

# IONOSPHERE

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**Journal of the National Fantasy Fan  
Federation Fan-Pro Coordinating  
Bureau**

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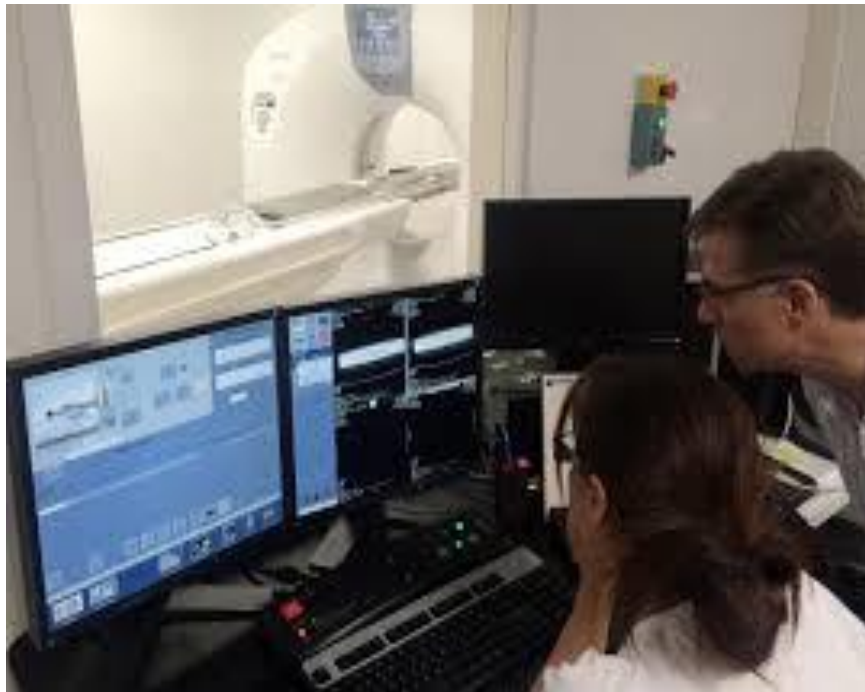
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Ionisphere's purpose is to help improve relations among fans and pros, editors and writers, by means of information and increased interchange. It is also our means of interchange with the membership.



# Editorial



## Have We Advanced?

Here it is, the new century, and we are well on our way into it. Nothing could be more emblematic of the future we thought about in the last century than a new century. In terms of literature and literary development, the twentieth century was the big century of science fiction, and in this new century our enthusiasm for this form of writing may be dying down. Can we keep pace with another century after all those earth-shaking scientific discoveries have leveled out and those wars have been looked over for a hundred years, those world wars? As war goes, I believe we are now in a time of aftermath.

Let's not tire of science fiction, shall we? Of war, yes, of literature, no. We have advanced through time, and considering those wars and upsets we have advanced through, we've advanced in experience as well. Isn't it time for consideration, a more literary outlook? Some have called our time the Age of Enlightenment, due to how much it's been a time of civilization. Let's look for that same enlightenment, and see if we can participate in it, rather than the dreadful blight that might be said to exist beneath us as readers of science fiction. Shall we start taking ourselves more seriously? Perhaps better contact with one another could be achieved.

That's what we at fan-pro contacts are here for.

## BEHIND THE SCENES \*\* Jeffrey Redmond



### **The Top Ten Science Fiction Sites**

According to Feedspot, and as of October 2018, these are among the current top ten websites for fans of Sci Fi. They vary in size, quality, quantity, content, frequency, opinion, style, purpose, accuracy, relevance, popularity, and reach.

#### 1. Dust

United States

Dust is the first multi-platform destination for binge watchable sci-fi. They feature science fiction short films, and other content, from emerging filmmakers with stunning visual effects, captivating plots, and complex character explorations. Robots, aliens, space exploration, technology, and human experience are all a part of DUST.

Frequency about four posts per week.

Since July 2016.

Also in Short Film Youtube Channels, Sci Fi Youtube Channels, Most Subscribed Youtube Channels.

Website: [youtube.com/channel/UC7sD](https://youtube.com/channel/UC7sD).

Facebook fans 1,015,106. Twitter followers 780.

## 2. Science Fiction—Reddit

This reddit is for fans and creators of Science Fiction and related media in any form. SF topics should involve plausible ideas reached through the rational application of science. General speculative fiction posts are fine as long as they involve Science Fiction.

Frequency about 5-6 posts per week.

Website: [reddit.com/r/sciencefiction](https://reddit.com/r/sciencefiction) .

Facebook fans n/a. Twitter followers n/a.

## 3. Clarkesworld Magazine—Science Fiction & Fantasy

Stirling, New Jersey USA .

Clarkesworld Magazine is a Hugo, World Fantasy, and British Fantasy Award-winning science fiction and fantasy magazine that publishes short stories, interviews, articles and audio fiction.

Frequency about 4 posts per week.

Website: [clarkesworldmagazine.com](https://clarkesworldmagazine.com)

Facebook fans 15,821. Twitter followers 22,161.

## 4. RT Book Reviews/Science Fiction

Visit RT Book Reviews to enjoy an incredible selection of book reviews, excerpts, author interviews and more that focus on science fiction books.

Frequency about 1 post per week.

Website: [rtbookreviews.com/genre/scie..](https://rtbookreviews.com/genre/scie..)

Facebook fans 31,899. Twitter followers 30,489.

#### 5. Orbit Books/ Science Fiction, Fantasy, Urban Fantasy

London, New York, Sydney.

Orbit in the US and UK has published two Hugo Award winners: *The Fifth Season* by N.K. Jemisen, and *Ancillary Justice* by Ann Leckie, which became the first novel to win every major award in the field. Orbit is an English language publisher of science fiction and fantasy with dedicated publishing teams in the US and UK.

Frequency about 2 posts per week.

Website: [orbitbooks.net](http://orbitbooks.net).

Facebook fans 14,491. Twitter followers 39,201.

#### 6. The Barnes & Noble/Science Fiction

New York, New York USA.

Barnes & Noble's online bookstore for books, NOOK ebooks & magazines. Shop music, movies, toys & games, too. FREE shipping on \$25 or more!

Frequency about 9 posts per week.

Website: [barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-..](http://barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-..)

Facebook fans 7,006. Twitter followers 14,882.

#### 7. The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, founded in 1949, is the award-winning SF magazine which is the original publisher of SF classics like Stephen King's *Dark Tower*, Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*, and Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. It hosts a science fiction discussion forum. In 2002, it won the Locus Award for best science fiction webzine.

Frequency about 1 post per week.

Website: [sfsite.com/fsf/blog](http://sfsite.com/fsf/blog)

## 8. SFWA/ Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc., was founded in 1965 by the American science fiction author Damon Knight. Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America informs, supports, promotes, defends, and advocates for its member writers. SFWA is a professional organization for authors of science fiction, fantasy and related genres.

Frequency about 2 posts per week.

Website: [sfwa.org](http://sfwa.org) .

Facebook fans 44, 368. Twitter followers 20,818.

## 9. The SG Gateway

We come from the Future.

SF Gateway is part catalogue site, highlighting and promoting the thousands of eBooks the imprint publishes. It is part gateway (pardon the inevitable pun) to the online retailers from whom these eBooks can be bought. Part community hub for readers who wish to discuss and recommend authors and books with their fellow enthusiasts, and part commentary/blog site.

Frequency about 1 post per month.

Website: [blog.sfgateway.com](http://blog.sfgateway.com) .

Facebook fans 1,290. Twitter followers 4,992.

## 10. File 770/ Mike Glycer's news of science fiction fandom

About Blog File 770.com is the online version of Mike Glycer's science fiction fan newszine, reporting on fanzines, sf clubs, conventions, fan funds and fanac. File 770 is named for the party in Room 770 at the 1951 Worldcon that upstaged the convention.

Frequency about 21 posts per week.

Website: [file770.com](http://file770.com)

<https://blog.feedspot.com/science-fiction-blogs> .

## FAN INTERVIEW: Will Mayo



**William Mayo as drawn by Homer Yost**

**William Mayo is a member of the N3F, just entered last year. Since being in, his poetry has appeared in Ionisphere, Origin, and Synergy (NAPA), and in Eldritch Science, and he has joined NAPA and has a NAPA publication called The Makings of a Good Life. He has published four collections of his stories and poetry, available from Amazon: ROADMAPS OF THE MIND, THE HORROR OF DUNBLAINE AND OTHER TALES OF THE FANTASTIC, KENNEDY'S COCONUT AND OTHER TALES OFF A MISLAID DESK, and THE GREAT RED HORSE ROBBERY AND OTHER TALES OF THE IMAGINATION. Here's what he has to say:**

**IO:** Will, you've had a lot of philosophical postings on Facebook and I believe they're starting to be generally noticed. Do you maintain correspondence with a lot of the people who reply to your postings and have further philosophical discussion?

**WM:** As far as philosophy and some such, I don't normally think in such terms, though it may all well fall under the heading of "philosophy" for all I know. These are questions written in my life's blood—is there a meaning to this life? Why is it that some of us are still alive when so many are dead? And, of course, is there a life—or



would there be lives—beyond this one? These are questions I, like so many, ask myself as I get older and so many drop by the wayside. It is only natural to do so. It seems we all do so sooner or later. Over the years, I've checked out various religions and philosophies—various different churches, a local Bahia congregation, a Hari Krishna service, among others—and found none of them to my liking, but, as always, I remain open to free thinkers everywhere. They are the way of the future.

**IO:** Do you think the Earth is a troubled place? What are its chief problems, in your view?

**WM:** Do I think the Earth is a troubled place? You betcha! Over the past few years, we've seen the rise of strongmen like Donald Trump here in the States and Duterte in the Philippines and elsewhere and unrest everywhere along with the worries about the role technology as artificial intelligence plays as artificial intelligence continues to put more people out of work. This may have well played a part in the popularity of dystopian fiction in fantasy circles as well as across the broad reading audience. But I see so much hope as well! As technology continues to take our jobs away man will be forced to look inside and find meaning outside of work, and it is high time that he did so! For too long, meaning has been found in the nine-to-five drudgery, but, now, as countries are being forced to provide for their down-and-out, their citizens look within to find their own particular meaning in life through contemplation and spirituality, not depending on any one faith. I see that happening now already and, again, it is a good thing in its own right.

I don't normally do much correspondence with people on these topics, as people—who run across the broad spectrum from Hindu to Buddhist to Christian to Scientologist—mainly just want to convert me to their own particular faiths, which is something I prefer not to do. I prefer to take the best out of what's out there and go my own way. Once they see that I'm not interested, they quickly step away, though I have to say that the Christians—most especially the fundamentalists among them—are the most persistent.

**IO:** Who introduced you to the computer?

**WM:** Who introduced me to it? My mother, God bless her heart, did, over twenty years ago, and got me on the internet as well, though she remained disappointed that I never learned to type. It's all done one finger all the way due to my lack of coordination, and my mother now is confined, in her old age, to a nursing home in Florida. I love her with all my heart.

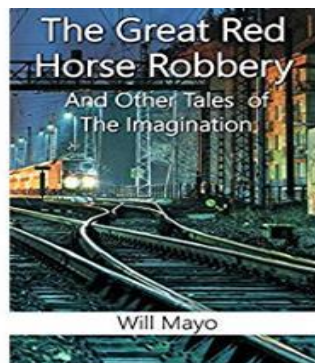
**IO:** Do you read much science fiction? What SF do you like best?

**WM:** As far as the speculative literature—Heinlein’s term for it, I believe—I began reading it all back around 1973 when I was just a young boy. I started out with Jules Verne and HG Wells and then quickly moved on to modern day masters such as Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein and Harlan Ellison. My family worried at the time that all this reading of way out literature was making my mind come unhinged when, really, it all opened doors to the human spirit and psyche within. It’s hard to explain to those who are not into this kind of thing, but speculative writers have long explored the human condition of their times—after all, Philip K. Dick was more talking about the world of the 1950s in his literature than the future—and it’s a pity that it remains still a genre that is widely misunderstood—despite its continuing popularity—by those who don’t even bother to read it.

I continued to read fantasy and science fiction through my teens and twenties and into my thirties and then got into other genres for around the next twenty years—true crime, some history, some biography—and I owe myself a long overdue return right about now. It is, as I say, a forum for exploring the human condition—I know of none better—and I have some Algernon Blackwood and Robert Silverberg among others on the shelf just waiting to be cracked open. Right now, I’m reading a biography of Edward Gorey, a writer and artist of the past century, and he proves interesting.

**IO:** Do you have any thoughts you would like to make known *via* this interview?

**WM:** I hope I haven’t troubled you with this long response to your questions. I am just a boring man with one black cat and a couple of rooms full of books, but increasingly I am haunted by the night, and so I write. One night, a man and his computer and his cat. And so it goes.



One of Will Mayo’s published works...found on Amazon

## FAN INTERVIEW: Lawrence Dagstine



Lawrence Dagstine is also an NFFF member, although I note that he allowed his membership to lapse recently, and I have been reminding him to renew; hopefully he will do so. He is the author of numerous books, among them **ESPIONAGE FIRST**, **SPENCER PRAGUE**, **DEATH OF THE COMMON WRITER** and **ALLEGIANCE TO ARMS**. His novelettes and short stories have appeared in many magazines, and some may be found easily by looking in the annals of *Surprising Stories*. This might be called a pro interview, or a fan-to-pro interview, instead of a fan interview, but the transition isn't completed.

**IO:** Lawrence, I've been wondering about your writing background. When did you start writing things, and when and where did you first have something published?

**LD:** I was always good at English, reading and writing, throughout elementary and middle school. When I was in third grade, I did a book report on Stephen King's *THE SHINING*; I actually freaked my class out. I could read five hundred page novels as early as second grade. And, of course, I was the head of the boys in Language Arts in my school district and won spelling bees. Between 1994 and 1996 I attended a two-year journalism school and went to night school at NYU for creative writing (short fiction) and the business side of writing (understanding the science of the publishing industry). I started writing in 1994, after I failed as a comic book artist (I wanted to draw for Image Comics), but I found that, along with the characters I drew, I could also tell stories. So I started writing in 1994 on a Brother word processor. There was no household internet or Windows 95 or Microsoft Word back then. I grew up to science fiction, fantasy, and horror. My diet consisted of *Dungeons & Dragons*, shows like *Doctor Who*, *Saturday Morning Cartoons*, and the original *Star Wars* trilogy, among other things.

**IO:** When did you first start writing science fiction? When and where did you first have a science fiction story published?

**LD:** I first started writing science fiction in 1994. But I was a long time reader of it, as far back as the 1980s. My first story published was actually in 1996. It was to your print fanzine, *PABLO LENNIS*—"The Empty Planet". One of my favorite types of science fiction, still to this day, is the pulpy astronaut tale or well-thought-out piece of interplanetary exploration.

**IO:** What was the first science fiction you read, and what was the first science fiction magazine you read?

**LD:** I grew up to the SF giants. I lived around the corner from *Forbidden Planet* back in the 1980s, so I had plenty of access to science fiction magazines and novels. I would also take these books with me to school, as there was a one hour reading period back then. Some of the names I grew up to include Isaac Asimov (especially the *Foundation* series), Arthur C. Clarke (*CHILDHOOD'S END*), Robert Heinlein, Ray Bradbury, some Philip K. Dick. Eventually I discovered John Brunner and Brian Aldiss. Kurt Vonnegut was another favorite, plus he lived in my area when I was young and I delivered his prescriptions for a pharmacy I worked at. The first science fiction magazine I read was probably Asimov's...though I was most partial to *Astounding*

Magazine and Algis Budry's Tomorrow.

**IO:** What brought you around to writing science fiction?

**LD:** The books I read as a child and teenager, the movies and TV shows, outer space, the planets in our solar system, space toys, and other genre fare that inspires a young mind. A culmination of all of that.

**IO:** You write some pretty tough, no-holds-barred stories. Mostly there is violence and major problems in what you write. What makes this so, why do you write stories with so much conflict in them? Is there something you want to say about life in all of this?

**LD:** That there are no real happy endings. Just when you think things might work out, events can easily turn for the worst. I tend to do this with a lot of my speculative and sociological works. Not so much my Hard SF, which I rarely write any more. It's interesting to see what the human condition is like, what society is like, and on the written page, see what happens when you put all of that into panic mode. It keeps the reader turning pages.

**IO:** Have you had much contact with fellow writers, where you discuss with them things you and they have written?

**LD:** Years ago, yes. I was never in a workshop atmosphere such as Clarion. But during the first decade of this century I was a member of online forums. I'm friends with a lot of writers through social media, even now. I read a lot. I talked on message boards a lot when message boards were still a thing. Never did the convention circuit that much. Very costly. I locked myself in a room, put a pack of cigarettes by my computer, wrote through the night and slept days to create a handsome body of work (short stories). That was pretty much my late twenties and early thirties.

**IO:** What would you say motivates you most to write?

**LD:** Having ideas that I need to get off my chest. The need. The itch. The writing bug. Getting paid for a short story is nice, too.

**IO:** What things are you optimistic about? Is there anything in your stories that you might consider optimistic?

**LD:** Hope. That with all the wrongs and injustices, there is something or someone who can right—or rewrite—mistakes. I think the future of space exploration and what's beyond the Milky Way is the most optimistic thing there is. Not so much on Earth. Above.

**IO:** What do you think of other writers writing hard-approach-to-things science

fiction?

**LD:** I think they're brave. If they didn't tackle it, someone else would. Or perhaps wouldn't.

**IO:** What writers of science fiction do you particularly value?

**LD:** The writers who toil, who keep at it. The writers I have appeared with in anthologies, who I have shared tables of contents with, and the ones who open up new doors.

**IO:** What do you think fantasy and science fiction have to offer a reader?

**LD:** Escape.

**IO:** Is there anything else you would like to say in an interview?

**LD:** Follow your dreams. Don't give up. Writing is a very hard profession. It is a poor man's profession. But when you get that acceptance, you get paid for it, you see your name in print, it can be a very rewarding experience.



## LETTERS TO IONISPHERE



RAJNAR VAJRA: It's an interesting issue. I'd like you to know that some of your information you presented about me isn't quite true. I don't like politics, hate arguing about politics, and would much prefer to return to the non-political shell I lived in just a few years ago. But I loathe racism, sexism, religious prejudice, the vast and widening gap between the rich and those less economically fortunate in this country, and all injustice for that matter. Having clearly witnessed our country turning increasingly toward authoritarianism and fascism, under the "leadership" of a person who is incompetent, ignorant and unwilling to rectify that ignorance, who constantly acts like a childish bully, who puts oil executives in charge of the EPA and a woman who's made a fortune off charter schools in charge of public education, is a self-admitted sexual predator, and shows every sign of the most dangerous form of narcissism, I could no longer remain silent.

*Well, I don't discuss politics myself, but it's difficult to ignore the shape the government is getting into. It's nothing like the government that was once projected.*

ROBERT JENNINGS: Received and read Ionisphere #14, the new December issue. I was particularly interested in the interview with George Phillis, who in addition to being an active SF/fantasy author, and the current president of the N3F, has also had a very active life.

I wish the interviewers had asked more about his involvement with the world of strategy war gaming. For example, the interview mentions that he has the world's largest collection of war games, but nobody bothered to ask him how that particular event came about, or how many years it took. Six thousand games is a hell of a lot of material. I wonder how many strategy board games have been published since the mid-1970s? It seems likely that George has copies of the overwhelming majority of the ones that were commercially released, but maybe not. Another question I would have asked.

I'm sure he hasn't played all those games, but aside from the mention of Stalingrad, about which he has written several strategy booklets, somebody might have at least asked what were his favorite war games. For that matter, how about asking which ones he thought were just putrid and really, really badly constructed (I can think of a bunch that fall into that category myself). Also, I wish someone had asked about his current interest/opinion of the new versions of popular role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons and Pathfinder.

I also get the impression (but again, nobody bothered to ask) that George has been actively involved in the gamer apa Alarums and Excursions, possibly almost from the beginning. More info about that would have certainly been interesting. Also why he felt it necessary to write those strategy books about Stalingrad (which I will admit I only tried to play a couple of times; my group gave up because the rules seemed overwhelming—although we may have been under the influence of certain malted beverages those Saturday nights—my memory is dim on the exact events). I was also curious about his involvement with the SF club at MIT, especially his comment that the club mainly considered themselves as just readers, not fans. My experience with the MITSFS was just the opposite. I came in contact with the group in the very early through mid 1960s, just before George was active there, and I recall they put out a pretty respectable fanzine on a regular basis. Many of the members had extensive correspondence with other fans. And that some of their members also contributed regularly to other fanzines, including my own.

Of course, the membership of a college SF club changes constantly as people



graduate and new members come on board, but again, I wish the subject had been explored a bit more in the interview, including, at least, the size of the club when he was the prez.

I am, of course, stunned and amazed at his grasp of branches of physics that are so complex that I don't even know what the hell they are. Maybe someone should have asked for a plain language explanation of what polymer solution dynamics actually is. How about surfactant micelles? Anybody got a clue? (Besides George, that is.)

Someone might also have mentioned that he has a wry/dry/unique sense of humor. I recall he gave a stirring speech during the 1992 presidential election in support of Cthulhu for President (why settle for the lesser evil?!) in which he expounded on the candidate's Thousand Points of Fright program and the candidate's pledge to settle all the haggling among the other major political parties about raising/lowering taxes with what the candidates had explained to George was the Survival Factor—namely, those who voted for/supported Cthulhu in his campaign would survive, while those who chose not to, well...

That speech was reprinted in several fanzines, and then resurrected and reprinted in even more zines four years later with the 1996 presidential race.

So far as his fiction goes, somebody might have asked why so many of his central protagonists seem to be young women. That seems unusual to me. Also if he intends to more closely interlink several of his Shining Sea stories together. Also why he seems to favor fantasy in his fiction writing rather than more traditional or hard science stf, especially considering his professional background teaching and doing research in the field of physics. There is probably a reason for that, but nobody asked much about his fiction.

I would also be curious to know about his writing habits. Some writers just sit down and everything comes out in a rush, taking however many hours/days/weeks it takes to get the tale written and polished. Others set a pace of a certain number of pages or words per day. Some writers outline every part of the plot, beginning to end, before they even start. What kind of schedule does he keep when writing fiction, or does he even bother?

I certainly echo his call for every member of the N3F to become more actively involved with the club. The N3F has a lot of bureaus and activities designed to appeal to a wide range of interests. But if the individual member does not bother to

make use of them s/he is wasting opportunities to increase their enjoyment of the hobby and interact with other people with the same shared interests.

Communication is what it's all about, and I think all the members of the N3F should look around and become more involved with the club. That's what we are here for, after all.

Here's a thought—how about I send a copy of this email to George Phillies as well as to you, and maybe he can add some more commentary and background info to the interview that you can use for an upcoming issue?

Otherwise, I enjoyed the interview with Rajnar Vajra, but I only know a couple of his Dr. Alien stories (which I did enjoy). The interview covered a lot of detail and makes me interested in seeking out more of his stories.

I was especially impressed by the letter from Gary Labowitz, which is both timely and insightful, and does offer lots of hope for the future of science fiction fandom and for the N3F in the new digital age. I disagree with some of his minor points, but the world is changing, as it always has, and fan clubs have to keep up with these changes if they are going to remain both fun and useful for the fan base as a whole.

Really great issue here John, a truly outstanding fanzine all round. My only complaint (a minor one) is that the front cover illo seems to be a bit out of focus. Maybe if you tried the tweak the time-viewer settings a little more next time you could correct that.

*Your LoC is a fine contribution to making this a still better issue than the last.*

*Due to difficulties with email communications we are not able to give interviews many goings-over and so there are few follow-up questions and the interviews do not proceed much into the matters that come up, and also those being interviewed are usually pretty busy. Questions, of course, may be asked about what appears in the interviews, as you are doing, and your idea of showing the letter in advance to George has perhaps solved your problems with the interview. I might add that I don't get much into games myself; I don't know about Jon. I've only played one wargame, D&D as I recall, played with some people at Purdue University, and my piece died the first move it made, but then the game was further explained and thereafter my man made out successfully. I'd run directly into a dragon and it was the wrong choice of moves, but then, being asked how my man would deal with it, I pointed out that he was by a woods and what he would do was fade into the woods when he saw the dragon and it would not follow him through the close-set trees. I also did*

*a space wargame on the net and was wiped out at once, but it turned out nobody else had followed the rules and I won by default. But that's the extent of my gaming knowledge, two games. The site, I think it was called Planet SF, went off the net shortly thereafter, possibly because, among other things, of how that wargame had gone...people in it wouldn't respect the person setting up the game and they had him overpowered. This apparently was not impressive to site moderators, etc.*

*I'd like to see one of George's strategy books about Stalingrad. I wonder where they may be obtained?*

*It seems to me that one of the fanzines I used to receive, **Sigma Octantis**, came from MIT. They had a really good zine.*

*Cthulhu for President has still been going pretty strong. It was a bit weaker in the Trump election, though.*

*Here's George Phillies' reply:*

GEORGE PHILLIES: Bob asks some interesting questions. I could go on about them at great length. Since the first board wargames were published in the 1950s, there have likely been seven or eight thousand board wargames published. I own, at a guess, more than three fourths of them. More important, I own most of the board wargaming magazines that have ever been published. These will eventually end up with the Strong Museum in Rochester. My favorite board wargame is Stalingrad. The two books I wrote on its play are books three and four of my five book series on board game design. They were necessary to introduce computer game designers, some of whom know less than they think about designing games, to hex and counter board wargames, as a prequel to my book on Design of Board Wargames.

There have been three or four gaming apas, notably the Wild Hunt and Alarums and Excursions. I contributed to all of them, at least close to their beginnings. In particular I originated the idea of using gaming apas to publish game-related fiction.

MITSFS did indeed publish a fanzine, Twilight Zine. However, the club slogan was "we're not fans, we just read the stuff". The SF zine was a side venture. The serious effort was the library, which now houses *ca.* 90% of all English Language SF works ever published. The folks who wanted, *e.g.* to run a Boston area game convention, went off and formed the New England Science Fiction Association and are very effective at what they do. If there were members in touch with other fen as correspondents, they did not broadcast this fact. When your club has four hundred members it is hard to keep track of what they are all doing. Surfactant micelles are

tiny soap bubbles, with liquid (perhaps more soap) rather than air inside. Micelles are why soap in water dissolves oil and grease; the oil and grease hide inside the micelle.

I'm amazed that anyone recalls my Lovecraft tribute, the Cthulhu for President speech, including the albino vulture releases. I was mostly not aware that anyone had reprinted it.

Fiction? Characters.

Let's see, the lead characters in *Minutegirls* are Sandra, who is in her late 20s, her much older hoped-for paramour, and then State Senator Alphonse Humbert Meyer, the four older guys and one gal who are the eminence grises of the American Stellar Republic and have been so for a century and a half, Grand Commodore Kalinin (older), and Fleet High Admiral Bernard Rohan, with a considerable supporting cast (it's a political-military novel, after all).

The lead characters in *The One World* are Evaine-sa-Orowan (female, late 20s), Tomas-sur-Maserin (male, late 30s) and his illicit paramour Roxanne-sa-Anglewood (same age), with a considerable supporting cast (it's a political-military novel, after all).

The lead character of *Against Three Lands* is Angus Valentine MacDonald (male, late 20s) with a considerable supporting cast (it's a political-military novel, after all).

The lead character in *Mistress of the Waves* is Amanda Kirasdotr. It's an economic-legal novel. She moves from 13 to 20 or so after the course of the tale.

The Lead character in *Eclipse*, prequel to the to-be-rewritten *This Shining Sea*, is *Eclipse*, who is female and 12. She's obliged to be a bit younger than she was in *This Shining Sea*, because *Eclipse* is the prequel novel. Her foil is Jessamine Trishaset Wells, who is most of a year older than she is.

The lead characters in *This Shining Sea* were *Eclipse*, Trisha, twins Janie and Brian (a bit younger than *Eclipse*), and Cloud (Trisha's age, but he will disappear in the rewrite).

*Eclipse* and *This Shining Sea* did have a literary propaganda intent of a very mild sort, namely to break the trope that stories written for a particular age group had to have characters more or less the age of that group, so that *Eclipse* being 12 according to the trope meant that the tale was being written for twelve-year-olds. Those novels are written for adults.

Bob has mentioned having a preference for lead characters who are somewhat older than *Eclipse*, and male. I suppose I am writing for a different audience, though I

much appreciated Bob's fine review of *Against Three Lands*.

*The ladies' names are reminiscent, to me, of Trance in ANDROMEDA. (One of the people at the Syfy site kept trying to change her name to Trace and get it programmed.) You seem to me to do some really far-out fiction. I think it's liberal of you and makes for more interesting reading to have all those female characters.*

GARY LABOWITZ: Thank you for the zine and the kind comments. Oh dear, I do see now, rereading it, that it does sound "dire". (A nice word you used there, by the way, and one not seen much today except for reading Lovecraft or the *faux* Lovecraft of, say, Darrell Schweitzer in his book.) I'm surprised at your comment of it being almost zen-like. I practiced Zen for a while, and I still have a growing internal feeling that everything is a huge physical nonsense and doesn't really mean anything other than the interactions of the moment on a very local level.

Forward!

I had accumulated a collection of tapes issued by the Metropolitan Opera Guild back in my high school and early working days. I struggled to pinch together the cost of each issue (about one every month or two) until I had the entire 52-tape set. It came with a wonderful booklet on each opera. There are twenty-six or twenty-seven operas represented, each with recordings of arias of one opera which covers the entire storyline, and some with multiple recordings of select arias. Each recording is by a different artist who "sang at the Met" and they date from about 1903 until 1957 or so. I couldn't afford the CDs on which they were also offered.

So what? I wanted at the time to get CDs, and now I have cassette tapes. Of course, now they would all fit on a few high density CDs and have a disc or two with the booklets' material on them. That's what! And what good are these tapes I have? Well, I have listened to them all many times, and I am opera fan enough to still go to the Philadelphia Opera to see and hear the "old" stuff. I hate how they "update" them to be relevant. (My wife and I saw a "Don Giovanni" that was set in the subways of Chicago, I think it was). Just awful!!

So fandom marches on, like the cavalcade of people stuck in Oz stories, Sherlock Holmes, and Victorian drama.

I can't tell if I'm lucky that I didn't get hooked in all of the new stf that is being produced. I might like it and spend all my "free" time reading and accumulating it instead of doing my lettering (talk about retro...), and waking to horrible dreams about my old jobs and people I once knew who are all gone but for memories.

I better stop now before I get all dire again.

[Further aside: I can now sell my lettering work in the form of a PDF which the customers print out for themselves and frame. This is a huge change from my early days (50 years or so ago) when I had to get things framed for them and deliver a physical but original work. Can you picture Leonardo da Vinci sending a PDF of the Mona Lisa for a few lira to dozens of fans? Wow. All he would need is a good digital camera, a computer, and the Internet. He was too early!]

[Too bad Ike isn't around any more. He'd have that in a story in no time.]

*Sounds like "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" may have been your thing. A lot of what you describe seems like a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, following its progress the way numerous tradespeople have always done. Mayhap that begets a side interest in science fiction.*





**Fin de sieckle**

(there'll be trouble about these extra blank pages)