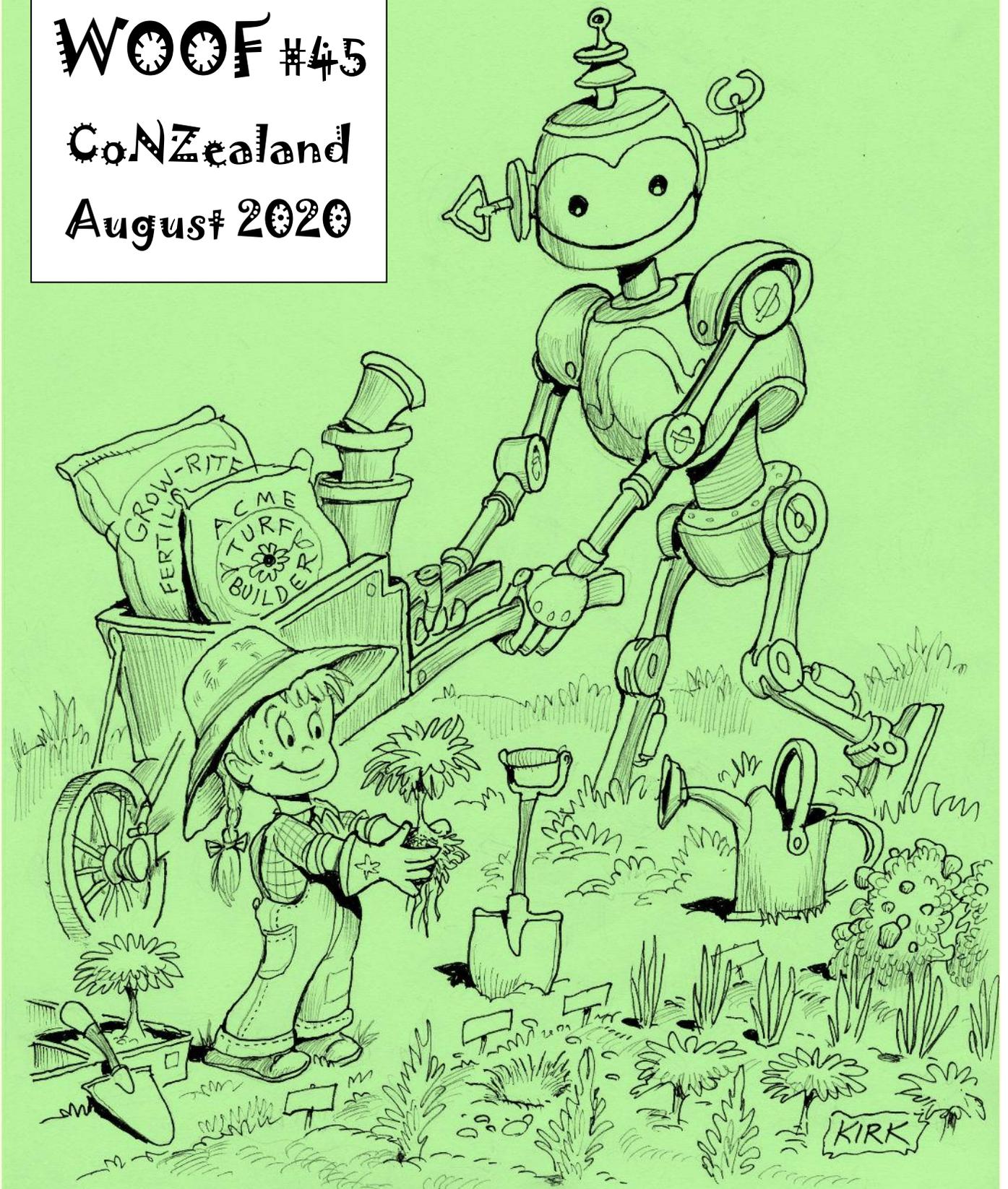


WOOF #45

CoNZealand

August 2020



WOOF #45 2020

Worldcon Order of Fan-Editors **CoNZealand**

Bruce Pelz: Founder * Guy Lillian III: Official Editor

John Hertz: Unseen Master * TIM KIRK, Cover Artist

Collected at 1390 Holly Avenue Merritt Island FL 32952

GHLIII@yahoo.com * 318-218-2345 * GHLIII Press Pub #1285

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Congratulations, contributors: this is the largest WOOF mailing, ever, with new contributors and great variety: several perzines, fannish history and lots of exceptional art. Please note Roger Hill's request for missing back issues! Special thanks to Tim Kirk for his spiffy cover illo, Murray Moore for the CoNZealand newsletters, and to John Hertz for guidance and encouragement throughout. So: *who wants to edit WOOF in D.C.?*

W.O.O.F.

Prepared for the World Order of Fandom



By stf reader John Thiel, whose address is 30 N. 19th Street,
Lafayette, Indiana 47904,, email kinethiel@mymetronet.net



sad puppy

I assume by its name that WOOF has some connection with the sad puppies who turned up at the Hugo confabs, and so I show that I have a picture of a sad puppy so that people will know that I'm into this thing. This is the cover of my zine; the next thing

you'll see is the first page. 2. There is a dog here too.



Notice it comes running, eager to get in on things. It is such a dog as you might wish to own.

Has there ever been before, to your understanding, a first page labelled “2”?

Can you define the paradox involved?

I was contacted late and asked for a fanzine, and I put one together as best I could, having just then completed several fanzines: Event Horizon, Pablo Lennis, Ionisphere, Synergy, Origin, and Surprising Stories. I do a lot of fanzines. But I never have been invited to WOOF before.

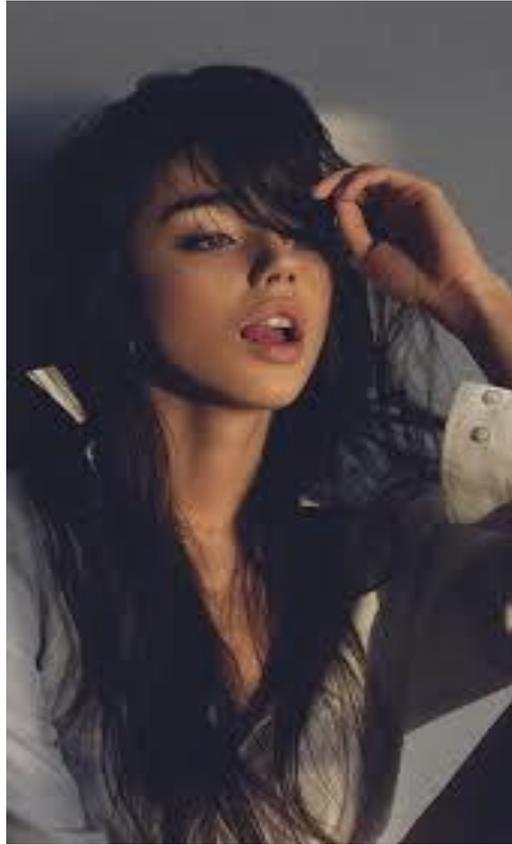
I'm going to do pictures in this one. It's all I've got. Stream of consciousness, I was talking to a girl in Hubbard's Cubbord many years ago and she was boasting to have kept her virginity. I said, "Why would you want to keep that?" She said, "It's all I have." Okay, the free association is on the subject of having not very much. She put it to good use, recalling more about it. She married a fellow who would not have married her had she not been a virgin. The fellow was known as "The Long-Legged Mother" around

3. Hubbard's, a name he claimed placed him above others.

Back to the picto-fiction files. You will find the rest of my pictures to be science fiction. Like these of space women:



4. And here's just a pretty woman:



Now here's a space walk.\\:



5. Let's face it, here's another woman:



I have a cosmic mind. What do I do now?





6. Who, you?



Have you ever seen Pluto looking this good? It's springtime there.



"Hi, cats! Glad you could tune in?"



Pondering to find a clue, what to send when Woof is due

7. I hope the other faneds and readers will treat my little oneshot gently and with some manner of respect. I did not have much on hand when asked to send something for the mailing. But I do like attempting to contribute something to it. Here you have it.



8.The name of the one-shot?



The Cosmic Mind.

At least, it has the spirit of science fiction, or one form of science fiction spirit.

THREE-EYED FROG

And so, for the Worldcon unlike any other, from the velvet incarceration of my father-in-law's comfy home close by Cape Canaveral, in the squalid grasp of Coronavirus isolation and COVID19 paranoia, greetings to fellow travelers in the Worldcon Organization of Fan-Editors, W.O.O.F., on the occasion of its 2020 collation and distribution.

Well, one hopes there's a collation; one hopes there's a distribution. No reason exists why there couldn't be, since last year's Dublin Worldcon featured a virtual W.O.O.F., proving that such things are possible. But let's admit it: this is a *weird year*. We seclude ourselves at home. We avoid even the most trivial human contact. We maskup to leave our yards. We wash our hands a dozen times a day. *We* – meaning Rosy and myself – carry in our mail by a corner and nuke the envelopes in the microwave before opening them – which reminds me of the time I microwaved an envelope containing a credit card and filled the Greenhouse with the stench of molten plastic. A Facebook friend called me a “doody-head” and another lady said “Bless your heart,” which was worse. But never mind that.

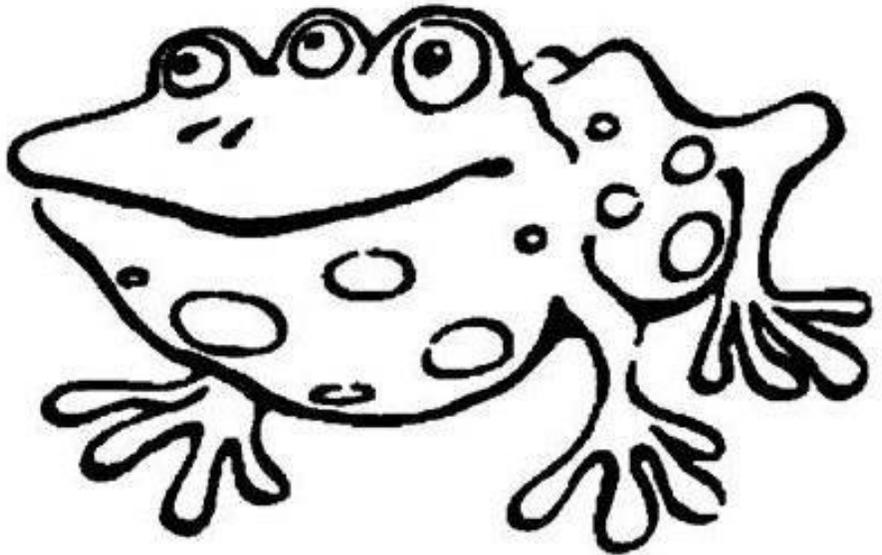
I'm writing this introduction in the early days of May. The disty comments that follow were composed in late March and earliest April. You won't read this until mid-August. By now, with luck, the virus will have subsided enough or a cure has come far enough along to where we can begin to return to normal life. Maybe, with luck, Rosy and I can go on our much-anticipated trip to London, Edinburgh and Paris ... next year.

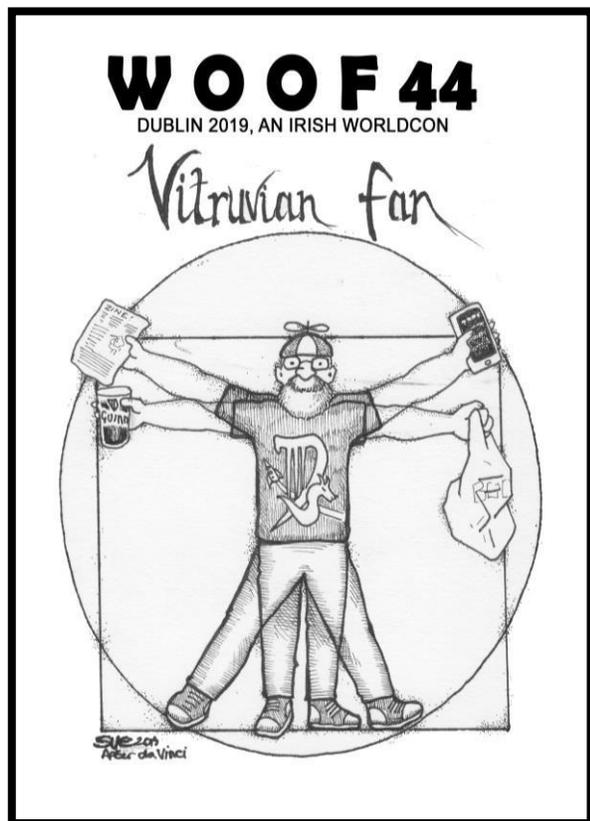
A zine by **Guy H. Lillian III**

For the Worldcon Order of Fan-Eds 2020 / March-August

1390 Holly Avenue, Merritt Island Florida 32952 USA

GHLIII@yahoo.com / 318 218 2345 / GHLIII Press 1273





But in its time. When it's safe. We're handling quarantine now. We can keep on keepin' on..

... COMMENTARY

Cue my annual gripe about WOO F. Among the necessities of any zine for an amateur press association are *mailing comments* on the previous distribution. In the weekly, monthly, bimonthly and quarterly apas to which I've belonged over the last fifty years – and God alive, it *has* been fifty years – mc's, plus personal natter, have been the heart and soul of the medium. But here in Bruce Pelz' seconddumbest idea, the Worldcon Order of FanEditors, the idea is a tad ridiculous. Even if we're consistent contributors, like Roger Hill or Alan Stewart, it's next to impossible to remember what we wrote about in the previous WOO F, and if almost the whole disty is composed of one-time-only contributors, as was the case with Helsinki, what comments they glean are most likely never read, and certainly never rejoined. Nevertheless, we old apahacks see mailing commentary as our duty, so into the

void our comments go, arguments on issues long forgotten, compliments on jokes long expended, in hopes that someone will read what we've written and be sparked to remember ...

WOO F 44 # van Toorn First thing, my compliments on your novel approach to WOO F in 2019. Knowing that a Worldcon in Dublin would be inaccessible to most fan editors, you took WOO F online, enabling fans from o'er the vast Atlantic – and in Alan Stewart's case, the vast *Indian* – to contribute and receive the disty with ease. *This was truly a global effort*. Of course, going digital cost WOO F 44 the act of assembly – the ecstasy of circling a table stacked with fanzines, piling one atop the last. Apa collation is always a community thrill. But the exchange of convenience – and color – for the traditional effort was worth it. Good work, Kees! ## Fun cover by the great Sue Mason! But isn't the lad's left arm a trifle truncated? What extra exercise does his *right* arm get to stretch it so? (Never mind; I was once a young & lonely fan too.)

Ansible 385 # Langford What can I add about *Ansible* except that it's one of the very few *essential* SF fanzines. If you've been around fandom for more than 15 minutes, you know that as well as I do. Those who don't know, check *Ansible* out on line, and don't neglect the home page. It throngs with essential links. Personally, I can't live without "Thog's Masterclass"!

OASFiS Event Horizon # Sanmiguel Gad, the transition to PDF really made a hash out of Juan's careful layout! Fortunately, the Orlando spirit comes through and the writing and photos remain unsullied. Juan is, as I've often said, the preminent Florida fan; his occasional Oasis convention in Orlando is a generation-slucing joy (attendees range from cosplaying kids to Ben Bova; doesn't that about cover it?) and this zine is rich with enthusiasm and info and cool

photos and quality. The costume photos from Worldcon 75 are the best I've seen. Keep it comin', Juan.

ROBO-Rooter # me I love Brad Foster's robots. I've been waiting for Rosy to frame her Foster portrait and mine for our bedroom wall. ## Despite my blood-soaked plea in these pages, no one has yet sent a letter of comment to my last *Challenger*. I fall back, scorned. Come on, pipp! As mailing comments are the sinews of apazines, LOCs lend strength to *genzines* like *Chall*. I hope to publish again this fall; still time to sneak in a word! (By the way, I *might* theme this next issue on Theodore Sturgeon, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of my meeting him. Suggestions, and contributions, solicited with advance gratitude. One idea of my own: a piece on Ted's TV and movie adaptations. I understand he did a slew ... *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Trek*, *Ellery Queen* ... and there's this book called *I, Libertine* ...) ## I whined herein about the lack of "science fiction with *hair* ... challenging ideas set in good writing ... *A Case of Conscience*, for instance." It's not Blish, but it is superb writing on far-ranging ideas: *Machines Like Me* by Ian McEwan. Mine was likely the only Hugo nom the novel received, but it's a rewarding read, trophies or not.

Intermission #97.5 # Engholm So, you created this special WOOFzine at the last minute, at the Worldcon. *Bravo*. Such, as I told Kat Templeton in San Jose, is the true spirit of WOOFdom. Enough with obsessive lunatics such as I, who compose their pubs days, weeks, months (no kidding; today is March 19) in advance! Attend the Worldcon, hear about a collation, find a keyboard, *pub your ish!* Spontaneity is all. ## That said, I read your plea to join EAPA (the Electronic Apa) with sympathy but reluctance. I've been in monthly apas before – LASFAPA, for outstanding instance – and have no objection to electronic zines – as long as I keep paper file copies of all my stuff, that is. Nothing prevents me from heeding your call to its roster. *But* ... to an extent, my home apa, SFPA, the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, has spoiled me. Because it is a regional group, and its members have traditionally gathered at DeepSouthCon and other Southern events, SFPA was an in-person community from *before* Jump Street, and remains so today. LASFAPA, my other longterm apa, became much the same – in a more shall-we-say *frenzied* fashion, betokening our reckless youth and the fact that the lotus-eaters were more evenly split between male and female. Anyway, the amateur press involvement has been, for me, an occasionally very personal – *take your flagyl* – experience. (Don't even ask me about Golden Apa's New Orleans visit!) I am now a married man on Social Security. Dare I venture into another fannish cluster? Have I the strength? (Blast it, Arhvid; you've got me considerng it!) ## A fascinating story of the founding of Swedish SF fandom. Serious idealists, including science fiction reader and future Nobelist Harry Martinson, hoping to escape a world brinkling on the brink of nuclear destruction – a scenario straight out of "Third from the Sun." The *Twilight Zone* dream of a spaceship to trundle its heroes away seems silly to us, now, but imagining the terror Hiroshima must have brought people of the time, it's understandable. Anyway, very cool story. ## Also cool: your tale on the first Swedish fanzine, *Vår Rymd* ("Our Space"). I love to read old zines – "the way the future was." Makes you feel like you're in *cosa nostra* for those people, so long and not-so-long ago. Good for you for preserving precious history.

Newt News #o # Vanek (Jan Jr.) From the U.K. to Sweden we drive southeast to the Czech Republic, betokening another quality of WOOF: its species-wide *scope*. Australia awaits. It's especially cool to see a zine from a Czech fan, as one of the few perfect people I've ever known comes from Prague. (She's an academic, not a fan, with a *curriculum vitae* a mile long.) It's also



of *Křičím*: „*To jsem já.*“ *Příběhy českého fanzinu od 80. let po současnost / I Shout “That's Me!”* *Stories of the Czech fanzine from the '80s till now*, it's obvious that the urge to seal our love for SF in print is universal. As one who speaks English, and that badly, plus a few words of the Spanish I studied for 8 years, I greatly admire such bilingual projects as you mention; I know how hard it is to express a thought in two tongues and make sense in both. (Cue: Rosetta Stone.) Your dry sense of humor on the subject of making oneself understood to those of a foreign language shows in your footnotes, not to mention your story of being accosted by a Scottish strumpet, and is delightful. ## Daily my wife Rose-Marie slaves on her father's e-publishing imprint, Greenhouse Scribes; she'd love to join a proposed Worldcon panel on the topic of editing and designing books. ## When you see this WOOF mailing, you'll see my zine of zine reviews, *The Zine Dump*. Since you write with such erudition and humor, I'd be tickled pink to mention future issues of *Newt News* therein. Place your pub on eFanzines or e-send it, please!

Serzine # Coxon & Sheriff No offense, John, but this layout is a mess. Neat portrait and cockatoo, though. ## You talked me into it! Even though I don't usually review blogs, I'll mention *Lulzine*, your new “SF-comedy-based” publication, in the next *Zine Dump*. It looks absolutely splendid, great art and nifty tech. Only objection: the light-blue type is hard for me to read. *Pfft!* I'm sure it'll be worth the strain.

Laurraine's WOOFzine 2019 # Tutihasi Something especially pretty about *cactus flowers* ... it's the contrast of the purty blossoms with the bitter turf they spring from. The blue posies on your cover are gorgeous. ## Sad to lose pets. Twice in the last year we thought our male yorkie Pepper had set his paws upon the Rainbow Bridge – once due to a bladder stone and once from exposure to spilled auto fluid. Each time he bashed his way back to us, ornery and mad for treats. Our female, Ginger, persists in good health, defended from mayhem by sheer sweetness. Unlike *el Peps*, she doesn't let her 14 years slow her down. ## Your San Jose Worldcon report is thick with names. I regret that ours aren't among them. I wrote up the con (and our trip there and back) in *The Cathartic Route*, which sits on eFanzines with most of my other *Routes* (Worldcon reports). Please check it out. ## *Purrsonal Mewsings* is a good genzine, richly illustrated by Mike's terrific nature photos. Happy 43rd anniversary, by the way.

Yellow Matter Custard #27> # Blackmon You open this zine with too long a list of R.I.P.s. It may make for glum reading, but if WOOF is to be a fannish yearbook, it's a necessary downer. Of these names, I recognize far too many. Ellen Vartanoff ... wonderful girl, what a loss that was. And Gary Tesser, the silly secular saint, as kind a guy as ever goofed his way across the planet. Next year, I wonder how many fannish victims of coronavirus will be mentioned ... ## It's a funny thing about paper apas. SFPA, which I mentioned before, is prospering, producing bimonthly 400-page-+ mailings without fail; its membership is friendly and when we manage to gather, as at San Jose, a good time is had by all. Our old snortin' grounds LASFAPA keeps on truckin', although – as you see in my comment to Engholm, our youthful juices flow not as freely as once they did *ahem*. Yes, blogs rule – for now – but the zine, be it hectographed, dittographed, mimeographed, xrogr- ... xeroxed or whatever, remains supreme. ## There's a happy mention: Joe Siclari and Edie Stern. They visit the Greenhouse whenever they're in Florida, and it's always a happy, full-on fannish evening. Their work on preserving the fanzines of the past merits a Fan GoHship for them; some bid should get to it!



I envy you attending a reading by Pete Hamill (although at first I thought you meant *Mark* Hamill). Fine, tough writer. For some reason his name sparks mention of my current favorite non-SF author, crime fictioneer Don Winslow, whose Cartel trilogy and other work is both literate and unstintingly honest. (Yes, that means violent.) ## My fingers bleed green with envy over the plays you've experienced; as far as I'm concerned, theatre is the major reason New York exists. (Pizza-by-the-slice is another.) When Broadway closed down for the virus early this year, I really appreciated that we were in for a bad time. ## I agree about the need for *manned* missions to other worlds – I want to see a Mars landing before I give up the ghost – but it isn't really true that the public imagination doesn't sometimes embrace robots we send into space. Look at the joy Hubble has engendered, and the hoots of delight that greeted *this* little fella. (I take it we all remember Sojourner?)

Report from Hoople #137.446 # Hill Indeed, strong kudos to John Hertz for his efforts on behalf of WOOF – even though he hasn't contributed a zine to the mass in a long while. (C'mon, John: put your money where the motivation is!) Your own steadfastness has been a boon as well, bringing WOOF that sense of apa community I harped on before. ## Genealogy ... surely I've mentioned the deep interest my late stepmother-in-law had in the topic (which is why she eschewed – *gesundheit!* – a grave marker in favor of a memorial tree and a detailed obit in the newspaper), and how our pal Larry Montgomery often devotes much of his SFPazine to his researches. I like to look back over the family tree he did for me and imagine what my greatgreat-grandfathers were like. Maybe, however, it's best to leave such matters alone: one of my great-grandfathers was a lumber auctioneer (John Lillian, a yankee from Indiana) – another a Swede (Carl Ericksen, a Swedish immigrant who stomped grapes) – another a fella I know little about, except for his moustache (Thomas Solomon Johnson, probably a farmer) – and the last ... well, I don't mean to put down "Pap," as they called him, because he was poor, and uneducated, and worked in cotton fields all his life – hard, hot work. But in addition to being a Mason, John Franklin King was also a member of another club, or should I say *klub*: one with white sheet uniforms and white conical caps. My 4-year-old future mama, they said, could always tame him with a bawl. ## #6, #30, 1981, 2006, Denver, Anaheim – these are the mailing numbers, dates and places of collation for the WOOF disties you lack in your collection. We should make it a fandom-wide crusade to obtain copies for you. I was at the '06 con but apparently did no zine for WOOF; I *did* do a zine called *It* for the '81 mailing – a mess; as I say about the similarly-named Stephen King novel, and the movies made from it, I left off half the title – but if I got the disty, I have no idea what I did with it. I might have donated it to the apa collection at the University of Alabama; I've asked Joe Moudry, a SFPA brother who worked there at the time, who to contact, but he doesn't know.

Ytterbium Octoxide August 2019 # Stewart Hi, Alan. With your Australian input, this WOOF encircles the world. ## Well, we see no photos from Dublin in 2014, so I imagine they remain gummed up in the guts of your computer. That happens too often; I always back up, twice. Of course, one time I left all of my flashdrives hooked up to my 'puter overnight, God knows why, and that was of *course* the evening when Russian hackers encrypted the works ... Everything I had was lost – but fortunately, no completed zines. I ran for help to a Microsoft engineer, and he consulted a friend whose computer skills were, shall we say, *spooky* ... but no luck. We blanked everything and started all over again. ## I fondly remember your zine *Thyme*, with its nifty club content and weird numbering. Tell *me* about those fanzine articles you have planned! *Challenger* doesn't publish often, but when it does, its editor – me – wants the best. ## Nice door cats!

The rest of the WOOF 44 post seems to be random sections from several earlier publications, no doubt the fault of wacky PDF conversion. Unless it's meant to be a *collage* of some sort. That's a French word, meaning paste.

WOOFWOOFWOOF WOOFWOOFWOOF WOOFWOOFWOOF WOOFWOOFWOOF

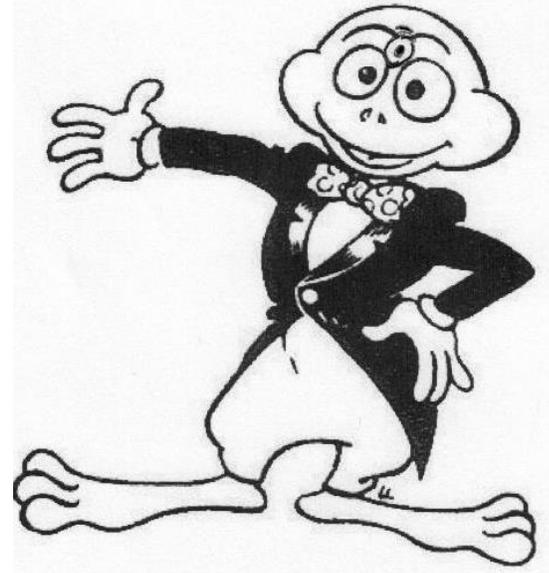
Well, there was a WOOF collection at ConZealand, and I was/am Official Editor. Thanks to ConZealand Exhibits honcho Murray Moore and WOOF cheerleader John Hertz for their encouragement, but now, let's see what the rest of you have to say...

THE W.O.O.F. PAST ... ASSEMBLED BY ROGER HILL (with additions by GHLIII)

	2018	San Jose	#43	Guy Lillian
1976 Kansas City #1 Bruce Pelz			75	
1977 Miami Beach #2 Bruce Pelz	2019	Dublin	44	Kees van Toorn ~64
1978 Phoenix #3 Bruce Pelz				
1979 Brighton #4 Bruce Pelz				
1980 Boston #5 Fred Patten				
1981 Denver #6 Dick Smith ?				
1982 Chicago #7 Dick Smith* 75				* With the help of Robert Sacks.
1983 Baltimore #8 Dick Smith* 52				
1984 Anaheim #9 Dick Smith* 42				
1985 Melbourne #10 Jack Herman 16				
1986 Atlanta #11 Robert Sacks 23				
1987 Brighton --- --- -				

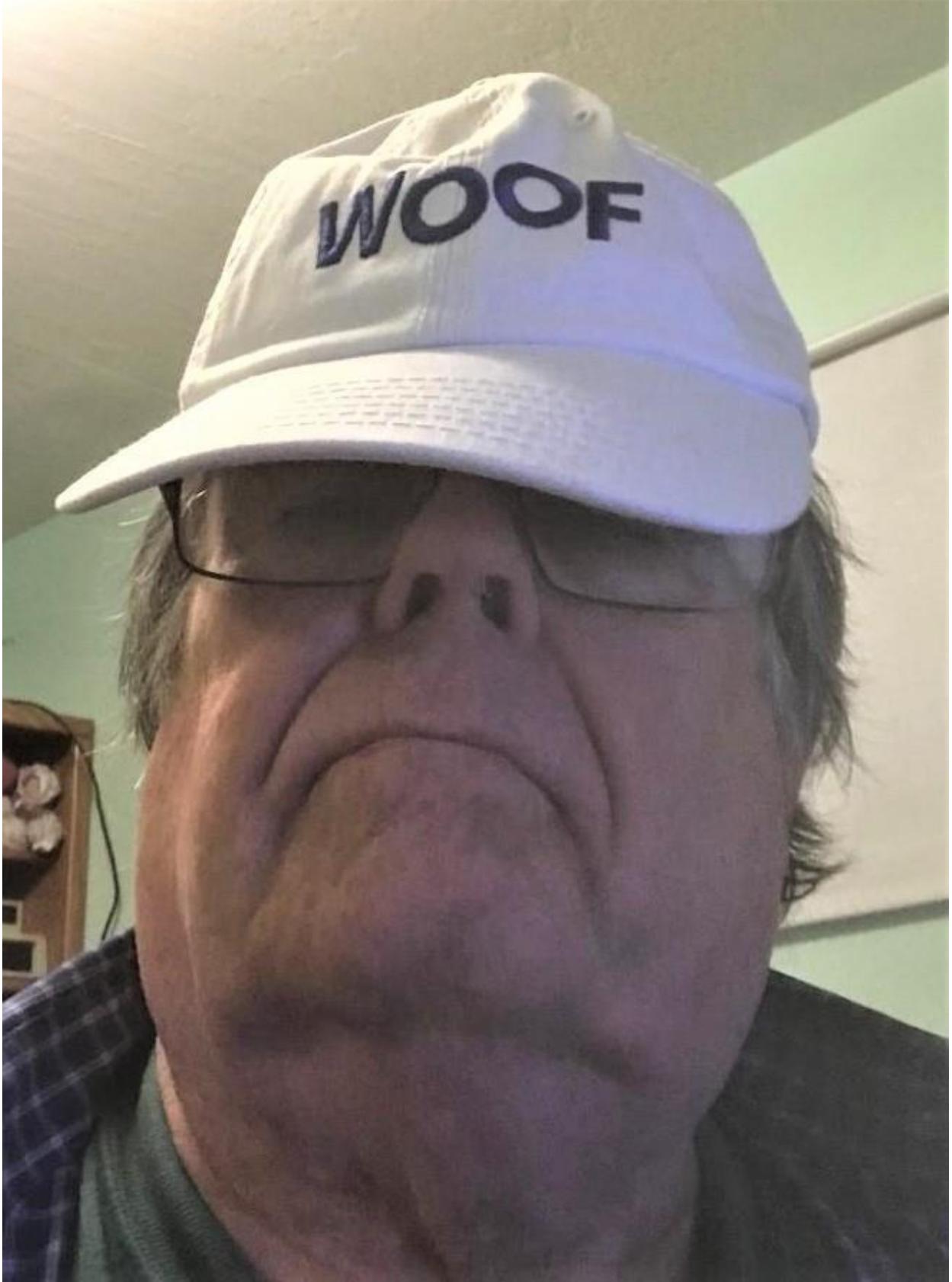
1988 New Orleans #12/13** Robert Sacks 44				
1989 Boston #14 Robert Sacks 29				
1990 The Hague #15 Robert Sacks 8				
1991 Chicago #16 Victoria Smith 29				
1992 Orlando #17 Victoria Smith 7				
1993 San Francisco #18 Victoria Smith 11				
1994 Winnipeg #19 Victoria Smith 37				
1995 Glasgow #20 Victoria Smith 19				
1996 Anaheim #21 Victoria Smith 23				
1997 San Antonio #22 Victoria Smith 16				
1998 Baltimore #23 Victoria Smith 17				
1999 Melbourne #24 Alan Stewart ~34				
2000 Chicago #25 Victoria Smith ?				
2001 Philadelphia #26 Victoria Smith ?				
2002 San Jose #27 Victoria Smith ?				
2003 Toronto #28 Victoria Smith ?				
2004 Boston #29 Victoria Smith ?				
2005 Glasgow --- --- ---				
2006 Anaheim #30(?) Victoria Smith(?) ?				
2007 Yokohama --- --- ---				2008
Denver --- --- ---				
2009 Montreal 2009 Lloyd Penney 22				
2010 Melbourne #35 Alan Stewart 9				
2011 Reno #36 Randy Byers 76				
2012 Chicago #37 Chris Garcia ~62				
2013 San Antonio 2013 John Purcell 108				
2014 London --- --- ---				
2015 Spokane 2015 Andy Hooper 33				
2016 Kansas City Murray Moore 54				
2017 Helsinki 2017 John Purcell & Shimo Suntila 67				

** WOOF #12 encountered obstacles in Brighton and was not collated; contributions were saved by Robert Sacks and combined with \#13 in New Orleans. Separately, \#12 and \#13 would have 31 and 13 pages.



So ... who's up for W.O.O.F. 46 in **2021? Start now! Pub your ish!**

UP YOUR HOSE WITH A RUBBER NOSE!



Askew #30

July 2020

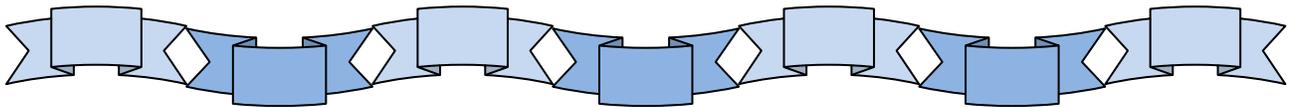
July 2020

Edited and produced by John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845

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Art credits: clip art – 1; Teddy Harvia – 2; Teddy Harvia & Brad Foster – 6.



The world – especially America – keeps getting worse. Daily assaults on our mental and emotional abilities to understand and accommodate the various major events here on planet Earth dare us to rise to the basic challenge of human existence. Pandemics, wars, politics, deaths, and ... I could make a considerably long listing here, but don't want to do that. However, recent events have really hit home, and I would like to expand upon the following posting I made to my Facebook page on May 28th, 2020. Yes, this regards the protests and rioting in Minneapolis following the death of George Floyd on May 25th.

When getting political gets personal

As a Minnesota native, seeing what happened in Minneapolis broke my heart. Yes, I have a lot of friends living in the area of the city where all this went down - my brother included - so the rioting and property destruction still worries me for their lives and homes. I hope that everyone is safe now that this appalling situation finally seems to have calmed down in the last couple months.

The state has definitely shifted in its overall attitude since I've left. Growing up in St. Louis

Park - a suburb affixed to the western edge of Minneapolis - I have always considered the Twin Cities a fairly progressive, prosperous, and relatively quiet and decent metropolitan area. As a teenager, my political heroes were senators Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy, and Governor Wendell Anderson; later in life Senator Paul Wellstone joined that list. When I was in high school I went door-to-door around my neighborhood handing out brochures for Dr. B. Robert Lewis when he was campaigning for the Minnesota state senate; the same year I canvassed for state Representative Pete Petrafeso. Both



were members of the DFL (Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party). All of those people I just mentioned believed in and worked for equal rights and civil treatment of everyone.

All of them would be appalled at what is now happening in Minneapolis and around the country. We should be much further along than this unlawful mistreatment of blacks or any other members of our communities. This greatly saddens me, and it hurt to see my hometown in flames.

My hope is that the police officer who committed the initial act of excessive violent restraint that resulted in the death of George Floyd be brought to trial quickly on the charge of murder. It is not right that one overzealous police officer brings such destructive anger and property loss from his actions. He must be held accountable, and for any kind of progress to be made in bringing racial hatred to an end, the authorities in Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota must act swiftly and firmly. The Minneapolis police commissioner's office needs to act accordingly to the law and not protect one of its own.

Additionally, the rioting doesn't help matters either. While I certainly can understand the anger over the constant mistreatment of black Americans, I don't think rioting helps at all. Peaceful protesting, yes: get the word out that this behavior by police against blacks is wrong, that it must stop, and is unacceptable by officers of the law. For that matter, I can't stand rioting either. Like I said, I can understand the anger, feeling the need to strike back, but violence begets violence, and delays any chance for civil discourse. I do not condone violence on either side of this issue, but in order to make it stop, everyone must open their eyes, their minds, and their hearts to see what we are doing to each other.

It is the year 2020. In the midst of a planetwide pandemic claiming hundreds of thousands of lives and infecting millions more, maybe - just maybe - the human race might just get a clue that we need to pull ourselves together, not pull ourselves apart.

The weekend immediately after this tragic event saw the nighttime rioting and looting that would burn down Uncle Hugo's and Uncle Edgar's Bookstores in Minneapolis, which were properties of longtime fan Don Blyly; Dreamhaven Books, owned and operated by Greg Ketter, was also broken into, suffering damage from that and the aborted effort of someone trying to set fire to the store. There is now an official GoFundMe page on Facebook for the Uncles Hugo and Edgar stores, so here is the link for this:

https://www.gofundme.com/f/let-us-help-save-uncle-hugo039s?pc=em_dn_postdonateshare_o&rcid=r01-15913113013-66e2c39eb5b5402a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=p_email%2B5102-48hr-donor-share&fbclid=IwAR29IbGnx8HHxIajrMrLgTk7QwvYVaB2T7r-r-Hz4rc2SvflEq7ukbEeOA

Please know that by posting this GoFundMe link I am not minimizing the loss of George Floyd's life and the cause that these protestors are fighting for: equality not only before the law, but simply to have a decent chance to live a life in which every human being can provide and care for their families. It boggles my mind that in this day and age that not everyone gets it: we are all here together, and differences in color, race, religion, sexual orientation, or cognitive abilities should never blockade another human being's rights to live a decent life. What is so damned hard to understand?



Virtual Conventions

Well, since Valerie and I both did not bother to pay for supporting memberships for the upcoming Virtual CoNZealand Worldcon, we don't need to worry about voting for Hugo Awards and other such nonsense. I do admit to being curious as to how this massive experiment will work out, but I have my doubts that it will be as successful as an in-person, real world sf convention. I wish the committee all the best of luck in this endeavour, though.

Then during the last week of June I learned that ArmadilloCon 42 will indeed be happening, but online. So, since that is a much smaller effort than a Worldcon – although it's still a technical marvel to me – we are going to do that over the weekend of August 28-30, 2020. If anybody else is interested in partaking of the online festivities of Austin, Texas' annual literary science fiction convention, it is on Facebook, and you can even Google the convention and find the homepage. Or you could even click on this link:

<http://armadillocon.org/d42/> This is the latest word as of June 24, 2020, and I would not be surprised that updates will be forthcoming Real Soon Now since the projected virtual con is now one month off. My plans are to partake of this opportunity, and I hope many of you will do likewise.

skewed results

*This is the section where letters from readers are shared and commented upon where applicable. Since the previous issue contained the Fanzine Activity Achievement (FAAn) Awards listing and vote tabulations, that was a major topic covered, which is to be expected. In fact, there was a significant conversation in about these awards in general – category definitions, voting methodologies, etc. – in Nic Farey's Best Perzine winner **This Here...** for a while, and that's good. I strongly recommend readers go to efanzines.com and read through that zine's most recent issues (April to July 2020) for the discussion. Lots of good idea sharing in there.*

*Once again, correspondent's content will be in regular Calibri size 11 font like this, while my comments shall be in **italicized bold Times New Roman size 12 font like this**. Onward we go!*

Steve Jeffery
44 White Way
Kidlington, Oxfordshire
United Kingdom OX5 2XA

31 March 2020

Thanks for sending *Askew 29* with the Corflu Heatwave voting figures, which put Nic Farey's comments in *This Here... 27* into perspective.

I'm not going to get too involved into the whole argument about categories. I've already replied to Nic on this and pointed out, as you say that here, that in hindsight you can always recast some of the votes cast into other, equally eligible, categories and get a slightly different final outcome. It's hardly a surprise, and someone else could equally do the same thing and come up with yet a different prospective outcome. It's not so much the fannish equivalent of a VAR (Video Assistant Referee) appeal, as it doesn't overturn the original decision, but perhaps more like the pundits at the end of a game disputing the referee and linesmen decisions after the event.

Anyway, the results are what they are, and it's good to see the numbers.

I am though, rather disappointed at the number of voters being quite so low this year again. An improvement on last year's voting, but not by much, especially given the number of people who attend Corflu. I'm really sorry now that I couldn't make it, but who could predict the shit that would hit the fan so shortly after. In fact, just as it was wrapping up. I spend my birthday this year in lockdown, having been sent home to work remotely a few days before. I hope no one ended up stranded and unable to get home. *{Everybody did, thank Ghu. Let's hope Corflu 38 gets off the ground, too.}*

What I did want to pick up on though was the tone of some of your comments (at what I perceived as the tone of some of your comments) to and about Nic at the end.

"and as far as I'm concerned, when they're all done diddling with the numbers, they can diddle with themselves", and later "I don't care where you put your award, as long as you stick it where it belongs."

OK, so you and Nic don't agree on which of several categories some of the votes should go in, and Nic himself would admit that he does not shy away from robust and sometimes abrasive comments in his own zine (and should therefore be prepared to get as good as he gives) but this feels unduly personal. Maybe I'm wrong, and I'm misreading it (and maybe I'm a snowflakey wuss) but it's one thing that puts me off fandom (yeah, we're a family, and not all families love each other unconditionally) and leaves a sour taste.

Hopefully I'm wrong. I just don't find reading this sort of stuff either entertaining or useful.

That said, I'm immensely pleased that so many of my own votes came home to roost in the top three slots of so many categories. Well done.

Steve

Thank you for the positive comments about seeing the numbers for the 2020 FAAns, Steve. Overall, I am very pleased with the results. The questions that Nic raised in his zine – and through an extensive email exchange we had – are valid because of the very nature of fanzines. Sometimes the lines of definition blur between categories, and that was one of the problems: is such-and-such-title a perzine, apazine, both, or what? When tabulating the votes I had to make some decisions – as described last issue – that might have resulted in slightly different totals, but that was then and this is now. The “robust” discussion in This Here... for the past few months should hopefully result in clearer categorical definitions, which is fine by

me. I am all in favor of that. () As for my attempt at being snarky-funny with those comments, it definitely fell flat. That type of attitudinal fan-writing is not my usual writing voice, and I apologized to Nic for my snippiness. Sadly, that sort of thing happens from time to time, and mostly I try to avoid such situations. However, I did feel a bit insulted at some of the things Nic wrote, so I tried getting snarky-funny back at him. Like I said, it did not go over very well. Mea culpa.*

To wrap up, we can't go back and change this year's results, but learn from mistakes made to ensure they don't happen again. Natcherly, these being the FAAn awards we're talking about, there will ALWAYS be differences of opinion about them. Such is the nature of the beast. So it goes.

Lloyd Penney
1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2

7 April 2020

Many thanks for *Askew 29*. Take it from me, it takes a lot of time to recover from running any convention. The after-con responsibilities are huge. Taking equipment back, meeting with the hotel to see if there were any problems and taking the temperature of the attendance to make sure they like what you served up for their membership monies. So far, everyone sounds happy, a minor miracle in itself, so congratulations on a successful convention. And, happy belated birthday, too. *{Thank you very much, Lloyd.}*

I know the COVID-19 quarantine is driving most people up the wall, but most fans I know have a myriad of videos, books, projects, etc. available to them to while away the hours. (As I write, we have been dealing with a neighbourhood-wide power failure for the past 17 hours. We expect that power will not return until about 8pm, so having those other projects will also help. I will write up this letter, get it ready to send to my Bell.net account, and then fire it off to you from there.) *{Got it!}*

The FAAn Award results...hey, I got 3 votes this year! I received not a single one last year, so I am pleased. I have not voted the last couple of years, just not motivated, but somehow, I must get that motivation back. I see you subscribe to a number of SF magazines... I will add here a terribly subjective plug for *Amazing Stories*. I think it's been an excellent product, and I am currently working on another *Amazing Selects* novel.

Next year in Bristol? Have fun, guys, but I will need to build up our transporter credits again. We really want to go back to England, but our trip last year cost close to Can\$20k, and that kind of funds is out of reach...for now. I have some hopes for some work once the quarantine has been lifted.

Once the power returns, I will get this ready to send to you. Take care, our best to Valerie and the family, and see you with the upcoming and promised *Askance*.

Lloyd

{Your getting votes for Best Letterhack does not surprise me, Lloyd; you have walked off with that award a few times over the years, leaving no doubt as to faneditors and fanzine readers greatly appreciating your steady contributions year after year. We all thank you for ongoing support. Hopefully Corflu Concorde will go on as scheduled, but we shall see. }

Leigh Edmonds
119/29 Stawell Street South
Ballarat East
Victoria, 3350 AUSTRALIA

16 April 2020

Just a quick email to thank you for *Askew 29*. The figures included therein were interesting and I agree with you that the results came out well. Of course, I would think so since, as I recall, I voted for most of the winners.



I may be an early riser but don't put me on any programming before I've had my coffee.

I caught a few sessions of Corflu on the interweb, mostly well after the event because of the time difference. You are right, Bill Burns presentation was mesmerizing. In my experience of conventions, the best ones I've been to have had no more than fifty members and Corflu was an excellent convention from what I've read. That was the feeling that came over the interweb too. And, of course, you may go down in history for running the last convention before the Plague hit. I'm glad that I didn't attend; if I had I would no doubt have been stuck somewhere in the US and then, when I finally got back here, end up stuck in a hotel room in

Sydney (of all places) for two weeks with a guard at the end of the corridor to make sure nobody had any fun. What an appalling thought.

So, on top of running a convention, tallying up the votes of a major fannish award and converting your teaching over to on-line, you also read all those books? If there was a 'Human Dynamo' FAAn award you would win by a landslide.

Leigh

*{Golly! Thank you so much for the long-distance feedback, Leigh. I was wondering about the quality of the Livestream during the convention, so this is good to hear. The weekend after I went to Rob Jackson's YouTube page to watch some of the programming and was pleased with the recordings. Well, not exactly *all* of them; my little "concert" is best enjoyed by turning the volume down to nil. Turn it back up when Howard Waldrop gets up to tell his story. When he's done, back down goes the volume for my last song. Other than that, the recordings turned out great. Many thanks to Rob Jackson for making this possible.}*

Ray Palm

raypalmx@gmail.com

3 May 2020

This caught my attention:

“Therefore, I stand by these results, and believe that all the winners are worthy of their awards. That includes Nic Farey’s *This Here...*, which obviously impressed a lot of the voters. It is a damned fine personal fanzine, and he deserves the honour because he has worked very hard on that zine. So enjoy the plaque, Nic. Hang it proudly on your wall at home. Or in your cab. I don’t care where you put your award, as long as you stick it where it belongs.”

Gee, did you ever consider a career in international diplomacy? On the rare occasion that someone really irks me I pass on the mealy-mouthed politeness. *{See my comments to Steve Jeffery above regarding this.}*

But what really fixated my attention was your mention of auctioning off your dentures. Now that’s the type of story perfect for my ezine. Any chance of a short interview via email about the event possibly with photos?

Ray

{The latest issue of your fanzine, The Ray X X-Rayer #150 now on efanzines, has the story of how that auction item came to pass. That was a bit of silliness that made Corflu Heatwave fun.}

I ALSO HEARD FROM

Leybl Botwinik, Pat Charnock, Nic Farey, Jerry Kaufman, Guy H. Lillian III, Ian Millstead, George Phillies, Andrew I. Porter. Thank you, one and all.

Well, that should do it for this issue. The last page is an unabashed advert for the upcoming WOOF collation at this year’s SF WorldCon in New Zealand – sort of – asking for contributions to this annual WorldCon APA (amateur press association). I have a short contribution in the works (two pages, most likely) to send to Guy Lillian, who is apparently this year’s Official Editor. The deadline is fast approaching (August 6th), so if you’re interested in doing so, act fast.



W.O.O.F.

45: *Pub your ish!*

Guy Lillian III / Worldcon Order of Fan-Eds / Aug. 2020 CoNZealand

GHLIII,O.O.F.yahoo.com

GHLIII Press Publication #1284

The World Science Fiction Convention approaches – and so does collation of the 2020 edition of W.O.O.F. – the Worldcon Order of Fan-Eds! Like the Worldcon itself, W,O,O.F. is on-line this year – but like every year, we want *every* fan editor and fan writer to contribute!

So do a fanzine – tell us about your year, your quarantine, your cons, your clubs, your books, your movies. Review last year’s W.O.O.F. and respond to the zines there! (I’ll Dropbox a copy to you on request.) Do whatever you want! W.O.O.F. has been described as fandom’s yearbook – so be part of it!

The deadline is ~August 6, right after CoNZealand. We’re hoping to include the con newsletter, announcements and “oneshots”; **Daniel Spector** will collect zines done on site and scan them for the mailing. Earlier zines and publications done outside of CoNZealand’s bailiwick, e-mail them to the address above. An e-copy of the completed disty will be en route to you ASAP (print copies *will* be available).

If you can’t avoid hard copy and must submit a physical zine, the address is **1390 Holly Ave., Merritt Island FL 32952**. No problem scanning your pages, but please mail extra early. For time’s a’wastin’! W.O.O.F. wants you! *Pub your ish!*

Illo by the great Vaughn Bode.



Little
Passport

It's

been a year, right?

2020 has been crazy, and so much more crazy as time has gone on. A lot of folks are struggling, which makes me feel even more guilty as this is my ideal life!

Truly, I love it. Rarely having to leave the house, folks keeping their distance. Work is a dream because I don't have anyone looking over my shoulder, so if I wanna write in the middle of the day, I can! If I wanna work from midnight to 8am, no problem! I don't have an hour commute, I don't have to listen to my podcasts through headphones, and I get lots of time for doin' me stuff.

Like painting.

I've taken up painting, largely starting because there was an issue of *Journey Planet* (which is just now about to come out!) that was all about Pen & Ink. I had little to contribute, but wanted to do something, and I had purchased a bunch of ink for Vanessa, I took it, since she wasn't using it, and started doing little things for the zine.

Then she told me there were oils downstairs.

And gouache in a cabinet in the living room.

I was off to the races. I figured I would do things with a gimmick, because I can do nothing the right way, and would squeeze the paint directly on to a piece of paper, then press a piece of paper on top of it, rub it around, and end up making two largely the same paintings.

And I might do this three or four times, mixing and matching different paintings, so none are really the same, or I would just be a printer. A poor, simple printer.

I've gotten to see a lot more of my kids, which is always a frustrating delight. They're crazy, and adorable, and we're finally making headway on potty-training them. I love them, and after about twenty years of being told I couldn't have kids, I'm glad I did, if only because I can see so much of Vanessa and I in those little monsters. Still, when they cuddle up at 3am, driving an elbow through my spine, I really think I should eat them.

Sadly, it's not been all roses. About 10 people I've known have died of the COVID, and many people I've admired have passed away as well, notable among them Earl Kemp. The passing of Randy Byers rocked me hard because he was a friend, but Earl was more an inspiration. He had been a favorite of my Dad's, *Who Killed Science Fiction?* Was one of the major things I always turned to once I had access. Earl's *el* was a major influence on my zines, and I feel incredibly lucky that both myself and my Dad appeared in its pages. He made it to 90, and what else can we hope for?

Still not ready to talk about Steve Stiles.

Stars stars stars falling left and right. Grant Imahara died of COVID. He was a friend, and on *Mythbusters* and a regular at various media-type cons. Wrestlers haven't been dying as often as in the past, but we lost Rocky Johnson, father of the Rock, who knew my Dad a fair bit. My Gramma died, and that was sad. She and my Pops had a strange and contentious relationship, but she was a lot of fun.

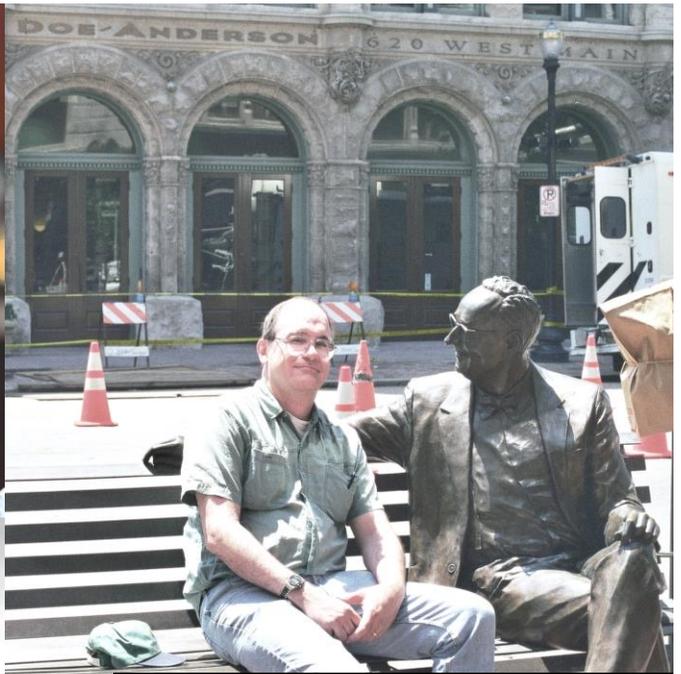
And now, I'm including some of my paintings! I hope to see y'all at cons next year, or the year after, or the year after. I will save you some, and if you send me your address, I'll even send you one now!

We're still doing zines! **Journey Planet** is doing an issue on King Arthur, and Cops in Science Fiction, **The Drink Tank** is doing Super Hero Teams, Alice in Wonderland, and Audio Dramas, and **Claims Department** is doing PUNK! If you wanna write for any of those, I'm at johnnyeponymous@gmail.com

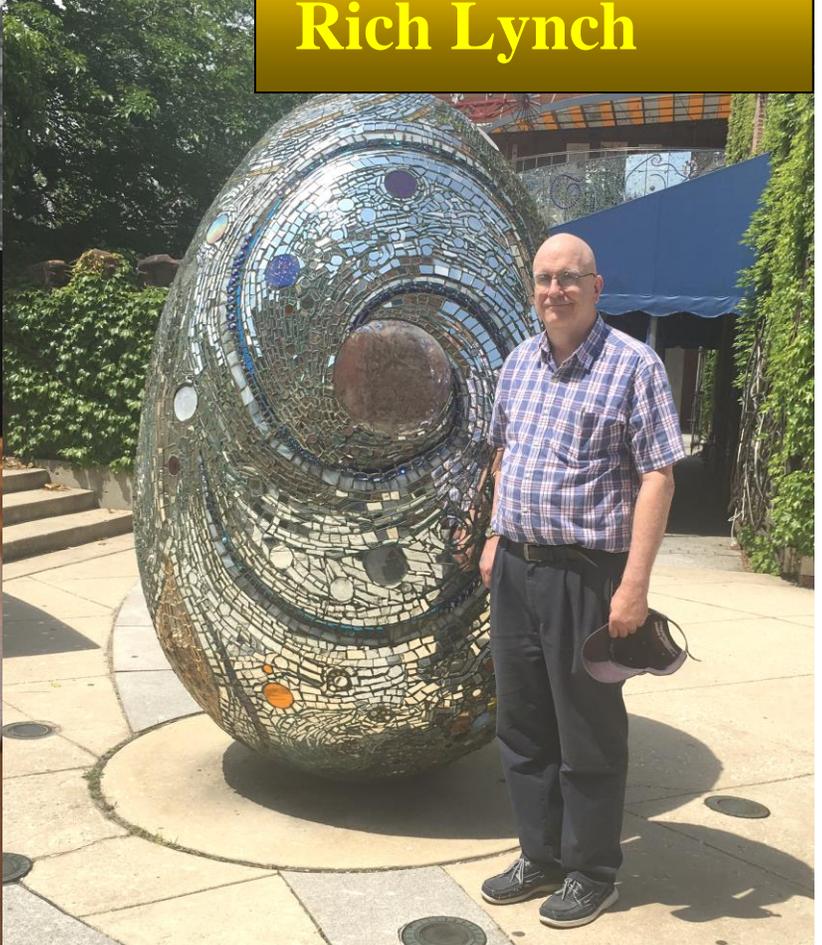
Chris







**My Back
Pages 24
Rich Lynch**



My Back Pages 24

articles and essays by Rich Lynch

Welcome to the 24th installment of my personal time capsule. This issue is being assembled in the middle of a pandemic lockdown, and I'll have a bit more to say about that shortly. With all the crowd-size restrictions now in effect there's not been much in the way of sporting events, so I'll use this opportunity to pay homage to some famous 24s of the sports world. And there are a lot of them: Kobe Bryant, Jeff Gordon, Ken Griffey Jr., Bill Bradley, Jimmy Wynn, Rickey Henderson, Sam Jones, Rick Barry, Willie Wood, Miguel Cabrera, Charles Woodson, Dwight Evans, Chris Chelios, Walter Alston, Manny Ramírez, Tony Pérez, Early Wynn, Lenny Moore, Moses Malone, Spencer Haywood, Robinson Canó, Lou Brock, Tim Howard, and Barry Bonds.

And also, here's a shout out to my favorite no. 24 – the great “Say Hey Kid”, Willie Mays. As you'll read in the first article of this collection, I've actually met him! Well, sort of.

Rich Lynch
Gaithersburg, Maryland
June 2020

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‘Worldcon’, ‘Hugo Award’, and ‘NASFiC’ are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society.

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P.O. Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885 USA; [rw_lynch \(at\) yahoo \(dot\) com](mailto:rw_lynch@yahoo.com)
Previous issues are archived at efanzines.com and fanac.org

The Day I Met Willie Mays

I remember that it was my friend Rick who came up with the idea: “Hey, wanna go see a baseball game?”

It was the summer of 1973 and I’d been hanging out at the college radio station, wondering what I was going to do with myself over the upcoming Independence Day extended holiday. Back then I was finishing up work on my Masters Degree at Clarkson College of Technology in Potsdam, New York. There wasn’t a whole lot going on in Potsdam in July – it’s located way up in the wilderness north of the Adirondack Mountains and in the summers, after most of the students had left town, they pretty much rolled up the streets. There are two colleges in Potsdam, the other being a campus of the State University of New York, and that’s where Rick was taking a few summer courses. The radio station, WNTC (the ‘NTC’ standing for ‘Northern Twin Colleges’), played rock music, about half current and half from the 1950s and 1960s. Rick and I were DJs, both of us probably spending way too much time on-air instead of studying.

But there would be no studying for us over the holiday break. Or DJ-ing either for that matter. Instead, on the morning of July 5th, I met up with Rick at the radio station and we headed off on a day trip to the nearest Major League Baseball city. For those not all that familiar with the geography of New York State, it’s probably about a seven hour drive from Potsdam down to New York City – more than a bit inconvenient for a day trip. But back then there was a much closer option. Just a bit more than two hours by car, up to the northeast, is the city of Montreal. And on July 5th, *Les Expos* were hosting the New York Mets.

Back in 1973, the Mets were one of the better teams in baseball. They had some very fine pitching, including future Hall of Famer Tom Seaver, and some pretty good if underrated hitters, among them Rusty Staub, who really ought to be in the HoF. And they also had had on their roster, in the final season of his illustrious career, the great Willie Mays. He’d spent most of his 22 years in MLB as a member of the Giants, first in New York and then, when the team relocated, out in San Francisco, and by the early 1970s had hit more home runs than any other player except Babe Ruth. But by the middle of 1972 his baseball skills had declined to the point where the Giants, in a cost-cutting move, traded him and his large salary to the Mets in exchange for a minor league pitcher. That must have been humiliating but it did bring Mays back to the city where he was still immensely popular. And it also created an opportunity for me to see him in person. Which turned out to be a much closer encounter than I could ever have expected.

The Montreal Expos played in a small, fan-friendly place called Jarry Park, located in the corner of a much larger urban green space area which, somewhat confusingly, had the same name. Rick and I arrived there in the early afternoon to buy tickets for the game, and then spent most of the rest of the day checking out what else Jarry Park (the green space, not the stadium) had to offer. Not a whole lot, it turned out, and I remember that we eventually became bored enough that we ended up on a park bench for an hour or so watching a group of old guys play bocce ball. An hour or so before game time we made our way back to the stadium, and that took us past the visiting players entrance just as a big bus pulled up. The Mets players quickly made their way off the vehicle and into the stadium, and the bus pulled away. It had all happened so fast that I hadn’t had time to get my camera out and focused to where I could get a photo.

But a couple of minutes later, just as Rick and I were about ready to continue on to the stadium’s main entrance, a taxi pulled up to a stop and out stepped the one and only Willie Mays.

He had to ring the bell on the door to get somebody to open it from the inside and in the ten seconds or so it took for that to happen, I had my chance to speak to him (from a distance of about 15 feet). It went like this:

Me: “You’re Willie Mays, aren’t you?”

Him: [Dead silence] He was staring at me and probably wondering if he’d ever been asked a dumber question.

Me: “Can I take your picture?”

Him: [Dead silence] By this time the door had opened, but he waited patiently as I fumbled around with camera’s focus and f-stop before I finally took the photo.

And then he entered the clubhouse and the door closed. Rick and I gaped at each other for a few seconds, and then I shouted, “I JUST GOT A PICTURE OF WILLIE MAYS!!!”

After all that, the game itself was fairly anticlimactic. The Mets won, and I remember that Willie got a hit in a late inning Mets rally which put them ahead for good. The drive back to Potsdam got us into town well after midnight and I was dead tired the next day. But it had been worth it. And as for my photo of the esteemed Mr. Mays...

I can’t find it. I’ve looked everywhere, in all my boxes and envelopes of old photographs from over the years, and it’s not there. In the 47 years since that day I’ve had eight changes of residence, including one resulting from a fire, and I’ve come to the conclusion that the photo was either lost or destroyed during one of them. So I’m gonna have to be satisfied with vicariously reliving the experience in my mind, knowing that, geez, it *actually happened!*

And you know what? That’s good enough for me! ☀

Afterword:

The Mets made it all the way to the World Series in 1973 but lost to the Oakland Athletics in seven games. Willie Mays got the very first hit of the Series and also drove in a run during the Mets extra innings Game 2 victory. But when he was in the field he appeared, for the first time in his career, to be a defensive liability and he was benched after the third game of the Series. When he retired, following the Series, he said that “growing old is just a helpless hurt”. I can identify with that.

As for me, I finished my Masters Degree work not very long after that Montreal trip and spent the rest of the summer trying to find employment, which eventually brought me to Chattanooga, Tennessee that October for my first career position (with DuPont). I remember that by then my funds had gotten so low that I’d had to give up my apartment and sleep in the WNTC production studio just to have enough money so I could eat.

WNTC no longer exists. I returned to Potsdam in the mid-1990s to visit my friend Dave Kyle and saw that the building which had housed the radio station had been torn down. It had always been a shoestring operation so learning of its demise wasn’t really much of a shock. But I still have lots of good memories of the place. And of the friends I made there. One of them is Nicki Wasnick, who at the end of 1973 became Nicki Lynch. But that’s another story.

And speaking of another story, here’s one (also involving an outing to a baseball game) that looks back to the summer of 1992...and my closest encounter ever with a U.S. President.

Forty-One

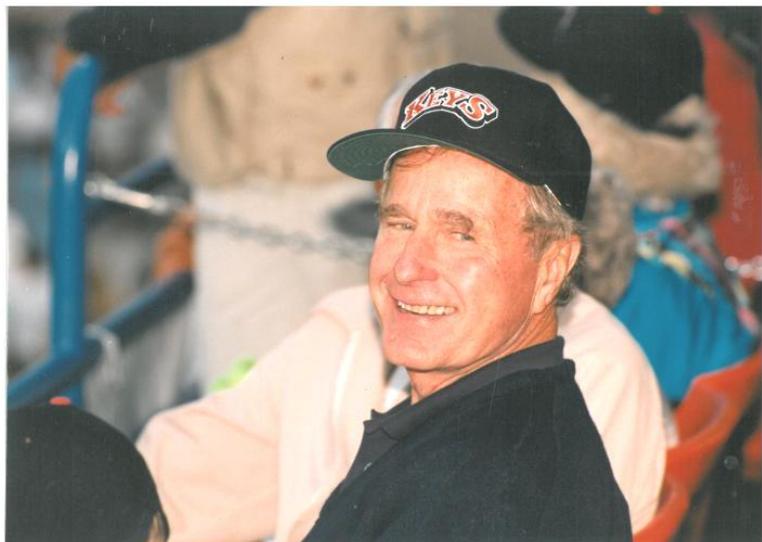
It was more than 26 years ago, back in the late summer of 1992, that I had my closest encounter ever with a United States President. My wife Nicki and I were at Harry Grove Stadium in Frederick, Maryland with some friends for a Frederick Keys minor league baseball game. I had been trying to decide what I wanted to have to eat from one of the concourse food vendors behind the first base dugout when the Marine One presidential helicopter came in for a landing out beyond the right field fence. After a few moments, and while everybody's attention except the players' was diverted away from the ballgame, the door opened, a stairway was deployed, and out of the copter strode the 41st President of the United States, George H.W. Bush.



the view from inside Harry Grove Stadium at about the same place where Nicki and I were sitting

All of us at the ballpark had actually been expecting him. President Bush had been spending the weekend at nearby Camp David, and it was well known that he sometimes attended minor league baseball games. But what had tipped us off that there would be a special visitor that evening was the extraordinary security at the entrance gates to the stadium – airport-style metal detectors and watchful guys in dark suits lurking close by who had hearing devices in their ears. This had caused long queues which slowly wended their way toward the stadium, and there was rampant speculation by people in line around me on who that special visitor would be. When it was finally my turn to empty my pockets and be scanned, I asked the ticket-taker if Mr. Bush would be attending. When he confirmed that it was, I told him, “Good. I would have been annoyed to go through all of this just for Vice President Quayle.” That brought a chuckle from him, and even the Secret Service guy showed a hint of a smile.

The First Lady, Barbara Bush, was accompanying the President and I remember that she was actually the more popular of the two that evening. Which wasn't really a surprise. Maryland is a very Blue-leaning state and back then, during the run-up to the 1992 Presidential Election, Mr. Bush's job performance ratings were plummeting partly because, to his misfortune, the economy happened



President George H.W. Bush at Frederick Keys game in August 1992

to be tanking. But for that evening he still was accorded the deference that he, as a respected statesman, was due. It's just that Barbara was the rock star. They were seated in the open-air mezzanine behind home plate, not all that far from where Nicki and I were sitting. It was a special baseball glove giveaway night for all the kids at the park, and people down below were constantly tossing baseballs, baseball gloves, and other stuff up for Mr. Bush and her to sign. And then she would wave to everybody and the crowd would cheer. I remember that Mr. Bush, from his placid demeanor, appeared to be content that she was the center of attention.

But what *really* made it a close encounter for me was that on the way to where Mr. Bush was to be seated, he was escorted into the stadium through a gate which brought him down that same concourse where I was pondering dinner. At one point he was so close that I could have reached out and touched him. But if I'd been dumb enough to try that, I'm sure my arm would have been broken by the big Secret Service guy who was between us.

One other thing I remember about that evening was that as Mr. Bush passed close by me, I could see that he looked old and tired. The Presidential election polls were starting to turn against him about then, and I could read in his face that he was aware that his time in office was probably coming to an end. Being in the middle of a long and at times harsh re-election campaign must obviously take something out of you, and it showed.

The Bushes didn't stay to the end of the game – they were back in the helicopter soon after the 7th inning stretch. And after that the focus was back on baseball. As I mentioned, it all happened more than a quarter of a century ago. And most of it has become etched in my memory. But not everything – try as I might, I can no longer remember who won the game! ☀

Afterword:

I'm embarrassed to say that it's been many years since the last time I've been to a Frederick Keys game. And there's the possibility that I won't see another one. Major League Baseball, as part of a cost-cutting strategy supposedly brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, would like to contract the number of minor league teams by eliminating 40 of them. The Frederick Keys are one of the teams in jeopardy.



And speaking of being in jeopardy, I guess I should be in fear for my life if something said by one of Donald Trump's sycophants holds any sway. Back in late March, just as all the pandemic lockdowns had started to happen, Trump bloviated that all this social-distancing stuff should be ended sooner rather than later in order to 'save' the economy from the Coronavirus. And to reinforce that, Dan Patrick, the not-so-esteemed Lt. Governor of Texas, took that idea to the extreme by asserting that the population sectors at most risk, including senior citizens like myself, should be willing to die from the pandemic if it meant that the economy could quickly recover by getting rid of the lockdowns.

When I read that on the news feed, my first thought was: "Fuck you and the horse you rode in on, Mr. Patrick. I am not willing to sacrifice my life just so people like you can go back to enjoying your cocktail parties and political fund-raising events." But my second thought was: "Waaaaait a minute, I think I've actually attended a seminar on pretty much that same topic!" And I had. It was back in July 2003, down in Washington at a luncheon event sponsored by the conservative American Enterprise Institute, and I reported on it in my now-defunct LiveJournal blog. Here it is again:

How I Quit Being a Slacker, and Other Enlightenment

I see it's been a while since my last essay was posted here, and I'm trying to figure out if it's because I'm wilting from the arrival (finally!) of the summer heat, or if it's just that I've become a slacker. It's not that nothing much has happened, because in the last half of June there's been the opening of the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival and a trip to Cincinnati among other things. On the other hand, I hadn't been to any of those luncheon seminars and forums since mid-June. It turned out that today I could put a stop to that string.

Today's luncheon forum (hosted by the conservative American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research) was actually a pretty thought-provoking one: "Valuing Lives: Are Old People Worth Less than Young People?" Here's the event's description:

"A controversy recently erupted when a cost-benefit analysis, conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, valued seniors' lives 37% less than the lives of younger people. Derided by critics as a 'senior death discount', the formula estimated the worth of someone over seventy at \$2.3 million and the worth of a younger person at \$3.7 million. Federal regulations often put a price tag on lives in order to determine the relative costs and benefits of life-saving investments, but there is little agreement on the right way to do it. [AEI] has assembled a panel to explore different ways of evaluating these investments and how those approaches affect public policy decisions."

As usual, the event consisted of each panelist being given about ten minutes for a speech or presentation, with audience questions afterwards. Much of the time was spent describing the different ways in how a person's life can be given a monetary value for purposes of being used in a cost-benefit analysis. For instance, there's the Value of Statistical Life (VSL) – if somebody spent, say, \$500 to reduce by 1/10000 his or her mortality rate (by getting one's automobile repaired, for example), that person's VSL would be \$5 million (i.e., \$500 divided by one-tenthousandth).

It gets worse from there. There are also parameters (and I won't define them here) called Quality-Adjusted Life Years and Disability-Adjusted Life Years. There's also a person's 'Willingness to Pay' (in millions of dollars) to reduce his/her own risk of death, which is apparently determined empirically (by a survey, for instance).

The purpose of all of this is to place a numerical monetary value on lives so that it can be used in cost-benefit analyses (CBA) for any proposed health-related legislation. This could include revisiting any existing environmental-related laws and rules, such as the Clean Air Act, when the cost of implementing any remedial technologies is very high.

Needless to say, this approach is very controversial. A recent CBA, done by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, had estimated the 'worth' of someone over 70 years old at \$2.3 million and the 'worth' of a much younger person at \$3.7 million. There was so much criticism of this methodology (it was attacked as promoting a "senior death discount") that the EPA Director, Christine Todd Whitman, quickly backed down and announced that her Agency would never value an older person's life differently from anyone else's.

To its credit, the somewhat right-wing AEI set up the event so that both sides of this issue were represented. One of the panelists argued that we should not be playing the game “How much for your Grandmother?”, while another claimed that use of CBAs for pragmatic decision-making, especially in times of tight resource allocation, leads to an overall measurable improvement in human welfare. As for me, though, I have great difficulty in accepting that use of a CBA in this manner is anything less than outrageous. I tried to make that point in my question:

“When I hear of the use of cost-benefit analyses with assigned numerical values to evaluate life, I’m reminded of Patrick McGoohan’s character’s quote from the TV series *The Prisoner*: ‘I am not a number, I am a free man!’ My opinion of the CBA is that it is nothing more than an exercise in Chaos Theory – even in a rigorously scientific CBA for evaluating, say, a new chemical process, by tweaking the various inputs it’s only too easy to make the outcome whatever you want it to be. A lot has been said about use of ‘Willingness to Pay’ as a rational parameter for evaluation, but how can you believe that when it’s obvious that a ‘Willingness to Pay’ for mortality risk reduction is greatly influenced by a person’s ability to pay?”

I ended my question by asking the panelists to consider that such a CBA would be, in effect, no more than an example of “Garbage In-Garbage Out”, but I was sloughed off. One of the panelists claimed that what I was suggesting was something that a sensitivity analysis would disprove, and to use a simple example, it was obvious that a CBA would definitively prove the worth of having defibrillators installed at airports for the times when passengers suffered heart attacks when transiting through.

I was not allowed the chance to respond. If I had, I would have challenged him on that – defibrillators are not meant to preserve quality-adjusted life years, they are there to save lives. The use of a CBA for quality of life-related decisions absolutely requires that the person doing it be totally disinterested in the outcome. This is almost never the case, though – instead, what’s happening is that CBAs are being used to justify the repeal of rules and regulations unpopular with groups which contribute a lot of money to elected legislators.

I suppose I should feel more outrage than I do about this, but I came away from the forum feeling that I’d actually clarified my thinking on the topic. The rest of the afternoon sped by rather quickly after I got back to my office, and hey – I’m no longer a slacker! ☀

Afterword:

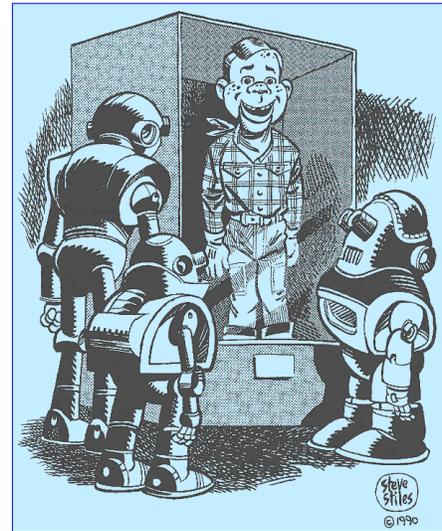
A lot of things have happened in the seventeen years since that luncheon seminar, but nothing quite so surreal as how much everyday life has changed since the middle of March. Stuff I used to take for granted, such as going to science fiction conventions, suddenly was no longer possible. Almost every convention from late March onward has been cancelled due to the pandemic, including several that Nicki and I had planned on attending: Balticon up in the Charm City over Memorial Day weekend, Midwestcon in Cincinnati at the end of June, and the 2020 North American Science Fiction Convention at the end of August. I feel particularly bad about the cancellation of the NASFiC because several of our friends were to be Guests of Honor. I can only hope they all will be offered that opportunity again in some future year.

As far as I know, the very last science fiction convention to be held this year was the annual fanzine fans’ convention Corflu, back in mid-March. Nicki and I didn’t attend, but I did have a remembrance of a good friend published in its program book. Have a read:

My Friend Steve

It was at about the beginning of 1989 that I first met Steve Stiles. But I'm not sure *exactly* when, because we first met through correspondence. Nicki and I had moved from southeastern Tennessee to the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. near the end of 1988, and back then we were still publishing our general interest fanzine *Mimosa*. We had joined the Washington Science Fiction Association not too long after the move and when it became known that we were fanzine publishers who needed some illos for our next issue, somebody, maybe it was Alexis Gilliland, suggested that we write to Steve.

His first illos for us were in our 'Welcome to Maryland' 6th issue, for an article by Harry Warner, Jr. about strange happenings in the house next door to him. Steve also illustrated Harry's next article, in our 8th issue, about even stranger happenings Harry had observed while on walks a bit farther from his house. It wasn't until our 11th issue, in 1991, that we finally were able to coax a set of covers from Steve, and they were good ones – the front depicted a middle class city scene about to be interrupted by a deluge of falling robots, while the back showed some of those same robots displaying idol worship in the most literal sense. The very next issue featured Steve's first writing contribution for us, a now legendary article titled "My First Orgy" which was actually about a huge misadventure, and after that he was a frequent contributor (with both words and illustrations) for the remainder of the run.



Steve Stiles' back cover for *Mimosa* 11

Steve had transitioned from contributor to friend at some point early on in those first few years after Nicki and I had moved to Maryland. But we lived far enough away that we usually only crossed paths with him at conventions, mainly the local ones but once in a while at Worldcons. It was at the 2016 Worldcon, the evening before the Hugo Awards Ceremony, that we had what I consider our most memorable dinner together. It was part of a group which had convened at a downtown Kansas City sports bar restaurant which had such loud ambient noise that the only people Nicki and I could talk to were Steve and his wife Elaine. I remember that it was entertaining and that we talked about a lot of things, but one of the topics that got left at arm's length was the upcoming Hugo Ceremony – he was one of the finalists in the 'Best Fan Artist' category.

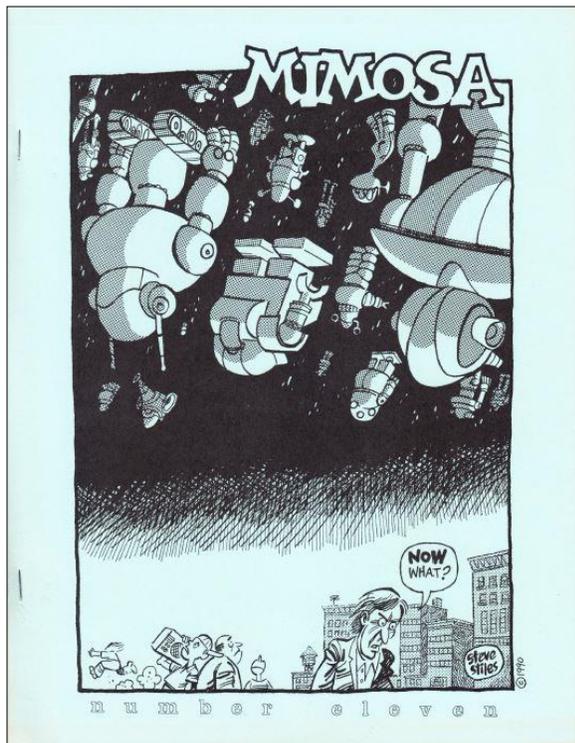
It turned out that he was the winner, much deserved with all the fan art he has done over the years. And it had been a long time coming. Steve had been a finalist fourteen previous times, the first one dating back nearly half a century to when 'Fan Artist' had originally debuted as a Hugo Awards category. He made a reference to that as he told the audience, "You know, I had written an acceptance speech, but I wrote it back in 1967 and it got lost amid the fossils."



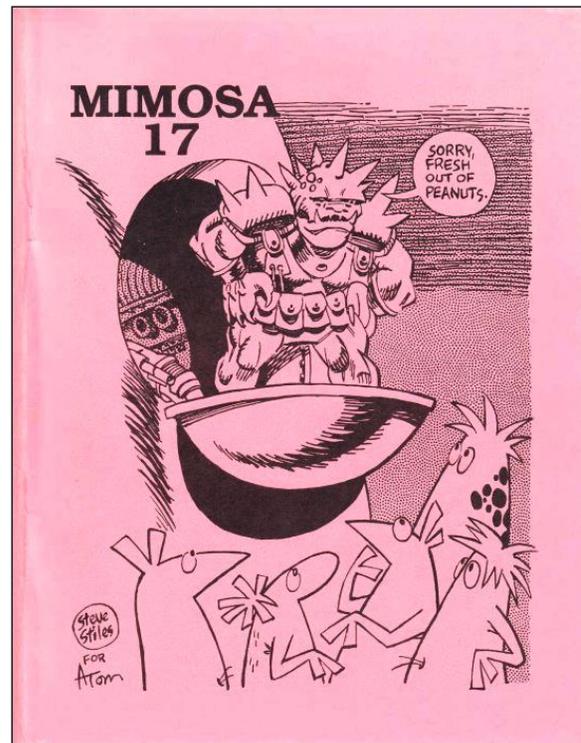
Steve contemplates his Hugo Award

And now he's gone. As I mentioned earlier, I'm not really sure when the first time was that I met Steve Stiles, but I do know the last time. It was in October 2019 at the local Capclave convention. I'd already known about his cancer and had asked him about it – he told me he felt pretty well, all things considered. And I remember that he also looked well, so it was a somber day a few months later when I learned of his passing.

Even though Steve did finally win a Hugo Award, he unfortunately missed out on what is probably the ultimate career honor in the science fiction genre – being a Guest of Honor at a Worldcon. I do believe it would have happened, and probably soon, had time not run out on him first. What's left are recollections about him from people who've been fortunate enough to have had him as a friend. These were some of mine. ☀



Steve Stiles' front cover for *Mimosa 11*



Steve Stiles' front cover for *Mimosa 17*

Afterword:

Among the conventions that were cancelled was this year's Worldcon, CoNZealand, though it's only being cancelled in a physical sense. They're still going to have a convention, but it's going to be entirely online. It will be the first 'virtual' Worldcon, and if it's anything like the 'virtual' Balticon that was held at the end of May, all the programming events will be streamed over various online meeting platforms such as Zoom. I haven't seen the program schedule yet, and I'm hoping there will be remembrance events for Steve and others from the science fiction genre who have died in the time since the 2019 Worldcon. It would be highly appropriate.

Looking ahead, the 2021 Worldcon will be held in Washington, D.C., which will make it the closest Worldcon ever to where Nicki and I live. At least I hope it will be, as we won't know its status for sure until this pandemic is finally over. Until then, as a certain loudmouthed individual has decreed, we are at war with an unseen enemy.

Life During Wartime

“You better not go into a bank dressed like that!”

That was my comment to Nicki, back in late March, when I saw how she was dressed as we were getting ready to head off for some grocery shopping. Hat, hoodie jacket and face mask. In less strange times somebody could very easily come to the conclusion that she was planning a heist.

But these are most definitely not usual times. There are not very many things the President of the United States says that I agree with or for that matter even consider as truthful, but I think he was mostly right when he claimed that: “The world is at war with a hidden enemy.” Except that by the time he finally came to that conclusion he was probably the last person in the world to acknowledge it.

As I write this we are now about two months into a pandemic-induced lockdown and it’s mind-boggling to me on how much my perception of day-to-day living has changed. It didn’t used to be that I felt I could be risking my life by going grocery shopping. It didn’t used to be that I counted it as a victory when the grocery store had gotten in a shipment of paper towels or toilet paper. And it didn’t used to be that I wonder if I’ll ever again feel safe in places where there are crowds such as at a baseball game, or a theater performance, or a science fiction convention. I’m fortunate that I have a job which makes it possible for me to work from home, and Nicki and I are taking extreme care the times we do leave the house. So much so that we have a small soap-and-water wash-up station in the trunk of my car which we unflinchingly use every time after we’ve been in a public place of any kind. And we also have plenty of face masks, one of the benefits of having a spouse who is an expert quilter. The one Nicki was wearing back on that cold March day is one of my favorites, with planets, stars and galaxies of all kinds. She made me one just like it, and yes, we have gotten some compliments a few times we’ve worn them out in public. But from a respectful six-foot-away social distancing, of course.



me with one of Nicki's "outer space" pandemic face masks

So life goes on. Some things haven’t changed – the lawn still needs mowing from time to time, for instance, and the cat’s litter box still needs cleaning every evening. But other things are different. One of them is that I’ve grown a beard! I started it the day the COVID-19 lockdown began. Several weeks later it’s still a work in progress and I’ve decided I’m going to keep it until all this is over. And maybe even longer. Nicki seemed a bit dubious at first, but she’s gotten used to it and no longer looks at me like she’s wondering who this strange man is that’s replaced her husband Rich.



Nicki in her grocery shopping garb



a work in progress: my pandemic beard

This is the first time in my life I've ever had a beard and I'm frankly surprised that it's taken me this long to want one. But in the end it's really only a small lifestyle change. Even in these highly unusual times, as my friend John Hertz likes to say, it seemed the fannish thing to do. ☀

Afterword:

It was only a couple of weeks after I finished this essay that paper products like facial tissues and toilet paper started to become readily available again. But bread yeast continues to be a problem. I bake fresh bread on Sundays and even though I've been able to find bags of bread flour in the grocery store often enough where I've never been in danger of running out, bread yeast is another matter. There hasn't been any in grocery stores for well over a month. I was able to eventually find an alternate supply, and in retrospect it should have been an obvious place to go. There's a branch of the Spring Mill Bread Company a short distance from where Nicki and I live, and even though they don't promote it they do in fact sell both yeast and flour.



the neighborhood Dress-Up Goose in times of pandemic

As for the area where we live, at first glance you might think that things were as normal as they could be – people we see around the neighborhood usually are not wearing facemasks. But a closer look shows that things are far from ordinary. For those who are out on walks, social distancing is easy to observe – people invariably cross to the opposite sides of streets to avoid getting very near other pedestrians. And there are other signs as well, some of them a bit whimsical. I've noticed that someone had painted “Keep Your Distance” on a large rock near the sidewalk. And just up the street from us, the Dress-Up Goose which guards the entrance to a house was wearing pandemic protective wear.

But the most obvious sign that things are definitely *not* okay is a Soul Pantry which has taken up curbside residence a few houses up the street from ours. It's a little metal cabinet that's stocked with food supplies, urging people to “take what you need, give when you can”. The first time we saw it, on one of our neighborhood walks, it was completely empty. But a couple days later, on our next walk, it was fully stocked. We added to its inventory with a can of soup, a box of Mac-and-Cheese, and one of Nicki's pandemic face masks. Several days later, they were all gone and had been replaced by stuff other people had left. The area where we live is far from impoverished and the fact that people around here are that much in need of food speaks volumes on how much the world has changed over the past few months.



the Soul Pantry near our house

I doubt that any sense of normalcy will return for at least the rest of this year and possibly longer. My age puts me in a relatively high risk group so I would have to be absolutely convinced that there was essentially zero threat to health from the Coronavirus before I'd be willing to attend any event where there's a crowd. It has to be that way. It *has* to. One of the places I'm going to miss the most is the regional theatre, which had to cancel the remainder of its season. As you will read next, that's the place, back at the beginning of 2017, where I saw a show that made me just a *tiny* bit fearful of barbers.

Sweeney

Back in 2012, at the Chicago Worldcon, I participated in a discussion panel for which I wasn't even close to being qualified.

I only found that out while I was up there on the dais in front of the audience. The panel was titled "Magical Musicals" and the topic was about use of fantasy-related themes in musical theatre. I had wanted to participate not only because my friend and the convention's Guest of Honor, Mike Resnick, was on the panel, but also



me trying to look intelligent on the "Magical Musicals" panel

because I have a strong interest and enjoyment of Broadway musicals and I had thought I might have something to add. But as it turned out, I was way, way out of my league. All the other panelists, Resnick included, had immense knowledge of the topic; one of them had even written a quiz book about Broadway musicals. So I tried my best not to embarrass myself, which mostly consisted of letting the other panelists do almost all of the talking.

At the very end of the hour all the panelists were polled on which Broadway musical, of any genre, was their all-time favorite. My answer was *Anything Goes*, mostly because of all that wonderful Cole Porter music and that the stellar performance of show I saw featured the great Sutton Foster as the lead. But three of the other four panelists, Resnick included, were entirely in agreement on their choice: Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

This more than a bit surprised me, not only because with all the musicals to pick from that there could be such near-unanimity, but also on what their preference was. *Sweeney* is a very good show, to be sure, but it wouldn't make it into my top ten. I don't even think it's Sondheim's best musical. (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* leaves everything else by him in the dust. In my opinion, at least.) But that said, I would absolutely go out of my way to see a performance of *Sweeney*. Turns out I didn't have to go very far.

I live in the northwest suburbs of Washington, D.C., and I'm fortunate that there are many high-end regional theatre companies within a relatively short distance. The closest is over in Olney, Maryland, which is about a 25 minute drive. It's been doing Actors' Equity-level productions since 1938 and in its eight decades of existence has staged hundreds of shows. Olney Theatre Center, over the years, has had many big-name movie and theatre stars as featured performers, including Helen Hayes, Tallulah Bankhead, Burl Ives, John



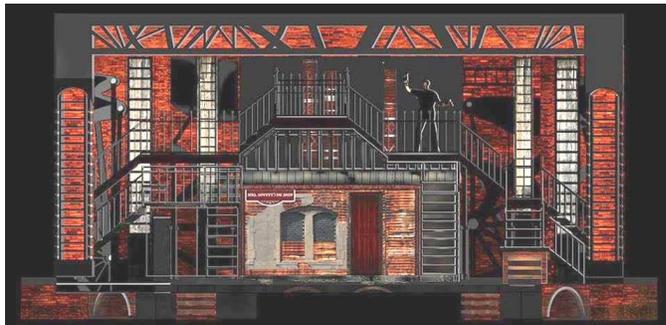
Carradine, Carol Channing, Roy Scheider, Olivia de Havilland, and Ian McKellen. Each OTC season includes no fewer than three musicals, and for 2017 the first of them was *Sweeney Todd*.

The show has been around long enough that we're all probably fairly familiar with the plot. It's based on a serial that appeared way back in the 1840s, in one of Britain's 'penny dreadful' magazines. The main character is a barber who had been falsely convicted of a crime and shipped off to Australia, leaving behind a wife and infant daughter. Years later he returns and in a psychopathic rage carries out his revenge by killing those who were responsible and while he's at it, many others as well. And in the process, providing a continuing supply of meat for the pie shop of his downstairs landlord, Mrs. Lovett.



David Benoit as Sweeney Todd
in the OTC production

No big names were in the cast, but there was no lack of high quality actors. In particular, David Benoit, who played Sweeney, is a powerful baritone who was mesmerizing in the role. Reviews of the show mentioned that he wanted to perform as this character so much that he took a three month leave of absence from his other gig in the national tour of *Phantom of the Opera*. But in my view, it was the scenic design



conceptual stage design for OTC's Sweeney Todd

that was the real star of the show. OTC is continually cash-strapped but it has nevertheless gained a reputation for opulent stage design. The one for *Sweeney* was done by a Peruvian immigrant, a lady named Milagros Ponce de León who has earned her chops in various productions throughout the middle Atlantic region. It was rich in both detail and functionality, with metal-railing staircases and moveable sets-within-sets –

more than enough for an active imagination to transport me to mid-nineteenth century London. As for the show itself, it was certainly entertaining though in a macabre way. There were many good songs and a lot of mayhem, with razor slashing and blood spurting. Often happening all at the same time.

So after finally experiencing a live performance of *Sweeney*, am I going to elevate it into that upper echelon of musical theatre where Mike Resnick and others on that Worldcon panel have placed it? No, I'm not ready to do that; I am way too much a fan of musical comedy. But I did like the show a lot, and it changed what had been a difficult day for me into a memorable one. And one more thing: after vicariously experiencing what a sharp razor can do in the hands of a crazed and demonic tradesman, I've made a firm decision.

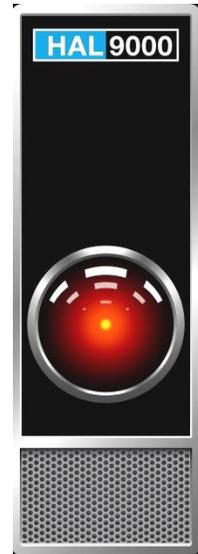
I'm never *ever* going to a barbershop for a shave! ☀

Afterword:

Besides not yet being willing to attend any events where there are crowds, the pandemic has also caused me to avoid all public transportation, especially airlines. That means no trips anywhere distant until all of this is over, business as well as pleasure. One of the casualties was a multilateral carbon sequestration conference in Norway that I had helped organize. It had been scheduled for the end of March, and if all goes well will happen in early 2021 instead. Last year's conference, as you will read next, was held in a place not quite so far distant.

In the City of HAL

It was back in either 1992 or 1997, depending on which alternate timeline one observes, that a self-aware supercomputer became operational. It happened in Urbana, Illinois, at the Coordinated Science Laboratory on the campus of the University of Illinois. As we know, the HAL 9000 computer that came into existence in those timelines went on to become the murderous systems manager of the Discovery One spaceship on its ill-fated voyage to the outer planets. The Coordinated Science Laboratory does exist in our actual timeline but its activities do not seem to include creation of artificial intelligences. Which, given what happened in those alternate timelines, is probably a good thing.



But there's more to Urbana than just the Coordinated Science Laboratory. From what I could see, it seems to be mostly a bedroom community which includes housing for married U of I students. And that's where I was on the morning of April 26th, in the parking lot of the Orchard Downs Apartments. My



in the parking lot of the Orchard Downs Apartments

sister and her husband were there for about a year, back in 1974-75, and when she found out I was in Champaign-Urbana for the week she texted me the location and also mentioned that: "There was a HUGE open field behind apts. Best kite flying ever!"

After that I had felt obligated to see for myself and found several places where kites could possibly fly. And also a parking lot where resided a crashed Beamer with its air bag deployed. Not sure what to make of that, except it seemed that U of I students are more affluent than they were several decades ago. But not better drivers.

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What had brought me to Champaign-Urbana was another in a long and continuing series of multilateral carbon sequestration conference that I organize. The venue for this one was not nearly as spectacular as a year ago, when we were in Venice, but there were still some places of interest including a couple of museums and the very picturesque main quad of the U of I. Too bad I didn't get to see any of it – the few daylight hours that I wasn't in meetings I was preparing for them. But one of the delegates did, and photos he texted me during his walkabout served as a reminder of what I was missing.



at the carbon sequestration conference

The sole evening event of the conference was the only chance I got to absorb any of Champaign-Urbana’s culture, and that was pretty much limited to its sports heroes. It was at a buffet reception in the U of I’s football stadium, which is home to the University’s sports hall of fame. Among the honorees were pro football legends such as Dick Butkus, Bobby Mitchell, Ray Nitschke, and George “Papa Bear” Halas. But the greatest of the great was The Galloping Ghost, Harold “Red” Grange, who (in 2008) was named the greatest college football player of all time by the cable sports network ESPN. There’s a statue of him on prominent display at the west entrance to the stadium and it became a photo-op for just about everybody who attended the reception that evening. Even those from Asian and European countries who had no idea who Grange was, or for that matter, what American-rules football was all about. It was all part of the Illinois experience.



The Galloping Ghost of Champaign-Urbana

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Just getting to Champaign-Urbana had presented some challenges, though more for those coming from outside the United States than for me. In the end I had decided to fly into Chicago-O’Hare and rent a car, mostly because I dislike very small regional airports like the one in Champaign. That decision helped out one of Canada’s delegates, who met up with me at O’Hare for the three hour drive downstate. He’d been in a similar situation and had very much appreciated my offer to be his chauffeur. We had pleasant conversations for the durations of both rides, down to Champaign-Urbana and back to O’Hare a few days later, which ranged all the way from comparing next-generation technologies for capturing carbon dioxide to speculating on who would end up on the Iron Throne. Very entertaining for both of us, and it seemed to make the time go faster.

I had thought that this could be my final meeting, but during my time in Illinois I decided to wait until at least the end of the calendar year before retiring. The next conference, in early November, will be in a suburb of Paris, which was tempting enough by itself but there’s currently nobody else capable of doing all the facilitating, organizing and sweating the details that go into making these conferences successful. Like it or not, I’ve become irreplaceable. For now, at least. That will ultimately change at some point because it *has* to – I have no intention of becoming preserved in amber at my office desk. But maybe not *quite* yet. Looking forward toward next year, well, I’ll just paraphrase what the Conference Chair, from Norway, told me:

You know, we’ll probably be holding a conference about a year from now in Oslo. And you don’t want to miss out on one last trip to Norway, do you?

How can I refuse an offer like that? ☀

Afterword:

I don’t know of anybody whose travel plans for the year have not been disrupted. This includes my good friends Guy and Rose Marie Lillian, who were hoping for a trip to France later this year. I’m not at all going to be surprised if they decide they need to cancel. And so I offer the following essay (from back in 2013) on some things they can look forward to when their trip does happen.

Pardon My French (and Flemish)

Prolog: A Giant Crystal of Iron

“There it is!” Nicki said.

We had just spent a frustrating 45 minutes navigating through the Brussels Metro system, overcoming ticket machines that wouldn't take charge cards or folding money and transfer stations that seemed to require that you to exit and then re-enter the system. All so that we could see a most unusual building.

I am a late bloomer, as far as international travel goes. My first trip outside North America didn't happen until I was 40 years old, back in 1990, and the seminal event that brought it about was the Dutch Worldcon, ConFiction. Until then I had been intimidated by what I had naively and wrongly perceived as insurmountable difficulties with languages, locating places to stay, and in general, just finding one's way around.



at the Atomium in Brussels



view up from the base of the building

That trip is now 23 years in the past, but my memories of it are as clear as if it were last week. Nicki and I spent three days in Amsterdam prior to the convention, and afterwards spent a single day in Brussels on our path through other parts of Europe. And until this year I had never been back to Brussels. My memories are of grand museums and plazas, and not nearly enough time to see everything the city offered.

One of those things was the structure we beheld with some amazement that late afternoon – the Atomium. It was built for, and is the only remaining relic of the 1958 World's Fair. And it's huge! The building was designed to be a super-sized iron crystal, magnified 165 billion times, with each of the 18-meter spheres representing an atom. The top of the uppermost sphere is more than 100 meters above the ground.

It's possible to go inside the place (there are some historical exhibits about Expo58) and at night the spheres are lit by a myriad of small lights mimicking the paths of electrons around the super-sized atoms. There wasn't enough time for either of those, so it will be something to look forward to seeing the next time we're there.

Hopefully in less than *another* 23 years!

The Tower of Radiant Energy

There's another, more famous building about 200 miles southwest of the Atomium that also has an evening light show. The Eiffel Tower is an artifact of an even earlier exposition. It was the entrance archway of the 1889 World's Fair and was never intended to be a permanent structure, but proved valuable enough for communications purposes that the City of Paris decided to keep it. It has a footnote in science (in 1910) as the place where cosmic rays were discovered, but back at the end of 1999 it gained even further prominence for a different form of radiant energy. During the new millennium celebration, thousands of strobe lights were installed on the Eiffel Tower and ever since then, for five minutes at the top of every hour in the evening, they are all flashed at random intervals to give a rather amazing display.

Nicki and I were in Paris for four days prior to our stay in Belgium, and the Eiffel Tower was the very first thing we went to see there. But it's so tall, you can't help happening across interesting vistas of it wherever you are in the city. The day we were there we couldn't get to the most interesting vista of all, the one looking upwards from beneath the tower, because of a noisy demonstration of some kind, complete with smoke bombs, going on in the plaza surrounding the tower.



the Eiffel Tower from an alleyway



demonstration at the base of the Eiffel Tower

It's possible to go more than 900 feet up to the tower's *troisième étage*, the uppermost observation deck, but any thoughts of that nature were put to rest by all the chaos we'd been witnessing. Besides, that observation deck, for all its panorama, has the *worst* view of Paris in the entire city.

It's the only place where you can't see the Eiffel Tower!

8½ Million People and One Smiling Lady

The Eiffel Tower receives 7½ million visitors per year. But even more popular is The Louvre which, at 8½ million visitors per year, is by far the most popular art museum in the world. It's also one of the largest art museums in the world, housed in a former royal palace that dates back to the Middle Ages. To see the entirety of the museum in a single day requires far more time and stamina than is possible for most mortals, so Nicki and I restrained ourselves to seeing mainly the *crème de la crème* of the collection.



view of The Louvre entrance plaza from the 2nd floor of the museum



“Winged Victory of Samothrace”

And as a result, there were dozens of people constantly jockeying for position to get their very own personal photo. I really don't know what the allure was, as a much better photo than they could ever possibly take can easily be found with a simple web search. I'm guessing it must be, at least in part, a mob mentality thing as even I was sucked into the frenzy. But *my* souvenir photo, a ‘meta-photograph’ of one of the scrummers who had finally made it to the front of the pack, at least had a bit of entertainment value to it. I'd like to think that even Leonardo might have been amused.

And there were many of them. The Louvre is much more than just an art museum, and its holdings include Egyptian, Roman and Greek antiquities (including the “Venus de Milo” and “Winged Victory”), Islamic art, and even some modern-day paintings in addition to works by the Olde Masters. The star of the show, of course, is Leonardo da Vinci's “Mona Lisa”, and trying to get anywhere near the painting required you to brave the museum equivalent of a rugby scrum.

The previous time I was in The Louvre, back in 2007, photography of the smiling lady was *interdite* (forbidden), but this time around it was definitely *quelque chose se passé* (anything goes).



an over-the-photographer's-shoulder view of the “Mona Lisa”

The Palace of Splendor

This was Nicki's first visit to Paris, and we had settled on a four-day stay so that we could experience the city without being constantly in a rush. But one place that was a priority for us to see was actually not in Paris at all.

For more than a century, from the early 1680s to the start of the French Revolution in 1789, the Royal Palace of Versailles was the hub of political power for the

country. It was the home of nobility and the center of government. Nowadays it has become a UNESCO World Heritage Site, preserving the apartments and living spaces of French royalty as a historical museum. In all there are more than 700 rooms, containing thousands of paintings, statuary, items of furniture, and other furnishings. It was the place where, in 1919, the Treaty of Versailles ended World War I and, in 1871, where the German Empire was founded. And it was the place where, in 1789, French Revolutionaries captured King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.



a small part of the Royal Palace of Versailles



the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace

There are self-guided tours in many different languages available but for just a small amount more, Nicki and I were able to sign on to an additional English-language guided tour that brought us into some of the rooms that were otherwise only viewable through doorways. The splendor was breathtaking, with the tour taking us through a recreation of the king's day starting with the royal bedchambers, through the Hall of Mirrors, then the Royal Chapel, the Council Chamber, the Library, and various

drawing rooms. But in the end, sensory overload won out and after several hours of walking around with our mouths agape we headed to the train station for the short trip back to Paris.

Back when we were planning this vacation, I'd been told by a friend that no trip to Paris is complete without a visit to Versailles. After experiencing the place, I absolutely agree.

The City of Light

If I had to do it over, I'd have extended the trip so that we could have had one additional day in Paris. There was just too much to take in at any reasonable pace. Obvious things, like the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Arc de Triomphe, we made sure to see. Other places, like Montmartre and its equally grand cathedral, will be things to experience next time.

We didn't limit ourselves to seeing only the most famous sights of the city, though. On our final day we took a more low-key



the towers of Notre Dame Cathedral from across the Seine



a small part of the weekend market at the Place de la Bastille

famous Left Bank gathering place, Shakespeare and Company. It was described by its owner, back in 1964, as “a socialist utopia masquerading as a bookstore” and counted as its patrons such notables as Alan Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Anaïs Nin, and Henry Miller. The place even has some cinematic street cred, with cameo appearances in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* and in the third season of the *Highlander* TV series. The store is packed with used books and the aisles are very narrow, but Nicki was still able to discover a book on crocheting that the current owner had been wondering who would claim it. It's one of keepsakes we took with us from our all-too-short stay in The City of Light.

approach, seeking out many of Paris's less-famous cathedrals and exploring the vicinity of the Place de la Bastille. The Prison itself is long gone, demolished soon after the French Revolution. But the area is now home to a very large weekend outdoor market where all kinds of meats, seafood, fresh produce, wine, jewelry, clothing, and...just about anything else of everyday convenience, from what we could see. If we lived in Paris, this would absolutely be the place where we'd buy our weekly provisions.

One other place we sought out was a



the Shakespeare and Company bookstore

The City of Chocolate

Brussels was just a bit more than an hour's train ride from Paris on one of those high speed Eurostars. The center of the city is dominated by Grand Place, one of the great town squares of Europe. It's an ornate mixture of Gothic, Baroque, and Rococo architecture styles, all coexisting in harmony with each other.

The architecture, in all of its varied forms, is actually the star attraction of Brussels, but it has the odd fate of being overshadowed by “Le Mannequin Pis”, a small bronze fountain sculpture of a little kid urinating into a pool. The statue dates back to the 1600s and has several different legends attached to its origin, but its burgeoning popularity can only be attributed to one of the most powerful known forces in the universe: bad taste.



Grand Place in Brussels



“Le Mannequin Pis”

The city has gone out of its way to encourage this. The statue is frequently dressed out in costume, sometimes as often as several times a week, and the Brussels City Museum even has a permanent display of many of the hundreds of outfits that have been worn by the statue. But this pales in comparison to what must be the ultimate in tackiness: I've read that the statue, on occasion, has been connected to a keg and passers-by have been treated to glasses of beer that had been ‘Pis’ed out.

Neither the town square nor the statue seemed very much different from what I remembered of them from 23 years ago. There was a crowd of people with cameras jockeying for position near the statue and there were many outdoor restaurants in and around the Grand Place. I remember that back then the most popular cuisine, from what I could observe, was bivalve mollusks: Mussels from Brussels. But that

was not the case in 2013 – we didn't see a single restaurant patron, anywhere, dining on shellfish.

What we *did* see was a proliferation of chocolate shops. We noticed at least a couple dozen of them, sometimes located next door to each other, in the tourist-trafficked parts of the city. In all, Brussels is home to about 2000 *chocolatiers*, large and small, which must make it the most chocolate-dense place in the world.

But much as we were tempted to, you can't really eat large amounts of chocolate. Luckily, there were alternatives. At one sidewalk kiosk there were mini rhubarb pies, and we found that rhubarb is indeed "the secret of the good life as we know it". (Thanks, Garrison!) And even better were the waffles. It seemed obligatory to have a Belgian Waffle in Brussels, so that was one of the



workers at a *chocolatier* in Brussels



a handful of heaven in Brussels

first things we did. And also the last thing we did, out in the city, on our last evening in Europe. There were many different options to choose from, but the one that looked best to us was layered with sweet European strawberries and then covered in whipped cream. *Way* too much for one person, but just right for sharing. But there was no way to eat it without making a mess, so it seemed almost a badge of honor to walk around with dabs of whipped cream clinging to your nose and cheeks. From what we observed for other tourists, we weren't the only ones to think so!

The City of Cuberdons

Just a short train ride northwest of Brussels is the city of Ghent. It's the birthplace of the famous painter Jan van Eyck, the home of International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge, and the host of a large international music festival that would have made it impossible to find a hotel room if Nicki and I been in town while it was going on.



scenic Ghent

Brussels is a mostly French-speaking city, and we had wanted a day in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium before we ended our vacation. We narrowed it down to Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp, but in the end, we chose Ghent mostly because it had a Marriott Hotel and the other two cities didn't.

But it was a good choice! Ghent was mostly spared by the numerous wars of Europe, and its medieval architecture is largely intact. The historic center of the city is dominated by three towers, all of which date back to the 13th and 14th centuries. Two of these belong to magnificent cathedrals. In one of them resides a Van Eyck masterwork, the 12-panel 15th century altarpiece painting "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb", that is considered one of the world's art treasures, and in the other we were able to sit back and enjoy a rehearsal for an upcoming pipe organ recital.

There was more than enough content for the day we had in Ghent. Too much even, as we



the historic center of Ghent



a Nose of Ghent

didn't get to see any of the imposing Gravensteen Castle except from the outside. And there were also small discoveries to be made. One of them was the 'cuberdon'. It's a cone-shaped candy made from a chewy berry-flavored fondant and filled with a thick berry-flavored jelly. It's colloquially known as 'The Nose of Ghent' from its shape, and you can't find them in North America. The shelf life is only a few weeks (the jelly eventually starts to crystallize), so they're not exported. We saw a sidewalk vendor trying to interest tourists into buying a

bagful, telling them that: "You can't leave Ghent without trying some of these. They will be a highlight of your stay here!"

And you know what? He was right!

Epilog: The City of Jules Verne

While we were in Brussels and Ghent we were able to stay in hotels close by the city center, but in Paris we stayed in the 'La Défense' business district on the west side of the city, well away from the city's points of interest. I'd chosen that hotel deliberately because there was a very large shopping mall nearby with good and affordable places to eat in case we needed them. But it turned out that La Défense was not without a few points of interest of its own. The most

prominent landmark is the Grande Arche, an office building with a 110-meter square hole through the middle. It's aligned so that the view from under the arch is directly down toward Paris's main street, the Champs-Élysées, and you can see Paris's other and more famous arch, the Arc de Triomphe, in the distance.



a telephoto lens view from beneath the Grande Arche

On our final morning in Paris, a couple of hours before our taxi to the train station, we took a long walk around the plaza near the Grande Arche and found even more of interest. There's an Alexander Calder metal stabile, "L'Araignée Rouge" ("The Red Spider") that dominates the northeast corner of the plaza. And not far from that is a little carousel.



the Calder stabile with the Verne carousel and Grande Arche in the background

When we checked that out, we were surprised and pleased that it honored one of Paris's most famous citizens, the great novelist and playwright Jules Verne. Instead of the usual array of horses there were various forms of transport from his novels – the balloon from *Around the World in 80 Days*, the submarine from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, and the rocket from *From the Earth to the Moon* among others.

Verne wrote fantastic literature, so it seems only appropriate to use 'his' carousel as the coda for a fantastic vacation. Our experiences in Paris, Brussels, and Ghent by far exceeded our hopes and expectations. And someday, soon perhaps, we would like to have additional adventures on another visit to these grand cities. ☀

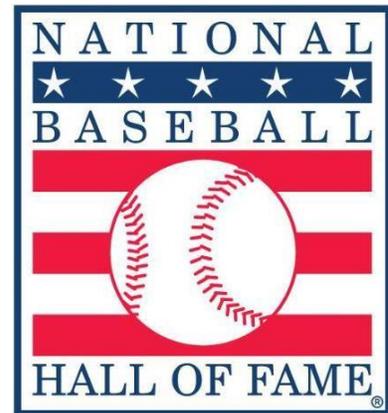
Afterword:

Time to end this issue the same way I started it, with one more baseball-related essay. If you're a lifelong fan of baseball, as I am, there's one place that absolutely has to be visited – the central New York village of Cooperstown. It's home to a museum where legends of the game reside.

The Museum of Dreams and Legends

The village of Cooperstown, New York has been the home of many notable people. The famous American writer James Fenimore Cooper lived there, as did publisher Erastus Beadle who has been credited with creating the very first ‘dime novels’. Painter and inventor Samuel F.B. Morse was a resident there for a time, as was U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Nelson. But perhaps the most mythic resident of Cooperstown was Civil War General Abner Doubleday who attended a private preparatory school there prior to entering the U.S. Military Academy. It was in the summer of 1839, in a cow pasture just south of town, that Abner Doubleday invented the game of baseball.

Or maybe he didn’t. In the decades since that claim was originally staked a lot of evidence to the contrary has surfaced. But that didn’t prevent a committee of the New York State legislature, in 1936, to declare that Cooperstown was “the birthplace of baseball”. Three years later, on the 100th anniversary of that first cow pasture game, the building that houses the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum was dedicated. It is a place where millions of visitors have since come to immerse themselves, for all too short a time, in the fabulous history that surrounds this storied game. Nicki and I included.



I have been a baseball fan for most of my life – 60 years and still counting. My first memory of professional baseball was seeing the 1957 World Series on a grainy black-and-white television broadcast. The Milwaukee Braves beat the New York Yankees in seven games, and the hero of that World Series was a young slugger for the Braves named Hank Aaron. The third floor of the museum has a gallery that showcases Hank Aaron’s career from his minor league years, including three months in the segregated Negro American League, through his 23 years in the big leagues where he was a 24-time All Star and the 1957 National League Most Valuable Player.



remembering Shibe Park

Most of the ballparks that Hank Aaron played in back in the 1950s no longer exist, places like Shibe Park in Philadelphia, Griffith Stadium in Washington D.C., the Polo Grounds in Manhattan, and Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. I was pleased to discover that the museum has preserved many artifacts from these extinct ballparks – turnstiles, building stones, a pitching rubber from a 1951 no-hit game, and even the Griffith Stadium locker of the great Washington Senators pitcher Walter Johnson. These places were actually sacred ground to the faithful, the hometown fans who made baseball a big part of their lives.



San Francisco Giants team exhibit

The museum is big and there was a lot to see. Every major league team was ‘encapsulated’ in individual lockers which contained game-used bats, gloves, baseballs and jerseys worn by team players. There was an extensive exhibit on the history of the sport, including the earliest professional teams and players, and there were also galleries that honored the Negro Leagues, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, the broadcasters and baseball writers who made the game accessible to those of us who didn’t live anywhere near a ballpark, and, far from least, a look back at the life and times of the legendary George Herman “Babe” Ruth. It was he, more than anybody else, who by the power of his personality transformed professional baseball from a mostly localized summertime form of entertainment into a larger-than-life spectacle. He was the most celebrated athlete of his time, and the sport’s first great home run hitter. And he was one of the first five players to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

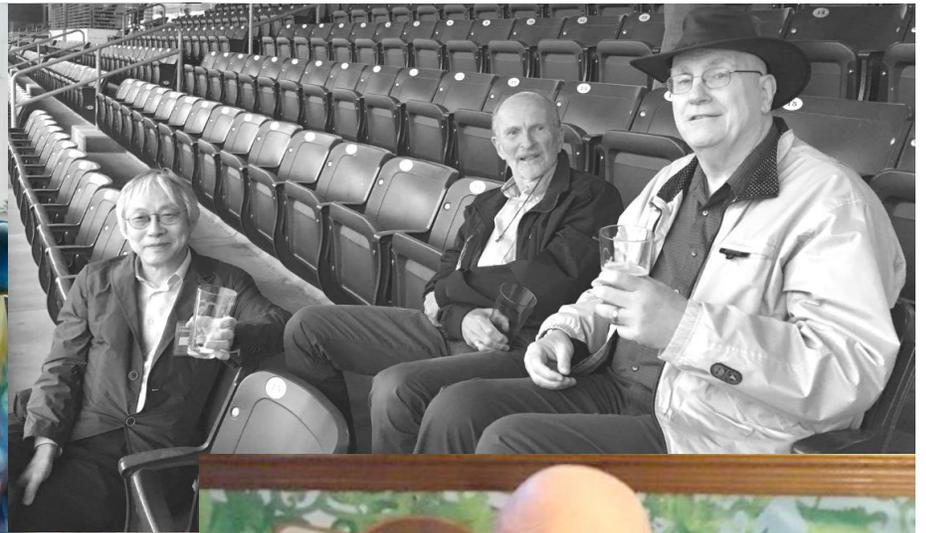
The Hall of Fame is really what most baseball fans come to Cooperstown to see. It takes up much of the ground floor of the museum, with brass plaques for each of more than 300 players, managers, executives, and umpires. It’s the culmination of a long and successful career to be enshrined there, and those who do make it are the best of the best – there is no Hall of Pretty Good Players.

It took me a few minutes to track down the plaque that I had really wanted to see – my boyhood hero Mickey Mantle. Many, many times in my pre-teen years I had stayed awake past my bedtime, surreptitiously listening to New York Yankees games on the radio, hoping to vicariously witness Mantle hitting one of his mammoth home runs out into the night. And hoping – often dreaming – that someday I would be a big league baseball player just like him. It took another few years to realize that would never come to pass, but it did not diminish my love for the game that still very much exists.



with my boyhood hero Mickey Mantle

Some people have likened visiting the baseball museum at Cooperstown to a religious pilgrimage, and I suppose that’s true. The Hall of Fame is filled with icons of the saints of the game – players whose exploits have become the stuff legends are made of. For me, baseball has always been a deep-seated, true-believer part of my existence and I am happy that it has. I’m taking my cue from another Yankee, Jim Bouton, who said: “You see, you spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball and in the end it turns out that it was the other way around all the time.” It’s an apt description. ☀





Me? I'm Just A Lawnmower

(Article/Opinion/Stupidity originally written for pro magazine
CyberTalk #10 September 2018)

Danger! Danger Will Robinson!

No matter which way you cut and carve it, when it comes to serving up Artificial Intelligence to the general public then expectation far exceeds reality. This is not a new phenomenon. Witness all those wonderful 1950s publications that predicted futures full of flying cars, unlimited leisure time, and intelligent autonomous machines doing Humankind's bidding without so much as a complaint or a graduated pension plan. Sadly, due to imagination being brought down by the Curse of Reality, most of those post World War II prophesies failed to materialise – except in 1950s Sci-Fi B-movies, where the men were Men, women all wore bikinis, and 7-legged bivalves from Alpha Centauri finally got to know their place in The Order of Things.

Then Man Said: Let There Be Life!

However, according to some sources, AI became a commercial success 20 years ago – back in 1998 when the Furby was officially released into the wild. Thankfully, unlike mink, coypu, and Japanese Knotweed, the Furbys rise to dominance was halted by The Next New Thing – in this case the AIBO – potentially creating one of those 'If only Terry Nation had stuck legs on a Dalek' marketing moments. But why, having spent x-many millions on research, was the best launch application really deemed to be Artificial Intelligence powering a mechanical dog? AIBO ran (rolled over, shook hands and, if you took the batteries out, played dead very convincingly) for about 6 years – at least proving that an AI pet wasn't just for Christmas. After that, having been entertained by the spectacle of it all, like magpies, Humans ended up being distracted by the sparkle and shine of the new once more. And the jump from AIBO to humanoid (the Actroid series) via ASIMO at the turn of the Millennium, rapidly followed.

Yet, as we come to the end of the first quarter of this new 21st Century Era, the underlying presentation of AI hasn't really changed since Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. It has the potential to be an equal, yet while we want AI today, rather than tomorrow, we also distrust the hell out of it. Otherwise why the 'reliance' on the likes of Asimov's *Three Laws* which, like talking to a naughty child, are based first and foremost on *Thou Shalt Not* rather than the more positive and encouraging *Thou Shalt*. Are we that paranoid in our perceptions of what AI should be capable of, that we immediately shackle the learning process with rules that bind rather than free the electrosprit? Is it that we expect something human-created to be as human-like driven?

Or is it the unpredictability – read *uncontrollability*? – of two identical sets of Hardware, each producing two differing AI 'personalities', that takes us down such avenues?

And make no mistake, there *will* always be some element of deviation owing to Engineering's in-built design and budget-limited Manufacturing's reliance on a +/- Tolerance when it comes to Quality Control.

'But don't you worry about that – it's only a small variation. What? Well, yes, so maybe one of them turns out to be a sociopath rather than socially acceptable – but, hey, that just means our products are actually as near to Human as we can get them.'

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I Rarely Use Oxygen Myself, Sir. It Promotes Rust.

So do we really want our AI-powered automata to be as Human as possible?

According to General Consensus and Major Opinion, the answer to that question is a resounding ‘No!’ – both from a historical/hysterical viewpoint – ‘Open the pod bay doors, HAL’ – to that of modern day research and advances such as those from the likes of Boston Dynamics. It seems those people have not only stuck legs on it so it can climb stairs with ease, but also given it spatial awareness and object recognition along with rudimentary cognitive capabilities. And that means the ‘mechanisms’ learn by their mistakes, as well as evaluate and analyse new situations so that potential mistakes don’t happen in the first place.

So who cares if the funding has its foundations in the US Department of Defence? It’s bound to have more commercial uses. Eventually. Well, at least the Hardware still looks like a Steampunker’s wet dream, and doesn’t try and pass itself off as Near Human – something that some Robotacists seem to feel is important.

Into The Uncanny Valley

Humans are fickle creatures at best, and as such have a revulsion to things that are too imitative of themselves – ‘Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, and I’ll rip your Sensor Modules off.’

A ready example of non-Humanesque acceptance is the amount of ‘Smart’ units in and around the home today. Everything from ovens, washing machines, fridges and freezers, down to waste bins that scan bar codes and send electronic post-it notes to your smartphone, telling you that you need to buy more of whatever it is you’ve just possibly run out of. That way you’ll never forget. In fact, if you just marry it to another, GPS-based app, it will then be able to tell you where you can get the item(s) from a conveniently nearby store....

At least Pavlov used a bell.

And what Society creates, Society will also subvert. Witness the MiraiBotnet DDoS attacks using just the power of the *Internet of Things*. While I would be immensely proud to say “My toaster brought down the CIA,” sadly it’s just a simple handraulic model – and slow, and burns the toast on the second load of slices if you put them in almost immediately after the first load have dutifully popped their golden brown heads above the chrome. Such is the nature of Life, I suppose – always disappointing once the novelty wears off.

So while we’re happy to have our robots looking like mechanical constructs, it seems we are not happy with the social integration/interaction aspect. Especially if the intention is to perfectly imitate to some degree.

Is this, perhaps, because Humans are worried that the pseudo-meek will inherit the Earth?

Seriously, Would I Lie To You?

Recent studies have shown that while Humans are happy to lie to an AI construct, they get more than a little upset when said construct reciprocates with a lie. Yet isn’t GIGO something that’s been around for generations of electro-interfacing? As far back as 1957, in fact. And if they can lie, they can learn to scheme, and manipulate, and before you know it you’ve followed the white rabbit so far down the Conspiracy Hole that you reach the end of the line – which is supposedly a Skynet/slave uprising future.

All of which makes it look like we have come full circle and are back in that 1950s Sci-Fi B Movie country?

One film, *Robot and Frank* (2012), posed an interesting question: If the directive is to protect your human charge (*First Law of Robotics*), and the only viable form of protection is assisted self-destruction (*Third Law*), then is the erasure of cognitive sentieny an act of murder? It is impossible to ‘rollback’ to the last ‘backup’, because different – or even

Bend, Fold, Spindle and Mutilate Inc #1

modifying/influencing – non-repeatable ‘learning experiences’ would have occurred post-backup. Like Death, there’s no coming back once you press the OFF button.

The Future’s Bright – The Future’s Organic

And if Hardware doesn’t cut it, is the next move Programmable Wetware?

At the moment, such an alternative is still very much in the realms of theory, and hopefully by the time it becomes a commercial reality, there will be an alternative to Dr Frankenstein’s rather drastic reboot procedure.

Yet it was only a year after the Furby that William Ditto et al created the first Wetware computer from leech neurons – a construct capable of generating mathematical output in a similar fashion to that of a basic pocket calculator. So who knows? Maybe future bio-computing will have a residual taste for blood – on the basis that if it works then why fix it?

Fusion Conclusion

But have we – as in Humanity – already reached the cut-off point? In 2014, the term Digital Detox officially entered the Oxford English Dictionary, and shortly after there appeared rehab clinics for those who consider themselves to be Digitally Addicted. Is it time for a New Luddite Church to appear?

Some people think not.

At the World Government Summit in Dubai (February, 2018), Elon Musk stated that people would need to become cyborgs to be relevant in an artificial intelligence age. He said that a “merger of biological intelligence and machine intelligence” would be necessary to ensure we stay economically valuable.

So, just like Robby the robot, I shall be off to give myself an oil-job, on the grounds that it always improves my self-worth. Thank you.

-oOo- -oOo-

The Story So Far



Rupert has finally given in to desire and left Juliet for the Bahamas – a fun-loving retro swingers couple who balance the lows of Hipster cred New York with the cocaine and gansta highs of Bridlington-on-Sea – a notorious Yorkshire den of depravity.

Juliet, in turn, has been left with the children and is having to come to terms with the quandary which most parents have to eventually face. Does she sell them now for medical research, or wait a while and invest in the White Slave Trade futures market?

Mickey, who is really only Sherman’s father by the foreskin of his teeth has, unsurprisingly, discovered Trixie in a compromising position in the potting shed. Not quite the sort of behaviour one would or should expect from a prize-winning pedigree goat.

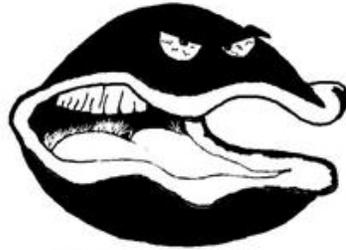
Meanwhile, despite having twelve points on his artistic licence, Chuck Connor continues to add yet more column inches to his fanzine output, in the misguided hope that it will somehow bring him international fame, success and unimaginable riches.

But first, here are these massages from our sponsors...

Advert Break

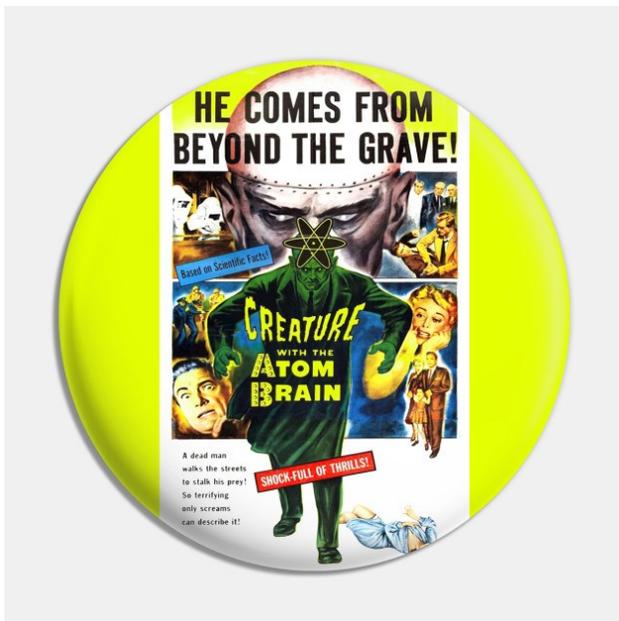
...That's Egyptian Nazi Sharks Week, all next week, here on Fux.

Have you been attacked by a shark? Then why not call CLAMS DIRECT on 1-800-555-55-55 for some of the best and most aggressive No Win No Fee bi-valves around.



CLAMS DIRECT – Sponsors of the Egyptian Nazi Sharks Week here on Fux

-oOo- -oOo-



Life At The Cutting Edge....

There comes a point in life when you realise that you're no longer invincible. I passed that point a long time ago. Well, not so much passed it, as kicked down a diversionary fork.

The fork came into sight on realising that both immediate sides of my parental families were more than a little prone to the vagaries of Cancer. And, in true "fuck you" fashion, I made light of it all. Even to the point, when various marks appeared on the backs of my hands, I would say that I'd wake up of a morning, and if I couldn't join the dots and make a big 'C', then things were just fine and dandy.

The same kind of laissez fairy attitude was also used when I discovered a lump on the top of

my head some 10 years ago. Even the local GP at the time gave it the old "It's probably just a cyst." Maybe I should have asked for an intelligent second opinion, but I'm a glasses half cracked rather than a glasses totally smashed kind of guy.

Time, as is its wont, beat on its petty pace from day to day, until a couple or three months ago (around October time) I was having my hair cut at the local barber. Halfway through the scissor cutting (I've never been one for clippers – a throwback to the long deployment days, when various members of the ship's crew would be assigned the joys of buzz-cut merchant. No matter what you wanted it to look like, it was always a #1 all over) Martin leans over and says:

"I could be wrong, but that lump looks like it's bleeding."

I put my hand up and give it a vigorous grope – though not the kind that people used to do in the back row of the movies, before technology turned them into phone zombies. Yet when I have a look at my fingertips I don't see any incriminating crimson.

Martin leans in towards me again, like he's about to make me an observation I can't refuse. "I don't mean there's blood coming out of it. It just looks like it's bleeding. On the inside."

"Oh"

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“You should get that looked at,” he adds, totally missing the historical point that barbers also doubled as surgeons in the Middle Ages. Like the sign says, **Welcome to Crowland – an Historical Market Town.**

I nod in agreement, thankfully before he gets going with a modern cut-throat razor to the back of my neck.

Twenty minutes later and I’m puttering over to Abbey View surgery – so named because you can still see the remains of the old Abbey from the carpark – and take an ‘emergency walk in’ slot. Thankfully I draw Dr X. He and I had a bit of a rocky first meeting – Abbey View was one of the WannaCry ransom victims back in 2017. Since then it has updated the Mickey\$oft OS, and as I type these final amends in late April 2020, during the on-going covid-19 pandemic, it is doing its very best to keep things running as smoothly as possible.

So as I enter the room we exchange polite pleasantries before I sit down, almost manage to stick my head between my knees, and say, “What do you make of that then?”

“Bloody hell.” And then he rolls his chair forward and we’re in the back row of the cinema again as he gives it a serious going over.

Before I can ask whether that was a professional diagnosis or an emotional reaction, he asks: “How long has it been like this?”

“Seriously, doc, I check my balls and boobs for bumps, but that’s as far as it goes.”

“Here, look at this.” He snatches up a webcam and points it at the top of the lump, which then appears on his 27-inch flatscreen monitor – no doubt in 24-bit colour. Bravely I resist the temptation to say something along the lines of ‘Heavens, my roots need doing,’ and just stare at the Malbec/Rioja Gran Reserve wine coloured thing. For some reason it reminds me of what shape you get when you sweep a dead cat under the hearth rug – or one of those extra large, round ravioli – the sort that usually has crab meat in them.



(Picture of a large round ravioli – not a dead cat under a rug)

We both agree that it’s going to need a more specialist opinion, and while I shouldn’t worry, he’s going to tag my referral as ‘Urgent.’

It’s only later, talking to one of the librarians, do I find out that Dr X was at one time part of the Oncology Dept in Peterborough Hospital.

A fortnight goes by and I’m sitting in the reception area of some department in the self-same main Peterborough Hospital complex. I get the call forward, go into a little side room, and get the bump felt by someone I believe may be a middle-aged Indian woman. She then scribbles down some notes, takes a few measurements, and asks:

“Why haven’t you had this removed before now?”

Bend, Fold, Spindle and Mutilate Inc #1

I want to say that we've become attached to each other, but I don't. It's the underlying fear that makes me revert to that kind of thing. Witty sayings and snappy banter deflect from the reality that whatever it is that I've been carrying around for a decade or more is apparently nothing like I've always thought it to be.

We chatter for a minute or so longer, then she tells me to go wait in the reception area again, and someone else will be along shortly to see me.

When he arrives he's carrying a large digital camera around his neck. He's going to take some photographs – and I seem to slip into a parallel Harmony Hairspray world:-

“Photographs? Why?”

“Just in case.”

“In case of what?”

“Just in case we need to do reconstructive surgery.”

His 'studio' is in yet another medium sized room, with an area at the back complete with three white cotton draped walls. A massive lightbox. In the middle of the area is a straight backed wooden chair.

As I sit down on the chair I make a Christine Keeler reference, and behind me I can hear him laughing. Thank fuck someone realises what I need to hear at times like this. Ten minutes later and I'm back out in the corridor again, heading towards reception, the parking fee machines, and eventually home.

Time moves on, and I get the surgery appointment letter. It's on a Saturday morning, which is a little bit of an advantage, mainly as the car park isn't totally jammed to the gills. I go up to the section reception as annotated in the letter, and get myself logged in. Den is with me, even though he has absolutely no love of hospitals. Bad experiences after his car accident left mental as well as physical scars. He wants to be with me, and I'm concerned that he's going to upset himself. But that's what we do. He worries for the both of us, and I'm too stupid to see the down side of any situation. It's how we've stayed together for 20 years now.

I'm greeted by the ward nurse, given the usual hospital gown, and then Den and I are shown to the bed with the wraparound curtains. I change into the gown, the nurse comes with paperwork, then leaves after I've filled it all in.

Tea and biscuits arrive and are eaten, apologies are given when the original surgery time is moved right by a couple of hours. Then a gurney comes up and I'm asked to climb aboard. Den stays by the bed. He has his word search puzzle book which, given his profound dyslexia, always amazes me in regard to the number of books he completes successfully.

Down a passageway, into the operating theatre – all white, bright lights and 1980s Electro-Pop. The flap on the gurney is brought up and pillows arranged around my shoulders – the nurse asking me if I'm comfortable. I resist the old punchline of “I get by.”

Before I know it, the bulging section of my head is shaved, dried, re-examined, and then marked up in various blue symbols. During the prep I ask if they're going to video it so I can have something to cherish later, but the nurse doesn't degrade herself by answering. Which is probably just as well because the surgeon comes up behind me and says:

“This might just sting a little, but it'll only be for a short while.”

Then she's at the top of my skull with a loaded hypodermic and a hand like an electric sewing machine.

Before I can say anything about her Botox technique, the *fecking enormous* belt of pain does its drive-by routine, and seconds later I'm left asking the nurse if she has a tissue as both my eyes are watering.

Bend, Fold, Spindle and Mutilate Inc #1

Five or so minutes later, accompanied by the question “Can you feel that?” The procedure starts. Cue for me to simply retreat into my ‘Happy Place’ while all the cutting, tugging and finally cauterizing (“Do I smell barbeque?”) takes place.

It’s a successful technique that’s worked for me in the past – amazing my sadly missed previous dentist, Chris – aka Christakis Mindikkis – because I fell asleep during his root canal work.

“You went to sleep!”

“What can I say? I trust you implicitly.”

We were finally retiring the ‘Miracle Tooth’ after 20+ years. He’s a perfectionist, but lost £5 to me back in 2000 when he didn’t have faith in his own skills. Hence ‘Miracle Tooth.’

I miss his professionalism, the pictures he stuck on the ceiling every time school holidays came around, and his incredibly sexy eyes.

Eventually they remove whatever it was I’d been playing host to for almost a decade, put it in a sample container full of clear liquid, and before sending it off to the lab for whatever they were going to do to it, they give me a chance to handle and look at it. Floating in its suspension, it reminds me of something I might have seen in an old B-movie rip off of Alien.

I look up at the waiting nurse. “Does this thing have a name?”

She looks a little confused, and remains silent behind the face mask.

As I hand it back to her I say, “Goodbye, Cyril.” Well, for some reason, it looked like a Cyril.

After that it’s just a case of being wheeled back to the ward, given yet more tea and biscuits, and Den. A little later, after all the paperwork had been signed and collated, and a 7 day post op review appointment booked, I’m finally released back into the wild once more.

I drive home – Den doesn’t have a licence – and on the way back we both agree not to talk about any ‘What If?’s until we get the results back from the hospital. It’s another one of our coping mechanisms in that we try and look on the optimistic side of things.

Thankfully several weeks before Christmas I received the news that despite the fact it had been slowly growing and haemorrhaging, Cyril was benign.

Looking back on it all it’s been an interesting experience. I wouldn’t say it was an enjoyable one – waiting for any medical results always puts me on edge. And I always hate surgery of most kinds – not for any fear of knives, or not coming out of it at the other end – even though that is becoming more and more a possibility as time goes on.

No, it’s walking up with the cannula still in the back of my hand. It’s the one thing I always want out of me, regardless.

And, despite the picture, the stitches have now been yanked out and my hair is now growing back again.

Mind you, it still doesn’t stop me from telling people I’ve had an organic memory upgrade, in the form of a brain transplant.

You’d be amazed at how many people actually believe it.



Bend, Fold, Spindle and Mutilate Inc #1



***“Look love – if you
ask someone to
guess your age,
you shouldn’t be so
bloody upset if
they get it right!”***

Congratulations!

You have been singing along with the original film soundtrack recording of the newly restored and digitally remastered Irving Berlin 1953 cult classic musical, *Call Me Ishmael!*

“Three hundred and one
Pounds of fun,
That’s why he’s
Our Chucky-bun!”

Yes, that’s *Call Me Ishmael!*
Starring
Halibut Lom as Cap’n Ahab

“Which one of you scurvy dogs wants to polish my harpoon?”
Ethel Mermaid as Sickbay Nurse Nancy

“That’s the worst case of Moby Dick I’ve ever seen! Take two Aspirin and come back if it drops off. Next!”
and Buster Crabbe
Simply because that’s just too good a name for me to pass up!

Shot in Technicolor (using both barrels), *Call Me Ishmael!* is more commonly known as *Bend, Fold, Spindle and Mutilate Inc #1*. All Skate Press Productions are directed and produced by the fumble ningers of Chuck Connor, who can be easily contracted by the following unprotected means:- Email - chuck.connor@gmx.co.uk
Or via the vagaries of snail-mail, using a correctly stomped ant eater, sent to:- 81 Peterborough Road, Crowland, PE6 0BB, UK/GB. And with that, all I can say is

***Goodnight out there,
whatever
you are...***

The history book on the shelf is always repeating itself. --ABBA

INTERMISSION #99

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com for EAPA, but this also for the Worldcon Order Of Faneds and a few other innocent victims, due to interesting - I hope you think so! - sf&fandom history stuff. BTW, follow @SFJournalen's newstweets from Nordic sf/fantasy/horror/fandom on Twitter! 42 years of covering fanews. Do typo distancing and don't leave your eyetracks around! Early August 2020.

CORONALLY

In last issue I covered the amazing movie "Space Invasion of Lapland". It so happens that I'm now sitting in a cottage in Lapland writing this! Corona's fault. For Lapland trips I hitch a ride with my brother. This year he intended to go to Switzerland with my sporting nephew on a little training camp, but just days before leaving the Swiss decided Swedes - despite corona figures now in single digits - must quarantine to get in. So he went for Lapland instead and I joined. We have our late grandma's house here in the little village Bellvik (see map). As I covered my Lapland trips 2018 and 2019 in #75 and #87 and in #98 the "Space Invasion of Lapland" flick (map shows where much of it was shot) I don't feel a pressing urge to write more now about Lapland. Ask me for those issues if you're interested. Not much is happening here anyway, except we saw a reindeer by the roadside today. Lapland feels far from the corona scare. Mosquitoes are a bigger annoyance!

Instead there'll be more history stuff from the Stockholm Royal Library newspaper archive, as in the last few issues. The Swedish national library temporarily let their digitised newspaper archive be open on-line for two months this spring- usually you go there and sit by a terminal - to compensate for the library being corona-closed. So I spent a lot of time researching sf, fandom and related stuff from old newspapers, thousands of them from the 1600s and on, totalling 80+ million pages. (Their OCR doesn't work well on the really old-style old-style typefaces, which limits the scope. Texts

become readable from the 1800s and on.) I feel it's my duty to sf&fandom history to report interesting stuff found!

As usual, I reproduce the articles as illos which Nordic readers can read (just magnify, though it may be a bit blurry - I must limit the file size!) and for other readers I'll make translations and/or summaries of essential parts. I hope you like it. Some of the material is rather unique, which is the reason I'll mail expand distribution a little, also to WOOOF. I also want to make a plug for the oldest electronic APA around. New members welcomed! If you have something mildly interesting to say, know your way around a keyboard and find the "Save as PDF" command in your word processor - *join!* It's free. Contact me or OE garth.van.spencer@gamil.com if you have any questions.

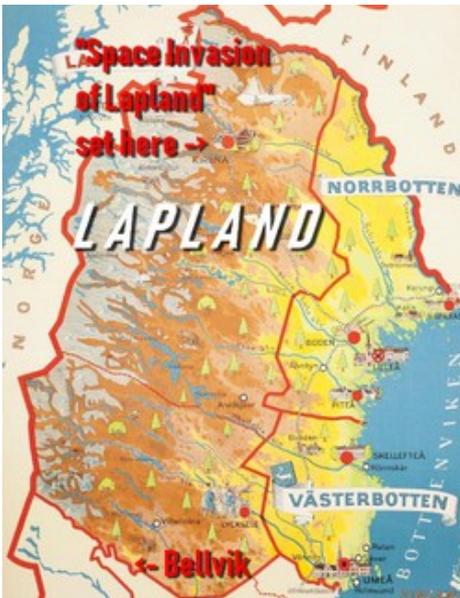
But first some corona notes. I know it's boring beyond belief, but the world having a bit of a crazy apocalypse can't pass without comments.

Besides, old Sweden has an interesting take on the virus...

--Ahrvid Engholm

LIES, DAMN LIES & CORONA STATISTICS

You should be very careful when using statistics. That's especially true when it comes to the corona situation. For instance: the number of "confirmed cases" is most of all only a measure of *how much you have tested*, and the number of fatalities *relies heavily on your definition of "corona death" and the reporting practices*, which vary widely from country to country. Not to mention that the figures are



Sweden Has Become the World's Cautionary Tale *Not exactly true...*

Its decision to carry on in the face of the pandemic has yielded a surge of deaths without sparing its economy from damage — a red flag as the United States and Britain move to lift lockdowns.

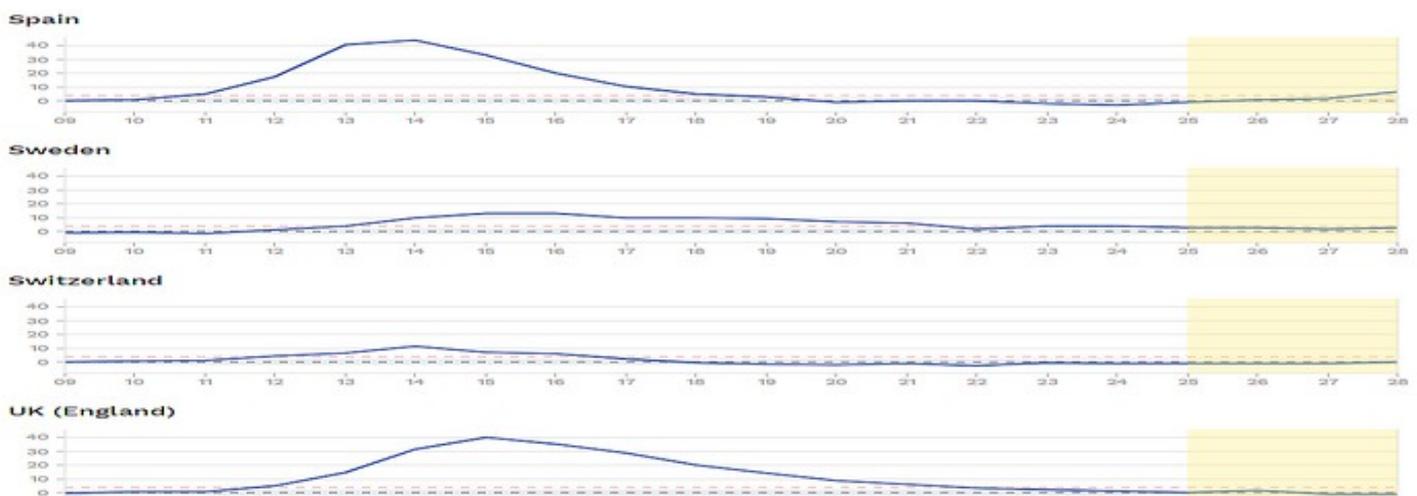


in many cases doctored (no pun intended) for political reasons. For instance, I find it very likely that the real figures for China and Russia are much higher than the official ones - to make the communist party and Putin, respectively, look better. And the US is a mess, with 50 states all doing their own races, and elections coming up in which politicians want to shine. And the US health system is so fractured that the figures probably miss a lot, like corona fatalities at home, in institutions, among immigrants, the uninsured. (We know that NY state at one point had to add many thousands to their statistics, when they realised all they had missed. And there're 49 other states!)

When I see articles like the one in New York Times I just sigh...a gross exaggeration, shallow analysis and misrepresentation. It may come from the urge to vindicate the local much stricter measures. New York had a very tough lockdown. As I have noted before, the Swedish epidemic results while not being the "best" have been *unexcitingly average*. And that's *without a lockdown!* More than half a dozen nations have done much worse, all of them more or less incarcerating the entire population. And for fatalities it seems US as a whole, Brazil and others are on their way to overtake Sweden's modest averageness. Our Nordic neighbours have been struck milder, but that's in all likelihood due to having a minimal initial spread of the virus. Sweden have more immigrants and had school breaks late February, early March and millions travelled abroad. To this we have that Swedish figures are likely very inflated, counting mostly deaths *with* the virus, not *from* it.

Economic and other secondary damages, while not absent will at least be much milder here. The Swedish economy is calculated to shrink by 6-7% - mostly because important export markets are hit badly - which is half or less than half of the figures for most other industrial nations. And in the UK medical experts calculate that there will be 50 000 excess deaths in cancer, due to cancelled or delayed diagnostics and treatments. That's *more* for cancer alone - other diseases uncounted - than the presently ca 45 000 British corona fatalities! Lockdowns have effects on unemployment, domestic violence, mental health and suicides, depression, drug use and alcohol... Some of that will come here too, but I'm sure not being a prisoner in your home for three months is helpful. Very helpful, in fact!

The only *reliable* corona death statistics are what is called "excessive deaths". Statisticians have noted that death figures for the same periods of a year are strikingly similar every year. As people are



either alive or dead, without room for difference of opinion on causes, any variations can be ascribed to external factors - as the corona epidemic in this case. See the graph from

<https://www.euromomo.eu/graphs-and-maps>

Sweden lies on the same level as lockdown-Switzerland, though effects lasted a little longer, and is way, way below lockdown-Spain and lockdown-England. At the epidemic's spike the excessive deaths in Sweden was 13% above normal, while a bit slower to subside it just means tackling things

earlier and most likely having much less trouble later. The present figure in July is in fact *within the limits of normal variations*, ie the excessive deaths are as for a normal flu. I made a little calculation of Swedish excess deaths March-June, and found them to be ca 1800 rather than the official figure of 5400. It seems media and many papers have got things wrong. If Google translate works see <https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=sv&tl=en&u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.freelists.org%2Fpost%2Fskriva%2FStarkt-verdrivna-coronasiffror-tycks-det> You need to subtract 65% from Swedish corona deaths to get deaths *from* not just with the virus, if the excessive death numbers are correct. "Cautionary tale"? Really? This New York paper wants to comfort its readers, who were locked up for three months in an overreaction to a virus can't eradicate, only temporarily slow down. We now hear about regions, states and countries being *forced to go back into lockdown*. They suppressed the virus so hard that immunity became minimal, freed quarantine prisoners invaded bars and beaches, and the little bugger just bounced back. Chances are that won't happen here and there's no lockdown to go "back" to. Note though, we should wait 1-2 years until the corona bug is gone, to finally evaluate what did and didn't work and what real numbers are.



The Corona Knights of Gotland!

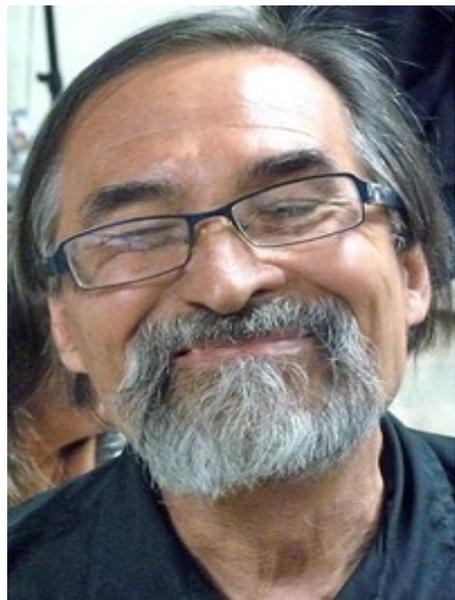
On the latest twice-weekly press conference - daily ones are deemed unnecessary - state epidemiologist Dr Anders Tegnell said that Sweden can now count on a comfortable level of herd immunity, due to what is called T-cell immunity. That's from the fast, general immune system, which however doesn't leave or rely on anti-bodies. He also estimated (a seasoned scientist, fighting viruses in Africa etc for many years!) that those having had the virus will be immune for at least six months. But next Nobel banquet will be cancelled. The separate price ceremony may be without an audience, but it's not clear yet. It's mostly due to that the infection status of all international guest may be uncertain. Most Swedes will be OK, probably long before the Nobel Day in December.

Dr Tegnell has earlier explained that the Swedish measures have always been the usual ones based on experience: hand hygiene, social distancing, don't visit the elderly, stay at home if the slightest ill (work from home if possible), close schools only for older students, and so on. Locking up people is unnecessary, maybe useful only in *extreme cases for short periods* so that the medical systems can prepare. Masks are a tricky thing. The effects of them are actually questionable, since they may give a *false sense of security*. They won't stop you at all from getting infected (Nota Bene!) and while they may stop sneeze droplets, it is much worse if they make you forget keeping distancing and even to go out on town when you don't feel 100% healthy.

The Swedish strategy have always been the standard for fighting an epidemic, but then "the rest of the world suddenly became crazy," Dr Tegnell said. But politicians wanted to show "strength", fooled by faulty epidemic models since proved wrong. Result: economy and people's non-virus related health suffer a disastrous blow.

An odd end note. Since it's still important to wash your hands, keep your distance to others and so on, the wonderful Baltic island of Gotland, a popular vacation destination, has found a new method to remind visitors: medieval knights! They have recruited a local medieval re-enactment society to move around in their armour, on their horses, and remind people about the virus:

"Keep twain cubits away, Sire, or the Black Death will fall upon you!"



RIP Jean-Pierre "Laigle" Moumon 1947-2020, heart attack. French sf expert, enthusiast, good friend from many sf cons. Adieu, mon ami!

FANSCIENT CONUNDRUMS

Time to go back in time, to the old scriptures in the form of the highly intelligent newspapers and their hard-working reporters! Once more, some findings from the newspaper archive of the Royal Library in Stockholm. What marvels will be unearthed? What old mysteries will be unraveled? Will there be the secret recipe for corflu? Will we learn who sawed Courtney's boat? Come along and find out!

First a little thing I can't remember seeing at the time it was published. I wrote an editorial in the Nova SF magazine in 1985, with advice to sf authors. Morning paper Dagens Nyheter commented upon it **April 13, 1985**:

ADVICE TO SF WRITERS. "To you who write", writes editor Ahrvid Engholm in an editorial in the latest issue of sf magazine Nova. It seems Nova gets a lot of short stories from its readers, and Engholm has in this issue decided to give some advice to his enthusiastic but perhaps not so accomplished submitters. It's a nice little article by a seasoned but still optimistic editor. Engholm has to start from scratch: You must write with cleaned types... The advices are wise and constructive: most must be re-written - try to spell correctly - the start is important. Ahrvid Engholm is also a friend of the logical ending. Most claimed surprise endings are far from surprising. And he ask readers to avoid endings where "the sun turns into a nova", a giant explosion that ends both characters and plots. "A good sf author only lets the sun explode when it's needed", Engholm maintains."

Råd till en sf-författare

"TILL DIG SOM SKRIVER" skriver redaktör Ahrvid Engholm en ledare i senaste numret av sciencefictiontidningen Nova.

Tydligt får Nova in en mängd noveller från sina läsare, och i detta nummer har Engholm beslutat förmedla några råd till sina entusiastiska men kanske inte alltid så tränade bidragsgivare.

Det är en fin liten artikel, skriven av luttrad men fortfarande optimistisk redaktör. Engholm får börja från scratch: "Du måste skriva maskin med rengjorda typer..."

Råden är kloka och konstruktiva: det mesta måste skrivas om - försök stava rätt - början är viktig.

Ahrvid Engholm talar sig också varm för det logiska slutet; de flesta förment överraskande slut är allt annat än överraskande.

Och han vädjar till läsarna att undvika slut "där solen blir en nova", och i en jätte-explosion gör slut på både personer och intrig.

"En bra sf-författare låter bara solen explodera när det behövs", framhåller Engholm. MÅRTEN BLOMKVIST

Well, I think I can still stand behind all of that. I sound like a very experienced author, though I at the time had only had two short stories published in Jules Verne Magasinet (and a handful in fanzines). I had of course been writing for many years. I think I must have submitted my first story attempt to Sam J Lundwall of JVM around 1978 or something. I have always written short story fiction, beside writing non-fiction articles and books, fanzine pieces and all kinds of stuff, even poetry. Over the years I've had an estimated 100+ short stories published professionally or semi-professionally (the difference is sometimes academic...) and have always been interested in the art of writing. I have written an unpublished book on writing short stories (I'm not satisfied with it, it needs polishing, so I haven't tried it with any publisher) and had the writers' E-mail list SKRIVA running since 1997. I don't have an enormous output, maybe only 2-4 short stories per year and it's only short stories. I have only written half a novel (the infamous heavy tuckerised crime fiction parody Brotherhood of Blood, hacked out during a weekend together with David Nettle, who wrote the other half) and a couple of novellas. I like short fiction best.

But enough about me. Beside writing and fiction, much around science fiction is about space. And I'm not really surprised that it's the topic the first time Arthur C "Ego" Clarke is mentioned in Swedish newspapers. We find a short article in Dagens Nyheter again, **May 28 1950**:

Moon rocket researcher's dream for Russian planetary offensive. It's possible the the Russians will be the first to reach the Moon. They work

intensively on that project, perhaps with a triumphant Russian 'occupation' of the planet as an aim, says the

Månraketen forskardröm

för rysk planetoffensiv

UP. LONDON, lördag.

Det är tänkbart att ryssarna blir de första som når fram till månen. De arbetar intensivt på projektet, kanhända med en triumferande rysk "ockupation" av planeten i sikte, påstår den engelske vetenskapsmannen Arthur C. Clarke.

Han baserar sin teori på informationer från den vetenskapliga världen i Sovjet, bl. a. yppade i ryska facktidskrifter. Under de senaste åren har ryssarna dessutom fått förstärkning av flera skickliga tyska forskare, som satts i arbete på projektet. Clarke är den som leder engelska forskningar på området. Han räknar för egen del med att kunna

Forta. sidan sex, spalt sex.

Månraketen...

(Forts. fr. sid. 1)

företa månresan inom 20 år, berättar han. Korta utflykter i rymden kommer att vara vardagsmat inom tio år. Rymdflygningen befinner sig nu på det stadium där flygningen befann sig för 40 år sedan. Man behöver "bara" femdubbla raketernas hastighet till 40.000 kilometer i timmen för att övervinna jordens dragningskraft, och detta anses inte längre omöjligt. Sedan tar resan till månen mindre än fyra dagar, allt enligt Clarkes optimistiska beräkningar.

English scientist Arthur C Clarke. He bases his theory on information from the Soviet scientific world, eg stated in Russian journals. During later years the Russians have also been augmented by several skilled German scientists who are working on the project. Clarke is the one leading English research in the field. He counts on that he himself will be able to take part in the first Moon trip within 20 years, he says. Short excursions into space will be common within ten years. Space flight is now at the stage where ordinary flight was 40 years ago. You "only" need to increase the speed of rocket fivefold to 40 000 km/h to conquer Earth's gravity, and this is no longer considered impossible. And then the trip to the Moon will take less than four days, according to Clarke's optimistic calculations.

For Arthur C himself hoping to get to the moon was a bit optimistic, but otherwise he wasn't that far off in his assessments. He was chairman of the British Interplanetary Society which had made a detailed study of how to build a British moon rocket (thus "leading English research in then field"...). He was absolutely correct with assuming that the Soviets would take the lead in the space race early on. He must have had good sources.

Atomic bombs is also something sf authors have been writing about, even before Hiroshima. Sweden also wanted to catch that train, at least in the beginning, as we could read in Söderhamns Tidning as early as **November 16 1945...**



Rocket to the stars, according to artist "Lon"!

ÄVEN SVERIGE KAN tillverka atombomber

Omedelbart före sin resa till London på inbjudan av engelska vetenskapsakademien meddelade professor Manne Siegbahn i en intervju, att han skulle vara i stånd att göra en svensk atombomb inom en tid av tre månader. AT har låtit frågan gå vidare till en av våra främsta experter på sprängämnesområdet, och han ställer sig litet skeptisk till professor Siegbahns löfte om tre månader, men i övrigt bekräftar han professors yttrande.

— Jag förstår inte, varför det skall vara så oerhört ståhej kring hemligheten med atombomben, säger han. Atombomben är ingen hemlighet och hur tillverkningen av en sådan skall ske är känt av vetenskapsmännen i hela världen. För oss här i Sverige skulle det endast gälla att få i gång en industri, som tog hand om tillverkningen, och vi skulle kunna göra atombomber på löpande band.

— Och hur länge skulle det dröja?

— Professor Siegbahns löfte om tre månader kan naturligtvis endast gälla en laboratorieprodukt, men i industriell skala skulle tillverkningen kunna igångsättas inom lät oss säga lika många år. Amerika ligger före här, ty

där forcerades tillverkningen fram för att få ett snabbt krigsslut, men den svenska expertisen hade kommit lika långt med problemet, det var bara dess omsättande i praktiken, som då det inte var aktuellt, fick anstå.

— Några hinder för denna tillverkning skulle alltså om resurserna funnes inte föreligga.

— Nej, men maskiner måste byggas, och det tar här som inom all annan tillverkning sin rundliga tid. Hur bomben skall byggas vet vi, och smärre detaljspörsmål som naturligtvis uppenbara sig, kommer vi att lösa under byggandet. För den händelse nu ett sådant blir av.

SWEDEN CAN ALSO MAKE ATOMIC BOMBS Just before his trip to London, invited by the English academy of science professor Manne Siegbahn said in an interview that he'd be able to make an atomic bomb within three months. We have asked this question to one of our foremost experts on explosives and he was somewhat sceptical to professor Siegbahn's promise about three months, but otherwise he confirms what the professor says.

"I don't understand why the secret of the atomic bomb should be such an issue," he says. "The atomic bomb is no secret and how one can be constructed is known by scientists in the whole world. For us in Sweden it would only be a matter of starting an industry to take care of production, and we could produce atomic bombs in long lines.

"How long would it take?"

"Professor Siegbahn's promise of three months would only be a laboratory item, but in on an industrial scale production could start within the same number of years. America is in the lead here, because the production was speeded up there to reach an end of the war, but Swedish experts could have reached just as far, the problem only being to realise it in practice, but as it wasn't needed it could wait.

"There wouldn't be any obstacles for this production, as long as the resources where there?"

"No, the machines must be built but it will as a

WARNING: The text in this publication resembles English - but don't be fooled!

lot of other production take some time. We know how the bomb shall be built, and other little details that appears will be solved during construction. In case that will happen."

Who this explosives expert is isn't said. It may be the case that the basic principles of creating an atomic chain reaction was known to a lot of scientists, but it seems the guy underestimates the problems with obtaining U235 or handling plutonium... Building atomic bombs in three months! It sounds like it's just being some sort of firecrackers.

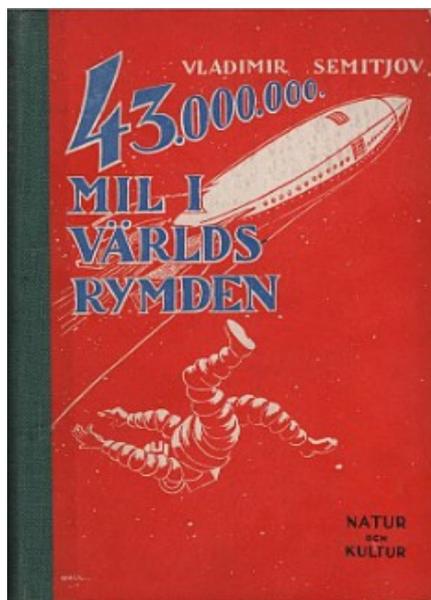
And it was already from the beginning clear how these firecrackers were to be used: you'd put them on rockets and throw them half-way into space to hit the cities and industries of the enemy. As said in this article in Dagens Nyheter, **November 12 1945**:

*PHANTOM WEAPONS FOR USA
Atomic projectiles from "space ships"
The head of the US Air Force, general Arnold, says that the US Air Force should have such an efficient spying and intelligence organisation that they in peace time can make complete and modern plans for destroying cities and industrial and military objects in any possible enemy state with atomic bombs and other weapons. This is evident from the general's official report to the war secretary Paterson regarding US Air Force 1945 operations. "V2 is a weapon type ideal for transporting atomic explosives, since it would be very difficult to find any efficient defence against it," Arnold writes. "If any defence is developed against such projectiles which moves with 4500 km/h, we must be ready to launch it from closer to target, give it a shorter flight time and make it more difficult to discover and destroy. We must be ready to launch it from unexpected directions. That can be done with real 'space ships' that can operate from outside Earth's atmosphere. It is already now almost possible to construct such*

crafts, and technical research will certainly be able to do it within foreseeable future." The general openly

discusses the possibility of a new war and writes: "With the present equipment an enemy air power may without prior warning penetrate all perceivable defences."

In previous issues I've talked about Sture Lönnerstrand (1919-1999), a pioneer of Swedish sf. Other pioneer were the Semitjovs, in fact two pioneers, the father author Vladimir and his son author and space journalist Eugen (whom I knew very well). The Semitjovs fled Russia after the revolution and came to Sweden after a complicated journey through eg Turkey. Vladimir Semitjov (1882-1939) wrote fine sf novels and lots of short stories and articles in Swedish magazines and newspapers, of all



Vladimir Semitjov's first (rather good!) sf novel from 1936. When the title refers to "mil", it's the "Swedish mile" = 10 km.

FANTOMVAPEN FÖR U.S.A. Atomprojektiler från "rymdskepp"

TT fr. Reuter. WASHINGTON, söndag.

Chefen för Förenta staternas flygvapen, general Arnold, anser att det amerikanska flyget bör ha ett så effektivt spioneri- och under-rättelseväsen som möjligt och under fredstid förfoga över fullständiga och moderna planer på att med atombomber och andra vapen förstöra alla strategiskt viktiga städer samt industriella och militära anläggningar i varje tänkbar fiendestat.

Detta framgår av generalens officiella rapport till krigsminister Paterson rörande det amerikanska flygets operationer under år 1945. "V-2 är en vapentyp som idealiskt lämpar sig för transport av atomsprängämnen, eftersom det skulle bli ytterst svårt att frambringa något effektivt försvar mot den", skriver Arnold. "Om det utvecklas några försvarsmedel mot sådana projektiler som rör sig med en hastighet av 4.800 km i timmen, måste vi vara redo att sända i väg dem närmare målet, ge dem kortare flygtid och göra dem svårare att upptäcka och förstöra. Vi måste vara redo att sända i väg dem från oväntade riktningar. Detta kan göras med verkliga 'rymdskepp', som kan operera utanför jordens atmosfär. Det är redan nu nästan möjligt att konstruera sådana skepp, och den tekniska forskningen kommer säkert att kunna göra det inom överskådlig framtid."

Generalen diskuterar öppet möjligheten av ett nytt krig och skriver: "Med nuvarande utrustning kan en fientlig flygmakt utan föregående varning passera alla tidigare tänkta för-



discusses the possibility of a new war and writes: "With the present equipment an enemy air power may without prior warning penetrate all perceivable defences."

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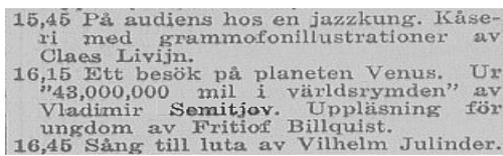
types but much of it science fiction. Eugen Semitjov (1923-1987), born in Sweden after the family had arrived, first became an accomplished illustrator, working for Jules Verne Magasinet and then creating the sf comics Allan Kämpe published in several countries. Then he became an author and space journalist, writing about the coming space age long before it became a reality, finally winning the Grand Prize of Journalism, a Swedish Pulitzer, for his fine material.

One of the first examples of Vladimir's activities I find is from an advert in Aftonbladet **March 10 1926**, for #11 of the magazine Allt för alla, which says the issue will have the story by "WL" (sic!) Semitjov named "24-25, a future fantasy". This is about the same time the genre got going in the US with the start of Amazing Stories - so Vladimir was early on to it. The ad also mentions that the magazine will have "information about Europe's radio stations and their wavelengths" - the new futuristic technology, the "wireless "Internet" of its time. I can't find Valdimir's story, since the newspaper archive doesn't cover magazines. But I found for instance the short story "Avatism", a Dr Jekyll Mr Hyde tale of sorts, by him in Aftonbladet, **August 27 1933**, which you'll find on next full page. (It's a challenge to run it. The original is a full tabloid page, but here it has to be reproduced smaller, which makes the text extra blurry... Too long to summarise, sorry.) Sf historian Bertil Falk has through the years collected many of Vladimir's short stories and estimates he must have written hundreds of them!

His Swedish Wikipedia page also mentions around 15 books, some apparently mainstream, some non-fiction but also the sf novels - and I translate the titles - *430 000 000 km through Space* (see ill), *Towards Fading Suns* and *The Lost Aeroplane* (https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Semitjov if you can make out the Swedish text). As he was an engineer by trade it's no wonder he was interested in science, space and such things. He for instance also wrote the non-fiction book *How the Universe is Arranged*.

A review of *430 000 000 km Through Space* is worth looking into, a rather appreciative piece from Dagens Nyheter, **November 19 1963**, "Jules Verniade". Some excerpts:

He knows his space and physics, but doesn't go into deep explanations on how it's possible for Dr Sternborn's strange giant torpedo to cruise between the planets. This is Semitjov's strength as an adventure author, he never stops the story for quasi-science babble but lets the story run in new fresh adventures. Another advantage of this adventure-spinner is his total lack of the usual, banal love story. Everything here is adventure and excitement. ... You can experience how it feels to get lost on the Moon with 24h of air left in your breathing apparatus, you go through a violent wild fire on Venus - where the grass is light blue - a rather unpleasant place BTW, where you always run the risk of encountering relatives to Earth's fortunately extinct dinosaurs, and finally you get insights into the cultural dusk on Mars, where the proletariat seems to be really at disadvantage, as the upper class already at birth removes their cognitive abilities. Giving a wink to older readers, Semitjov BTW also notes how Mars already a long time ago had a very extreme birth control. As you can see, "430 000 000 km in Space" isn't only full of imaginative, exciting adventures, it also has much new, valuable information for the reader.



A part of this exciting novel was also read in radio, a half hour reading by Fritiof Billquist, **March 5 1937** (right).

It is worth noting is that while he learned Swedish for everyday use, he never felt comfortable writing it, so he wrote everything in Russian and had to split the money with a translator. Still, he apparently managed to make a living. What I

Jules Verniad.
 VLADIMIR SEMITJOV:
 43.000.000 mil i världsrymden.
 Natur och Kultur. Pris 3: 25.
 Den tysk-svenske författaren Vladimir Semitjov har roat sig med att skriva en modern variation på Jules Vernes gamla "Resan till månen". Semitjov nöjer sig emellertid inte med månen. Han för sina passagerare både till Venus och Mars med en självklarhet som inte känner några tekniska svårigheter. Den fantastiske författaren var också i unga år ingenjör herta i St Petersburg. Han kan sin världsrymd och sin fysik, men ger sig ändå aldrig för djupt in i förklaringar om hur det egentligen är möjligt att doktor Sternborns sällsamma jättetorped kan kryssa så där mellan planeterna. Detta är en sida av Semitjovs styrka som äventyrsförfattare, han stoppar aldrig upp sin handling med kvastekniskt snusförullt, han låter den löpa friskt utan i ständigt nya äventyr. En annan fördel hos denne äventyrsberättare är också hans fullständiga frihet från den vanliga banala kärleks-historien. Här är allt äventyr och spänning.
 "43.000.000 mil i världsrymden" bör därför vara en utmärkt pojkbok; bland de svenska äventyrsböcker som kommit ut de senaste åren är den också ganska unik. Man får vara med om hur det känns att gå vilse på månen med luft kvar i sin andningsapparat för 24 timmar, man får uppleva en våldsam skogsbrand på Venus — där gräset är ljusblått — en ganska olustig himlekropp för resten, där man ständigt löpte risk att stöta ihop med släktingar till jordens numera lyckligtvis utdöda dinosauruser, och till sist får man en inblick i kulturförfallat på Mars, där proletariatet verkligen tycks ha det högst beklagansvärt ställt, då överklassen redan vid dess födsel opererar bort reflexionsförmågan hos det. Med en blinkning åt den äldre läsaren konstaterar Semitjov för resten även hur mars för långesedan införd en till ytterlighet gäende födselskontroll. Som man hör, är "43.000.000 mil" inte bara full av fantasiska, spännande äventyr, utan också av många nya, värdefulla upplysningar för läsaren.
 Ab.

ATAVISM

Novell

av

VLADIMIR SEMITJOV

Stålmagnaten R. C. Haram led av spleen. I hemmet var det outhärligt. Om några dagar måste han hålla en stor festmiddag. Hans vänner och bekanta yrkade bestämt på att få fira hans fyrtioårsdag, och som han ogärna gick på restaurang föredrog han att ha tillställningen i sitt uskarloshem. Föberedelserna hade redan börjat.

Där han stod framför fönstret i sovrummet kände han sig underligt överkig. Det som existerade var hans namn, hans fabriker, hans pengar — men människans R. C. Haram, som betydde sig om den? Och när häns så kallade vänner nu voro ivriga att betyga sin glädje över att han utvärldat fyra decennier i denna jättemänska, beredd det inte på att de voro förtjusta i hans person. Nej, de behövde honom av andra orsaker: de satte värde på honom som duktig affärsman, de spekulerade i hans aktier och ville gärna ha tips av honom.

Fadern var en seltänkt man. Medan han levde, predikade han för sina söner Bufus vikten av systematiskt arbete. Man skulle sätta sig ett mål före och sedan sträva att nå det, varje dag, varje timme, varje minut. Det var den säkraste vägen till framgång, sade gubben. Men ibland, när han var på god humor, brukade de gamla dra romantiska historier om sina upplevelser som tramp på 90-talet. Så nu hade han haft roligt i sin dar, medan Rufus däremot från första stunden konfronterats med livets allvar. Vad hade följden blivit? Han hade inte haft tid att leva. Han hade inte hunnit lära känna en kvinna, som han kunnat göra till sin hustru. Han misströdde alla människor, han isolerade sig från världen. Det var som en mur omkring honom, och det var han själv som rest den muren. Det var han medveten om.

Han tryckte på en knapp. Dörren öppnades, men han vände sig inte om.
— Jag går och ligger mig tidigt i kväll och vill inte bli störd, sade han.
— All rätt, sir.

Dörren stängdes. Haram lysnade till stegen, som avvägnade sig. När allt var tyst gick han på två in i badrummet och öppnade försiktigt ett skåp, ur vilket han plockade fram diverse konstfika persorier, som man minst av allt väntat se i ett miljonärshem; en smutsig overall, en rock med trasiga ärmkaningar och färskar på uppslagen, en lila medfärdens sportmössa och ett par snodgångs kängor. Dessa skrud löfde han sig, sedan han låt dörren ut till korridoren.

Det väntade kapitlet var att komma ut obemärkt, men i skydd av mörkret tog han sig ut genom ett fönster, som vekte åt parken, och klättrade över muren på ett ställe, där belysningen var svag.

Ute på trottoaren drog han en lättadaga suck. Hans raka, spetsiga postalt liknora förvandlades. Med händerna i byxfickorna och mösskärmen neddragen över ögonen anlade han den något knutiga gång, som kännetecknar grändernas folk. Han kände sig äntligen fri. Nu var han människa, och ingen mer skilde honom längre från den övriga människligheten. Han förstod, att om han förärvade en vän i den kostym han nu bar, så måste det ligga oöngynniga i den väskan. Rufus Haram fanns inte längre till annat än som ett begrepp, som huvudsakligen manifesterat sig i några järn- och stålverk. Men den materiella delen av Rufus Haram gick i denna habit under namnet Johnny Blunt, permanent arbetlös.

Klockan var över sju. Johnny Blunt tog en buss, som gick ut till en av förstörerna. Vid en viss hållplats hoppade han

av och begav sig till en källarlocal vid en bakgata i närheten. Här var en brokig samling av gangsters och bootleggers, män med dunkla och ljusskygga yrken, folk av alla möjliga nationaliteter sökte sig hit om närtorna för att träffa bekanta och tösma ett glas, möjligen för att diskutera hemliga, betedfulla affärer.

Här fick man vara i fred. Ingen begärde att få se ens prästbetyg. Slog man sig i slang med någon av de andra gästerna i lokalen, bekvämd man inte pressurerna sig. Det gick lika bra att resonera ändå.

I ett hörn satt ett par kvinnor vid ett litet bord. Den ena reste sig och gick emot Johnny Blunt.

— Var har du hållit hus hela veckan? Nora trodde den hade burat in dig.

Hon granskade hans kläder med en kritisk blick.

— Och inte har du riggat upp dig heller. Då har du väl kovan du vann sist i behåll då. Ska du inte bjuda Dolly och mig på ett glas vin? Men här är Nora...

— Vad racklar du om, va? utbrast en liten piggs blondin, som under tiden kommit in i lokalen. Dager inte Johnnys rigg åt dig, så kan du låta honom vara i fred.

— Ach, bräka inte nu, sade Blunt med ett godmodigt leende. Och så slago de fyra sig ned vid bordet och beställde in dricksvor.

Nora lätade sig mot Blunt och viskade i hans öra:
— Roger Fry har frågat efter dig. Han skulle visat komma hit i kväll och se om du var här.

Det var livlig omstämning bland publikens somliga gäster, men det kom ständigt nya, och solet och glimmet stog högt över tobaksrökens, som ligo lägrade likt en dimma kring gästerna. Ju mer tiden led in på småtimmarna, dess glattigare blev stämningen. Nora hade placerat sig i Blunts knä; där satt hon och vaggade fram och tillbaka som en liten barnunge medan hon gnolade på en rervyn. Hon var sot, men hon visste om det också. Hon var svärfångad; det visste nästan alla, och därför fick hon vara i fred. Hon hade en vass tunga och var oberört slagfärdig. Det var inte roligt att raka ut för henne, när hon var på mösshögen. Blunt tryckte dock ha funnit nåt inför hennes ögon. Det var tydligt att hon hade saknat honom, tänkte han med en känsla av tillfredsställelse.

In i lokalen kom nu ett sällskap, som flögade Neras uppmärksamhet.

— Där är Roger Fry, sade hon och stod sig hårdare till Blunt. Fry sjutton, så han ser ut. Jag är rädd för den där karlen. Ta reda på vad han vill dig, men låt honom inte lura dig till några galenskap.

Roger Fry, som hade några av sina kamrater i följe, såg ut som en illa åtgånge bokare i anskitet. Någon var tillplattad, underkäken var absorberat utvecklad men kroppen var värvat och proportionerlig. Nora satt kvar i Blunts knä, när Fry kom fram och nickade.

— Du, Blunt, det är en sak jag skulle vilja snacka med dig om. Låt jätan komma med först.

De gingo in i ett mindre rum, som var reserverat för mera gynnade gäster.

— Här är stora saker i görningen, sade Fry. Vi kem ju överens om flera gånger, att vi skulle göra ett bättre kap.

— Vad gäller det? undrade Blunt.

Fry suckade rösten och talade om att det gällde ett inbrott. Han hade sett att Blunt alltid hade gått om slantar. Karlen var säkert ingen klippare, tänkte Fry, fast han föredrog att jobba på egen hand. Hur det



var fick han emellertid ett halft löfte av Blunt; om något lekrativt skulle dyka upp kunde han ju söta på.

— Inbrott, sa du? Ja, jag vet inte, det är inte min bevakning.

— Jag tänkte så skulle vara med högre två. Jättan kan vara till stor nytta.

Blunt rykade igenbrynen.

— Hon gör väl som hon vill i det fallet, sade Blunt bittert. Hör du Nora, du kan gärna hinta in våra glas hit.

När flickan avlägsnat sig lutade Fry sig fram över bordet och viskade till Blunt.
— Har du hört talas om Harams ställkungen.

Blunt ryckte till och kände hur blodet hostade i kinderna. Vad nu då? Var han avsedd? Men så behärskade han sig, klände sig på näsan och trycktes fundera.

— Visst har jag det. Dom där hägljuren är ju i alla människors mun.

— Nå, då kanske du begriper att det är fråga om saker, som rör sig?

Blunt tog sig om hakan för att döja ett leende.

— Hur har du tänkt dig det? frågade han.

Fry redogjorde för sin plan. När han slutat, nickade Blunt eftertänksamt.

— Är det inte konstigt, att ingen passat på att plocka honom förut? Den kuppen blir jag gärna med om.

Han hade svårt att döja sin förtjusning över att få göra inbrott i sitt eget hem.

Han fyller fyrto på ett par dar, och då ställer han till med en stor skiva. Det lär ska bli över hundra personer, medeltalade den vällinformerade Fry. Det bästa är antarkligris att Nora spöker ut sig och far dit som gäst. Hon kan alla finesser som behövs hos tockna där. Hon får försöka komma på te man hand med krisonen ett tag. Har hos barn nycklarna och kan slänga ut dem till oss, så ska vi nog klara resten.

Men Nora ville inte vara med. Hon vägrade bestämt, trots alla övertalningsförsök. Blunt beundrade henne för denna sedaknighet. Men när hon fick blicka att Blunt skulle medverka, gav hon efter.

Kvällen därpå råkadde åter Fry och Blunt. Under dagens lepp hade Fry lyckats skaffa en noggran plan över killaren, där kassavälet var utpekat. Han hade också reda på var nämndledningen gick och bodde den fungerade. Blunt kände inte förest det på annat sätt än att det måste finnas någon skurk bland personalen, som förest Fry med planeringen. Eljest var det oförklarligt.

— Alarmledningen skulle Nora kunnat klippa av, om hon bara gick med på att spela inbuden, sade Fry. Men eftersom hon inte vill så... Jag tvistar ingen.

Fry skötte alla förberedelser. Han var den vasa ledaren, och Blunt hade bara att ta emot sinas instruktioner.

Det var natt. Klockan var ett, när Blunt stog in på killaren, där de andra redan väntade honom.

— Du är punklig, sade Fry erkännande.

— Ska vi? frågade Blunt.

— Tacka fassen för det. Nu pågår väl galejet som bäst, och ingen kan föreställa sig att någon vågar bryta sig in då.

En blå väntade dem i hörnet. Den förde dem på en kvart till en gata i närheten av Harams magiska privathus. Chauffören, en gammal medhjälpare till Fry, fick order att stanna en stund och sedan långsamt köra upp på den gata, åt vilket parkeringen vette. Där kunde han vaka på något lämpligt ställe i skymundan.

Blunt kände hur hjertet hoppade upp och ner i honom, när han kröp efter Fry över grasmattan i skuggan av muren. Fry dök ner genom en killarlucka, som stod öppet efter hans besök ett par timmar tidigare på kvällen, då han gjort en liten relogsoverering. Blunt följde honom i hälar. Nora skulle ligga däruppe och passa, så ingen kom och överraskade dem.

Fry hade stött på en dörr, som var låst. Den ledde in till det killarum, där kassavälet fanns. Flick han upp den dörren, kom signalapparaten i funktion upp i vinden. Det visste Blunt.

Dörren gick upp, men inget slårns bördes. Blunt svalde en del. Fry förbätade in i det lara rummet med ficklampan framför sig.

Just som han stod i begrepp att börja bearbeta kassavälets dörr hördes en svag visning utifrån. Det var Nora...

— Fort... det kommer folk!

— Satan! brunnade Fry och lösnade det påbörjade arbetet. Vig som en opa klängde han sig upp i killarluckan. Blunt ofser. Fry satte i väg mot muren i full fart. Blunt tänkte göra detsamma, men hindrades av ett väl applicerat krokben. Han föll handfäst till marken och slog huvudet i något hårt, så att han nästan svimnade av. Några sekunder därefter lyftes han upp av starka armar, som oarmhärtigt vredo hans egna uppåt och bakåt. Han vägrade på huvudet och ursäldde bekanta drag; det var en av hans egna betjänter. Skulle han försöka sig på en feklaring för att få hela saken nedtryckt? Men i det samma föstod han att det var löslöst, ett stycke bakom hörde han en basist, som tillbröde hans hemväntare:

— Här är flickan. Henne fick vi tag i. Men den tredje, han smet han. Då hade visst en blå som väntade utanför. Polisen är här när som helst. Snycat följa, va?

En halvtimme senare stod Johnny Blunt i säkert flövar bakom lås och galler.

En vecka gick. Nora frågades i birst på beris — hon gjorde gillande, att hon av nyfikenhet att få se de elegant teatleterna på nära håll tagit sig in i parken, och när polisen släppte henne, var det i den bemäliga avröktes att genom att skugga henne få fatt på den som lyckades smita.

På birsten uppstod panik med anledning av Rufus Harams försvinnande. Det var det mest gåtfulla man hört om på länge. Gästerna hade sett honom halv ett, och läpningt ovanligt hade märkta på honom. Många ligen hade tagit honom som gisslan? Skuggningen av flickan ledde ej till resultat. Möjligen fickholl det sig verkligen sen hon sade, att hon alltid var oedklig. Den som satt i ärrest fick man inte ett ord ur.

Då kom polisen på en lysande sö. Varför inte släppa karlen också, men hålla zoga reda på yart han tog vägen. På så

sätt kunde man kanske få upp ett spår efter den försvunna stålsmagnaten.

En dag överraskades Blunt av att konstapeln öppnade dörren och med en buggning, som skulle verka ironisk, antydde att han kunde passera.

— Vi har inga bevis mot er. Ni får gå, sade polisen och gjorde med huvudet en gest åt utgången.

Blunt avvägnade sig med händerna i byxfickorna. Han trodde inte det var sant. De sista dagarna hade han grubblat hit och dit för att komma på en utväg att rymma. Endast i yttersta nödfall ännade han avsläpa vem han var. Han var höjrtglad över att han sluppit det. Nu kunde han gå hem och klia om sig. Han fick förklara saken med att han måst resa bort. Ett angeläget telegram hade kommit... Men ännu var det ljusan dag, och innan det blev mörkt torde han inte göra ett försök att smita is. Bläst var det mellan tio och elva; då stod fönstret till sovrummet öppet för vädring. Nå, han fick gå här och larva omkring, tills tiden var inne.

När nattens skugga brett sig över parken kring stålsmagnaten Rufus Harams påls, syntes en individ i färd med att klättra över muren. Det var en man, och han smög sig hastigt över grasmattan fram till huset, där han raskt klättrade upp på stupsteget och lyckades ta sig in genom ett öppet fönster.

Han hade knapp försummit, förrän tväns massiva gestalter doko upp. Den ena placerade sig vedazette fönstret, vilket den mystiske individen för övrigt stängt ordentligt efter sig; den andra skyndade runt huset till huvudentrén, där han ömsom ringde och hollade ett par minuter, innan han fick liv i någon dörrens.

Rektorn, som öppnade porten, stod och gapade efter den grovmodige figuren, som så brykt skjutit honom åt sidan och trängt in i vestibulen. Men så blev det liv i honom.

— Vad vill ni? Vad är det fråga om? Vem söker ni?

— Det är... Det är inbrott här! En tjv en trappa upp...

Hovmästaren tillkallades, och tillsammans snög de tre männen på tyta eslor uppfor trappan.

— Han kröp in genom ett fönster, som stod öppet. Vilket rum ledde det till?

— Det måste vara mr Harams sovrum. Han är inte hemma, som ni kanske vet, men hans order lyder vi, och sovrummet vidras varje kväll.

Med ögonen på skaff stannade trion utanför dörren till sovrummet. Hovmästaren tog i vreden och öppnade försiktigt. Den var öppet. Rummet låg i mörker, men i det angränsande badrummet lyste det, och där plockade någon i koret så det stod härliga till.

Hovmästaren gick fram på skälvanande ända.

— Ah, mr Haram, jag ber tusen gånger om ursäkt, men jag visades verkligen lute...

— För all del, Jones. Ge mig lite te och rostat bröd är ni snäll. Jag är hung're som en varg.

Detektiven såg ut som en idiot.

— Vem har ni med er, Jones? hördes Harams röst.

— Det är en... hm... detektiv, som trodde att någon hade brutit sig in i vinden, sir.

— Vad säger ni? Det var raskigt! Leta igenom huset då, för guds skull.

Det gjorde man, medan stålsmagnaten Rufus Haram gick omkring i pyjamas och fänsade som en tjvpojke, som lyckats med ett riktigt röligt rackartyg.

— Atavis, tänkte han. Jag brås nog på puppa, som han var då han var ung.

hadn't realised is that he became a minor celebrity in his new homeland. In 1935 he took part in honouring Sweden's at the time most famous actor, Gösta Ekman, after a performance at the Vasa Theatre, and it appears in the papers as in Svenska Dagbladet, **March 3 1935**:

*Gösta Ekman Receives a Thank You Oration
Grand Celebrations at Saturday's Fedja performance ...
Author Vladimir Semitjov steps forth and according to Russian customs delivers an artistic oration with thanks from friends and admirers of Gösta Ekman's art. A lady from the Russian colony in Stockholm delivers flowers.*

There's also a picture to this on page one, and I'll translate the caption:

Gösta Ekman was on Saturday evening's performance of Fedja object of grand celebrations. An artistic oration with thanks from friends and admirers of his art was delivered, to ovations from the audience. The text is in an article in the paper. Above we see Vladimir Semitjov hand it over to Gösta Ekman-Fedja.

It seems Vladimir (to the right) was a good friend of Gösta Ekman, who was a superstar at the time. That's something! This grand man unfortunately died, AFAIK during a surgical operation (I don't know what illness he had),



February 6 1939. There were death notices already the next day in eg Svenska Dagbladet (**February 7**, excerpts):

Author Vladimir Semitjov died Monday at Maria hospital in Stockholm, almost 57 years old. He was an engineer by trade but later went to the press. Until the Bolshevik revolution he worked as journalist in then



Pförfattaren Vladimir Semitjov avled på måndagen på Maria sjukhus i Stockholm, nära 57 år gammal. Han var rysk till bördan och utbildades först till ingenjör, men övergick senare till pressen. Till bolsjevikrevolutionens utbrott verkade han som journalist i dåvarande Petrograd. Under en tid redigerade han sedan en tidning i Kaukasus, men måste vid de rödas framträngande fly också därifrån. Liksom så många andra ryska emigranter startade Semitjovs med sin familj västerut från Konstantinopel 1919. I Deutschgabel i Böhmen fann han en tillfällig fristad och ett arbete. Amerikanska K. F. U. M tog nämligen här hans krafter i anspråk för sitt hjälparbete under de svåraste efterkrigsåren.

År 1922 flyttade han med hustru och barn till Stockholm. Här lyckades han först få grossarbete i Råsunda filmstad och där träffade han en dag Mauritz Stiller, som uppmanade honom att börja skriva. Han författade en novell, "En mot tre", vilken publicerades i en veckotidning. Framgången lockade honom att fortsätta. Han skrev på ryska och öclade de blåkannans honorarer med sin översättare. Någon träng honom till en värdig produktivitet, men han lyckades på sitt arbete icke endast försörja sin familj utan även att ge sina barn en god utbildning. Han skrev också romaner, vilka delvis handlade om hans egen öden, han utarbetade en rysk grammatik, utgav flera böcker med gåtor och skräckspölar. Författade fantastiska historier i Jules Verne-stil och hade vid sin död till hälften färdig en roman: "Jag klappar på Sveriges dörr." Alla, som kommo i beröring med honom, höllt ut denne storvuxne rysk, som var så stolt över sitt till sist förvärrade svenska medborgarskap. Han var en utomordentlig sällskapsmänniska, talangfull och underhållande, men också en god människa, vilkens trofaste handslag och ljusa blick man sent kommer att glömma.

Petrograd. For a time he edited a newspaper in Kaukasus, but after the advance of the Reds he had to flee from there. As many other Russian emigrants Semitjov and his family went west from Constantinopel in 1919. In Deutschgabel in Bohemia he found temporary sanctuary and work. American YMCA hired him for their relief work during the difficult post-war years. 1923 he moved with wife and children to Stockholm where he managed to be hired as a stage worker at Råsunda filmtown, where he met Mauritz Stiller who encouraged him to begin writing. He wrote a short story, "One against Three" which was published in a weeklie. ... he wrote fantastic stories in the Jules Verne style and at the time of his death he had a half-finished novel, "I Knock on the Door to Sweden". All who came in contact with him liked this big Russian who was so proud of his acquired Swedish citizenship, He was a magnificent socialite, talented and entertaining, but also a good human being, whose faithful handshake and bright eyes you won't forget.

There's a similar death notice in Dagens Nyheter the same day, where we also learn that his mother in Petrograd was Swedish, born Liljewall, which might have helped him getting a Swedish citizenship. I won't reproduce DN's obituary but I'll quote the end:

The many of us here who came to know Vladimir Semitjov personally have only one opinion: he was a man of rare noble, good-hearted character, who with admirable courage under hard circumstances took up the struggle for his family's existence and did his duty. His being was in good or bad times heart-warming and open, with a modest philosophy of life and a great ability to make and keep friends, who long will respect and care for the memory of "Volodja".

These are words that really touches you! Vladimir Semitjov must have been a very special man. The half-finished book mentioned before, could have been the basis for the later family biography *Viktor Somov's Diary*, based on notes by Vladimir and in 1985 edited, translated and published by his sons Eugen and Volodja ("Somov" was a pseudonym Vladimir used sometimes). It's a very fine account of the family's struggle getting away from the Bolsheviks, moving through Europe and finally coming to Sweden.

As somewhat of a celebrity there was of course also a report from his funeral, in Svenska Dagbladet, **February 13 1939**:

The dust of author Vladimir Semitjov was on Sunday committed to the final rest in Lidingö church. The church in beautiful decorations was full to the last seat. /It was a Greek-Catholic-Orthodox ceremony./ A choir of compatriots sung and Dr de Roubetz held a memorial address about the deceased. After first speaking in Russian he then turned to Vladimir Semitjov's Swedish friends and thanked them for their actions for him when he first came to Sweden as a refugee. /Then a Bible quote on this subject./ Editor Karl Johan Rådström spoke by the coffin. From the stage society Kottarna miss Inga Olsson gave a last farewell and read a poem. After the act an old friend of the dead, miss Elsa Berglund, sang. Finally the coffin was carried out in procession together with the choir and brought to Lidingö cemetery to be buried. The many flower arrangements were around 50, notably a wreath from the publisher Åhlen & Åkerlund.

But we are not finished with the Semitjovs. Far from! Both of Vladimir's sons made their marks in history. First we have Vladimir "Volodja" Semitjov (1912-1985) and I quote from <http://immigrantinstitutet.se/immi.se/kultur/authors/ryssar/semitjov2.htm>

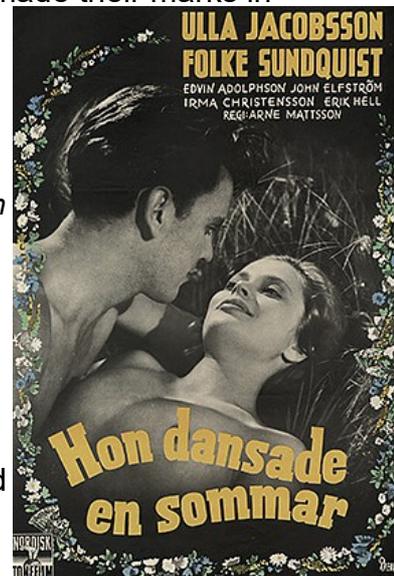
"Volodja trained as an engineer and then turned into writing. He was war correspondent for Dagens Nyheter and followed the collapse of Poland during WWII as Hitler invaded, and was a reporter during the Finnish-Russian war on the Karelian peninsula, he was present as Israel was founded and witnessed their first war with the Arabs, etc. He also wrote around 40 film manuscripts. In the 1950's he wrote the manuscript to Swedish film's big international success, Per Olof Ekström's "One Summer of Happiness".

Based on Ekström's novel this film (1951),

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Summer_of_Happiness , made a major

international splash, since the actress Ulla Jacobsson had short sequences of nudeness! A major scandal, long lines around the block and the beginning of what came to be known as Swedish Sin. It's available on Youtube, with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJcCLUlr8ec> As Ingmar Bergman followed with more nudity in "Summer with Monika" (1953) even president Eisenhower took notice and warned the world about the "sin, nudity, drunkenness and suicides" there on the Scandinavian peninsula... <http://www.nordstjernen.com/news/sweden/6415/>

— Stoftet efter författaren Vladimir Semitjov vigdes på söndagen i Lidingö kyrka till den sista vilan. Kyrkan, som var vackert dekorerad, var fullsatt till sista plats. Officiant var dr Alexander de Roubetz, som förrättade jordfästningen efter grekisk-katolsk-ortodox ritual. En kör av landsmän till den döde sjöng sjölämsåsan och dr de Roubetz höll ett minnestal över den bortgångne. Sedan han först talat på ryska, vände han sig därefter till Vladimir Semitjovs svenska vänner och tackade dem för deras handlingsätt mot denne, när han först kom till Sverige som flykting. Såsom det står i bibeln: "Jag var hungrig och I gäven mig att äta, jag var törstig och I gäven mig att dricka, jag var busvill och I gäven mig härberge", så ha ni, hans svenska vänner, handlat mot denne man, sade dr de Roubetz. Vid bården talade redaktör Karl Johan Rådström för vinnerna. Från scenfällskapet Kottarna framförde fröken Inga Olsson en sista hälsning och läste en dikt. Efter akten sjöng en gammal vän till den döde, fröken Elsa Berglund, en sång. Till sist bars kistan ut i procession med den sjungande kören i täten och fördes till Lidingö kyrkogård för att gravsättas. I den rika blomstergården, kransarna uppgingo till ett 50-tal, märktes en krans från Åhlen & Åkerlunds förlag.



"She Danced One Summer" is the Swedish title of the film manuscripted by Volodja Semitjov. To the left a scene from it. Dirty, dirty!

Language note: Swedish transcription of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet differs from English. Transcription in English would be something like "Semichev", but I use the Swedish version. Playing with Google Translate I find "Semi" should mean "family, home" or something similar and "tjov/chev" is probably a grammatical suffix of some sort. Let me know if you have a better idea of what "Semitjov" means!

I knew his little brother, Eugen Semitjov (1923-1987), who became a skilled artist, author and space journalist, writing about the coming space age long before everyone else, commenting the Apollo landing on TV, and winning the biggest Swedish journalism award for his reporting. I first met

him in the late 1970's on an sf con and later he was a columnist for the popular tech/science mag Teknikmagasinet, which I worked for. He used to drop in to our editorial office and sit there in a corner talking about space and his life. I also did a long interview with him for my sf newsletter SF-Journalen.

I have enormous amounts of newspaper material with Eugen, so it's difficult to choose and the EAPA OE may go mad if this issue goes up to 50 pages... But let's start from the very beginning, with his very first published artwork, from Svenska Dagbladet, **May 7 1931** (right) at age 7. Eugen inherited his father's interest in technical stuff and turned to flying model aeroplanes. The years 1938-39 I find four mentions of his results from model aeroplane competitions. An example, from Svenska Dagbladet, **November 7 1938:**

One of the young contestants proudly releases his machine ... On Sunday 45 pupils competed for five hours on Ladugårdsgårde in flying furtherest and for longest time with their model aeroplanes ... Best individual result was reached by Eugen Semitjov, Vasa Real school, with 139 seconds

No wonder that Eugen did his military service during WWII as a mechanic with the Air

Force on an airbase near Stockholm. While doing that he invented and drew the comics character "Allan Kämpe" (kämpe = fighter), which appeared in many newspapers, also abroad as far away as Argentina. He came to produce it for about 10 years. The hero works for the Brain Trust and together with his friends and scientific machines he averts disasters and fights for justice. It's a bit like Edmond Hamilton's Captain Future, who at the time appeared in the pulp mag Jules Verne Magasinet. Eugen also made a wonderful little film about how "Allan Kämpe was born", here on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZXj1OTdgbQ&t=29s>



"Tennis is a game, at the same time a sport, and Eugen Semitjov, 7, has managed to catch the tennis players' movements really well in his painting."



En av de unga tävlingsdeltagarna sänder stort tvåg sin maskin.

På söndagen tävlade 45 skoleungar gar offörretet i fem timmar på Ladugårdsgårde i att flyga långt och långt med sina modellflygplan, och resultatet blev ganska gott trots ogynnsamt väder. Det var modellflygklubben Vingarna, som anordnat en lagtävling med tre man i varje, och sammantaget lag hade ställt upp med fem i nybörjargruppen och tio i den andra, för nämligen gruppen. De 45 maskinerna bestod av eleganta svängar och gjorde långa rader i nedvänden, som dock störst möjligheterna att nå verkligt fina tidlar. Haverierna voro dock oöversiktliga. Det bästa individuella resultatet nådde Eugen Semitjov, Vasa real, med 139 sek., och den bästa sammantagna tiden för tre "uppstigningar", 281,9 sek., svarade Bertil Lundqvist, Palmgrenska skolan. För Palmgrenska skolan lade överlägsen beilag på första lagpriset.



It became a matter of the highest interest when the Florida Aquarium became a victim of a loan shark.

Det var naket

och sött och blomsterarrangemang i håret på både balett och parkett på Oscars i går, när "Vita hästen" galopperade fram, och på den publika sidan av rampen fann man nästan lika stora stjärnor som på den andra. Paranta Margit Rosengren kände sig mera hemma än de flesta, och när Sickan Carlsson i helvitt gjorde entré tillsammans med dekorative maken Åke Rapp och blonda fru Malmberg i svart och vitt hade man svårt att hålla tillbaka en applåd.

Under en jättekorg av gyllenblonda flåtor hittade vi grevinnan Edith Oxenstierna d'Amara, omgiven av ett hov av kavaljerer, och tillsammans med Eugen Semitjov och Hans Graucob konverserade charmanta Madeleine Posse.

Eugen would also work for Jules Verne Magasinet, doing several cover illos for instance. But his venture into comics began with a small strip about A Boy and His Dog (hear, Harlan!) from 1943 in Dagens Nyheter, though it didn't catch on (see right). A distraction was perhaps that he just as his father knew his way around the theatre stage. From Expressen, **September 18 1948**, from the premiere of the musical "White Horse" at the Oscars theatre:

It was nude and cute and flower arrangements... Under a giant basket of golden blonde braids we found countess Edith Oxenstierna d'Amanta, surrounded by a court of cavaliers, and together with

Eugen Semitjov and Hans Graucob conversed with charming Madeleine Posse.

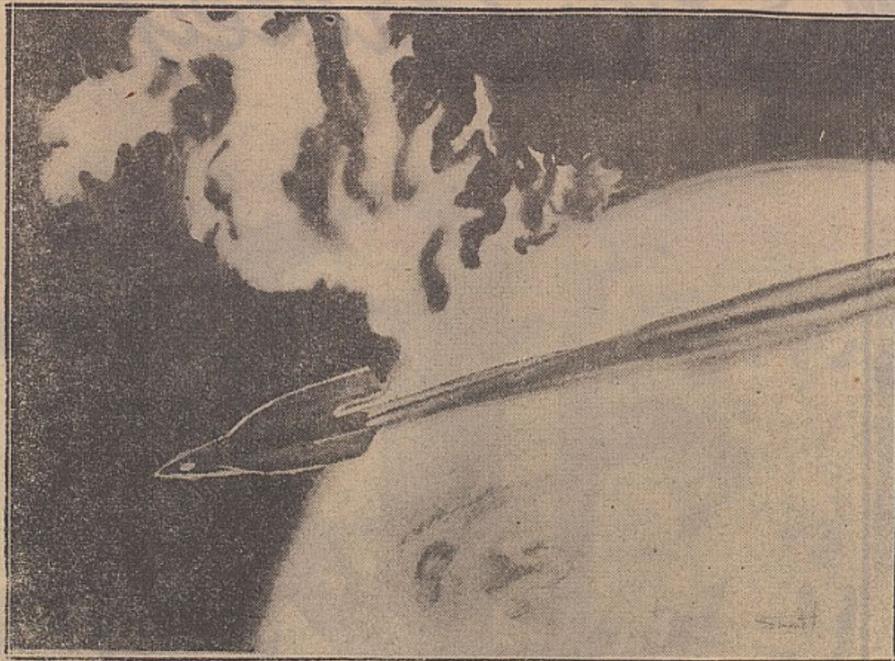
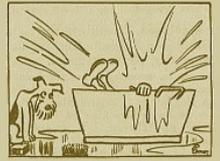
The newspaper Expressen also sent

Eugen to England in 1950 to do the drawings to a report about this new thing called "television", which hadn't started in Sweden yet. A full page article came February 1 that year, but I'll skip it. In a notice in Aftonbladet, September 25 that year, we read that "Eugen Semitjov has been appointed advertising director of Tonefilm, after Olle Hellbom who now will concentrate on writing manuscripts" so at that time he was into ads, where I guess he could use his artistic talents. Hellbom would later be famous for doing beloved film/TV adaptations of many of Astrid Lindgren's books.

But he'd soon raise his eyes towards space. The first of many space articles, where he'd usually both write the text and do the art, could have been the one in Expressen, **April 1 1950**, "Come along to the Atomic Power Plant Which We Have Longed for This Winter", and with that he means the sun. The sun is a part of space, last time I checked...

Who hasn't longed for the sun this winter? It has been darker, we think, and colder than any year. Now the sun will finally emerge. Do you want to see it close up? Since its 150 million km from us we must approach it in a fantasy

Kalle och Lufsen.
Dagens serieteckning har ritats av Eugen Semitjov, Kronbergsgatan 3, Stockholm.



Flammande kaskader sprutar upp ur solens inre och slungas till enorma höjder, där de svävar som glödande moln.

FÖLJ MED TILL ATOMKRAFTVERKET SOM VI LÄNGTAT EFTER I VINTER!

VEM HAR INTE LÄNGTAT EFTER SOLEN I VINTER? Det har varit mörkare och, tycker vi, kallare än något år. Nu kommer solen fram så småningom. Vill ni se den på närmare håll?

Eftersom den befinner sig 150 miljoner kilometer ifrån oss får vi lov att nalkas den i en fantasifärd för att kunna ordna en närmare presentation. Vi tänker oss alltså sittande i en rymdraket, pansrad för att motstå den ofantliga hettan och försedd med mångdubbla skyddsglas för att dämpa den intensiva strålningen.

Vi lägger märke till att solens kontur har en mattare nyans, svagare lysande än den inre globen. Den mörkare skiftningen betyder att solens yttre skikt är gasformigt, man skulle kunna säga att solen har en "atmosfär" av glödande gaser som ätnar inåt och övergår i den mera kompakta solmassan.

Ett område är täckt av karaktäristiska mörka fläckar — solfläckarna. De är i själva verket inte mörka, de lyser med ett rödaktigt ljus som är flera hundra gånger starkare än fullmånens, men som drunknar fullständigt på den bländande solytan, och därför förefaller mörka. Dessa fläckar har bildats av ofantliga cykloner i solens atmosfär. Det är virvlar av sådan storlek att de skulle kunna innesluta hela jorden, ofta ända till tjugo gånger jordens volym.

• Bikinimoln

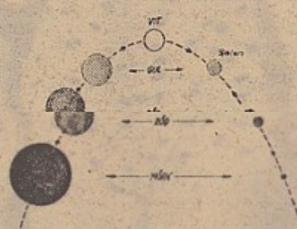
Fläckarna är flammande kaskader från de ständiga atomexplosionerna solens inre. De tränger genom yt-

skiktet och kastas upp till enorma höjder där de svävar som flammande moln — protuberanser. Deras form leder tanken till atommolnen över Bikin.

Den upphörliga förnyelsen är nyckeln till solens gåta, svaret på den fråga som många generationer har ställt sig: varför slocknar inte solen, när slocknar den, vad kommer att hända då? Om solen hade varit bara en glödande massa, som ett stycke glödande järn, hade den upphört att brinna inom loppet av någ: tusen år, dödad av universums kyla. Men solen har existerat och brunnit i biljoner år, och den kommer troligen att lysa lika länge till.

Kunde man placera ett fragment av solatmosfären i ett provrör och analysera den skulle man finna att den består av sönderfallande atomer. Mot solens inre siegras graden av sönderdelning och själva centrum består av helt sprängda atomer, sammanpressade under det ofantliga trycket av 50.000.000.000 jordiska atmosfärer, med en temperatur på cirka 25.000.000 grader Celsius. Om ett knäpphuvud vore upphettat till denna temperatur skulle dess egen värmestrålning förbränna allt på flera kilometers avstånd.

Solen roterar kring sin axel, ganska långsamt: ett varv på 26 dygn. Dess massa är så "flytande" att polerna vrider sig långsammare än ekvatorzonen.



En stjärnas liv: Från en gigantisk sval gasmassa komprimeras den till en vitglödande sol, för att sedan åter svalna medan krympningen fortsätter. Vår egen sol har passerat toppvärmen — men det är

Captions: Flaming cascades spurts from inside the sun to enormous heights, where they hover like glowing clouds. And: Life of a star. From, a giant cool mass of gas it compresses to a white glowing sphere, to later once more cool down while it shrinks. Our own sun has passed peak of warmth - but it's nothing to worry about.

vehicle to do a closer presentation. So we imagine we are in a space rocket, armoured to withstand the immense heat and equipped with many layers of protective glass to dampen the intensive radiation. We notice that the sun's contour is blander, weaker than the inner globe. The darker nuance means the outer layer is a gas, you could say the sun has an "atmosphere" of glowing gas which becomes thicker going inwards turning into the more compact sun mass. An area is covered with dark spots - the sunspots. In reality they aren't dark, they glow with a reddish light many hundred of times stronger than a full moon, but drowns completely by the gleaming sun surface and thus seem dark. The spots comes from huge cyclones in the sun's atmosphere. It's vortexes of such a size that they could swallow the Earth up to 20 times. The spots are flaming cascades from the eternal atomic explosions inside the sun. They penetrate the surface and throw up to enormous heights where they hover like flaming clouds - protuberances. Their shapes makes thoughts go to atomic clouds over Bikini. The constant renewal is the key to the riddle of the sun, the answer to the question from many generations: why don't the sun go out, when will it fade, what will happen then? If the sun had only been a glowing mass, like a piece of hot iron, it would have gone out within a few thousand years, killed by the cold universe. But the sun has existed and burned for billions of years, and it will probably burn for that long more. If you could take a fragment of the sun atmosphere in a test tube to analyse you'd find it consists of atoms that fall apart. Towards the core the decay increases and the centre consists entirely of shattered atoms, compressed under the huge pressure of 50 000 000 000 Earth atmospheres, with a temperature of 25 000 000 degrees C. If a pinhead was that hot its radiated heat would burn everything within km. The sun rotates around its axis, one turn every 26 days. Its mass is so flowing that the poles rotates slower than the equator.

The article continues with talking about the supergiant Antares, colder and so "thin" you could fly through it as with air (if it was even colder) and Eugen also informs us stars will burn out eventually, grow redder and colder and finally collapse. But one glitch: he says the sun has atoms "falling apart", which is only true in the sense at atoms are a plasma where they've lost their electrons - otherwise the atoms are rather *fusing*, as we know now! However, the exact workings of its fusion was just emerging in the 1950's so Eugen may be excused. Things were happening in his personal life...

From a report of a premiere of a show at the Folkan theatre in Afonbladet, **Maj 17 1951**, we learn that Eugen has snatched himself a little lady, one Inga Brink. The caption (next page) says: "*Ernst Eklund, Inga Brink and fiance Eugen Semitjov.*" She looks at him lovingly, doesn't she! And it would later turn serious, as we see in Expressen's gossip column, **August 25 1952**, "*It is said...*":

That the perky little Inga Brink will get married. The second church announcement for her and editor Eugen Semitjov came yesterday and in the autumn the wedding bells will ring. Inga will BTW go to Malmö, where she'll play the female lead in "The Rainbow", which will have Swedish premiere in early October. Eugen has this summer written an adventure novel for youngsters, "Four Film Frames" and have just begun with a new book. And more news: the couple have acquired a nice studio apartment in Blackeberg.



Blackeberg is a Stockholm suburb, maybe 10 km to the west. The Tunnelbana (metro) had just opened in that direction the year before and modern couples would of course want to be near it. A small notice in Expressen **December 30 1952** says they married that day and they plan to honeymoon in France by car. (I know they divorced later and Eugen re-married. But I don't have details. It wasn't in the newspapers or maybe I didn't look hard enough.) They married in



There is worse torture than joining EAPA Watered down bheer. Olof Möller's latest yarn. A LoC from a shaggy Afghan dog. Running out of carflu. Finding someone nicked your fan fund money. More George Lucas toys. Don't hesitate! Join! EAPANEEDS /b/o/o/z/i/n/g boosting. So come along! Be a *Pretty Dandy Fan* with your PDFs!

DET RÄDER INGEN som helst tvekan om, att det var miera revyfolk — S:t Erikson naturligtvis undantagen — i salongen än på scenen, då den thaliaistiskt historiska händelse som innebar pånyttjandet av nya gamla Folkans scen i går kväll utspelade sig vid Östermalmstorg. Den filmiska brandmuren var äntligen nedkämpad, och folk som minns riktigt gamla Folkan, satt med tårar i ögonen för att nu inte tala om dem, som bara minus nya Folkan med Karl-Gerhard och allt.



Ernst Ekblad, Inga Brink och hennes älskare Eugen Semitjov.

December, but it took some time before their honeymoon. Maybe it was because Eugen was busy winning a competition. Aftonbladet **June 16 1953**, "Winner":

Vinnare

AB-tecknaren Eugen Semitjov har vunnit första pris i den tävling som Nationalföreningen för trafiksikkerhetens främjande utlyst om bl. a. trafikpropagandabästa tecknade dan. Semitjov belönades för en bildsida i Aftonbladet om "Livets sista bom".
I dag har han bilat på semester söderut med sin fru operettsångerskan Inga Brink, för att pröva sin egen trafiksikkerhet på sydligare landsvägar.

Aftonbladet's artist

Eugen Semitjov won first prize in the competition announced by the National Association for Safe Traffic about eg best drawing for traffic propaganda. Semitjov was awarded for e picture page in Aftonbladet about "The last miss of life". Today he has begun a car trip south with his wife operetta singer Inga Brink, to try out his own traffic safety on southern roads.

A real boost for his space stuff was the series of articles announced **November 18 1953** in Aftonbladet, "Science defeats space":

Adventure writers no longer have exclusive rights to rocket flight through space. Science has entered the field and rushes on fast. Aftonbladet lets artist Eugen Semitjov explore the latest science, It will be presented in a series of fascinated picture pages. The first is published today.

I think Eugen by this time had left the advertising agency and he was now free-lancing, mostly for Aftonbladet. But I know he would also take up the weekly family magazines, where he could get more space for texts and also get his artwork published in colour. The Aftonbladet series here mentioned included eg;

18 November: "We arm ourselves for space", on high altitude jets and flying in a parable to get weightlessness.

25 November: "Space not for women" Monotonous life in space too demanding", it would take at least 63 days to Mars for instance (it takes longer, but here he counts on reaching a higher speed).

12 December: "To find your way among the stars", you must navigate in three dimensions, and in the US they are building a mechanical space navigation simulator.



Vetenskapen besegrar rymden. Äventyrsförfattarna har inte längre ensamrätt på temat raketflygning genom världsrymden. Vetenskapen har trängt in på området och marscherar fram i snabbt tempo. Aftonbladet har låtit tecknaren Eugen Semitjov sätta sig in i vetenskapens senaste rön. Dessa kommer att redovisas i en serie fascinerande bildsidor. Den första publiceras i dag.

I'm not sure I could find all articles in the series, but it seems Eugen soon got another article series, starting January 21 1954 under the title "Around space". This time he would take us to the planets and other bodies in our solar system. I'm not reproducing all of this, since it would take a heavy toll on the file size of this PDF. And in fact, Eugen was now *hot as a supernova* when it comes to space material! I find about 50 articles by him from the 1950's alone, and I might not have found everything - and besides, he had just as much or maybe more in the weeklies! And his output continued in the 1960's when the space race became real. Beside this he wrote a lot of books. Swedish Wikipedia https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugen_Semitjov counts to:

- 8 fiction books/novels, mostly for a young adult audience
- 2 comics album, Allan Kämpe of course!
- 9 non-fiction books, mostly space, science and "fantastic" things
- 2 biographies, one about his father and family, one his own illustrated sort of autobio, title "The Space Artist"

And to this hundreds of articles covering the space age, probably before any other Swedish reporter. And his excellent drawings and paintings must amount to thousands. I own one Eugen Semitjov original. I don't now if his status is such that it's worth silly amounts of money - but it should, if it was up to me! Now let's have a look at a classic (next page) his page one to Aftonbladet **October 5 1957**, after the news of Sputink, headline:

"THE RUSSO MOON CAN BE SEEN HERE Around the world in 95 minutes - USA congratulations - YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO SEE THE ARTIFICIAL MOON". The short news text on page 1 isn't by Eugen, because he was busy fixing the rather accurate artwork. He once told me how it went...

Sputnik was of course a total surprise (even if the Soviets actually had announced they intended to launch a satellite, I guess most didn't believe them) and the news came just before the newspaper's deadline. The editors of course called Eugen and asked for A Fast One to illustrate the front page. Eugen set to work with an incredible speed. He knew the approximate orbit and it's impressive how he made Sputnik a silver ball. The only thing he got slightly wrong was that the antennas should be swept back, but all in all it's an amazingly good Fast One! The newspaper sent a messenger to pick up the drawing, a boy who sat there and became more and more nervous. Finally Eugen just needed to include the moon, but since it was near a Douglas Adams Deadline (you know the sound of such swishing by) he took out an astronomy book, cut out a moon picture there and glued it on. Finished! The news text reads:

The artificial moon the Russians surprised the world with by launching it yesterday, can with great probability be seen in Sweden tonight in clear weather. It is 900 km up and orbits the Earth in 1h35m. The orbit goes with a little deviation over the poles. The Russomoon is a metal globe full of instruments weighing 83.6 kg, having a diameter of 58 cm, ie somewhat bigger than the moon the Americans have presented. The Russomoon transmits radio signals on 15 and 7.3 m wavelength. The signals have been received by British radio amateurs who describes the sound this way: it sounds like a cricket but a bit coarser. Swedish short wave listeners have also heard similar signals. The satellite was launched with a multi-stage rocket - as fuel is consumed, rockets fall off. Final speed was 29 000 km/h. American scientists have congratulated their defeaters, who won the space race with about a month. Caption: The satellite orbit is about 35 degrees off the equator. This means it will go over every part of Earth between 25 degrees north and 65 degrees South - in Sweden it will be visible up towards Skellefteå. This drawing is by AB artist Eugen Semitjov.

(I'm sorry if you find the Swedish text hard to read. It's not ideal to reduce tabloid format to A4!)

That Eugen could get so much right - eg the orbit he draws crosses Skellefteå! - must partly be because he was one of few science journalists in the west who could talk to the Russians in their own language. I'm not sure how strong his Russian was. Eugen was born in Sweden in a Russian household. But obviously his Russian must have been good enough. He told me how fascinated he was sitting in the Moscow metro and suddenly realise ha understood what people around him said!

Eugen, nicknamed "Genie", was a great guy of many talents. He supported us when we in the 1980's founded the Swedish Space Movement group (which later fell apart in a mess too intricate to go into here) and was made honorary member, of course. I wish he was alive today, because he'd be excited about all the buzz around the space activities going on now: finding new planets with super telescopes, probing Mars for life, aiming for the Moon and soon Mars, the reusable, giant rockets from Space X, space plane tourism, and much more.

Time to wrap things up - with myself. What has been designated as the "official national" Swedish sf convention is called Swecon, running in that capacity for a couple of decades. But the first of our cons to be called Swecon was actually in 1982, though we then didn't call it the "official national" con (there were also Swecons in 1983 and 1985). There's been sf cons almost every year here since 1956, and the system used to be that anyone who felt like doing an sf convention...just did it. Many years have had 2-3 cons. 1980 was a record year with six Swedish sf cons, most of them small, 50-100 attending or so, big cons would have 150-250 (the record is Eurocon 2011 with 750...).

Anyway, I have often been the press agent for cons, since I think I know a bit how media works. It wasn't intentional, but as I mailed out a press release about Swecon 82 morning paper Dagens

Grundades
år 1830 av
Lars Johan
HIERTA

AFTONBLADET

SENASTE NYTT — OPINION — NÖJEN — SPORT

Stockholmsväddret 610: Ostodigt, Kylligt.

Lördagen den 5 oktober 1957

Nr 270 x Pris 30 öre

RYSS-MÅNEN KAN SES HÄR!

Runt jorden på 95 min — USA-lyckönskan

DEN KONSTGJORDA MÅNE, som ryssarna över-
raskade världen med att
släppa upp i går, kan med
stor sannolikhet ses från
Sverige i kväll vid klart
väder. Den går på 900 km

höjd och har en varvtid
runt jordklotet på 1 tim-
me 35 minuter. Den är
med knapp avvikelse över
polerna.

RYSSMÅNEN är en in-
strömsopåskat metall-

klot med en vikt av 83,6
kg och har en diameter på
58 cm, dvs. något större
än den måne amerikana-
na presenterat. Ryssmånen
sänder radiosignaler på 15
och 7,5 m våglängd. Signa-

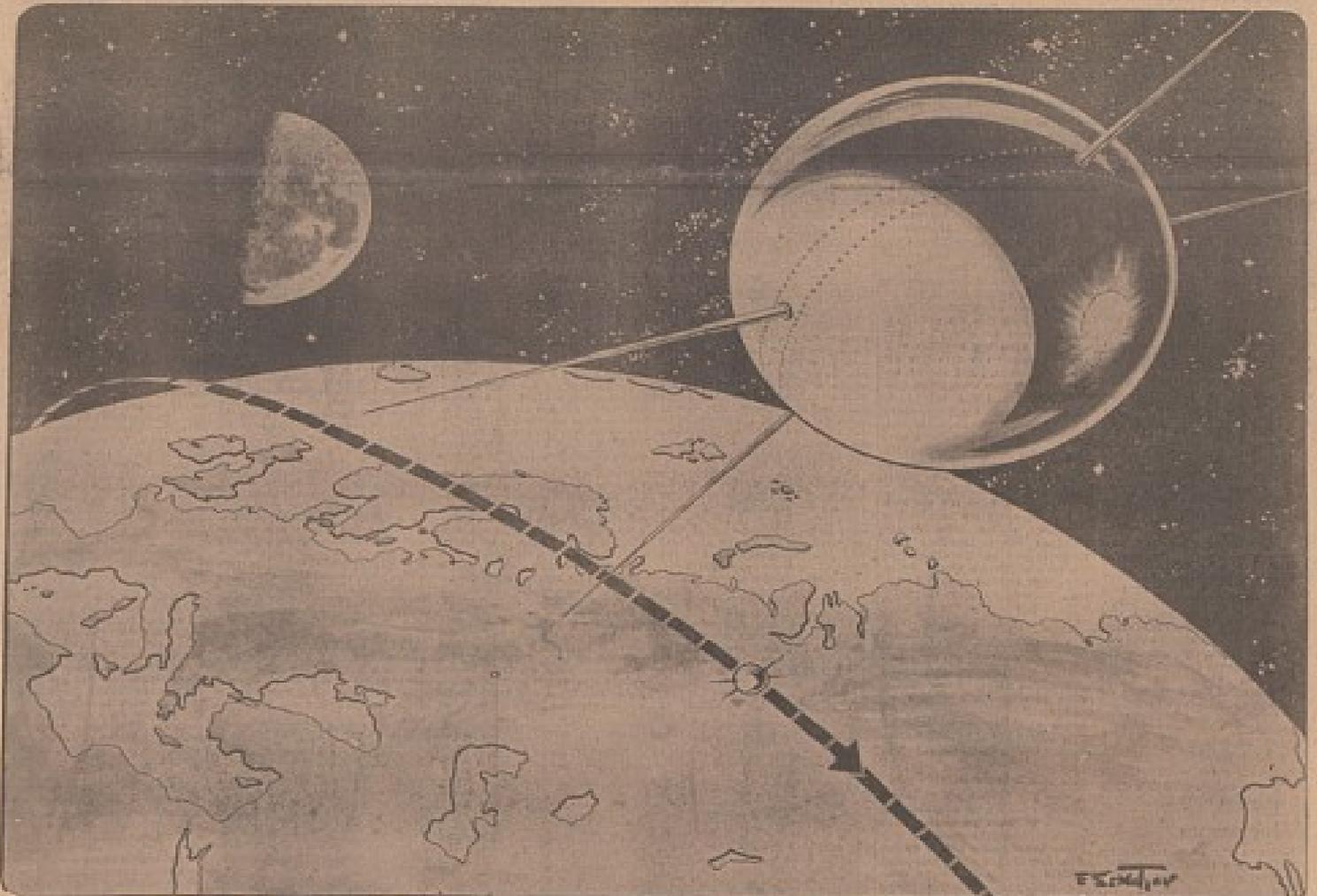
lerna har uppfattats av
beliska radiolängdsvärer,
som beskriver läret så här:
Den låter som en ryss som
något skräckig. Även
svenska kasteröglumare
har uppfattat liknande sig-
naler.

SATELLITEN sänder
upp med hjälp av Der-
stegenskeiter — riktlinjer
som bildat förberäkt
faller delrekterna av.
Utgångshastigheten var
29.000 km i timmen.

Amerikanska forskare har
gratulerat sina rysskollega-
rer, som vann kapplopp
någon med ungefär en
månad.

Bildas 4 och 5

NI HAR CHANS FÅ SE KONSTGJORDA MÅNEN



SATELLITBANAN bildar 25 graders vinkel mot ekvatorn. Detta innebär att den kommer att ses på flera punkter på jordytan mellan 25 grader norrlig och 65 grader sydlig bredd — i Sverige kommer den att synas upp till Skellefteå. Denna teckning är gjord av AE-techniken Eugen Semitjer.

Nyheter's Stockholm supplement På Stan wanted to make an article interviewing me. It could have been because the reporter was Swedish fandom's Secret Contact on that paper, Martin Stugart, but he should know better than misspelling my name! I'll give you some excerpts of the article, published **November 20 1982**, also featuring Sverifandom's Grand Old Man Lars-Olov Strandberg (Fan-GoH of the 2005 Worldcon, if you remember!) Headline "Science fiction and fanzines on SWECON 82", captions "AE Stockholm's biggest sf fan. He has painted the walls himself, a glittering starry sky."



And: "Lars-Olov Strandberg, fandom's granddad in Sweden."

One of Swedens more unknown popular movements, fandom, has a convention in town this weekend. Sf fans from all of Sweden plus so me from Norway, Denmark and Finland meet in the Medicine Student House near Karolinska Institute for three days of intensive socialising, films, panels, lectures, room parties etc. Fandom - what is it? A way of life others say. It often starts that you by accident slip into a convention. Once in fandom you begin doing fanzines, mimeoed papers, go to club meetings where you increasingly initiated trade gossip about those not there

Ahrvid Engholm tells us all of this on a visit to his one-roomer in Gröndal. He is one of those burning for fandom ... and a bit respected for his fanzine Fanytt, which with unfailing precision tells what has happened in the movement lately. Nothing passes Ahrvid by, who spends a lot of time, efforts and money on his hobby.

"OK, it costs but you get much out of it that it evens out. An sf fan consumes many

* Ahrvid Engholm, Stockholms störste sciencefiction-fan. Väggenas motiv, en gästströande stjärnkammet, har han målat själv. FOTO: OLLE SELJBOLL

■ En av Sveriges mer okända folkföreiser, fandom, kongressar i stan i helgen. Sciencefiction-fans från hela Sverige, plus några från Norge, Danmark och Finland, möts i Medicinska förningens kårhus vid Karolinska institutet för tre dagars intensiv samvaro: filmvisningar, paneldebatter, föredrag, rumspartyer m.m.

Science fiction, fandom och fanziner på SWECON 82

Fandom - vad är det? Ett sätt att umgås, säger en del. Ett sätt att leva, anser andra. I grunden ligger hur som helst ett brinnande intresse för sciencefiction i alla former.

fandoms eldsjälur och är självfallet med på årets kongress, SWECON 82.

Rapporter

Det börjar rusa ned att man av en slump släcker ut på en kongress. Vill man i fandom börjar man säga fanzines, egna sken-censurerade tidningar, blir aktiv på klubbmöten där man fallit ner i triternas deltar i skvallret om frävarande fans. På det sättet är fandom inte olik en liten by på landet.

Fandoms föreläs brukar dateras till år 1929 i USA. Till Sverige kom fandom 25 år senare - den första sf-klubben grundades i Stockholm år 1954.

Allt detta berättar Ahrvid Engholm för oss vid ett blixtpösk i hans etta i Gröndal. Han är en av sf-

från fandom är han känd och smitt aktad för sitt fanzine Fanytt, som med osviklig säkerhet rapporterar allt som hänt inom rörelsen sedan sist. Inget undgår Ahrvid, som laggar ned åtskilligt med tid, möda och pengar på sin hobby.

- Visst blir det dyrt, men man får ut så mycket av sitt engagemang att det väger jämnt. En sf-fan konsumerar åtskilliga sf-böcker per månad; på så vis utvecklas kunskaperna i engelska enormt. Och så får man ju massor av nya vänner, kul och originellt folk som berkar ens liv.



* Lars-Olov Strandberg, "fandoms mormor", i Stockholm.

Ahrvid Engholm har varit aktiv fan i ungefär sex år - mycket längre än så brukar intresset för det krävande fandom inte hålla. Undantag till den regeln finns förstas.

Ett sådant undantag är Lars-Olov Strandberg, arkfan med 25 års erfarenhet av fandom. Han är som vanligt med och organiserar årets kongress.

- Allt jag varit med så länge beror delvis på den sköna och fängslande litteraturen. Men ännu mer på hemkänslan bland fanen, en känsla som blir starkare med åren.

- I början var det här en udda aktivitet: folk tog inte sf på allvar. Alltså gick vi så smått under jorden och hade tveklöst tillsammans i lugn och ro.

Det var egentligen inte vår mening, vi talade mycket om att sprida intresset till fler, men...

Först på 1970-talet började sciencefiction att accepteras som litterär konstform, kanske efter den lyckade månlundningen år 1969 och filmsuccéer som "2001" och så småningom "Star Wars".

- Det märktes i fandom också. Fler och fler

kom till våra kongresser med höjdpunkt år 1976. Sedan har intresset mattats av igen, vad det m beror på.

Runt världen reser en liten kärna av trogna fans som bara njuter av de här med kongresser.

Lars-Olov Strandberg är en av dem - han missar sällan och ogärna ett tillfälle att träffa medfans.

- Utan en inre kärna skulle nog fandom inte kunna överleva. Och det är konstigt vart man kommer i världen hem till fanen, nog lyser samma förgyllda pocketböcker bokhyllorna, nog känne man igen jargongen. Så dant ger en kolossal trygghet och hemkänsl menar Lars-Olov Strandberg.

MARTIN STUGAR

books per months so your knowledge of English grows hugely. And you get a lot of new friends, fun and interesting people who makes your life richer. AE has been active for about six years - longer than that is rare that interests for the demanding fandom lasts. ... An exception is Lars-Olov Strandberg, arch-fan with 25 years of experience. He is as usual one of the organisers.

"That I've been around so long is partly due to the cool and fascinating literature. But even more the feeling of being at home, a feeling growing stronger over the years. In the beginning it was an odd activity: people didn't take sf seriously. So we went somewhat underground and had it nice and cosy together.

It took until the 1970s for sf to be accepted as a literary art form, perhaps after the successful moon landing in 1969 and film successes like 2001 and later Star Wars.

"That was noticeable in fandom too. More came to our conventions, with the top in 1976. Since interest has gone down again, for whatever reason ... Without an inner core fandom wouldn't survive. And it's strange, wherever you come in the world home to fans, you see the same colourful paperbacks in the shelves and you recognise the jargon."

Lars-Olov - another great guy, much missed! - had then been a fan for about 26 years, counting from his first con. I felt at the time he had been a fan forever, since Hugo Gernsback lay in the cradle or something. But I realise now to my shock that I have now been in fandom 18 years longer than he had at that time! I suddenly feel so old and worn out... What a sad world! Paper fanzines are gone with all the mimeographs, on cons you see droves of clueless neo-fringefans who call our holy stuff "sci-fi" and dress in silly costumes, sf magazines just fold, few know about Walt Willis, and on top of

all a bloody virus from outer space to make everything apocalyptically topsy turvy. And you have now been in this for the better part of five decades! Nextish will be #100 - how come? Roscoe, help us...

M--I-ng Co--en-s

Henry Grynsten: I read through it all, and though I'm not sure I understood everything, I land on that your piece can be summarised: "God exists, as he is a meme and memes exist." OK...or? It seems like a statement that is void of contents. It's like saying Mickey Mouse exists because he is in drawings and animations in comic books and cartoon films, and those exist. OK, those drawings exist - but it's clear that Mickey Mouse *does not exist* the form of a little mouse that wears costumes and can speak! God and Mickey Mouse are just ideas (a meme is just an idea that spreads) and the question then becomes: Does ideas exist?

Yes. And No. You can't touch an idea (or a meme), observe it in a microscope, put it in a test tube to analyse. But on the other hand, ideas do seem to have *some kind* of existence. We can define an idea and describe it. You can even get legal possession (of a kind, limited in time and in other ways) of ideas through copyright and patents. An idea can have effects. The idea of communism had for instance 100+ million killed as an effect. But we come back to one of the most fundamental hypotheses in philosophy, thousands of years old: Plato and his thoughts about the "world of ideas", which he thought was even more real than the physical world. Wild Ideas' piece "The God of Memes" to me just seems to follow Plato, and whether his idea is substantial or not is even to this day inconclusive.

A couple of other things. I quote "you can not understand God literally". But the thing is that many - even most - who are religious *do* take the idea of God literally! So that must be the basis in a discussion about religion. Interesting idea, this: "Psilocybe cubensis, which was picked and eaten by our ancestors. Now this mushroom has hallucinogenic properties, and according to the theory affected the brains in a way that eventually gave rise to language and culture." One can very well imagine that a substance that kicks the brain around could have played a role in causing the sort of quantum leap that language is. (But there are more theories of the origin of language, eg the Bow-wow, the Pooh-pooh, the Ding-dong, the Yo-he-ho and the Ta-ta theories...

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_language .)

William McCabe: You sound like defending Mr Floyd being crushed to death, which doesn't go down well with me. The autopsies said nothing about drugs being in his system to the amount influencing the outcome. The thing with counting "excessive deaths" is that those numbers are really quite stable every year, *unless* there are external factors in play. And then we know that those factors are the cause. I agree that a number of corona deaths are probably not *caused* by the virus, its fatalities *with* corona, not *by* corona, and the difference is something excessive death figures can catch (see my earlier comment on this). Since numbers are quite similar every year, deaths *with* X but not *from* X will be known. BTW, I sometimes write near the limits of my own understanding...

Garth Spencer: I've been checking the URL you gave, but no Confabulation there yet. BTW, I *have* summarised my fandom history research. (I sent you a copy of *Fandboken*, though it's in Swedish...)

R Greame Cameron: Unfortunately I don't like Zoom meetings or any other such thing where you are supposed to sit in front of a webcam in real time. I like on-line activities to be things I can do in my own speed, at my own time. I wouldn't mind, however, to be a passive onlooker, to watch something but without having to show my own ugly face. I have often suggested that sf cons should broadcast eg panels and lectures over the net! Nice that you have cons about writing sf! There are no such ones here, though I'd love to attend one. I too had contacts with the guys from Chernobylisation, Alexander and Boris. I met Alexander on last year's Irish Worldcon BTW. Yeah, the corona thing hasn't been handled particularly well south of the border. Mr Trump hasn't exactly helped... But I do stand behind the Swedish strategy, with its average results (which are good, *without* lockdown!) and it will possibly/probably pay off well in the longer run. BTW, here's a recent interview with Dr Anders Tegnell, our chief epidemiologist, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh9wso6bEAc>

A very irregular fanzine. Needs more fiber.



Woofers and Tweeters, the Third

A fanzine for WOOF 45, the WorldCon Order Of Fan-editors fanzine.

Collated by Guy H. Lillian III for the 2020 World Science Fiction Convention, this time held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has the planet in its vise-like grip. **Publication date: August 2020.**

This zine is from John A. Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, Texas USA 77845

Contact him via email at askance73@gmail.com

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Life Above Ground in War Time

Well, that's how it feels these days, doesn't it? The COVID-19 pandemic rolls merrily along, and the battle lines have been clearly drawn. By this I mean the positions are either you wear a mask and do all the CDC recommendations to minimize exposure to the pandemic, or you deny the pandemic's existence and refuse to play nicely with your neighbors. The vast majority of the people I know dutifully wear their masks in public, minimize the need to venture forth into the wider world outside their doors, and are mostly confining themselves to working from home (if their job can be performed that way, that is). Funny thing, I have friends who belong to all political stripes, so this very large group is a cross-section of local society, and in this part of Texas, that means a lot of conservative voters are obeying CDC guidelines. Apparently, the personal threat to kith and kindred far outweighs their loyalty to their political party. This is, I believe, How It Should Be.

On the other side of this battlefield of differing opinions is what I call the Contrary Mary Coalition. In short, this sizeable group is comprised of science deniers, hard-right and alt-right conservatives, gun-owning, bible-toting, Trump worshippers who are firmly entrenched in their beliefs, and any factual information simply falls on deaf ears. Even if they do acknowledge hearing the facts, they flat out won't believe it just because it's against their personal beliefs. This position claims that the scientific method, the pursuit of verifiable information to support a position, is anathema to their existence; on top of it all, the kicker is that it violates their right to form their own opinions.

“It was dusk. I knew it was because the sun was going down.”

A very irregular fanzine. Needs more fiber.

Well, I can concede to this last point. Yes, indeed, every American citizen has the right to form their own opinions and express them publicly. That is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of the United States of America. This is not the crux of the argument, though. The question is a matter of ethics: what is the right thing to do here? Save lives no matter any individual’s political affiliation, or dig your trenches so deep that there is no way to climb out in order to save even your own life, nor even your own family’s lives?

My conclusion, based upon nearly fifty years of conscientious public awareness of living in America, is that the conservative side of the American public has been brainwashed by their churches and political leadership. This segment of the population has lost the ability to be skeptical and seek creative, truthful solutions to problems. In fact, I think “truth,” to these people, exists solely inside their own belief system, and to question this system is dangerous. These are the brainwashed masses: the end product of the Republican Party’s long game to reshape and control America according to their own beliefs, and regard any opposing positions as anti-American. These people live in a black-and-white world; no gray areas exists in which differences of opinion can be negotiated. You either toe the line, or you’re out.

Well, I much prefer the way of the scientific method mainly because the reality of what is happening cannot be denied, and I feel that this is what too many people are doing: denying reality. That is no way to live. As bad as the real world is, this is where we live, so let us do what we can do deal with it.

As of the end of July 2020, I have yet to be tested for the Coronavirus – and no, I am not allergic to Corona beer; it’s just not “beer” to me – and don’t yet exhibit any of the symptoms.

However, I am scheduled for an annual physical on the afternoon of Monday,

August 17th, so it would not surprise me if I will be tested for the virus as part of that exam. So be it. Valerie and I haven’t attacked each other yet after five months of self-isolation, which is a good sign. Sure, there have been a few instances of “differences of opinions,” but for the most part we’ve been good. Healthy, too. So we are keeping on in a good way. She has begun work on a major painting in addition to attempting to garden in this beastly hot Texas climate, and I have been getting ready for the next semester already, but also playing my guitar a lot more often. This leads naturally into the following header:



Map of COVID-19 testing sites in south Texas.

“Hey, mister! Can I give you a shine?”

“Uh... No, thanks!”

Let the Music Play

It is very simple: I love music and have been playing a musical instrument of one sort or other since the age of 9 when I started in the cornet in grade school band class. Originally, I wanted to play the clarinet because dad had a few dozen jazz records, mostly big band with some small



combo stuff mixed in, at home and he would listen to them fairly often. The Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw records were my favorites, and the Pete Fountain ones also were good, which is why I wanted to play the clarinet. However, the band director, Mr. Rochet (gad, I still remember his name), said, “Hmm. Looking at your mouth structure, the lips, I believe you would have a good embouchure for playing the cornet.” Well, that depressed me since my heart was set on playing like Benny Goodman. When I got home and told my father this, he went over to his stack of LP’s and pulled out a few, then started playing Harry James, Al Hirt, and other big band albums that featured the horn players, especially the trumpeters.

That worked. If you will pardon the pun, that got me jazzed up on playing the cornet in school. Then Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass hit it big. Nine years later I started college as a music major, main instrument the trumpet. Of course, along the way I started in the guitar at the age of ten – wanted to play like Rick Nelson, Scotty Moore, the Beatles, and others – and learned other instruments along the way: self-teaching myself piano and drums in the music practice rooms at school, and shifted around on all the brass instruments throughout junior and senior high. There was no doubt in my mind what I wanted to be: a composer. Not a performer nor band teacher, but I loved writing music. In fact, I still have some old music staff sheets and folios with compositions I wrote way back when. My song catalog dates from the beginning of 1975, and now contains over 250 songs; this does not include what I wrote before then. I am not sure, but my earliest attempts at songwriting were in junior high school when I was 13 or 14 years old, and they are definitely best left forgotten. If I do not remember them anymore, fine. Let the damn things lie lost in time.

Which brings me back to the present. Since May of this fucked-up year of 2020, I have actually completed a few songs, and composed another dozen chord progressions and melodies that have potential. What I want to do lyrically with these wordless tunes is yet to be determined. When the mood hits, I will know.

But this song-writing – and fanzine activity, too; can’t disallow how important this is – has helped immeasurably to deal with the pandemic and isolation of this surrealistic existence we call the year 2020. I am reminded of that old Zager and Evans hit song: “In the year 2525, if man is still alive, if woman can survive, they may find....” Indeed. What *will* they find? At the rate we’re going, humankind may not make it that far. Until then, thank Ghu I still have my music.

A Virtual WorldCon? Inconceivable!

Who would have thought this would happen so quickly? Granted, the technology for holding major conferences online has existed for many years now, so why the heck not? It is definitely terribly sad that it took a global pandemic to bring this concept to reality – holding the World Science Fiction Convention online – this year. The question is, will it really work?

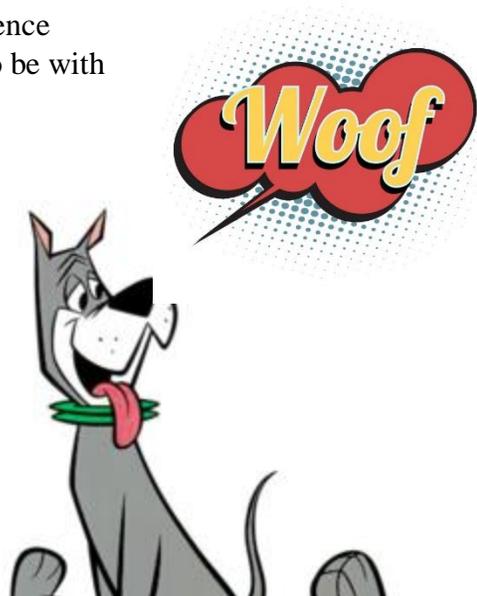
Well, so far, based on what I have seen on Facebook postings on the CoNZealand page and other locations – GUFF delegate Alison Scott has been running a virtual GUFF trip report on a Facebook page, for one example – in assorted social media sites and formats, there is a mixed reaction. The wait-time for logon is an issue, and I have heard a lot of grumbling about the dollar amounts involved. Granted, that can be expected considering the physical location, but I am not going to pay that kind of money unless I can actually be there for the event. Then again, the CoNZealand committee is doing the best they can considering the situation. I truly feel bad for them, and what they have done to convert this baby in such a short period of time is phenomenal. The third-party postings I have seen so far are interesting, but it's just not the same as being there. For me – and for many of us – is being together with longtime fan friends and making new friends.

Look. I admit it: as much as I enjoy producing fanzines and nattering back and forth online with fannish friends around the world, it is much more fun to physically be in their presence. The face-to-face conversations, the dinner groups, running into familiar faces you haven't seen for at least a year... All that and more. It is good we can still communicate via the technology, but I much prefer my conventions be held in a hotel or in a convention/conference center so I can hang out with my peeps. I simply want to be with my friends. It is just that simple.

At the end of this month (August) I will participate in my first virtual convention. ArmadilloCon 42 in Austin, Texas is scheduled for August 28-30, 2020, and will be in this virtual format. It is free (or so it says here: <http://armadillocon.org/d42/>), so I figure, why not? I shall give it a go. It should be interesting.

But I still would rather be *with* my friends.

John Purcell



“Ruh-ro, George!”

MT VOID 08/06/20 -- SPECIAL W.O.O.F. EDITION



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
08/06/20 -- SPECIAL W.O.O.F. EDITION

Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net
Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net
Sending Address: evelynchimisleeper@gmail.com
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This special edition of the MT VOID is taken from various COVID-related articles in the past few months of the MT VOID. (I have omitted the various links for news stories since by now most of them are probably bad. A web search should find them.) Of particular interest may be the reviews of CONTAGION and A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR.

03/20/20: Evelyn on the effect COVID-19 was having on book sales:

Normally this week I would have been reporting on the Bryn Mawr book sale in Princeton, but due to the current situation, their planned five-day sale was truncated to a day and a half. The Princeton Day School was shutting down and asked/told the sale organizers that they must close by 3PM Friday. This meant only the preview day on Thursday, and a little more than a half day on Friday. (Ironically, it probably also meant that Friday would be more crowded than usual.) So this clinched it for us, and we decided not to go this year. I suspect the East Brunswick Library book sale at the end of March will also be cancelled. (It's held in a mall, which would make it worse.) I'm hoping things normalize by the time of the Old Bridge Library sale in June, especially since they did not have one last year because of the remodeling of the library.

And of course, between when I wrote that (03/12/20) and when this issue appears, a whole lot has changed. Clearly the East Brunswick sale won't happen, but here in NJ, all the restaurants, libraries, and theaters are closed as well (among other businesses). However, delivery services such as USPS, UPS, and FedEx are still running, so I decided to treat myself to an order of books on-line to replace the sales. (It certainly makes more sense than ordering a year's supply of toilet paper.)

Late(r)-breaking news: Many brick-and-mortar bookstores are closing at least temporarily. Those affecting the area where we are (NJ) include Second Time Books in Mount Laurel and the Strand Bookstore in New York.

One thought that has nothing to do with books: when someone suggested helping out elderly neighbors by shopping for them, I started to think of who I might help out--and then realize that *I* am the elderly neighbor. :([-ecl]

03/27/20: The monthly listing of book discussions reflected the uncertainty, noting that everything listed was tentative, but that all Middletown meetings were cancelled/postponed until further notice.

04/03/20: Mark on some of the other weird stuff going on:

"Day of the Animals":

Back in the mid-1970s we saw several low-budget horror films released to theaters with similar plots: films such as DAY OF THE ANIMALS, GRIZZLY, and FROGS. The plots were much the same. Nature had apparently gotten tired of us human animals messing up the environment. The animal kingdom unites to kill all humans. A typical vengeance-of-nature horror film was THE DAY OF THE ANIMALS, in which a business executive takes some of his top underlings to hike in the

mountains. The top execs presumably are also there to admire the boss's bare chest. This plot is carried out in all seriousness (well, with the possible exception of having a bad human played by Leslie Nielsen as a captain of industry--playing his role naked to the waist, fortunately in the right direction.)

In the film there were pollutants in the atmosphere that acted like some sort of rabies toxin. Soon there are a variety of species that appear to have declared war on humans. Of course, at the time the idea of animals banding together across species lines to beat humans--this was fantasy in 1977. In 2019 the climate may have altered behaviors and may have brought on new, more cooperative animal behavior.

Here are some examples of brought out new hostile behaviors:

Locusts

When I look back over my life this year will (I sincerely hope) be the "Plague Year." I hope no other year contends for that title. We have Covid-19. But in Africa another plague is raging. It is a plague that returns ever and again. The current round is the desert locust swarm in the Horn of Africa. We are approaching the height of the swarming, endangering food supplies. The greatest danger is from voracious "hopper bands" that have eaten 1.3 million metric tonnes this year. There is no way to chase them away, you just have to get out of their way. While the locusts do not attack humans or even animals, they can fly 80 miles per day and they leave only dirt behind.

Spiders

Dangerous funnel spiders, scary as all get-out, could flood Australian towns after much-needed rain. (See the photo on the provided link.) This is so serious that the Australian Reptile Park is asking people to bring in captured male funnel-web spiders for use in the creation of a life-saving anti-venom. They do warn, "This is an undertaking only for the brave."

Hippopotamuses (Okay, if you want to spell it, I will at least consider your spelling. It might be better to spell it "Hippos"))

Pablo Escobar was a fan of animal and could purchase any animals he wanted for his private zoo. Nobody would tell him no. And he financed his zoo with what was undoubtedly drug money. He had four hippos smuggled from Africa. What he did not know--and nobody told him--was that the ecology of Colombia was incompatible with hippos. Hippo poop is becoming a large problem in the South American jungle near Escobar's zoo, especially since the original four hippos multiplied to thirty. The poop is a serious environmental problem.

Iguanas

Talk about bad awakenings. If you are an iguana living in Florida you can wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself sleeping in a tree with the ground rushing up to meet you. It is probably not a pleasant introduction for the day. Bring an umbrella.

[-mrl]

04/03/20: Evelyn seeing connections to COVID-19 everywhere:

Sometimes a passage from a book will come to mind while one is reading a news story. For example, I recently read, "China has

reported 3,299 coronavirus-related deaths, with most taking place in Wuhan, the epicenter of the global pandemic. But one funeral home received two shipments of 5,000 urns over the course of two days, according to the Chinese media outlet Caixin" [New York Post] and was immediately reminded of Josephine Tey's DAUGHTER OF TIME:

"Truth isn't in accounts but in account books. ... The real history is written in forms not meant as history. In Wardrobe accounts, in Privy Purse expenses, in personal letters, in estate books. If someone, say, insists that Lady Whoosit never had a child, and you find in the account book the entry: 'For the son born to my lady on Michaelmas eve: five yards of blue ribbon, fourpence halfpenny' it's a reasonably fair deduction that my lady had a son on Michaelmas eve."

[-ecl]

04/17/20: Mark comparing how threats are met in the movies with the reality on the ground:

"Independence Day Feel-Good High":

I was afraid that I was not going to see it in my lifetime. What did I want to see? Call It the Independence Day Feel Good

Feeling. Something has attacked the Earth. at don't know. It is aliens or plant fungus or something. We are just all in its gun-sights. Suddenly humanity looks up from what it is doing and realizes, "Hey. We are all one planet, if something is threatening the planet it threatens ALL of us." We've got to work together to save not just ourselves. We have to save us all. And the next scene is a montage of men and women, Jews and Muslims, blacks and whites. Tibetans and Chinese. Once we see it is a threat to all of us working altogether we work together to save us all.

And despite all odds I lived to see it. We must all see it. And what do I see happen? I see a whole bunch of fights over who gets a six-pack of rolls of toilet paper. We just never learned to cooperate with each other. Perhaps we are getting what as a race we deserve. Think about it. Then GO HOME!!! [-mrl]

04/17/20: Evelyn reminding people that everything was farblunget, including:

Volcanos in Iceland Could Cause Disruption for Centuries

Anak Krakatoa Is Erupting Again

The Forest Around Chernobyl Is Burning, Spiking Radiation Levels

And lest you thought the animals were gone, reports directly connected to the isolation and shut-downs cover them as well:

"For centuries, humans have pushed wildlife into smaller and smaller corners of the planet. But now, with billions in isolation and city streets emptied, nature is pushing back. Wild boar have descended onto the streets of Barcelona. Mountain goats have overtaken a town in Wales. Whales are chugging into Mediterranean shipping lanes. And turtles are finally getting some peace."

[-ecl]

04/17/20: Mark's reprint of his 2011 review of the film CONTAGION:

"CONTAGION (film review)":

CAPSULE: Director Steven Soderbergh and screenwriter Scott Z. Burns give us a fast-paced and grim scenario of a nasty but all-too-possible avian flu was released and spread through the environment. There are about six strands of plot running through the scenario, each with a recognizable actor playing the main character. In spite of the presence of major stars Soderbergh gives us the confidence that he is not tweaking the film to exaggerate the drama or excitement. Even without the usual tropes of science fiction, this is--among other things--an excellent science fiction techno-thriller. Rating: low +3 (-4 to +4) or 8/10

CONTAGION begins with a cough. Beth Emhoff (played by Gwyneth Paltrow) is in an airport calling on her cell phone talking to a man--not her husband--about their recent sex. Beth does not know it but she is dying. And she is killing perhaps thousands who touch what she has touched. And they are killing thousands more as the contagion spreads by touch. We see a staccato montage of the sickness being spread by touch and by air travel. And so it begins. Within short days Beth is dead, as is her son. Her husband Mitch (Matt Damon) is seeing his whole world crumble like his life just did. We see what is happening in the outside world

through his eyes.

CONTAGION is a science fiction film that is almost purely science extrapolation. There is a minimum of "boy-meets-girl" plotting; there are no fascistic military megalomaniacs (as there was in 1995's OURBREAK); there is no last-minute, high-tension race to save the human race. Just about every frame of the film tells what is happening with the epidemic. The filmmakers have taken and filmed an all-too-possible chain of events that might occur if a particularly nasty avian influenza got loose on the world population. Director Steven Soderbergh's rapid-fire of events comes at the viewer almost faster than it can be assimilated. There is very little that happens on the screen that is not advancing the scenario.

The action takes place in about six plot lines, not necessarily distinct. Two pivotal characters are Dr. Ellis Cheever (Laurence Fishburne), a Center for Disease Control official charged with leading the fight against the sickness, and a popular Internet blogger Alan Krumwiede (Jude Law). Each will be the focus of moral issues arising from the pandemic. Each will prove to be selfish in his own way and each will be a threat to the public interest. The film makes a moral distinction between them, but each is dangerous in his own way which is very different from the other's.

One slight departure from the straightforward scenario format is that we start with Day 2 when the pandemic is already out of control. It is by this point too late to avert disaster, but the size of the calamity can be affected. In this way the viewer is immediately swept into a story already in progress. But the source of the epidemic is has to be found and will be revealed to

the viewer only at the end of the film. The events of Day 1 are withheld to heighten suspense.

In Soderbergh's hands the film becomes a story very much of the 21st Century. The Internet and the attitude of the public is much more crucial to this film than it was or should have been in OUTBREAK. The information about the epidemic, be it factual or rumor, is as much a virus on the Internet as the virus is in the real world. The Internet is an important player in the efforts to control the results of the situation. Soderbergh manages to give the film a subdued look to counteract the sensationalism of the subject matter.

CONTAGION demonstrates that science fiction can be used in film for a more serious purpose than telling a superhero story. I rate the film a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale or 8/10. In a sense this film is an interesting pairing with RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES. People who stayed through the closing credits of the APES film will understand how well this film dovetails with that one.

Film Credits: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1598778/>

What others are saying: http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/contagion_2011/

[-mrl]

04/17/20: Jim Susky commenting on some of these phenomena:

This morning I was struck by the supreme irony of an ABC news headline:

"Communities of color see alarming rates of COVID-19 cases" with a subtitle:

"Data gathered by some cities and states show African Americans have been disproportionately affected by coronavirus. In Chicago, black people make up nearly 70% of all deaths."

Is it not plain that America's poorest and most vulnerable will bear the brunt of all the *government closures*? It requires no analysis to determine this widespread "cure" is worse than the disease.

This is all but drowned out by all the noise and fear.

I'll make you a Gentleman's bet--one year hence, over 1/2 of all Americans will harbor COVID-19. This is inevitable--such is nature of viral ecosystems. [-js]

04/24/20: Mark describing his diminished expectations:

Life is just not as fun as it was a couple of months ago. It has really started wearing on me. Just yesterday I told Evelyn that I really needed to unwind a little. I wanted to go someplace fancy for dinner ... like maybe the living room. [-mrl]

04/24/20: John Purcell commenting on the situation:

Good morning, Evelyn and Mark. I trust you are both well and safely ensconced in your hidey-hole in New Jersey.

We are taking things a day at a time. Some times we try taking it two days at a time. We accomplish while we can and keeping an eye out for revenants.

Your survival experiences:

All this reminds me of another movie besides CONTAGION (2011), one that could have been a lot better, OUTBREAK.

Not a good film. It started by showing you how threatening the situation was, but then made the villain Donald Sutherland. It was like TITANIC was dramatic enough that it did not need a gunfight.

For some reason this reminds me of all sorts of "menace from outer space" movies that use a viral infection or some malevolent alien spore that lands on planet Earth that begins wreaking havoc before the good guys win out over this "How can we do this? We're all gonna die!" situation. Some year in the future, a Ron Howard clone will direct a made-for-streaming digital movie of this year's viral apocalypse. Then again, Howard's my age, so in ten years he'd only be 76 and quite likely still be making movies, which means he could very well do this one. Let's see how accurate my prognostication works out, provided we are still around at that time. [-jp]

04/24/20: Evelyn starts a series of columns reviewing one of the many plague classics: THE DECAMERON by Giovanni Boccaccio. (The full texts of the comments is too long to include here; go to .):

THE DECAMERON by Giovanni Boccaccio (translated by John Payne [*]) (Project Gutenberg) was written in 1353 and set during the Black Death, the premise being that ten people take refuge in a villa outside Florence, Italy, and entertain themselves by each telling one story a day for ten days.

[*] Note: all the spellings and translations are from Payne's translation, which is from 1886. I hope that those reading other translations will be able to at least recognize the characters' names. For example, "Jehannot" is "Giannotto" and "Melchizedek" is "Melchisedech: in the translation "Classical Stuff You Should Know" is using.

The "Classical Stuff You Should Know" (a.k.a. "Quarantine Stuff You Should Know", a.k.a. QSYSK) is (was) an hour-long weekly podcast by three teachers at a Classical Christian academy in Texas. However, social distancing being what it is, they have switched to a new format: one single podcaster, doing a twenty-minute (or so) daily podcast on THE DECAMERON, one story per day. I had originally thought that this column would not show up until mid-July, when the book was done. But it would be ludicrously long by then, so I will probably run it in sections (e.g., ten stories, or ten days' story-telling, at a time).
[-ecl]

05/01/20: Everyone in full-scale pandemic mode:

Sign seen on a bookstore window:

"Please note: The post-apocalyptic fiction section has been moved to Current Affairs."

05/08/20: The animals were still in the news:

And in our continuing coverage of the "Day of the Animals" (though it's more like the "Year of the Animals"), we have good news and we have bad news:

The good news:

"Rome's seagulls hunt rats and pigeons as lockdown starves them of scraps"

"Seagulls in Rome are 'returning' to their natural status as predators, hunting down rats, pigeons, and other smaller birds as the lack of humans on the streets mean no food scraps are to be found.

'They are catching mostly pigeons but also swallows and black birds. They're also going after the fish in the Tiber,' [Bruno Cignini, a zoologist from the Rome University Tor Vergata] said. 'Luckily, they are also eating rats. Animals are changing their habits as we change ours.'

The bad news:

"Asia's 'murder hornet' will arrive on East Coast and is 'here to stay'"

"It's not a matter of if but when the 'murder hornet' will hit the East Coast, experts warned The Post on Sunday.

The deadly meat-eating Asian giant hornet, which has been known to kill up to 50 people a year in Japan, recently surfaced for the first time in the US in Washington state--and New York City beekeepers say there is no way it won't make its way here, too."

ObsF: "The Year of the Jackpot" by Robert A. Heinlein

[-ecl]

06/05/20: Evelyn commenting on the classic pandemic novel, A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR

A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR by Daniel Defoe (ISBN 978-0-140-43785-0) was written about 1665, but sounds so current. I should start by saying this is fiction, albeit heavily fact-based. (In many ways, it's one long info-dump.) Pepys for reportage, Defoe for fiction. Defoe wrote this in response to a resurgence of the Plague in Marseilles in 1720, because people had forgotten how bad the Plague could be. Defoe himself was born in 1660, and so was only five at the time of the Great Plague, but did have some memories of it, as well as using contemporary reports as a basis of some of his novel.

Even from the very beginning, we see parallels. Defoe talks about the official deaths from the Plague, and then notes that what we now call "excess deaths" were considerably higher, and that probably most or all of those were attributable to the Plague.

He writes about streets being deserted, and even where there were people in the streets, they were in walking in the center to avoid being close to any of the houses.

Unemployment? Servants by the thousands found themselves let go as their masters closed up their town houses and fled to the country. Only public charity saves any of them.

People looked for preventatives and cures and "even poisoned themselves beforehand for fear of the poison of the infection..." Theaters were closed, and serving food at taverns was forbidden. (Taverns could stay open for drinking, but there was a curfew.) People assaulted those in charge of making sure quarantine and other rules were followed. Those who could afford to do so stocked up on food and drink and locked themselves within their homes.

People started doing other things as "social distancing". "When any one bought a joint of meat in the market they would not take it off the butcher's hand, but took it off the hooks themselves. On the other hand, the butcher would not touch the money, but have it put in a pot of vinegar, which he kept for that purpose. The buyer carried always small money to make up any odd sum, that they might take no change.. They carried bottles of scents and perfumes in their hands [their version of hand cleaner], but then the poor could not do even these things, and they went at all hazards." And "My Lord Mayor had a low gallery built on purpose in his hall, where he stood a little removed from the crowd when any complaint came to be heard, that he might appear with as much safety as possible."

Not just domestic servants were unemployed. Defoe lists master-workmen, dock workers, home builders and repairers, merchant sailors, and so on.

As to the spread, Defoe (or rather, his narrator) makes clear that it was often spread by those whom we would call "asymptomatic"--or at least those who had not yet shown symptoms. He also accepted that material goods could spread the Plague. What he did not seem to know was the role that fleas played in the spread.

Unlike our current pandemic, the Plague in London seemed to sweep across the city, starting with the western side. By the time it reached the eastern side, the west had mostly recovered, and Defoe says this saved the town, because it meant there were always people who could perform the essential tasks. However, this has a parallel in our notion of "flattening the curve": not overwhelming the hospitals by having everyone sick at once. Ours may not be geographical in nature, but the concept is the same.

In short, one finds so much of contemporary relevance in A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR that it is truly startling. [-ecl]

06/12/20: Evelyn bemoaning the [then-current] library situation:

A few days before this was due to run, I heard on the radio a review of a new book, ALARIC THE GOTH: AN OUTSIDER'S HISTORY OF THE FALL OF ROME by Douglas Boin, which seems to cover a lot of the same ideas. If my library ever re-opens, and if one of the books in its consortium gets a copy, I will definitely read this. [-ecl]

[The library re-opened for curbside pickup the end of June, and one of the consortium libraries has it on order, but inter-library library loan is still not available. -ecl]

06/19/20: Evelyn continuing her DECAMERON comments, but noting, "The 'Decameron' series of podcasts seemed to have petered out only halfway through Day Two, but I will continue, at least for a while." [-ecl]

06/26/20: By this point, plans are being made to have the local book discussion group meet in a socially distanced fashion someone's backyard.

07/17/20: Evelyn still continuing her DECAMERON comments, ending with, "If the content of the stories was why the 'Quarantine Stuff You Should Know' podcaster gave up in the middle of Day Two, one can only imagine his reaction to some of these stories!) One is so racy that one translator left a big chunk of it in Italian, and another subsisted a different story entirely." [-ecl]

07/31/20: Mark commenting on the current situation in his column on films on TCM in August:

Well, we are back to late summer and this living is easy. Well, perhaps not as easy as it was late summer last year. Actually I think the planet will not have a whole lot of easy living for a long, long time. I think we should all do what we can for the unemployed and the hungry. [-mrl]

08/06/20: And that's about it. It's August, I've been to the supermarket 12 times in the last four months (plus 2 trips to Costco and 3 to specialty food stores), and other than picking up take-out six times, we haven't been to any other stores. We have visited our best friends four times, socially distanced outside, as well as a book discussion of four people, ditto. New Jersey no longer has a ban on non-essential travel, but we still feel and act as though it does. I filled the gas tank the end of March and there's still 5/8 of a tank left.

In March we cancelled our trip to Arizona planned for April, and in May we cancelled our trip to Massachusetts planned for the summer. By July, we had cancelled plans to attend Philcon in November, assuming there is an in-person Philcon this year. At our age, we're in that high-risk category--will we ever fly anywhere again? For that matter, when will we eat in a restaurant, or go to a movie?

We're living in a science fiction world. Yeah, I know, it's a cliché by now. (I wonder whether sales for Charles Yu's HOW TO LIVE SAFELY IN A SCIENCE FICTIONAL UNIVERSE have shot up because people think it's non-fiction.) But so far, no zombies. [-ecl]

Mark & Evelyn Leeper
leepers@optonline.net

Ahhh Sweet Mystery of Life

A zine for WOOF 2020 by David Schlosser at the behest of Guy Lillian

As it happens, the first thing that came to mind this time around was Madeline Kahn's line from *Young Frankenstein* after she sees the monster's schwanstucker – that is to say “*Woof!*”. I'm fully aware that that's not what Guy was hoping for as the jumping off point, but that's not my problem so the jumping off point that is.

It began last fall when we had one of my coworkers (and friends) over for dinner. I made a passing reference to *Casablanca* and not only didn't she get it, she'd never seen it. I immediately declared a “cultural emergency” and loaned her our copy of the movie. Not to much after that, the local “restore the old theater” fundraiser was (this does connect) was *Young Frankenstein*. One of my other coworkers asked about the movie because she had never seen that one (I required here to go).

Anyway, realizing that some of said coworkers are quite young (25-36) and may never have had the opportunity (or suggestion) to see some movies that I (and Kay) would consider ones that You Must See (NB – this is entirely our notion of those movies that qualify & which ones we think of). To “right this wrong with blinding speed” I decided that we had to start inviting them over in twos or threes to see some of said films. To that end I checked what I had in stock, rifled my mental rolodex for others and acquired a line up consisting of (as a start): *Casablanca*, *Beau Geste*, *THEM!*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; *Twelve Angry Men*, *Fail-Safe*, *Young Frankenstein*, *El Dorado* & *What a Way to Go*. So all was in readiness to start on the project when – your guessed it – social distancing became the watchword of the day.

As I don't want to move the TV around (ie outside), I'm sort of stuck although I am toying with the idea of seeing in the synagogue – which is currently not in use for gatherings – might let me use their big screen if I keep the “crowd” down to that same planned for so people can keep their distances. Haven't asked and I'm half tempted to just do it since, gee, I just happen to have this key.....

Moving on to CoNZealand. It sort of snuck up on me, seeing as it started In JULY and with working and such I sort of missed the first day or so. I did manage to catch a few panels and did a little scanning of the dealers. For the latter, I really did miss having the ability to just wander through and check things out in person – particularly books. If you know what you're looking for (or at least a ballpark idea), shopping on-line is fine but if you're actually looking for stuff that you aren't familiar with and waiting to see what catches our eye it's a much slower way to go about things. The same actually does go for shirts, buttons and things you may not even know you're interested in. I didn't check but it may be (have been) a worthwhile idea for the con to keep the site open for access to the dealer's for a week or two post-con to give people time to do just that.

As for the Zoom panels, I actually think the ones I attended worked out pretty well. The Q&A set up allowed for everyone to at least present their questions to the panel. Clearly it was still impossible for all of them to get answered and sort of biased that in favor of what struck the moderator vs the usual “first come” basis. Still, at least it didn't depend on who's hand you saw when. And having the side chat (that everyone could see) allowed for a nice amount of Q&A and general discussion among the audience and “around” the panel without interrupting the flow of the presentation. That was a very nice add-on. As is the fact that the panels were being recorded and therefore available to view afterwards. Not as ideal if one wanted to participate, but far better than missing out entirely.

Overall – and with somewhat limited data – I'd say they did a reasonably good job of trying to fill some of the roles. I didn't try Discord etc so I can't say how the party / hang-out aspect went though.

Mystery 2

I guess a few words about CoViD would be in order. While where I am (NW California coast) has had a reasonably mild infestation (as we hit August, about 240 cases out of 15000+ tests in a population of 136000) and been able to lightly reopen, albeit not for eat-in restaurants in general. (I note that those that have the space have set up outside dining to supplement take-out.) I certainly have seen some more stores closed up than was the case a few months ago (I can't give hard number on that and don't have a clear idea of what the jump is). I do know that we (and some of the people I know) have been making an effort to increase our use of local stores (mostly restaurants in our case) to keep the income flowing through the community. In our specific case, we've considered the first stimulus payment as a "bonus" (Oh, yeah, I work in the local hospital lab so no loss of income there and my wife, Kay, is officially retired) which we're "obligated" to pass along to help the economy as much as possible. It's enough \$ that, we've really only managed to pass along about ¼ of that amount but the plan continues.

On other fronts, I'm utterly amazed at the degree of "I don't WANNA wear a mask and YOU can't make me" tantrums being thrown. Both on-line and (worse?) in person. Yeah, you have your rights – but a) so do I, b) you have responsibility to go along with that, c) private businesses can (regardless of gov't edicts) require them if they choose to without impinging on your rights and d) gee, I suppose you'd have been the one with a brightly lit home during WWII blackouts. I'm sort of waiting for the folk who decide to have a hissy-fit about having to wear shoes and shirts to go into stores or can't light up their cigars wherever they choose. Grow The F*** Up.

I'll add that one person I know on FB keep reposting memes of the above nature (and similar ones on other topics). While I certainly can't (and won't and don't) respond to all of them (it almost seems that he's always had the most recent posting on my feed) I do try to knock the pegs out of the ones I see that strike me as particularly egregious or offensive. Can't say he buys in but, while Kay thinks I should just unfriend or ignore him, I neither can (or will) I let it all just slide by. It may not be quite the level of "All it takes for Evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing", but it is what I can contribute. Either in that forum or via replies to Letters to the Editors or OpEds or whatever. I may not be the most effective speaker, but I like to think that I can turn a phrase or two.

To Close on a related note:

it's t̃wue! it's t̃wue!

With a "Rouf and Rouf and Roy-al Scowl" I remain
David Schlosser



Yellow Matter Custard* #28? For WOOF #45 / New Zealand (2020) / Mark L. Blackman / 1745 East 18th Street #4A, Brooklyn, NY 11229 USA / 718-336-3255, 347-729-6051 / markblackman@juno.com / member fwa & ICC / written Sept. 2019-Aug. 2020; ed. Aug. 2020 (just before the deadline).

or the Dead Dog Party]

In memoriam> (fans) Norm Metcalf, Paul Turner, Spike McPhee, Kunkel, Les Cole, Steve Stiles, Elyse Pines Rosenstein, Earl Kemp, Aly Parsons, Frank Lunney, Kate Hatcher, Mary Nofi, Abby, Sheryl Lerner, Dan Goodman, Thomas Barber, DI, Merv Binns, Anne Zeek, Ken Rowand, Hugh Casey, Ro Nagey; F. Alexander Brejcha, Alexei Leonov, Jonathan Miller, MD CBE, William Ruckelshaus, Joan Staley, Robert Walker Jr., DC Fontana, Andrew Weiner, Caroll Spinney, René Auberjonois, Ron Leibman, George Laurer, Anna Karina, Tony Brooker, Claudine Auger, Randy Suess, Allee Willis, Jerry Herman, Sue Lyon, Don Imus, Peter Wollen, Lee Mendelson, Neil Innes, Syd Mead, Gary Starkweather, David Stern, Buck Henry, Mike Resnick, Edd “Kookie” Byrnes, Christopher Tolkien, Terry Jones, John Karlen, Jim Lehrer, Mr. Peanut, Kobe Bryant, Bob Shane, Gene Reynolds, Paul Barnett (John Grant), Geraldine Duncann, Kirk Douglas, Orson Bean, (Nobel Laureate in Medicine) Dr. Stanley Cohen, Robert Conrad, Kevin Conway, Joseph Shabalala, Kellye Nakahara, Larry Tesler, Julius Montgomery, Nicola Cuti, Katherine Johnson, Al Worden, Victor Gorelick, Russ Cochran, Clive Cussler, Freeman Dyson, Trader Joe, James Lipton, Robert Wise, Rosie the Riveter, Max von Sydow, Allen Bellman, Stuart Whitman, Lyle Waggoner, Kenny Rogers, Albert Uderzo, Bill Rieflin, Terrence McNally, Curly Neal, Tim White, Honor Blackman, John Prine, Harriet Glickman, Mort Drucker, Pip Baker, Brian Dennehy, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Reed Andrus, Little Richard, Jerry Stiller, Martin “Pesky” Pasko, Fred Willard, Charles Lippincott, Astrid Kirchherr, Matty Simmons, Denny O’Neill, Dame Vera Lynn, Sir Ian Holm, Joel T. Schumacher, Milton Glaser, Joe Sinnott, Carl Reiner, Johnny Mandel, Ennio Morricone, Gary W. Crawford, Joanna Cole, Grant Imahara, Rev. CT Vivian & Rep. John Lewis, Peter Green, Olivia de Havilland, Wilford Brimley

No, I’m not at Worldcon (CoNZland.)

Recapping the past year:

In fannish activity, I attended monthly **FIStFA** (Faanish and Insurgent Scientifiction Association) in Inwood (Manhattan) ... until Coronavirus sent it into hiatus in March. Said a regular “an awful lot of us who show up at FIStFA either are of advanced age, or have medical histories that qualify us to be considered immunocompromised.” (I hit 3 risk factors.)

I qollated a few disties of **APA-Q** (still mostly on-paper, but gasping) and churned out an electronic zine for **e-APA-NYU**. (My old fanzine *Tsimmes* exists these days as random paragraphs in my apazines.) Plus I’m on **Facebook** (too much lately).

I was out at Bill & Mary Burns’ **End-of-Summer Party/Cookout** on Long Island: lots of fascinating conversations with regional fans & pros, and much, much food. There was much talk about the Dublin Worldcon (Bill & Mary were Fan GoHs, and Editor GoH Ginjer Buchanan was there). I’ve described the house as a museum of technology, from 19th-century mechanical gadgets (Edison cylinder phonograph & mimeo, even a piece of the Transatlantic Cable [Bill is an expert on it]) & early electronics (old radios & a tv with a 3-in. screen) to holographic stuff & a 3D tv. He also displayed the Moskowitzes’ Little Loonie Honorary Membership Awards.

The next (another warm, sunny) day was the (14th Annual) **Brooklyn Book Festival (BKBF)** at Borough Hall Plaza. SF was well-represented: NK (Nora) Jemison was on 2 panels & Ted Chiang on one, Dell (*Analog*, *Asimov’s*, *Ellery Queen’s*, *Alfred Hitchcock*) was there as usual; and I ran into Andy Porter. # I made a circuit of the 250+ exhibitors/vendors (small publishers & literary magazines, authors), entered raffles, and had a few nice chats with literate people & booklovers. # “Fake News &

Faery Tales: Re-Framing History for Truth or Comfort” featured Jemison, P. Djelli Clark, et al. The re-writing of history has gone on & is going on; fantasy writers aren’t the only ones. Clark, a history professor, spoke about unknown historical facts; history can be manipulated. (Washington’s wooden teeth weren’t wooden – per his ledger they were from black people – and he was not a kindly master – he hunted down runaway slaves.) They said they want to “make people uncomfortable ... especially white people”; “Goldilocks” was described as “white privilege”. # “Imagining Beyond”, ie, reality, possible worlds & what-ifs, featured Jemison, Chiang & Mark Doten. Doten read from *Trump Sky Alpha* (a satire – we hope – in which Trump destroys the world; the title refers to his luxury airship), Nora from *The Fifth Season*, & Chiang from “Exhalation”. Jemisin said that her story ideas come from dreams; she wants to know about the characters in them, so makes up stuff. Terrible fates or hopeful alternatives – are they optimists or pessimists? Chiang said in Hollywood sf, the world begins as good, then evil enters, there’s a good vs. evil fight, then things go back to the way they were before – which is fundamentally conservative or reactionary; if the world changes, it’s progressive; dystopian fiction can be a cautionary tale, a warning about what to avoid. Jemisin noted that *The Broken Earth Trilogy* has multiple ends of the world, but isn’t pessimistic, is about survival. In a Q&A she said that “climate change is literally the fault of 100 people, and we know where they live.” | I didn’t stay for the next panel which had CNN “enemy of the people” Jim Acosta.

I was at **NY Review of SF Readings** (curated by Jim Freund, host of *Hour of the Wolf* on WBAI-FM) in Downtownish Brooklyn (the neighborhood has been a focal point of Black Lives Matters rallies) and **Fantastic Fiction Readings** (co-hosted by Ellen Datlow & Matthew Kressel) at the KGB Bar in Manhattan’s East Village. My writeups ran on File 770.com and my or the NYRSF Readings’ Facebook pages, usually with photos.

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December’s **NYRSF Readings** was a launch party (we’re going to a party party) for *Across the Universe*, an anthology of 25 freaky and twisted (and shouted) speculative fiction stories about the Beatles and alternative variations of the still-Fab Four, guest-hosted by its co-editor Randee Dawn. The ticket to ride features what-ifs by Spider Robinson, Jody Lynn Nye, David Gerrold, Cat Rambo, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Allen Steele, Pat Cadigan, Gregory Frost, Gregory Benford, et al. coming together, plus the, um, Fab Five readers of the evening: Charles Barouch, Keith R.A. DeCandido (a paperback writer), Carol Gyzander (aptly sporting a Nehru jacket; I wore a Blue Meanies button), Gordon Linzner & Sally Wiener Grotta; their takes had the Beatles encounter time travelers and be recast as the A-Team (“the Hey! Team) & as D&D tropes, plus George trying to end the War by hooking Nixon on TM. In addition, Randee read Matthew Amati’s story in which 4 reminiscent musicians wander a postapocalyptic landscape of gangs & cannibal mutants (the US lost JFK’s Cuban Missile Crisis gamble), and Ian Randal Strock, the book’s publisher, read “Rubber Soul” by Spider Robinson (John is resurrected 24 years after his death at 40, making him ...). Then, it being a party party and all the world is birthday cake, Dawn brought out a huge cake (though not honey pie or marshmallow pie) decorated with a copy of the cover art. (I took a piece but not too much.)



/ February’s **NYRSF Readings** was an evening of Sherlockiana, with stories by Elizabeth Crowens & Teel James Glenn (TJ [Jim when he lived at Thom’s], an actor & stuntman [in most of his parts, he told me, he has 3 lines, then gets “punched in the face”] having fun with accents). My writeup ran on my Facebook page & the Series’, and on File770.com.

/ June’s **NYRSF Reading** was different, virtual (as was May’s). (Plus, on top of shelter-in-place, there was a citywide curfew.) Taking advantage of being virtual, Series like NYRSF

& KGB can offer readings without the necessity of having authors schlep out to Brooklyn or Manhattan, making lemonade from lemons. (Yes, it's not the same, like the difference between live theater & watching tv. And I watched on my smartphone.) And so NYRSF presented its farthest-flung writer, Jack Dann, coming from "the boondocks," his farm overlooking the sea outside Melbourne, Australia. (Evening here was morning there.) The Nebula & World Fantasy Award-winner & editor of the Jewish-themed anthologies *Wandering Stars* & *More Wandering Stars* read from opening chapters of his new novel *Shadows in the Stone*; drawing from Gnosticism, it's set in an alternate reality and ranges from Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea (I've been to the area, and seen the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Israel Museum's Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem) to the Italian Renaissance (where 90% of the novel takes place) & even the Civil War (what happened in Scranton in 1862?).

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October's **Fantastic Fiction Readings Series** at the KGB Bar featuring Barbara Krasnoff (who read a story from *The History of Soul 2065*, "Stoop Ladies", set in 1983 Brooklyn) & Nicole Kornher-Stace (who read from her upcoming novel, *Firebreak*, a scene of a protest against a company town [as guards bust it up, it was hard not to think of what's going on in Hong Kong]). My writeup ran (with photos) on my Facebook page & on File770.com (w/out).

/ February's **Fantastic Fiction at (the) KGB (Bar) Readings** presented James Patrick Kelly (who read a brand new story about a future where Boomers are hunted) & P. Djèlí Clark (who read from his Nebula-winning, Hugo-nominated "The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington" – yes, his famous choppers – the original George Washington bridge – were not wooden; they were his own that had fallen out + slaves'). I posted my writeup on my Facebook page and it ran on File770.com.

/ June's **Fantastic Fiction Reading** was its 4th on YouTube; though not being at the Bar, the hosts & readers all were drinking (& commiserating about staying in & chatted about the BLM protests), and more viewed it than could have fit in the Bar. NK (Nora) Jemisin read a story she thought appropriate, "The Ones Who Stay and Fight" (a companion/answer to Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas") & Kenneth Schneyer read 2 short stories from his collection. (I didn't do a writeup for my FB page or File.770.com.)

I was at a **New Year's Day "Recovery" Party** at the home of Ian Randal Strock, publisher of Fantastic Books & formerly of SFScope.com (where some of my writeups on local sf readings ran). The group was mostly Mensans; things talked about include the English language, the Oxford comma, tech, a berry that makes bitter taste sweet, colorizing movies, Nero Wolfe, *LotR*, *Dune*, the Chester A. Arthur statue in Madison Sq. Park, *On the Beach*, & the Southern Hemisphere constellation Mensa. Food included munchies, baked goods & ham. A couple of board games came out.

I dipped into **Virtual Balticon** on YouTube. Opening Ceremonies' In Memoriam list included friends. And Roberta Rogow had a filk concert.

March was the 25th **anniversary** of my Chiring Lunacon. May-June was the 50th anniversary of my HS graduation, the 25th of my first cataract surgeries & the 5th of my open heart surgery.

I had a quiet **birthday** (67). (I even shaved, in case I got a video chat; I didn't.)

I was at a few concerts & performances at my local library branch, classical (Wagner, Paganini, Verdi, Rachmaninoff, Gershwin), jazz/pop standards ("My Funny Valentine", "All of Me", "The Shadow of Your Smile"). & soul (Martha Reeves & The Vandellas, The Marvelettes, Dionne Warwick, The Supremes & Aretha).

The branch also featured **play Readings** from absurdist short plays by their featured playwright Alan Magill. An old HS classmate is in the stock company.

I was at a **talk** (very informal because the audience was so small) at a nearby library by BPL librarian (Shanghai-born) Frank Xu on “The Jews of Shanghai”. Some 18,000 Jewish refugees found haven there (14,000 in the Hongkou District/Ghetto – at one point 30,000 – some on their way elsewhere, most remaining till after the war, or till 1948 [when Israel was established] or 1949 [Mao’s takeover]). (One became Carter’s Treasury Secretary.) Reasons for that destination were that Shanghai was unique, had US, British & French spheres which cooperated with the Japanese occupiers in the ’30s (till the Pacific War), and with no real gov’t, there was no passport control, so for a few years they just came in. Also, there was a Jewish community already there; it began in the 19th century with Sephardic merchants. (Make your own Jews & Chinese food joke.) The Ashkenazi refugees created a community in Hongkou with synagogues, trades & businesses, hospitals & schools, even Viennese-style coffeeshouses. There was no anti-Semitism; the Chinese not influenced by Christianity, and they & the Jews shared similar values (like loyalty to parents), and they shared oppression. During the war, Jews were moved into the square mile of Hongkou, ie, a Ghetto, but when the Gestapo arrived with their Shanghai Plan (part of the Final Solution), it was never enacted. The Japanese had mixed feelings about Jews, and some remembered that Jewish bankers had helped Japan in its war against Russia (land of pogroms) in 1905.

THEY WERE ALL SUDDENLY WIPED OUT BY A VIRULENT DISEASE CONTRACTED FROM A DIRTY TELEPHONE> Other than food shopping, I’ve pretty much sheltered in place at home since mid-March. Cosplaying Jesse James (“He robbed the Danville train”; hey, I grew up watching Westerns), I put on a bandana (alas, my brother’s old Hopalong Cassidy neckerchief was too small). The (disposable) face masks I requested from the Brooklyn Borough President’s office never arrived, though I did get a few from cops near my Subway. Ultimately I gave up and bought a couple of washable masks.

TSIMMES: TRUMP GOES VIRAL> It’s been an astonishing year in the US (politics alert). A President (who lost the popular vote) extorted a foreign leader for election help, was acquitted by the Senate even before he was impeached by the House of Representatives. # He next denied the threat posed by an emerging pandemic, calling it “a hoax”, then a bioweapon he dubbed with a racist name (said a mask-burning rabid Trumpist “Only Libtards fear the Chinese Flu”), yet somehow simultaneously likening it to “the sniffles”, and demeaning virologists as “alarmists”, refusing to wear a facemask even after 4.5 million Americans were infected and 150,000 had died, calling it a way to show hatred of him as he held indoor rallies without masks or social distancing, touting an ineffective anti-malaria dug and inspiring scores to shoot up household cleansers. (Kudos to New Zealand.) # He also made racism a pandemic by encouraging police brutality and falsely claiming that protesting police murders of unarmed black people by kneeling during the National Anthem was actually about hatred for the Flag, the troops, Mom and apple pie. And when protests inevitably erupted across the country (if society had heeded & acted for racial justice, we perhaps wouldn’t have weeks of street protests), he labeled Black Lives Matter (which, in actuality, is saying black lives matter too, a regrettably needed reminder) terrorists, dismissed the grievance by saying more white people are killed by cops, and responded to protests about excessive use of force by police with more excessive use of force by police. In Washington, peaceful protestors were teargassed & pepper-sprayed, so he could stride to a church he didn’t attend for a photo op, holding a Bible upside-down. Then Trump sent paramilitary tactical forces in insignialess camo uniforms into Portland, Ore. to gas & grab protestors, tossing them into unmarked vans, detaining w/o charges. (When a Navy vet told them they were violating their oaths to the Constitution, they beat him, breaking his hand, and when a barricade of white “moms” stood between the Stormtrumpers and BLM, they were also gassed, several shot in the head with semilethal rubber bullets.) Trump went on to threaten other cities, all with Democratic mayors, overlooking Republican-led cities with higher crime rates, showing that it was all just a campaign stunt to stir up fear to enhance him as “the Law and Order candidate”. # He further contributed to racial disharmony by defending the Confederate flag (the only Confederate flag that

mattered was the white one they surrendered with), Confederate monuments and the naming of military bases in honor of insurrectionist Confederate generals, all relics of the Jim Crow era. Someone dubbed him the CSA's 2nd President. (Confederate monuments' proper place are in museums and national battlefields, exhibited in context, not in town squares where they proclaim that we honor the cause the insurrectionist slaveholders fought for. Removing them isn't erasing history, it's expanding history to be more inclusive, and without the distortions perpetuated by racists.)

TSIMMES II: DIE FRAU IM MOND> On the ISS, NASA conducted the first all-female spacewalk (2 women, one – Jessica Meir – Jewish & the daughter of an Israeli). (Trump, of course, congratulated them on the first female spacewalk, and they had to correct him; fortunately they were safely 250 mi. out of his reach.) A few months later the duo made a 2nd & 3rd spacewalk. # Meir tweeted “Happy Hanukkah from space”, while wearing socks featuring pink menorahs & green Stars of David on a blue background (she couldn't light candles in micro-G). # Meier's partner on the EVAs, Christina Koch, holds the record for most time in space by a woman.

TSIMMES III: AN ASTERISK IS A 6-POINTED STAR> It's commonly held that *Astérix*'s premise – a village in Gaul fighting against the Roman occupation – was inspired by the Nazi occupation of France; however, a French rabbi considers its inspiration decidedly Jewish. René Goscinny was Jewish, and reportedly once explained in a tv interview that *Astérix* was directly inspired by the Bar Kochva (Bar Kochba) rebellion against the Roman Empire (135-36 CE). The magic potion, made by their spiritual leader, is analogized to the Torah (a stretch). A French manga shop owner echoes him; she sees *Astérix* as being about resisting assimilation & keeping traditions alive, about being proud of ethnic identity (*Astérix* has been translated into several minority languages). (Still, in an Uderzo post-Goscinny volume, *Astérix and the [Jerusalem of] Black Gold*, the Gauls travel to Jerusalem, and we're reminded that Obélix's favorite food is decidedly not kosher.) # Btw, comics publisher Papercutz is coming out with “American” translations of *Astérix* (as most British in-jokes go right by Americans).

TSIMMES IV: TOY STORY> *Magic: The Gathering* has been inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame for 2019, along with Matchbox Cars & the coloring book.

TSIMMES V: HARRY POTCHKES> I recall a friend having a Latin translation of *Harry Potter*. The series now has an official Yiddish translation: *Harry Potter [or Heri Poter] un der Filosofisher Shteyn*, with the sequel in progress: *Harry Potter un di Soydes-kamer*.

TSIMMES VI: TWILIGHT SONATA> A book's misprint saying Beethoven wrote music despite being “dead” (they, of course, meant “deaf”) inspired jokes about Beethoven being a vampire. I asked “Who would write it? Brahms Stoker?”

TSIMMES VII: THE ESCHER HILTON> The Hilton in Rye Brook, Westchester, NY, host under various variations of its name, to Lunacons 1992-2004, 2007-13 & 2016, affectionately dubbed “the Escher Hilton” (& by Pellegrino “the Hypercube Hilton”), is shutting, like many other hotels a victim of the Covid-19 Economy.

READING> I tried alternating sf, fantasy and mysteries, mixing in occasional mainstream & nonfiction/history. And I've been working through books already in the house.

SF: China Miéville's *Iron Council* (a group of dissidents flee New Crobuzon [see *Perdido Street Station*], which is in turmoil & soon erupts in civil war, for the titular sanctuary & symbol of hope, “the perpetual train” stolen by railroad-building work crews & camp followers, and pursued anew by the city's Militia; a unifying theme is rebellion, the events of their renegacy & within the city uprising; a mix of sf, fantasy, horror & even Western [Miéville acknowledges Zane Grey], plus a main character is a golemist named Judah Low [rebels call their fellows “*chaver*”, Hebrew for friend]). # 2 Fredericks with different spellings & different Martians: Fredric Brown's *Martians, Go Home* (Earth is invaded by a billion little green obnoxious & irritating, intangible – but not harmless – ubiquitous & able to teleport, that destroy privacy, blab secrets and interfere with everyday life to the extent that the world is plunged into Depression along with depression; but one writer can't see or hear them and may have the answer; on the cover: Kelly Freas' most famous image) & Frederik Pohl's *The Day the*

Martians Came (an otherwise failed Mars expedition finds Martians – they resemble seals; as they make their way back, bringing a few, linked short stories [one ran in *Dangerous Visions*] show how various people are affected: a screenwriter whose Barsoom plan has to be scrapped, con men peddling mystic pseudoscience nonsense [Shaverism meets Scientology] & Beltway bandits milking the Pentagon for grant money for fraudulent studies, cult acolytes, et al.). Still on Martians: Stephen Baxter's ***The Massacre of Mankind*** (authorized sequel to *The War of the Worlds*; the Martians return, immune to our germs, first to England, then all over the globe [the US Army preps for a battle at Grovers Mill]). # Gene Luen Yang & (illus.) Gurihiru's ***Superman Smashes the Klan*** (YA graphic novel inspired by/adapted from the 1946 *Superman* radio serial "Clan of the Fiery Cross" [fearing the powerful, "respectable" KKK, they disguised their name; here "Klan" & "Kross" are used] ; in 1946, Superman helps protect a Chinese family terrorized by the titular "bedsheet bigots", and reveals that he's an alien/immigrant). # Eric Flint & David Carrico's ***1636: The Devil's Opera*** (a liberal, tolerant WV town was hurled back to 1632 w. Germany, sparking an alternate history; using "up-timer" armaments, including planes, they've united small states into a semi-democratic empire under Sweden's Gustavus Adolphus; to challenge forces of reaction directed from Berlin, a popular resistance has swiped "Do You Hear the People Sing?" from *Les Miz* and musicians from 2 times & nations stage an opera [Carrico has a degree in music theory & composition]; meanwhile, 2 crooked businessmen war against each other and bodies pile up as a mixed pair of detectives investigate, and a professional boxer has befriended a crippled orphan boy; Tom Kidd cover). # Max Brooks's ***World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*** (interviews with/accounts from soldiers, commanders, civilians, et al. as they contend with the rise & spread of living dead; a fitting book for today, situations both alike & very different – fear & total disruption of life, but their enemy is visible, the outbreak begins in China and is kept secret [it gets called "African rabies"] and quickly spreads; as it happens, Brooks & his father did a Covid-19 video urging not to visit the elderly [btw, when I chatted with Max at a comic con, I told him a story he had never heard about his father talking about his birth on *Merv Griffin*]). # Allen Steele's ***Arkwright*** (the titular Golden Age sf author [early scenes are set at Nycon] creates a Foundation to build & launch a starship to colonize an alien world, a task that takes generations).

Fantasy: Barbara Krasnoff's ***The History of Soul 2065*** (a mosaic novel – or perhaps a Mosaic novel – linked magical realism stories spanning a century plus about the immigrant descendants & extended families [including in-laws & lovers] –whimsically dubbed "Soul 2065", like a union local – of a Russian Jewish girl & German Jewish girl who meet in a supernatural forest clearing on the eve of WWI, intertwining unawares and sometimes influencing across time, as otherwise ordinary & recognizable characters [particularly to Brooklyn Jews of a certain age] encounter ghosts, dybbuks, demons, magic jewels & personifications of Death, Cancer & Time [one of the latter a parakeet]; one of the stories, "Sabbath Wine", about a little girl who wants her Marxist father to have a Shabbos dinner [which means wine, and it's Prohibition, oyl], was a Nebula finalist; I've heard Barbara read selections from this several times [see above]; my copy was inscribed [her Hebrew signature is much neater than mine]). # Matthew Kressel's ***King of Shards*** (a *Lamed Vav*, one of the hidden 36 righteous [Tzadikim Nistarim; *lamed vav* = 30+6] Pillars that sustain the Earth, is abducted by Ashmedai [Asmodeus], ousted King of Demonkind, and taken to Gehinnon [Gehenna; I've been to that valley], here a Shard, a forsaken husk of a failed world, purportedly to save him from the queen who'd usurped him and is killing off *Lamed Vavniks* [I first encountered the lore not in Singer but in Borges], but has his own agenda; aiding them are an immortal witch & an architect/singer [a creator with an enchanting voice] plus Mikulalim [cursed corpse-men] as they face demons; btw, there's similarity to aspects of Judaism, eg, the Kabbalistic Tree of Life & Sefirot, with a question of which influenced which; 1st in a planned trilogy, with the 2nd book in process of being sold; Matt gifted me the book & inscribed it). # R Alan Dean Foster's ***Spellsinger*** (an LA grad student is inadvertently brought to a magical world shared by humans & dressed talking animals by a wizard turtle whose homeland faces invasion by insectoids, and discovers that he can perform magic, albeit imprecisely, by playing rock songs),). # Mercedes Lackey's ***Fortune's Fool*** (in lands influenced by fairy tale Traditions, the daughter/spy of a

Sea King & a prince/songweaver/Wise Fool who spreads luck through his kingdom fall in love, then she & other girls are abducted by a Jinn who drains their magic, and he sets out to find allies to rescue her, while she & the girls plot escape).

Cross-genre: *Across the Universe*, ed. Michael Ventrella & Randee Dawn (an anthology of speculative fiction stories about/alternative variations of the Beatles, eg., superheroes, zombies, D&D tropes, monster-hunters, Cajuns, Canadian hockey players, sometimes musicians; my copy was inscribed by several of the authors; see above).

Mysteries: Jonathan Kellerman Alex Delaware, Agatha Christie, Rex Stout (including a non-Nero Wolfe), Ellis Peters' Brother Cadfael, and Lindsey Davis' Marcus Didius Falco (set during Vespasian's early reign).

MOVIE-VIEWING: In theaters: *Joker* (Oscar-nom.; a very different origin – no Batman or chemical vat – a weirdo, failed clown & frustrated, unfunny wannabe standup – who lives with his delusional mother & gets beaten up a lot – snaps and starts shooting people; depressing; seen in 2D; btw, the steps are in the Bronx; st. Joaquin Phoenix [Oscar-winner – now 2 actors have gotten Oscars for playing the Joker], Robert De Niro, Frances Conroy; dir. Todd Phillips [Oscar-nom.]). # *Star Wars – Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker* (Siths Kylo Ren [Vader's grandson = Han & Leia's son = Luke's nephew\ & the Emperor [back from the dead] amass a fleet of planet-killer ships and demand the Galaxy's surrender to their new Empire, so the Resistance [with the Empire destroyed in VI, aren't they the restored Republic?] sends agents Finn, Rey, Poe, C-3PO & Chewie to find the bad guys' base & stop them; Rey, the last Jedi, faces off against Kylo Ren & the Emperor; st. Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Adam Driver Billy Dee Williams, Ian McDermid, Anthony Daniels + Mark Hamill & Harrison Ford as their characters' ghost & vision, & Carrie Fisher via unused footage; co-wr./dir. JJ Abrams). (So I've seen all 11 films + the *Holiday Special*, and read Alan Dean Foster's novelization; I was one of the first people to *Star Wars [IV]*, free, at a press preview & got a press kit; + I have a *Revenge of the Jedi* button; I opted for 2D, even though that meant a nighttime showing.) ## At local libraries: *Pan's Labyrinth (El Laberinto del Fauno)*; in Franco's Spain soon after the Civil War, the stepdaughter of a cruel fascist army captain who hunts down/tortures guerrillas escapes into a fairy tale fantasy where she's a princess and given tasks by the titular Faun [who, says del Toro, is not Pan] [Oscar-, Golden Globe-nom., Hugo-winning; wr./dir. Benicio del Toro; subtitled). # *The Prisoner of Zenda* # *Yesterday* (my Beatles fantasy month continued; a struggling musician wakes up on an alternate Earth where the Beatles never existed [also Coca-Cola & cigarettes] and, realizing that he's the only person who can remember them, "writes" & performs their songs; I dunno, their songs were too tied to the era and built on each other in order; st. Himesh Patel, Lily James, Ed Sheeran, Kate McKinnon; dir. Danny Boyle). # *Ad Astra* (an astronaut goes in search of his father, who vanished 30 years ago near Neptune, the source of a cosmic ray surge that threatens Earth; st. Brad Pitt, Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Sutherland). # *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (Golden Globe winner, Oscar nom.) (an ex-tv Western actor [the title alludes to 2 Sergio Leone Spaghetti Westerns] & his stunt double/gofer try to revive their careers; as it happens, they're next-door neighbors of Roman Polanski & Sharon Tate, and The Manson Family comes calling on the night of Aug. 8, 1969; st Leonardo DiCaprio [Oscar nom.], Brad Pitt [Golden Globe & Oscar winner], Margot Robbie; wr./dir. Quentin Tarantino [Oscar nom.]). # *A Monster Calls* (a boy whose mother is dying of cancer is visited by a gnarled creature in the form of a giant anthropomorphic yew tree that tells him 3 stories with hidden truths and demands his in return; st. Liam Neeson [voice & motion capture], Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones; seen at my library). (When my sister died of cancer, her older was 11.) # *Judy* (needing money, in a custody fight and overdoing pills & booze, just before her death, Judy Garland takes a gig in London, plus flashbacks to her early career at MGM; st. Renée Zellweger [Oscar-winner]). # *Parasite (Gisaengchung)* ([double Oscar winner: Best Picture & Best Internat'l Film; Trump was outraged that a non-US film won – or maybe that it was South Korean – to which Bette Midler replied, better *Parasite* getting an Oscar "than a Parasite in the White House"]; a poor slum family schemes to become hired help of a wealthy one – even framing the old staff – so



they can live in their mansion, but the house holds a secret and things go horribly wrong; dir. & co-scr. Bong Joon-ho [Oscar winner as both]; also seen at that library). # *Harriet* (the Harriet Tubman story; slave Araminta “Minty” Ross escapes North, but returns South to rescue her family & eventually guide over 70 slaves to freedom as a conductor on the Underground Railroad; stars Cynthia Erivo [Oscar-nom.]; also seen at that library).

-- Hey, Bulldog, WOOF!: Comments on WOOF #44 --

I had no luck with WeTransfer or DropBoxes reading WOOF #44, so had to get help from a friend. (Even so, the PDFs he sent stubbornly kept yielding boxes “Source file cannot be read”.)

ANSIBLE #385/David Langford: Noted.

OASFiS EVENT HORIZON Vol. 31 #372/Ron Sanmiguel: Interesting. // Worldcon 76 report appreciated. // I had the privilege of meeting with Stan Lee at an American Booksellers’ Assoc. expo. As it wasn’t a comic con, he was alone and we had time to chat. He gave me a Spider-Man pin, which I passed on to my nephew, a big Spidey fan who’d even lived in Forest Hills. // Otherwise noted.

ROBO-ROOTER/Guy H. Lillian III: The Moon Landing was a nice 20th birthday present. (New math!) # Great Brad Foster “portrait”. (Though I associate you more with Green Lantern than Superman.) // Condolences. Besides the expected trees in Israel, a tree was planted in my mother’s memory outside Stockholm, and in my sister’s in Sofia, Bulgaria. (I’ve never visited either.)

// ct Johann Anglemark: I’ve “won” 2 Hogus, thanks to my “friends”. // ct Andy Hooper> From a *Tsimmes* piece “**Lies, Injustice & the Republican Way::** The Univ. of Wyoming could lose the collected papers (correspon-dence, galleys, mss., photos, etc., 1928-78) of longtime *Superman* editor Mort Weisinger after his son took offense to comments by Misrep. Liz Cheney – someone trading on her VP father’s name & influence – placing blame for Turkey’s invasion of Syria not on Erdogan & Trump, but on the Democrats’ impeachment proceedings! (She raved that it wasn’t an “accident that the Turks chose this moment to roll across the border.” True, they waited till Trump withdrew all of the US troops there.) Weisinger’s son demanded the return of the materials, saying he does not want his father’s papers at a university represented by a member of Congress he perceives as opposing Superman’s values of “truth, justice and the American way.”

INTERMISSION #87.5/Ahrvid Engholm: Atomic Noah sounds like Steele’s *Arkwright* (above). Otherwise read and enjoyed.

NEWT NEWS/Jan Vanek Jr.: I read Čapek’s *War with the Newts* many years ago. This year is the centennial of *RUR*.

SERZINE/John Coxon & Espana Sheriff: I’ve cut mimeo stencils with a daisywheel printer and done art with styli & shading plates, but I do see that PDF offers some advantages.

THE ZINE DUMP #46/Guy H. Lillian III: My background is also in apazines (which are interactive collections of fanzines). // Reviews noted. Some of those zines I’ve seen.

REPORT FROM HOOPLE #137.446/Roger Hill: It wouldn’t be WOOF without a road thing.

LAURRAINE’S WOOFZONE 2019/R. Laurraine Tutihasi: Always wonderful to see a zine from you.

YELLOW MATTER CUSTARD #27?: Though not in the ToC. // From the Good Old Days when we could see people and attend cons & fannish gatherings in person. To quote Zoom Seders, next year in person.

Mark

THE BLACK RIDER

[This is a fell and mysterious fanzine submitted to the 2020 Collation of the Worldcon Order of Fan-editors, composed by **Andrew Hooper**, member fwa, residing at 11032 30th Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98125, email received at fanmailaph@aol.com. This is a production of the Drag Bunt Press. Completed August 4th, 2020 and submitted with thanks to trusty WOOF editor Guy Lillian III.]



Don't Start Me Talking **An Editorial for WOOF by Andy Hooper**

I thought I'd jot down a few thoughts to introduce SYKORA'S WORLDCON to WOOF readers and turned on an afternoon baseball game broadcast to act as background noise. The game was coming from Target Field in Minneapolis, with the Minnesota Twins hosting the Pittsburgh Pirates. For long-time baseball fans, that sounds curious enough, as the two teams are in different leagues and would only play one another infrequently. But then consider that there are no fans in the stands, and some seats are filled by cardboard cutouts portraying them; the umpires, batter and fielders are all wearing masks; and the play-by-play man is calling the game from Bristol, Connecticut and the color commentator is at home in Oregon.

Then, in the top of the fifth inning, an angular black shape drops down over the empty stands, skirts the cables supporting the huge nets now erected to keep the non-existent fans safe from foul balls,

and orbits around the field about 200 feet above the ground. No one has any idea where it came from, or who is controlling it; there's apparently no way for anyone to intercept or knock down the intruder; and so, the players are pulled off the field, and we observe the second "Drone Delay" in Major League Baseball history. Welcome to 2020.

The Long Tradition

I am by no means a Worldcon habitué; I have not attended since Spokane in 2015. Still, I count 8 Worldcons from 1987 to 2015 in my bag. That means I've spent over a month at the World Convention, which is by any standard an extended vacation. The general lore of the convention has come to me through many sources, written and oral, and I find my sense of wonder is still enthralled by the annual creation of a temporary town devoted to the fantastic. Spokane began with the aura of a renaissance faire spilling out of a modern art museum; then the smoke from three major forest fires closed in, and it became an end-of-the-world epic. Which also had a kind of dark magic. Several of the people that made that a very special weekend are now gone, just a few years later; I wouldn't trade those five days struggling for breath with them for anything.

Over the past, urm, decade-ish period, I have often celebrated the approach of the Worldcon by writing another chapter of my account of the first such convention in 1939. A fairly detailed picture has emerged by concentrating on the experience of different individuals, like Ray Bradbury, Mort Weisinger and John

[Continued on page 2]

The job of the poet is to say, "This one, I guess."

Artists are mystic scientists. They are criminals operating under society's glare.

Don't Start Me Talking:

W. Campbell, before and after the convention. This has also created a related project, the Biographical Directory of the Nycon, in which I've tried to identify every person known to have been at the convention on July 2nd, 1939. The first two chapters of that were published in **CHUNGA** #25 and #26, and the final portion will appear in issue #27, out before Chicon 8.

I ended up missing last year's **WOOF** deadline, as I was busy fighting a backyard mole infestation and preparing for a family visit. But I was close to completing the next chapter, **SYKORA'S WORLDCON**, and submitted it to the tiny membership of **SAPS** in October, hoping Robert Lichtman would also publish it in his award-winning fanzine **TRAP DOOR**.

Unfortunately, recent health issues are forcing Robert to take a hiatus from producing his fanzine, and with the deadline for the next **WOOF** collection barreling straight at us, it seemed only right to publish the next chapter in its traditional first home. The follow-up, **WOLLHEIM'S WORLDCON**, is underway; it seems only fair to give the Futurian view of events after this more sympathetic view of New Fandom.

So, this is why the opening paragraph of **SW** refers to the Dublin Worldcon as occurring in the very near future and is dated August, 2019. This may also explain why it refers to author George R. R. Martin as a "luminary," rather than the villainous pariah known to denizens of August, 2020. The Virtual ConZealand might have protected its members from the Corona Virus, but it once again infected them with the germ of fandom's racist, sexist history, for which they have offered an abject apology. **SYKORA'S WORLDCON** also considers a founding member of fandom found guilty of sexual assault in court, certainly not the kind of person that contemporary fandom seems interested in remembering, let alone venerating. But his story is integral to the first Worldcon and the fandom that presented it, as well as the fandom that wanted to present it but was denied the chance. I

Continued from Page One

hope that **WOOF** readers will find the story intriguing, despite the odious qualities of its protagonist.

Quarantinium

What did you do with your extended internment? I've entered another fandom, a large circle of folks devoted to the Marx Brothers, 20th Century comedians of stage, screen and ***You Bet Your Life***. It seems sometimes as if everyone who falls in love with the Marxes must at least attempt to create some kind of biography or history of their work, or in extreme cases, a potential script for an unmade Paramount picture co-starring Thelma Todd.

My own inevitable entry into this crowded field, "The Acme of Anarchy" appeared in the 19th issue of my thus-far monthly fanzine **CAPTAIN FLASHBACK**. If you were interested, you might have a look at it at efanzines.com. More Marx-related material, titled "Harpo Spliffs!" appeared at the end of issue #20, and #21 is expected to contain a deep analysis of the song "Lydia the Tattooed Lady," as sung by Groucho in ***At the Circus***. That picture was released on October 20th, 1939, by which time World War 2 was going on in Europe. It failed to make money for MGM studios, largely because of the money spent on Groucho's hairpiece. However, the songwriting team of Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg, who wrote "Lydia," had already had a nice payday with the success of their composition "Over the Rainbow" in ***The Wizard of Oz***. 1939 was a good year for Yip Harburg.

There are naturally many similarities between Marx fandom and science fiction fandom – there has been quite a lot of cosplay, of course, and there are fan festivals where Marxists gather, and even a few fanzines back in the heyday of the 70s and 80s. Marx fandom also had its own version of the population boom which sf fans faced after ***Star Trek*** became popular. In the 1970s, their films were rediscovered by a huge new audience of college students, and events like

the “re-premiere” of *Animal Crackers* drew crowds which threatened public safety.

Now, The Marx Brothers Council of Facebook provides an excellent meeting place for those who find themselves suddenly obsessed with Harpo’s commentary by taxi horn or wondering how Chico learned to shoot the piano keys like that. It’s also a place where aging fanboys and girls wonder where the next generation of Marx fans will come from – will the kids still want to dress up like Gummo for Halloween once we’ve all gone? As I said, very much like science fiction fandom.

Ackermanese

It’s now become a habit for me to close most fanzines with an article or story reprinted from an old fanzine. This time, the “I Remember Entropy” Department presents a piece titled “Artjay’s Dilemma,” written by Willis Conover Jr. and published by Calvin F. “Groo” Beck in issue #14 of **THE SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC**, dated January 1938. This was one of the most respected fan magazines of the 1930s, published by Calvin’s sister Claire P. Beck, out of Lakeport, California. The fanzine – a word not coined for several more years – was reproduced by hand-set type. Two copies recently entrusted to my care for auction are still perfectly legible, including transcription errors made by Groo 82 years ago.

Willis Conover Jr. (1920-1996) was one of fandom’s most famous graduates. After a youth spent corresponding with the Lovecraft Circle and other early fans, he became a legendary producer and broadcaster, presenting concerts at the White House, and spent decades bringing jazz to the world through The Voice of America.

His piece “Artjay’s Dilemma” is a perfect example of what is known as “faan fiction” – a story featuring a thinly-disguised version of a well-known fan, composed specifically for an audience of fans familiar with its subject. Curiously, the fan whom he lampoons is now probably even more famous than he was in 1937, while Willis himself – that Willis, anyway --

has begun to recede into the dusty junk drawer of history. I hope you find it to your liking, and that we will convene here again next year!

I REMEMBER ENTROPY DEPARTMENT

Artjay’s Dilemma By Willis Conover Jr.

ARTHUR J. FORRESTER sat before his typewriter, scratching his head. Forrester was a science fiction fan – one of the best known, too. In fact, *the* best known. Anyone could write letters; but it took brains to turn out thoughtful, interesting articles for fan magazines. And the fan magazines were the real backbone of science fiction literature.

Forrester often thought about that phrase, “the real backbone of science fiction literature.” He felt a thrill in the realization that he -- Arthur J. Forrester – was more than a vertebra in this field – that he was just about the anterior superior crest of the iliac.

People knew about him, he considered pleasantly. He had written letters to the reader’s departments of all the great science fiction magazines for many years. He had corresponded with the men who mattered. His thoughtful, interesting articles had filled the pages of almost all the fan magazines...except those little sheets whose niggardly editors had refused to pay for them. His name was synonymous with that of science fiction. He, Arthur J. Forrester, *was* science fiction.

But pardon me, uninitiated reader. I forget that you are not acquainted with the terminology of science fiction. According to the editors, all of whom are versed generally in scientific knowledge, it is “an instructive, fascinating type of literature, which provides the reader with first-class, swift-moving healthy entertainment and at the same time gives him a scientific education, even though sugar-coated.” It deals with reporters and scientist’s daughters, a

[Continued next Page]

Both twins are evil! Their poor mother.

There is always plenty of room out on any limb.

Artjay's Dilemma

variation of the old Aryan legend about the traveling salesman and the farmer's daughter; wild-eyed Billy goats with a tendency to conquer the universe; pretty rays that tie skyscrapers into Gordian knots among other tricks; Adonises that hop into airtight tin cans that drop them onto dinky planets, where they conquer the inhabitants and marry the king's egg-laying daughter; Contraptions that take young experimenters at right angles to themselves through the fourth dimension, into the past or future to kill poor grandpop or shake hands with Junior (as yet unborn) etc., etc.

A science fiction fan, defined by the observer, is a near-sighted youngster who lives and breathes this stuff, who haunts back-number magazine shops, spends fabulous sums to add to his collection of classified pulp, and sacrifices schoolwork, sleep and local friends in the endless search for escape or publicity.

Arthur J. Forrester was one of these latter. Now he sat before his typewriter. It was unendurable; he had just discovered that he could no longer turn out thoughtful, interesting articles for fan magazines!

In the past he had never been at a loss for subject matter. If Karloff or Lugosi couldn't inspire him to write about "fantascientifilms" – on which, he repeatedly told his breathless public, he was *the* expert – why, there was always Esperanto.

Ah, Esperanto, the universal language, the tongue of tomorrow, the door to democracy, the key to coined words, the passageway to peace, the alliterative absolute, the infinite infinite, the ultimate ultimate! For Arthur J. Forrester was also an authority on

Continued from Page 3

Esperanto. *The* authority on Esperanto, as a matter of fact.

And perchance the fans tired of thoughtful, interesting articles on Esperanto – ah, how fickle the public taste – Artjay could always write up one of those "Celebs I've Met" columns.

But now, since he'd written up all the fans and authors he'd ever seen, even those unwillingly cornered on streetcars, he sagged in his chair, glum and dejected, the paper in his typewriter as blank as his mind. Then he sat up with a jerk. If he couldn't think of something to write a thoughtful, interesting article about, he could answer his mail. Gleefully, he turned to the fantastically decorated cabinet where he kept his correspondence. Ducking a Tootsie Toy Rocket Ship that hung from the ceiling, he opened the drawer where he kept his letters – and gasped. It was empty!

Artjay clutched the bookcase to keep from falling over. Gone – his precious letters! Suppose -- suppose they had been stolen? Or read by someone else? Artjay went green. Suppose some columnist – like Wilhelm – had got hold of a Certain Particular Letter and published its contents! Artjay went red.

Wait! What was that? A white paper lay at the very back of the drawer. It was a letter. Whatever had become of the others, one remained. Forrester recognized it. He had received it from Smythe, an English fan who criticized Artjay's style of writing. Dull creatures, these British, without inventive or imaginative powers.

Then he understood why the other letters were gone. He sank to the floor laughing. He'd answered them and put them in

another drawer. But this one he'd saved in order to put his fullest powers into a shattering reply.

"Bonshancon!" he cried in Esperanto. Now he could write! Opening the missive and placing it beside the typewriter, Forrester began production of another epistolary and syntactical masterpiece

101 S. N Hump
H'Wood Cal

30 Jul 36!

De Mr. Smyth

-- Rcvd yrs 14 'Z' (i.e., last. Clever?) Dankojn! Acidcriticomentz not'd'th 100 pe int, &'s and ,00 tuffeelings on pt Esthetic J. (i.e., Artjay: me. Clever?) M everedi 2 lern oth's thots conc me & same's you-hiss -- i.e. U-ssss!: use. Clever? -- 'Forresperanto', fav-elsewise. Conc latter, *mi toleras!*

Reely -- moviecabulary -- blve use abbrs & simbles'll 'X' 2-daze Eng. Forresperanto'll B l-ly form verbalanguage, M sir-10. ArtJay's riting 2-day: every-1's riting 2-moro.

-- Appr. Yr riting me, & trust 've 5-month'd (i.e. May'd: made. Clever?) U fulyaware 'plus-vantajez' off'd by use transatlanguaj...

Sciencerely,

sined Artjay Forrie

Arthur J. Forrester
Exec Dir FSL

Certain that Smythe would now fully concur, Forrester folded the typewritten sheet into a triangle and placed it in a three-cornered envelope. Inverting the envelope as best he could, Forrest wrote the address backwards on the wrong side. This was a unique touch. Why should the Post Office

unimaginatively object? It was costing him ten half-cent stamps, wasn't it?

Artjay put aside the envelope with a sigh. *No more mail until Monday Morning*. What was left now to occupy his fertile mind? Alliteration was passé, and he had coined words until his Esperanto dictionary ached at every joint. They were becoming tiresome to invent. "Inventiresome" he said aloud, then commented with a trace of bitterness "not as good as usual." Neither were there any more celebrities to be written up.

Artjay jumped. He beamed. Oh there weren't, were there?

"Look," he told himself in a voice he could barely control for triumph, "What do the fans want? Celebrity write-ups! Who do they want 'em written up by?" The answer was obvious.

"Now" -- Artjay could hardly restrain his joy -- "Who is the greatest celebrity?" He coughed modestly.

O.K., if they want it, I'll give it to 'em!" It felt good to be generous. Sitting down again for a moment lost in thought, then with inspiration dripping from every pore, he proudly typed out the beginning of his momentous and culminating work:

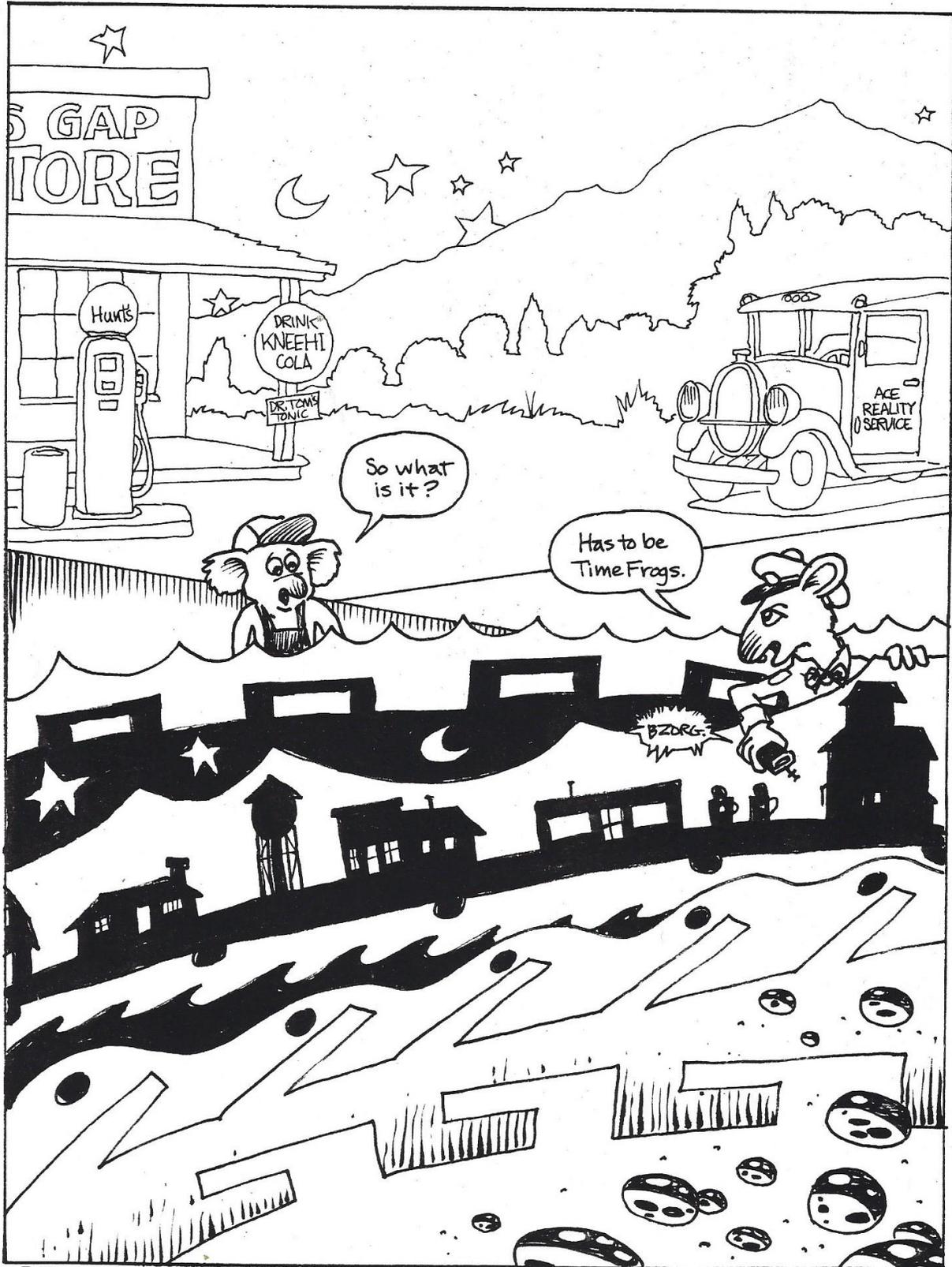
I, Science Fiction.

AJF, s-f's foremost fan, 'sb, 14 Nov 1916. Wrot 1st let to rdr's col when 14, & achv'd pop'ty 'th eds & rdrs similar (i.e. Alike. Clever.)...

(Originally published in issue #14 of *The Science Fiction Critic*, edited by Calvin F. "Groo" Beck, January 1938.)



Back page art by Ken Fletcher, 1989. Thanks, Ken!



© Ken Fletcher 1989



Sykora's Worldcon



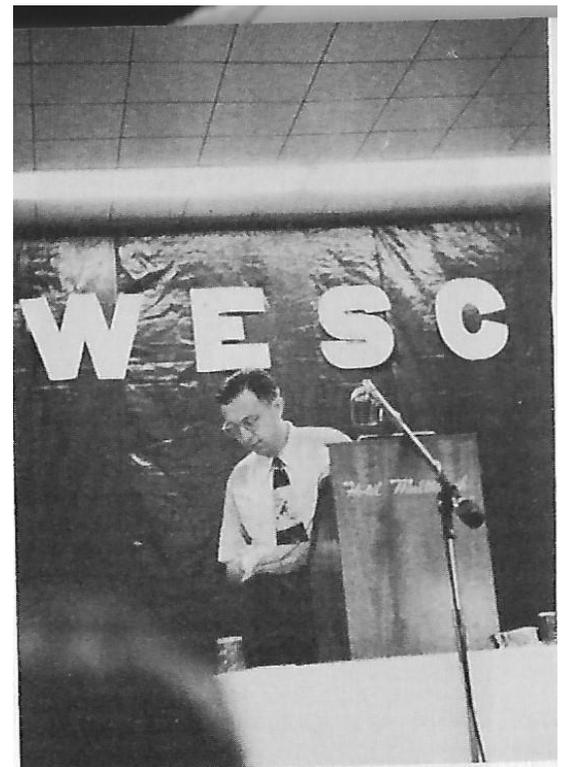
A fanzine for the 45th collation of the Worldcon Order of Faneditors, known to its friends and well-wishers as **WOOF**. *Sykora's Worldcon* was composed by Andy Hooper (with the assistance of Carrie Root), members fwa, and resident at 11032 30th Ave. NE Seattle, WA 98125. You may E-mail Andy at fanmailaph@aol.com, and Carrie at carrieroot49@yahoo.com. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production, this edition completed on 8/4/2020. *Sykora's Worldcon* is the sixth entry in a series examining the gathering of science fiction fans which took place in New York City's Caravan Hall on the weekend before the 4th of July in 1939. The five previous chapters, *A Tuesday in July*, *Bradbury's Worldcon*, *Campbell's Worldcon*, *Weisinger's Worldcon* and *Widner's Worldcon* have all been reprinted in the pages of Robert Lichtman's fanzine *Trap Door*, in issues now available online at eFanzines.com. Or you can contact me and I'll be happy to send you a .pdf file by e-mail. Previous chapters have examined the lives and careers of several professionals who attended the Nycon, the events they took in during the convention weekend and also looked at some fans who traveled long distances to be there. This narrative will consider one of the three parties most responsible for organizing the convention, William Stephen Sykora (1913-1994), who along with Sam Moskowitz and James V. Taurasi, formed the "Triumvirate" at the center of the Nycon committee. Of these three, Sykora is the most obscure to today's fandom, having written no known memoir of his career in the hobby, which ended very soon after 1960. Sykora is also known to have perpetrated several acts of sexual abuse against members of his family, which has justifiably dimmed fandom's interest in remembering him. But his relentless struggle to see science placed on an equal footing with fiction represented a significant evolutionary option open to fandom at the climax of the pulp magazine era. His disappointment in that effort was a critical reason why fandom attracted a broadening spectrum of humanity, rather than becoming an elite society of far-seeing futurists, technocrats driven to improve mankind. Fandom has had self-improvement kicks - cosmic minds, Dianetics - but we tend to table attempts at utopia in favor of bheer can towers to the moon....

William Stephen Sykora and the 1939 Worldcon

by Andy Hooper

August 17th, 2019: As science fiction fans gather to celebrate 80 years of the Worldcon tradition in the beautiful city of Dublin, Ireland, it is growing ever more difficult to understand the world in which the first "World SF Convention" took place, or the motives of the people who organized and participated in it. This weekend, no less a luminary than George R. R. Martin has proclaimed that science fiction has conquered the world and judging simply from the ubiquity of speculative stories in all media, he seems to be right. And science fiction has generally carried fandom along with it: People herding sheep in Patagonia or counting caribou in arctic Sweden, understand the meaning of "egoboo," and would call themselves "fans" of something fantastic or science fictional. It is very hard to imagine that the world once regarded these stories as one step above pornography, appealing to the most idle and impractical impulses of human nature. That librarians would actually steer dreamy readers away from science fiction in favor of more presentable forms of mainstream literature now seems ludicrous, but that's a story which many fans shared, right up into the 1970s.

The first dedicated fans of pulp science fiction thought those librarians were wrong and devoted a great deal of energy to the general business of proving them so. Early fans sought to "Boost" science fiction as a field of popular expression, in addition any specific authors or titles that appealed to them. The science fiction convention came into being as a vehicle for that effort, and only later did the many delightful social, aesthetic and commercial aspects of the phenomenon present themselves. **[Continued on page 2]**



William S. Sykora at the 1950 World Convention in Portland, Oregon. This is the best published photo of the co-architect of New Fandom.

Morality is the infusion of chocolate into the veins of all men.

SF conventions began on both sides of the Atlantic at the end of 1936, and they very quickly became an important venue for fans to express themselves. And the question of who would present these gatherings immediately became a subject of intense interest within the thin ranks of early fandom. It has been argued that the 3 years prior to when Nycon took place on July 2nd to 4th, 1939, were dominated by one long "feud" between members of New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey fandom; and for this reason, the actions and motives of the "Triumvirate" of fans most involved in the Nycon committee continue to provoke speculation by fan historians.

These three were Sam Moskowitz, Will Sykora and James Taurasi. Moskowitz and Taurasi remained active fans for many years after 1939, and Moskowitz wrote by far the most notorious history of early science fiction fandom, *The Immortal Storm*. But William Sykora was far less involved in fandom after 1945 and is lesser known to modern fans than either of his fellow committee organizers. Like John W. Campbell Jr. and Mort Weisinger his reputation is justifiably tainted by the knowledge of unsavory aspects of his life and personality. It is perhaps understandable that fandom has not named an award after him, such as the Sam Moskowitz Archive Award, and is unlikely to ever do so. Yet, without the contributions of William Sykora (pronounced "cy-KOR-a"), it's an open question where several of the first science fiction cons would have found financial backing. His pledge of \$100 towards the 1939 World's Fair convention was a critical element in the three-month campaign with which the Triumvirate won the support of professional editors; and that professional endorsement was a huge reason that the convention attracted an unprecedented gathering of present and future science fiction professionals.

The great irony of Will Sykora's contributions to SF fandom is that he always found its obsession with fantastic fiction somewhat disappointing. His greatest passion was for scientific experimentation and invention and thought that a fan ought to devote at least as much time to science as they did to reading and writing fiction. He threatened to leave fandom many times, but always remained fascinated by its possibilities, and never lost hope of diverting at least some of its energies into real technical achievement.

The Gernsback Ideal

Like so many of his contemporaries in early science fiction fandom, Will Sykora was from a family with roots in Eastern Europe. Charles Sykora, his father, was born in New York in 1888; his mother Anna Kostka Sykora was born in Czechoslovakia, then part of the Austrian empire. Charles' family had also come to the US from what is now the Czech Republic. Charles and Anna were married in Manhattan in 1911. William Stephen Sykora, born August 16th, 1913, was the oldest of three children in the family; his brother Joseph was born in 1915, and his sister Frances in 1921. In the 1920 and 1930 Census, Charles described himself as a "tool maker," and his employer as a "machine shop." By 1940, he had become a "steel machinist" in a "steel foundry." In 20th century engineering terms, a "tool-maker" is usually someone involved in the creation of steel molds for forged or cast objects. Charles was apparently good at his job; by 1930, he owned his home at 31-51 41st Street on Long Island, and held onto it through the Depression, still resident there in 1940. Through 1920, the family lived on 11th Avenue, with Anna's father, Stav Kostka.

Will was reading science fiction stories by the age of 11 at the latest, and would be a charter subscriber to *Amazing Stories*, when Hugo Gernsback introduced it in 1926. Interviewed for "Who's Who in Science Fiction" by Ted Dikty in 1940, he reported that the first sf story he could remember reading was "When Sound was Annihilated," in a 1924 issue of *Practical Electrics* magazine – also a Gernsback title. The following year he was an avid reader of *Science and Invention* and was more than ready for *Amazing* when it appeared.

His first letter of comment was submitted to *Science Wonder* magazine in early 1930. His first face to face encounters with other fans occurred in the fall of 1930, at some of the later meetings of the Scienceers, recognized as the first New York fan club, with its first meetings in December of 1929. Sykora arrived after a schism had split the group into two factions, one led by Allen Glasser and the other gathering in the spacious collection room of the young Mort Weisinger. Sykora was part of Glasser's faction, until the group ran out of steam by the end of 1933. But Sykora's enthusiasm for speculation was only growing. In May 1933, *Wonder Stories* published his letter under the title "A Militant Anti-Time Travellist." In December 1933, he caught the attention of F. Orlin Tremaine, who published his letter to *Astounding Stories*.

In 1931, he carried on a friendly correspondence with another young fan, Milton Kaletsky, and the two soon formed a club, the Amateur Experimenter's League. (It sometimes seems as if any group of two or more fans that discovered one another in the early 1930s soon gave themselves a title, and the fewer fans involved, the more grandiose the name,) He also apparently graduated from High School the same year, and did not, to all appearances, pursue any higher education after that.

However, he would be employed by businesses engaged in technical and industrial research for most of his adult life and must have acquired considerable technical knowledge across that career. In introducing him to readers of *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz wrote: "To understand him best, it must be realized that William Sykora was an old-time science fictionist. He epitomized the Gernsback ideal that all readers of the genre should consider the advancement of science their serious aim. He had amassed a solid scientific background, and his cellar boasted a well-equipped laboratory. Beside an excellent science fiction collection rested an imposing assemblage of scientific tomes. Several short articles by him had appeared in *Science and Mechanics*, including "A Scientific Paradox," a prize-winning entry in a contest sponsored by this magazine. He garnered another prize in a similar contest published in *Mechanics and Handcraft*. Undoubtedly he was a person of intelligence and capability."

Boy Mikado of Long Island

He was also a person of considerable ambition, particularly as regarded science fiction fandom, and he liked the attention and camaraderie afforded by clubs like The Scienceeers. In 1934, he approached Allen Glasser and Julius Unger to see if they might be interested in reviving that club, but they demurred. Sykora had another letter published in *Astounding* in May, but it was the May, 1934 issue of *Wonder Stories* that would change his life. In it, publisher Hugo Gernsback and newly-installed teenaged-editor Charles Hornig announced the formation of the Science Fiction League, a national club for fantasy fans that Sykora would join before the end of the summer.

His correspondence continued in the fall of 1934, with letters in both *Astounding* and *Wonder Stories* in October, the latter titled "Praise for Weinbaum." But his friendly relationship with *Wonder Stories* editor Hornig was soon to take distinctly adversarial turn. In



Scienceeers president Allen Glasser (left) with Mort Weisinger in 1938.

the January, 1934 issue of *Wonder Stories*, Hornig and Gernsback had published a short story titled "The Man from Ariel," written by Donald A. Wollheim. In 1934, Wollheim was one of Will Sykora's closest associates in fandom, and as the former pursued legal action to recover payment for his story, Sykora began to find fault with the operation of the SF League. His letter in the January 1935 issue of *Wonder Stories* was titled "A Complaint From a Member," and signaled the beginning of his quest for a club that fit his interests and goals more perfectly.

What he wanted was a group that valued the science behind the stories as much as their adventurous and fantastic qualities. Knowing his interests, a serious young friend named John B. Michel introduced Sykora to a meeting of the International Cosmos Science Club, a local group that, like the Scienceeers, had fallen into dormancy.

Sykora was an enthusiastic booster of the ICSC. At the February 3rd, 1935 meeting, a group including Sykora, Michel, Wollheim and Herb Goudket declared themselves the "New York Branch" of the ICSC. At the February 23rd meeting, Sykora was elected President of the Branch. At the same meeting, he appointed John Michel editor of *The International Observer*, the club's "official organ," a fanzine with

I would be true, for there are those who trust me.

You're quarantined. You can't go outside spewing mumps like a couple of mump fountains.

which they would announce their existence to the world. Sykora also quietly folded the membership of the Amateur Experimenter's League into the ICSC, beginning a process of consolidation of organizations which suggested an accretion of titles by European nobility to some of his critics.

Sykora now had the spotlight in a club at least nominally interested in science and engineering, and he quickly took advantage of it. On March 10th, 1935 Sykora launched four experimental rockets, under observation from other ICSC and SFL members. The launches were not considered particularly successful, but were recorded on motion picture film for posterity, and Sykora's written accounts brought him national attention. His publishing collaboration with Michel was also productive: In April 1935, they shared a byline in a letter to *Astounding*, and *The International Observer* included submissions by Wollheim, Frederik Pohl, Dave Kyle and Arthur Selikowitz.

One recurring theme in *The International Observer* was the shortcomings of the Science Fiction League and its director Charles Hornig, as well as his payment practices as editor of *Wonder Stories*. Similar material appeared in several other fan-published magazines in the summer of 1935, and by September, Hornig had had enough. He expelled Michel, Sykora and Wollheim from membership in the SFL, writing:

“THREE MEMBERS EXPELLED

It grieves us to announce that we have found the first disloyalty in our organization. We have discovered that three of our members, who run what they consider a competing club to the SFL, have done all within their power, through personal letters and published notices, to disrepute the League, *Wonder Stories*, and the Gernsback outfit by spreading gross untruths and libelous slander to other science fiction fans and authors. They joined the League only to be able to attack it better. We are extremely sorry that we cannot know every fan's intentions when applications are received, but we have proved only three-tenths of one percent wrong in our enrollment, so we hope that the other members will forgive us. These members were expelled on June 12th. Their names are Donald A.

Wollheim, John B. Michel and Will S. Sykora -- three active fans who just got themselves on the wrong road.”

One might think this verged on surrealism, but things got stranger. Despite their expulsion, the three continued to keep company with their peers still in the SFL. At a meeting of the Eastern New York chapter of the Science Fiction League in November of 1935, Charles Hornig was appalled to find expelled members Sykora and Wollheim in attendance. When he demanded they be removed, other members asked him to elaborate on his reasons for expulsion. Knowing that he would be asked to account for his non-payment to Wollheim and others, Hornig retreated.

Alphabet Soup

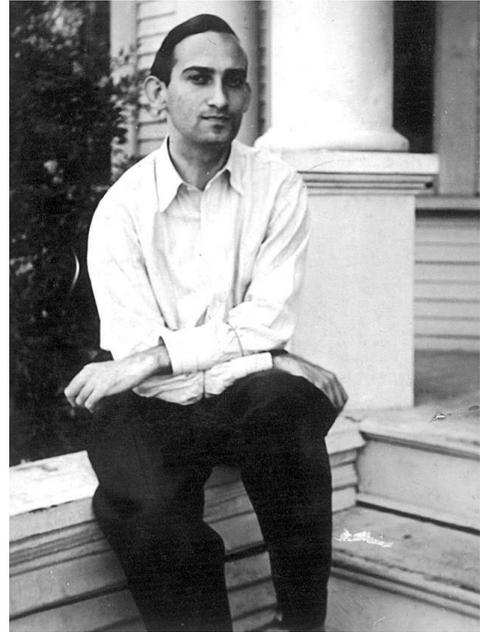
Seeing the SFL at least temporarily closed to him, Sykora moved to further enhance the status of the ICSC. He moved to merge with another early organization of science hobbyists, the International Scientific Association. It was possibly the first science fiction club of any kind, having been started in Montgomery, Alabama in 1928 by a fan named Aubrey Clements, as the “Science Correspondence Club.” It had largely been composed of amateur scientists and included Willy Ley and the President of Drake University among its members.

Under Allen Glasser, the Scienceers had published six issues of their fanzine *The Planet* between July and December of 1930, and many consider this to be the first true fanzine devoted primarily to science fiction. But the ISA's club fanzine *The Comet*, originally edited by Raymond A. Palmer, and later renamed *Cosmology*, predated it by two months, with its first issue in May of 1930. It had run for 17 issues, through December of 1933. In December of 1935, Sykora wrote to Ray Palmer, asking to combine the International Scientific Association and the International Cosmos Science Club (and Amateur Experimenter's League) into one organization under the ISA banner. *Cosmology* would be combined with *The International Observer*, and Sykora would assume all obligations to ISA members. Palmer was apparently happy to pass the long-neglected ISA on to Sykora, and it would become the focus of Sykora's ambitions.

Meanwhile, Charles Hornig had reorganized the New York chapters of the Science Fiction League and planned to meet with the remaining members in a New York City school room. In response, Wollheim and Sykora allegedly arranged a physical invasion of the meeting. Moskowitz describes the event in The Immortal Storm: “The second meeting of the reorganized New York Chapter was in progress, with Hornig presiding in a New York school room. Suddenly, the clumping of many shoes was heard, and in burst Sykora and Wollheim at the head of eight other youths (not all science fiction fans) recruited from the streets for rough action if necessary. Sykora walked up to Julius Schwartz, a member of the audience, and shook his fist under his chin as a gesture of defiance to the *Fantasy Magazine* Group. Then with the aid of his comrades he chased Hornig from the platform. Producing a gavel of his own (one which later became famous, being wielded at many conventions and fan gatherings), Sykora proceeded to call the meeting to order in the name of the New York Branch of the International Scientific Association. Such brazen effrontery left the audience too flabbergasted to protest. Wollheim then ascended the platform and vividly outlined his grievances with *Wonder Stories*, which he was still in the process of detailing when the building superintendent – probably summoned by Hornig – arrived and broke up the gathering.”

Fantasy Magazine, published by printer Conrad Ruppert and ultimately edited by Julius Schwartz grew out of the earlier *Science Fiction Digest*, and was regarded as the most polished and physically impressive of the early fan magazines. It was also one of the longest-running such efforts, with 37 issues published between September of 1932 and January 1937. The contents of *Fantasy Magazine* were often of professional quality and origin, as Schwartz and Mort Weisinger were also proprietors of the Solar Sales Service, a literary agency formed on the premise of their immediate access to professional editors working in New York. The source of Sykora’s conflict with Schwartz is obscure, but it underscores how eagerly the former acquired adversaries in fandom.

When the SFL convened again in February, Hornig warned the assembled members that Sykora and Wollheim wanted nothing less than control of all fandom; but however plausible this may have seemed, the litany of grievances recited by Wollheim and Sykora was far more convincing. The members voted to disband and reformed as the “Independent League of



Former SFL Director Charles D. Hornig in 1940

Science Fiction.” Hornig would later publicly reinstate the three fans; but his time as Director of the Science Fiction League was soon to end with the sale of *Wonder Stories* and the rest of the Standard Magazines Group.

On Sunday, May 3rd, 1936, a party including Herb Goudek, John Michel, Fred Pohl, James Blish, Herb Kirshenblit, Sykora and Wollheim attended a showing of *Things to Come*. It was said to be one of the first purely social gatherings of fans, absent the formal business of meetings.

Basement Symposia

If it really was May of 1936 before New York’s fans found an excuse to take in a movie together, one can’t help asking what it was they were doing up to that point. The modern fan would likely find science fiction club meetings of the 1930s remarkable “stiff” affairs, with participants waiting to be recognized by the meeting’s chairman before speaking. Thus did Will Sykora begin toting his own gavel to fan gatherings, just in case he might want to address his peers. Informal meetings between professional writers and editors at several establishments in Manhattan more closely resembled the modern fannish “pub meet,” but most fan clubs, whatever the name, were fixated on science fiction and ways that it might be “advanced.”

If I could just get a piece of lemon, I’d be fine.

There are questions I'm still not wise enough to answer, just wise enough to no longer ask

Will Sykora's relentless efforts to reorganize fandom in a form more perfectly under his control can also be seen as an effort to make his "voice" heard, as possession of the chairman's gavel was often the only guarantor of being able to take the floor.

Characterizations of Sykora's manner and actions are possibly colored by the knowledge of his later notoriety, but most observers tend to agree that he was something of an eccentric even within fandom. He was fond of showing off the scientific accoutrements in his basement, the text books, science magazines, laboratory equipment and even a few science fiction magazines. Damon Knight, writing in *The Futurians*, alleged that Sykora also had a jar of urine that he kept hidden on the back of a shelf, waiting to see if it might transform in some manner with advancing age.

Other fans seem to have been similarly bemused by some of his scientific pretensions – the ISA rocket experiments eventually became a cliché – and almost all were reluctant to follow his experimental example. It is also possible that they rapidly found the limits of Sykora's actual knowledge. Like many early fans, Sykora was ostensibly an auto-didact, who had expanded wildly on the curriculum he encountered in high school, to gain a level of knowledge equal or superior to a college graduate.

Such claims are not uncommon in fandom, or even among professionals, but the actual level of scholarship involved must vary considerably. Ray Palmer, purveyor of the first fanzine, *The Comet*, as well as the notorious Shaver Mystery through his editorial role at *Amazing Stories*, also claimed to have educated himself by reading in the aftermath of a horrific childhood accident. But Palmer came to scorn "Dogmatic" modern science in favor of pseudo-science and hokum, rendering his actual level of understanding of the sciences moot. He assumed they had nothing to offer him anyway.

Will Sykora was a far more faithful disciple of science, and his knowledge was sufficiently advanced that he was able to work at firms like Westinghouse for most of his adult life. But it is also reasonable to assume that education was sometimes a touchy subject. He didn't seem to know exactly how to escape from his basement, and was prone to periodic tantrums in which he banished everyone else from it. Some of his peers clearly grew weary of this pattern.

Home and Away

The alliance between Wollheim and Sykora had always seemed unlikely, and stresses between the two began to

appear very quickly in the summer of 1936. Wollheim, who tested many friendships to destruction, wrote some less than complimentary thoughts about fans that he termed "Science Hobbyists," and this led Sykora to wonder aloud whether Wollheim was actually "good" for the ISA. Word got back to Wollheim, and he proffered his resignation on the grounds that he no longer had the President's confidence. Sykora rejected his offer, promising that Wollheim was still his man. But John B. Michel, who had resigned as editor of *The International Observer* due to poor health really did leave his post, to be replaced by Fred Pohl.

In November of 1936, Sykora led a mass resignation of ISA members from the Independent League of Science Fiction, effectively ending that group's existence. This seemingly pointless act of hostility enhanced the impression that it was only a matter of time before Sykora turned on everything in fandom outside of the ISA.

During this period, the first American Science Fiction convention took place on October 22nd, 1936, when a contingent of ISA members traveled to Philadelphia to visit a group of Philadelphia Science Fiction Society members. In photos taken of the event, Sykora can be seen holding a pennant honoring the New York Branch of the ISA. The New York group immediately began planning to host a gathering of their own and Will Sykora and his salary were at the center of this effort. When the convention took place on February 1st, 1937, it was held at the Bohemian Hall in Long Island City, very much Sykora's home turf. However, the committee was chaired by Don Wollheim, Michel was his secretary and David Kyle and Fred Pohl were the remaining members. As President of the ISA, Sykora presented the first address and welcomed the two-dozen attendees. The film program included Herb Goudket's movie of his ICSC rocket tests. And the idea of another such gathering to be associated with the projected New York World's Fair of 1939 was also discussed in positive terms.

The committee had put considerable effort into the gathering, and most of those present considered it quite a success. But the event seems to have been a letdown for Sykora, who had put so much effort into gathering the organization behind it. And after seven years of increasingly intense activity in fandom, he suddenly had his first "Fandom is Just a Goddamn Hobby" moment, and resigned from the organization he had so carefully created.

He published a mimeographed memo complaining of fandom's failure to pursue scientific and technical progress, writing: "Scientifiction had little to do with the attainment of this ideal, with only one important exception, namely, to act as a stimulant, Scientifiction is only a means to an end, a bit of writing or a story that would make the reader want to get into the thick of the fight man is waging in his effort to better understand nature and life. But scientifiction, far from being the stimulus to scientific study it should be, had become an end in itself ...a sort of pseudo-scientific refuge for persons either incapable of pursuing a technical career, or else too lazy to do so. Science Fiction was therefore a mistake in the make-up of the ideal club."

He went on to criticize fans who wasted their energies on "pulp-writing, editing and cartooning." Since this described virtually all of his colleagues in the ISA, no one appears to have attempted to talk him out of his decision. Wollheim, defining himself as the ranking executive in the club, quickly moved to disband it, abruptly ending the ISA's campaign of imperial expansion. Sykora later regretted his action, and tried to argue that the dissolution had occurred illegally, but there was little interest in a revival of the ISA. They had taken their fill of his complaints. By that time, Wollheim had introduced another innovation: the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Despite his vows to gafiate, at a time before the term was invented, Sykora became a member of FAPA as well, and would stump for a non-Wollheim-connected candidate in the organization's first election.

Mario Brothers

Despite his jaundiced feelings toward fandom, he couldn't keep himself from joining more science fiction clubs. In early October, 1937, a group including Sykora, Mario Racic Jr., Robert G. Thompson and Dick Wilson met at the home of James V. Taurasi and declared themselves the Greater New York Chapter of the Science Fiction League. Now under the direction of Leo Margulies, the League had continued to attract new chapters even as the national organization fell into inactivity. Sykora happily attended meetings, although he frequently mentioned his wish that the ISA could be revived.

The presence of Mario Racic Jr. was an interesting development, as he would eventually marry Will Sykora's younger sister Frances. His enthusiasm for science fiction and Frances seem to have been complimentary motives, and he would play an

increasingly central part in the creation of the first Worldcon. Harry Warner Jr. referred to him as a "non-entity," but Mario's personal connection to Will Sykora made Racic a trusted associate – or possibly a henchman – during the maneuvers of the next 18 months.

The Third Eastern SF Convention was held on October 30th, 1937. Most New York fans traveled to Philadelphia on the morning of the 30th; but Sykora and Mario Racic went down on the 29th, and had an evening in the city on their own. This may seem like a small detail, but it might also mean that he was coming to value the social connection he enjoyed with fans as much as the thrill of technocracy. This was the event where Donald Wollheim presented John Michel's speech "Mutate or Die!" and introduced fandom to what would come to be called "Michelism." But it was also where Will Sykora first became acquainted with Sam Moskowitz, who was to become one of his most enduring friends in fandom. Moskowitz shared his ambition to hold a similar convention with a "National" focus in Newark the following spring, and



Bohemian Hall, Queens in 2014

Your theory is crazy, but it's not crazy enough to be true.

When you're happy, you enjoy the music. When you're sad, you understand the lyrics.

Sykora talked about the possibilities of the upcoming World's Fair.

Fandom was an itch that Sykora could not resist scratching. When John W. Campbell Jr. took over as editor of *Astounding* in December of 1937, he printed a letter from Sykora in the "Brass Tacks" column. In January of 1938, he wrote to Willis Conover, asking if the latter would like to revive his *Fantasy Magazine*, with Sykora as its financial director. And the same month, Moskowitz traveled to Queens for a meeting of the Greater New York Science Fiction League, where Sykora pledged \$100 toward the proposed First National Convention, taking place in Newark in May. There is some evidence that Sykora may have moved into a better and more lucrative position at work, because this was a significant sum in 1938, when many were dealing with a recession that increased the effects of the ongoing Depression. On January 30th, he realized another long-held ambition, when he hosted the first meeting of the new Scientific Cinema club of New York, at Bohemian Hall. The program included The Lost World, animated shorts, and the ISA rocketry film. The only sour note was that Harry Dockwiler became so intoxicated and disruptive that he was taken away by the police.

Feudal Spring

Unfortunately, this was also about the time that Don Wollheim concluded that he could not stand Sykora's continuing presence in New York Fandom, and tried to bully him out of the five boroughs. At the second meeting of the Scientific Cinema Club of New York in February, Sykora and Mario Racic Jr. were confronted by a half-dozen of Sykora's detractors in the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction, aka the Michelist Front. He refused to meet with them, sulking in another room, and predicted that they would soon ruin the club. This eventually proved to be true; at the next meeting, the insurgents voted to condemn Sykora for spending the club treasury on the print of The Lost World, and resolved to disband.

Later that month Sykora formed a "Committee for Reorganization" and tried to advance the claim that the ISA had been disbanded illegally. He claimed that he had signed statements from a majority of ISA officers, asserting that they had no voice in the decision to dissolve. The Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction rose as one to refute his claims in detail.

Then in March, several rather puzzling events occurred. Sykora did not attend the monthly meeting of

the Greater New York Science Fiction League, and a group including Wollheim, Michel, Pohl and Herb Goudket appeared and asked politely if they might be permitted to join. No one present had any negative history with the four, and they were duly allowed in. This suggests that Mario Racic Jr. was not present either, leading us to question just where he and Will might have been. We know that a year later Sykora would be very romantically involved with Miss Francis Teresa Alberti, who attended the World Science Fiction convention in the company of her parents. Francis Alberti and Frances Sykora were both 17 years old in 1938, while Will Sykora was 24 years old, and Mario Racic Jr. would turn 24 in November. It's tempting to speculate that the quartet were at a movie or the roller rink on the night of the GNYSFL meeting, but whatever the reason, Sykora was devastated to find that Wollheim had once again invaded his home club.

Stranger still: On March 13th, 1938, following a long night carrying on with other New York fans, Jack Gillespie and Dick Wilson impulsively traveled to Newark to inform a bleary-eyed Sam Moskowitz that they believed Will Sykora to be dead. This hoax was accepted completely, leading Moskowitz to contemplate cancelling the upcoming Newark convention. When Sykora received the sympathy card sent by Sam to his family the next day, he made a quick trip to Newark to keep Moskowitz from further rash action. Moskowitz accused the hoaxers of being habitually drunk, which Wilson resented, provoking further antagonism.

At the April meeting, Sykora argued that the election of Wollheim, et al, to the membership was not valid, as not all club members were present. This was rejected out of hand, and Sykora gamely trotted away to start another SF Cinema club, "The Scientifilmakers" in May, 1938. He published one issue of an official organ, *The Scientifilmer*. It featured a prominent solicitation for a revival of the ISA.

The death hoax served to push Sam Moskowitz even more firmly into opposition of Wollheim and the CPASF, and there was no one present to represent the group at the First National Convention, also referred to as the Fourth Eastern Convention, which took place at the Slovak Sokol Hall in Newark on May 29th, 1938. Sam Moskowitz and William Sykora were the most prominent organizers and underwriters of the convention. In his address, Sykora asserted that the large number of fans in attendance – more than 100 -- proved that a convention associated with the World's Fair would be a great success. He moved that the

chairman be empowered to create a committee for the purpose, and after some confusion caused by Moskowitz' unfamiliarity with parliamentary procedure, the motion was passed, and a committee formed. Sykora and Moskowitz interpreted this as abrogating the authority of the committee formed in February 1937 at the Second Eastern Convention. Other members of that committee, including Wollheim and Michel, quickly moved to register their disagreement with that conclusion.

And when Sykora tried to muster the committee appointed at the Newark Convention, only his trusty sidekick Mario appeared. The others were either sympathetic to Wollheim's claim or not sufficiently interested in the event, and a second attempt proved no more successful. Soon, letters written by Wollheim to Leo Margulies and John W. Campbell Jr. prompted a summons to a summit meeting in early July, where the two editors listened to Wollheim and Sykora – and no one else – detail their claims to holding the convention. When Wollheim pointed to the growing membership of the CPASF as his strongest evidence of the support for his claim, Sykora blithely claimed that he could create an organization with twice as many people in a month, and Leo Margulies basically called his bluff. If he could produce such a groundswell in the time he claimed, they might talk again; but for now, the claim of Wollheim's group was going to take precedence. After the meeting, Wollheim offered to shake Sykora's hand, but Sykora refused, not wishing to signal his acceptance of the decision.

New Model Fandom

In despair, Sykora shared the events of the meeting with Moskowitz, who had not been part of the provisional committee due to his role as chairman of the Newark convention. He shared the depth of his antipathy to Wollheim, hoping that Moskowitz would understand why he could not be part of a convention under his control. And to his surprise, Moskowitz' response was to assure Will that he would be able to assemble just the kind of group that Sykora had described at his meeting with Campbell, and that the assembled talent would outdo anything that the CPASF could produce.

Meanwhile, Wollheim moved to complete his victory over Sykora. At the August meeting of the Greater New York Science Fiction League, he asserted that Sykora must be expelled, because he had missed three consecutive meetings, since his attempt to scotch the March election in April. President James Taurasi called

this action invalid, because there was no written proof of anyone attending the previous three meetings, as secretary Dick Wilson did not record the attendees' names. Wollheim then moved to impeach Taurasi; he resigned his post, and Sykora was expelled anyway.

Taurasi was particularly angry with Dick Wilson and the other members of the CPASF for personal reasons. Taurasi published the frequent fanzine *Fantasy News*, while Wilson was in charge of *Science Fiction News-Letter*, a rival publication that frequently carried CPASF dispatches. Wilson saw that Taurasi had gotten fine results from the mimeograph lent to him by their mutual friend Dave Kyle, and managed to convince Kyle that he could do more worthy things if he were given access to the equipment. After the summary repossession of his duplicator, Taurasi was deeply resentful of the Michelists, and *Fantasy News* became the first mouthpiece for Moskowitz' new fandom, which was imaginatively named "New Fandom."

Moskowitz then took a page from the empire-building book of Will Sykora. In the August 21st issue, *Fantasy News* announced that it would henceforth be combined with another correspondence club, the Science Fiction Advancement Association, as well as *Helios*, *Tesseract* and *Fantasy Review* magazines and the Moskowitz Manuscript Bureau. The resultant entity would be known henceforth as "New Fandom." Including the former members of SFAA quickly expanded New Fandom's member base. However, *New Fandom* was also a fan magazine; and the first 24-page issue, appearing in September 1938, was sufficiently impressive that John W. Campbell Jr. and Leo Margulies both reviewed it positively, and would publicly endorse their convention plans in the pages of their magazines. Campbell invited Moskowitz, Sykora and Taurasi to his office for a meeting and reported favorably on his impression in "Brass Tacks."

On September 15th, Leo Margulies announced that he was regretfully dissolving the Greater New York Chapter of the Science Fiction League and invited both Sykora and Wollheim to form their own new Chapters. On September 18th, Wollheim and his circle respond by forming the Futurian Science Literary Society, a group safely outside of Leo Margulies' jurisdiction. On October 8th, the members of New Fandom met at James Taurasi's home to declare themselves the new "Queens Chapter of the Science Fiction League", and this would become the primary organizing body for the World's Fair convention.

"But how will all of this help you get to Trufandom?" asked Jophan.



James V. Taurasi in 1938.

Sunday Meeting at the Caravan Hall

In the event, of course, this was not true. And Wollheim was not there to see it. A few hours before the convention opened on July 2nd, a small stack of flyers titled “A Warning,” which muttered darkly about New Fandom’s true motives in hosting the convention was found where David A. Kyle had hidden them in the convention auditorium. This anonymous rebuke was enough to convince the Triumvirate that the Wollheim faction intended some disruption at the convention. And thus Wollheim, Michel, Pohl, Jack Gillespie, Robert W. Lowndes and Cyril Kornbluth were chosen as examples of their ilk, and barred from entering the convention, by the “dark haired, stocky and blunt” James Taurasi.

Retiring to the automat across the street, Wollheim, et al, were not there as Sykora presented an address intended to explain just what New Fandom was about. Few who listened to his speech could really explain what Sykora had talked about, but it was quite clear that he had nothing to refute the socialist and utilitarian political ideas of Michelism; he continued to tout technical progress as the primary purpose of science fiction and fandom, without linking it to any social benefit or goal. The response from most of the crowd

was muted; but Sykora had a thick cheering section of his own. In addition to Mario Racic Jr. and his sister Frances, his mother and father were in the audience, as was his girlfriend, now sometimes known as “Felicia” Alberti. Her sister Rose Alberti was sitting next to her, as were her parents, Domenico and Bella Alberti, all committed Brooklynites. They all surely gave Will a warm reception for his remarks, although they may have been even more confused as to their meaning.

Sykora was probably much more satisfied by the film program presented by Dr. Ruroy Sibley, as it combined research on the stars and objects in our solar system with state-of-the-art technical photography, and for a little while, science fiction fandom was focused on real science again. Then the projector was loaded with a print of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, a movie now so familiar that Forry Ackerman claimed that cast members waved hello to him from the screen. The Futurians had tried to criticize the committee for showing a German film that might potentially profit the Nazi regime, but Moskowitz was assured that the print had originated with an American distributor, and no profits were sent overseas.

Even though fans still seemed enthralled with fantasy, Sykora must have been gratified that so many people that he respected in the science fiction field appeared. John W. Campbell’s speech suggested that science fiction had a thrilling future, while Leo Margulies told stories about a number of pulp writers and their paths into the field. Even Charles Hornig was there, talking about the many different kinds of people he had come into contact with through his work in science fiction. There is no record if he mentioned what sort of people he thought Donald Wollheim and William Sykora were.

Two more days of light entertainment, auctions, baseball games and automat meals were still to come, but the small crowd of Sykora well-wishers probably did not hear his second address of July 3rd. Their presence, while helping to fill up the room, also foreshadowed the forces that were soon to diffuse Sykora’s attention away from science fiction fandom. Moskowitz theorizes that it was his relationship with Francis Alberti that gradually pulled him away from fandom, but Francis was a member of the Queens Chapter of the Science Fiction League even before the Nycon, and she continued to attend meetings with Will after they were married in December of 1940. In fact, Francis is said to have broken the strap on her purse when she used it to pummel Dick Wilson and Dan

Burford, when they tried to crash a QSFL meeting in 1941.

As this suggests, the Wollheim-Sykora feud had not ended with the foundation of the Futurians and the Queens SFL; if anything, it reached new heights in the wake of the “Exclusion Act” that barred Wollheim from entering the Nycon. Most of fandom had roundly condemned Moskowitz, et al, for this decision, and it excited considerable enthusiasm for some sort of alternative to New Fandom’s stewardship. At the “Futurian Conference” of July 4th, 1939, Chicago fans including Mark Reinsberg and Erle Korshak had been charged with the task of presenting another convention in the summer of 1940. Then, at the small “Philadelphia Conference” four months after Nycon, Moskowitz and Sykora came prepared to offer New Fandom’s blessing to this effort, but this turned into an endless nightmare of pie charts and time-consuming procedural questions; and when at one point, Wollheim called one of Sykora’s statements a lie, the latter had to be restrained from physically attacking DAW. At this point, even Moskowitz had begun to lose patience with the feud, and secretly reached out to Fred Pohl to see if some mediation might be available.

Moskowitz’ contention that Sykora became less active after 1940 seems at least somewhat counterfactual. In December of 1939, Sykora took over production of *Fantasy News* from Jimmy Taurasi, and would produce nearly a hundred issues until Pearl Harbor – issue #155 was actually dated December 7th, 1941. He resumed publication with a series of issues in 1943 and 1944, then made a more substantial return in 1948 and 1949, concurrent with an unsuccessful bid to bring the World convention back to New York in 1949. He ended with a last special issue in 1950.

He took exception to most of the successor science fiction groups to arise in the New York area, including The Hydra Club and the Eastern Science Fiction Association. After the war, Sykora resurrected the Queens Science Fiction League, and conducted club meetings in his home, just as he had done in the 1930s. He briefly ran a small press, The Avalon Company, in partnership with Sam Moskowitz. In 1947 he was the New York representative of the Big Pond Fund, in the attempt to bring British fan Ted Carnell to the World convention in Philadelphia. The fund did not succeed in collecting enough to bring Carnell over, but eventually inspired the Transatlantic Fan Fund.

According to Wollheim, via Damon Knight, Sykora never got over the shock of winning his struggle with

the Futurians. In his history, Knight quoted Wollheim: “Years later, about 1953, I got a phone call from William Sykora; he wanted to come over and talk to me...And he said what he wanted to do was get together with Michel and me, and the three of us would reorganize fandom, reorganize the clubs, and go out there and control fandom...And about ten years after that, he turned up at a Lunacon meeting, out of nowhere, with exactly the same plan. And again you had the impression that for him, it was still 1937.”

Dark and Unwanted Destinations

Being married fans is not an uncommon condition; being married fans with children is a far more challenging proposition. The first of Francis and William’s six children, Annabelle Sykora Kolar, was born on June 18th, 1942. It is not entirely clear if William was actually living with Francis at the time of Annabelle’s birth, as he was accused of creeping into another person’s bedroom and attempting to sexually molest them while he and Francis were staying in the Alberti home. The incident was sufficiently serious that police were called and they issued some sort of warning to William.

A man named William Sykora enlisted in the US Army at Fort Jay on Governor’s Island on the 8th of June, just ten days before Annabelle was born. That Will Sykora offered 1913 as his birth year but also claimed that he was unmarried and had only a grammar school education. Did Sykora try to enlist as a means of atoning for his mistake? It may be only a coincidence of names, as no other source credits William Stephen Sykora with military service.

Fandom soon heard about this incident and Sykora’s enemies lost little time in dubbing him “Dirty Will.” By this time, the succession of what could become known as “World Science Fiction Conventions” had been interrupted by the American entry into World War II after cons in Chicago and Denver in 1940 and 1941. When they resumed in 1946, Wollheim and most of his fellow Futurians were now working full time as science fiction professionals and had far less interest in the politics of fandom. Will Sykora had presumably concentrated on regaining the trust of his family and his wife, and apparently succeeded, as he and Francis would welcome their second child, Charles Frank Sykora, on March 9th, 1947. Another daughter, Caroline Sykora Rosenblum, was born on September 10th, 1948. Hope Sibyl Sykora Allen joined the family on September 3rd, 1954. Another sister, Frances Ann Sykora Gibson was born on March 23rd of 1960. And a

That path is for your steps alone.

A fanzine can be deep emotions on a smooth twiltone surface.

last child, Sally Lexi Sykora debuted in 1967.

Supporting this large family was assuredly a full-time occupation, but Moskowitz and other fan historians confirm that Sykora made periodic appearances at conventions through the 1950s, including sightings in Philadelphia, and at the Portland World SF convention in 1950. He typically had a proposal for starting a new fannish organization tucked under his arm, something that would take over the business of certifying and distributing the world convention, and direct fandom's interests into properly technical and concrete avenues. Few seem to have had much time for him, sure that pie charts would follow any attempt at friendly conversation.

In 1970, after at least a decade of absence from fandom, it was learned that Sykora had been convicted of sexually assaulting a minor member of his family and was sentenced to six years in prison. The story was reported in Arnie Katz's fanzine *Focal Point*, among others, and soon reached anyone familiar with the name Will Sykora. It must have sent a grim chill down the spine of anyone who remembered the accusations made against him in the early 1940s. Fandom has frequently apologized for members accused of sexual misconduct rather than isolating or ostracizing them, but most fans seem to have found Will Sykora a little bit creepy and lacking in empathy from the beginning; even Sam Moskowitz was exasperated by his stubborn, self-destructive impulses.

After divorcing Will, Francis Alberti Sykora moved her children to Marseilles, in north central Illinois. After the move, she became acquainted with a former army Staff Sergeant named Leonard A. Quarterman, and they were married in 1975. Sadly, Leonard passed away not long after in 1978. Francis died on April 1st, 2006, and the two are buried together in the U.S. National Cemetery in Farmingdale, Long Island. Frances Helen Sykora Racic died on January 1st, 2002, a little less than five years after her husband Mario Racic. Mario worked as a painter at a novelty company, then did unspecified work at the National Broadcasting Company before relocating to Newburgh, New York, and eventually settling into work as a custodian. He and Frances raised two daughters.

William Stephen Sykora died in Long Island City on June 7th, 1994. He was not quite 81 years old. He was survived by at least 8 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, but sadly, it is hard to say if any of them were familiar to him at the time of his death.

Later that summer, the 52nd World Science Fiction convention was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Over 3,500 people attended. And the Guest of Honor was Anne McCaffery, a writer of novels about mutant fire-breathing dragons and their psychic human riders, hunting toxic spores through the skies of an alien planet. Charles Hornig would have been so very proud.

Please stop sending me TARZAN fanzines. I don't smell that bad.

Very Select Bibliography:

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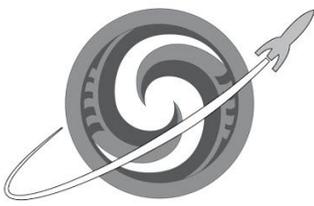
Moskowitz, Sam, (1986) *Seekers of Tomorrow: Masters of Modern Science Fiction*. New York, Ballantine Books.

Pohl, Frederik, (1979) *The Way the Future Was*, New York, Ballantine/Del Rey.

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Issue 1: Wednesday, 29 July Afternoon

Until quite recently I lived on the same street as Mittens, the cat with the key to Wellington. I'm used to seeing Mittens IRL, and am pleased to see that online Mittens has kicked off the online worldcon the #pets channel.

Looking forward to attending my 19th WorldCon tomorrow! Have been a regular since ConJose 2002.

Ready to have fun. Getting used to the time zone difference.

Never enough coffee!

First day of con: the Cuba St bucket fountain, immortalised in Wellington Paranormal



Yep, got pictures with that. It's a lovely piece of work (even if I wasn't getting too close in costume) ;P

Probably a good idea



First coffee of the con.

Per tradition, I am working on a costume the day the convention starts

Went for afternoon walk yesterday to Wellington Botanic Gardens & Observatory. Got this view of the city & harbour from the top.



I was going to run a #Pokemon raid tour of the CBD, but then COVID happened. Here is one of the Pokemon gyms we were going to visit.



> First coffee of the con. @Dave Agnew Breakfast



Note that I ate that at NZ breakfast time, which was my-timezone about 10pm. And my spouse is the bestest spouse in the world because he anticipated that I'd want tea and put everything ready for it.

virtual con pluses can be in bed eating breakfast at two panels and at the bar all at once without having to leave the cat at home

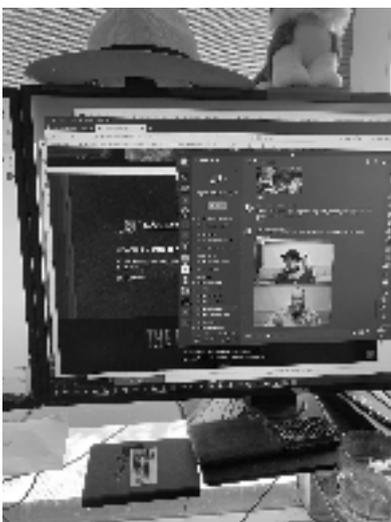


I went for my "morning" walk at 10pm my time / 9am NZST, to wake up for the con, and saw a meteor as I turned into my home street! Seems like a good way to start.

Guests of Honor Mercedes Lackey (and friend) and Larry Dixon during the Opening Ceremony



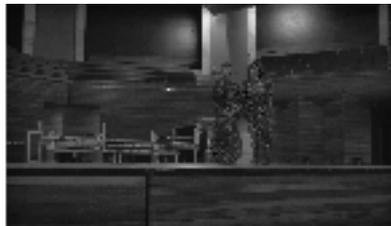
Logged onto Worldcon. The opening ceremonies have just finished.



Woot - I just walked around the house and

coincidentally heard CoNZealand get a mention on the Concert Programme of Radio NZ - and they're now playing some music from the movie The Day the Earth Stood Still - It's almost like we're really happening! 😊

A few screenshots from today's opening ceremony...

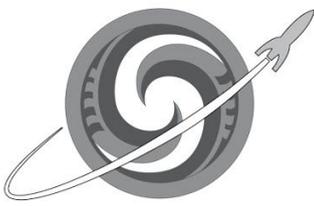


Loved Georges ideas for an amazing entrance!

At Science Fantasy session, David Levine made this distinction in describing the genre: Science-Fantasy "smoothies" (Star Wars) and Science-Fantasy "ripple" or "marble" (China Mieville)("Gunna Roll the Bones" by Fritz Leiber)

With thanks to: ensslen, Patrick Manion, CaroleMcDonnell, u_ne_korn, backwardsandinhighheels, AlduinS., dragnew, mix.1009, SoonLeeNZ, Irina, maxdragon, rmc28,, CPO Parker, Judy Fletcher, bryng, SoonLeeNZ, NickyP

Images from: backwardsandinhighheels, dragnew, SoonLeeNZ, Irina, maxdragon, NickyP, CPO Parker, KateR - Promotions DDH (She/Her)



Issue 2: Thursday, 30 July Morning

Things not heard at a meatspace con. "The panelists are blathering, BRB taking out the trash."

"putting the panel on wireless headphones so I can go get a jumper"

Done my last session today. Drinks time!



One of the better questions at the first Feedback session was "Why does Norman remind me of Graham Norton?" To this there was general hilarity. Then Norman described

himself as "the love child of Graham Norton and Eddie Izzard".

Overheard in the bar: "I made an AI read 10,000 #WorldCon tweets, and this is the newsletter it wrote."

[ed. note: beep boop]

1337 people have logged in to the CoNZealand discord server as of 21:00 Wednesday night!

The 2020 Worldcon seems the perfect convention to have its logo on the 20 side of a D20. Unfortunately I'm not able to bring them to the convention in person, but here's a photo.



Oh, now that would have been super cool to have as real merch. @Suzie Eisfelder You need this

I so want that

I still have some from Nullus 7

I believe I still have some of the Dublin 2019 d6s, but the d20s you've made are special. And of course the CNZ d20 is amazing!

@Soon Lee. Send me your friend code, we could set up a remote raid group! My trainer name is Snapdragoness.

@James Shields Oh that's a very cool d20.

Public Notice: Play a game during the Con with @leece and myself, and we will post you a cool physical ribbon, if you are comfortable sending us a postal address. Thank-you, @rdm .

I wonder if the Cruise Log could publish in color?

Just the happy face on page two was yellow. 😊

Why is Chatham Island 45 minutes off of New Zealand's time zone. 45 minutes?!

That does seem unusual. I know of a few half-hour offsets out there, but 45 minutes is new to me.

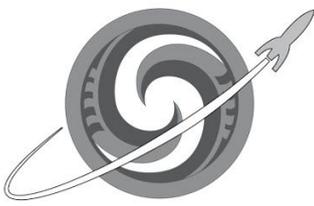
Well, after standardisation, anyway. There was a proposal for a Dublin Mean Time which was 25 minutes, 50 seconds behind GMT. I can only imagine how confusing that would have gotten.

> 1337 people have logged in to the CoNZealand discord server as of 21:00 Wednesday night!
@Kelly Buehler (she/her)
We are LEET!

1400 people have logged into the CoNZealand discord server as of 09:00 Thursday morning!

With thanks to:
BohemianCoast, darusha, khaybee, James Shields (LostCarPark), run.trivena, SuzsSpace, Marguerite, Snapdragoness, EdFortune, rdm, Tom Giese, TerryNeill (RegStaff), Marguerite, John Pomeranz, atnbueno, Erin, SoonLeeNZ, andicbuchanan, Mattlistener, rmc28, Judy Fletcher

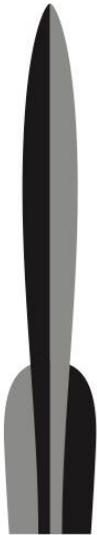
Images from: James Shields (LostCarPark), SoonLeeNZ



Issue 3: Thursday, 30 July Afternoon

Awards Edition

Retro Hugo Awards



HUGO AWARDSM

The winners of the 1945
Retro Hugo Awards:

Best Novel

"Shadow Over Mars" (*The Nemesis from Terra*)
by Leigh Brackett (*Startling Stories*, Fall 1944)

Best Novella

"Killozer!"
by Theodore Sturgeon
(*Astounding Science Fiction*,
November 1944)

Best Novelette

"City"

by Clifford D. Simak
(*Astounding Science Fiction*,
May 1944)

Best Short Story

"I,Rocket"

by Ray Bradbury (*Amazing
Stories*, May 1944)

Best Series

The Cthulhu Mythos

by H. P. Lovecraft, August
Derleth, and others

Best Related Work

"The Science-Fiction Field"

by Leigh Brackett (*Writer's
Digest*, July 1944)

Best Graphic Story or Comic

Superman: "The Mysterious Mr. Mxyzplk"

by Jerry Siegel and Joe
Shuster (*Detective Comics*,
Inc.)

Best Dramatic

Presentation, Short Form

Tie:

The Canterville Ghost

screenplay by Edwin Harvey
Blum from a story by Oscar
Wilde, directed by Jules
Dassin
(Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
(MGM))

The Curse of the Cat People

written by DeWitt Bodeen,
directed by Gunther V.
Fritsch and Robert Wise
(RKO Radio Pictures)

Best Editor, Short Form

John W. Campbell, Jr.

Best Professional Artist

Margaret Brundage

Best Fanzine

Voice of the Imagi-Nation

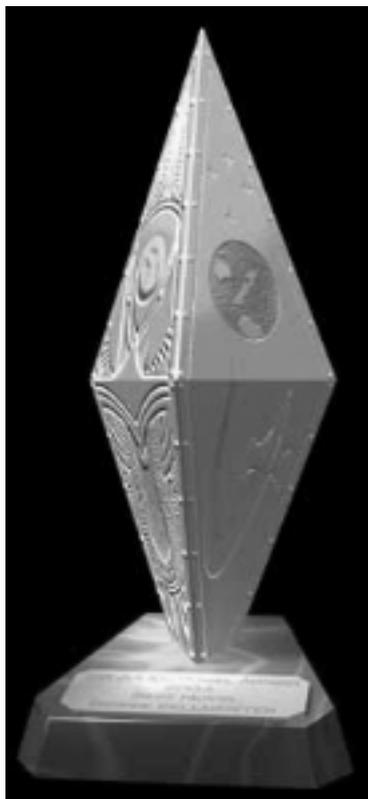
edited by Forrest J.
Ackerman and Myrtle R.
Douglas

Best Fan Writer

Fritz Leiber

Add your newsletter items to #log-entries

Sir Julius Vogel Awards



The winners of the 2020 Sir Julius Vogel Awards:

Best Novel

The Dawnhounds
by Sascha Stronach (Little Hook Press)

Best Youth Novel

The Clockill and the Thief
by Gareth Ward (Walker Books Australia)

Best Novella/Novelette

From a Shadow Grave
by Andi C. Buchanan (Paper Road Press)

Best Short Story

"A Shriek Across the Sky"
by Casey Lucas (Sponge Magazine)

Best Collected Work

Year's Best Aotearoa New Zealand Science Fiction and Fantasy, Vol 1
edited by Marie Hodgkinson (Paper Road Press)

Best Professional Artwork

Cover for Dragon Pearl
Vivienne To (Rick Riordan Presents)

Best Professional Production/Publication

Swords The Webcomic
Matthew Willis

Best Dramatic Presentation

Doctor Who: The Elysian Blade
David Bishop

Best Fan Artwork

Deet
Laya Rose

Best Fan Production/Publication

Plant Life
Laya Rose

Best Fan Writing

"Sitrep"
Alex Lindsay

Special Awards:

Best New Talent

Sascha Stronach

Services to Fandom

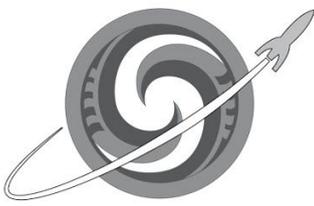
Grace Bridges

Services to Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror

Melanie Harding-Shaw

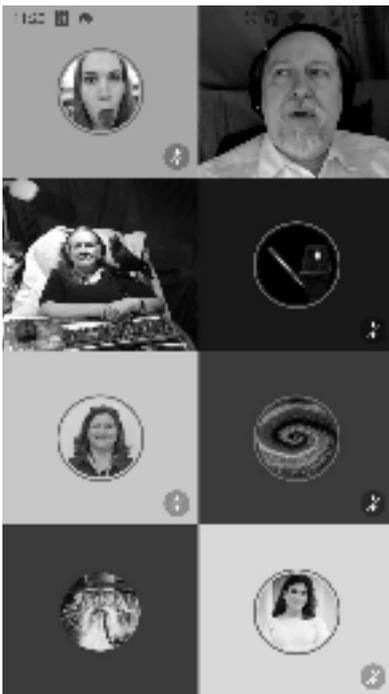
Congratulations to all the finalists and winners!

Add your newsletter items to #log-entries



Issue 4: Thursday, 30 July Evening

Discord panel with Misty and Larry. When asked if they should turn off the video so more people can attend the answer was "We want to see the birds". Sorry to everyone who wanted to listen in 😊



Goblin Emperor fans will know why this is my favourite brand of hummus.



Cory Doctorow: "I can't hear you. No one can hear you! I'VE SILENCED ADA PALMER!"

Life is confusing in Melbourne : WorldCon & COVID vying for attention.



Answer to questions raised at the feedback sessions can be found in the pinned posts in the #chairs-office Discord channel, under Information.

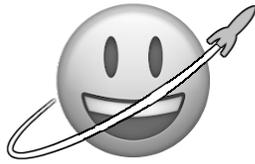
From the Wild Cards RPG session: after attempting a peaceful legal arrest of the powerful villain and getting blasted in response: "Quantum here - Shrinker, your ass is legally covered. Go for it!" Shrinker proceeds to launch a surprise attack from behind that would have been called police brutality in any other setting.

From the "Meet the Heinlein Society" session - Keith Kato's camera was showing his beautiful background, but completely failed to show him at all... "I'm hiding behind the Andromeda Galaxy because: Social Distancing."

The SFF and Te Ao Māori session was brilliant - I have a notebook full of recommendations of books to read. Ngā mihi nui to Dan Rabarts, Cassie Hart, Whiti Hereaka and Steph Matuku.

With thanks to:
RalaOfTheVale, a-cubed, Irina, ladymidnight, darusha, run.trivena, Jo Toon (She/Her)

Images from:
RalaOfTheVale, Irina, ladymidnight



NOT CONZEALAND

78TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Issue 00: July or Something, 2020. Who really knows anymore?

AVENUE 5
CRUISE
LOG

Join us for classic board games in the Discord gaming-table channel. There was some debate about what to play which resulted in...Trouble. Sorry about the Scrabble. We're now playing updated versions of Risk, which mostly involves leaving your house, and Life, which mostly involves staying home. Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos is still playing Monopoly.

This is not the apocalypse you're looking for. Move along.

You can tell how much a teen reads by how they pronounce YA.

Unpopular opinion: I liked Podcasting a lot better when it was called Radio.



My Favorite Greg Broadmore Panel: My secret identity as Buck Rogers AND the Green Arrow



My Favorite George R.R. Martin Panel: Barn-Raising and Butter Churning: How to Survive the Winds of Winter



My Favorite Mercedes Lackey Panel: A Pirate's Life for Me: Why You Need a Parrot

If we talk about films that borrow ideas from "Plan 9 from Outer Space" in the Golden Age of SF Movies discussion, would that make it a faux Wood panel?

con-ops sincerely apologizes for the temporal filter preventing time travelers from landing in Wellington in this era. This has been implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other times and places. Please consider arriving in Washington D.C. in 2021 or Chicago in 2022 and leaving messages there.

Overheard at the first virtual Worldcon...

"Beep, boop, I am a bot!"

"I can't believe I'm here!"

"Where, in your living room?"

More Award Winners

Best Novel

Awarded to Coronavirus for COVID-19

Best Dramatic Presentation

Awarded to people who are still complaining about not being able to use Discord

Marvel's Avengers "Good Job, Hawkeye" Participation Award

Awarded to any nominee who also showed up. Good job!

Worst Zoom Background

The non-Euclidean geometry of the beings of mythos from HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu Universe which results in instant insanity caused by the realization of the existence of monstrous malevolence and strange dimensions beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend. Sadly, those who gaze upon this Zoom background will later go on to host a Worldcon.

Message from our Convention Chairs



Too much sitting is bad for you. Stand up once in a while.

The Five Stages of Inebriation at a Con, in the form of a Dramatic Performance, Short Form

- 1. Watchmen:** You start out wearing a mask with good intentions, but knowing you have a shady past.
 - 2. The Expanse:** You open up and start talking too much, even when you're alone.
 - 3. The Good Place:** Welcome! Everything is fine.
 - 4. Doctor Who:** You leave with a man who tells you he's a doctor AND a pilot, but you never find out his name.
 - 5. The Mandalorian:** You can't show your face almost anywhere anymore, but, on the upside, you're going to have the cutest baby ever!
-

Added Sunday Panel: Is Everything a Conspiracy?

What: They won't let me say.
Where: Reading Room 237
Who: Session is full. This session has a maximum capacity of everyone except you.

Tips for Enjoying Your First Virtual Worldcon

Remember to hydrate.

Try to stay up for 5 days straight so you don't miss anything. #FOMO. The struggle is real.

Use a moving Zoom background so processor intensive you always appear on camera at 10fps.

Know your spending limits for the dealer's room and art show. Take out a second mortgage now.

Also overheard at the first virtual Worldcon...

After seeing a cat on Zoom, "Who's the cat GOH?"

"What's the big deal with Flash Fiction? Batman stories have better villains."

"I'm so over Pluto. As far as I'm concerned, it's an exoplanet."

"Having problems with Grenadine? Add Rum."

Report from the Con floor:

"There's carpet down here."

"Thanks, Bob."

This parody newsletter is dedicated to the staff, volunteers, and attendees of CoNZealand for coming together to create an unforgettable first-of-its-kind Worldcon. Thank You!

A Fan Guide to New Zealand Slang

Kia Ora: A traditional NZ greeting that makes fans from outside NZ wonder why everyone greets each other by saying the name of their car.

Example Usage...

Kiwi: "Kia Ora"

Non-Kiwi: "Chevy Impala"

Bring a plate: The traditional battle cry when more than one person is creating consuite recipes.

Bugged: That sleepy feeling you get in the Arthropods panel.

Jumper: What you put on before you get your hokey pokey from the chilly bin.

Hobbiton: The amount of weight you gain from snacks while you binge-watch all of Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings movies.

Stubbie: Bheer

Stubbies: What you wear below your respectable shirt on Zoom.

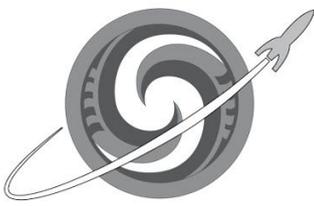
Wop wop's: When you're the only person who shows up for a panel.

Nominations for new Hugo Categories

Best Moderator Hat

Best Inaudible Live Stream

Best Surprise Reaction After an Unexpected Transition



Issue 9: Saturday, 1 August Evening



charliejane: hai
charliejane: GOOD LUCK HUMANS
Irina: what about any nonhumans in here?
charliejane: point
Irina: good luck, gentlebeings!
charliejane: i hope i live to see the first A.I. to win a Hugo
charliejane: if I haven't already 😊



Perk of going to BM:
getting to hold the Retro Hugo.

Everybody shouts to NaomiKritzer "You are on mute!" Congratulations for winning this year's Lodestar Award!
#CoNZealand
#hugoawards #lodestar

We are go.

"I gather that babies cultivate mono-dexterity. Sorta like falconry." -

Discord user Cavyherd



More than twice as many attendees at the WSFS Business Meeting as we planned for. We ran out of snacks 😊

Things you don't see at an in-person convention - the panelist popping off for a few seconds to take their pie out of the oven!

For those that asked for it



TURTLE!

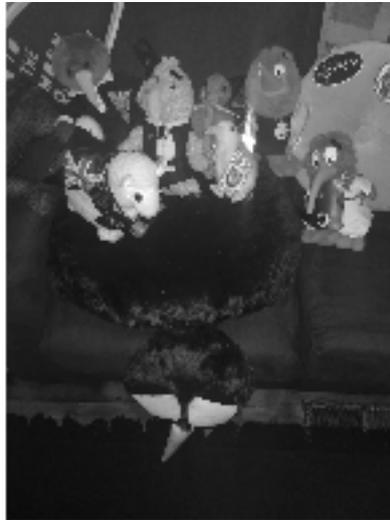
GRRM cosplaying as a Hugo award during the ceremony is my favourite

The Art Show Survey has Closed! Best Artist is a tie between Sarah Clemens and Emma Weakley. Best Piece of Art, by a hair, was The Last Tea Party by Sarah Clemens.

Emma Weakley was the NZ/Aussie Artist who impressed people the most with 66% of the vote. Greg Broadmore was new to 72% of those voting, so CoNZealand has brought his work to a wider group of people. And the comments! "New artists!" "Amazing cutwork - I literally gasped", which is about Kathleen Jennings' work. "Cats and dragons are a great combo," "Beautiful art connects with our emotions," and "How well a Virtual Art Show works."

Nomination for a new Hugo Category: Best Acceptance Speech for winning Best Acceptance Speech

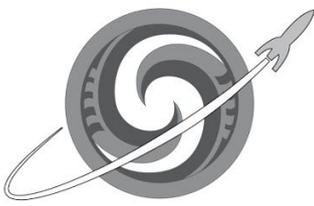
Hugo Watch Party. There were actual people too who had pav and cake and NZ chocolate.



With thanks to:
SoonLeeNZ, Chris (another Zoom Host), YBahjatt, Jeddi High Council, Irina, eschluessel, ensslen, morganHazelwood, Brian R, RalaOfTheVale, Robbie B Art Show, Maree Pavletich

Images from:
SoonLeeNZ, Brian R, Maree Pavletich

Add your newsletter items to #log-entries



Issue 11: Sunday, 2 August Afternoon

I must take issue with calling poffertjes "Dutch pancakes". Dutch pancakes are HUGE. Poffertjes are tiny.

I apologize if I walked through any people or tables in Squid Hall yesterday morning. I swear I was not drunk, just on a very laboring computer.

I walked through some tables in Squid Hall too! Easy to do.

Someone said "tautoko" to me in a chat room, and I feel like I've really been in New Zealand.

A little poem for the first virtual Worldcon:
Five days of insanity
Oh the humanity
I click on a room
It refuses to Zoom
I say words of depravity!

There once was a con in New Zealand
That had a lot to deal with.
In the middle of tension
A brand-new invention
That amazed everyone
who's seen it.

Help! I've been captured by the Virtualizers! They're goin
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From this morning's Daily Briefing, a discussion on the art and perils of glass blowing:
Glass blowing combines the best elements of artwork and a car race.
"You can burn yourself on hot glass and cut yourself on cold glass"
"Is there a technical term for that?" "Yes - OUCH."

Daily Briefing - "Can I tell a Dutch Cheese story?"
"If it is full of holes, then it's a Swiss Cheese story..."

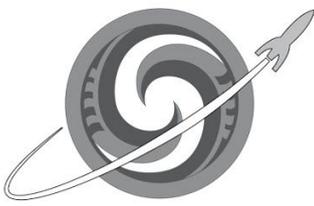
A huge thanks to Morgan Hazelwood who has been working tirelessly for weeks to train the programme participants before the con started, training the Behind The Scenes tech staff to host zooms, and answering questions in what feels like just about every room across three separate Discord Servers throughout the duration of the Convention itself.

The votes are in! The Best Dressed Dealer Table belongs to Bard & Jester!



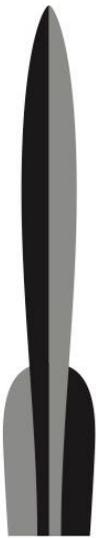
With thanks to:
JadeValour, Irina,
BethMitcham, Jenny Hammond,
RalaOfTheVale,
Metsäpeto, Jo Toon
(She/Her), Anne, ravyn

Images from: ravyn



Awards Edition

Hugo Awards 2020: Final Ballot



HUGO AWARDSM

The winners of the 2020
Hugo Awards:

Best Novel

A Memory Called Empire
by Arkady Martine (Tor; Tor UK)

Best Novella

This Is How You Lose the Time War
by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone (Saga Press; Jo Fletcher Books)

Best Novelette

Emergency Skin
by N.K. Jemisin (*Forward* Collection (Amazon))

Best Short Story

“As the Last I May Know”
by S.L. Huang (Tor.com, 23 October 2019)

Best Series

The Expanse
by James S. A. Corey (Orbit Us; Orbit UK)

Best Related Work

“2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech”
by Jeannete Ng

Best Graphic Story or Comic

LaGuardia
Written by Nnedi Okorafor, art by Tana Ford, colours by James Devlin (Berger Books; Dark Horse)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Good Omens

Written by Neil Gaiman, directed by Douglas Mackinnon (Amazon Studios/BBC Studios/Narrativia/The Blank Corporation)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

The Good Place: “The Answer”

Written by Daniel Schofield, directed by Valeria Migliassi Collins (Fremulon/3 Arts Entertainment/Universal Television)

Best Editor, Short Form

Ellen Datlow

Best Editor, Long Form

Navah Wolfe

Best Professional Artist

John Picacio

Best Semiprozine

Uncanny Magazine
Editors-in-Chief Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas, nonfiction/managing editor Michi Trota, managing editor

Chimedum Ohaegbu,
podcast producers Erika
Ensign and Steven
Schapansky

Best Fanzine

The Book Smugglers

Editors Ana Grilo and Thea
James

Best Fancast

Our Opinions Are Correct

Presented by Annalee
Newitz and Charlie Jane
Anders

Best Fan Writer

Bogi Takács

Best Fan Artist

Elise Matthesen

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Young Adult Book (Not a
Hugo)**

Catfishing on CatNet

By Naomi Kritzer (Tor Teen)

***Astounding* Award for Best
New Writer, sponsored by
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R.F. Kuang (2nd Year of
Eligibility)

Congratulations to
all the finalists and
winners!

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TIME FOR A REUNION IN HOLLAND

Last year I was the Official Collator of WOOF after John Hertz asked me to take on that job at the Irish Worldcon in Dublin. Looking at all options then I decided to change from a printed WOOF to a digital WOOF, allowing people to submit their work either at the worldcon in Dublin or electronically, then collate and put everything together to send it out via e-mail to those who wanted to receive the WOOF edition that way - or print it and mail it.

I think it worked quite well given the circumstances. It seems the days of Bruce Pelz are long gone - it the good old days a fair number of zines were printed to be collated at the given worldcon but nowadays it seems concons are not too keen on having people "from the outside" use their copiers even though WOOF was set up to be something special at worldcon. When I asked Dublin for help they did assign me a room to collect zines but in the end I had to sit in front of a closed door as the room had also been assigned to a panel. All in all a long wait and only one person showed up to hand me a USB-stick with his contribution. The rest is history. I collated WOOF with a great cover done by Sue Mason and mailed it out. Almost a year after it was done I was able to send it off again to Marc Glasser who was then able to print it out and hand it over to Mark Blackman. So, in theory all who wanted it, got it...

And now Guy is the O.E. for this year and wants me to submit something.

Well, as you may know this year and this month it is 30 years ago we ran ConFiction, the 48th world SF convention in the Hague. And we had planned a reunion, booked a hotel, blocked room and have been working on a nice program, even including one of our original Guests of Honour (Joe Haldeman) and were all geared up to do... when Covid-19 came along and the world shut down.

We had to postpone the event - we now aim at August 20 - 22 2021 in the Hague at the Promenade Hotel which was one of the original hotels back in 1990. And Joe and his lovely wife Guy will still be present even though worldcon in 2021 will be a week later. If any of you have any good memories of ConFiction, you are most welcome to join us - support or attend.

Also, if you have any photos of that convention at hand or if you can dig any photos out for us, that would be fantastic. One of the reasons we want to do Reunion 2021 is that so many good and dear friend have left us. It is time to look back and enjoy this event together, tell (tall) stories about 1990 and all those years after that convention and just have a good time with old and new friends - as we also welcome fans who did not attend in 1990.

We all have a wealth of knowledge to share with new fans. And let's all hope Covid-19 will have either left us by then or that a vaccine has been found. We need to get out of the worldwide lock-down and enjoy life and Fandom with friend again!

Please, if you do have any photos of ConFiction please send them to me! FIAWOL and hopefully see you next year in the Hague

Kees van Toorn

Email: keesvan.toorn@hccnet.nl

Check: www.confiction1990.com

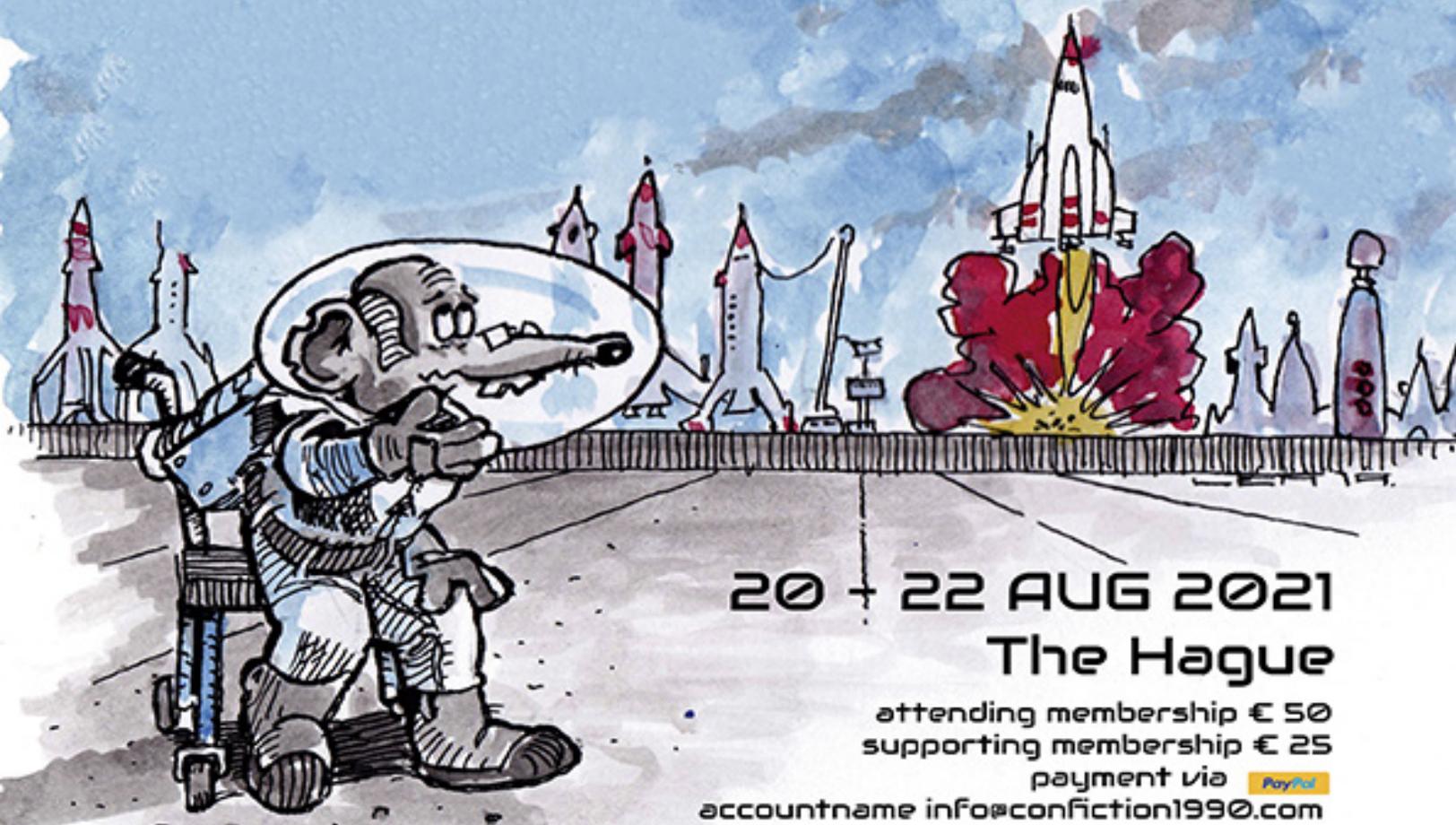
info@confiction1990.com



REUNICON 2021

to celebrate ConFiction 1990
the 48th World Science Fiction Convention

Guests of Honour:
Joe & Gay Haldeman
(The Forever War)
Comic Artist Guest of Honour:
Martin Lodewijk
(ATH, Storm, Agent 327)



20 + 22 AUG 2021

The Hague

attending membership € 50
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accountname info@confiction1990.com

Reunion of ConFiction 1990
Postbus 3411
3003 AK Rotterdam
Netherlands

www.confiction1990.com
info@confiction1990.com
f @confiction1990
@confiction1990

AN AUGUST 2020 WOOF CONTRIBUTION
A
CLOCKWORK PRUNE



A CLOCKWORK PRUNE # 2020

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INTRODUCTION

This being the Wordcon WOOF-special, I believe it is possible there may be one or two readers who are not familiar with CounterClock, which is my main fanzine. It has come at regular intervals since May 2012 and only paused when my world suddenly turned upside down starting October last year. I have repeatedly shielded my mind under tumultuous circumstances and leaving the state of mental turtledom has always been difficult. It is a time of procrastination. A time when all projects, letters and articles fall behind. You'd even had a hard time trying to catch me on the telephone. It is a time for my dreams and thoughts. The covid19 pandemic didn't help to rattle me out of it. On the contrary. It was the world going collectively mad. And additional shielding was necessary.

SURVIVORS

In my youth I watched the BBC-series *Survivors*, which I felt was a possible scenario for a future apocalypse. The difference was, in the tv-series more than 99.95% of all people on the planet perish in a pandemic. Now we have the reverse situation. More than 99.95% survive.

But 100% of the population is inconvenienced.

- We have to save lives!

- But we are not saving lives. We delay deaths, that's all. Most of us, over 60, are aware that we have less ahead of us than behind. We have lived our lives. I can't speak for all of us, but I am not sure that the inconveniences we are going through are worth the trouble. If memory serves, it was not on the table to stop the spread of covid. Only to slow it down, so the hospitals could deal with the pressure. We slowed it down in Italy. But the inconveniences continue.

Some appear to enjoy it. Or they are scared shitless because news had little else to report on. People with mask and people without mask look at each other and think of the other as cretins.

I belong to the unmuzzled crowd. I wear a mask where it is mandatory, not because I fear to be fined, but because here they fine the shopkeeper,

if they allow people to come inside unmuzzled.

I have developed a fine immunity anyway. It does not matter how many fines or the size of the fines imposed on me. Under the current system, nothing can touch me. You might be curious how this is done. I will only give you a hint. In Germany we had the saying "You can't put your hand into the pocket of a naked man."

My motivation for being this privileged, was not to avoid fines. I have zero outstanding financial demands. I have managed to create zero on all my economic balances. No debts, no income and no into money convertible resources. Immunity to fines is only a side effect. Now before you begin speculating, let me assure you that I am by no means useless to my fellow human beings. I only stepped outside of the taxable system and in no way illegally. There! Something for you to ponder upon. Meanwhile I have all I need.

The secret to be wealthy is not in having a huge income. Its in being able to eliminate all the small expenses. I have no car, no cell phone and no TV. A wise man named Seneca is credited with once having said in latin: *Poor is not he who has little. Poor is he who wants to have a lot.*

And I can't really think of anything I need other than food for the day, a bed to sleep in and my computer with an internet connection.

Am I happy? You bet, I am!!

But the mandatory muzzle bugs me.

- All other considerations irrelevant, said a casual acquaintance. If I can save someones life by wearing a mask, then I do it.

- But you have to contract the virus first, before you can save anyones life by wearing the mask.

People have unfriended me on Facebook for not sharing their beliefs. One pointed at an article claiming that lockdowns have saved millions of lives in Europe. I dismissed this article as bullshit and got promptly unfriended. Why did I call it bullshit? One reason was that Sweden was included in the list of countries saving millions and my home country didn't even have a lockdown. I traced the source for the statistics, but not even at the source it was stated on which assumptions the numbers were created. We should just accept that more than 600k lives were saved in France while far, far less were saved in Germany in spite of the population being considerably larger.

And where did logic disappear to? We were going to *slow down* the rate of infections. Not stop the pandemic, because it was reasoned somehow that it would be impossible to stop it. Which meant we would have to face the virus one day. And see if it has any effect on us. This was an argument I

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accepted long ago and braced for the impact. But now it looks like we are trying to eradicate the threat entirely. Fine with me. But it would be interesting to see if we all come out at the other end with our mental health intact.

It will be interesting to see what changes will be made under the guise of health safety.

Exclusively digital currency? The Central Bank of Italy is considering it. Well that could be fun watching in a country which hasn't even mastered an interrupted power supply.

Be prepared for most inconvenient brown-outs.

Tracking of citizen? Well, most people are already being tracked by their smart phones. I will not have one. Ever. They can track my rotting corpse. Pity the Romanian Eurocon bid for 2021 had to fold. DYSTOPICON would have been exactly right in time. Dystopia is here. And all I hope for, is not to run out of popcorn while civilization goes over the cliff.

This is traditionally called
A) a mask B) a muzzle



We like to pride ourselves equipped with "A" while the reality is "B" Now be a good dog and don't pull at the leash.

I am not likely to shut up even when no one is listening. I know most people have lost their ability to read, spell and articulate their thoughts.

I've come to realize the world is governed by sheer stupidity, shallow values, greed, nepotism and false intellectual pride. Few nearly as gifted as their predecessors. A problem with the world is that skilled and experienced people die, while every day a horde of ignorant, selfish, blank kids are being born and treated like golden eggs. Told they are special and can do anything (and just like Mary Sue and Gary Stu never need to work hard to get there).

I'm sorry, but there does not seem to be much to hang around on this Earth for. If I had any choice i would end it right here and now.

*Space is cold and black as coal
The void of stars has been our goal
Though gravity can form a hole
And suck up all that matters*

[...my own...]

SOUND & VISION

It was a long time ago that I heard good music on the radio. When I do, most of the time it was made in the previous millennium. I used to like music when it was being performed on musical instruments. Some good stuff is still being made. You just wouldn't hear it on the radio. My latest new acquisition has been *Corvus Corax*, which my nephew Sebastian recommended. So, yeah, not everyone is insane, only the majority of the population.

In the realm of cinematic achievements on the big and small screen, the only weak glimmer of hope is on streaming services such as Netflix.

Now *Jar Jar Abrams* killed *Star Wars*, *Alan Kurtzman* perverted *Star Trek* and *Chris Chibnall* fucked up *Doctor Who*.

CRITICS DOING A BETTER JOB THAN ME

When it comes to new releases in the realm of fantastic film I used to be on the front line in buying dvd's and watching them. I have complete sets of all the science fiction series from *Twilight Zone* to the excellent reboot of *Lost in Space*. But watching new releases has become increasingly boring and hazardous. I tell myself; if one feeds the mind with garbage, then garbage will fill the mind. *Garbage in – garbage out*. Now, prior to making a new purchase, I listen to what people on youtube have to say who already have seen what I am interested in. One hilarious guy is the *Critical Drinker*, who may sound like a drunk idiot, but is more funny, witty and entertaining than the majority of films he is reviewing. I have repeatedly laughed tears listening to him.

Another guy worth listening to, is Gary Buechler at Nerdrotic, who convinces by knowing his stuff.



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What all intelligent and productive youtube voices appear to have in common, is that they all dismiss the 11th and 12th season of Doctor Who (with the new pc female Doctor) as poor writing. I tried to find some positive reviews for balance, but what I found was someone thoroughly taking apart an attempt at defending this sad era of a formerly great and wonderful TV-show.

Gradually I went from deciding *not to buy series 11 until the price was down to approximately 10 Euros to not buying any new Doctor Who dvd's at all* under the mismanagement of Chris Chibnall.

There is solid logic to support this decision. If you disapprove of what has been done, don't buy it! Don't spend a cent (or penny) on it!

I still have a complete set from 1968 to 2017 and I will serve my cerebral pathways better in watching the classic Who-adventures I haven't seen yet, or re-watching them.



I am not a misogynist. I love the Dr Who-spinoff, *the Sarah Jane Adventures*. I am also very fond of the other Dr Who-spinoff *Torchwood*. What I am not keen on watching, is an unequivocally poor and sluggish written tv-show.

One can hope that the industry rethink their strategy. Prequels, remakes and politically correct

film does not sell. *Rapid Fire Stupidity* does not sell. Modern mythology (Star Wars, Star Trek, Doctor Who, Terminator, Alien, Predator and Ghostbusters) do not sell simply because they add meaningless chapters to the franchises.

PROGRESSIVE, MODERN, POST MODERN

In modern art, one shite after another have been hailed as a creative genius. From Pollock's drip painting, Malevich's monochrome black square to Fontana's knife cut in canvas. I can only pray that one day all of it is hauled away as the garbage it is.

The internet burger bar of knowledge can now support any argument you wish with solid facts and scientific studies. For and against the human bean as the cause for global warming. Differences can only be found in their application. If we decide that Fräulein Thunberg is right, then we can tax the air that you breathe for carbon emissions. All that can be bought and sold has already been bought and sold. You can not keep your own cow, because the milk needs to be taxed.

Way back in time, bad times were defined as the time in which you had to buy your own food. Say what you will about the old feudal society, but at least then the role models were supposed to be chivalrous and generous to the poor. A time of honour and legends born. Now, the role models are politicians. No honour, just talk.

No honesty, no truth, no democracy. The word democracy means *government by the people*. We can't have that. People are too plain stupid. We need experts to govern, but we don't have that either. If only...

ON REINHARD MEY & HOSPITALITY

The other day I brought out an old favourite of mine, *Reinhard Mey*, a German chanson-writer, who accompanied only by his guitar (just like Bob Dylan, but with a smoother voice – and in German language) told inspirational and entertaining episodes. His social critique such as *Die Heisse Schlacht Am Kalten Buffet* (The Hot Battle at the Cold Buffet) or *Was kann schöner sein auf Erden als Politiker zu werden?* (What can be more beautiful on Earth than to become a politician?) may be more subtle than Dylan, but none the less poignant.

I translated 3 of his songs (see Clockwise 2014), but have to admit, some experiences can't be translated. One can translate the words, but not their flavour. Assisted by google translate, but not submitting entirely to its interpretation, I will attempt to translate a song in words and flavour, sacrificing the rhymes and brilliant phrasing. You *can't* have it all.

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GUTE NACHT, FREUNDE – Reinhard Mey is a song easy enough to find on youtube. Here's my translation and thoughts around this song.

I saw I had to take a huge step away from googles version, since the meaning sometimes is lost in word for word translations. It does nicely between English and Italian or Romanian, but is not half as good between English and German or Swedish.

CHORUS:

*Good night friends, it is time for me to go
What else I have to say, lasts a cigarette
And a final glass while standing*

*Thank you for the day,
For the night under your roof
For the seat at your table,
For each glass I drank
For the plate you put next to yours
As if nothing was more natural in this world*
CHORUS: *Goodnight friends,
it is time for me to go...*

*Thank you for the time I passed chatting with you
And for your patience when there was
more than one opinion
For never asking when I'm come or go
For the always open door I
n which I now am standing*
CHORUS: *Goodnight friends,
It is time for me to go...*

*For the perpetual freedom a guest has with you
Thank you, for never asking whether it's worth it
Maybe this is why, from the outside it seems
That the light shines warmer in your windows*
CHORUS: *Goodnight friends,
It is time for me to go...*

I will go out on a limb here and say that every German over 50 is familiar with the song and the lyrics. This high praise to hospitality is something I would like to dedicate to many of my German friends, since I have experienced it over and over again during my time in Germany.

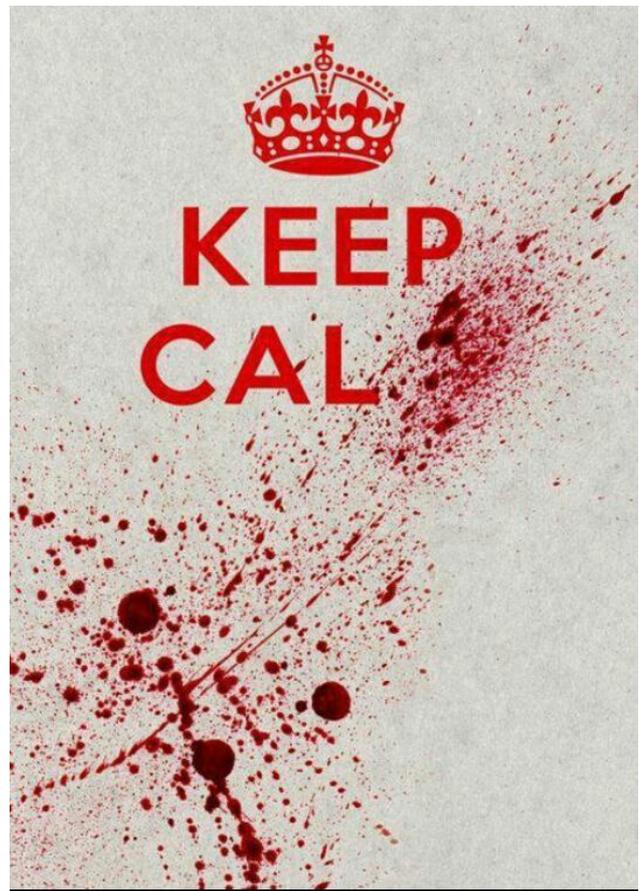
Even here in Italy. We were invited to dinner one evening to a half-German half-Italian couple. Five minutes before we were to depart, the phone rang and four other friends announced they came to see us.

- We're in the car outside your house! they said. They were on their way to the Football (soccer) World Championship in France (2018). So we called our half-German, half-Italian couple and were going to say; "Sorry, but we just now got

an impediment to our dinner participation.
- What? Four more guys? Aw, well... Not a problem. Bring them too!!!
Now THAT'S hospitality squared!

Reinhard Mey's song *Es gibt keine Maikäfer mehr* (There are no more Maybeetles – specifically the Cockchafers, a species on the brink of extinction due to pesticides). Perhaps the lyrics have trickled through the conscious mind of every German and has contributed to the country now flourishing in a lush green vegetation.

I believe poets can set their mark on an entire population without its individuals knowing where a notion comes from. Where there is space for it, Germans plant a tree. Italians splash out some concrete instead. Some statistics I saw a while ago, stated that Italy was the most cemented country in Europe. We can see it around our own house in the countryside.



Nah, I'm done with keeping calm. I know I am not going to be very popular, ranting a bit like *Graham Charnock*, but with much less charm. But I will try to remember that when I mix my breakfast serials with blended Whisky and light a cigarette.

Besides, who is reading this anyway?

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I have a single motive for pushing myself to concoct this fanzine. I am trying to stick out my head from the shell I retracted into this winter.

I still have things to do. There's a bunch of unanswered mail, CounterClock#37 and #38 in the making, Clockwise#2020 and 2021... things are piling up, while my cerebral functions are changing their course.

Being a bit on the dim side, like a prune, I thought of another way to elaborate on the Clock-theme.

A brief annual WOOOF-contribution seemed just like the right thing. An apazine doesn't need to be more than 6-8 pages.

I should have loads of stories to tell, and I have. But I am saving them for another publication. Here come a stream of random thoughts, only to prove that I am still alive.



I managed to shoot another selfie while ripping weed among solar panels. An entertainment born out of the ambition to stay in better shape. We kept it up for a couple of weeks. Now it's back to sit at the computer where thoughts pass through fingers and keyboard into a word-document.

No more discolouration from ink on stencils, no more back scratching with the saddle stapler or piles of loosely sorted papers with articles, letters and drawings. No more licking stamps or paper cuts from carelessly opening envelopes. Pen and paper, the often superior technology, is now in the past. Now I loose my random notes in small txt-

files in a folder full of them. Hundreds of them.

What did I name the file?

I can't remember. Have to open all of the suspects and get stuck on something completely different.

Oh, there's the beginning of that article, story or song I was writing... Did I write THIS???

When? What was the melody I had in mind???

Sounds like I was in a bad mood that day...

*I've got a particle beam
but I don't think myself extreme
We've got a death-ray mounted on the City Hall
I've got Palladium shields,
I'm on the Lithium pill
It doesn't matter, man.
If you run or stand still.
So don't mess with me booooy,
With your ridiculous toy
I'm dressed to kill.
And you do best to chill.*

*I can blow up all your junk
With pulse-grenades from my trunk
I fire heat-seeking ammo
With armor-piercing rounds
A plasma rifle in holster
With underslung launcher.
If my bullets don't kill, their radiation will.
So boy, you don't scare me with your disruptor
I'm dressed to kill.
Pass me your guts to spill.*

*I can see through your lies
With my multi-spectrum eyes
I saw a Zimmermann particle
Doing an Immelmann turn
I don't need any dope, nor any microscope
It would surprise Niels Bohr,
That I can see the core
Of an atom in my hand
And your cheese is moving*

Aha, file created on June 21 in 2014. That was one of my really silly days, evidently. I don't think I'm going to finish this filksong. Can't even see it having any discernible rhythm.

Naah, it'll be fine! A lot of things are, these days.

*I would jump for joy for a Löwenbräu
I might do it again for a Heineken
Everybody here drink a pint of beer!
Let's do the beer belly twist*

[..another silly song, never finished.. thank gods..]

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THE CHAOS MIND

My mind is slightly unsorted at times. Give me a piece of information which doesn't fit anywhere and I'll file it under *miscellaneous* in my brain.

Every now and then another piece comes in which fits with a pre-deposited piece and a picture evolves. Most of the time the data is *historical* or *apocryphical*. You may not even find this word in your dictionary, but who cares if you catch my drift?

So, this guy was a merchant in the Hanseatic League and he owned a ship wharf. Must have been well off.

After a while the larger picture emerges and it becomes enough material to write at least a short story. So, why don't I? Mostly because I don't feel nearly good enough as a writer. Recent practice has been showing me that I can improve while working on something. And unexpectedly a guy comes along and says he loves to read my posts on Facebook and is looking forward to read my book. Say WHAT???

This young man rarely even clicked *like* on the posts. I had no idea he was reading them all.

Again, some encouragement. It makes my day, when I hear that somebody actually *read* and liked what I wrote. It is enough for me when *one* does it. I don't need and don't even want a million followers on Twitter. I always have to think of how flies eat shit. If millions would like what I wrote, then there would have to be something wrong with my writing. I don't write for the masses.

Actually, I don't think my writing is good either. It happens that something *quite good* comes out, occasionally, but one needs to keep a certain standard for a novel, or even for a short story.

Then I watch some garbage film and see how utterly incompetent people have become screen writers. *Ronald D Moore, Russell T Davies* and *Simon Moore*, where did you all go? Please, come back! We need you.

So, yeah... I need to sort out my head and I am still in the process of doing that. I've abandoned the endeavour to put the month on the cover of CounterClock. Now it just says Summer 2020 and I hope to finish it before the autumn begins. With any luck, the next will be Winter 2020, and so on. My ambition is still to make it at least until issue #42 and then to #50, if I get to live.

But I am on a collision course with life itself.

Fandom is dead. I mean it! I doubt it will be resuscitated after the pandemic, but I love to be wrong with my predictions. I don't go to

conventions to see the program unless I am part of it. I am among the guys who hang out in the bar and chat with old friends. To me, it's the best part of conventions. Now we have virtual conventions as some kind of surrogate. It won't do.

It's no better than reading a good book while having a glass of whisky on the side. Actually, the book and the whisky is a much better idea than to read the admittedly sometimes witty remarks of sf-fans on stupid debates such as *worst sf-movie of all time*. Been there, done that. On stage.

I pride myself with carefully preparing for my program-items. It helps to know something about the topic in question, which is no random thought. I would like to think the audience gets something to take with them after participating and listening.

So I don't force my personal opinion on things, but actually do a bit of research prior to appearing in a panel. This is a habit I picked up fairly late in my fandom-career. The panel with Brian Stableford in 1998 about *the psychological impact of longevity or immortality* changed that. We agreed to disagree, which turned out to be an excellent decision. Brian in favour and me against the idea of living for ever.

We got the audience so enthused by both sides that the discussion went on even after the debate and program-item was finished. Out of the room into the corridor and... sorry I need to get me a beer. I already had delivered all my ammunition in the room and didn't have anything to add.

As much as I enjoy a good chat, but not without a beer in my hand.

So, yeah... there are times when my mind is in less chaos and more orderly. When it has to be.

Other than that, I love to let my thoughts roam around the endless universe.

I came into existence 98 billion years ago. Then absolutely nothing happened for 84 billion years and I slept to pass the time. Somebody got bored with sleeping around, so he created the Heavens and the Earth, Ricky Gervais and other hilarious characters and things looked vaguely interesting. I set my alarm clock to wake me up 14 billion years later. Here we are now.

- Gervais was born 1961, the wise Az attempted to correct me.

- Yeah-yeah. After sleeping 14 billion years. I don't know what possessed him to pick that number.

Next thing I know is standing at the Trial of Osiris. And outside the house some Alpinists have a religious congregation in front of a Madonna they erected last year. Their singing penetrates the mosquito net in the kitchen.

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THE FINAL WORD

Yesterday I still wasn't sure I was going to make it in time. But I'm there, I'm here! At the end. Not the finest of my fanzines, but the best I could do under the circumstances. Fanzines are for me a chance to blow off some steam and pretend that someone is listening even though I am mostly talking to myself.

My son does enjoy listening to my monologues. He doesn't always agree with me, but when he disagrees he tells me so. I like that, because I don't have to guess where he's standing. And it is also nice that he cares what the *old man* is yaking about.

Of course, I like to believe that I accumulated some life wisdom along the way. I would really like to know what a veteran of combat thinks about the current pandemic. One who has had a close brush with death and seen his friends blown to pieces right next to him. Now, what a strange desire to hear a veteran soldier on this?

Personally, I have only read about past calamity. How large portions of our family was wiped out in wars, in the black death and in a later bubonic plague. Naturally, they're dead now. This was all more than 250 years ago. But in contrast to this historic backdrop today's sad wretchedness in the face of this virus barely worse than the seasonal influenza, has a ridiculous shimmer. Suddenly so many seem aware that death may be a possible outcome. Yes. What else is new?

My dad told me an episode from the war when he had to sneak between Germans and Americans firing at each other in Landsberg in southwest Bavaria. He had bullets swishing past his head at age 12. He was digging out corpses from the ruins after the war, age 13. I wonder what his reaction would have been on the pale cast of thought around covid19.

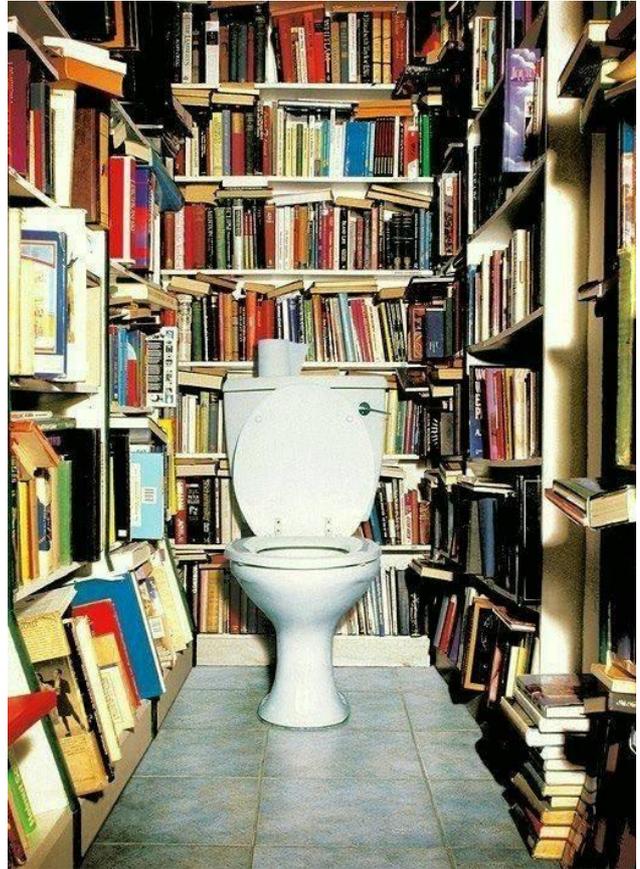
Perhaps our politicians, financial and industrial magnates and bankers are afraid because so many of them are old fools? It was okay to send boys to war, to build cars and motorcycles which by design were inviting to break legal speed limits and kill their drivers. It was okay to pollute the environment until the public started noticing. It was all okay. We were all fine with that. But now their own arseholes were on the line as well.

No remote controlled drones to hide behind, no safety in being out of range. Yeah, that's nicely equal. The richest guys in the world are at risk too. Not so much the unemployed young masses.

And the intellectuals argue with each other leaning on scientific evidence supporting both

sides of their quarrel. Mask or no mask, lockdown or no lockdown – everyone reacted in some way, because everyone is at least inconvenienced, while some are actually afraid.

Rarely in my life has it been so obvious that all of the world has become a theatre stage of a badly acted drama.



There is only one sane choice. Stay away from everyone. Self-isolate. If covid doesn't get you, the prevalent stupidity will. What covid has done, is to make it more obvious just how many idiots we are surrounded by. With and without masks.

And since shite is all there seems to be left of the world, you're not going to miss anything as long as you have a couple of good books for company. You may already have noticed. Those who are sure to survive this pandemic can't read a whole lot beyond the smileys and abbreviations used in chat rooms and texting. Hi! Ntmu. Wtf? LOL!

That's all for today!

Have a nice rest of your life...

A CLOCKWORK PRUNE # 2020

Wolf von Witting

Via Dei Banduzzi 6/4

33050 Bagnaria Arsa (Ud) - Italia

Email: wolfram1764 - at - yahoo - dot - se

Laurraine's WOOFzine 2020



Laurraine's WOOFzine 2020 is a zine by R-Laurraine Tutihasi, PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 520-275-6511, Laurraine@mac.com.

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Art and Photo Credits

Cover illo—photo of lion at the Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City taken by Mike Weasner
Photos— p. 3 taken by editor; all others taken by Mike Weasner
Illo—William Rotsler
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* Editorial / Introduction

This has been some year. Something to do with the reputed Chinese curse about living in interesting times.

Covid-19 has not affected me too badly. Except for occasional travel, which of course has all been cancelled for this year, I really don't go out very much except for shopping and doctors' appointments. I do miss the occasional get-togethers with friends.

Our cat Cato, of course, doesn't know any different. If he thinks it's odd that he's rarely left alone at home any more or boarded, he hasn't complained. By the way I'm still healing from the fall caused by his zoomies. Here's a fairly recent photo of Cato climbing a ladder.

Other than Covid, the worst thing that's happened recently was a wildfire fairly close to us. At one point we were on SET alert in case of evacuation. Fortunately the fire fighters were able to head the fire off. After coming as close as three miles away, it was driven far east of us. The smoke was something terrible for a while, though.

After a fairly wet winter, we've had fairly dry weather here. The effects of climate change have become more noticeable than last year. Many plants are blooming much later than "usual". Our summer weather has been the hottest since we moved here in 2009.

I had not planned to attend this year's worldcon and wasn't at the virtual one.

* * *



* Kritter Korner

We live in a rural area, so we see quite a bit of wildlife.

Earlier this year I noted that a greater roadrunner hung around a lot for a while. Since they are omnivores, they will eat small birds as well as rodents, snakes, and lizards, many small birds seem to be discouraged from using our bird feeders when the roadrunner is around. See photo to right showing a roadrunner that came right up to the house as though to show off his catch.

We saw a horrific fight a few months ago between two antelope squirrels; these are chipmunk size squirrels with stripes. Spring is the time for the males of many species to have it out with one another. The poor loser was badly injured, but he hobbled away. Below is a photo of the type of squirrel I'm talking about.

I saw a deer brazenly walk up to one of my fruit trees and start munching away. We have hired a couple of brothers to build me a cage to go around my fruit trees. I got the idea from a friend who has done the same. After seeing her cage, I have noticed quite a few others in the area.

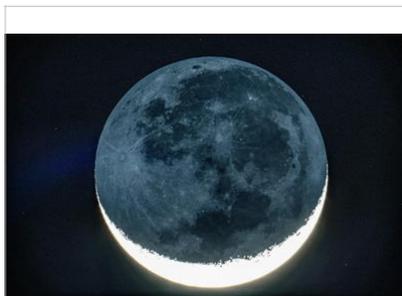




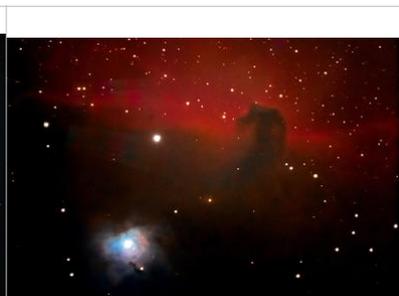
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* **Astronomy**

One of the reasons we chose Oracle as our home location is the dark sky at night. My husband is an astronomy nut, and I also have quite a bit of interest in it. He built an observatory on our land right after our house was finished. On clear nights he's managed to get a lot of nice photos. Here are a few. This first one is the Whirlpool Galaxy (M51):



Very new Moon exposed to reveal the dark part.



Horsehead Nebula



Cigar Galaxy (M82)

Here's a great shot of the Orio Nebula:



* * *

* **Reviews:** reviews without attribution are by the editor

TV

Penny Dreadful: the City of Angels, Showtime

This show impressed me, possibly because of my having lived in Los Angeles (which I consider to be my home town even though I wasn't born there). The show starts in 1938, just as Hitler is rising in power (Another of my interests is WWII). The show makers have taken many historical events and facts and warped them just enough to make the series a fantasy. For instance it's true that there was much friction between the whites and hispanics. The show has expanded this into a more serious issue. One of the leads is a hispanic policeman (It doesn't hurt the viewer that he's young and handsome.) It's also true that Hitler had a plot to take Los Angeles, and there were indeed Nazis in town. Two fantasy characters have a large part in these two plot elements. The mother of the hispanic police detective worships Santa Muerte, a goddess of death. The other supernatural character seems to be an incarnation of the devil played by Natalie Dormer. She appears in several different versions of herself. Another plot element is loosely based on the church founded by Aimee Semple McPherson.

I looked over the reviews on IMDB, and they seem largely negative, partly based on the fact that a previous show titled *Penny Deadful* was nothing like this show. I have no knowledge of the earlier show.

Personally I haven't reacted to a TV show in this way in a long time if ever. It just speaks to me on a really basic level.

#

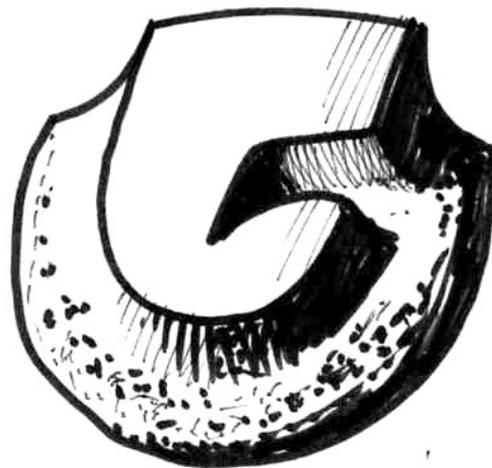
MOVIES

Lone Wolf and Cub: Sword of Vengeance, Lone Wolf and Cub: Baby Cart at the River Styx, Lone Wolf and Cub: Baby Cart to Hades, Lone Wolf and Cub: Baby Cart in Peril, TCM

These Japanese movies are about a disgraced samurai. He had been the lead Shogunate executioner. An opposing faction had tricked him into being dishonoured. Now he is a ronin wandering the country with his young son. Right after he had lost his position and his wife, he had given his son a choice between a toy and a sword. The boy had chosen the sword. The ronin built a robust and armed cart for his son. He travels the country seeking vengeance and also as an assassin for hire.

These movies are based on a manga and are done in a stylised manner. If you don't mind copious amounts of movie blood (completely fake looking), they are fun.

#



RITUAL OBJECT. WR86

Beauty and the Beast, TNT

This is the live action Disney version of their animated movie of the same name. I haven't seen the animated version since shortly after it came out, so I really need to see it again to make a comparison. I don't know why exactly, but I was very taken with this. Possibly it was the choice of actors: Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, Luke Evans, Josh Gad, Kevin Kline, Ewan McGregor, Ian McKellen, Emma Thompson, Audra McDonald, Stanley Tucci, and many others. The actors I named are the ones

who stood out for me. Kevin Kline, who played Belle's father, impressed me most. Emma Watson did a wonderful job of playing Belle. Anyway I've purchased my own copy.

#

***A Guy Named Joe*, TCM**

This is a Spencer Tracy flick from 1943. I don't generally care for Tracy, but I have to concede that he made some outstanding movies. This is one I hadn't known about. He plays a hotshot aviator in the Army Air Force during WWII and is killed on one mission. He becomes an angel guiding young pilots. The one assigned to him is played by a young Van Johnson, an actor I always found attractive. The one snag in the story is that the young pilot falls in love with the same woman that the Tracy character had loved. The Richard Dreyfuss movie *Always* was a remake of it, except that in that one the pilots are fire fighters working for the forest service. Dreyfuss plays the older pilot.

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

I have no current plans to attend any of the future worldcons that are on the calendar, but I intend to participate in WOOF if there is one.

This zine was mostly stitched together from pieces of recent issues of *Purrsonal Mewsings*. If you're interested in seeing other issues, you can check them out at <http://www.weasner.com/laurraine/Felinemewsings/index.html>.

Laurraine

5 August 2020

**REPORT
FROM
HOOPLE**
#140.587
FOR WOOF 2020

ROGER HILL
2661 Bowring Drive
Altadena, CA 91001
U.S.A
rhill@siue.edu
www.siue.edu/~rhill

at the “virtual” Worldcon #78 in Wellington, New Zealand. Also for APA-L #2883 of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS). This year’s WOOF is also #45, numbered as if there had been one every year since WOOF #1 in 1976 (there were actually 4 exceptions). Thanks once again to Guy Lillian III for handling WOOF this year, and of course to John Hertz for having kept WOOF from fading into oblivion.

Since I retired in 2010 from teaching physics at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, I had been spending the winters and summers in my native land of Altadena, CA, and the springs and falls back in IL — until this year. While I was making plans to go back to Illinois this March, the pandemic hit, and besides not wanting to fly, I decided it was much better being “stuck” here in my family home in California, not to mention the weather being nicer.

I have not been bored, though. I do miss folk dancing (which has gone virtual like everything else) and getting together at the archives of the Orange Empire Railway Museum to scan and catalog photos. But a lot of my activities are doable at home, especially since I’m retired. So, despite the horror of the pandemic, there has been a “silver lining” for me, extra time to catch up on things I had planned but never seemed to have the time for. One of these was to get and set up a slide scanner, which I’ve wanted for years. After some research (and a lot of soul-searching), I finally splurged on a Nikon CoolScan 9000, top of the line for scanning Kodachrome slides which most of my photos are. Nikon stopped making them some years ago, but I was able to get it on eBay from a seller who specialized in refurbishing these things. It took some doing to get it to work on my Windows 7 laptop, but it’s working and does a great job. Beside scanning my own slides, I can bring slides from the museum and scan them here.

Another activity that I have mentioned here before is to add to my collection of 3D movies and try to catch up on watching them. Also I have a lot of house-cleaning and organizing to do (Real Soon Now...).

Usual Plea: I am still trying to get ahold of WOOF #6, collated in Denver in 1981, and WOOF #30 (or #31?), collated in Anaheim in 2006. I know these both existed!

COMMENTS ON WOOF #44 (2019)

Kees van Toorn: Congratulations on producing the first all-electronic version of WOOF! It looks very nice, is easy to read by scrolling, has nice color photos and illos, seamlessly merges contributions formatted for different sizes of paper, and is easy to send around the world. And I’m less likely to lose it, assuming nothing catastrophic happens to my computer and/or I’ve backed up my files. Of course, it does break the old tradition of APAs being printed, collated, and stapled, but one can always print out the PDF and curl up to it with bottles of corflu, Ditto fluid, etc. to sniff now and then tor added atmostphere... ☺

Juan Sanmiguel (OASFIS Event Horizon): Very nice tribute to Stan Lee. He will certainly be missed!

Guy Lillian III (Robo-Rooter): Thanks for your comments, and congratulations on your 70th! I found it hard to believe myself when I reached that point. But as the saying goes, you’re only as old as you feel.

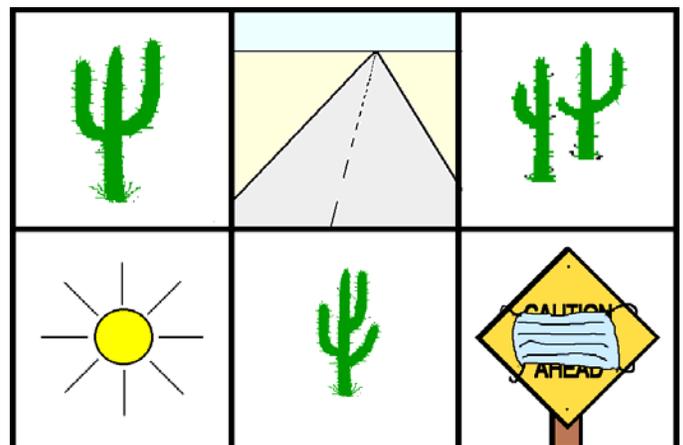
I’ll compile some revised WOOF statistics as soon as I can locate a few issues that somehow got misplaced, and especially if I can get the two that I don’t have (and thanks for spreading the word!). I have to admit to being somewhat lazy about looking for them; there are a couple of people whom I ought to have contacted, and eBay has also been suggested. I did try putting “woof” in eBay and found a nice designer dog diaper—not quite what I’m after—but there’s a lot under “science fiction fanzine” including some APA-L’s. Will have to dig deeper; who knows what may be there...

And yes, there are quite a lot of railway museums in the US (as well as other countries), the oldest of its kind being the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, ME. One of the largest is the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, IL, and also the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, CA (recently renamed the Southern California Railway Museum but still referred to by its previous name by many of the members). “Orange Empire” is a former name of the now-called Inland Empire about 50 miles east of Los Angeles, and it was also the name of a scenic trolley trip through the orange groves before they got taken over by housing developments, stores, and parking lots. The museum, located in Perris, CA, started in the 1950’s when streetcar and interurban lines were being abandoned, and a group of (then) mostly teenagers managed to buy and save some of the cars; over the years it gradually grew and acquired other types of railroad equipment besides trolleys. Among other things, there are a couple of miles of track on which visitors can ride the old trolleys and other equipment.

Ahrvid Engholm (Intermission #87.5): Interesting article about Harry Martinson and the Atomic Noah club.

Jan Vaněk Jr. (Newt News #0): Enjoyed your history of Czech fanzines, along with the rest of your zine. Your footnote on *přechylování* (gender-marking suffixes) reminds me of a couple who got married in the US; the groom was Macedonian with surname “Destinovski”. The bride had to adopt the same surname according to US tradition, but when they went back to Macedonia it sounded strange because hers should have been “Destinovska”. They probably got it resolved somehow.

A VIRTUAL ROAD THINGIE



YTTERBIUM

NONOXIDE

August 2020

WOOF Collation #45 (Worldcon 78)

Prepared by Alan Stewart,
PO Box 7111, Richmond, Victoria, 3121 AUSTRALIA.
fiawol@netspace.net.au

Brownian Noise

As some of you will know my ANZAPA zine is called *Ytterbium*, and I'm putting together this one-off for WOOF, but trying to give some of the flavor of that zine. There probably won't be the regular features of that zine (Chocolate roundup and beer), it is last minute. I'll save it as a PDF and email it off. As the whole collation will be a PDF, I may play around with font colours.

Continuing a sort of WOOF tradition, here's some photos that I took on a previous visit to Wellington. This was in 1991, and I was the FFANZ delegate to New Zealand and I attended Forrycon, the New Zealand Natcon for that year.

These were scanned from photos on a friend's scanner, and there may be a white 'blotch' on most. Sigh.





Original artwork on display at the convention.





Most of the photos I took have been sent to Nigel Rowe to be included in an exhibition of New Zealand Natcons to appear at CoNZealand. Apart from this last one, the others will not be used in that exhibition. Here I am with Forrycon GoH, Forrest J Ackerman. Now I notice the red eyes, and old 1991 glasses.



Comments on WOOF 2019

The PDF only format should work again for this WOOF. I assume Guy will work out how to get the mega collated file to contributors.

Juan Sanmiguel

A repeat of page 1 in my copy of the PDF pretty much threw out the rhythm of all the rest of the collated WOOF. Dang, I didn't pick this up before hitting print.

Thanks for your Worldcon report, but the opening and closing ceremonies are about the only events we attended in common.

Guy H Lillian III

Nice inner robot portrait.

I've recorded *First Man* from when I had free Foxtel movies earlier this year, but haven't watched it yet. I'll probably submit an A4 PDF for this collation. Will I have any trouble printing the final file if there are a bunch of US letter sized pages in there? Or do PDFs automatically fit to paper in the printer? I guess I'll find out when (or if) I end up back at work in the office with access to a nice printer and scanner.

Ahrvid Engholm

I saw the movie version of *Aniara* last year. I'd forgotten the book had so many depressing parts.

Kudos for an interesting contribution at such short notice.

Jan Vanek Jr

Looking through my photos for possible scanning towards the exhibition at CoNZealand, I came across this one of Eva Hausser (GUFF delegate from Czechoslovakia) and Rex Thompson (FFANZ delegate from New Zealand) I took at Syncon, 17–20 April 1992.



In my printout your zine became a verso then recto page, not a 2-sided one!

John Coxon and España Sheriff

It looks like I must remember to look up *Lulzine*, particularly as I spent many hours last year playing 4-player *Gloomhaven*.

Guy H Lillian III

Now to visit efanzines. The last *Challenger* I've downloaded and printed out is #38. Other zines which look interesting include *Claims department*, and nice to see *Warp* still going.

LASFS lost its clubhouse? I thought it had owned it, but I may be misinformed or misremembering.

Roger Hill

Regarding genealogy, what I have found out from my father and sister, who was/is more into it than me, my ancestors arrived in Australia in the mid 1800s as free settlers. No convicts in this Aussie's family tree.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi

The 'modified from' comment explains the earlier references to photos on pages 9, 10 and 7, and illos on p. 18, said pages not being in this zine.

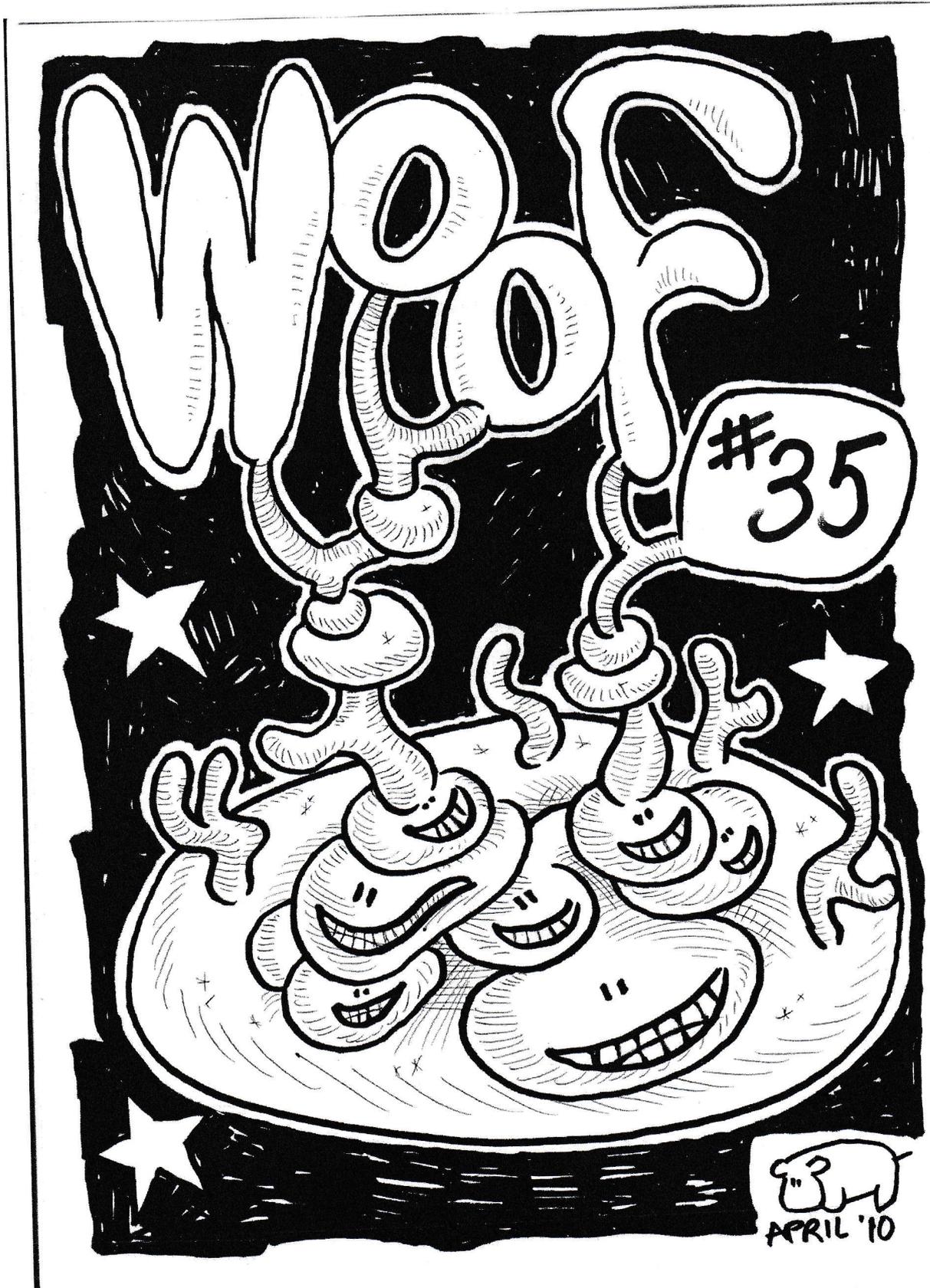
Mark L Blackman

Your zine was missing from the Table of contents. A very late addition?

The end-of-summer party/cookout and summer party sound like fun occasions. I can't recall any fannish parties/cooking in Melbourne lately, but then I'm not on facebook so there may have been some I was not aware of. Of course that would only have been before the lockdown in March.

David Langford

Good to see *Ansible* continues to be franked through APAs, as I still do so for ANZAPA. This year lately being all PDF, similar to WOOF 44. It might go back to print next year. There will probably be a vote of members.



Aussiecon 4 2010