

ScientiFiction

The FIRST FANDOM Report and Newsletter

New Series Numbers 3 & 4

3rd and 4th Quarters 2004

Greetings from ye New Editor: I let myself be talked into taking over the editorship of *SCIENTIFUNCTION*. I hope to keep things on schedule hereafter, but as you all know, I need material from you. I can't write the whole thing myself. So keep me updated with news and information. My contact information is: *SCIENTIFUNCTION Editor*, Joseph P. Martino, 905 South Main Avenue, Sidney, OH 45365-3212 e-mail: jpmart@bright.net

Update on Jim Harmon: Jim submitted his resignation as editor because of health reasons. The good news, he's found a treatment for a long-term condition which seems to be helping. However it's very time-consuming, and the editorship had to be dropped. We all wish Jim the best of health and hope his condition continues to improve.

Fossil SF Dept: ROBIDA, Albert, *"The Twentieth Century"*, (Wesleyan U Press, Middletown, CT), 2004, \$29.95, ISBN 0-8195-6680-2 (translation by Philippe Willems). This book was originally published in France in 1882. Wesleyan U. Press had brought out the first English translation as part of its Early Classics of Science Fiction series.

The story is laid out in 1950. Robida presents a forecast of the technology that would be available nearly 70 years after he wrote. He correctly anticipated air travel, telephone, television (telephonoscope), news broadcasts (although by telephone, since Hertzian waves had not yet been discovered), the English Channel tunnel, women's liberation, and massive price inflation. He missed the automobile and radio, not to mention nuclear weapons...

The novel does not focus on the technologies themselves, in the manner of Jules Verne, but rather on how they have affected society. The author's method is to present Parisian society of 1950 through the eyes of a naïf, a young woman who had spent the past ten years in a provincial boarding school, where she was isolated from "up to date" Paris. She has now graduated and is trying to choose a career.

Satire is never more than a millimeter below the surface of this novel. Robida brings out the absurdity of what people have done since time immemorial, usually by exaggeration. The book is alternately funny and serious.

Robida supplemented the text with his own illustrations, which add to the depth of his depiction of the world of the 1950s, graphically showing things that would take paragraphs to describe.

The book opens with 52 pages of the translator's exposition of where the book fits into the history of SF, and ends with 32 pages of notes explaining things in the text that would not be familiar to the modern reader, and a 6-page biography of Robida. I highly recommend it.

JPM

We Get Letters:

Dear Jim & Barbara: I received the same bad news from Bob Peterson. I remembered, a few years ago, there was a lot of interest in Dragon Speaking voice recognition software. The technology has obviously improved because my bank argues with me and I eventually get a printed response. How about a project to set up Bob with a system? At age 85, I'm getting a person interest.

Roy Lavender

Greetings Jim Harmon, Madame President, and Everyone. It's my pleasure to thank you all very much for voting for me in the contest for the First Fandom Hall of Fame award for this year. It was as kind as it was unexpected. As you may know, I was presented with your handsome plaque in Kansas, back in July at Jim Gunn's conference. Since then I have attended the World SF Con in Boston, where I met up with many old friends, and in December will attend Philcon as Principal Speaker, where I expect to meet many more old friends. So thanks again, chums, and best regards.

Viva SF!! *Brian Aldiss*

Dear Jim. Once again I have to thank you for the latest SCIENTIFUNCTION, another good read. Barbara mentions the high cost of cons, I've been saying this for ages. In the early fifties a con cost in the UK was five shillings. My teacher's salary of 30 pounds a month could buy 120 tickets. Were I still a beginning teacher today, my salary would be 1500 pounds a month but would only get me 30 tickets at 50 pounds each.

Now what else was there? Well, for openers, there was great excitement here in Scarborough the other day as the world's biggest passenger liner, the Queen Mary 2, sailed through our bay. Apparently Jimmy Saville has persuaded Cunard to make a slight detour to visit us. Not knowing the exact time of passage, I didn't go to see it. A good thing as apparently thousands turned up and the town was totally gridlocked.

With EKG's last issue after 45 years, another landmark comes along with our 44th wedding anniversary. Amazing how time flies when you are having fun. The great thing is we have never had a row. We ought to get the Dunmow Flicht.

We see some queer things around her including two wild deer, which ran in front of our car a few years back. Then last weekend, at the same place only a mile from home, we had to stoop while a duck led her eight tiny ducklings calmly across the road in front of us.

On the even queerer front was a phone call we got last night. It was a lady asking if we were a shop as she had bought a tape recorder in a car boot sale in Leeds and it had my name and phone number on it. The queer bit is the fact that I dumped that recorder in our local dump about a year ago. How had it escaped from there and ended up in Leeds. Oh, better belt up, thanks again and all the best. *Terry Jeeves*

Dear Jim. Thanks for the zine. All the zines I have received since the early 60s are in the index, about 70 feet of fanzines.

I have run into the Salvation Army boutique shops that you describe--there's one east of here in Snellville. I don't bother to go there very often--no old books or interesting machines, just unused furniture that must have come from discontinued lines as some furniture store, clothes, and a lot of pottery and glass. But I think this must vary by area or store manager--the old Salvation Army store in Avondale is still full of the usual junk. Not much in the way of books though--I think the old attics must be empty. And the Salvation Army isn't the only game in town. The Last Chance Thrift Store in Decatur has lots of books with fairly good turnover, and occasional interesting gizmos. I bought four typewriters there last week at \$2.99 each. It's run for the benefit of some charity called the AHDD. But I can't give them my extra books--I don't want to see those again!

Who knows about old-time British radio? Years ago someone over there sent me a tape of a spooky show called "Mr. Goodjohn and Mr. Badjack" and I've never been able to discover who wrote it or whether it was based on a published story. *Ned Brooks*

Greetings: When I was in college, I lived in the largest dormitory at Columbia, John Jay Hall. It was a multistory building, with not quite the ambiance of a cellblock. Each room had a solid metallic door, and each door had a holder that could display a business-size card. Even by the 1950s, social cards were more or less on the way out, but those who wished to identify where they lives usually put in a piece of paper of card size with their name on it. Not everybody followed the practice, so there were some labeled doors; the rest were bare.

One of my friends at school was dating a young lady whose part time job was a switchboard operator in the dormitory. She also helped maintain a directory of students living in the dorm. This was a big, glass-paned case like unto a bulletin board, where student names were displayed, each typed in a special metallic holder that could be slipped in or out of the case on a moment's notice.

I was musing about all of this one day in my dorm room, and the thought came to me: why not put up an exotic name rather than my own? After a little cogitation, I came up with a name. A character in Edward E. Smith's *A Skylark of Space* had the title, Nalboon of Mardonale, and I liked the sound of it. So, I typed out the requisite piece of paper for my door's cardholder. Then I asked my friend's significant other whether she would include the name in the student display. Well, time passed.

About a month later, I got off the elevator and headed to my room. Outside my door, I saw a student staring at it. As I approached, he looked up and said, "That Nalboon fella came over here to study, I guess." I looked at him and allowed as that was probably correct. Then I reached for my key and headed to the door. The kid's eyes grew wide and he said, "Don't tell me that you're...you are..."

I said with a straight face, "You are correct. I am the Nalboon." How I kept my voice sincere and without breaking up I'll never know. The student backed away from me, eyes still wide, until he reached a stairwell door at the other end of the hall. Then he exited.

To this day, I wonder how many people he's told that he'd actually met and had spoken with the Nalboon of Mardonale.

Stephen Kallis

Greetings: Thank you for your concern about my safety in the wake of Sunday's devastating tidal wave.

I am enormously relieved that my family and household have escaped the ravages of the sea that suddenly invaded most parts of coastal Sri Lanka, leaving a trail of destruction. But many others were not so fortunate. For hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans and an unknown number of foreign tourists, the day after Christmas turned out to be a living nightmare reminiscent of *The Day After Tomorrow*.

Among those affected are my staff based at our diving station in Hikkaduwa and holiday bungalow in Kahawa - both beachfront properties located in areas worst hit. We still don't know the fully extent of damage as both roads & phones have been damaged. Early reports indicate that we have lost most of our diving equipment and boats. Not all our staff members are accounted for - yet.

This is indeed a disaster of unprecedented magnitude for Sri Lanka, which lacks the resources and capacity to cope with the aftermath. We are all trying to contribute to the relief efforts. We shall keep you informed as we learn more about what happened.

Curiously enough, in my first book on Sri Lanka, I had written about another tidal wave reaching the Galle harbour (see Chapter 8 in *The Reefs of Taprobane*, 1957). That happened in August 1883, following the eruption of Krakatoa in roughly the same part of the Indian Ocean.

Sir Arthur (from an e-mail dated 27 December 2004)

Convention Reports. By Ye Old Editor, Joe Martino

INCONJUNCTION, Indianapolis, IN, regularly held on weekend near July 4th.

This was my first time there. I attended in an effort to promote my new book. The con was largely media and gaming. The masquerade was well done, lots of good costumes. Among the dealers was old-timer Juanita Coulson. One panel of interest to us Dinosaurs was Sally Childs-Helton's panel on preserving fannish memorabilia. I have a fair collection of back issues of SF magazines and books, programs from cons, and similar things (two floods in the early 1990s wiped out a lot of my collection, but I have stuff from then on). I try to keep my things well organized. Sally had some good suggestions on how to preserve your "stuff." She didn't really cover what to do with it after your death, though. Will anyone care? I don't think my children will. Perhaps you too need to think about what to do with your memorabilia when you depart this life.

ConGlomeration, Louisville, KY, first weekend in August.

This is the successor to the excellent but discontinued Rivercon. I missed their first one, but made it to this one. Very good con, heavy on gaming. Interesting panel on remakes of old movies. I've had the question myself, why do they have to keep remaking movies from the 30s and 40s? Doesn't Hollywood have any new ideas? When they do a remake, they usually mess it up, like they did *The Manchurian Candidate*. I had a book signing at this one, also appeared on several panels.

NOREASCON, The WorldCon, held this year in Boston.

The con had a Lensman theme in its publications, but there was little of that in the con itself. One interesting event was a slide show on the new Science Fiction Museum in Seattle. I plan to attend CascadiaCon next year, and that's one place I definitely want to visit. Several good astronomy panels. My son had an instrument on the Cassini probe orbiting Saturn, so I made sure to attend the panel on that. I had a chance to chat with Dave Kyle and buy his Lensman books. For me, one of the highlights of the con was the Prometheus Award, given for best Libertarian science fiction. F. Paul Wilson received the Best Novel award for *SIMS*, and Vernor Vinge the Hall of Fame award for *"The Ungoverned."* The masquerade was good, and the Huckster Room was immense. I enjoyed it.

ARCHON, Collinsville, IL, first weekend in October.

One interesting panel was a "Tribute to Bob Tucker." Unfortunately Bob wasn't there to hear himself roasted. One panelist got a chance to tell the origin of "Smo-o-o-o-th." I told my tale of having met Bob at the first MidWestCon, held in Bellefontaine, Ohio, in 1950. Bob was telling a joke involving the Russian coin, the "kopeck." He made a slip of the tongue that embarrassed him. I reminded him of it when I asked him to sponsor me for First Fandom, to prove I really had been there. Last year, when I made a trip to Russia, I brought back a few kopecks, and sent one to Bob. He responded that now he was rich "beyond his dreams of avarice." The audience got a kick out of that. I did a reading and a book signing. In the book signing, I was paired with George Takei, who played Mr. Sulu on the original *Star Trek*. I signed maybe three or four books during the whole hour. The line for George's autograph stretched out the door and down the hall. However, he was a complete gentleman. He took the time to talk with each fan, to sign whatever they brought, and to pose for a photo with them. He knows what he owes his fans, and it showed.

Mars Society, Chicago, August 19.

This was not a science fiction convention, but a convention of serious people who plan to colonize Mars. Unlike many space groups, the Mars Society is not a cheerleader for NASA. They're willing to give fair criticism where it's deserved. This was a four-day event, filled with lots of panels on various aspects of life on Mars. The Mars Society has established two "Mars Analog" stations, one in the Canadian north and one in the Utah desert. The purpose of these stations is to simulate living on Mars, in a somewhat realistic fashion. Volunteers live in a "habitat" of a size that could be launched on a booster rocket. They leave the habitat clad in simulated pressure suits. They attempt to conduct scientific data gathering (geology, biology, etc.) under these simulated conditions. Volunteers stay at a station for two weeks, after which a new crew takes over. Lessons learned are incorporated in future simulations. These people are trying things out, and making mistakes, in a forgiving environment. What they learn my eventually prove very valuable in the ultimate colonization of Mars.

Publishing Milestones:

Dave Kyle's continuations of the *Lensman* series has been reprinted by Red Jacket Press. They are: The Dragon Lensman, ISBN 0-9748895-5-5

Lensman From Rigel, ISBN 0-7948895-6-3

Z Lensman, ISBN 0-9748895-7-1

These novels were written with the approval of the estate of "Doc" Smith.

Joe Martino's murder mystery, "*The Justice Cooperative*", was published by Elderberry Press. ISBN 1-932762-00-0. Joe has been selling short stories to magazines since 1960, but this is his first published novel.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES:

Terry Jeeves's new e-mail is terry-jeeves@ic24.net.

Keith Stokes's new address is: 555 N. Murlen Road, Apt. 201, Olathe, KS 66062-5418

New Members: Several new members have joined our august group recently, mostly as a result of being ambushed at ARCHON. They are (in no particular order): Noted sf writer *David Gerrold* (Northridge, CA), renowned sf artist *Vincent DiFate* (Wappingers Falls, NY), fanzine publisher *Mike Glycer* (Monrovia, CA), fan *Robert Lichtman* (Glen Ellen, CA), and long suffering fan *Robert McCormick* (Columbia, MO) finally gave in to his wife Sue's nagging, uhh, I mean urging, and signed on.

Welcome to all our new dinosaurs!!

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF:

Club Officers:

President – Joan Marie Knappenberger, 1474 Summerhaven Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146-5440

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Cleveland Plain Dealer

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1955

Science Fiction 'Pioneers' Cited

The people who read and write science fiction—may their tribe increase—are real pioneers of these days, Associate Prof. Isaac Asimov of Boston University told delegates to the 13th World Science-Fiction convention last night in Hotel Manger.

Prof. Asimov, who teaches bio-chemistry in the medical school at B.U., spoke on "The Secret Pleasures of Science-Fiction" at a banquet session. He was introduced by Anthony Boucher of Berkeley, Calif.

The professor himself has written science fiction 17 years and he has written textbooks in his teaching field.

"Salt of Earth"

Prof. Asimov said the "secret pleasures" of science fiction were "the people you meet; they have imagination and they wish to exercise it."

"These people, the science fiction readers, want the new, the future," he remarked. "They are impatient; so impatient they

can't wait, so they make up the future. They are the salt of the earth."

Prof. Asimov said these people did not have an easy time of it "because they have, obviously, to be non-conformists." He added: "They are the pioneers, the triers-out."

Most of his talk was confined to humor, jokes about science fiction editors he knows.

Awards Presented

Achievement awards were presented at the banquet to winners of six categories of science fiction work. Winners who were not announced until the moment of presentation by Boucher were:

BEST NOVEL—Mark Clifton and Frank Riley, both of Manhattan Beach, Calif., for coauthorship of the book "They'd Rather Be Right."

BEST NOVELLETTE—Walter Miller of Orange City, Fla.

BEST SHORT STORY—Eric Frank Russell of London, England.

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR—John W. Campbell of Astounding Science Fiction of New York.

BEST ALL-AROUND ARTIST—

Frank Kelly Fress of Patterson, N. J.

BEST FAN-EDITOR OR STAFF OF EDITORS—Ray C Van Houten and James Taurasi, coeditors of Fantasy-Times of Trenton, N. J.

Awards were trophies which pictured a rocket on a wood base.

Most of those persons attending the convention are readers of science fiction. The others are professional writers, publishers and editors in the field.

Today the delegates will visit the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and hold sessions at the hotel in the afternoon.

The convention will end tomorrow with more meetings and a masquerade ball, where awards will be presented for "out of this world" costumes.

FFF FANEWSCARD

6401 - 24th Avenue, Brooklyn 4, New York
June 30, 1945

FREE CARD NO. 2.

L. A. Eschbach recovering from a broken shoulder blade which he suffered in a recent auto accident.... Mike Rosenblum out of hospital where he underwent treatment for fibrositis.... "Ship Of Ishtar" due out in 25c Avon Book late this summer.... "Metal Monster" expected by late Spring in same format.... Summer 1945 issue of "Fantasy Commentator" nearly all stencilled... will be mailed shortly.... Ron Clyne gets write-up in Chicago TRIBUNE.... Dick Witter now stationed in Del Monte, California.... CORRECTION—Joe Gilbert headed for France, not West Coast.... Harry Jenkins now working for press associates, a radio subsidiary of Associated Press... they plan to make him big chief in Columbia.... Joe Gilbert tried unsuccessfully to come to the Unger, Searles, Moskowitz, Nitka meeting last Sunday, but fate would not permit... Joe only had phone number, and by bad luck, Searles' phone was off the hook for three hours... the evening showed indications, said Joe cheerfully, of being eventually productive, but a willing telephone operator worked nights and he days.... McQueen and Jenkins on seeing final SOUTHERN STAR debated nostalgically over possibility of issuing a FINAL final SOUTHERN STAR. Parting is SUCH sweet sorrow.... Is O'Donnell tale in the July ASTOUNDING co-authored by C. L. Moore?... Moskowitz's "History Of Fandom" to begin Fall 1945 "Fantasy Commentator", 19 East 235th Street New York, N.Y.... Campbell wrote own ending to Kuttner's "Misguided Halo" in UNKNOWN.... C. L. Moore and Kuttner BOTH write under Laurence O'Donnell pen-name... Both collaborating on detective book... Noel Gardner Kuttner, nom de plume.... With next issue of FAPA "Sardonyx", Louis Russell Chauvenet quits general fan activity.... Don Grant, 271 Doyle Ave., Providence, R.I., to print "Rhode Island on Lovecraft", pics of Lovecraft's wife; write-ups include one by Rogers....

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the late *Ben Jason*.

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by *Bob Peterson*. - - - - - >