

SPARTACUS No. 34

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We've lived in the past for much of 2019 ... 50 years in the past.

Not surprising. **1969** was one of the richest, greatest, most terrible of years we Boomers have lived. The first moon landing (actually, the first two); Woodstock; the Jets' Super Bowl; the Mets' World Series; St. Louiscon; People's Park; *Midnight Cowboy* ... *Z ... Easy Rider*. We saw the sickening crimes of the Manson Gang, the hatefulness of Vietnam and the terror of Hurricane Camille. A generation later, something calls us to see and feel those moments again, through *Apollo 11* and *First Man*, *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood*, Hurricane Dorian – and the death this summer of Peter Fonda, producer and star and visionary, with my old pal (I met him twice) Dennis Hopper, of the signature movie of our time. (79 years old. Do you believe it?)

What was it about 1969? We came into it bedraggled and beaten from a year in which assassinations ruled, optimistic, progressive liberalism failed, and the country schismed even worse than before. At its end we saw men orbit the moon, but our generation largely lumped that resplendent achievement in with the reprehensible war and many felt no part in it. Bitterness and cynicism reigned as '69 – met with smirks by the *Playboy* culture – came in.

We couldn't have been more divided. People were being beaten for the length of their hair. The bloodshed of the '68 Chicago Democratic Convention found an echo in the People's Park war – which saw 35 people shotgunned on the streets of Berkeley (one man died), crimes for which no cops were convicted.

This year, I marked 50 years since St. Louiscon, my first SF convention, At the con



I met Ray Lafferty – my boy! – and Fritz Leiber and a billion others of our crowd. Sour house detectives prowled, certain younger fans were nothing but draft-dodging hippies. I survived People’s Park, parts of my personal journey in 1969. The most important part? Let’s just say that Camille and being tear-gassed and everything else taught me a very valuable lesson. *Live* in this world, stud, because you will for sure *die* in it.

In short and in sum, our country took a surge in 1969, technologically, morally, and I followed suit. It was the first year of a tentative manhood I am still trying to master. But it let me know I was part of life and worthy of it; that like Wyatt and Billy I could take off across the frontier and check out this world, come what dangers may. I was part of it. I had courage.

Oh, one other thing. In the summer of 1969 I joined NOSFA, the New Orleans Science Fiction Association, and committed, like the crime it was, *Alack*, my very first fanzine. This is my 1,262nd. More than one part of 1969 definitely took hold.



Rosy & I want to thank those in the SF community who inquired after us when Hurricane Dorian roared up the Florida coast, though of course all our sympathies should be reserved for the Bahamas and the flooded parts of North and South Carolina. Those of you who knew about the family emergency just before the storm – our yorkie Pepper developed a wicked bladder stone (so massive Michelangelo could have sculpted *David* from it). It blocked Peps’ pee and came *very* close to killing him – will be happy to know that the old boy is fine now. Nominal blood work, normal appetite, plenty of energy. True, his girlfriend and fellow parent of three litters, Ginger, runs circles around him, but ain’t that the way of the world?

Though I spend far less time than I used to glued to the tube, I still watch *interesting TV*: *The Spy*, Sacha Baron Cohen’s straight and very effective story of an Israeli agent in Syria in the 1960s, and the surprisingly funny *Righteous Gemstones*, about a millionaire family of professional evangelicals, are two standouts. I’m pleased that though the Gemstones are borderline ridiculous, the holy joes are not depicted as overt hypocrites and crooks.

Toni Collette and Merritt Wever star in a terrific police procedural, *Unbelievable*, on Netflix, a true story about two policewomen in pursuit of a clever serial rapist. This show is as real as the weather – more real, if you believe Trump – an accurate depiction of the plodding, methodical, undramatic form of a true criminal investigation, and of the psychological horror that survives the physical crime. I’ve defended three men accused of violent rape, and known several vics, in court and out: this excellent, excellent show rings terrifyingly true. Kaitlyn Dever deserves an Emmy for her portrayal of a confused, conflicted victim.

At long last debuted the second season of *Mindhunter*, about the early days of the FBI Behavioral unit, is as rewarding and chilling as the first. Just as then, the show is stolen – I’d even say *eaten* – by the actors portraying the killers the Fibbies interview: Ed Kemper, David Berkowitz, Tex Watson, Elmer Wayne Henley and other stalwarts. They’re each bloodchilling and convincing. Charles Manson (see *infra*) is played by the same guy as in *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood*, and very well, too. (He comes across as just as affected and phony as the real Charlie, as described by my old acquaintance Leslie van Houten.) This season concentrates on the Atlanta child killings and Wayne Williams, another fascinating monster-next-door. In the wings for season 3, BTK. The parade of deformed souls is broken by a powerful personal story of one of the FBI profilers. I recommend *Mindhunter* strongly ... if you can stand the company of demons.

Almost all of these shows appear on Netflix; network TV is generally a trash heap.

I've done a bit of **reading**: the Hugo winner, *The Calculating Stars*, which I mentioned last time. I satisfied my thirst for literature with Flannery O'Connor's spooky and funny *Wise Blood*, urged upon those who like to think about what they read. I moved on to a crime novel with aspirations to art, *A Small Death in Lisbon*, well worth the time and about 95% successful. Finding a new T. Jefferson Parker, I interrupted *Lisbon* for *The Last Good Guy*, very reminiscent in moments of Chandler and Hammett; I miss Parker's novels about the cartels but these lighter mysteries have great appeal. Turning away from crime to horror, I've interrupted Ramsey Campbell's *The Darkest Part of the Woods* to start the new Stephen King, *The Institute*, effortless and enjoyable reading as always. Awaiting: David Mitchell's World Fantasy Award winner, *The Bone Clocks*.

Among recent **movies** viewed is the horror/thriller/comedy *Ready or Not*, reminiscent of *Get Out* and *Carrie* and *The Most Dangerous Game* and surprisingly funny. Very much enjoyed it. Also good is the unfunny horror thriller *Crawl*, in which a young woman tries to rescue her father from a basement *crawlspace crawling* with huge alligators – during a hurricane. The title contains a stupid double pun, as you see, and the dog survives. In fact, he's the hero.

And I saw *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood*. Follows a review by my friend and SFPA brother, Tom Feller, and then, my thoughts.

Tom: *Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood*

I suppose like all Americans who have been following the news since 1969, I know something about Charles Manson and the Tate/LaBianca murders. I even read *Helter Skelter* by Vincent Bugliosi, who successfully prosecuted Manson and three of his followers, and *Child of Satan, Child of God*, the autobiography of Susan Atkins, one of those followers. Even our very own Guy Lillian has written extensively about the subject. Every few years, there is a new book, TV show, or movie about them. The latest is writer/director Quentin Tarantino's alternate history version. He was born in 1963 and grew up in southern California hearing about Manson.

To my surprise, Charles Manson himself (Damian Herriman) only appears in one scene for about 30 seconds. Tex Watson (Austin Butler), Patricia Krenwinkel (Madisen Beaty), and Susan Atkins (Mikey Madison) actually get more screen time. They were the members of the Manson family who physically murdered Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie) and her house guests, Abigail Folger (Samantha Robinson), heiress to the Folger coffee fortune, Jay Sebring (Emile Hirsch), a hair stylist and Tate's former boyfriend, and screenwriter Wojciech Frykowski (Costa Ronin). Linda Kasabian (Maya Hawke), the lookout in the historical account, is shown in Tarantino's version as chickening out and driving off in their car. Eighteen year old Steven Parent, who had the bad luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, does not appear in this film, nor do Gary Hinman, with whom Manson had a dispute over money, or Leo and Rosemary LaBianca, whose only crime was that Manson noticed their house.

The two main characters in Tarantino's film are fictional: television star Rick Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stunt double and best friend Cliff Booth (Brad Pitt). Their relationship resembles the one between Burt Reynolds and Hal Needham, although the latter pair were far more successful. Reynolds became a movie superstar, of course, and Needham the director of films like *Smokey and the Bandit*, which starred Reynolds. Dalton is the former star of a western TV show called *Bounty Law*, which is based on *Wanted: Dead or Alive* and starred Steve McQueen. McQueen (Damian Lewis) is a character in the film in one scene in which Roman Polanski (Rafal

Zawierucha) and Tate visit the Playboy mansion for a party. Dalton's career has stalled since he left his TV show to try to become a movie star and has been reduced to guest-starring roles on other TV shows such as *Mannix*, *The F.B.I.*, and *Lancer*. An agent, Marvin Schwarzs (Al Pacino), persuades him to travel to Italy and star in spaghetti westerns like Clint Eastwood (*Rawhide*), Edd Byrnes (*77 Sunset Strip*), and Ty Hardin (*Bronco*). The latter two had career arcs similar to Dalton's in that they were TV stars whose careers declined after their shows were cancelled. Only Eastwood became a bigger star after making his three spaghetti westerns (*For a Few Dollars More*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*). They were all directed by Sergio Leone, and this film's title is derived from Leone's later films *Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Once Upon a Time in America*.

Booth has essentially been blacklisted as a stunt man. First, many people in the film industry believe he murdered his wife. The film includes an ambiguous flashback showing that event. Second, there was an incident on the set of *The Green Hornet* in which Booth beat up Bruce Lee (Mike Moh). He now works for Dalton as his driver (Dalton has lost his license because of several DUI convictions), gofer, and overall man Friday. Dalton lives on Cielo Drive in the house next door to Polanski's and Tate's, but Booth lives in a trailer next to a drive-in movie theater. While Dalton is working on the pilot episode of *Lancer*, Booth picks up a hitchhiker who calls herself "Pussycat" (Margaret Qualley). She is a member of the Manson family, and the character is supposed to be a composite of several of the women. (Reportedly Dennis Wilson on the Beach Boys once picked up Patricia Krenwinkel while she was hitchhiking.) Booth drives her to the Spahn Movie Ranch, formerly used for the exteriors of movie and TV westerns such as *Bonanza*. By 1969, it had become the base of the Manson family. Manson himself is absent on this day. Booth talks his way past Squeaky Fromme (Dakota Fanning), later notorious in her own right for attempting to assassinate President Gerald Ford, to visit with the owner, George Spahn (Bruce Dern), before beating up Clem Grogan (James Landry Herbert) for slashing one of his tires.

All this takes place on February 8 and 9, and then the film fast forwards with narration by Kurt Russell to August 8, the day of the Tate murders. The film is very funny and entertaining, although the first part is much better than the second, and all the period details, especially the music, seemed correct to me. It is quite violent, like all of Tarantino's films.

Guy: *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood* is a hymn to director Quentin Tarantino's kidhood through the media of the era, a time of cowboys, cigarettes and innocence, a wish that that time had been allowed to live on, that chaos and depravity and, alas, the ugly truth had been crushed before it had changed the world ... a hymn for what could have been. The shallowness of the time he admits, but sees as harmless ... even lovable. Margot Robbie's Sharon Tate is a model of bright-eyed go-go-booted California sexiness and innocence. The brief moment when Charles Manson sets eyes on her – which really happened – is not only horrifying, it's *disgustingly* horrifying. We spend the film cringing at the foreknowledge of terror and obscenity awaiting Sharon down the line.

Of course, Quentin Tarantino has other ideas. Shortly before the film's climax, I recalled the fate of Hitler and Goebbels in his *Inglorious Basterds* and wondered whether he had such a trick in store here.

Well, what we have is what we have, and *Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood* is unique, funny, incisive – I found it effective and occasionally brilliant. The movie is not particularly fair

to Bruce Lee, possibly (his daughter says not), but most real-life characters are righteously well-presented. Robbie deserves an Oscar. The guy playing Steve McQueen looks nothing like the star of *Wanted: Dead or Alive* – but I believed it was him.

Though he overwhelms his co-star, Leonardo diCaprio, Brad Pitt is terrific, especially in his scene with Bruce Dern's pitiable George Spahn – and it does one's heart and spleen good to see him hand the moronic Clem Grogan his teeth after he slashes his tire. I do object to seeing other Mansonites portrayed as merely monsters. Tarantino never delves into the depths of their giddy anti-social reveries. The denouement, where the shrieking killers eat flame and the Tate massacre is avoided, is cheerable for what might have been, but there are *other things* that might have been. Suppose, for instance, life had given Patricia Krenwinkel someone sane and humane to hearken to instead of Charles Manson? That alternate reality is never considered. Instead, Pitt smushes her face to cream of wheat. That saves Abigail Folger, in Tarantino's universe, and would to God someone had – but what could have saved them both?

(It might have been possible. In prison, Krenwinkel has become the most positive and self-aware of the Mansonites. Even prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi admitted that. Incidentally, the actress portraying Krenwinkel, Madison Beatty, also played her in *Aquarius*, a miniseries of recent.)

Anyway – 1969. Good and bad, it vividly survives in this alternative view. More movies await – but so far, Tarantino has scored largest.



Moving on fifty years ... The offenses of Donald Trump against sanity and decency are beyond number, but they've taken a fearful turn into the Absurd in the last two months. Except for his dismissal of the war-happy John Bolton as National Security Advisor, Trump's every move and word seems to indicate that the popular diagnosis of raw dementia is accurate. Who but a whack job would seriously suggest that America purchase the vast semi-frozen of Greenland – for no stated purpose? Who but an idiot man-child would take a Sharpie to a hurricane map to prove that his innocent misreading of a headline was justified? Who but a scientific illiterate would even ask if a cyclone could be erased by detonating a nuke in its path? Trump is more than occasionally ridiculous, but he's not funny, anymore. Just pathetic.

And dangerous, malicious, and capricious. Encouraging Israel to block visits from Muslim congresswomen was bad enough, as he utilized America's diplomatic swack to repay petty political grievances. But using the power of the government to prosecute the former FBI director who investigated him, Andrew McCabe, is vengeance and extortion of an historical level. Trump aspires to dictatorship. The Republican Party overtly supports him.

Now, who to nominate to oppose this gorilla? After three debates of the Democratic pretenders, I have an unsurprising favorite.

Liz Warren, from Frank Bruni's column in *The New York Times* of 9-14: "I worry lots about how Warren's grandly liberal plans would play in a general election, but I'm impressed by her increasingly skillful navigation of the Democratic primary. Performance-wise, she's pulling away from Bernie Sanders. He shouts and then shouts louder. She's hardly quiet, but she has grown better and better at layering in personal anecdotes and dabs of humor, which he has never been any good at.

He still favors the word "oligarchic," as if saying it for the zillionth time will finally make it roll off the tongue. She instead talks of "multinational corporations" and their corrupt chief executives, using more concrete images and language and doing, from a different end of the political spectrum, what Trump did with such effectiveness: identifying a class of villains on whom all of the country's problems can be blamed.

She has learned to sail over and around potentially choppy waters. On Thursday night she spoke of her lifelong passion for education without giving the slightest hint of how much her positions on some education-related issues had changed over time. (She once supported vouchers, for example, but not one of her opponents onstage bothered to bring this up.) She also refused to say whether Medicare for All would require a middle-class tax increase. One of the debate's moderators, George Stephanopoulos, asked her, and then Biden pressed her, but she never grew flustered and never succumbed, instead stressing repeatedly that in terms of people's reduced health care costs, they'd be ahead of the game.

You could call that deceptive. You could also call it disciplined. I shook my head but tipped my hat. She'll be in this thing until the end."

Indeed, Warren has ideas, she has energy, she has intelligence, she has freshness, she can fight, she's *flexible* – I hope enough to alter her position on Medicare for All, and leave a choice available for those with private insurance. Doing otherwise is scary stuff to many, and will leave her open to Trump's obvious charge in 2020: socialism. Otherwise, she's epic. *Liz! Liz! Liz! Liz!*



In **fandom**, PC has again run amok, as the parties responsible have renamed the John W. Campbell Award for Outstanding New SF Writer, based on 2019 winner Jennifer Ng's calumny that JWCJr. was "a fascist." The award is now named for *Astounding*, his seminal magazine. That nomicker I can live with, but the insult to Campbell – who once slept in this very room – is reprehensible. It's caused anger and disgust among many SFers, especially those who owe their careers to Campbell. But he had opinions that do not gibe with today's rigid and punitive social requirements, and therefore he is to be considered a non-person. Disappeared.

Even worse, in a way, is expunging "James M. Tiptree" from the award so-named, for an author whose work has challenged gender stereotypes. The author's family tragedy apparently does not meet someone's moral standards. As you may know, she and her husband died in a suicide pact due to his illness. Sheldon/Tiptree probably pulled the trigger, therefore she's a murderer, therefore she's unworthy of our admiration.

Leaving aside the sensible argument that titling an award after an author is a salute to his/her *work*, not his/her private biography, I'd call out describing Alice Sheldon as a murderer. Hers was an act of love for and with her life partner. There was nothing of bitterness, greed, psychosis or mendacity to it. It is a weakness in science fiction that the depths of human commitment and caring – such as moved Sheldon and her mate – are closed subjects to us. (I can think of only one successful SF love story: Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*.) Scratching her pen name from an award that her life and work inspired on the basis of a few – very few – slanders is unfair and insulting ... to her, to the field, to the idea of compassion itself. Weak-minded at best, reprehensible at worst.

In my latest *Zine Dump* I messed up the address for *MT Void*, Evelyn and Mark Leeper's excellent e-zine of criticism and comment. The righteous listing is ... well, here:

To subscribe, send mail to mtvoid-subscribe@yahoogroups.com ; the latest issue is at <http://www.leepers.us/mtvoid/latest.htm>.

I recommend subscribing; *MT Void* is always an interesting read and both Leepers are good writers.



Opus lastish

The Greenhouse thanks everyone who sent condolences on the passing of the home's mistress, Patty Green. Here's commentary on our last number, dealing with her death, from my brother and sister members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.

Liz Copeland <Liz.C.Copeland@gmail.com> Glioblastoma is cutting a swath through fandom. Andi Schecter also died this month (7/15) from it. The number of friends and friend of friends who have died from it in the last few years is approaching double digits. For a rare cancer, it's sure showing up a lot. *hugs* to you and yours as you deal with this loss.

Rich Lynch <rw_lynch@yahoo.com> Condolences of the death of Patrice Milton Green, a remarkable woman whom I unfortunately never had an occasion to meet. You write that "Glioblastoma --- brain cancer -- is a mean foe." It's also claimed the lives of two fan friends, Randy Byers and Kate Yule, who, from what I've read, departed the world in much the same way over the final months of their lives. Thank you for writing this remembrance of her for us.

Bill Plott <wjplott@aol.com> A wonderful tribute to Patrice Green. I regret very much that we did not get to meet her and Joe on our trip to that area a couple of years ago. She was, from all accounts, a bright and courageous person.

Gilbert Head <eghead@uga.edu> I love the Kelly Freas drawing of Patrice on the cover. Great story from MagiCon, and yet another testimonial of how much I missed when I did not make time for Samanda Jeude's presentation ...

Glioblastoma is indeed a nasty foe. It took a loved one's parent many years ago, and the closing stanzas are still all too fresh in my memory, even after nearly 30 years.

Re Notre Dame du Paris: The church stands still. Bloodied but unbowed, a testimony both to the skill of those who raised her up, and to those who worship there still ...

Kay McCutcheon <kameleon@gmail.com> I am sad for your loss of Patty, but happy for her release. It is never easy to watch, but I have found a sort of enrichment of my life by being present at such moments. The caring and love are what counts.

I hear (and feel) all the weeping and wailing of America at the changes occurring because of 45 [a.k.a. Trump]. I am stunned that we could elect a bigoted, misogynistic failed "businessman" to the presidency. As my shock wore off, and my anger grew, I had to accept the fact that we'd have 45 for four years ... I doubt that anyone after 45 can completely get us back on track. The general change in attitude will not spring back to progress and civility. The American people must want that before it will happen.

Rich Dengrove <Richd22426@aol.com> Patty Green was definitely a nice-looking woman in her 20s. A god who is not loving? The evidence doesn't matter: we need our faith. Faith, despite evidence, that God is good and everything works out in the end. Definitely not rocket science but, then again, we're

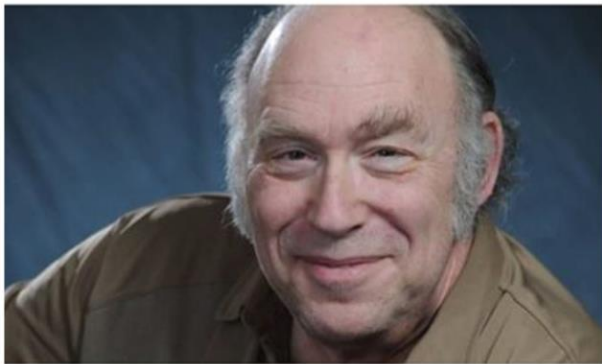


just living our lives not rocketing into space. Anyway, God is good, and I hope Patty Green is doing well in heaven.

Jeff Copeland <copeland@alumnoi.caltecg.edu> Again, condolences on Patty's death.

"Daring to venture into religion again, I thought 'The reality of God is unimportant. The truth of Christ is everything.' Said truth summed up in three resonant words: 'Love one another.'" For a Methodist, you'd make a pretty good Unitarian, Guy.

"I've heard [supporters of the President] say that they admit [he] is a despicable man, but they like his policies."* Which policies? The ones that steal from the middle class to pay billionaires? The ones that take people who are fleeing death threats and torture in their countries of birth and put them in concentration camps? The ones that are killing coal miners? The ones that are poisoning our grandchildren? The ones that are telling Iran to build nuclear weapons? The ones that are allowing Russians to hack our elections? Which hateful, destructive, evil policies do they like?



Help Mike Resnick pay off a near- death experience

\$20,070 raised of \$30,000

I can't afford to contribute to friend Resnick's **GoFundMe** page, but I can spread the word. Consider the word spread. Bestest, Mike.



As is my practice, I showed my basic composition classes *Citizen Kane*, figuring that unless *I* make them sit through Orson Welles' first film, they'll never see it. So I had to sit through it three (more) times – but guess what? I *still* saw something new in the 1941 masterwork, each and every viewing. (Bernstein's reflection in his desk as he talks about the beautiful girl he glimpsed 45 years before – a pun: it's a reflection of a reflection! It's part of a theme running throughout the film, *images* – paintings, reflections, photos, movies within this movie among movies. And the ships' whistles hooting in the background of Kane's interview in *News on the March*. No great cinematic theme, but an effective detail.) As my three classes take place in three classrooms, I've had to wrestle with three computer monitors to show my DVD – often asking for help. One machine defeated me. *Kane* had to be shown in cotton-candy

pink. Truly Rosebud ...



And to close, some amazing news. *We might – **might** – get to visit the U.K. next year.* Stonehenge here I come. Cross fingers!