

Nice Hugo, Chengdu, but Mib had the idea first!



SPARTACUS #69

A zine of opinion for science fiction fandom by

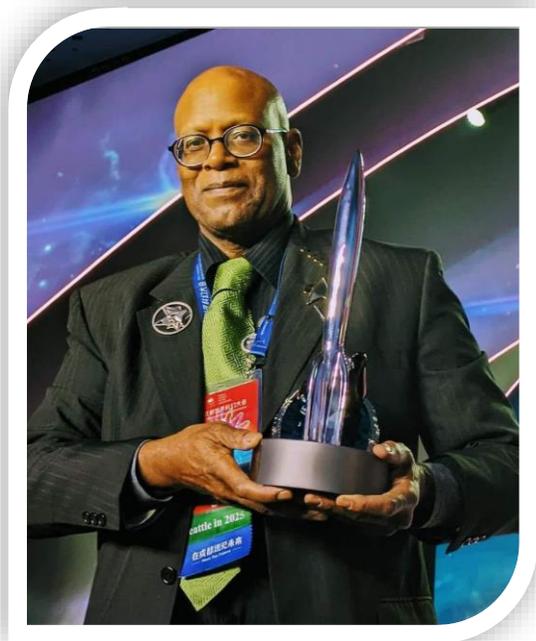
Guy H. Lillian III

1390 Holly Avenue Merritt Island FL 32952

GHLIII@yahoo.com * 318 218-2345

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I

Though humanity approaches 2024, it's still too early to gauge the success of the 2023 Worldcon. Con reports on Chengdu are still being written, and I'm so chuffed – as the Ozzies say – by **Chris Barkley's** win of the **Best Fan Writer Hugo** that I'm deaf to any other con matters. Was there political interference? How did people with little or no conventioning experience handle organizing fandom's ultimate challenge? At this point, who cares? *Hugo won the Chr-* ... uhh, *Chris won the Hugo!* Happy dance!

I've known Barkley for decades, since our bids competed against each other for the 1988 Worldcon. That rivalry began an ongoing friendship that has better than survived the years. I've published Chris in *Challenger*, urged him to run for DUFF, and supported him for this honor. Like I say, *happy dance!* I look forward to further triumphs from the Barkster.

II



Most people these days would not remember 1968, and that's to their benefit, because until its very last days it was a bad, bad year. Forget the election of Richard Nixon; at the time he showed little of the paranoia that would ruin his presidency. American cities were torn by racial strife, Lyndon Johnson withdrew in failure, Chicago cops made protesting the raging Vietnam War a death penalty offense, and both Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy met with murder – the latter a week after coming face to face with me. It was a grisly, frightening time.

Except for Apollo 8. In a year as news-sick as no other, *Time* magazine named its astronauts the Men of the Year. Because they were the first human beings to go to the Moon.

Apollo 8 could be called the last shot of the Cold War. Its original mission was to test the many systems of the final configuration in an elliptical Earth orbit, but—I understand – rumors of a Soviet expedition to loop around the Moon caused

NASA to change its plans and try for a lunar orbital flight. The change apparently caught the Russians by surprise and brought a modicum of grief down onto NASA for rolling such risky dice. The mission began with the first manned launch of the monster Saturn V rocket and continued with the first trans-lunar insertion taking its astronauts out of low Earth orbit – also a first. Two veterans of the two-man Gemini program – Frank Borman and Jim Lovell -- and William Ander, a space rookie, composed the crew. It flew at Christmastime.

The mission was a stunning success. The crew orbited the Moon ten times, carrying back the immortal Earthrise photograph and the astronauts' fervent paean to the beauty of the green-and-blue Home they'd left behind. Their Christmas Eve message to the planet was one of the great – if corniest – moments of

American history, as they read the opening chapters of Genesis. I remember the ABC newsmen sitting stunned behind their desks as they bid a Merry Christmas to all of us here on “the good Earth.”

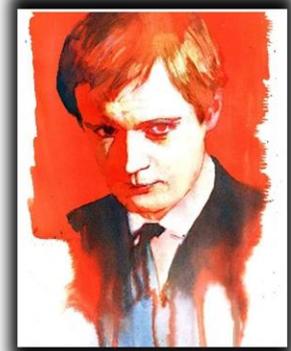
Corny as could be, yes, but at the end of such a year, just what the species needed to hear.

In a very few months, Apollo 11 would take astronauts the rest of the way to the lunar surface, and the splendor of Apollo 8 would be eclipsed. But the mission had done its duty. The Russians were beaten. Mankind had gone beyond the Earth. And seen the world for the first time as one fragile, beautiful gem in a whole lot of space.

Frank Borman, commander of the Apollo 8 mission, left this good planet again in early November of this year. He should be and will be remembered.

III

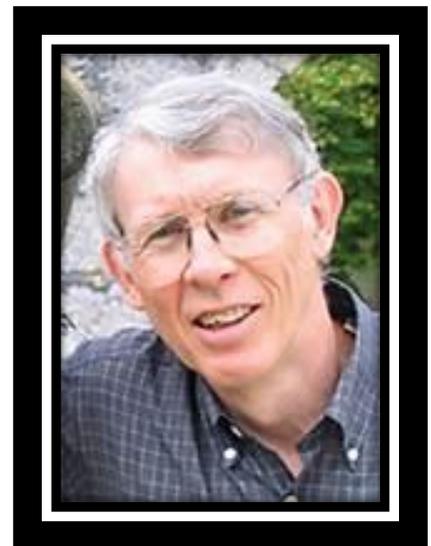
As everyone knows, it is vital for an American high school kid to have a great model of Cool. For many of us Boomers, that model was Ilya Kurayakin in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, portrayed unforgettably by the fine British actor **David McCallum**. Ilya made turtleneck sweaters and phony Russian accents fashion staples in the mid-sixties, and redefined the essence of cool. McCallum’s many credits included a heroic participant in *The Great Escape*, Judas Iscariot in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, the instructor in the astonishing Hallmark film *Teacher, Teacher*, and, of course, “Ducky” Mallard on *NCIS*. We lost him this September. He’d just turned 90.



С п а с и б о , Ilya, for showing us how.

IV

Michael Bishop was a very pleasant guy and a brilliant writer. Apropos of little, Mike and his wife Jeri were close friends with my shrink, and I knew them too, though not well. I was delighted to be present when he won his Phoenix Award at the 1977 DeepSouthCon for his contributions to Southern science fiction and to see his own delight when he opened the package with his Nebula for *No Enemy But Time* at another DSC. The literary quality of his fiction was extraordinary, though he protested vehemently when Diane compared his *Unicorn Mountain* to the best of Sturgeon. The poor man’s personal suffering was unspeakable –it’s well-known that his son fell victim to a psychopathic shooter at the university where he taught. But he behaved as he wrote, with epic class. Losing Mike this season is a hard blow.



V

Fandom is a family, holding families within families. Among the finest *real* families in the family and community that is Southern SF fandom is the Proctor clan of Birmingham, Alabama. I met them in 1976. In 1977, thanks to the kindness of their matriarch, Charlotte, the patience of the father, Jerry, and the companionship of the kids, Valerie, Justin, Martin and Forrest, they practically adopted me, and helped me survive a terrible period in life. Their friendship has been everlasting.

I watched the kids grow up. I cheered when Charlotte edited a Hugo-nominated fanzine called *Anvil*, appropriate for a B’ham-based zine, and won Southern fandom’s Rebel Award. I huzzahed Val’s marriage and motherhood, and noted Justin’s morph from a teenager into a respected Birmingham

detective. And I watched **Forrest Proctor** rise from childhood – he was 8 when I met him – to responsible adulthood. A fella of great humor, he handled every challenge of life with class, dignity and infectious pride. He bid us all farewell in early November. *Now cracks a noble heart.* Horatio never meant it more.

VI

Dominating my individual existence since the last issue *Spartacus* was a 10-day trip to Louisiana, Rosy and me and thirty heavy boxes of books. Our rationale for the journey dealt with this cargo, mostly items from the late Nita Green's enormous collection of genre tomes. We intended to donate the lot to New Orleans' Symphony Book Fair. So why not dump the books closer to home? Well, we had a storage unit in Shreveport, our former city of residence, one which has been bleeding us for *nine years*. It was past time to empty it for good.

Turned out, of course, that we had more crap stashed in the Shreveport unit than we remembered: 150 boxes of books and papers, 20 tubs of clothes and other items. Crippled by my Parkinson's, I needed help to accomplish our goal. Enter my cousin Johnny and his able brood, recently moved to Louisiana from our desert birthplace in Southern California. In the midst of a terrible storm, transferred our stuff from the unit to a U-Haul truck I rented. I surprised myself by driving the truck south, needing help only to climb into the driver's seat. (Parkinson's again.) We unloaded the truck ourselves into another unit in New Orleans, after which we congratulated ourselves on getting our junque closer to Merritt Island, at least, and bidding dismal Shreveport a final farewell. I did good lawyering there, and we did find our dawgs, but we had no two-legged friends in Shreveport and despite a good opera and a terrific movie theatre, there wasn't anything to keep us.

We visited New Orleans going and coming home, and it was grand to see the Easy, to gobble a Jaeger's shrimp **po'boy** (that's a *grinder* to Californians, a *sub* or a *hero* to New Yorkers, a *hoagie* in Philadelphia, a *wedge* or a *spuckie* elsewhere in Yankee climes), Liuzza's lasagna, Morning Call beignets, a fine waffle (instead of my usual Eggs Benedict) at the Panola Street Café and Chinese at 5 Happiness. (Everywhere else people eat to live; in Nawlins they *live to eat*.) Our lifelong pals Annie and Justin Winston and John Guidry joined us at the last-named restaurant, and despite the ravages of time and age on our beloved John, that was a splendid time. But for me, the overwhelming emotion for the whole journey was melancholy. It's true; you can't go home again. Life goes on with or without you, good news and bad. I miss sharmg it with my New Orleans people, but know I'm lucky to share it with my beautiful, strong, able wife.

Physically exhausted, emotionally confused, I returned at her side to our land of sand, spaceflights, ocean We recovered, her almost instantly, me over weeks. But *no more monstrous moves*, people.

VII

Speaking of Health, November is Doctor Month for GHIII, with three of my main physical problems finding succor in the hands of medical miracle-workers. Just before Thanksgiving, I went to my new neurologist, who affirmed that I mdo have Parkinson's ... and may need a change in medication in oh, *ten years* or so. He was terrific; he inspired trust, had humor and empathy, and best of all seemed really interested when I bored Rosy by dropping van Houten's name.

Lots pending. Sometime in December, I have another round of Endo- and Up-do[sic]-scopes to anticipate. I've had them before; the worst thing about them is the starvation one must undergo as part of the prep. On deck, sometime after, a Sleep Study, where I'll be sequestered in a clinic bedroom with wires stuck everywhere and commanded to sleep. And a nerve treatment on my left hand involving needles that I do not want to think about.

VIII

Mention the name “Brit Marling” and you’ll immediately command my attention. The genius behind *Another Earth*, *The OA*, *The East* and the incandescent *Sound of My Voice*, she is a unique presence in entertainment. Now she offers us the TV miniseries *Murder at the End of the World* on Hulu. “The End of the World” is Iceland, the premise is reminiscent of *Camp Concentration* and *The Gold at Starbow’s End*, and we’ll see how the whole magilla works out. I have faith in Marling; it’s bound to carry more meaning than the mystery yarn it seems from the first two dropped episodes. Also recommended: *Tehran*, probably the most suspenseful and exciting show on TV, any number of Scandinavian cop shows on ViaPlay, and *Daryl Dixon*, the *Walking Dead* spinoff set in France, probably the best story-within that seemingly unstoppable universe has. And *The Ones Who Live* is on for ’24. The walkers keep on truckin’.

IX

THE LOC-DOWN

Mark Nelson mnelson@uow.edu.au

School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics

University of Wollongong, Northfields Avenue,

Wollongong, NSW 2522, AUSTRALIA.

Last year, a high-profile trial in the ACT supreme court collapsed after a juror conducted their own research and brought material into the jury room from outside the courtroom. This was despite the fact that the jury had been repeatedly warned not to carry out their own research. The juror concerned did not face any punishment because it turned out that in the ACT it isn't an offence for a juror to act in this manner. As a consequence, new laws are being introduced in the ACT which will punish jurors who are guilty of misconduct, including internet searches, with up to two years in jail.

I'd forgotten about this, in one ear and out the other, until you mentioned your call to jury duty. How is this kind of thing handled in Florida? [*Beats me. I was a Louisiana lawyer. Offhand. I'd say such action is grounds for a mistrial.*]

As soon as I read your opening paragraph I was wondering how, given your background, you'd be viewed as a potential juror. That was answered by the end of your second paragraph. Very efficient.

I remember reading, a long time ago, in a newspaper article that there was some judicial disquiet about the selection of jurors in Australia. The nub of the issue was that middle-class professionals routinely arrange for exemption requests from their employer and that these are granted. This happens to an extent that some judges feel that it is distorting the pool of jurors for jury trials.

Everyone in Europe seems to speak 5 or 6 languages? Except for the British... I only speak one myself. [*Hey, we Americans don't speak any!*]

David Schlosser Schloss17@suddenlink.net

2041 N St., Eureka CA 95501

With regard to the *Titan* [submersible], I would point out that – at roughly the same time – there was that migrant boat that floundered off of Greece and the Greek navy / coast guard appears to have done very little to prevent or mitigate it when they had the chance.

There is coverage of migrant boats being swamped and/or rescued but nowhere near the level of response (certainly not per capita). (And yes, there are other differences – such as “5 poor people” probably wouldn’t have been under such a watchful eye when something went wrong.) // Rich Lynch’s letter: Rather than how the economy is Doing, I think things in the election will depend on how people Perceive the economy as doing. Even now with inflation down, unemployment down, GDP and job growth staying solid over half of survey respondents see the economy and Biden’s handling of it as Not Good. Make me wonder what they want.

Bill Plott wjplott@aol.com

190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115

On the *Titanic* mini-sub disaster, yes there were a lot of comments about rich folks kind of asking for it – and getting it. A greater concern, however, was the outpouring of search and rescue apparatus from multiple nations for that vehicle when hundreds of migrants were perishing off the coast of Greece. A number of editorial cartoonists commented on that.

On my questioning the excitement over a visit to the Ron Jon Surf Shop you wrote: “Ah, but you didn’t know me in my bippy hodad days when I’d go into the coup after charging the bomb till grubbing! Ron Jon’s sells all kinds of sticks and gear and junque! And the ambience is utterly akaw!” I think I know what “into the soup” means but I do not know what in the pluperfect hell you are saying with the rest! [*Too much time writing cool books about baseball, Bill, and not enough on a surfboard!*]

Sheila Strickland stricklandsheila@yahoo.com

8939 Jefferson Hwy, Apt 1711 Baton Rouge, LA 70809

You didn’t like *The Spare Man* and think Mary Robinette Kowal has an artless style? Oh, dear. Should I reconsider our friendship? Okay, no, not really; I’ll be magnanimous and allow you to choose which authors you prefer. I enjoy her books and thought the cocktail and mocktail recipes were a nice addition to the story.

Rich Dengrove Richd22426@aol.com

2651 Arlington Drive #302, Alexandria, VA 22306

The problem with Ted Kaczynski’s crimes being inspired by martial law at Berkeley is this: people often are not turned into killers by great historical events. More often it is by what has happened to them and their friends. It could be that he decided on his path because of the martial law but it could be because he got hurt or a friend got hurt. Still, that he started on his life of bombing because of the martial law appeals to us. It even appeals to me, believe it or not.

The submersible *Titan* burst and killed the CEO, the crew and the passengers. All because the CEO had succumbed to hubris. He didn’t believe in regulation, and reinforce his submersible. That worked for a time but ultimately the submersible burst. [*Well, imploded, but same difference.*]

LOC OF AGES.. RICH LYNCH. I have more books to read. I agree: elections are won or lost mostly because of the economy. Thus, whatever the polls say, Biden looks good – for now. No Armageddon. RAY PALM. He’s right. *Butterfield 8* was a terrible movie. A tale about the woman on the side that had become a cliché even in the ‘50s. TOM FELLER. What I heard about Irv Koch’s Weaponscon was that you could register your child as a weapon. In fact, I heard it from Irv himself. LLOYD PENNEY. I thought medical problems tie together fandom these days. At least the fans I know. As for *Amazing*, I hope your fate in life, Lloyd Penney, is to be one of the great editors of *Amazing*. My fingers are crossed. My fate

was to be the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Librarian. FNS is an agency of the Federal government. I received three parties when I left. One was in the Administrator's office. He was the head man. I was wondering how I can get to read *Amazing Stories*. Ah, there's a website.

GRAEME CAMERON. At least, you're not calling the new zine *BLURB* or putting out the *BLURB* Zine. Also, I agree with your love of old horror films. I wish someone made a video out of the 60's television "Arsenic and Old Lace" with Boris Karloff. Or is the TV version of that "Arsenic and Old Lace" making the rounds as a video? Fandom's too old to indulge in fights even for the purpose of supporting fandom. At least, our part of fandom is. BILL PLOTT. I wouldn't find going to a shop for clothes an interesting experience. However, my brother and his wife have. No trip is complete until they visit a giant department store. The cute cops are to attract some women. I guess Scandinavian series are better for not trying to attract that audience. You tempt me to watch the *Flash* movie. Movies with comic book characters can be great if you ignore all their illogic. I've been watching *The Boys* on Amazon prime and enjoying it as long as it doesn't overdo the violence.

Somehow I watched a little of *Fox and Friends*. The object is to denounce prosecution of Trump as merely political without getting involved in the details. Like whether his behavior was criminal. On the other hand, I met a January 6 prosecutor who believed the jury for the Jean Carroll case was crazy. [You don't say why. So ... why did he feel that way? No decent society would tolerate the presence within it of a man who forces himself on a woman. That a significant percentage of ours would call him Leader speaks worse than ill of us.]

X

That last note in my LOCs segues nicely into yap on the **2024 Elections** – and its issues, real and *faux*. Probably the phoniest of those is that of Joe Biden's age. A mere half-decade younger than the President, I suppose it's natural for me to argue that it's the quality of the man and his mind that matters, not the number of years of the body maintaining them, but I think it very true. As has been noted, Trump is only 3 years Biden's junior, and speaks such mad drivel that it's clear his wits are nowhere near as informed or sharp or compassionate or able.

The recent state votes on abortion questions inspire progressives; Americans of almost every political stripe don't like having rights taken away. If enough of us recognize that obliterating rights is Trump's whole purpose in life, then America might survive as a constitutional republic.

In the meantime, the trials loom. Sweat, Trump.

XI

Israel.

'Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.' Deuteronomy 32:35.

Gaza.

'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice.' Ephesians 4:31.

I wish the sons and daughters of Abraham strength and wisdom as they find the balance between justice and mercy. War is Hell, and the path through it is thread-narrow.

תפילה לשלום המדינה

אבינו שבשמים, צור ישראל וגואלו, ברח אמת-מדינת-
ישראל, ראשית צמיחת גאלתנו. הגן עליה באברת חסדך
ופרש עליה סכת שלומך ושלח אורך ואמתך לראשיה,
שריה ויועציה, ותקנם בעצה טובה מלפניך. חוק את
ידי מגני ארץ קדשנו, והנחילם אליהנו ושיעה ועטרת
נצחון תעטרם, ונתת שלום בארץ ושמחת עולם ליושביה.
ואת אחיננו כל בית ישראל, פקד-נא בכל ארצות פגוריהם,
ותוליקם מהרה קוממיות לציון עירך ולירושלים משכן
שמן, פכתוב בתורת משה עבדך: אם יהיה נדחך בקצה
השמים, משם יקבצך יהוה אליהך ומשם יקחך: והביאך
יהוה אליהך אל הארץ אשר-ירשו אבותיך וירשתה,
והיטבך והרבך מאבתך: ויחד לבבנו לאהבה וליראה
את שמן, ולשמר את כל דברי תורתך, ושלח לנו מהרה
בנדוד משיח צדקך, לפדות מחבי קץ ושועתך.
הופע בהדר גאון ענה על כל יושבי תבל ארצך, ויאמר
כל אשר נשמה באפו: יהוה אלהי ישראל מלך ומלכותו
בכל משלה, אמן סלה.

