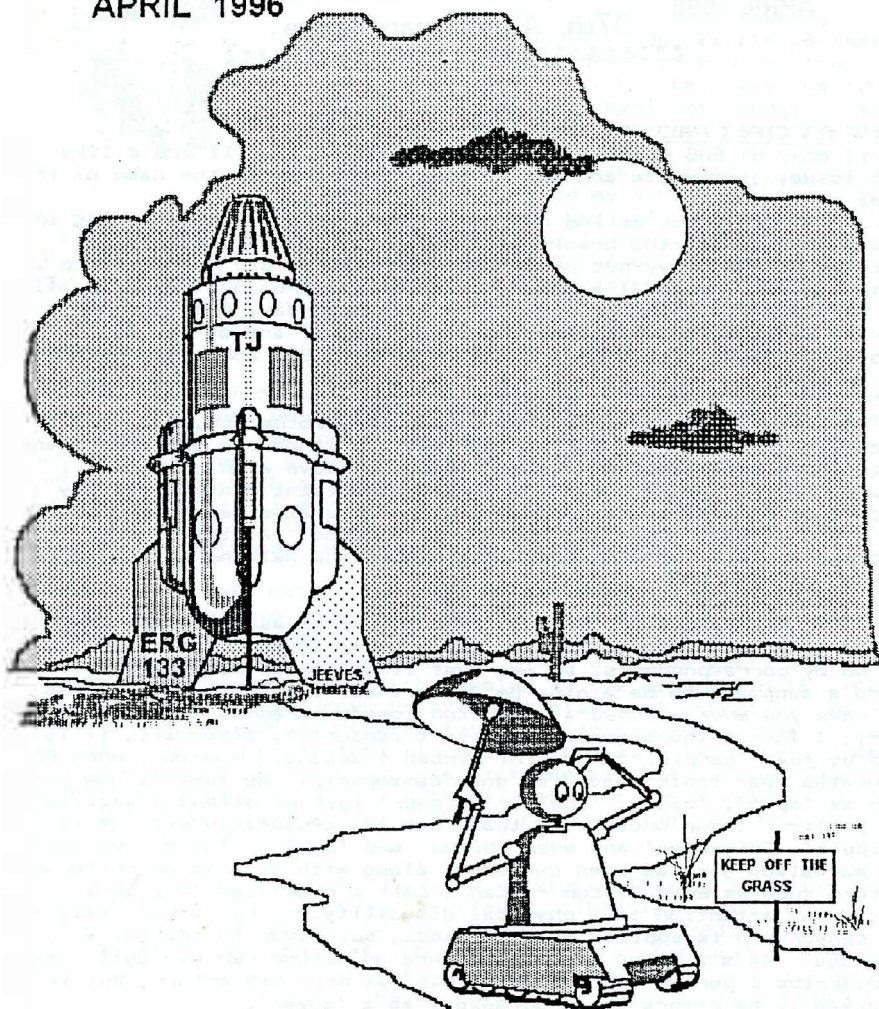


ERG 133

QUARTERLY

APRIL 1996



37th. ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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ERG 133
QUARTERLY
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37th. Anniversary Issue

EDITORIAL

This copy of ERG comes to you because I sent it. If you'd like the next issue, just write and let me know. Response is the name of the game.

Talk about piling Pelion on Ossa, or bad things coming in threes! Following the breaking of my ankle, I sped around on crutches with a heavy pot on my leg. By dint of sit and hitch up a stair, one at a time, I managed to finish off ERG 132, print it all out and mail it to the printer. The very next day, that disc went bad and I can't recall any of the files - so if any of you can recover Wordwise+ files on a 5.25" SAVED on a BBC computer, please let me know.

When the pot came off, I began physiotherapy, Val went to Leeds for the day and I had another fall. I landed on one crutch and broke it in half! Being unable to stand or move with only one, I crawled to the 'phone, rang the Physio department and they kindly sent round a nurse bearing a new crutch. She also made me a sandwich and a pot of tea. Who said the NHS is no good! At the time of writing, my left ankle remains locked solid and walking is difficult. Ho hum, on with ERG.

Niggle query. Frequently on TV, I am assaulted by obscene gutter language. I don't use it, none of my acquaintances use it, nor do my correspondents, so why must it be thrust upon me via TV? There's supposed to be a nine pm 'watershed' on such unpleasantness, but have you ever watched a Ben Elton comedy screened at 8pm? Oh sorry, I forgot the argument, "Mustn't censor it, after all, it is used by some people." The mini-minded I assume. However, when PC advocates rear their heads, so does censorship. We mustn't use words such as 'epic', 'dago', 'wog' or 'nigger' lest we offend a section of the public. I can understand that, but the censorship extends to 'cripple', 'disabled' and even 'blind' and 'deaf'. The gollywog on the marmalade jar has been censored, along with attacks on children's writers such as Enid Blyton - "Can't call a character 'Big Ears' as that draws attention to a physical disability." Can anyone tell me WHY censorship is applied in such cases, but never to the gutter language? It's a funny old world where an author can use gutter muck to describe a person who regularly has sex with his mother, but is attacked if he refers to a homosexual as a 'queer'.

The other day, I browsed Smith's and two Supermarkets in search of 'Scientific American'. Smith's had sold their two copies and the Supermarkets offered around 100 women's mags and a heap of 'Men's Interests'; guns, muscle, cheesecake, cars - Ghu help future readers if that's the only tripe on offer. What will tempt future fans to seeking anything else? Just what has happened to reading matter? Where are the magazines with articles and fiction such as Lilliput, Galaxy (UK pre-war), Armchair Science and the like? Profit margins are helping the Marching Morons to take over. It makes you think (and shudder)

Terry



SCHOOL DAZE

Seeing sundry complaints in the Press about overworked teachers with large classes (of 35) made me think of my own teaching days coping with 60 little perishers.

In those days, we had no 'free' marking periods. Let me cast back the mental clock to those early post-war years when I left the RAF and embarked on a teacher's training course, emerged as a qualified teacher, and in March of 1948, duly toddled around to report to my appointed school in

the East end of the city. It was one of those monolithic, smoke-blackened structures resembling a fortified prison, and conducted on similar lines. Its asphalted playground was marked out with cabalistic lines, circles and other devices laid down in past ages for the mystic rites of the ancients. I was disappointed to find that certain red marks were merely paint and not sacrificial blood stains.

A bell was tolling as I entered, calling "the faithful to their lessons. On the South end of the bell-rope was my new headmaster. New to me, that is, actually, he was rather shop-soiled. At 64, Maurice Green was a year short of retirement, stood 6'2" tall and ruled his school with an iron hand, (holding a leather strap). When I explained that I was his new teacher he gave me a rather puzzled look. It turned out that as might have been expected, the Education Office hadn't bothered to warn him of my coming.

After a brief natter, he took me on a tour of his domain. This turned out to be five classrooms on the upper floor of the building (A Junior School had the ground floor), plus a two-room prefab in the yard. The upstairs classrooms had glass windowed walls and opened out onto a narrow corridor which doubled as the Assembly Hall. As we strolled along it, Mr. Green pointed out places of interest. We were passing one room when Maurice snatched the door open, shot inside, produced a short strap from his pocket, hauled a lad from his seat, gave him a couple of whacks on his backside and the homily, "Now pay attention to your teacher!". Without a word to the master in charge, he strode out and rejoined me with the remark, "That was Mr. Dowson's room". The tour continued.

My first class (S3/4B) was a mixture of sixty boys and girls ranging from nine years of age to eleven. This introduced me to one of the many wheezes by which Government Regulations could be circumvented. The rules said that the Ministry of Education had to be notified of any class of sixty or more pupils. Maurice evaded that one, by entering child No.60 on the class register for 6.3A which only had 46 kids. Officially, I taught 59 children, this despite the fact that sixty sat, sardine-packed, before me. Next time a Government spokesman tells you "We have no classes with more than thirty pupils", bear that sort of fiddle in mind.

Another weakness of the system surfaced when a certain venerable lady was given a 'Post of Special Responsibility for the 'Welfare of the Girls In The Annex' - (half a mile away). This was worth an extra £100 a year, not a bad pickup in the days when a year's salary was only 340 quid. Lady X had been drawing her extra lolly for three

years when she was told to go and take a class in the Annexe. She had to ask for instructions as to how she could find the place!

Teachers and Education Committees often howl for more money, but ignore savings which could be made in their domains. A few examples point this up. At one school, we had a staff room with a beautiful parquet floor. For some fiscal reason, several hundred pounds were allocated to be spent on the room. As a result, the parquet floor vanished beneath wall-to-wall carpet, which soon became worn, tatty and coffee-stained. Then there was the Allowance given to Department Heads for special purchase of books, equipment and so on. This had to be spent before the end of a financial year. Any unspent allowance could not be carried forward. Worse, if your allocation was £150 and you only spent £130, your next year's kitty was likely to be reduced by £20. Naturally, to avoid this, you blew any end-of-year surplus on anything in sight.

Purchasing was another money-waster. For recording at home, I bought tapes from discount houses at about 50p each. When I needed some for classroom use, I suggested we save money by using my cheap supplier. No deal. I was told that all purchases had to go through the official Education Office dealer - whose tapes cost £2.00 each. I strongly suspect that somebody got a nice kickback from that official supplier. A similar 'closed shop fiddle' turned up when my daughter went to PE College, all her gear had to be bought from the official supplier - at double the normal price. Does that racket still flourish?



Modern teachers seem capable of teaching only one subject. I've had trainees on school practice decline to teach basic maths on the grounds, "My subject is English". When I began, I taught everything! Maths, English, Art, History, Geography, Science, Crafts, Religion, P.T. and Games. On one occasion, I even taught Needlework.

Having a class of sixty imposed considerable problems. By the time you had walked round the class and given each child a mere 30 seconds of help, half an hour had gone by and you had sixty (or more) pages of work awaiting marking. You needed a truck to carry the load home. My class was a 'B' Stream, and since the 'A' stream only

took children capable of passing the 11+ exam, it left my nominal 'B' stream to take everyone else - 'C', 'D', 'E' and on down. This included one sad case, a retarded epileptic called Basil. He had a front row seat so that when an attack struck, the class would shout, "Sir! Basil's off again". Whereupon we would slide him out from under his desk, then lay him on the floor to recover, whilst I stepped back and forth across him to teach the class. After a few minutes, Basil would recover and resume his seat.

Monday morning was nightmare time. Children had to be settled down with work whilst I ploughed through a mountain of non-teaching jobs. First all pupils present had to be marked in the register. At 9-30, a red circle had to be entered for absentees. If a child

then entered late after a medical appointment, an 'M' had to be inserted in their red circle, a 'D' indicated they had been to 'Domestic Science' and an 'H' showed the pupil had been to a Handicraft Centre. These converted the 'absent' mark into 'present' one. If they were absent on a permitted holiday, a 'V' was entered. To complicate matters, at the end of the week, totals and percentages had to be worked out .. with 'M's, 'D's and 'H's counting as present, whereas 'V's were counted as absences. At the end of each term, totals had to be made both vertically and horizontally, then checked and countersigned by another teacher. An error of 1 in a total of several thousand took some locating.

Next, dinner money had to be collected, change given and totals entered in the 'Dinner Book' - along with details of those on Free Meals and those claiming a meal owed to them after an absence. This done, Dinner book, money and a head count of how many pupils needed school milk had to be sent to the office.

These simple tasks out of the way, one was faced with the daunting Bank Book. A large and hideously complicated affair with vertical, horizontal and diagonal name columns. Children brought their money and pass books. Deposits or withdrawals were duly entered both in their pass books and in the BIG book. If a deposit brought the child's total to £1.00, this had then to entered (in red) in his passbook and as a transfer in the main account book. Once all transactions were complete, totals and money had to balance before being sent off to the office. On a bad day, three quarters of an hour could pass before actual teaching began.



Teaching Games to sixty was a fantastic operation. For openers, regulations said they were NOT to play cricket, football, rounders or netball but merely to practise skills leading up to these activities. The regulations didn't say how you did this with only ONE football, two rounders bats and a tennis ball. Solution? Ignore regulations, thirty girls played fifteen a side rounders while thirty boys had fifteen a side football. Naturally, one kept a weather eye open for inspectors looming on the horizon. At such times, one snatched up the ball and began a homily on how to kick the thing.

For P.E. each child carted a small woven mat out into the playground, to be put on the ground for exercises requiring the pupil to lay down. Nobody changed into P.E. gear, removing jackets was the nearest we got to that sort of foppishness. Pupils lined up in rows to go through a series of twists, turns, swings, hops etc. designed to give 'head, neck and trunk' a workout - followed by torture of the arms and legs. Fortunately, we were spared ear wriggling. The whole process was as tiring for me as it was for them, but at least they could relax after it, I had to go on teaching whatever lesson followed.. This torment came twice a week, each time I fervently hoped for rain to cancel the activity.

My classroom also doubled as a dining room, and had the added joy of a large electric oven standing in the corner. Fifteen minutes before the end of lessons, two dinner-ladies would barge in, switch it on and start bunging in stacks of plates and huge containers of school meals to keep them warm. Dinner duty came round about once a fortnight, it involved supervising a long line of children as each collected a plate of food and carried it into one of three classrooms. We also had to help dole out gravy, custard or other gooey substances and at the same time prevent mayhem breaking out in the three classrooms used for the meals. The sloping topped desks were not the best bases for slippery dinner plates so that by the end of the meal, goodly helpings of carelessly shovelled food decorated desk tops, seats and floor. The first few minutes of each afternoon were devoted to wiping all this away.

Once a month and envelope holding our pay cheques arrived from the Education Office. Thanks to five and a half year's war service being credited, I didn't start at the bottom of the scale. Even so, my monthly stipend of £31.00 before stoppages wasn't exactly conducive to riotous living. Getting the actual cash for the cheque was easy, but indicative of the different attitudes of the era. Maurice Green would take all the cheques round to a small terraced house where once a week, the National Provincial Bank rented a front room from an old lady. Their clerk would arrive in a taxi, carry in a large tin trunk holding oodles of money, then open his own little branch. Maurice cashed all our cheques, stuffed the money in his pocket and carried it back to school. He carried several hundred pounds, its equivalent today would be several THOUSAND! Both he and the mini-bank would have been lucrative pushovers for any bandit - but nothing ever went wrong. Back at school, Maurice counted the money into piles, sent for us one at a time and handed over our lolly.

Time passed and I moved to a bigger school with a tougher clientele. My classroom was the upstairs assembly hall. A more chaotic arrangement would have been hard to find. Each morning, after registration my pupils would stack chairs and desks in a huge pile against the wall. Barely had we finished than a bell would ring for assembly. Pupils from all the other rooms would then flock into the hall for a corporate act of worship followed by various edicts of the day. When this was over and the assembly dispersed, my pupils had to unpile the furniture and re-assemble the classroom. The whole procedure couldn't have been bettered as a way of starting each teaching day with the greatest amount of chaos.

Once a year we had a fund-raising jumble sale. At one of these, I got the job of auctioning the remaining debris at the end of hostilities. Finally, the last customers drifted away save for one small boy. The only thing left on my table was a huge pile of comics. The lad looked at me, then longingly at the comics. "You can have the lot for a penny", I told him. The bargain was sealed and off he staggered bearing his multicoloured mountain.

Ah teaching used to be, h'm, well, different.

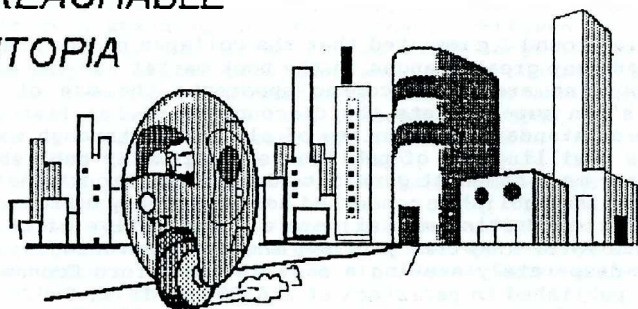


GENERAL CHUNTERING

Ken F Slater

Last time round I commented that the collapse of the NBA had not at that time made any great changes in the book market, so far as I had noticed. Some changes are now becoming apparent; the use of books as "loss leaders" in supermarkets, the discounting of top list titles, and the growth of standard discounting of all titles through some outlets plus the new unwillingness of publishers to actually publish books on which they have made somewhat generous advances (although that case wasn't in Britain, the publisher concerned holds directly or indirectly a fairish share of the British market) are all indicative of changes that will continue for a long time yet. But there are advantages; should you know anyone desperately seeking a copy of the Oxford Economic Atlas of the World, published in paperback at £16.95 in 1972, O.U.P. are offering it for £2 a go, during their Book Sale which ends 29th Feb. Sorry, but I don't know any economic historians likely to be having a birthday about now. Talking of economics (and street lighting) I am not certain whether Murray Moore means that Toronto CC intend to just turn the freeway lights off, stop, or whether motion detector controls are to be installed. Trouble with the former idea is that there is sure to be some idiot who will take a stroll down the centre knowing full well he'll see the lights of an approaching vehicle long before it hits him; forgetting about the other idiot who will driving on side or no lights because there is a full moon tonight, isn't there? I mention this because some time ago I had to remonstrate with a friend who was driving me, at night, down narrow curving lanes and at a furious pace. When I said I though 50-70 mph was a bit much, even on a good clear night, he told me that he'd be able to see the reflection of approaching headlights, and slow up. So the body on the bike becomes the body on the road? Oh, he hadn't thought about that... Freddie the Dog and I always get off the road at night when I (we) hear a car approaching - some of the roads around here are not equipped with sidewalks - but we are well up on light pollution. If the glow in the sky over that way were to be extinguished, there would still be the glow over the other way. It doesn't help if you want to stargaze, agreed. Incidentally, does anyone recall any old story or novel in which the constellation of Orion is called the *Hourglass*? I seem to have always used that term; I got corrected back in the forties when I used it out on a night exercise; I can understand calling the constellation of the Great Bear any number of variants; The Big Dipper, The Plough, and King John's Wain are three (as a small boy it was always the latter, picked up from local people - in Berkshire! In the area of The Wash where the King is reputed to have lost his travelling gear and his temper they don't recognise that variation, t'would seem). Talking to 'Zan Norman on the 'phone not long back, she thought she recognised the use of The Hourglass from a story. Hope to see you at Eastercon, Mr. Sullivan, sir, and maybe convince you that another trip to Holland would be a good idea. They don't have the "fortress" mindstate badly, as yet. I'm not sure about around here. Some have all automatic lighting stuff (not sure about curtain drawing - I'm not even certain about neighbours at the moment, haven't seen any either side for weeks! Couple of houses across the road still have human inhabitants, tho). But everyone in the village (except me) seems to stay tight at home after dark so to see someone walking (or biking) is a sufficient rarity to deserve a notch in my diary. And it is fifteen days since the last note. By the by, Freddie and I both like cats (he was brought up by cats, four of 'em) but none have adopted us lately. And, Ethel, we've been meeting at cons since Coroncon, at least! KFS

UNREACHABLE UTOPIA



Many an SF yarn has dealt with the idea of an alternative form of Government. These have included Totalitarianism, Republicanism, Democracy, benevolent and even matriarchy, total anarchy or rule by logical machine. One writer even suggested that only ex-service personnel had a vote. In such tales, the current Government is generally oppressive and gets overthrown by the hero, who then installs his version of free democratic people's rule as a perfect Utopia where everyone is perfectly happy with everything.

I fancy these concepts are but pie in the sky, I submit there is no such thing as a perfect Government, only systems which satisfy enough people to keep a majority quiet. Imagine SF-wise, that you're the last person alive. You can do just what you like, and where you like. You can make any rules you fancy and break 'em as you please. For you, Government (you), is perfect. Suddenly another survivor turns up. You get along pretty well, but niggles arise as to whose turn it is to hunt, cook, wash, and do various other chores.

So, you draw up a duty rota which works fine except that you have sacrificed a fraction of your perfect, do-as-you-please Utopia.

Expand your population to village size and problems magnify - who cleans streets, removes garbage, repairs the road, polices the criminal types and so on? You surrender a bit more of your freedom to allow rules to creep in as to how these tasks get done. Taxes are introduced to pay for them. You can no longer park where you like, sling your rubbish over the fence or help yourself to what grows in a plot tended by another.

Expand this to national size and more and more appointees are needed for social services, policing, national defence, upkeep of the infrastructure, keeping utilities operating. The list is endless so taxes and restrictions (for the greater good) increase. Your Utopia has become decidedly frazzled. It may be better than living in total anarchy, but it's a long long way from perfection.

In MY (slightly better) world, there'd be referenda on many public issues - do we need a new road, a new dam, a sports hall, a concert theatre, Olympic medal hunting, soap TV, pop music, fluoridisation, etc. etc. If you don't have a say in such issues, how can Government be 'by the people and for the people'?

You can please some of the people part of the time, but never attain perfection, there's no such animal.



ERGital
 comments in
 italics between
 these pretty
 little > signs

SUSAN ZUEBE, W.63, W.14262 WASHINGTON AVE., APT.68, CEDARBURG, WI 53012-3016, USA

Your article 'Which Shall I Be?' raised some interesting points. Society needs to change over time, because change is a vital part of life. However, as you point out, too much change, too quickly and too depended on, can have other than the desired result. Factories and industries have become mechanised, saving owners the expense of salaries and benefits and replacing people in dangerous or boring jobs. Unfortunately, such improvements also leave people unemployed.

Some technology has negative side-effects. Many families no longer sit down together for a meal. Each person grabs a pack out of the freezer, heats it in the microwave, then goes their own way. They may watch TV, play a video game or browse the Internet.

Many simple pleasures are being lost. It seems to require too much effort to read a book or newspaper. It's easier to pop in a videotape. Do children still play tag or hide and seek - or do they need games requiring computers, batteries or endless accessories?

> Graphic novels are replacing books for many, and as for hobbies, as I've said before, when I polled a class just before a retired, out of 40 children, some 25 listed 'watching TV'. Of the others, two swam, one cycled, the rest 'played with friends'. No stamps, models, cycling etc. That was in 1980, I wonder what a modern poll would show? <

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD, STH., WALLSEND NE28 7RE

Aliens, buried somewhere in your Astounding (When it was worth reading) was a serial by Clifford Simak, 'Cosmic Engineers'. The heroine looked at a Galactic gathering, "Were these the brains of the Galaxy, those wriggling worms, that creature looking like a frog?", etc. > Simak also did a linked (rewrite?) titles 'Hellhounds Of The Cosmos'. <

> But of course to have life as we know it means conditions similar to Earth. Furthermore, only chemical reactions that can start life can only take place under Earth conditions. > What about life 'not as we know it'? < But I say with Haldane (was it?) 'The Universe is not only queerer than we imagine, it's queerer than we can imagine'. > Wasn't it Clarke who said that? <

ETHEL LINDSAY, 69 BARRY RD., CARNOSTIE ANGUS, DD7 7QQ, SCOTLAND

I know you had sold Soggies, but was amazed to hear how widely they had gone. > I couldn't include all the markets, they did me proud. < Further to the children now being easily bored, a friend took her two children to the airport thinking they would like to see the aeroplanes. Within half an hour, the oldest proclaimed he was bored. Another two books about Dr. Who. What puzzles me is so little interest in Blake's Seven. Maybe it has something to do with the way the BBC ended the series killing the characters. > Hell, personally, I found it pot-boiling and tedious. However, if you want a book about it, what about 'THE MAKING OF BLAKE'S SEVEN' by Adrian Rigelsford Boxtree £9.99? I can let you have a copy for £4.00 including post & packing. See review in ERG 131 <

ROY LAVENDER, 2507 E.17th. ST., LONG BEACH, CA 90804-1508, USA

RECORDINGS. There seems to be a common theme of things buried by advancing technology. I can remember playing an Edison cylinder phonograph. It was superseded by wind-up 78 RPM records, then in turn, 45s and the 33 RPM LPs. My early Hi-Fi's were home-built and featured Girard \Rightarrow Could that be Garrard? \Leftarrow changers handling all three speeds. With vacuum tube amplifiers based on the Williamson circuit from Wireless World. Translated from the Australian, 6L6 tubes worked just as well as KT-88s. \Rightarrow In the UK it used two PX4s in push-pull. \Leftarrow I had a home recorder that used soft vinyl discs. Very poor quality and messy to use. It produced miles of fine cuttings that inevitably gathered round the cutter and lifted it. Some 35 years ago I assembled a kit for a reel-to-reel recorder. It is gone, but I still have tape reels with tape too fragile to play. My Hi Fi likes only cassettes. My answering machine uses two cassettes and works fine but has been made obsolete by newer all-digital machine using RAM.

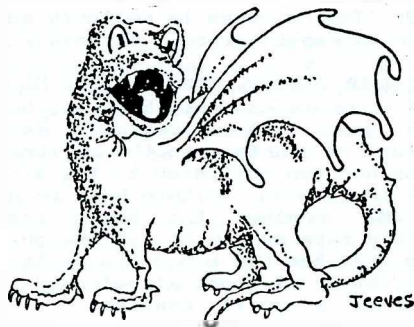
KEN LAKE, 1A STEPHEN COURT, ECCLESBOURNE RD., THORNTON HEATH CR7 7BP

It's ludicrous to suggest that life on other planets can't happen. The only problem is the timescale: I recall a clockface symbolising the length of time man has existed on Earth - the last five minutes are civilisation \Rightarrow I thought it was five seconds? \Leftarrow Consider how long planets have existed and will exist. Start the alien's clock just 12 hours earlier and they'd find Earth without mankind. How many clocks, all 12 hours apart, represent possible civilisations from planet formations around the Galaxy. \Rightarrow I suspect you're confusing a 12 hour span with the several million (billion?) years it represents. \Leftarrow The argument that because the parameters of air/content/etc. to support OUR life forms are so narrow, life is infinitely improbable, is solipstic: Earth's sentient beings arose because these conditions prevail here - other conditions, other life forms. Stands to reason. \Rightarrow I fully agree. \Leftarrow

ERIC LINDSAY, 7 NICOLL AVE., RYDE, NSW 2112, AUSTRALIA

Nice to see your history of the Soggy, given they've been around in your zines (and many other) for 10 these many years. I does seem a good design for ease of drawing.

I'm in agreement with the cynic who looks at TV and says there isn't any intelligent life here, regardless of the rest of the universe. One would expect that any life form that got off its own planet would eventually fill the Galaxy (simple biology), so the question is, where are they? W surely can't be the first to have the potential for doing this. Therefore something very nasty happened to every life form that tried. I don't mean external forces, just some normal effect of developing technology. \Rightarrow More likely the lightspeed barrier makes the trip too hard. If it is unsurmountable, we may have the potential but he is going to embark on a round trip with a minimum of 8.6 years - and that assumes instant FTL, no acceleration, deceleration or exploration time. \Leftarrow



11

A.V. CLARKE, 16 WENDOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT DA16 2BN
'ARE THERE ALIENS OUT THERE' would be OK for a local paper, bit of a waste here. You made up for it by the stuff about the DC-X and X-33. Very interesting, even tho' statistics rather scarce. If the X-33 is going to be twice the height, one wonders where it's going to stop. It's noticeable that there's no reason cited for the thing. I wonder if some S-F ad entrepreneur is in charge at MacDonnell Douglas with visions of those two-an mining ships that have been a mainstay of S-F since Ghu knows when? ~~Sorry about the lack of statistics and usage info.~~ I had to drop quite a bit of detail to paraphrase the hand-out, to fit into available space. What the original didn't make clear is how its manoeuvrability made it better for SSTO ~~Agree with your assessment of VENTURE.~~ I guess that it's a completist zine, the stories could have been offered to at least three better paying markets before Venture got 'em.

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST., NORTON, MALTON, N. YORKS YO17 9ES
There's a touch of genius in that 'Bentcliffe for Taff' cartoon, the general reader would assume the obscured display to read 'Silk, Taff..eta and Nylon', whereas the fannish reader would see the real message. Did you get any feedback on it? ~~Not a word.~~ I've recently seen an advert for a security feature that turns your lights on at dusk. There's also an automatic system to draw your curtains, to turn radio on and off, not to mention linking your doorbell to the sound of a dog barking. - but what if you're living alone and have a fatal heart attack, how long will it be before someone finds you? ~~Rather reminiscent of Bradbury's, 'There Will Come Soft Rains'.~~

BILL DANKER, R.D.1, KENNERDELL, PA 16374 USA

ERG 132 was enjoyed except for the stuff on planes. Did I tell you the only time I was in one was for a 15 minute flight? I had a brand-new Zeiss camera with a fresh load of film and shot lots of pictures from the plane. When I developed the roll, it came out perfectly clear. The beginning of the strip hadn't caught in the take up spool. It taught me a lesson, always after that I look at the rewind knob when advancing the film on loading. ~~Me too, in the fifties I shot the local moors on fire and reservoir water low enough to reveal a previously sunken village - same trick, the film hadn't been winding on. In 1982 I visited Yosemite and also flew down the Grand canyon - and the exposure meter on my cine camera chose that trip to act up.~~

LLOYD PENNEY, 412-4 LISA ST., BRAMPTON, ON, CANADA L6T 4B6

A rejoinder to Roy Lavender. Texas now has the same Concealed Firearms law as Florida. Also the US rate of firearms killing is enormous. Canadian Customs detain more Americans each year because they try to bring their guns into the country, and the Canadian homicide is up because of gun smuggling from the US. A new firearms registration system is being phased in in Canada which should make sure the guns are in the hands of the responsible. If the Swiss have such a low homicide rate with many guns, it is because the Swiss are taught to use and respect firearms because of mandatory army service. Many Americans have no training in handling firearms and therefore no respect, which results in many dead. ~~The UK has had a long, 'no guns' tradition for people. Sadly, that era is going, along with the 'no violence ethic' as more and more yobboes get ideas from TV and films. I suspect criminals tend to use weapons they themselves, most fear.~~

P.WILTSHIRE, 2 CHILTERN VIEW RD., UXBIDGE, MIDDLESEX, UB8 2PA

I enjoyed your account of the Soggies, it's funny how things catch on. In ERG, didn't you call them Glumps? *0> No they were different critters using a weird dialogue. 00 I hope to see them in a future ERG and if you ever do get them published, I'd like to buy a signed copy. 0> Try to get 'THE LAW AND YOUR TAPE RECORDER' by Andrew Phelan. 1966 A 'Tape Recording Handbook' price 3/6, some are in there. 00 Thank you for the Recent Reading, it does keep me up to date with what's available. I still get mixed up with covers, they all look so similar.*

ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL

Are there aliens out there? Well this is one that has been argued about many a time ~ and I've no doubt such arguments will continue. I'm pretty sure there's a mathematical formula for working out where the most likely life-bearing planets may be found. *00 I mentioned it, but as I recall, it had too many 'fudge' factors to have much value. 00 That doesn't mean we'll find alien civilisations, but you never know. Certainly it is unlikely that Humans are the only life in the Universe, and if one sentient race can arise, so can another. 00 I agree, the catch is, can they arise close together in both time and space? 00 Whether we will recognise each other as such when we meet up remains to be seen... Ken Slater .. On books, I think most SF fans take their book-buying quite seriously. I usually have quite specific items in mind - a 'mental' want-list - and so do most other fans I know. 0> True, but nowadays shelves are crammed with Fantasy and/or Graphic Novel stuff. 00*

ROBERT LICHMAN, PO BOX 30, GLENN ELLEN, CA 95442, USA

There must be aliens of some sort out there. Surely life exists on other planets though not necessarily in forms we would recognise. If there are other civilisations which have developed space travel, perhaps we haven't seen them because they are bound by the same limitations of velocity that govern our own efforts. 'Warp Drives' may turn out to exist only on Star Trek. I enjoyed your long and pleasing article about Soggies. I hadn't realised they'd ventured so far from the pages of fanzines. Have you ever thought of publishing a collection of them? *00 Can't think of an interested publisher for them, or my autobiography. 00*

BOXTREE PRESS RELEASE If you're a devoted fan of the original, or recent re-runs of MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, you'll be interested in THE COMPLETE MISSION IMPOSSIBLE DOSSIER, priced at £12.99 and released on Feb. 29th. Chapters cover: THE WHOLE STORY (Conception to Syndication), STAR SIGNS, FORGOTTEN SEASON (Before Peter Graves), BEHIND THE SCENES (Brainstorms, gadgets, failures & triumphs), PLOT SUMMARIES AND CAST LISTS FOR all 168 EPISODES, THE NEW MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, PHOTOGRAPHS. What more do you need to know?

FANTASY COMMENTATOR Double Issue \$10.00

from Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 10708, USA
140 pages and slick card covers mark this as a quality item and the contents live up to it. Not much artwork beyond some jacket reproductions, but what a star-studded Contents line-up! Articles by old-timer R.F.Starzl, Mike Ashley, Sam Moskowitz, T.G.Cockcroft, Darrrel C.Richardson, Andrew Darlington, Schuyler Miller and a host of others. Themes covered include, dust jackets, fan history, 'Rocket Man', A WT 'Eyrle' Index', Ray Bradbury, etc.. A far better read than Analog as every page is crammed with interest. Not cheap, but a damned good buy.

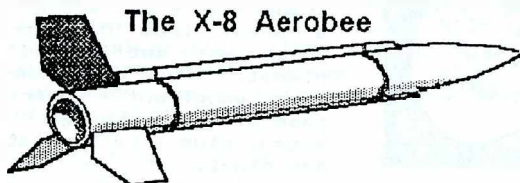
The X-8 {A, B C, & D} Aerobee

and

The X-9 Shrike

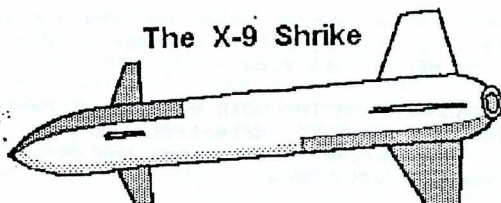
I was tempted to skip the X-8 Aerobee series and the X-9 Shrike from this series because they don't qualify as aircraft. Then I realised that I'd be getting letters asking, "What happened to the X-8 and X-9?" So, here for completeness a few brief details of the two missiles.

THE X-8 (A, B, C, D) Aerobee



The X-8 was designed as an upper-atmosphere sounding rocket with parachute recovery. Some 20 feet long, three tail fins mounted on a long, slim body and carrying a payload of up to 300 pounds, it could reach an altitude of around 800,000 feet and a speed of more than 4000mph. Over 800 of the various types were built.

Bell X-9 Shrike



The X-9 was designed as a smaller scale, liquid-fuel, radio controlled, development version of the Bell AM-63 Rascal, air-to-surface missile - which later fell by the wayside. The X-9 was carried in the bomb-bay of a B-29, then air-launched from a trapeze arrangement mounted beneath a B-29 bomber flying at around 20,000 feet. The missile would then power away and carry a nuclear warhead some 50 miles to its target. Slightly larger than the X-8 with four tail fins, four small canards and a length of 23 feet, the X-9 had a speed of 1200mph and a payload of 1000 pounds. Only 31 missiles were built.

DYNAMIC SCIENCE STORIES



February 1939 saw the arrival of a companion magazine to MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES. Edited by Robert O. Erisman and priced at 15c for around 120 pages, the new venture was short-lived, only seeing two issues. Don't confuse it with DYNAMIC SCIENCE FICTION which managed six. The cover by Paul, showed two of his typical spacecraft, somewhere off Jupiter. According to the Contents page, this illustrated the lead novel, 'Lord Of Tranerica' - but actually, it showed a scene from 'Mutineers of Space', which was set around the giant planet. Paul did however, supply two excellent interiors, other passable art being by Binder and Wesso, plus a rather static illo by Marchioni.

LORD OF TRANERICA by Stanton A. Coblentz told of the Tyngall, Hannibal Spratt, Dictator of the 25th. Century Americas. He accidentally hauled Harry and Celia from the past, became enamoured by Celia, whilst Harry faced death. However Harry stirs up a revolt, before winding up as the new Tyngall - and getting the girl.

THE MERCURIAN MENACE by Nelson S. Bond Tells how 'Buzz' Carson, a surveyor on Mercury who avoids the evil dark side - until glamorous Jeryl Morrow jets off there and has to be rescued with the aid of the football-like 'Rollies' - 'Buzz' also gets his girl.

MUTINEERS OF SPACE by Lloyd Athur Esbach described how men, falsely condemned to a short life in the Jovian sulphur pits, escaped, stole a spaceship, gained revenge on the villain and became space rovers. No girls this time.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE VOID by 'Hubert Mavity' (Nelson S Bond again) had alien and Earthly scientists trying to contact other intelligences - but neither understands the other's methods, so both decide to abandon the vain idea.

THE QUEST OF ZIPANTORIC by Robert Moore Williams was a typical 'lost race' yarn wherein explorer Dick Markle encountered a Mayan Princess in a South American jungle. Captured and faced with death, he escaped - along with the girl.

For your 15 cents, you also got 'The Test Tube', a ten-question quiz and 'Through The Telescope', seven columns of answers to scientific questions sent in to the sister magazine, Marvel Science Stories. A rather crafty way of coaxing readers to buy both magazines. Dynamic Science Stories saw only two issues, but a revival in 1973, titled Dynamic SF managed

RECENT READING



First off, two hefty graphic novels to complete the Classic STAR WARS trilogy, both priced at £10.99. Volume 2 has Luke, Leia and Han on an underwater hunt in which they face a squid, a Kraaken, giant sea worms and other perils. In Volume 3, when the Millennium Falcon is trapped at the bottom of a lake, Admiral Ackbar plans a cunning diversion in order to effect a rescue attempt. The books are each about 1/2" thick, with superb artwork. Colouring is restrained and excellent, avoiding the usual glaring contrasts. Definitely, the 'Rolls Royce' of graphic novels.

CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION E.Gross & M.A.Altman £9.99

Another STAR TREK goody, 128 large-size, glossy pages crammed with details, incidents and anecdotes. Part.1 deals with the coming together of ideas and the shaping of the new series. Part.2 visits a stage set, followed by interviews with the various characters. Part.3 is a critical article, 'What's Wrong With Star Trek'. Part.4 is an overview of the first series and Part.5 gives the story development of many early episodes. There's also an eight-page section of colour 'stills'.

THE DEEP SPACE LOG BOOK: Second Season Companion.

Ed. M.A.Altman & E.Gross £9.99 Large, slick, 120pp. An opening chapter explains the concepts and reception of the first series of DS-9. This is followed by cast lists, plot summaries and comments on all the second series episodes. Then come details of ideas for the third series plus a 'refresher course for newcomers to DS-9', a piece on the basic concept and a report on the initial press launch as well as comments by members of the cast. Interspersed throughout the text are numerous black and white reproductions of book covers, advertising matter and photographs of the actors and actresses - sans make-up. If you're a DS-9 fan, this should be on your bookshelf.

STAR TREK CREATOR: Gene Roddenberry by David Alexander £12.99

A brief Introduction by Roddenberry's widow, a Foreword by Ray Bradbury, a page or two of Acknowledgements, then you're into the fascinating life story, warts and all of 'Mr. Star Trek'. His ancestry, childhood, college days, B-17 and Pan Am airline pilot and police work are all detailed. His writing skills grow as he authors an incredible variety of material until the incredible uphill battle with Star Trek. No dull as dust account, this gives a living, exciting account cramed with incident and anecdote rivalling any work of fiction. You also get a listing of Gene's films, plus a reprint of an interview with Terry Sweeney, and 16 pages of photographs. Don't miss it, but be warned, first strengthen your bookshelf, it runs to 600 pages!

STAR WARS: The Lost Jedi Adventure Game Book Paul Cockburn £5.99

Two role-playing games in one cover (and for one price). After mastering the 10 pages of instructions you assume the role of 15-year-old Havet Storm to begin your first alternate-path adventure, 'Jedi Dawn'. According to your decisions, selected powers and a rolling die, you win through to the second game, 'The Bounty Hunter'. See how you fare against Bobo Fett, Jabba The Hutt, Darth Vader and other dangers.

THE ADVENTURES OF CYCLOPS AND PHOENIX Graphic Novel Boxtree £8.99
Spin-off from the TV series. Newlyweds Scott and Jean (Cyclops and Phoenix) are dragged into the far future by 'Mother Askani' in order to aid Scott's long lost son, Nathan who possesses the power to defeat the evil 'Apocalypse'. Very well drawn with complicated scenery and tricky story flow. Bags of violent action and weird characters. Great for TV addicts, but not for the young.

WARHAMMER 40,000: Chaos Child Ian Watson Boxtree £4.99
I quote .. Set in a mind destabilising Time Warp where heroes are Terminator Librarians in orbital battle monasteries. Can Inquisitor Draco, hunted by Imperial and alien enemies learn to read the Eldar Book of fate and discover the secret of the final Apocalypse? Devastated by the death of his assassin-courtesan, might Jaq surrender his soul to a daemon? If Jaq's faith in the Imperium fails, might the Space Captain who accompanies him be forced to kill him? Not my kind of yarn, but maybe it's yours?

SPECIES Boxtree £8.99
There are hints of 'A For Andromeda' and 'Alien' in this graphic novel of the MGM Film. An alien message received at Arecibo allows scientists to modify human DNA to produce a human-alien hybrid - a shape-changing female who rapidly grows to maturity (knowing English and social customs). The creature escapes and leaving a trail of mayhem, seeks a mate to perpetuate her species, whilst hotly pursued by those seeking to kill it. Violence, gore, explicit sex and gutter language mean this isn't for the young or squeamish.

STAR WARS: The Scripts Boxtree £14.99
A large size, 200pp volume holding the full scripts for the three Star Wars epics; STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, and RETURN OF THE JEDI. These are not 'shooting scripts' which can get cur around during production, but actual 'as in the film' scripts. If you want you can put on a video and read along with the characters. In addition, you get 14 full colour reproductions of various cinema posters advertising the films. If you happen to be a SW buff, then you'll want a copy of this collection.

Two further BOXTREE titles in 'The Gathering' series. £5.99 each.
SHATTERED CHAINS Clayton Emery, is set in a land where wizards are both powerful and hated. When Greensleeves finds she too has power, she sets out to overthrow them, aided by Woddcutter Gull. Further complications arise when a 'Herd' arrives and the powers get out of control.

FINAL SACRIFICE Clayton Emery, continues the saga as Archdruid Greensleeves seeks spells to use against the wizards. Gull fights a Warlord who guards a terrible secret. Seemingly the only way to defeat the enemy is for Greensleeves to make the final sacrifice.

Each book entitles you to one free playing card in the fantasy trading-game marketed by 'Wizards Of The Coast'.

PENGUIN announces the publication of a new serial thriller by Stephen King. Titled 'THE GREEN MILE', it is to be published as a 96-page paperback in six parts, priced at £1.99 each. Part.1, 'THE DEAD GIRLS' is due on March 25th., with further instalments at monthly intervals. The first story begins with the brutal killing of two young sisters whose deaths, even their killer, John Coffey does not understand although he finds himself on Death Row.