

DAGON

#704, APA-Q #616

January-February 2019

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, O At Room 108, 2250 S. Semoran Blvd, Orlando FL 32822-2704. My land line number is P Great (407) 270-5613. The number of my new cell-phone, like that of its predecessor, E Intervals is (718) 736-4901. **Dagon** circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press associa- R This tion (APA) edited once a month (if enough contributions come in) by Mark L. A Appears Blackman, Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 111229-2119. His telephone T To number is (718) 336-3255, and his internet address is <markblackman@juno.com>. I Inflamm optic The copy count for APA-Q is 15 print copies. O Optic **Dagon** also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject N Nerves matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$10 in the United States, and for \$25 #2239 elsewhere. I also trade with other amateur publications.

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Some of the problems that delayed **Dagon** # 703 (December 2018) have been dealt with, but a few others remain. In a recent attempt to add to this issue, I somehow managed to lose more than half of the pages I had intended to use in this issue. However, I have finally discovered how this happened. Neither the people who taught me how to use it, nor the extensive printed material that should have accompanied it but did not, informed me that only one file could be open at a time. This meant that when I tried to open and use a second file, the computer informed me that I had already opened that file, I could either empty that file or be denied access to it. Neither of these ideas appealed to me, and I had to write this file over again or give up on it. No person nor the computer told me anything different, and I lost a lot of time rewriting that file,

Because of this loss of time, I had to spend more time in writing **Dagon** #703, so Mark Blackman decided that there would not be a December issue of APA-Q, and that **Dagon** #703 and 704 would go into the January issue of APA-Q. As you know by now, **Dagon** #703 did, but this present **Dagon** #704 did not. This present issue will be the January-February **Dagon**, and will go into the February APA-Q.

And the traditional delays in mail deliveries during the Christmas season have apparently meant that the addition of some relatives' names and addresses to the "**Dagon** Directory" on pages 7-10 of this issue of **Dagon** was delayed, and could not be printed in **Dagon** #703. In fact, by New Year's Eve I still did not have them in hand, and it is only an act of faith that I expect to have them in this issue.

In preparing this and several other recent issues of **Dagon**, I have suggested to Deirdre that she should darken some of them before duplicating and collating them. She has informed me that she has observed no such thing. Since her eyes are 33 years younger than mine, I suspect that she is right in this matter. I had operations a few years ago to remove cataracts from both eyes, and since then I have not needed prescription glasses but merely reading glasses, which are much simpler and cheaper. But there is age-related macular degeneration in my right eye, which is apparently untreatable.

And the delays in postal service also mean that stamps which Deirdre ordered for me before Christmas had not yet arrived by New Year's Eve, which means that most of the copies of **Dagon** #703 (December 2018) were not mailed out in December. It also means that several bundles of *New York Times* clippings, which may interest people whom I furnish with them, are growing thicker as I wait for stamps to mail them. (If my luck is in, these people might receive these bundles before they receive this issue of **Dagon**.)

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One of the reasons for our conventional divisions of time has a rather mysterious origin. The day is based on what we now know to be the rotation of the Earth on its axis, though this was not completely understood until a few centuries ago, when this rotation was recognized. The month was early recognized as the cycle of the Moon's phases, which depends on the Moon's revolution around the Earth. And the year was based on the cycle of the seasons, though it was many centuries before this was recognized as the result of the Earth's revolution around the Sun. And that, in its turn, had its hazards, since in the early 16th century, a monk named Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in northern Italy for teaching that the Earth revolves around the Sun.

But the seven-day week, which is built into the beliefs of some of the world's major religions, seems to have no obvious reason for its existence. I am convinced that its existence is based on the observations of astronomers of the last Babylonian kingdom, unless they received it from a yet earlier civilization. They seem to have named many of the constellations which are still listed on astronomy texts. For example, these include a lion, which were found in the Middle East, but not a tiger, which was not found nearer than India and northern Asia.

The stars which form the constellations appear to be "fixed", although they move so slowly, and are so distant, that the Big Dipper for example will still resemble a dipper (or a plow. or a bear, or whatever it has been named by various astronomers) for thousands of years.

This the astronomers of ancient Babylon knew. But there were seven celestial objects that appeared to move among the "fixed" stars. The astronomers of ancient times, who were also astrologers, found a meaning in this. These objects must have been "gods". Later they were called "planets", from a Greek word meaning "wanderers". (When this word is in quotation marks, I refer to those seven wanderers which are not all called planets in modern scientific usage, as objects of a certain size which revolve about the Sun.)

Two of these objects were already worshipped as gods by many cultures - the Sun and the

Moon. They, like the other five, move among the stars - or, specifically, among a belt of twelve constellations that extend around the celestial sphere. Of course, the Sun is so bright that other stars cannot be seen when it is above the horizon. But if Aries rises just before the Sun does, and Gemini sets just after the Sun does, then obviously the Sun must be in the same direction as the intermediate constellation Taurus.

As for the other five objects, one of them looks like a fairly bright star whose light is red. Since red is the color of blood, this had to be the war god. So the Babylonians called it by the name of their war god Nergal. And in those years, Greek scholars went to Babylonia to get an education in science, so they called this "planet" Ares for their war-god. And eventually the Romans called it Mars for the same reason. Similarly the other "planets" were named Mercury, Jupiter (or Jove), Venus, and Saturn.

The two most influential cultures of ancient times, in passing these cultures on to other peoples, were the Greeks and the Jews. But they did this in quite different manners. Young Greek scholars went to Babylonia to study its culture, just as, many centuries later, young Roman scholars went to Athens to study Greek culture. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Judea had been conquered by Babylonia, who had forcibly resettled its people elsewhere. Then the Middle East's rising new power, the Kingdom of Persia, conquered Babylonia and allowed its Jewish subjects to return to their own lands. This had a profound effect on the Jews. In one of the psalms they went so far as to call King Cyrus of Persia a "Messiah". And when the Jews were sent into exile again a few centuries later by the Roman Empire, this hope that they could once more return to their own lands sustained them clear through to 1948, when the state of Israel was once more re-established on its ancient lands.

The astronomical effects of the first of these exiles is my own speculation. Of the seven "planets" after which the days of the week were named, Ninib, the Babylonian name for Saturn, was probably regarded as ill-omened. It was the slowest and faintest of the seven. So they would quite likely consider that anything under its influence would be ill-starred. The captive Jews could have picked up on this idea and decided that anything that was an unlucky day for their oppressors would be a lucky day for them. And so we have the Jewish sabbath as a holy day.

In all the languages derived from Latin, the days of the week contain the names of the ancient Roman gods, even though their speakers were Christians when their days got these names. Some of the more extreme Protestant sects object to such "idolatrous" names and refer to the days of the week as "First Day", "Second Day", etc.

The people who introduced the seven-day week in England were very likely Christians, but they nevertheless used the names of the formerly English Pagan gods in naming the days of the week. Tiw was the English Pagan war god and so his day became "Tiw's Day". Mercury got a promotion when his day was named. He was originally the messenger-god who led the souls of the dead to the realm to which they had been sent, but somehow became the more powerful god who ordered them there. He thus became Woden or Oðin, the chief god of the Germanic peoples. And

in England his day became "Wodensday". The powerful Jove was Thor to the Germanic peoples, so his day became "Thor's Day". The omnifutent Freya was identified with Ishtar, Aphrodite, Venus, and all those other goddesses, and so the sixth day of the week she gave her name to "Freya's Day", whence "Friday". There was no god comparable to Saturn in the Germanic pantheon, so his day remained "Saturday".

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To begin with, I am not advocating the partition of the state of Florida. Granted, it was originally a thinly populated and mainly agricultural state whose sparsely populated counties had not been discovered by people seeking relief from the blizzard-afflicted scenes of northeastern and midwestern winter snowfalls. Indeed, one early established county in central Florida had such a small population that not until nine months after its organization did it record its first marriage - of the couple that eventually became the parents of Walt Disney. No one yet dreamed that in 2019 it would become the nation's third most populous state after California and Texas.

Things were little better in 1956, when I moved to Tallahassee to enter graduate school at Florida State University (FSU). I had just received a M. S. in physics at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University, not to be confused with the State University of Iowa), and I had heard the reputation of a member of the faculty of FSU which made me interested in studying with him. This never came to pass, however, because he had just received a visiting professorship at another university, and would be spending the next year or more there.

In those years there were only three state universities in Florida. The oldest, and until recently all-male and also limited to white students, was the University of Florida, located in Gainesville. In Tallahassee, the state capital, had been formerly called Florida State College for Women (FlaStaCoWo), but had recently begun admitting women, but was limited like the university on Gainesville to white students. Its new name was Florida State University (FSU). Black students of both sexes attended Florida A&M University (FAMU), also in Tallahassee.

I began taking graduate courses in physics at FSU, but then I got uninvolved with a club of students from foreign countries, whom I found rather more interesting than the Floridians at the university. I also struck up acquaintance with some students at FAMU, a few of which were from overseas. So I invited the foreign students at FAMU to attend a function of FSU's foreign students. This, it seems, aroused the wrath of the Ku Klux Klan, and they commanded the president of FSU to expel me. He summoned me into his office, early in 1957, and obeyed his racist masters' voices.

However, this worked to my great advantage. It eventually led me to the man who would direct much of my doctoral research. He was Prof. Peter Gabriel Bergmann, who had come to America in the 1930s with Albert Einstein as refugees from Nazi Germany. After Einstein's death in 1953, he had taken two professorships, one at Yeshiva University in New York City and one at Syracuse University in upstate New York, commuting regularly between them. Under his direction I wrote a theoretical dissertation on gravitational radiation, a topic which has since also developed an experimental side.

I eventually became a professor of physics in the City University of New York, mostly at Brooklyn College. I taught there for 37 years before retiring.

In 1963 Perdita Lilly (her birth name) and I were married, she bringing with her a daughter by a previous marriage, Karina, then 7. In 1965 our daughter Deirdre was born. In 1969 we bought a house in Brooklyn, where we lived until 2010, when Perdita's developing case of vascular dementia made it impossible to live there. Our daughters had both settled in Maryland, so we sold the house, moved there, and lived in a succession of assisted living facilities until Karina's husband retired and they moved to Orlando.

After Perdita died in 2017, I moved to Orlando, where Karina and her husband Dean lived. They located for me a comfortable assisted living facility called Excellence, and I moved here in the following March. Our daughters fixed up my room at Excellence with the essential books from my library, a computer and printer, and provide me with transportation when our schedules allow it. So I am once more a Floridian, under conditions very different from those of 1955-57. Deirdre plans to also move to Orlando in 2019.

News reports on television cover local news very well here, but for the Orlando stations "local news" means not Florida but *Central* Florida. And by Central Florida, the Spectrum "All-News" station in Orlando means, specifically and only, the ten counties of Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia. The channel this "All-News" program operates on is Channel 9, an ABC station, on anybody's home TV set. But on Excellence's own TV sets it is Channel 7.

The newscasters in Orlando, which is the county seat of Orange County, certainly seem to think it's a state capital. And, to accommodate its greater population, Florida now has several more state universities. The nearest is Central Florida University (CFU), a short distance northeast of Orlando. When its football team was invited to the Fiesta Bowl in Arizona on New Year's Day, its eventual defeat by the team from Louisiana State University was closely followed, and tearfully lamented, by Central Floridians who had never seen the inside of a university except maybe as laboratory specimens. Elsewhere in Florida are such educational institutions as South Florida University, Florida Atlantic University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida Tech., Florida Southern College, and Florida International University. Needless to say, they all have football teams as far as I know.

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As of present writing, President tRump still insists that he will not sign any federal spending bill that does not include \$5,000,000,000 for a wall between the United States and Mexico. This wall is intended to prevent illegal immigration from Mexico and point south, into the United States. Apparently he believes that, a thousand years from now, tourists will come from all over the world to see the Great Wall of America. Well, it worked for tourism in China. However, the Chinese wall itself did not. The Chinese have a saying: "Fear not a tiger from the south, but beware even a rooster from the north." Until new foreign contacts began to come to China from European ships,

northern peoples invaded and conquered China despite the wall, established new dynasties, and assimilated themselves to Chinese ways. In a way, immigrants to America have also assimilated themselves to our very different American ways.

At present writing, President tRump has refused for almost two weeks to sign any legislation to authorize federal spending, claiming that he will “shut down” the government until Congress authorizes his wall. This is obviously not going to happen. At most estimates, only about 25% of the government can be shut down.

And of course, even as President tRump wants an enormous sum from Congress to build his wall, he and his supporters insist that Mexico will pay for the wall. Presumably after his wall is built with money appropriated by Congress, he will present the President of Mexico with a bill for the construction costs. Neither he nor his most dedicated supporters have said what they will do if the President of Mexico replies, “Chinga la leche de tu madre!”

However, tRump’s style as an administrator is, understandably, more that of a business leader than a political leader. He is less likely to operate the presidency under the restrictions of the Constitution than to merely fire subordinates who give him a lot of back-talk. But if he tries it, he may, without realizing it, commit impeachable offenses. This will give his opposition in Congress a way to get rid of him.

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The recent congressional and state legislative elections have left numerous claims that some elections were conducted illegally. Apparently the Republican efforts to draw district lines in several critical states have left us with situations in which a minority of Republican voters have been able to elect a majority of Republican office holders. And in one North Carolina congressional district there were so many irregularities in proper voting procedure that a state agency has unanimously refused to certify the election claimed by the Republican candidate. This claimed winner will go, not to Congress, but to court.

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As I should have mentioned on page 1, it is probably better to try to contact me by land-line phone rather than by cell phone. I keep my land-line phone always ready to contact me on it, while I use my cell phone so seldom that its charge sometimes runs out, and it takes quite a while to re-charge it. Nor do I know how long it takes to fully re-charge my cell phone.

Mark Blackman recently phoned me to inform me of Gary Tesser’s death from cancer, and about a few other matters. Unfortunately, I did not get from Mark some of the details, and more recently I have had trouble reaching him. so I do not know Gary’s age at his death, or other circumstances. As a Levite, Mark conducted a memorial service for Gary with his friends.

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The December issue of **Dagon**, numbered #703, was intended for the December **APA-Q**, was

(continued on p. 10)

THE DAGON DIRECTORY

Subscriptions are indicated by the number of the issue with which the subscription expires. If this number is less than 705, your subscription has expired. To renew your subscription, see p. 1. Note that this rate may have been reduced since you began to receive **Dagon**.

Other designations are:

C: Complimentary copy.

CAR-PGa: an active member of the Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games (RPGs).

F: a member of my extended family. Recently I have been citing in **Dagon** information about family connections which may interest them, and have been sending copies of those issues to many em. Some relatives may not have been sent those copies, and they should write to me and ask for them. From now on, they will receive all issues.

Q: a member of **APA-Q**, who therefore receives **Dagon** as a part of **APA-Q**.

T: trade copy

This directory is accurate to the date of 1 September 2018. Please let me know of any changes, corrections, and additions that need to be made. Any additions and corrections which I receive before 15 December 2018 will be printed in the January 2019 issue of **Dagon**, and will thenceforth be part of future Directories.

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THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 6)

actually a part of the January **APA-Q**, since Mark decided not to publish a December **APA-Q**. This present issue, #704, the January-February issue, will therefore be a part of the February **APA-Q**. And the March issue of **Dagon**, #705, is intended to be a part of the March **APA-Q**. This, I fondly hope, will straighten out the confusion caused caused by the unconscionable lateness of production of its predecessors.

The notice I put in **Dagon** #703 about comparing margins in different issues of **Dagon** is no longer valid. I found that I was unable to change margins in this issue, because the computer insisted on setting its own margins. And a quick check of misprints in this issue revealed so many that I had to review it and cull them out, and I probablky have to apologize for not getting them all,

Deirdre was not able to get together all the names and addresses of relatives that were left out of the above "**Dagon** Directory". I will put them in a "Family Matters" column in yjr next **Dagon**.

Dagon #704 (APA-Q #616)

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() - If this space is checked,
 you may find something of
 interest to you on p. ____)