

DAGON

#364, APA-Q DISTRIBUTION #274

2 January 1988

LORD PETER VIEWS THE CALENDAR

A Chronological Problem in the Detective Novels of Dorothy L. Sayers

The recent production on PBS of three of Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey detective stories has got me to re-reading these old favorites, which are as much sketches of life in England between the wars, as they are detective stories. The television productions were of the three novels that record the courtship of Lord Peter and Harriet Vane: Strong Poison, Have His Carcase, and Gaudy Night. But, in re-reading the first two Lord Peter novels, Whose Body? and Clouds of Witness, I have come upon a little problem of chronology.

Whose Body? takes place in a period of a little over a week, during a raw, foggy London November. At no point are we given a full date, complete with the day of the week. However, from the development of the plot we can piece together information that should give us the year.

On a Tuesday morning, a London architect who has been hired to do some restoration work in the church attended by Wimsey's family is shocked to find a nude body in his bathtub. Lord Peter undertakes to solve the riddle of the body's identity by putting an advertisement into the Times, seeking information about a pince-nez which was the body's only article of clothing. The next day, in consultation with his friend Inspector Parker, he observes the advertisement in the Times. An answer to that advertisement refers to it as appearing in that day's Times, and is primly dated "17 November 192-".

We are therefore looking for a year in the 1920s, in which 17 November fell on a Wednesday. Only two years meet this specification, 1920 and 1926. There are several justifications for choosing the former year. For one thing, Whose Body? was published in 1923. For another, there is a distinct flavor of an early post-war period. In Sir Julian Freke's waiting-room, Lord Peter meets a Russian gentlewoman with a little girl, who tells him that "we have escaped - from starving Russia - six months ago," with considerable traumatic effects on the little girl. This is much more believable for 1920, when Tsarist forces were still holding out against the Communists, than it would have been in 1926. Another one of Sir Julian's patients is "a soldierly-looking young man, of about Lord Peter's own age," which was 30 in 1920; this is an obvious shellshock case, like Lord Peter had been until taking up detection as a hobby. (In fact, during the most stressful period of the case, Lord Peter has a relapse.)

Since the affair of the Attenbury emeralds, which launched Lord Peter upon his career as an amateur detective, is referred to as taking place in the previous year, the 1920 date is the most likely for Whose Body? The chronology is now quite tight; Lord Peter comes home a mental wreck when the war ends in 1918, gets involved with detection in 1919 and finds Lord Attenbury's emeralds, and in 1920 solves the murder of Sir Reuben Levy.

However, this lands us with difficulties when we read the second novel in the series, Clouds of Witness, published in 1927. It is explicitly stated in that book that Captain Cathcart's body was discovered on Thursday 14 October. Here, again, this date exists in the 1920s only in 1920 or 1926; its next subsequent occurrence would not be until 1937, by which time Lord Peter would be married to Harriet Vane, and an incipient or actual father. Here the evidence seems to suggest 1920 rather than 1926, since reference is made to a purchase made at a Parisian jeweler's on January 31 of the same year -

a Sunday in 1926, but a Saturday in 1920. Despite English scorn of the "continental Sunday", I doubt that the shop would have been open on that day of the week.

This, however, requires us to put Clouds of Witness a month before Whose Body?, and that simply won't work. At the end of Whose Body?, Lord Peter is about to take an extended trip to Corsica, following "the excitement attendant on the solution of the Battersea mystery" - and, at the very beginning of Clouds of Witness he is in Paris, following three months in Corsica, on his way back to England. Furthermore, his age is in that same passage described as 33, which fits neither of the likely years, since evidence scattered through the novels has it that he was born in 1890.

Even if Parisian jewelry shops opened on Sundays in 1926, we still have difficulties. In Clouds of Witness it is established that Lady Mary Wimsey is 5 years younger than Lord Peter, which would make her 25 in 1920 or 31 in 1926. The way in which she reacts to her suitors in Clouds of Witness is more appropriate to 25 than to 31 - although, since the aristocracy is more shielded from the difficulties of life, their emotional maturity may be correspondingly retarded.

We get the impression that Lord Peter left for Corsica immediately after the apprehending of the Battersea Murderer. However, since the criminal was caught just before he could commit suicide, there would have to have been a trial, perhaps delaying Lord Peter's departure far into the next year. This, by itself, would fit the October date of Clouds of Witness, since the crime takes place at a hunting-lodge during the hunting season. In another of Sayers' Lord Peter novels, Busman's Honeymoon, she takes pride in the fact that British trials are relatively quick, rather than the long-drawn-out appeals that American law allows, so the murderer of Sir Reuben could have been disposed of by the following July, leaving three months for Corsica, and a return in October.

I would personally incline to this hypothesis, putting Clouds of Witness in 1921, except that we now come up against the difficulty of "Thursday 14 October", a date that would not exist again until 1926. And a date eight years after the end of World War I would not fit Lady Mary's involvement with her two suitors, whom she met during or just after the war.

The chronological problem will just have to be left at this point. Since the Sayers novels have been favorites for several decades, I scarcely imagine that I am the first person to have noticed this problem.

GETTING CAUGHT UP...

DAGON, an amateur journal of commentary on science-fiction, fantasy, comic art, and other topics, is published every third Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11226-5302. It circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association which is collated at the same address and frequency. The copy count of APA-Q is 35, and you are invited to contribute. If you don't have your own printing facilities, just send me your contribution on any mimeograph stencil that can fit on a Gestetner, and I'll print it for 2¢ per sheet, per copy. I can also mail you your copy of APA-Q if you send a few dollars for postage and the 15¢ envelope. The present state of postage and printing accounts appears elsewhere in the issue under the heading "The Ministry of Finance."

The schedule of the next few collations of APA-Q appears to the right. Some of these collations, including the one on 23 January, will be open to any APA-Q reader who wants to come by and help put it together. On other collation dates I may be busy, and will put the Distribution together by myself. To find out which of these conditions will exist for any given collation date, phone me a few days before at 718-693-1579, or at my office number, 718-780-5180.

For the 275th Distribution on 23 January I will definitely want help. That is also the collation and publication date of the 545th issue of my war-gaming fanzine GRAUSTARK, and that is 12 pages and 140 copies. APA-Q #275 will be ready to go at 2 PM that day, so if you plan to bring anything to be included, and find you will be delayed, phone me about

#275	23 January 1988
#276	13 February 1988
#277	5 March 1988
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it at once.

APA-Qover #273 (Blackman): For the Space Rabbi's 10th anniversary appearance you seem to have a reprise of the whole cast of characters. We did the same for the 100th installment of (yech! ptui!) Streak Gordon. I'm sorry that the collation got the pages out of order, and apologize for the inconvenience it must have caused readers. Apparently Sacks's microprinted contributions have also been collated the reverse of the way he wants them. I can never be certain which was is "upside down", and hope I've got it straight for this issue. As Mailman Duck once said, in the old Pogo strip, as he delivered a postcard to the Communistic Cowbirds, "This is the only message I ever seen what's got two upside-downs."

The Bagelworld Oy-Vey-Is-Mir, or, Star Schlep: A New Aggravation (Blackman): This is a very funny episode, particularly when Dr. Hugo is on stage. However, your pun on the two words written as chai is more visual than aural. The Hebrew word begins with a chet, pronounced as the Scottish or German 'ch', and of course means 'life'. The Russian word chai begins with the Kirillic letter cheh, pronounced like the English 'ch'. (The Hebrew word for 'tea' is tah, spelled tav heh.)

Years ago, in his genzine Kipple, Ted Pauls claimed that a military museum in Israel had the original missile with which David killed Goliath - a stale bagel...

Yes, I remember Alfred Bester's story 5,271,009, which first appeared in F&SF in March 1954. The only problem is that this recurring number is stated to be prime. In fact, it has 3 for a factor. And the gimmick about the "Borzoi Irregulars" and their "dress code" is also good. Someday, somebody is going to do for the Dorsai what Bored of the Ring did for Hobbits. (Unless Harry Harrison's Bill the Galactic Hero can be considered to have already done that job.)

I am looking forward to "Farblonget Voyage", which should be due for Pesach.

DAGON #363 (me): On page 4 I notice that I have used the phrase "I am not surprised" three times. The older you get, the less surprises you.

No, I don't know what "the Kumquat Conspiracy" is. For the collage cover, I just liften that announcement out of a schedule of events at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Something seems to have gang agley with the new Brooklyn College Science Fiction Society's plans for a fanzine. Before classes ended for the holiday break, I was assured several times that the 10 stencils (4 of them electrostencils) would be cut Real Soon Now, and I would soon hear when they could come over and start printing them. Then, silence. I fear that what we have here is a Daugherty Project.

Quant Suff! #156 (Malay): Yes, I've noticed that sometimes a waggish make-up editor sometimes puts stories with a curious relationship adjacent to one another in a newspaper. Consider the opportunities afforded by the U. S. adventures in Central America and the Soviet adventures in Afghanistan...

I agree with your conclusions about the New Jersey stadium bond issue and George Steinbrunner. If George Steinbrunner were attached to the Yankees in any capacity other than that of owner, the owner would have traded or fired him long ago.

I gave Karina the Infocom game Plundered Hearts for Christmas. She had heard about the game, and was looking forward to trying it. I'm going to get Zork's 3 parts in hand before trying Beyond Zork.

"There have been several movies recently in which top members of government are discovered to be hiding a hideous crime in their pasts." (A hideous crime, presumably, is one not involving live bimbos.) I commend to your attention two authors who are close enough to the Inside to know what sort of people govern us. The murder mysteries of Margaret Truman, of which Murder at the C. I. A. is the most recent, continually show high government officials engaged in subverting not merely specific laws, but the very concept of Law. And Christopher Buckley's The White House Mess presents Ronald Reagan as a senile old fool, and his successor, a sort of northwestern Jimmy Carter, as a fumbling incompetent. These authors are not grumpy outsiders like Alan Drury or Andrew Tully; one is the daughter of a president, and the other is a nephew of a senator and son of a C. I. A. agent and prominent con-

This is
O At
P Great
E Intervals
R This
A Appears
T To
I Inflamm
O Optic
N Nerves

1470

servative spokesman, and himself a speechwriter. When people like this display high government officials as fools or subversives, you know that disillusionment had gone pretty far even in the insider circles in Washington.

If cyberpunk is "geocentric" with "no sense of a greater Universe", it is because this school of s-f explores "inner space", a realm as important as outer space in making projections of the future.

Richard III left no legitimate descendants who survived him. If you reject the offspring of his brothers, a Yorkist heir would have to be sought among his sisters' descendants.

The story about C. I. A. drug-smuggling from Central America is breaking through in the oddest places. A couple of weeks ago, Newsday carried a review of a book about it. One of the people named in that book has made the tactical error of suing those who are calling him a drug-smuggler. When the case comes to trial, things could get very interesting, and the media will at last inform the public what was in those gun-running airplanes when they returned to the U. S.

Added to the distinction between the spellings "Holzman" and "Holtzman" is the fact that German, like English, once did not have its spelling rules quite as firm as they are today. The version without the "t" conforms more closely to modern German usage. At the beginning of the present century two of the founders of modern physics were a Dutchman named Lorentz and a German named Lorenz. There even exists a "Lorentz-Lorenz Theory" on which they collaborated. In my family records are the spellings "Boreman" and "Bordman", although "Boardman" was settled upon by the middle of the 18th century. I am not at all convinced by a story of an alleged Norman ancestor who lost a hand in battle, had a wooden substitute made, and was known thereafter as "Bois-Main". In actuality, a boardman was a peasant who paid his rent with produce rather than with coin or labor. The root word is the same as in "boardinghouse".

Presumably the "Rope-Makers" referred to in Wolfe's Soldier of the Mist are the Spartans, or Lacedaemonians. And if "Salamis" is translated as "Peace", I spy a Semitic root-word there. You can sometimes get good effects from literal translations of personal or place names. The place where Jesus was executed is called in the Christian scriptures by the Hebrew "Golgotha" or the equivalent Greek "Calvary". If it were rendered into English as "Skull Hill" the drama of the narrative would be improved. But the Latin latro means simply "thief", in which it is cognate to the Spanish ladron.

Several people have cracked jokes about a Jackson-Robertson presidential race. I am all in favor of it; it would mean that electoral politics is not only ridiculous, but would be seen to be ridiculous. And the turn-out should drop so far that even the management of the American political system would be able to see that something was drastically wrong. More likely, however, is a deal between Hart and Jackson. If they bring the two biggest delegate blocs to Atlanta next summer, the nomination will go to Hart, while Jackson gets Secretary of Health and Human Services and a veto over the other cabinet appointments.

Vaudeville Lines #191 (Lipton): Then there's the AAAAA - an organization for drunken drivers.

After World War II there was a complaint that the media were playing up murders and other major crimes committed by veterans. Then, of course, almost every male in an age group with a traditionally high crime rate was a veteran, often a combat veteran. For psychoses produced in Vietnam the statistics are a bit more convincing. Vietnam veterans have an unusually high proportion of suicides, criminals, and homeless. There is a persistent story going around, for which I can find neither an authoritative confirmation nor an authoritative denial, that the number of U. S. war deaths in Vietnam is now exceeded by the number of suicides among Vietnam veterans.

A Reconstructionist Jew is approximately the same thing, within a Jewish context, that a Unitarian is within a Christian context. They seem to be well-meaning, politically liberal types who support, very ineffectively, most of the proper causes. Other groups that seem to be composed of such people are Universalists, Ethical Culturists, Humanists, Baha'in, and the more up-to-date sort of Quaker.

Time & Space (Davies): At about the time this appeared in APA-Q, I had just finished reading Watchmen, a copy which Jim Dunnigan had loaned to Al Nofi. It is indeed very effective, though sometimes you have to go flipping back as some minor point in the development of the plot suddenly assumes major importance. In some ways it reminds me of DC's old "Inferior Five" series, but played seriously rather than for laughs. It is indeed a powerful "alternate history" in which real costumed heroes appear in imitation of those in comic books, with even an imitation of the "Justice Society". I was also reminded of George Scithers' hilarious "The Masked Marvels of Mollusc-on-the-Marsh", but again played seriously.

And yet in the end, for all its technical intricacy and expertise, I found Watchmen dissatisfying. I utterly reject any philosophy of life that is willing to sacrifice three million human beings to assure benefits for the rest. I have no doubt that if the opening blow of a nuclear war caused such a death toll, it might shock the rest of the world into making peace. But to deliberately plan such a thing is a totally different matter.

As for sequels, in all the English language there have been only three sequels that were better than the books that preceded them: Through the Looking Glass, Huckleberry Finn, and Lord of the Rings. It may or may not be significant that two of these were works of fantasy. The third is one of those terrible things that all authors are taught to avoid, a work with a Message. It has the same characters, and much of the same setting, as Tom Sawyer, a humorous series of sketches of small-town life from Twain's own boyhood, but one without a Message.

The state of Illinois is not as benighted as you think. I have a correspondent in Decatur named Jeff Frankel, who gets DAGON and who is active in the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. They seem to have an active local organization there, Central Illinois Atheists. However, I will send a couple of APA-Qs to Joe Lester.

The substitution of "they" for a generalized "he" or the awkward "he or she" is just another step in the continual development of English. In German the word sie can, depending on context, mean "she" or "they". A further complication is added by the fact that the third person plural is also used for the second person formal, singular or plural, and capitalized as "Sie". (For example, sie singt means "she sings"; sie singen means "they sing"; and "Sie singen" means, if formal language is called for, "you sing".) A similar confusion existed in Anglo-Saxon. Then a heavy Norse component came into English by the usual means of fire and sword, and the Norse third person plural, they, was introduced to distinguish this from the third person singular feminine.

I have probably saved myself a great deal of aggravation by never having learned how to drive a car. Someone with my slow reflexes shouldn't try it anyway.

Cherish that encounter with the Connecticut Yuppie! The financial pages seem to be telling us that the breed will soon become extinct.

The Singularity CardSM may soon have a real-life counterpart. The Roman Catholic Church is about to facilitate its donations by issuing credit cards, and of course that will be promoted as "the one card that gets you...infinite credit" - in Infinity, of course! Maybe they'll call it "Vaticard".

Blancmange #193 (Blackman): I rather doubt that, as the New York Times seems to believe, that "Goofy is Disney's attempt to copy Looney Tunes' slapstick." I think that Goofy was a Disney character before the first Looney Tunes came out.

Rambo may be escapist, but it's proving very useful. After two years as a surrogate Vietnam war hero (since there were no real ones), he has become a convenient word for describing the sort of politician or military man who wants to get us into another war. Eventually, I am certain that militarists are going to regret the day that such a convenient and useful epithet came into the language. It is not only militarists who can use bumper-sticker arguments; "Better Bimbos Than Rambos" will fit on a sticker or button very easily. If Pacifists are to be called "traitors", militarists can just as easily be called "baby-killers", described as "bloodthirsty", or have the name of John Rambo hung about their necks.

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Current postage and printing accounts have the following balances as of 30 December 1987:

Nina Bogin	\$5.30	Robert Bryan Lipton*#	\$20.47
Lee Burwasser	\$9.46	John Malay#	\$17.60
Philip M. Cphen	\$15.44	Alan Rachlin	\$19.25
Stacey Davies	26¢	Lana Raymond*#	\$7.94
Don Del Grande	\$16.18	Robert Sacks	\$6.97
John Desmond	\$5.37	Jane T. Sibley*#	\$21.41
Harold Feld*	\$4.46	Peter G. Trei	15¢
Daniel B. Holzman	\$8.59	Elizabeth Willig	92¢

* - Also gets APA-Filk.

- 1st-class mail

Including postage and/or printing costs for this present Distribution, the amount of your balance as of 2 January 1988 is given to the right. Since this is also a First Saturday, I will distribute as many copies as I can to APA-Q readers who attend. And, since we'll be at Hexacon a week from today, some copies will be held till then and given to readers whom I reasonably suspect might be there.

Anton Sherwood phoned a few days ago and said that he has lost interest in APA-Q, and that I should use the balance of his postage account to pay off Mike Gunderloy's arrears.

The next collation of APA-Filk, the quarterly filksinging apa, will take place on Saturday 6 February 1988. A week later will be the date of the 276th Distribution, and people who get both apas by mail will get both APA-Filk #37 and APA-Q #276 in the same bundle.

Accounts which fall into arrears will be suspended. Presently suspended accounts are:

Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	Dana Hudes	-28¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	Mark Keller	-86¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Ted Pauls	-39¢
Liz Ensley	-37¢	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢
John Hartzell	-79¢		

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Fred Phillips has passed on the doleful news that Eileen Campbell Gordon's Rivendell Bookshop is going to have to close at the end of this month. I would urge all of Rivendell's patrons to take this opportunity to drop in and buy out her stock. Her address is 109 St. Mark's Place, New York, N. Y. 10009, between 1st Avenue and Avenue A. The telephone number is 212-533-2501. You will probably never again find such a good stock of books in such fields as Keltic, Norse, and mediaeval mythology, the history and pre-history of the British isles, and the languages, manners, customs, languages, and liberation struggles of the modern Keltic peoples, with so knowledgeable a proprietor.

Eileen's tenure of the shop comes to an end on 29-30 January, and on those days there will be a farewell party at the shop. Since the Rivendell Bookshop, after years of valiant struggle, is finally going to fall victim to Manhattan's horrendous commercial rents, I suggest that we all congratulate Eileen on her efforts, and give her a good send-off by buying her remaining stock as far as the interest and ability in us lies.

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The passing of the Rivendell bookshop sets in motion again that old argument about whether commercial profitably should be the sole arbiter of success and failure

of an enterprise. A couple of years ago it surfaced on a much larger scale, when it seemed that the Radio City Music Hall was going to be torn down as unprofitable. The architectural and artistic importance of the building was the subject of editorials for weeks, and the building is still with us.

At the other extreme I am reminded of a conversation that I had several years ago with Joan Beachley, at about the time Eileen moved to the shop she is now forced to vacate. Joan took the strictly capitalistic view of matters. Once, it seems, she had been persuaded to put up financial backing for a Feminist bookshop, convinced that such a shop was needed. Between bad management and low sales, the shop went out of business. This persuaded her that no ideological considerations should deter the fall of an enterprise that couldn't support itself, no matter how useful it may be.

I had a counter-example. During the 1940s and 1950s there were many "science shops", particularly in large cities, and near colleges or high schools with well-heeled students. These shops sold microscopes, slides, telescopes, star charts, models, rock samples, and other things of interest to budding scientists. Numerous boys and girls were set on the road to scientific careers as a result of things they had bought, talked about, or learned in these science shops.

Capitalistic considerations, particularly sharp rises in commercial rents, had driven most of the science shops out of business by the early 1970s. As might have been predicted, there was a precipitous drop in the number and quality of science students, thereafter. Now, when demand is starting once again to overtake supply in the sciences, we can think over the social costs of letting all those science shops succumb to the laws of capitalism.

*

The return of Senator Hard to 1988 presidential politics is just the added touch of lunacy that the present system needs. Between Robertson's religious fanaticism, Biden's plagiarism, Gore's militarism and his wife's love of censorship, Jackson's chronic failure to engage his brain before opening his mouth, and the disposal of most Republican candidates to attack their own president's foreign policy, I had thought that rock bottom had been reached. But no, Senator Hard's withdrawal and re-entry - a thing he is said to be good at - is altogether worthy of this ludicrous political campaign.

Not that I have any admiration for Senator Hard. His old pal Governor Lamm, also of Colorado, is on record as insisting that old people ought to do their biological duty, die, and get out of the way of young people who can use their pension money to retrain themselves for new jobs. (Lamm and Hard are Democrats. Guess what the Republicans are saying.) But now nobody will think of his campaign in any terms except those of Donna "No Excuses" Rice. Personally, I'd rather see a president surrounded with bimbos than with Rambos. But, if the majority of the American electorate believed this, Ronald Reagan would never have become president.

At present writing, Senator Hard seems to have instantly regained his role as "front runner", and is drawing campaign workers away from his rivals. His supporters can be expected to be a coalition of the following elements:

1. People who have played around the way he did.
2. People who would like to play around the way he did, but haven't the nerve.
3. People who believe that playing around with bimbos is irrelevant to a man's qualifications for the presidency. Such people are likely to ask you who were the greater presidents - Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Kennedy, who played around, or Nixon, Ford, and Carter, who didn't. This is going to be a difficult question for Senator Hard's opponents to answer.
4. People who dislike the American political establishment, and will rally to any candidate that dislikes and is disliked by it.

Such people are plainly a majority within the Democratic Party. They may be a majority within the American electorate. The Republican Party would be ill-advised to bet the farm against this proposition.

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"One of the hot toys for boys this year, once again, is the G. I. Joe action

figure and 'accessories', which is the toy-industry code word for 'guns', as in: 'Don't nobody move! I got an accessory!' The little boy on your list can have hours of carefree childhood fun with his G. I. Joe set, engaging in realistic armed-forces adventures such as having G. I. Joe explain to little balding congressional-committee figures how come he had to use his optional Action Shredder accessory." - Dave Barry, New York Daily News Magazine, 20 December 1987

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What are the meanings of the terms "12 AM" and "12 PM". The lordly New York Times descended to this question on 29 November 1987. The Government Printing Office maintains that 12 PM is noon. The U. S. Naval Observatory avoids the question by using the words "noon" and "midnight" instead. The Department of Transportation refuses to use either "12 AM" or "12 PM". "Judges in New Jersey threw out a \$15 parking ticket given a man who parked at a meter posted with the hours '8 AM to 12 PM'...the driver assumed he could park any time after noon." Bus transfers in New York City seem to think that "12 PM" is the hour between 11 AM and 1 PM. The Times came to no conclusion on the matter.

If you go back to the original Latin meanings of the words abbreviated as "AM" and "PM", the difficulty disappears. The Latin word for 'noon' is meridies, literally "midday". "AM" and "PM" stand respectively for ante meridiem and post meridiem, "before noon" and "after noon". Noon is therefore "12 M". Midnight, traditionally considered as ending the day, is "12 PM". There is no such thing as "12 AM".

A similar confusion exists as to counting time in years. The 20th century began with 1901 and will end on 31 December 2000. However, in 1950 we got a lot of proclamations about the beginning of the second half of the century - which actually took place at the beginning of 1951. I have no doubt that 1 January 2000 will similarly be hailed as the beginning of a new century, or even of a new millenium.

For Christmas, Karina and Dean gave me Chronicle of the 20th Century, a massive, month-by-month history, up to the end of 1986. While it is a very interesting book, which I plan to review in today's issue of my war-gaming fanzine EMPIRE, it begins on 1 January 1900. Technically, this was the last year of the 19th century.

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The complete factoring of the allegedly prime number 5,271,009, the title of a famous short story by Alfred Bester, is actually $3 \times 53 \times 33,151$.

*

When the movie Rambo came out in 1985, Rupert Murdoch's New York Post enthusiastically endorsed its premises, gave it a rave review, and serialized a 'novelization' of the film. But, as I observed earlier in this present issue of DAGON, the connotations of the name are now taken quite differently. Or so the Post seemed to believe on 30 December 1987, when it reported the confession of William Sarmiento of Providence to the murders of two boys, one 9 and the other 6. Sarmiento had sent police a letter saying that 'Satan was responsible for the boys' death.' The story was headed: "'Satan' Killer was a Rambo", and based this conclusion on reports that 'Neighbors described Sarmiento as a strange loner with a fascination for knives, who often wore camouflage clothing, army boots and a bandanna.'

If the strongly pro-war New York Post now looks at their own Rambo this way, the rest of us know how this fictional character will enter American literary and popular history. Their adulation of this character on his first appearance may turn out to be one of the militarists' biggest tactical mistakes.

*

As readers of DAGON and my other publications know, I am fond of the polemical use of quotations. If some prominent politician says something singularly stupid - a thing which is bound to happen sooner or later - I will seize upon this and repeat it whenever it seems appropriate.

Apparently Newsday's Renee Kaplan is also of this opinion. In the issue of 30 December she has collected a number of remarks said over the past year by prominent people. One prize is Fawn Hall's famous remark: "Sometimes you have to go above the written law" - a remark which is characteristic of the entire approach of the senile actor's administration towards the Constitution and laws of the United States of Am-

erica. Throughout the testimony of Admiral Poing-Dextre, Lieutenant Criminal North, and their associates runs the theme that laws, and the Congress which passes them, are petty inconveniences which lie in the way of accomplishing the real policies and goals of the United States. It was with this motivation that Lieutenant Criminal North turned the Federal Emergency Management Agency into an agency that could impose a dictatorship on our country in the event of a "national emergency". (We may not yet have heard the end of this stunt.)

Other discoveries of Kaplan are:

"The Holocaust may be an enormous gift that Judaism has given the world." - John O'Connor, Cardinal, Archbishop, and Admiral

"For myself, let me assure you that my campaign has just begun." - Senator Hard, in May

"I think it was a neat idea." - Lieutenant Criminal North on the Iran-Contra scheme

"I am not a bimbo." - Jessica Hahn

"Hey, when the mechanics who keep those tanks running run out of work in the Soviet Union, send them to Detroit because we could use that kind of ability." - George Bush, Vice President of the United States of America

Unaccountably, Ms. Kaplan seems to have missed Governor Cuomo's successful campaign for the apple muffin. Maybe in 1988 I'll propose that the chuckwalla be named the Official National Lizard of the United States of America. I have no doubt that, within a week, rival factions would nominate the horned toad, the gila monster, or the blue-lipped skink.

*

The New York Times reported on 20 December that there may be shortages of electrical power in New England this winter. The New England governors, who announced this concern, nowhere connect it with the fact that the movement against nuclear power is strongest in their region, and that many of them have given aid and comfort to it in the past.

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According to Newsday of 18 December, Virginia Tooper of Pleasanton, Calif., is founder of Sarcasitics Anonymous. This organization does not propose to stop sarcasm, but to encourage this highly effective sort of polemic.

David Isby, who used to be a game designer for Simulations Publications and now works for a Washington lobbyist, ought to join Tooper's organization. This last Christmas season, he sent out cards showing a seedy-looking Oliver North in a Santa Claus suit, with the words: "'Tis the season to be Ollie." Inside, we are told, "Do not shred this until after December 25."

There was a brief burst of "Ollie-Mania" after Lieutenant Criminal North appeared before a joint congressional committee and seemed to expect praise for the way in which he had been subverting the Constitution, government, and laws of our country. Books on him were rushed into print, an "Ollie for President" campaign was mounted, and his home town, a little upstate burg, proclaimed an "Oliver North Day" and gave him a parade.

Then disillusion began to set in. Except for a hired band, the Oliver North paraders were outnumbered by counter-demonstrators. A Manhattan restaurateur put up a sign on his establishment, acclaiming North as a hero - and proceeded to get cancellations up the wazoo. Remarks began appearing such as:

"Ollie for President - and Stan for Vice President"

"Vote for Ollie and Ollie - North and Hardy!"

"What's Oliver North's favorite classical music?" "Afternoon on a Fawn."

"Kukla, Fawn, and Ollie"

"Olliewkat" T-shirts showing Oliver North with a "Buckwheat" hairdo

So far, no one had portrayed North in a boxer's outfit as "Mohammed Ollie", but that is only a question of time. By the time the 1988 presidential campaign gets seriously under way, Vice President Bush may regret that he ever issued a statement praising Lieutenant Criminal North "as someone who will go down in history as a national hero who feels passionately about his country and patriotism" and "did a better job even than our great communicator of a president in expressing what was at stake in Central America." (Newsday, 6 December 1987)

While Bush is vainly trying to live down these words of praise for one of the most contemptible characters of modern American history, the film Walker will be marching towards an Academy Award nomination, complete with advertising that "Before Rambo - Before Oliver North - There Was Walker". William Walker was an American adventurer of the mid-19th century, with distinct elements of both the fictional Rambo and the all too real-life North in his make-up. It was his scheme to conquer Central American territory, re-introduce slavery into those presently free regions, and bring them into the U. S. A. as additional slave states. Towards this end he conquered Nicaragua and was even briefly its president. But he had a falling out with Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had originally backed him. He went back to try again, and interfered with British plans to annex the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, a region that still has a substantial English-speaking population, mostly descendants of buccaneers and escaped slaves. The British turned him over to the long-suffering Nicaraguans, who had him unromantically shot. The film is said to make numerous comparisons with modern adventures by U. S. filibusterers in Vietnam and Central America, even to an episode where some defeated Americans are evacuated by helicopter!

An explanation was offered in Newsday of 7 October by one William Gibson, who is cited as a "Southern Methodist University sociology professor". (This was a real surprise. I didn't know that SMU had professors - just coaches and quarterbacks and bribe-takers and people like that.) In his book Return of the Warrior, Gibson claims that there is "a long tradition of American cultural warriors 'who have to save society because society can't save itself.'" Accordingly, "paramilitary ideology presents two main dangers to American society...it makes war desirable, that we can regenerate ourselves through violence and achieve the 'glow' that comes from victory, and it promotes the false image of war as a duel between warriors."

If a brief inoculation of Olliemania saves this country from actually going to war in Central America or some other 'troublespot', the furor will have been worth it. And it also sets a rather different task for the present anti-war movement. During the late, unlamented American attempt to conquer Vietnam, the anti-war movement set out to oppose war. This time, the task will be to suppress it.

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Fresh from his triumph, or whatever it was, in the Conan pictures, Arnold Schwarzenegger operates as a Federal police pilot in the Fascist America of 2019 in The Running Man (New York Times, 13 November). According to a review by Vincent Canby, a man notoriously incompetent to criticize anything in the science-fiction field, this new film "has the manners and the gadgetry of a sci-fi* adventure film but is, at heart, an engagingly mean, cruel, nasty, funny send-up of television." The Schwarzenegger character is unjustly accused of a massacre and becomes the quarry in a popular tv show in which a criminal is hunted down by professional hunters. This is an old plot in s-f, dating back to such short stories as Robert Sheckley's "Seventh Victim" and Kuttner's and Moore's "Home is the Hunter", which both appeared in Galaxy in 1953. Stephen King wrote the original story as "Richard Bachman", and Canby's review carries the theme even further back, to several film adaptations of Richard Cornell's classic short

story "The Most Dangerous Game". (Nowadays, however, you couldn't get away with a story in which an anti-Communist Russian is presented as a cruel and calculating villain.) The principal villain is a Morton Downey type played by Richard Dawson. There are a lot of fight scenes in which, "as is usual in all Schwarzenegger vehicles, a heavy emphasis placed on the vulnerability of male genitalia." (Canby can probably afford to be superior about this; based on his comments in reviews of s-f, I am not sure he has any.) Canby concludes:

"The film tries to have it both ways, not always successfully. Like many such sci-fi* movies, it's also loaded with tantalizingly subversive reflections on the state of contemporary society. It's the supposition of The Running Man that we could advance from this era of blissful, Government-approved deregulation to a police state within the professional lifetime of one Johnny Carson. You could almost say that The Running Man makes you stop and think."

Canby has obviously never read a New York Post column by Patrick Buchanan or R. Emmett Tyrell Jr., who are salivating for the establishment of a conservative dictatorship in this country.

*

Adam Dickter, a science-fiction critic for Brooklyn College's Jewish student newspaper Hatikvah, is having some problems with the new version of Star Trek. In the issue of December 1987, he asks "Star Trek - The Next Generation or the next cancellation?" "On a recent episode...when the captain was momentarily suffering from hallucination...you could just picture the luscious blonde good old James T. Kirk would conjure up, Jean Luc Picard imagined a run-in with his poor old dear departed mommy."

Dickter has mixed impressions of the new show. He likes the special effects, but thinks that the "new ship looks too advanced" (whatever that may mean) and "the uniforms look tacky." In company with everyone else who has seen even one of the new shows, he claims that the new plots are basically the old plots. "Another serious flaw in the show is that it lacks the butt-kicking sock 'em in the jaw action which the old show was chock full of." He complains that neither Picard nor any other member of the crew has ever thrown a punch. "The only battles that seem to take place on 'The Next Generation' are battles of wits..."

(Just about every other item in Hatikvah consists of truculent defenses of everything that the Israeli government is doing to the Arabs. No wonder Dickter is upset about Star Trek's lack of violence. Presumably he would rather see the Planet Gaza blown to smithereens.)

Like most viewers, Dickter dislikes "Dr. Beverly Crusher and her son (who came straight out of the Walton's or Little House on the Prairie.)" Tasha Yar, the only crew member who sometimes gets involved in violence, has "a mean disposition to begin with and all the sex appeal of a fully charged phaser torpedo...Tasha Yar serves the purpose on the show of appeasing the vast amount of feminist TV viewers who watch Science Fiction shows." But, then, not only Hatikvah but all Brooklyn College student publications these days are huffy and superior about Feminism and things designed to appeal to Feminist audiences.

Though we have been getting nothing but re-runs over the holidays, we can expect new episodes later this month. This, presumably, will give us more views of the Ferengi, the new villains against whom humans and Klingons have united. So far they have appeared as malevolent dwarfs, cowering and grimacing like the drawfs in a bad production of Siegfried. The old Klingons were snarling, truculent barbarians, but the Ferengi are "Yankee traders" - unscrupulous businessmen, presumably unloading the twenty-somethingth-century equivalent of Edsels and Pintos on unsuspecting planets. We are not yet certain what will be the long-term effect of replacing the melodramatic Nazis of the old Star Trek with bat-eared capitalists, but when the editors of conservative publications realize what is going on, we can expect anguished outcries

about the new Star Trek's villains.

*

Newsday of 28 December reported that a fatal epidemic is killing off bottle-neck dolphins along the Atlantic coast of Florida. The disease which is killing them off is thus far unidentified, but "researchers say the disease attacks the dolphins' immune system in the same way that acquired immune deficiency syndrome affects humans."

Dolphins with AIDS? I knew there were some strange sexual practices around, but this does surprise me.

*

According to the Daily News of 23 December, Isaac Asimov has "just completed work on the script for Miramax's animated feature Light Years". However, screen writing does not appeal to Asimov. "If I work for Hollywood, everyone else is boss. When I write my books, I'm boss."

Upcoming Asimov works include two non-fiction books and Prelude to Foundation, which will be published by Doubleday in May, and presumably will deal with events during the First Galactic Empire.

*

In December 1986 there were numerous stories about Father Grinch (as he was called), a priest who allegedly told a Sunday school class of children that their beloved "Santa Claus" was nothing but a 4th-century bishop named Nicholas, who is dead. There is therefore no North Pole workshop, no team of reindeer, and nobody but parents to fill the stockings.

The tearful children complained to their parents, who complained to the pastor (head priest) at the parish of St. John Vianney, which was variously reported as being in Colonia and in Woodbridge, N. J. Romano Ferraro, the offending priest, was given "a leave of absence", and the Diocese of Metuchen reassigned him, but won't say where. (New York Times and Newsday, 29 December) The pastor had no comment either.

At the time Father Ferraro's lack of sensitivity hit the papers, I commented in DAGON that the Roman Catholic Church had gone eyeball-to-eyeball with the essentially Pagan popular concept of Christmas - and blinked. The Christmas tree, the mistletoe, the holly, the feast, the carolers, the yule log, and the supernatural being who flies through the sky in a chariot drawn by horned beasts are all Pagan concepts, and were old in the north of Europe long before this new-fangled god came up from the Mediterranean. All the Christians could do was to attach their god to the already existing festival. Father Ferraro was, of course, fully aware of this. And, as it turned out, neither he nor his church can do a single solitary thing about it.

*

Judith Judson, a long-time DAGON reader, has a long letter in the New York Times Book Review of 27 December about Mary Lefkowitz's review of Marion Zimmer Bradley's novel The Firebrand. It seems that Marion portrayed the Greek "heroes" of the Iliad as the bloodthirsty brutes that they were, and Ms. Lefkowitz took exception to this. "Ms. Lefkowitz is moved by Achilles' eloquence," Judith observes. "Well, poets can do a lot for a fellow. Shakespeare makes out Henry V to be a fine well-spoken chap too, but we don't think too much nowadays of his claim to France."

"Homer's Greek warriors," Judith goes on to say, "are shown throughout as crass, brutal, and sometimes stupid - a bunch of jocks on a 10-year spree." This has been the consensus of opinion of every serious commentator on the Iliad in the last 25 centuries. Much irony here lies in the fact that Homer earned a living traveling through Greece and singing this epic for the benefit of warrior chiefs who traced their ancestries to the Greek commanders at Troy. It must have been the source of much necessarily silent amusement to Homer, that the heroes whose tales were approved and paid for by these chiefs were, as he showed them, really a "bunch of jocks on a 10-year spree".

Mary Lefkowitz is given space for a rebuttal, which is rather feeble. She protests Agamemnon . . . did not murder his daughter but sacrificed her, which was presumably a superior way to die.

At the very beginning of her letter, Judith makes a statement with which I can

thoroughly agree. Of Marion Zimmer Bradley, she writes that her "reputation and prose are both rather inflated and...style of feminism is sometimes risible when it is not tiresome." There seem to be to be three phases in Marion's Darkover novels. The first contains such works as the first treatments of The Bloody Sun and The Winds of Darkover, in which the books were rather heavily edited by male editors trying to aim them at their concept of a male audience. Then came the period when Marion had worked her way free of these constraints, and to this period belongs the best Darkover novels: The Spell Sword, The Forbidden Tower, Stormqueen!, Two to Conquer, and Sharra's Exile. Then, in 1983, began a third phase with Thendara House - a fact I realized when I found it was the first Darkover novel I was unable to finish. With Thendara House and its successors, Marion seems to be increasingly didactic, promoting her views about sex and society to the point when they overrode any considerations of characterization and plotting.

*

Ira Donewitz gave me for Christmas a copy of David G. Hartwell's horror story anthology The Dark Descent. One of the most famous and least read stories in it, Robert W. Chambers' 1895 "The Repairer of Reputations", is the source for many of the place names which Marion Zimmer Bradley uses in the Darkover novels. (The King in Yellow, the volume in which this story was included, influenced numerous fantasy and s-f writers, many of whom have outdone it.) The horror in "The Repairer of Reputations" is somehow inspired by a notorious book, also called The King in Yellow. Place names mentioned in this book include the Lake of Hali, Hastur, and Carcosa; personal names such as the Darkovan deities Cassilda and Camilla are also there. There is mention of "Aldeboran and the mystery of the Hyades"; Aldebaran, to use the modern spelling, is a star in the same direction as the Hyades cluster, and associated with it in mythology. The name "Aldebaran" may have given rise to Darkover's Aldaran Clan, as well as being spelled backwards in The Falcons of Narabedla.

As for other names in Darkover, Thendara is a small town in the Adirondack Mountains, not far from where Marion was born. The next town over, Old Forge, suggests that "Forge of Sharra", a center of power that opposes the ruling telepathic aristocracy of Darkover's Seven Realms. Cahuenga is the name of a boulevard in Los Angeles, while Storn probably comes from Stornoway, the principal town of the Hebrides.

*

"I really believe that the Sandinistas are a military threat and a totalitarian regime, but the one part of the puzzle that doesn't fit is that there are all these campesinos with rifles," a U. S. official said recently in Central America. "Ortega makes the argument that the large number of armed civilians, who don't run off and join the contras, proves his government is popular. It is kind of hard to knock down that argument." - Jim Mulvaney, Newsday, 17 December 1987

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All of the people who are interested in APA-Q's recent discussions of Libertarians and Anarchists should read James Coates's Armed and Dangerous: The Rise of the Survivalist Right. This book relates the history of recent American Anarchism, including such murderous fanatics as the Gordon Kahl to whom L. Neil Smith dedicated one of his s-f novels. These Anarchists, most of whom are also devout Christians, are actually looking forward to a nuclear war, thinking that their arsenals in their remote western fastnesses will enable them to take over what's left afterwards.

Wayne King reviewed this book in the New York Times Book Review of 29 November 1987, eliciting a protest from one Robert J. Alexander four weeks later. Alexander objected to King's characterization of the Survivalists as "Anarchists". He lays out what, in his view, the Anarchist program, dating back to the Spanish Syndicalistas who stabbed the Republic in the back as it was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Franco's Fascists. "Real anarchists," Alexander claims, "have favored establishment of a highly decentralized organization of society in which workers would control not only their local economic environment but also local government...they have favored the widest possible freedom for the individual." But King crushingly replies: "Except for its racism, Posse Comitatus meets very well the criteria of the anarchist program Mr. Alexander describes."

*

The New York Times of 27 December 1987 has an analysis of Pat Robertson's record on the relation of religion and politics - and a horrendous record it is. On a 700 Club broadcast on 11 January 1985 he said:

"Individual Christians are the only ones really - and Jewish people, those who trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - are the only ones that are qualified to reign, because hopefully, they will be governed by God and submitted to him."

These views, which directly fly in the face of the Constitutional provision that no religious test shall ever be required for a holder of public office, shocked one of his co-hosts, Ben Kinchlow, into saying:

"Obviously you're not saying that there are no other people qualified to be in government or whatever if they aren't Christians or Jews."

Mr. Robertson was adamant:

"Yeah, I'm saying that. I just said it.

"I think anybody whose mind and heart is not controlled by God Almighty is not qualified in the ultimate sense to be the mudge of someone else...No one is fit to govern other people unless first of all something governs him. And there is only one governor I know of that is suitable to be judge of all the universe, that's God Almighty. Yes, I did say that. You can quote me. I believe it."

Well, there you have the Christian view of the State. And it must be recalled that, when a Fundamentalist says "Christians", he explicitly excludes Roman Catholics. The New York City head of the Moral Majority, a preacher named Fare, once explicitly stated this in a radio interview. The theme dominates to stupefaction the tracts of Fundamentalists. Jack Chick refers to "the Roman Catholic institution", denying it even the name of a "Church".

*

Newsday of 29 December 1987 carried the obituary of Antony Panther West, the son of H. G. Wells and Rebecca West. West and Wells had what Newsday calls a "relationship" from 1912 to 1924; their son was both on 4 August 1914, not long before his father coined the regrettable expression "War to End War". He had a respectable literary career as a novelist, essayist, and biographer, but never achieved the reputation of either of his parents. His biography of his father plainly takes his side in his dispute with Dame Rebecca, who threatened to sue any British publisher who published the book. For those people who know Rebecca West only by her bletherings on the subject of treason, it is easy to take the side of her lover and of her son in this matter.

*

Starman may have been cancelled by ABC but, according to the New York Daily News of 24 December, it refuses to die. In November there was a "Starman" convention in San Diego, so apparently the adherents of this show have become another category of media sub-fandom, along with Trekkies, Dark Shadovers, Prisoner enthusiasts, and those dingbats who are apparently going to be running around the halls of the 1988 Lunacon, zapping one another with things that I hope the hotel security people don't think are firearms. Starman's producer, Jim Hirsch, says that "There's a grass-roots campaign to bring the show back, and it's just too strong to ignore." If they're as effective as the Trekkies, we should expect to see Starman: The Next Generation by 2005.

*

Lyndon La Rouché, who has cheated other people out of large amounts of money, was himself the victim of a con man, it seems - and of a con man well known in the underworld of American Fascism. According to Matthew L. Wald's story in the New York Times of 10 December, Roy E. Frankhouser Jr. not only diverted a lot of Rouché money into his own pockets, but habitually poked fun at this self-appointed political messiah, and

is now himself on trial in Boston on a charge of conspiracy to obstruct justice.

I first heard the name of Frankhouser over 25 years ago, when Bill Goring was researching American Fascist groups for the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League. Bill, then a Columbia University student, infiltrated these groups, trusting to his German-sounding name and a black belt as cover. ("Goring" is actually a name from the English gentry; their numbers included a now-extinct lineage of Earls of Norwich. Bill's ancestors and mine probably crossed swords during the English Civil War.)

Frankhouser, who is now 48, has been active in Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, and other such activities in eastern Pennsylvania for many years. At one time he got into a fight in a bar because people objected to his remarks about Blacks, and he lost an eye in the brawl. He is a Grand Dragon of the KKK, and thus superior in office to Senate Majority leader Robert Byrd, who is a mere Kleagle. (A Grand Dragon commands a state KKK organization, and is thus the next highest office to Imperial Lizard - er - Wizard. A Kleagle is merely a chapter head.) In late October of 1965 Frankhouser was hiding out in his house a Queens Nazi named Dan Burros, who was dodging a Congressional subpoena for an investigation of the activities of the KKK, in which Burros was a Kleagle. On Sunday 31 October 1965, the New York Times broke Burros' true story - he was really Jewish! When Frankhouser pointed out the story to Burros, Burros ran upstairs, took a .32 pistol that Frankhouser had loaned him, and shot himself dead before Frankhouser's eyes. You will find details of Frankhouser's connections with Burros, and with American Fascism, in One More Victim (Signet, 1967), by A. M. Rosenthal and Arthur Gelb. Also mentioned in the book are the then-"Fuhrer", George Lincoln Rockwell, and his follower John Patsakos, alias John Patler, who was to kill Rockwell on 25 August 1967.

It was probably inevitable that Frankhouser would tie up with the Rouchies. But he conned La Rouche by telling him that he was going "to Boston in November 1984 to check on the progress of a Federal investigation into possible credit card fraud by La Rouche campaign workers. But Mr. Frankhouser, and two other members of a 'security' team apparently went instead to a convention of fans of the television series Star Trek, being held in Scranton, Pa." Despite this, Frankhouser filed with La Rouche a report written in Scranton but datelined "Boston", giving horrendous details about the "persecution" to which the feds were subjecting the Rouchies. With La Rouche trying to con the nation, Frankhouser probably saw nothing wrong in comming La Rouche. He was getting \$500 a week from the La Rouche organization for this espionage work, and obviously used an imagination sharpened by the reading of science-fiction to "earn" this money. His s-f connections are obvious from notes by La Rouche aides, cited by the prosecutor, in which "Frankhouser's advice on certain records was '451-F', a reference to the temperature on the Fahrenheit scale at which paper burns." Frankhouser could only have got this from Ray Bradbury's classic short story "Fahrenheit 451".

*

Now that the March supernova in the Greater Magellanic Cloud has faded from naked-eye view, many of the questions that were asked at its appearance can be at least tentatively answered. Details will be found in the January 1988 issue of the popular scientific monthly Discover, leading off the review of astronomy for 1987. The pre-nova state of the star has now been definitely identified, the first time this has ever happened for a supernova. The star, prior to its explosion, was a blue supergiant identified in the charts as Sanduleak -69°202 - meaning that it was charted by a certain Sanduleak in the 69th degree of south celestial latitude, or "declination" as astronomers call it. This has led to some problems, since of previous understanding of supernovas seemed to indicate that the immediate pre-supernova state would be a red rather than a blue supergiant. The whole lifetime of this star from birth to explosion seems to be a mere 10 million years, compared to the more than 5 billion years in which our Sun has been in existence. (For supergiant stars it is a short life but a merry one.) Further varieties of radiation, traveling at speeds less than that of light, are still to be expected from this star. It seems obvious that our understanding of what causes supernovas, and how they behave, is about to undergo considerable revision.

*

When the "Star Wars" hoax is finally unmasked, it is going to be one of the greatest con games of all time, far exceeding the Marconi, Stavisky, or Kruger frauds, or the stunt pulled some 40 years ago by German emigres in Argentina who conned the Argentine government out of enormous amounts of money on the pretext that they were building an Argentinian nuclear bomb. And, when the scandal breaks, one of the central figures will be Lowell Wood, head man on the "Star Wars" research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. (For a detailed discussion of Wood's central role in this project, see William J. Broad's Star Warriors (1985, Simon & Schuster).)

The whistle-blower was Roy D. Woodruff, director of weapons research at Livermore. (What's New, 23 October and 25 December 1987; New York Times, 27 December 1987) It seems that Wood and his mentor, the raging hawk Edward Teller, have been giving the U. S. government brightly optimistic and widely erroneous reports about the progress of this alleged weapons system. According to a report that was originally broken in the Sacramento Bee by Deborah Blum, Woodruff tried to get Livermore director Roger Batzell to "correct falsely optimistic reports on the progress of x-ray laser weapons" by Teller and Wood. When Batzell refused to do so, Woodruff tried to go over his head to the President of the University of California, which is in purely nominal control of what is actually a weapons factory directly under Pentagon control. The president refused even to talk to Woodruff, who was later demoted.

Now Woodruff has come back, to the job of "head of the laboratory's treaty-verification program", which the Times seems to think is a responsible position, but which is actually a farce, since the U. S. government is in open violation of several weapons treaties by this stage of the "Star Wars" development. But the House Armed Services Committee and the General Accounting Office are now looking into it. Once the question of mis-appropriation of government funds is raised, it will quickly be discovered that the entire "Star Wars" program falls under this heading. Woodruff's colleagues are sympathetic with him, though Teller still insists that his statements to a president even more senile than he is were correct. Meanwhile, former supporters of "Star Wars" are beginning to desert. Peter Hagelstein, whom Broad's book makes the key man in the actual development of the x-ray laser on which the whole notion is based, has had moral compunctions about building weapons, and jumped ship. Ask any computer programmer what the chances are, that millions of lines of programming will work correctly, right off the bat in a real-life situation. (If they balk, remind them of the failure of a 45¢ computer chip that put this country on Red Alert in 1980.)

And, if you should still encounter that increasingly rare bird, a supporter of "Star Wars", ask him or her what investments they personally may have in the aerospace or electronics firms that are building it. A negative answer means that this person is a hypocrite. A positive answer, or a refusal to answer, means a profiteer.

DAGON #364

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F I R S T C L A S S M A I L

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