

IT'S MOVING MONTH! - See page 7 for important information!

DAGON

#696, APA-Q #607

March 2018

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

This is **Dagon**, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871-4017. My land-line telephone number is (301) 515-4271. The number of my new cell-phone, like that of its predecessor, is (718) 736-4901. **Dagon** circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark L. Blackman, Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229. His telephone number is (718) 336-3255, and his internet address is <markblackman@juno.com>. The copy count for APA-Q is 15 print copies.

Dagon also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$10 in the United States, and for \$25 elsewhere. I also trade with other amateur publications.

#2231

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In my classes I strongly recommended that college students should take the opportunity to learn at least one foreign language, and preferably more. It is the easiest way to learn foreign languages as an adult, and in several fields of study, foreign languages are needed to keep up with important publications by other scholars in the field. The best example I can think of is Asim Barut, a colleague in the field of general relativity. His native language is Turkish, not a major language in the sciences, and in order to speak with other scientists in that field, and to keep up with the literature, he learned to read and speak English, German, French, and Russian fluently. What languages you learn depend on your fields of interest. In medicine and the social service fields you may find that Spanish is the most useful, as you would have to use it with many of the people whom you deal with in the course of your work. There are fields in which your most useful languages will be those closely related to English, including German, Dutch, and the Scandinavian languages. Folk music might find you getting involved with the Keltic languages, and so on. I was once at a scientific conference where another of the participants was an Irish physicist named Synge, a cousin of the playwright of the same surname. Since the conference was in France, he felt that he had to deliver his paper in French. The conferees were therefore presented with a paper delivered in French with a rich Irish brogue. Afterwards a German physicist told me that if he hadn't been able to understand English, he wouldn't have been able to follow Synge's French.

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However, there is a problem involved with English: The so-called "Great Vowel Shift". At some time in the Middle Ages, probably due to the collision between the French and English languages created by the Norman Conquest, most of the vowels in English changed their pronunciations. In most European languages, you will be told that the five vowels are pronounced "ah, ay, ee, o, oo". But in English they are "ay, ee, eye, o, yoo". (There are a few other vowels on the scene, including the ones spelled in German "ö" and "ü", in French "eu" and "u", and in some Scandinavian languages "ø" and "y", but they add still more complications to the subject.) This creates a problem whenever a foreign word is given an English pronunciation. Most college students first encounter this problem in the Greek-letter names of the fraternities or sororities that they join. This situation arose most recently in something scandalous done by a sorority called "Alpha Phi" ($\text{A}\Phi$), at George Washington University. I fear that I did not follow the news report closely enough that I can now recall what it is that they are accused of doing. But, while Greeks would pronounce these letters as "alfa fee", the television news reports sometimes did the same, but sometimes called them "alpha phei", with what is called in English a "long i". This problem with the English pronunciation of Greek letters and names runs all the way down Fraternity Row.

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Useful foreign languages were not the only thing I recommended to my physics classes. My lecture class was divided into three to five laboratory sections. At the first meeting of the lecture, I told the students that in the laboratory they would be using only the metric system and the Celsius temperature scale, since these were used by scientists in all countries, and by everyone in a great many of these countries. Since then, they also came to be used in the (British) Commonwealth of Nations, so that now the United States of America is the *only* country that uses medieval measurement units and the temperature scale designed by Gabriel Fahrenheit. I was and still am convinced that the newer systems of measurement will inevitably be used in this country as well. I informed my students that using the metric system in lab will acquaint them with it more easily, and make it easier to use when it is mandated by law.

In a sense, the United States is already on the metric system. The legal definition of the inch in this country is precisely 2.54 centimeters. The metric unit of mass is the gram, which is the mass of one cubic centimeter of water at its maximum density, which occurs at 4°C (39°F). One liter is 1,000 cubic centimeters. And soda is already being sold in half-liter and two-liter bottles.

So how did Gabriel Fahrenheit get his temperature scale? At first, he needed a zero point and a hundred point. His "100°" was "normal human body temperature" - except that there is no such thing. Different people have, even in good health, different body temperatures. And if you go to a physician with a body temperature of 100°F, he or she will tell you that you have a slight fever, and give you recommendations consistent with that diagnosis.

Fahrenheit's zero was even worse. He'd wanted it to be the lowest temperature obtainable in the laboratory. For this, he used the sort of ice-and-salt freezing mixture that is used to freeze home-

made ice cream. (If anyone makes home-made ice cream any more, I strongly advise you to try it. It is much better than commercial ice cream.) Besides, where Fahrenheit lived, there were times of the year when you could get a lower temperature than his “0°” in the laboratory by simply opening the window.

By contrast, a Swedish chemist named Anders Celsius introduced a temperature scale of elegant simplicity. He called the freezing point of water “0°”, and the boiling point of water “100°”, both at normal atmospheric pressure. And that was that!

And to convert between Celsius and Fahrenheit temperatures, see **Dagon #693** (December 2017), p. 5).

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My favorite shows on television, even more than the Playboy Channel, are quiz shows such as *Jeopardy*, *Wheel of Fortune*, and *It's Academic*. I also like *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, but it is on at very inconvenient hours. It used to be on ABC from 12:30 PM to 1 PM on weekdays, but that changed when ABC chose to extend their noon news from half an hour to one hour. Two half-hour shows of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* are now broadcast on ABC from 1:07 AM (!) to 2:07 AM, but that is scarcely the same thing.

But when I happen to stay up that late, the show is still interesting. With each question, four answers are given, and the contestant must pick the right one. But recently one of the questions backfired on me. The contestant was asked, “How many prepositions are there in the Pledge of Allegiance?”

This seemed to be an easy one. Every day, in all the elementary schools which I attended, the class had to stand at the beginning of each day's session, face the flag that always flew from a staff on the classroom wall, place right hands above hearts, and repeat the words. At one time we all extended our right arms towards the flag at the words “...to the flag...”, and kept them extended to the end of the pledge. However, this ceased when the United States entered World War II, as it was too similar to the Nazi salute. We then kept our hands on our hearts to the end of the pledge. This continued after the end of the war.

As I listened to the show, I went through the words of the Pledge of Allegiance, counting the prepositions. The count went:

“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

That made *seven* prepositions. Then I heard the contestant reciting the pledge and counting prepositions. He had a slightly different text with *eight* prepositions. I then recalled that in the 1950s, several years after I left schools that have flags in their classrooms, the Republican Party regained the presidency and, as they often do, suggested more religion, or maybe just more religiosity, in the

government. It is my recollection that President Eisenhower himself went on the air and proclaimed the insertion of the words "under God" right after the word "nation". So the preposition count is now *eight*.

However, I still say the Pledge as I first learned it. In Amendment I of the Constitution, we are informed that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Saying officially, in a government proclamation, that the United States is "under God" openly violates this clause of the Constitution, and that belief is, like any other belief about religion, a private matter for each believer or unbeliever to decide for him- or herself.

Throughout this country's history there have been attempts to mandate religious belief. That seems to be an attempt to continue in this country the situation that existed in Europe's monarchies, where every subject was expected to hold the same religious beliefs as the monarch did. The required belief might have differed from country to country, but there was such an expectation almost everywhere in Europe.

But at the time the United States became independent, this attitude was already beginning to decay. The focus of this decay seems to have been the Seven United Netherlands (as the country was officially called). In the sixteenth century much of the Netherlands had been inherited through female lines by King Philip II of Spain, who was attempting to force his religion on their populations. In 1581 the Dutch drew up a document, "The Abjuration of Philip", which in effect dismissed the king, giving their reasons so that "facts [may] be submitted to a candid world". (These words are quoted from our Declaration of Independence, which is modeled on the Abjuration of Philip, almost certainly from concepts provided by the descendants of the Dutch settlers who founded New York.) The Dutch then established a republic which was the first country in the world to enact the controversial principle now called "freedom of religion".

(The Netherlands became a monarchy at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, when a peace settlement was proclaimed which ended the Napoleonic Wars. Apparently the major powers of Europe felt that installing a monarchy in the Netherlands would confine republican government to the far side of the Atlantic Ocean and keep that dangerous institution out of Europe.)

But even in America there had been an attempt to install a government-mandated religious belief. This arose out of the anomalous political and religious situation in Vermont. That New England territory was the subject of disputes among several American states. It was claimed by New Hampshire, New York, and even Connecticut, which may have claimed this non-contiguous region because it lay in the valley of the Connecticut River.

In Vermont itself there was another subject of dispute. It revolved about the religious views of Ethan Allen (1738-1789). Most people who now know his name, regard him only as commander of the Green Mountain Boys, the Vermont troops in the Continental Army. But in his own lifetime he was also famous as a man whose religious views arose from reason, not revelation. He had

written a book entitled *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, which makes it rather difficult to believe the story that he had demanded the surrender of Fort Ticonderoga “in the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!”

During the years when Vermonters were debating whether they should be a part of the United States or the British Empire, or become an independent nation, they enacted a law providing a fine of \$200 for Atheism. (This was a quite considerable sum in the eighteenth century.) This law was almost certainly a Christian reaction to Allen’s book and beliefs. Fred Lerner, who lives in Vermont, has assured me that this law is no longer on Vermont’s statute books. It was almost certainly scrapped because it was incompatible with Amendment I of the Constitution, which became operative in 1791 after Allen’s death. In that year Vermont became the first state to be added to the original thirteen.

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On 28 January 2018, Patrick M. Reynolds began in the *Washington Post* another series of *Flashbacks* strips about the van Lew family of Richmond and the roles that its members and former slaves played as loyal Unionists in the very capital of the “Confederacy”. (See **Dagon** #695 (February 2018), p. 2) However, after the second strip in this series was published on 4 February, my subscription to the *Post* apparently expired, and as of present writing I have received no copies after 5 February. And my daughter Deirdre was out of town that week, visiting relatives, so I have not yet seen any more *Flashbacks* strips in this series, except for copies of the *Post* that Deirdre or her daughter Melissa has been able to buy at newsstands for me. If and when I can get the remaining *Flashbacks* strips in this new series, I will describe them.

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In preparation for my move (see p. 7 for details) I have been going through my papers, and have found a great many envelopes which, in the pressure of other business, I had laid aside without opening them. One of these was a small package from Ruth Berman, which proved to contain a paperback book which could have answered some questions I had had trouble with in earlier issues of **Dagon**. It is an English translation of a work by Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Onze Mille Verges*. I had been trying to get information about this work, whose title and author I had forgotten. But it turns out that Al Nofi was correct in suggesting that it had been written by Apollinaire.

The French pun in its title cannot be translated, so the title of the English translation is *The Amorous Adventures of Prince Mony Vibescu*. The French word *verge* can mean “rod” or “whip”, and the pun lies in its similarity to “*vierge*”, which means “virgin”. This ties in with a legend that in the fifth century the Huns massacred eleven thousand virgins in an Ursuline convent in Köln.

Some of these envelopes were from Colin Bruce, who publishes the English gaming fanzine **Fury of the Northmen** and trades it for **Dagon**. I noticed that when he addressed them, he gave my nine-digit ZIP code as “20871-4017”. This surprised me a little, since when I had asked Deirdre for

this ZIP code, she told me she had forgotten it, and would have to look it up. So how could someone in England have been able to obtain it? Deirdre told me that anyone's ZIP code could be obtained on line. So anyone addressing a letter to me should use this nine-letter ZIP code: 20871-4017, to ensure that it reaches me.

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I have not been the only one bereaved by the death of a spouse. From the Bronx, Inge Davis wrote that her husband Fred Davis Jr. died on 9 October 2017. Apparently the letter she wrote, informing me of his death and renewing her subscription, was not opened when it reached me. She , wrote that she regularly read and enjoyed **Dagon**.

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Well, it's happened again. There has been yet another school shooting. This one happened at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Broward County, Florida, about an hour northwest of Miami. It is the eighteenth this year, and this year was only six weeks old. At this rate of murder, we can expect not just 144 school shootings in 2018, but several more than that, since an increase from 2017 is likely to be not matched but exceeded. The victims included not only students, but also three teachers including the football coach. Of these victims, fifteen died at the school and two more died in the hospitals where they were taken. There are likely to be more hospital deaths, since seventeen more victims were wounded, and some of them might also die.

Believe it or not, President tRump believes that there is something he can say that would calm all the worries about the promiscuous possession, purchase, and use of high-powered firearms like the AR-15 used by the Parkland killer, Nikolas Cruz, Nor do I agree in the least that we should not mention the killer's name. It should be frequently mentioned, and condemned with the same obloquy as those of John Wilkes Booth, Al Capone, and the Las Vegas mass murderer Stephen Paddock. In his speech on the morning after Cruz's killing spree, "President" tRump claimed tha something should be done about getting weapons out of the hands of the mentally ill, but did not mention his opposition to laws against producing, advertising, selling, buying, and carrying military weapons such as the AR-15. In fact, in 2017 "President" tRump proudly signed into law a bill passed by the Republican majorities in Congress, which made it easier for the mentally ill to purchase military assault weapons of its kind.

Ordinary people can also play a role in this campaign against shooting sprees. If someone expresses approval of the widespread sale, carrying, or use of weapons, speak to him and of him with open scorn, and tell everyone that that person is an immediate danger to public safety. Address him (it's almost always a "him") as "gunnie" or "gunnie boy". Not only your words but also your tone should carry contempt for him and his notions about weapons. If he enters a room you are in,

(continued on p. 7)

IT'S MOVING MONTH!

I am now preparing to move to Florida, so there will not be an April issue of **Dagon**. This got started because there is a strong likelihood that Deirdre will be laid off from her job in Frederick, and at the same time her lease on this apartment may expire soon. And the Dutch firm for which she has worked for twenty years has learned that they can employ people in India to do this work for them for about 40% of what their American workers get. Besides, Deirdre and I both find that this region's winters are colder than we care to deal with.

So in March I plan to pack up everything I own in Clarksburg, including all letters and publications that I have not yet answered, or checked for things that I want to cite in future issues of **Dagon**. Deirdre and I will then drive to Florida with a rented truck full of our gear, including every stick of furniture and scrap of paper in my present room, and also including every thing that Deirdre's sister Karina put in storage for me when I was living at Montevue in Frederick.

Deirdre inquired about living in Florida when she was recently there visiting Karina, Dean, and other relatives. She found a senior living facility where I can have a room and kitchen of my own. Since Karina and Dean live in Orlando, she found places near there where she and I can live. Other friends and relatives will also be in Florida. Deirdre's son Michael and his wife and daughter live in Jacksonville, while Ed and Sandy Meškys have moved their winter home from North Carolina to Florida.

The packing and moving will be a major job, which is why I am planning nothing else for March, including an April issue of **Dagon**. If the move really gets horrendous, the May issue might also die on the vine.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 6)

leave it at once and say why, even if the room is a classroom, a club room, or a\ athletic field.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is of dubious value in a campaign against shooting sprees. They have recently told the world that they had received warnings about Nikolas Cruz *six weeks* before he opened fire in Florida. This warning included his desire to commit mass murder. And yet the FBI did nothing! Their feud with "President" tRump is notorious, and I can say very little for either side. For several decades, the FBI has warned us about a suppositious "Sinister Monolithic Inter-national Communistic Conspiracy" (SMICC) which is nothing more than a boogeyman foisted upon us by people who were looking for an imaginary conspiracy that they could demonize in the same way that Adolf Hitler invented an imaginary Jewish conspiracy. This became obvious in 1991, when the "SMICC", which was allegedly trying to control the whole world, turned out to be unable to control even Russia, which it had ruled since 1917!

There are, of course, a few real conspiracies in existence. At one time, Communists really believed that they constituted a conspiracy that was out to rule the world. For what became of this notion, look up the name “Leon Trotsky” in a really detailed reference work.

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America’s oldest conservative organization is once again recruiting in this area. It is the Ku Klux Klan, a fact you should keep in mind if someone identifies him- or herself as a conservative. It was founded in Tennessee in December 1865, eight months after the armed forces of the self-styled “Confederate States of America” were forced to abandon their treasonous armed revolt against the United States of America. In effect, the founders and later members of the Ku Klux Klan were really the Confederate army who had traded in their gray uniforms for white sheets. And ever since, like all conservatives, they long for the days when the way of life that once existed in this country can be retained or restored.

At the time when the Ku Klux Klan was founded, the U. S. government was preparing a treason trial of Jefferson Davis, the “president” of the Rebels. But apparently the government was so glad to get the Rebellion ended that they unfortunately abandoned this idea, thus abandoning African-Americans to another century of degradation. Recall the Virginia campaign of “massive resistance” which was formed by conservative Republicans against the racial integration of Virginia’s public schools. This campaign was met by President Johnson’s successful campaign to get Congress to enact the 1965 Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. These laws left Virginia conservatives wondering how they would react to the conditions within federal prisons, and the whole “massive resistance” campaign collapsed.

According to television reports on ABC and MSNBC, in recent months the Ku Klux Klan has put in an appearance by distributing recruitment fliers in Baltimore, other parts of Maryland, the northernmost county of Virginia, and even Philadelphia, whose racially integrated team in the National Football League has just won Superbowl LII to fantastic fan support. including a parade which shut down all the rest of the city.

The Ku Klux Klan has already made its revival notorious in demonstrations opposing the removal or destruction of southern monuments honoring the soldiers or politicians who committed treason by supporting the 1861-1865 attempt to forcibly partition the United States of America. If they really are planning “Civil War II”, as I have suggested in previous issues of **Dagon**, it might not be too late for loyal Americans to take appropriate steps to resist them.

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“President” tRump also wants a parade. tRump’s parade, however, will not celebrate a football victory (as far as we know) but will feature marching troops, military bands, and a whole load of martial paraphernalia. It was inspired by tRump’s 2017 visit to Paris on Bastille Day, when the French celebrate the downfall of the monarchy that had oppressed them for centuries. It is no secret that tRump enjoys such displays, and there might possibly even be advisers from the French

Embassy to tell him how it's done. Considering how many generals are among "President" tRump's high-level appointees, we can expect to see an elaborate and well-trained parade. (Some of the generals are Mattis, Kelly, McMaster. Just go on from there. He has possibly bestowed office on more generals than billionaires.

Of course, military parades of the sort that tRump has in mind are usually held to celebrate victory in a recent war. tRump has already had one such parade, honoring an alleged victory in his invasion of Iraq, but that was a dubiously legal affair without the constitutionally required congressional declaration of war, and celebrating the defeat of non-existent "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. This next parade will take place only because the "President" wishes it, and like any other military activity it will be planned and carried out without regard to its cost. Its probable date might be Wednesday 4 July 2018.

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Speaking of Bastille Day, believe it or not, there are *still* royalists left in France. From time to time, people are still chalking "*Vive le Roi!*" on French walls. There are rather obviously very few of these people, but they seem to have a lot of time and chalk. They seem unwilling to say *which* royal family they want to restore: Bourbon, Bourbon-Orleans, or Bonaparte, but their fervor seems to outpace their numbers.

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And, while we're on the topic, let us dispose of the attempt to deal with the ridiculous belief that mass shootings like the one in Florida can be stopped by *increasing* the number of high-capacity firearms in the hands of the public. This is usually expressed by some such statement as "The only thing that can defeat a bad man with a gun is a good man with a gun." And the only effective refutation of this statement is the question "When did that happen?" If you say this, gunnie-boy will probably ask you what you are talking about. You can then reply, "When did somebody who set out to commit mass murder with a rapid-fire weapon, was instead shot by a 'good guy with a gun?'" Since no such thing has ever happened, gunnie-boy will be unable to answer you.

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For years, Donald tRump has complained that the claims of Russian collusion in the 2016 presidential elections are lies circulated by Democrats or the *New York Times* or somebody or other. But now Robert Müller has indicted thirteen Russians and three Russian companies for such collusion, aimed at electing tRump. It is highly unlikely that these accused persons will ever go on trial in the United States, but these indictments have promised that other culpable individuals may also be charged. Of course tRump is fully capable of firing Müller or his superior in the Department of Justice, Ron Rosenstein, or even Rosenstein's superior Attorney General Sessions, but that will say more about tRump than about Müller or the people he wants to indict. And since it will be at least two months before I can say anything about this situation in **Dagon**

DAGON DIRECTORY - ERRATA

The following corrections have all come in since I published the current edition of "The **Dagon Directory**", pp. 7-9 of **Dagon #695** (February 2018). A name followed only by a nine-digit number represents a ZIP code that has only five digits in **Dagon #695**, but I have discovered that a copy addressed only with a five-digit ZIP code is sometimes returned to me in the mail, which is why I asked for nine-digit ZIP codes in **Dagon #695**.

If there are any more corrections that need to be made in "The **Dagon Directory**" please let me know, even if you might have already sent them in.

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interest to you on page ____.