

**“DON’T
SHOOT! I
GIVE UP!”**

**(JEEZUS! One
little balloon flies
over and they
shoot down
ANYTHING!)**



SPARTACUS

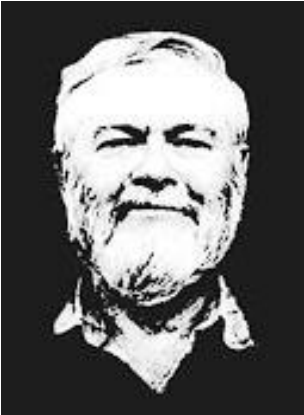
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Opinions & general bloviation by Guy Lillian III

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(Admit it: when you heard that America shot down “objects” near the Arctic in February, you thought of *The Thing from Another World* too!)



Greg Benford gave a talk at my very first science fiction club meeting, at the Bay Area’s Elves, Gnomes and Little Men in 1968. I forget the subject, but he obviously made an impression. I saw him many times in the years that followed, and every issue of my genzine *Challenger* has carried at least one Benford article. I was honored when he inscribed a book “To Guy Lillian, a good man to have on your side.”

La belle and I just saw Greg at last summer’s DeepSouthCon in Huntsville, where he told a terrifying story. Turns out that attending one of his public speeches some years ago was a certain Ted Kaczynski, who listened to Greg’s talk with a silent anger. Ted had, the FBI told Benford, placed his name on “a list.” Kaczynski – yeah, the Unabomber – was caught before he could do whatever he intended. A worse menace, though, was waiting.

Greg suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage a few days before Christmas. Naomi Fisher called me soon after and kept in touch through the frightening days which followed. For a while I was fearful we’d soon be rolling the brilliant SF fan and pro into a ditch.

But not so. An Alabama boy doesn’t give up so easily. On February 13, I talked with Greg on the phone. My impression matches that of Allen Steele, posted that very day on the *File:770* website. He’s graciously allowed this reprint.

A Positive Update on Greg Benford’s Health from Allen Steele (2/13/23)

I was notified about Greg Benford’s stroke on Dec. 28, a few days after it happened, by Naomi Fisher, his close friend and now caregiver, who was with Greg when the stroke happened. Although most of the SF community has been kept in the dark about this, mainly to give Greg the distance he and Naomi both need during this time, I’ve been in constant touch with Naomi since the last days of December, and just last night I talked with Greg himself for an hour or so, the first time we’ve had a conversation since the stroke. So I’m in a position to clarify things a bit.

First: Greg is not dying. He’s actually doing much better than he was only last week, when he was still in the hospital. He has been transferred to a rehabilitation center — “hey, they finally sent me to rehab” was one of the first things he said to me; when I heard that, I knew he was getting better — and although it’s likely that he’ll be there for a while, he’s a long, long way from where he was seven weeks ago when things really were dicey. Alcor isn’t getting his noggin yet.

Second: Greg is not incoherent, nor is he in any sort of daze or unable to understand what’s spoken to him. As I said, we spent an hour on the phone (thus saving me from America’s annual exercise in boredom that we call the Super Bowl) and although he’s still a bit hoarse from being intubated for a long time, I understood everything he said to me and he understood everything I said to him. He even got it when I commented that where he is now is at least better than being in Cleveland.

And third, Greg is in good hands. Naomi Fisher, whom I’ve also known for years and years, has been with Greg constantly. As I mentioned earlier, she is responsible for his survival; if Naomi hadn’t been downstairs when she heard him fall in the shower, Greg would have died then and there. The lady is a brick; she deserves no end of gratitude for him surviving what would have doubtless been a fatal medical emergency.

While they’re grateful for the public concern and support, what Greg really wants and needs just now is breathing room, a chance to step away for a while and quietly heal. He’ll be back, folks; my friend is tough, and he’s not leaving us yet.

And though he’s a doubter, I hope Greg won’t mind my appending a heartfelt “Thank God.”

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The latest genre “woke” controversy involves the Horror Writers of America and their erstwhile Life Achievement Award winner, Thomas Monteleone, booted out of the organization for alleged untoward and racist comments. At first, I was dubious, having seen the excesses indulged in by so-called woke culture to punish those who violate its codes, especially since none of the sources I found told their readers *what Monteleone said*. When a person is vilified for unknown reasons, I tend to demand details. Vague description of crimes allows the public to think them guilty of the worst things they can imagine, often much more repulsive than the truth.

That said, I followed my own advice and found out those details for myself. I listened to the Hatchet Mouth podcast, the Jamie Mason interview with Monteleone, and unsurprisingly, found that the situation was by no means clear cut. The subject is, of course, his expulsion from HWA and Stokercon. Perhaps because he was yapping with angry supporters, Monteleone is unrestrained.

Some of what he says about the hypocrisy of wokeness is true. Diversity is great except in a difference of opinion. If the lady receiving the HWA’s life achievement award did indeed criticize the organization as racist, then she indeed spoke without graciousness and was insulting. Punishing someone for saying so is unAmerican repression; Monteleone’s description of HWA’s actions doing so as “just stupid” strikes me as mild. “We are not allowed to have opinions that go against the Big Brother.” We’ve seen that. *But*.

Monteleone describes the woman as a “fat black chick.” He shouts obscenities about her. He calls HWA “lefty loonies.” He is crude, uncoupled. Frankly, he sounds drunk.

So what should HWA have done?

On “woke-ism” in general, I’d advise readers to read Ahrvid Engholm’s *Intermission*, which I discuss in *The Zine Dump* #57. To quote my review: “[Ahrvid’s] righteous outrage against the ’22 Worldcon for their contrition for the term ‘Spanish Inquisition’ – apologizing not to Spaniards but to those inquisitioned [*sic*] against in a historical purge that **ended in 1834** – is a happy read, although I might feel that way because I agree with him so wholeheartedly. ‘We must stop this trend that anyone, who states feeling ‘uncomfortable’ with what others say, have the right to silence them.’”

That said, no organization dealing with a fan base should tolerate such repulsive rudeness as Monteleone shows in the podcast. But giving him the bum’s rush is, under the circumstances, excessive. The man is important in horror fiction, a winner of several Stoker awards for his fiction and editing. If I had swack in the HWA board, I’d issue a public warning – but only for the *ad hominem* insults. His *opinions* are sacrosanct. No one should be condemned for any opinion that doesn’t threaten or vilify another. It’s an old principle of American law: the answer to bad speech isn’t censorship; it’s *good* speech.

LOC*A*BILLY! *Comments on Spartacuses past*

Ray Palm <raypalmx@gmail.com>

Good to hear that your MRI was OK. You have more than enough ailments to take care of.

Regarding the Oscars you wrote that *Everything Everywhere All at Once* was everyone’s favorite. Count me out. I borrowed the DVD from the library and made two attempts to get through it. Never finished it. What a headache. *Doctor Strange in the Madness of the Metaverse* did a better job handling the parallel universes concept. It showed a variety of realities but didn’t go full speed ahead with it during the entire movie. A constant barrage of strobe light images doesn’t make a good movie. Tell a story, don’t induce a migraine.

The modern dark age continues even with Trump out of power. Racists and idiots. Florida Governor Desanity trying to turn back the clock on history, advocating a return to White-washed textbooks. Marjorie Taylor Greene saying private citizens should have shot down that Chinese spy balloon. Uh, Marjorie, the world record for the maximum range of a rifle bullet was 4.4 miles. That balloon was around 12 miles up. To quote Bugs Bunny: "What a Maroon."

*Ray's witty perzine **Ray X-Rayer** is available at eFanzines.com, and you should go there and read it now now **now**.*

Joseph Major <jtmajor@iglou.com>

My medical problems also abuse me. For the past few months I have had a cough which, among other things, makes it impossible for me to hold a conversation. So I went to a pulmonary specialist. His people took chest X-rays and he concluded I needed a CT scan. This took forever to arrange and about ten minutes to perform.

Result: my lungs are fine.

Add to that a side-effect of our trip to Hopkinsville for Christmas. A pipe in the cellar froze and burst. When we got home I had some impetus to check, and there it was gushing, so we went on immediately to a hotel, and stayed about three weeks. How come? You couldn't get a plumber since there were a lot of broken pipes and they were full up. And then I had to have the water heater replaced. Again.

At least the hotel we stay at in Hopkinsville hasn't boosted its rates too high. I think I have enough frequent-stayer points to get a long stay over this coming Christmas.

The Chengdu Worldcon has moved its dates back because the building where they are going to hold it is not finished. Usually Worldcons had hotels close before they could hold it (thus the [1977] Orlando Worldcon which ended up in Miami Beach). The closer this gets the more I am concerned about a disaster.

The antivaxxers had built organization around opposing MMI shots and the like. When the crisis came they roared into action, grabbing headlines, getting influence, and spreading stories about sinister plots. It wasn't helped by the authorities reversing course over and over again, saying that they were absolutely right because the science was settled every time.

Tom Feller: So the consumers go to cons and the participants stay at home?

*Joe's **Alexiad** has long been one of the best genzines fandom has to offer. To eFanzines.com, go.*

Rich Dengrove in2outside2@aol.com

That cover [*John Fetterman*] does look ready for anger.

This month Fetterman checked himself into a hospital for treatment of depression, a brave move for a public man. He defies the common stigma about emotional illness, and by doing so encourages those who also suffer to take the best possible action and seek professional help. Pennsylvania should be proud of him.

There were a number of reasons why the Trumpites didn't make hay in the midterms. Biden is a mortal and Trump, to his supporters, is a god. Taking things at face value, the pundits ignored that Trump is often in his own world. It helps that Biden keeps his head to the ground. He did it as senator and I bet he is doing it now. So far not so close to the ground that he has ignored what is going on in reality.

I don't feel as bad about the Chengdu Worldcon as you do. It is saying that SF is prospering in China. And that young people there have a connection with us in America. I suspect amity between us and them will be its lasting effect. As I said, at this point, there are more science fiction readers and writers in China than there are here.

[*To Rich Lynch*] Ben Yalow, in talking about the fans he knew, talked about Irvin Koch, the fan who helped set up clubs all over the South. Also, cons. He didn't talk about Irvin's pride and joy, Weaponscon (?), though. You had to have a weapon to get into Weaponscon. However, you could register your child as a weapon.

George Takei sounds like he is a much better person than William Shatner. He is free of the ego that has dogged Shatner for his entire life.

Gary Robe <Richd22426@gmail.com>

Maybe Governors DeSantis and Abbott actually showed a better way to handle migrants by the stunt flights and busing of border-crossing asylum seekers to New England and Washington DC. Maybe that's the way to handle the influx of immigrants.

Florida, Texas, New Mexico and California undoubtedly handle more than their share of people crossing the border, because (no duh!) they *are* the border. That's where we've erected the detention facilities and processing centers for handling the influx. What if instead we set up a reception concourse and transit station to transport those away from the border and disperse them throughout the country? Many of these people already have family and sponsors in the US if only they could get to them. All of these people will have to make court appearances for hearings on asylum or residency. What if we spread them out all over the land instead of overwhelming the courts in the border states? Sure, some of the detainees would remain near the border, but it could be a fair loading of the system rather than expecting those hostile states to bear the entire load.

The vast majority of these people are not illegal immigrants. They are arriving at the existing entry portals and asking for legal entry. The numbers of people asking for entry sound huge. There are hundreds of thousands of people showing up each month. That sounds huge, but many times that number of people pass through international airports every day in Atlanta, Miami, Houston and L.A. We usually manage to send these folks on to their destinations. It's not like there are unmanageable numbers of people being dealt with. The real problem is the infrastructure.

There's also no evidence that many of these migrants couldn't find work in the US. There are many agricultural and food service jobs that are currently going unfilled. Of course, admitting that the US economy actually needs these workers, and that the current lack of laborers is one of the factors behind food price inflation. Sadly, there's a Certain Party in power that would rather have high inflation of food prices and an angry base than doing something constructive about the problem. Thanks, Greg and Ron for piloting the shuttlecraft into the maw of the doomsday machine and showing us how to resolve the problem!

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The Zine Dump -- a Supplement

When I sent forth the 57th issue of my "zine about zines," *The Zine Dump*, I promised to cover any neglected publications and note any mistakes here, and so I will and here they are.

Askance #54 | John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926 | askance73@gmail.com | I can't imagine how I missed John's fine genzine while writing *TZD*; I know I've read this material before. Anyway, it's fun material reflecting the lively spirit that served him so well in his Trans=Atlantic Fan Fund trip a couple of years ago. In the editorial, chatting about his work (an English instructor at Texas A&M) and TAFF and NASFiC and suchlike, he speaks of plans to blend *Askance* with his perzine, *Askew*, which he sees as an efficient move. A righteous piece on Burma Shave roadside poetry reprints some of the verse distracting drivers on US highways back in the day. Some are hysterical. Sticking with rhyme, the lyrics to Sam Long filks pop up in the pages that follow ... as do a series of righteous comments by Bill Fischer, a Figby strip by the same, a good review of *Rune* (followed by a nice plug for *The Zine Dump*), a good lettercol and a list of regional cons to come. Like I say, a fun zine, light-hearted and charming.

Inca #20 | Rob Jackson, Chinthay, Nightingale Lane, Hambrook, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 8UH. U.K. | robjackson60@gmail.com or jacksonshambrook@uwclub.net | After my latest *Zine Dump*, Taral Wayne notified me that, for the second issue in a row, I'd neglected Dr. Rob Jackson's superb genzine, originally published last August. His motive in complaining is obvious and justifiable: an evocative Taral color cover fronts the issue. And what follows is outstanding, articles

of length and depth by the editor, Taral, Nic Farey, John Nielsen Hall and TAFF candidate Sandra Bond. Much is funny – Nic takes on Corflu, Bond pens a parody poem on Novacon, Taral’s fanfic version of *Marty* (particularly cool) – and personal – Dr. Jackson on making a nightmarish drive in the snow years ago, accompanied by beautiful, terrifying photos of the whiteout. I’m reminded of my horrible New Year’s drives to and from Buffalo on I-79 in 1983/4, when I thought I might freeze to death in a Pennsylvania ditch. I wonder what Rob, a retired psychiatrist, would make of that, or of my unforgivable lack of judgment in ignoring this issue of his terrific journal till now. Never again! Oh yes – an enviable, lengthy lettercol, mostly featuring familiar Britfans.

Leybl Botwinik leybl_botwinik@yahoo.com sent a correction to *TZD*’s latest number ...

Hey Guy,

Thanks for mentioning our fanzine, *CyberCozen*. I’m sorry, that I’ve been rather lax in reading past issues of *The Zine Dump* - but I did notice something that various people have also mistaken:

You wrote "**CyberCozen ... | Monthly pub of the Israeli Society for SF and Fantasy**"

We are our own independent publication and have no official or unofficial ties to the Israeli Society for SF and Fantasy. What we do is mention their monthly reading circles and some key activities (notably the biannual 'comicons'). We do have an agreement with MonSFFA | Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (my home town) - that permits us to reprint some articles from their *WARP* periodical.

As far as I know (you might know better) - we are the only publication offering periodic Yiddish SF/Fantasy.

Take care, and keep the light shining,

Andy Hooper also had a correction, to wit: “I appreciate the review [of *Captain Flashback*], but I want to point out one thing -- that line referring to "Crusader Kings" appeared in ONE issue of *CF* over TWO years ago. It changes almost EVERY issue. Really! Go look, I'll wait.”

And finally, the ever-reliable **Lloyd Penney** LOCs a past issue:

Once again, we lose friends and peers. There are times, I wonder, who will be the last to turn off the light? I will go through your list of zines and see if there is a comment or two to be made. Re *Ansible*...I don’t think we don’t care about what might happen in Chengdu, but I think we know that there isn’t much we could do or say that would change anything. Even if I did support the ideas behind the Chengdu bid, I couldn’t possibly afford to go. Also, the Canadian government is trying to find out if the Chinese government might have secret ‘police stations’ in some Canadian cities, and commentary might mean trouble for those making the comments. Some of those ‘police stations’ may be in Chinese consulates in Canada, or even in concentrated areas of Chinese immigration in Canadian cities. Both Toronto and neighboring Mississauga have large Chinese populations.

Yeah, “Penney Lane” in *The Baloobius*...I might be the only one who locs Taral’s zines, but I hope not. I never did meet Susan Wood Glicksohn (*Captain Flashback*), but I wish I had. Susan Wood always did sound like a great deal of fun, and with little ego. I hereby wish there was a regular fanzine coming from NESFA. Last time I saw one, they were bidding for the ’89 Worldcon with *The Mad 3 Party*.

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Last year I took notice of the National Fantasy Fan Federation’s Short Story contest and thought *Why not?* So I sent the judge, Jefferson Swycaffer, a little story I wrote called “The Candlestick Maker”. Please note that this was the version that ran in *Challenger* no. 43, which you can find on eFanzines.com, not the sloppy initial draft I pumped through SFFA. As January 2023 faded, this note appeared in my inbox. It has **spoilers**, if anyone wants to *read* “Candlestick Maker” ...

“Jefferson P. Swycaffer

=====@gmail.com

28 January 2023

To the Author of “The Candlestick Maker”

This story was truly a delight, an echo of Frankenstein, as the narrator’s brother creates a candle golem as a wife and lover. The narrative voice is very clear and crisp, as is the narrative description. The dialogue is very believable. The characters are all well-rounded and fully realized. And the story is sad, in a “Greek Tragedy” sort of way, as it inevitably runs down to the grim ending. This little fable was a joy to read.

Your story has won the Honorable Mention for the 2022 National Fantasy Fan Federation Short Story Contest! There is no cash prize award for Honorable Mention, but it is a position of prestige and respect for a very good story indeed!”

First a Romanian webzine steals, translates and publishes it, and now the N3F gives “The Candlestick Maker” an award. Next stop, Stockholm!

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I hoped to end this month’s *Spartacus* with thoughts on teen girl bullying and suicides and the explosion in mass shootings across America of recent, but the issues are too horrible and too complex to take on in a page. I thought also of writing about Raquel Welch, Gina Lollobrigida and Stelle Stevens, but what can a pitiful Boomer boy say? It’s not yet time to talk about Jimmy Carter, but that subject will come forth again soon enough.

Instead I’ll mention an idea that’s come to me about my next *Challenger*, which I’ve decided to theme on the great James Whale film *The Bride of Frankenstein*, and the ghastly murders of four college kids in Idaho – murders which seem on early glance to be tied to the incandescent beauty of the college girl victims – and the incel feelings of the alleged killer. Hope – loneliness – need – desire – rejection – friendship -- anger. Themes the movie intertwines beautifully and real life reveals daily. Your thoughts?

In the meantime, I bid this issue of *Spartacus* adieu ... on February 21, 2023. A Tuesday. *Fat Tuesday. Mardi Gras*. In New Orleans today it started out partly cloudy but cleared up, and the temperature rose into the low 80s. Short miles to the west Louisiana was drenched in rain, and only a bit further north the awful winter of 2023 continues unabated. When I lived in the Easy, we called that **Mardi Gras Magic**.

I spent today wandering around the Greenhouse in my pajamas, catching up on *The Walking Dead*, comparing it, with Rosy, to *The Last of Us*. Oh well. NO use being jealous. Wherever we are, whatever the day, ***laissez les bons temps roulez.***

Do I really need to translate?

GHLIII

