on you'll look at the artwork as it comes in; after all, you edited the story and therefore you should know what should go into it and whether or not the artist interpreted it correctly.'"

"I said okay, but I knew nothing about art. He told me, 'Don't worry about it!' I realized what he meant. He wanted me to look at the artwork as a non-professional. What I liked he figured the young kid outside in the world would like, because he didn't know beans about art either. If I looked at a panel and didn't understand it, neither would he.

"It's no good for an artist to come in and say 'Boy, look what I did in that panel; it's so subtle and ingenious.' If it's not clear, it is worthless. So I look at the artwork from my point of view, an ordinary, average Mr. Joe. I tell my assistants 'If it pleases you, it will please the average reader. And vice versa.'"

In theory, this philosophy must have sounded fine to both Mayer and Schwartz. Fortunately Julie has always been willing to look at work more than once.

"When I first came in to DC," remembers Carmine Infantino, "Shelly Mayer took my work around to the different editors, Murray Boltinoff, Jack Schiff, Schwartz. And Julie said, 'Who wants this? I don't like it!'"

It was hardly an auspicious beginning to a partnership that has lasted to this day, through the unprecedented upheaval that has raised Infantino from an artist (even though he was the most honored comic book penciller of the day) to Editorial Director and finally Publisher/President of National Periodical Publications. Schwartz's initial growl of discontent with Carmine's innovative artistic style turned into enthusiastic use of his pencils on such strips as *GHOST PATROL*, *BLACK CANARY*, *DANGER TRAIL*, *POW WOW SMITH* and, of course, *THE FLASH* and *ADAM STRANGE*.

Pencils . . . but not inks. "He always hated my inking," says Carmine. "He let me ink a few stories myself, the SPACE MUSEUM series, a few DETECTIVE CHIMPS. But he never liked it. He cared for Seymour Barry's style of inking, which was very realistic."

It was Julie who came up with the idea of pairing Carmine's stylized pencils with Murphy Anderson's hyper-realistic inks. It was a combo that made ADAM STRANGE one of the best-illustrated strips in comics during the fifties and sixties and won both Infantino and Anderson several Alley Awards from fans as the best in their fields. The task of adapting his own style to Infantino's was maddening to Anderson, however. According to the penciller, Murphy was such a strict realist that the poses Carmine put FLASH and others in, sometimes too "artistic" for an actual person to mimic, were practically sacrilegious.

Schwartz didn't care. In his words, "Carmine and Anderson were both just at the point in their artistic development when they could balance each other, and be a great team."

"Julie's professional," says Infantino, "and he expects you to be professional. That's about it. He's sharp . . . and he's not one to pay compliments. In fact, I'd worked for him about 15 years when I asked him once how he liked a job. He said, 'If I *didn't* like it you'd know about it!'

"He does know how to incite you, get you worked up, bring out something different."

Something different was just what Julie wanted then, in the middle fifties. Ideas for SHOWCASE features were being batted around a National editorial meeting and "someone, some unknown inspirational genius, suggested that we bring back the FLASH. We decided not

to revive the old FLASH from the '40's but to modernize him. We got the idea of a new origin, a new costume," which Infantino designed, "a hero who got his inspiration, strangely enough, from reading an old FLASH comic!"

Julie edited the story by Robert Kanigher and oversaw the art team-up of Infantino and Joe Kubert. From Steve Allen and a local TV personality named Barry Gray the FLASH's alter ego, Barry Allen, was named. Appearing in SHOWCASE #4, the character became a giant success, and the super-hero segment of the comics industry, long dormant, came alive again.

FLASH was followed by GREEN LANTERN, the JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, THE ATOM and HAWKMAN, all revivals of 1940's heroes edited by Julie. For the secret identity of the size-shrinking ATOM Schwartz chose to honor a friend from his science fiction days, diminutive Ray Palmer, who had become a successful editor in the sci-fi field.

Through all this time Julie was also striving to keep the two dominant professional interests of his life, science-fiction and comics, alive in union. STRANGE ADVENTURES, which began in the early fifties, was one of his finest books, featuring a variety of excellent art and strong, if short, stories. For SA John Broome created THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS, Infantino and Fox SPACE MUSEUM, and the hilarious STAR HAWKINS series came to be. Stories by Hamilton and Otto Binder shared space with yarns by Fox and Broome. MYSTERY IN SPACE was Julie's other sci-fi title: ADAM STRANGE's adventures on Rann, scripted by Fox, were the core of MIS's later issues, superbly illustrated by Infantino and Anderson.

Fans could tell that the science fiction books were a particular love of

Schwartz's. It was therefore something of a shock when fans read in the lettercol of STRANGE ADVENTURES #156 that Schwartz was leaving the two sci-fi books for ("I don't believe it!") BATMAN and DETECTIVE.

The reasons for the change were locked in the changing times of the sixties. BATMAN, as a character, was in trouble. Little detective action was involved in the stories; giant props and very weak science fiction gimmicks were thrown into each story. The artwork had been stiffening into rigor mortis for several years, and so had the reader response. The National management looked to the man who had revived FLASH and the other Golden Age heroes so successfully.

Julie immediately read a bunch of BATMAN comics; he claims he never had before. For the first of his "new look" BATMAN stories in DETECTIVE he enlisted the unwilling Infantino, who never liked doing BATMAN, John Broome as writer, and one stunning goof: in "Mystery of the Menacing Mask," he showed the CAPED CRUSADER covering some crooks with a **gun**. Any kid knows that BATMAN avoids guns like poison! Gulping back his embarrassment, Schwartz moved to "Gotham Gang Line-Up" and, through the extraordinary pencils of Bob Kane, asserted his editorial dominance with a surprise move, killing off Alfred the butler.

The move was very unpopular among fans but it got the desired response: sales climbed. And, little knowing what he was starting, Julie decided to bring back one of BATMAN's best foes, the RIDDLER. He worked it out with Fox, the story appeared, and a man named William Dozier read it, liked it, and picked up other issues featuring the JOKER and PENGUIN.

SID LAZARUS caricatured Julie in the early '50's; twenty years later, Schwartz looks over artwork with Assistant Editor Bob Rozakis and Elliot S! Maggin.



William Dozier was a TV producer of 20th Century Fox. He saw great screen potential for the CAPED CRUSADER, and with Lorenzo Semple, Jr., Dozier adapted the BATMAN yarns for the boob tube. The era of "camp" BATMAN and 88% sales was upon National, BATMAN, and the astonished Julie Schwartz.

That era was an uncomfortable one for Julie. On the one hand, he had a bonanza that he had to exploit. On the other, he was thoroughly nauseated by the campiness enshrouding his characters. The incredible sales were great, but Julie knew well that when a fad faded, it faded out. Sure enough, after the TV show had run its course, sales plunged all over the DC line and "it looked as if I might have to go back into agenting."

The solution to the business woes of NPP was, in the management's mind, new leadership. That meant, as things worked out, that Infantino had to lay down his pencil and brush to learn the business end of the industry. It cost Julie his most popular artist, but it probably saved the whole comics field from going under in the post-BATMAN blues.

The BATMAN boom/bust came as Schwartz finished twenty years in comics. He was acclaimed as among the finest men in the field. His personality had mellowed. When he first came to work at DC and for some time thereafter, according to Production Boss Jack Adler, "he had a thing about packages ... that an executive shouldn't carry them. He always tricked somebody else into carrying them down or up the elevator for him. He had a real thing about it that changed when people got onto it and just refused."

Perhaps Julie was recalling one time when he did carry a package—original Sid Greene artwork to a MYSTERY IN SPACE story. Finding it cumbersome to hold on the subway, he placed it behind him on the seat, and when he came to

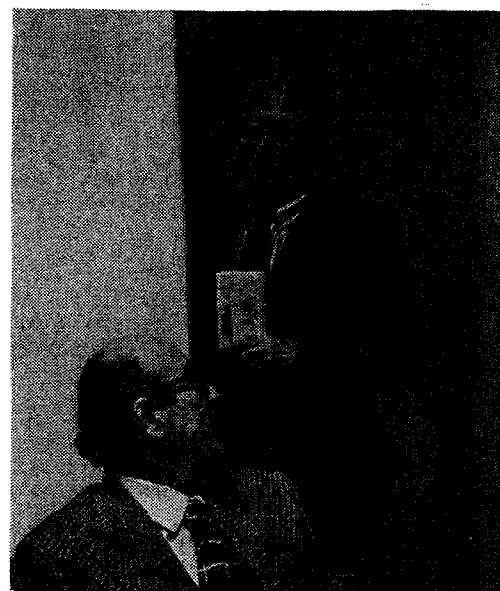
his stop, he got off, but the artwork kept going. A reprint was used and the Greene pages are still riding the "E" train.

Then there's always the point-of-view of the man who faced Julie Schwartz across a desk for most of their editorial careers ... Robert Kanigher:

I shared an office with Schwartz for more than twenty years. Our desks were back to back. Staring at him reminded me of (CENSORED — CENSORED). His desk was filled with (CENSORED — CENSORED). At precisely 8:55 he (CENSORED). At 11:55 a.m. he (CENSORED — CENSORED). At 4:44 p.m. he (CENSORED — CENSORED — CENSORED). You could always count on him to (CENSORED). On the rare occasions when he failed to (CENSORED — CENSORED — CENSORED), he unfailingly (CENSORED). His method of editing scripts was to (CENSORED — CENSORED — CENSORED). Artwork to him was (CENSORED). He wants to live to the year 2000 so he can (CENSORED — CENSORED — CENSORED). I hope he (CENSORED). He deserves it.

It was the sixties and new people were coming into the industry, just as it was recovering from the slump. One of the writers emerging was a young man from St. Louis by the name of Denny O'Neil, and a young artist named Neal Adams was also making his presence felt—and how!—in the business. Both had done work before for Julie, marked with originality and excellence. And as comicdom faced a different sort of crisis, they were there to help Schwartz meet it.

The challenge was a readership and an era. A substantial portion of National's older readers were caught up in the social and ethical turmoil of the



Old comrades meet again ... Mort Weisinger and Julie Schwartz today.

later '60's, just like any people their age. Society truly seemed to be crumbling, or at least shuddering. Everywhere the problems of the world were making themselves known—and the urge to "do something" intruded even to 909 Third Avenue, where the National offices then were.

The response was to take a dying magazine, GREEN LANTERN, and, in Julie's words, "expand the comics medium, explore its boundaries, explore this new realm—relevance."

Business-wise it was not a real gamble. GL was practically kaput anyway and Infantino wisely figured that a book with relevance coupled with the highest quality writing and artwork could only help DC in terms of publicity and respect within the field.

And as such, it worked. Julie gave O'Neil and Adams free rein, even though he knew that relevance would not go over well with the vast majority of the readership. "Older readers went wild over the book, and it won awards," he says, pointing to the SHAZAM plaques won by the book and two of its stories. "GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW gained us a lot of swell publicity and didn't lose any money. But the younger readers didn't want relevance. They wanted entertainment, and for them the two didn't match up."

And so GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW died. But though relevance is no more, it certainly got its due from Julie Schwartz and Co. "We gave it a hearing," he says, "and that's all we could do."

"Look, I always say that comics should be FACT: Fun, Action, Comedy, Thrills. And above all, be original. B.O. (Be Original) Schwartz, that's me. Anytime any new writer or artist comes in here and wants to discuss something, I tell him: be original—don't copy from

MARTY PASKO's writer's-eye view of the contemporary editor.





Writer/Editor LEN WEIN in his mentor's office.

anything to your knowledge. Always **surprise** the reader.

"And how do you be original? There's no way except by having originality. It's like asking a violin player, 'How do you become a Heifetz?' You either have it or you don't."

Julie's career in the last ten years has been notable not only for GREEN LANTERN, but also for the new talent that he has brought into the industry. To revivify SUPERMAN, he not only utilized Cary Bates but brought in and developed Elliot S! Maggin, and later Marty Pasko, who says of Schwartz, "he was the first person to plant in my mind the idea of being a writer. Basically I owe being in the business and most of my success to Julie."

"The most important advice I ever got from him was not to take comics too seriously, so that you're so uptight when you approach a story that basically you're cold to it before you even start. You can become pompous, because you think what you're doing is so important. 'Loosen up,' he said—and I like to think I have, because I'm selling to him now."

The most controversial event in the last several years of Schwartz's career was the much-publicized conflict with artist C.C. Beck over the direction of the SHAZAM book. Beck didn't like the stories Maggin and O'Neil were writing and as a result, is now off the strip. "The editor and publisher have the responsibility for the success of a book," Schwartz maintains, "and they should not surrender control over it." As far as Julie is concerned, that's the last word on the subject.

"It's a sheer delight to work for Julie," says artist Bob Oksner. "He seems so absolutely sure of himself, he knows what he's about every moment. He demands the best and you want to give him your best. He says he's not an artist,

yet he has the uncanny knack of being able to spot bad art and compliment good. He's been around art so long he has the insights of an artist."

"Julie Schwartz is one of the two or three best editors I've worked for in **any** medium," states writer Denny O'Neil, who has worked in every phase of the printed word. "He is one of those rare men who does not try to impose his own ego on the work—he just tries to make the writer look good."

"He has the marvelous quality of being fresh and alive after 30 years in this business. He can be delighted—he's not bored."

"He's a pro. He's got his trip together almost better than anyone. His editing operation is smooth, no sweat. It's what I always aspire to and almost never attain."

"Best editor in the business—I've learned more from him than I learned on my lunch hour last Tuesday." So speaks Len Wein, erstwhile DC writer and presently editor at Marvel, no less. When, in the blood-&-guts competition of comic books, a rival—even one who is a protege—says such about you, that's praise indeed.

Julius Schwartz won the Academy of Comic Book Artists SHAZAM Award in 1973 for "Superior Achievement by an Individual." But his favorite reward for his years in the business came one day when he sat on a bus heading for work and happened to notice that the kid beside him was reading Jim Steranko's HISTORY OF COMICS.

"We started talking and I asked him how well he liked SUPERMAN and BATMAN. He said 'very much.' When I told him I was the editor he didn't believe it. He said 'You're Julius Schwartz?!?' How about that? He knew my name!"

Not bad for someone who names bean soup and chili con carne as among his favorite foods, and considers himself expert on only two things... **not** comics

and science fiction, but contract bridge (he has a 1947 "Master's Degree" from BRIDGE WORLD magazine to prove it) and New Orleans jazz (even though he's never visited the Crescent City: "a true jazz fan is called a Moldy Fig. I'm proud to be a Moldy Fig!"). How have these obsessions affected his professional life? Well, he hems and haws, and finally admits that they only prove the value of excellence and skill.

His partner at lunchtime bridge is usually Milton Snapinn, DC's export manager, who sniffs, "he talks a rip-roaring game. He's a better pinochle player."

His favorite comic? "The next one I do. Hermoine Gingold was recently asked: 'Do you get bored doing the same play night after night for months?' And she said no, 'each night was a different audience.' I feel that way about my job. Each individual performance counts."

"If I'd known thirty years ago that I would have gone through God knows how many thousands of stories, covers, and all, I would have run away. But I didn't, and I'm glad."

"What am I proud of? Well, I'm proud of all the kids that used to write me letters who are now in the business... Roy Thomas, Marty Pasko, Marv Wolfman, Bob Rozakis who is my assistant here, Mike Barr, our friend from Castro Valley, Mike Friedrich... and I won't forget 'My Favorite Guy'..."

"I'm currently working on the new JOKER book. I don't know what we'll end up doing with it. Denny has written the first story; Irv Novick is illustrating it."

"Retirement? Dirty word! I'll keep going as long as I can, as long as I have anything I can offer to the industry. Theoretically, at 65 you're supposed to retire, according to American custom. That'll be 1980. But I don't think about it. I like what I'm doing."

"Now get out of here. I've got work to do!"

Article author GUY LILLIAN with "Our Favorite Julius" at Julycon '73.





ViSITED

At the **MidSouthCon/DeepSouthCon** in Memphis this past March, the guests included actor **Michael Sherd**. Who else recognizes **Admiral Ezzel** from *Star Wars*?



With **Julie Wall** and **Charlotte Proctor** we visited **Elvis Presley's** hillside home, **Graceland**, and came away liking the King more than we ever had before.

Naomi Fisher accepted native Alabaman **Greg Benford's** **Phoenix Award** – bearing a secret she wasn't quite ready to reveal ... *Congratulations, Naomi and Pat!* (Remember, "Guy" if it's a boy, "Lillian" if it's a girl ...)



**In brightest day, in blackest night,
No evil shall escape my sight!
Let those who worship Evil's might,
Beware my power – Green Lantern's light!**

*- Alfred Bester
- for Julius Schwartz*