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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 05/17/91 -- Vol. 9, No. 46

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.  
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158. MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

\_ D \_ A \_ T \_ E                      \_ T \_ O \_ P \_ I \_ C

- 06/05 LZ: UBIK by Phillip K. Dick (Death and Hell)
- 06/26 LZ: ALTERNATE WORLDS by Robert Adams ("What If Things Were Different?")

\_ M \_ E \_ E \_ T \_ I \_ N \_ G \_ S / \_ C \_ O \_ N \_ V \_ E \_ N \_ T \_ I \_ O \_ N \_ S / \_ E \_ T \_ C .

- 05/18 NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA  
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)
- 06/08 SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA  
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt  
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt  
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leeper  
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3B-301 949-4488 hotsc!tps  
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 mtunq!lfl  
MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzy!leeper  
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
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1. I see now on television that there really is some guy out there who suggests the way to bring your life together is to teach yourself to walk on hot coals. I guess the idea is that it is very self-affirming to do something crazy. I think we all know the principle that if you think you can do something, you can. If you think, for example, that you can find two even numbers that total to an odd one, then you can. The only thing that prevents your finding two such numbers is that you just don't have the confidence to go looking for them seriously. Now, I have no doubt that

confidence helps in many situations, but I wonder just in how many situations does the knowledge that you can do something like walking on hot coals do much for you.

I cannot vouch for the authenticity of this story, but I have been told that a certain major corporation has a confidence-building

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program. On a regular basis, they send people out and have them do things that are nutty and dangerous just so the company can rearrange their minds on subjects like teamwork and what the individual can do. Now, I don't know about you, but I am kind of fond of my mind. I mean, it and I grew up together. I guess it has information storage and information processing facilities and I am fond of both. I am willing to let my company add to the information storage part. The only resistance I put up is that portion's natural resistance to going beyond its capacity, and if I could increase that capacity I would. But the processing section--that one is mine. Nobody pays me enough to let them go fooling around in there. Certainly not to improve the company's profits.

Anyway, so the story goes, to instill confidence in some of its engineers, a leading company was having them trained by a fire-walker to walk on coals. If you believe you can walk on coals, you can. If you believe you can get a job done, you can. That was the lesson. One of the engineer asked if the fire-walker would still believe if there were some coins thrown on the coals--perfectly ordinary room-temperature coins. It does not matter, he was told; what matters is the belief. So the engineer tossed the coins. Well, the fire-walker believed he could walk on the coals, so he did. He believed he could walk on the coins, so he did. But then he decided he was willing to take a second opinion from his feet, which told him walking on hot coins was not the same thing as walking on hot coals. Nasty burn! He turned around and sued the company. Here this guy was an expert on fire-walking and didn't even know why it worked. Coals get hot without conducting heat. You can stick your arm in a hot oven without burning it; you can walk on coals if you walk fast. But coins are a good conductor. Perhaps faith can move mountains, but physics can move galaxies. And does.

So what's the point? Ah, you figure it out. But while you're figuring, don't do anything really stupid to impress yourself that you can do it.

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzy!leeper

Man is a Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion--several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat is his theology isn't straight.  
-- Mark Twain

THE UNTELEPORTED MAN by Philip K. Dick  
Book reviews by Frank R. Leisti  
Copyright 1991 Frank R. Leisti

Information. In any society which controls information, it is always the ones with knowledge that has the advantage over all the others. Whether it is from having advance knowledge of a company's financial records, or someone's legal and illegal activities, or in the form of patents or proprietary information, the ones with the knowledge can use it against others who do not. The classic example is the con artist experienced with the shell game. When the marker is palmed, the marks loose their money hand over fist.

In the story of T h e U n t e l e p o r t e d M a n, Philip K. Dick brings us a society in the near future, where the large companies hold the information and the power. In this near time, mankind has created a device to teleport people to a distant world, about eighteen light years away. The only unfortunate thing is that it is a one-way trip. The company has stated that one can not teleport back from that planet. Of course, with this mode of transportation, the company that had banked on

ferrying hundreds of colonists via deep sleep ships moving near the speed of light went bankrupt, and the owner died leaving his son facing all of his debts.

Rachmael ben Applebaum, the sole heir to the debts of his father, discovers a terrifying secret that the broadcasts from the planet of the colonists are false. He also considers that there must be some people on that planet who want to get back to Earth, so he wants to take his father's last and fastest ship out 18 years to the Formalhaut system to bring back people for a fee. Yet, the company who owns the Telpor system is doing everything that they can to prevent him from going. What dark secret is this company hiding? Can a company which fulfills a basic need for mankind become more powerful than governments. What is the price for information? For Rachmael, it is the planning of an 18 year journey without the benefit of deep sleep devices to make his time of passing easier. What price do we pay for not having the information of others?

While the story is fairly simple and predictable, the underlying society values and the aspect of information control and distribution is quite fascinating and rather scary, when we begin to realize how much information is controlled by people we do not know. How much of your own information is passed on to others for their advantage against you? For the story itself, I would rate it only at -0 on the Leeper scale, however, unless you have read this story as well, I have the information about the story and you don't unless you are willing to read  \_ T\_ h\_ e  
 \_ U\_ n\_ t\_ e\_ l\_ e\_ p\_ o\_ r\_ t\_ e\_ d\_ M\_ a\_ n by Philip K. Dick.

SON OF THE TREE by Jack Vance  
Book reviews by Frank R. Leisti  
Copyright 1991 Frank R. Leisti

Political intrigue between three planets and their civilizations forms the basis of this book by Jack Vance. Of course, what would be the story without the standard foil of a human who happens to get involved in the middle of this enterprise? Joe Smith of Earth is hop-

scotching through the universe in an effort to find his rival to the affections of a woman left back in Earth's solar system.

Joe first meets the Druids of the planet Kyril, who have a huge population of serfs with a small religious order ruling them. For the Druids, the Tree of Life is all-important and much of the work is done on the planet to support this magnificent tree, a trunk five miles in diameter, and twelve miles from the great kneed roots to the ultimate bud. This tree is the focal point of the five billion Laity and the two million Druids. When Joe is thrown into the political arena on this world, the Druids learn what an Earthman is capable of.

The problem for the Druids and Laity on Kyril is that they need to increase production for their growing population of Druids, yet are concerned that if industrialization or education occurs on their planet, then the Laity will not want to be serfs to the Druids. So, a neighboring planet, Mangtse, which is populated by the Mangs provides the services and products that the Druids needs and wants. Of course, the Druids feel that the Mangs are spying on their lifestyle and they do not want to become completely dependent upon them, and so the Druids have turned to another planet, Ballenkarch, which is currently in the middle of civil war where petty princes attempt to become king.

So Joe on his quest becomes the center pivot point of a plot to either extend or deny Druid rule to the Ballenkarch planet. The space journey allows the political intrigue to extend to deaths between the Mangs and the Druids. The final journey before the newly emerging king of Ballenkarch is enlightening in both Joe's journey and the journey of the Tree of Life.

While this story was written some time ago, in 1951, the idea about the Tree of Life is quite interesting. Also the religion based on the growth and care of the tree is impressive. Whether dealing with human or non-human characters, the focused and close-mindedness of these characters shows the limitations and restrictions of a society in which religious dogma rules. Even when the events are not explained in detail, the singlemindedness of the religious order to their Tree of Life is well exposed when confronted with outsiders of the religion.

While it is somewhat entertaining, I can only give this novel a +0 on the Leeper scale of -4 to +4.