

A

GERULEAN

SKY

Time once again for an Occasional Paper, this one ~~1/4~~ in the series, and entitled A. CERULEAN SKY. This issues forth from the Pentel rolling marker of Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave.S.W., Seattle, WA 98166 and is written especially for my friends and available to other interested bystanders for a thin quarter (inflation, you know.) This issue is especially dedicated to Roy Squires, who should have known better.

The title this time comes from the fact that a recent article on writing which I read indicated that language such as "a cerulean sky" was not likely to sell. I had been saving that phrase for my big novel and was momentarily downcast at this news. I'd never be able to use it. "Aha!," I exclaimed. "A perfect title for an Occasional Paper and the phrase shall not be wasted." So be it.

FEBRUARY 19

Boy, the Dentons are really on a hiking kick. It got started with the little book of Winter Walks that I told you about last time. We did not feel that we were stealing as much time this weekend because it was the President's Holiday weekend and we felt that we still had Monday to catch up on things like Anna Jo's report cards and some stuff that I wanted to get done, like planting a clematis, ripping out a rose bush which has, over the last 10 years, become absolutely unbearable. Brutish thing with no manners whatsoever. Reaches out and grabs you by the arm when you haven't even invited it into the conversation. Other chores need to be done also by working people when weekends come around. But there has to be time for play as well.

I shouldn't even call these hikes, because they are nothing more

than pleasant country walks. Just right for a couple of old timers like we are getting to be. So yesterday we decided to go on another one. The strange thing was that my son, Sean, his girl, and some other friends of his decided that they would like to go also. So we set out in two cars armed with thermoses of coffee and mocha (coffee and hot chocolate in equal parts), some Delicious apples (that's a famous Washington brand of apple) and other goodies.

The walk that we chose was one that was quite a ways away. We traveled about 50 miles to get there but the day was very pleasant for driving as well as for walking. It took us to a small town called Stanwood that sits on the edge of Skagit Bay. The walk itself ran along the edge of a levee called by the locals the Big Ditch. Fairly good walking on an almost flat path along the top of the levee.

The walk was as long as we wanted to make it. I guess, from what the book says, you can go for miles and miles along the levee. We walked for an hour and then turned back and retraced our steps. The day was absolutely beautiful. To the east we could see the top of Mt. Baker and all of Mt. Pilchuck. To the west we looked out across marsh land to Skagit Bay and more than once we wished that there were some way to get out to the edge of the land. We could see ducks and geese by the thousands out there. The area is a wildlife refuge and the waterfowl seem to know it, because they congregate there. We could see that there were huge flocks of white birds which we knew were snow geese, but we were unable to get any closer. They were probably a half mile away and even the binoculars couldn't pick out any individual birds. Occasionally something would disturb the flock and they would fly up briefly

gabbling and making one heck of a racket. Some of the boys remarked that when they were disturbed like that, and from the distance that we were away from them, it sounded like attacking Indians in a good old grade B western. Once the whole waterfront must have been disturbed and there must have been over a thousand birds in the air at once.

We kept a close watch out for other bird life closer to us, but we were a bit disappointed. A couple of scaup were fleeing ahead of us but sticking to the water in the ditch. We managed to see some red-winged blackbirds, a couple of marsh wrens, a few gulls that flew overhead and one eagle. But by and large there weren't too many birds in evidence close to us that we could watch with the glasses.

Cat-tails left over from last year and gone to seed provided some



YOU'RE ALMOST
RIPE, MY PRETTY.

WR

of the hilarity of the day. The boys decided that they would make good spears. It was fun to watch them make a direct hit and have the head of the cat-tail burst into a thousand cottony seeds. Occasionally one of the hurlers would miss, or the hurl-ee would dodge and reach out and grab the spear as it went by and then return it. It looked like a lot of fun, but not enough so that I wanted to become involved. Ah, youth. It sure was funny to watch these big hulky, 6-foot tall, 19-21 year olds playing like kids. Everyone enjoyed themselves immensely. Jessie, our collie, was along, as well as Gryff, a little, brown, non-descript dog belonging to one of the other fellows. They must have worn themselves out because poor Jess didn't do much today except lie around.

It was altogether a very nice way to spend a Sunday afternoon. We even had a small private plane do a

180 degrees turn and fly back over us and give us a waggle of his wings. I suspect that he was enjoying the day as much as we were, because the skies were clear and blue and the flying must have been very nice.

Last night we just sort of sat around exhausted, but managed to stir just enough in the late evening to make popcorn and split a beer between us. That's the first time we've done that in a couple of months. I have been watching my diet pretty well since the day of the triglycerides and let me tell you, the beer tasted ghod. Coors, of coors, Dale and Swampy.

MARCH 3

Well, I think that it's time to tell a story that doesn't come out all peaches and cream, or sweetness and light, as they sometimes say. The last issue and this one I've been talking a bit about going for

walks in the country and what a great time we have been having. Last Sunday, February 25th, we set off on another of our famous safaris as described in our little book of Winter Walks. The hike began at the bottom of a road that ran up into a watershed belonging to the Seattle Water Department. It was about an hour's drive out of town, near the little town of Carnation. Yep, that's where the Carnation farms produce some of their various products, like canned milk from canned cows, dog food, and Scottie dogs. Yes, they really do raise prize Scottish Terriers there, but I digress. (Isn't it fun?) The day looked a little threatening, but not so much as to deter us. The first two and a half miles ran along a dirt road that must be used exclusively by water department vehicles. Then the route cut off into the woods toward the focal point of the walk, an old mill pond called Swann's Mill Pond. We crossed a couple of small

streams and found ourselves on an old overgrown road that the log trucks must have used at one time. The pond itself was probably a half-mile long and still had a couple hundred logs floating in it. But it looked as if it hadn't been used for many years, possibly fifty or sixty, and many of the logs were water-soaked and only the bare surface was revealed above the waterline. The area surrounding the pond was typical rain forest, and that should have been a clue. Just about the time we arrived at the pond it began to sprinkle.

There were several choices at this point. We could retrace our steps, or we could continue around the pond, cut back a little further on to come by a beaver pond, or we could continue on towards another road which would ultimately bring us back to our car. We decided to try the beaver pond route, and continued on. The rain began to come down

pretty steadily at this point in time and it continued so for the rest of the walk.

Shortly thereafter we ran into some other people coming in from the opposite direction and discovered that there had been articles in the local papers a few weeks ago describing this area as typical rain forest. When people in this part of the country talk about rain forest, they usually mean the huge rain forest on the Olympic Peninsula. There the rainfall is usually about twice the average for other parts of Puget Sound region. It gives rise to lush foliage, lots of shaggy moss hanging from the trees, and huge stands of timber. The area in which we were walking was typically the same. I talked the next day to one of my staff who has a summer cabin on a lake near there. He said the area received between 70 and 80 inches of rain annually. A few hundred yards

further we discovered the automobile of the party we had just met and had the typical reaction of the hiker. We had assumed that they had walked in quite a ways and were dismayed for having given them so much credit. They shouldn't have been able to reach the area so easily when we had had to work for it. (Is that sour grapes? I suspect so.)

The rain continued and soon my glasses were ready for windshield wipers. Somehow in the pouring rain we managed to miss the proper trail which would have taken us to the beaver pond, so we were committed to follow the road back around. All in all we hiked about nine miles, the last five or so in the pouring rain. It was a tad more than was good for my gimpy right leg, which rebels when pushed too hard, and had sort of quietly gone numb somewhere back in there. So all was not sweetness and light. By the time we got back to



the car, the leg was hurting pretty badly, we were soaked to the skin, and hungry as bears.

Fortunately Anna Jo had had the presence of mind to bring a thermos of hot coffee, some raisins, some salted, roasted soy beans (gooder than peanuts) and some Camp Fire Girl mints. You can't imagine how good they all tasted. Unless, of course, you have found yourselves in the same situation.

Well, sitting down for a few moments restores whatever it is that makes my leg go dead, the heater helped quite a bit to make us more comfortable, if not completely dried out. And a hot soak in the tub does marvelous things to tired bodies. A good drink warmed up the insides once and for all, and the day ended well. I just thought that once in a while I should tell you a tale that shows that we are indeed mortal, and not

avored by the ghods. All did not go as well as we had anticipated, but sometimes it is good for one's soul to be treated badly, to come home with your tail dragging, and to feel just darned good and tired out. Now if every Sunday was like that, I guess we would soon find some other source of entertainment (like standing for a couple of hours on a wet sideline, wind blowing sixty, temperature at about 35 degrees, watching a soccer game. We've done that lots of times.)

Well, anyway, we sat this Sunday out. Three Sundays in a row and the last one not exactly a romp through sunlit meadows, prompted us to forego the pleasure. But maybe next Sunday we'll be back at it again, undaunted.

MARCH 5

Robert Silverberg never ceases to amaze me. I suppose I should be used to it by now, but just how pro-

lific can one man be? Today I received in the library mail an introduction to The Dolphin Book Club, which features books about sailing and the sea. Among other offerings were THE WORLD WITHIN THE OCEAN WAVE and THE WORLD WITHIN THE TIDE POOL, both by Silverbob. To quote from the squib, "Two first-rate introductory books which describe in uncomplicated terms the delicate balance of plant and animal life existing in the seas around us." Knowing Bob's abilities, I suspect that they are well done and probably fascinating works, if one has an interest in such topics.

MARCH 6

An American Family. Have you been watching it? What, you don't know about An American Family? I thought that everyone must know about it by now.

If you haven't heard about it, or only vaguely, bear with me for a

minute. This is the documentary filmed by Craig Miller and his crew from WNET, educational television. It was done with money from some sort of a grant. For something like seven months the crew filmed the family, the Louds, who live in Santa Barbara, California. They have never been purported to be a typical family. Five children, ranging in age from 13 to about 20 when the film was done a couple of years ago. What started out to be a one-hour special ended up being 12 one-hour segments. During that time three of the camera crew moved in with the Louds, in order to do a more complete job.

Anna Jo and I didn't see the first couple of episodes. When we had read a little bit about the show in the local paper's television column and had caught a couple of short articles in Time and Newsweek, we thought that we had better give it a try. We started with the third seg-

ment, and were immediately hooked. And scared to death at the same time. Over and over it has been pointed out that this family is not typical. The oldest son is gay; the father is the owner of a foundry specializing in heavy mining equipment parts and they are pretty well off. The mother travels quite a bit. In other words, this family is what I would describe as upper middle class.

I said that it was scary. There is enough there that happens in many families that it is easy to see some of the things happening in your own family. We have three children pretty well grown now. Shannon, our daughter, is finishing high school this year. But to watch some of the things happen, some of the discussions take place, some of the bad decisions, the battles lost, show that you are not alone. In a way it is reassuring to know that others make the same mistakes. In another way it makes



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We got the kids (two of whom still live at home) interested in the show and now they are watching it. We've had some interesting discussions about some of the happenings. Maybe we'll learn some things from it. We also watched the 1½ hour show when Dick Cavett had the entire family on and devoted the whole show to them and to the film's producer. The husband and wife, Bill and Pat, as we familiarly call them now, have since divorced. There was evidence that this might be on the way early in the series. The children corroborated this to Cavett, allaying any fears that it might have been brought about by the presence of the camera crew for such a long time.

Well, it's been a most interesting insight into the workings of a family, typical or not. Margaret

Head calls it the most important sociological documentary of the century. I don't know whether that is correct or not. I'm not qualified to say. But I would recommend it to anyone interested in human nature, and in the workings of the family.

MARCH 18

Today was a great day. I should say, rather, a fruitful day. I proved once more my invincibility over the machine. If you people knew me very well, you'd know that I'm not much in the way of a mechanic. But once in a while I get mad at being taken for my hard-earned money (which we all know is better spent on postage stamps to send fanzines) and I take my life and skinned knuckles into my own hands and do something about it. This morning I noticed that one of the cars, the faithful Barracuda, she of the 137,000 miles, was missing something fearful. I decided that it wouldn't hurt to put

a set of new plugs into it. It might not be the answer, but it was the first place I knew where to start. And I had my suspicions. It had been a good while since the plugs had been changed. Unfortunately, I did not have the proper tools to do the job. You don't save money, at least short range, by buying an expensive socket set. Long range, yes. Fortunately, Sean's friend came up with the socket set and I proceeded to take out one of the plugs to see what number it was. The book for that car is long gone. The fellow at the local auto store was able to provide the right plugs and the proper gap for me. I also needed a gapper, and they were fresh out. But he scurried around and found something else that would measure the gap properly. I had the plugs all in in about an hour's total work and felt quite proud of myself. I felt even better when I sat behind the wheel, turned the key and the engine turned right over and purred.

I went myself one better by immediately charging off to a discount auto store nearby where I picked up a case of oil. I figured out that I will save 31¢ for each and every quart of oil I have to add to the old Barracuda. The old girl does take a drop now and then, but I figure that it's only fair. I take a drop now and again myself. And I probably don't even have 137,000 on me. So I sit, feeling quite content with my efforts to subvert the spiraling inflationary trend. Ho, hum. I suppose if I had not been so successful at a rather simple task, I'd be telling you a different kind of story. As my sainted mother used to say, "You'd be crying out of the other side of your mouth."

Friday last I was invited by the Northwest Humanities Association to visit with one of their in-service workshops to discuss high school science fiction curriculums. The

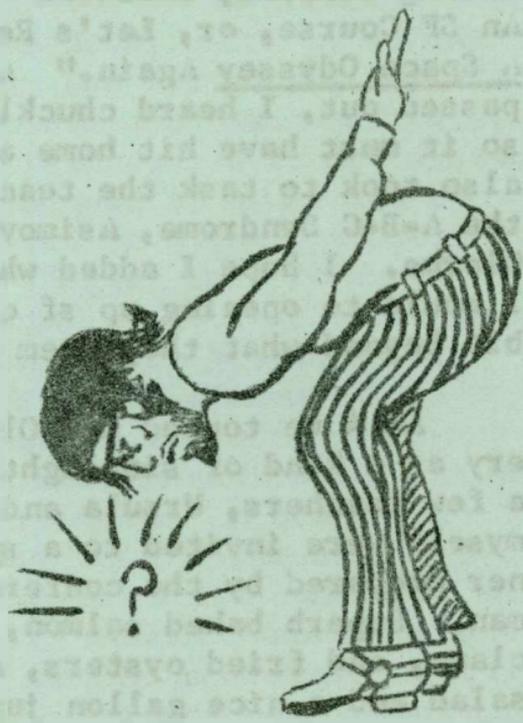
meeting took place at Evergreen State College near Olympia and was attended by high school science fiction teachers, some high school and college students, and a few guests. I'll leave all the details for my column in Ash-Wing. But the guests included Ursula LeGuin and Vonda NicIntyre, authors and self as a sort of fannish influence. A good time was had by all, I gathered from the discussion which never flagged once from the time we started at 10 in the morning until we finished up just a little bit before 4 in the afternoon. A panel started the day off, with brief introductions and then a lot of open discussion. An Evergreen professor who leads a Futures program filled us in on its content. We then broke for lunch. Immediately after lunch Ursula gave forth with her comments, and again questions from a lively group. Finally we split into two groups to discuss what might make good novels or short

stories to use with a high school class. I had prepared a three-page paper, mainly disjointed, but rather strong remarks, entitled "How To Kill An SF Course, or, Let's Read 2001: A Space Odyssey Again." As it was passed out, I heard chuckles abound so it must have hit home a bit. I also took to task the teacher with the A-B-C Syndrome, Asimov-Bradbury-Clarke. I hope I added what little I could to opening up sf courses a bit beyond what they seem to be.

At 4 we toured the Olympia brewery as a kind of sidelight, and then a few teachers, Ursula and Vonda and myself were invited to a special dinner prepared by the conference chairman. Superb baked salmon, steamer clams, and fried oysters, a green salad and a nice gallon jug of wine. We just had a nice time talking for a couple of hours. Ursula is such a fine conversationalist and we talked about theater, opera, California,

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and a myriad of other subjects. She had to leave about 7:30, as she and her family were heading for California over spring break on the following morning. I drove Vonda back to the campus to pick up her car and then home. It was a very nice day. Vonda, by the way, has a story in Orbit 11 which is just out in paperback. You might pick it up. Orbit always seems to be a good collection.

MARCH 22

I'm finally getting around to reading the second of the two latest Moorcock books concerning Elric. Yes, you don't have to tell me that they are not very good or rub in any of the business about sword-and-sorcery fans. There is something fascinating about Michael Moorcock's ability to create and interlink all of these stories about Law and Chaos. The Elric stories, Dorian Hawkmoon and the Runestaff series, The Knight, Queen, King of Swords, the Eternal

Champion utterly delight me. Had I the time I think it would be fun to compile a glossary of all the proper names which appear in these stories. I'm sure that there is more inter-linking than I am aware of. The books seem to sell so, Indeed, there must be a market for them. Quite truthfully, I found much finer writing by Moorcock in an anthology of short stories that I picked up in England. It was entitled THE TIME DWELLER AND OTHER STORIES. There he captured the feeling that seemed to be much more akin to J.G. Ballard, but with greater characterization. I'm a fair number of books away from having read all of Moorcock's stuff, but I find myself going for one of them about twice a year to savor the strangeness of his demons, their spells and the weird geography of place and plane in which Elric and Dorian and the others move. And to try to cope with his weird concept of time. So be it, Michael. More!

MARCH 23

Stan Kenton is coming to town. With his fabulous orchestra, of course. Or is it still? I began to wonder about this when I read the announcement. You see, I've been away from Kenton's music for a long time and for some reason there is this nagging fear that it won't be quite the same. You have to go back almost twenty-five years to the time when I first heard Stan Kenton's orchestra. I got really excited at things like Artistry In Rhythm, Artistry In Bolero, and Peanut Vendor.

Later there was the Bob Graettinger composition, City Of Glass, with the huge orchestra, with a string section (unheard of). This piece, was so advanced that only one of the three or four movements was played during the concert.

Where is the Stan Kenton band today? Who sits in the chairs once

occupied by Eddie Safranski, Pete Rugolo, Vido Musso? Would it be the same? Or are the fellows playing in the current aggregation even better? What is the music like? Has rock influenced Kenton at all or has he made his own inimitable track through the forest.

For that matter, have I changed? Will I go to the concert and find out? I can't really tell you at this point. I vacillate. Yes, indeed. Thomas Wolfe said, "you can't go home again." Should I believe him?

ST. PADDY'S DAY

Yes, I know it's out of order as far as the dates go. But handwritten as it was, it got lost for a while. Somehow I didn't feel very Irish this year. Do you suppose that it had something to do with going to the tax consultant and putting myself, my family and my receipts in his hands. Well, I expect that things

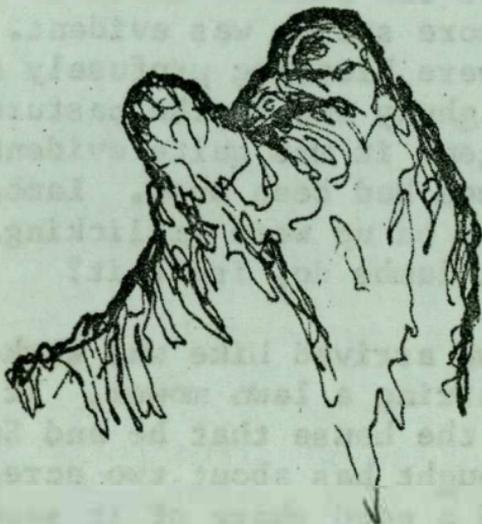
will be a lot better this year than last. That's because we had a lot more deducted this year. And throw in some writing expenses as well, even though I haven't sold a thing, they are still deductible. So I hope that St. Patrick smiles on me when the consultant gets finished and the magic computer in Denver or Salt Lake or wherever it is takes a good scan of the return. I wouldn't mind it if a dollar or two of my hard-earned coin came back, since our fearless and almighty leader has determined not to fund all those neat programs like college libraries. *grump, grump*

So, I hope that it was a fine day for all of you Irish out there, and that the rest of Swensons, Olsons, Schmidts and Mantuccios went along with it by sticking an O' in front of your name. Especially to George O'Wells and Ed O'Cagle, I raised the glass.

APRIL 3

It seems as if I am constantly on a fannish trek these days. Let's see if I can catch you up on all of the disjointed stories of my travels before I run out of the next few pages.

Two weekends ago I drove down to Portland to visit Larry and Judy Paschelke. Larry is a collector type. As a matter of fact, he is the guy who is responsible for getting me hooked on collecting. I have only him to blame. He also got me off to a great start by selling me about six boxes of duplicate stuff at a give-away price, as I recall. Anyway, Larry and I had made plans to get the gals to planting ground cover and other things at his new house on Mount Scott, while we charged on down the freeway to visit briefly Saturday afternoon with Mike and Susie Horvat. We stopped briefly in Beaverton to Pick up Richard Dix, another collect-



or of note. Richard has many lovely illustrated books, especially a collection of Arthur Rackhams that I am entirely envious of.

The trip down was lovely. Bright sunshine and the further south we went, the more spring was evident. Daffodils were blooming profusely along the highway and in the pastures around Tangent it was quite evident that the ewes had been busy. Lambs from day-old on up were frolicking. That's what lambs do, isn't it?

When we arrived Mike was working on repairing a lawn mower. It seems that the house that he and Susie just bought has about two acres of land and a good share of it seems to be in lawn. Iggy, their resident lamb, so far hasn't been able to keep up with it, but then he's just learned to eat grass recently.

The house, part of which was

built in 1850, has thirteen rooms and a lot of work. They are stripping the old wallpaper and have begun to do the walls over. There is more room than Carter has little liver pills. Room for books and books and books. Do you detect a little envy there. You're so right!

APRIL 19

Best I be moving along with this thing or I will be further off schedule than ever. Many things have been happening, and I have been too busy to get to this. The SAPS mailing took a little time as I always try to do at least 10 pages. The school year seems to be drawing toward its inevitable end and there are always things like budgets to work on. Two rather healthy meetings in which I am involved as an officer are nigh and they require more work than they are worth, but one has to take his turn at these sorts of things and this has been

my year to do so. A call from the State Office for Community College Education involved me in the writing of a proposal to the national Right To Read Foundation. 17 million people in the United States are functional illiterates; cannot read well enough to fill out simple forms for work, licenses, food stamps, welfare. A whole bunch of them are centered in Pierce and King Counties, population centers on Puget Sound. Our demographic studies say that there are almost 100,000 of these people in the Seattle-Tacoma area. So hopefully we can get something started. Not much, because there isn't much money available, but something. Can you imagine that many people who are unable to read science fiction? Astounding! Anyway you can see that I have not just been frittering away my time. Of course, if I would stay home a bit, I would have time to write this. On the other hand, if I didn't go somewhere I wouldn't

have all that much to write about.

I just bought Tom Pynchon's latest novel, GRAVITY'S RAINBOW. I don't know if you know his earlier works, V. and THE CRYING OF LOT 49. Weird and wonderful stuff. Friends of mine knew him when he lived in Seattle and was working on V. Time Magazine goes mad trying to track him down. He won't interview and there are no pictures of him anywhere. Amazing. The new book is a monster, 760 pages. So big that it was not done in hardcover. The paperback alone is \$4.95. I can see their point in not doing a hardcover.

Art this time: Cover and center by ye olde ed; p.7 by Bill Rotsler, p.14 by Jim McLeod, p.28 by Loren MacGregor and p.35 by Jim McLeod.

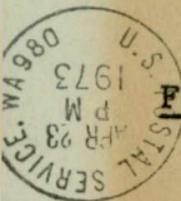
WAS THE EASTER BUNNY GOOD TO YOU?

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