

The



TUCKER

TRANSFER

This is the one-shot fanzine of THE TUCKER TRANSFER - a fan fund to send Wilson "Bob" Tucker to Seacon, the 1979 Worldcon in Brighton, England.

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The TUCKER TRANSFER:

THE TRUE STORIES

Bob Tucker is known and loved by many people, and they are willing to do a little something extra for him from time to time.

That might mean a lift to a con or sharing a hotel room, thereby providing themselves and others with the pleasure of his company at a con he couldn't otherwise afford to attend.

These many friends of Bob's have also proven that they care enough for Bob to send him somewhere where most of them could not be. But the Aussies got great pleasure out of this kindness as well as Bob.

This time we're sending him to Great Britain. Maybe if we could have sent an ambassador like him some time ago we wouldn't have needed a Revolution.

Bob Tucker is known and loved by many people, but he's terrible about remembering their names.

After six years in fandom I first really met Bob when during a party at Torcon he scratched my back because it was there. Three years and many cons later, Bob finally recognized me at Big MAC. "You're Lisa Tuttle, aren't you?"

Totocon, 1977, 1½ years after GRR Martin and I had married, I asked Bob if I'd told him how we smoothed champagne at our wedding. His face lit up and he hugged me and said, "I didn't know you guys were married." Not five minutes later Bob tried to introduce a friend, but he couldn't remember either of our names.

When later that con Jan Finder was looking for a ~~sucker~~ person to run a Tuckerfund, I accepted. I had a plan... if Bob can't remember my name by Seacon's end, no return trip!

Where We Stand...

Not only is getting to England rather expensive, but so is staying there. Our goal is to cover Bob's airfare plus some room and board expenses, although obviously not all of those. To date, early November 1978, the fund has roughly \$500 which should be at least half way if not more. One problem is in determining the airfare -- the summer rates won't be firmed up until March 1, 1979. Meanwhile, money-raising will continue on, to Seacon if necessary. Just in case our goal is exceeded, the excess funds will be passed on to the other fan funds.

THE SPEECH MUST GO ON



Standing up there in front of several hundred fans, Bob Tucker was really getting into his Guest of Honor speech. His voice rose and fell as he increased or decreased his inflection and his arms were beginning to wave around, adding visual emphasis to his comments. As his words captured and held the attention of his audience, he had the appearance of a man totally within his element. Tucker in his majesty was an impressive sight.

This sensation was shattered when seven or eight fans began marching down the aisle while blowing kazoos with all their wind power. They maintained their semblance of a tune as they filled the stage behind the speaker. To his credit, Bob Tucker did his best to ignore this outburst. Not once did he falter in the delivery of his speech, although the crowd was no longer paying as close attention as they had been.

This, I thought to myself, is a hell of a way to treat your Guest of Honor. Even for a Disclave.

Ever since I moved into the Washington D.C. greater metropolitan area several years ago, I have been attending the local regional sf convention, the Disclave, with the sort of regularity that would make a prune packer proud. My attendance record has been helped by the fact that it has been held in the same hotel (the Sheraton-Park) on the same weekend (Memorial Day) each year that I've been here. The Disclaves have been consistently enjoyable, somewhat crazy at times, but enjoyable. I think that a large share of the credit for their success has to go to Dolly and Alexis Gilliland, the two folks who have been in charge of the conventions. Anyone who knows these two also knows that they make absolutely no effort to restrain their very active senses of humor and this attitude has permeated the Disclaves. The 1978 convention was to be the last Disclave that they would run --at least for now-- and they took certain steps to insure that it would be a memorable convention. One of the most important of those steps was selecting Bob Tucker for their Guest of Honor.

Can there be anyone who does not know who Bob Tucker is? Somewhere there no doubt is an individual who has led such a sheltered and deprived life that he or she has not read Tucker's fan writings nor his professional sf and mystery stories, and who has never had the pleasure of speaking with the man in person. I cannot help but feel both pity and envy for that individual. Pity for what the person has missed out on; envy for the thrill of discovery that awaits him or her.

Bob Tucker has been Guest of Honor at more conventions than the total number of cons some fans have attended. Such honors as he has received have been well earned and frequently long overdue. He has become a master at performing his Guest of Honor duties, yet he never makes it seem less than a great personal honor. I felt certain he would come up with something special for Disclave.

To an extent he would have to because Disclave presents a special problem to those who must give Guest of Honor speeches: there is no banquet. No, honestly. The speech is given in the afternoon in one of the meeting halls, and the only food present is food for thought. The problem is that one of the mainstays of Guest of Honor speeches has been a series of cracks about the food everyone has just eaten. Obviously the absence of a banquet tends to knock the hell out of jokes about the quality of the banquet food. Not even Bob Tucker is fearless enough to jest about rubber chicken that wasn't there.

Bob rose to the occasion and came up with a topic to counter the absence of food jokes: he talked about science fiction.

The beginning of the speech struck me as rather peculiar. Steve Stiles and Alexis Gilliland placed two easels on the stage behind Tucker, one on each side. They announced that they were going to do some sketches which would later be auctioned to raise money for fan funds, things like TAFF, DUFF and the Tucker Transfer. This was a good concept and both were skilled artists but I wondered if two artists drawing might not be distracting during the speech.

Tucker launched into his talk and informed us that science fiction was no longer a ghetto; it had, in fact, become the mainstream. He went on to support this statement by citing some of the contract figures that had been reported in the fan and professional press, figures of such size that they would certainly have mainstream authors knocking at sf's door.

Yet while Bob was talking my eyes kept wandering to first Steve and then Alexis, trying to make out what they were drawing. I was seated towards the rear of the room and basically all I could see was their hands moving along huge sheets of sketch paper. They may have been sketching Tucker, doing cartoons about the audience, or, for all I could tell, drawing likenesses of the invisible rubber chickens. I turned my attention back to Bob, thinking that those artist types can be strange at times.

By now Tucker was working his magic. The audience was in the palms of his hands, metaphorically speaking -- which is just as well since Tucker's hands in actuality were gesturing most emphatically. Bob continued talking about science fiction's increasing importance as a literary force and its growing financial success for publishers and authors.

At this moment the kazoo band began its "performance." As they marched down the aisle, I made out several faces that belonged to Baltimorians (or are they called Baltimorons?). Disgraceful and downright rude, I thought to myself. Were they the sort of fans who got a perverted thrill out of banquets; the type who enjoy the clatter of dishes and who get off on watching the Guest of Honor spill gravy down his chin? How could they do this to that fine man Bob Tucker? This action only served to reinforce my belief that no one from Baltimore should be trusted, with the exception of Steve Stiles and Spiro Agnew.

Tucker refused to let these kazoo commandos disrupt his speech. He increased the level of his voice and waved his hands about with even more vigor. Despite all, his message came across: science fiction is hot shit (but not in quite those words).*

Those cretinous kazooers departed and the Guest of Honor's speech returned to a normal state. Bob ploughed ahead, broaching the subject of sf magazine circulation figures. He was giving some information about Fantastic's sales when the door behind him burst open. Charging through it were two overweight men in barbarian combat gear. One swung his weapon at the other's shield and all too soon blows were being exchanged, accompanied by a loud ringing sound as metal hit metal and by beast-like grunts.

Tucker did not bat an eyelash.

The audience, however, did.

*Editor's note: Hot Shit was a fanzine put out by Terry Hughes, and to think I spent all these years waiting for such revelation.

This, I thought to myself as was becoming my habit, is beginning to look a bit fishy. I said as much to the person seated next to me. "Chris," I said, "this is beginning to look a bit fishy." However, he was too busy laughing at the spectacle to pay attention to my astute observations. Raising my voice, I continued, "This might all be a pre-arranged presentation." Things cannot slip past my keen blue eyes that easily.

Bob Tucker continued speaking. However, he moved his head slightly away from the microphones so that his words were nearly inaudible. His mouth was flapping away and his hands remained animated. He even pointed at the sheets he held in his hands and I suppose those pages contained figures to support his statements. I was almost certain there was more to this than met the eye.

This process of Tucker speaking with various interruptions taking place behind him continued through a song and dance number, a young man and young woman taking turns chasing each other, and a massive anachronistic battle. This array of interrupters ran out of steam before Bob Tucker did. Con Chairman Alexis Gilliland approached Tucker and whispered into his ear, and the microphone, that the speech was running too long and should be concluded quickly. As usual, Bob became wrapped up in his speech that he forgot about this admonition. After impatiently waiting for him to end, Alexis went up to repeat his message with a greater urgency. Tucker told him not to worry. He then continued his speech. When Alexis approached a bit later, Bob uttered the phrase "In conclusion . . ." but it fooled no one.

With a couple of jokes Bob Tucker finished his Guest of Honor speech and received a standing ovation.

The man is a comic genius. He had worked things out with Alexis and Dolly so that the talk and the interruptions could be meshed as smoothly as possible, including the bits where Alexis would urge him to wrap up his talk. At the party later that night, Dolly confided to me that they had planned to include a bagpipe interruption as well but the pipers failed to show up. They would have made a nice addition but they were not needed.

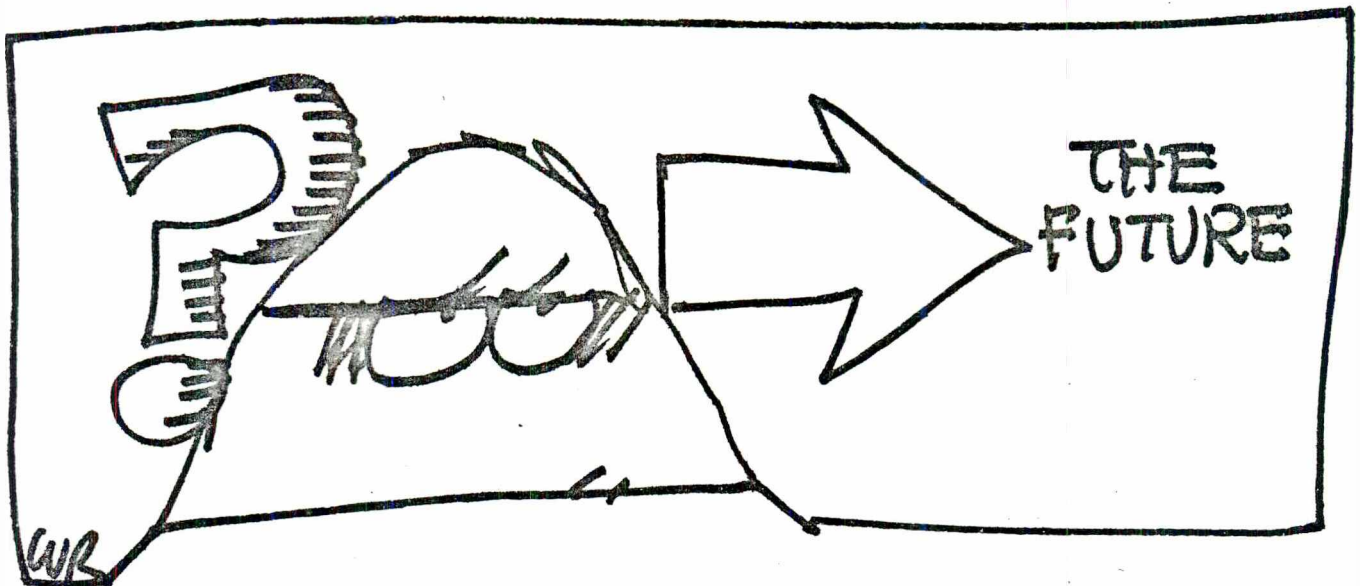
Bob Tucker had taken the innermost fears of Guests of Honor -- that of suffering embarrassing interruptions in the midst of their speeches, being told that they were going on too long and being urged to wrap it up quickly-- and made them an actual part of the speech, a physical reality. He continued his jape by basing his speech on themes that have been over-worked by sf speakers for ages, but Bob did include several Tuckerish twists. It was an event that does not translate well to the printed page since it was something that must be experienced by all of one's senses to be fully appreciated. It was a most memorable Guest of Honor speech.

Only Bob Tucker would come up with this outrageous concept and only he could pull it off (with the assistance of his zany cohorts). Soon the fine fans in Britain should be getting the opportunity to meet and speak with this talented fan and warm human being. They will no doubt become as fond of Bob Tucker as the fans have in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Just don't leave him along with your girlfriend or your whiskey.

THE LONG LOUD INFLUENCE

howard waldrop



"THE PROBLEM WITH THE MYTH OF THE
APOCALYPSE IS THAT THERE'S NO PLACE
YOU CAN GO WITH IT."

jon landau

"I'M GONNA TELL YOU HOW IT'S GONNA BE."

buddy holly

The first real sf book I ever read was Chad Oliver's Mists of Dawn. I was eight years old and it was 1954. The second or third was Wilson Tucker's The Long Loud Silence. It was the book that I needed to get through the Fifties and get out of them alive.

Let me tell you about the 1950s. The worst drought in US history was going on, from 1951 to 1957. I remember cracks in the ground so wide you could lose your little brother in one, and a sky the heat and color of the top part of a battered aluminum

pressure cooker. Nothing but sky and heat from April until October.

Being eight years old in 1954 meant being sure I was going to die in an A-bomb blast. I lived six miles from Carswell Air Force Base. B-36s, leviathans of the skies, flew over on their way God knows where with God knows what inside them. Every morning I would ask myself, is this the day? Is the sky going to fill up with Tu-44 Badger bombers and IL-28 jets and MiG-17s and ugly missiles with hammers and sickles all over them? Are the sirens going to start?

See, the 1950s were pretty much The Pits before rock'n'roll came to save us all. When you turned on your tv (which we had just got) in 1954, you could see lots of stuff you didn't want to. Like, the Army-McCarthy hearings. CONELRAD alerts, which showed slow-motion footage of Operation Ivy tests, in which the Army built mock cities and blew them up, to show that interesting things would happen to concrete, wood and human beings when subjected to a couple of kilotons of fissionable materials. Eisenhower was President, and Richard Nixon was just a heartbeat away. The PTA was burning comic books in the streets because they caused juvenile delinquency. Among those burned were The Next War, Atom Age Combat and World War III Comics. The swimming pools were closed in the summer from lack of water and threat of disease, because the poliomyelitis vaccine was still a gleam in Jonas Salk's eye.

When you went to the movies, along with the garbage and the Jeff Chandler films, you couldn't get away from the Bomb. You could see Invasion USA, The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms, Hell and High Water, and Them! They were saying that not only would we have to live with the Bomb and die from it, but that if we somehow lived through it we would be ripped apart by the hands and claws of some mutant lifeform.

Space offered the only hope that I, eight years old, could see. The stars were up there. We'd already sent up a few mice in Aerobee rockets and guinea pigs in balloons. The big scientific debate, three years before Sputnik, was whether you'd need a meteor bumper once you got into space. It was tantalizingly close, but too far away. We'd all be dead in a few years. The only thing left would be rats the size of horses and crabs the size of Cadillacs.

It was a tough time to be a kid.

I had just started reading sf, partly to get away from the Bomb, partly out of dread fascination with what was going to happen to me. Nobody who was raised in the Fifties believed in the peaceful use of the atom. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still too close to the adults, and children had known no time free of the threat of nuclear war.

So I opened up The Long Loud Silence and read it. I don't think I've ever been the same. Here was a novel filled with everything I ever wanted to know about what it would be like After The Bomb. Most of us would die. Those who didn't would consider those who did lucky, because they would be slowly forced to strip themselves of all those human skills which didn't aid jungle survival. They would maintain shreds of their humanity -- memories, reflection, nagging feelings of sympathy and decency -- but only at the cost of their animal instincts. Life would go on. There was some glimmer of hope rising from stupidity and barbarism.

I reread the book every year up until about the age sixteen. In the meantime, and since, I've read all the other After The Bomb/ Last Person Left Alive books and seen all the movies. On The Beach (the movie) hit me at puberty, when you're susceptible to influences you question the rest of your life. The Day the World Ended (and its remake, Doomsday: 2087 A.D.), The Last Woman on Earth, Shiel's The Purple Cloud and the movie from it, The World, The Flesh and the Devil, Panic in the Year Zero, Five, This is Not a Test, Captive Women, La Jetee, World Without End, Beyond the Time Barrier, The Bed-Sitting Room, Mary Shelley's The Last Man. I've seen and read them all, and they're all filed away in corners of my mind, and will show up somewhere in my thinking and my work.

But none so much so The Long Loud Silence.

I'll tell you a few things about the book and what it's done to me and for me, and then let you continue on enjoying people writing about Bob Tucker, the person and fan. This is about the writer, Wilson Tucker.

Primo: I've written three conscious After the War/Last People Left Alive works. I had'nt stopped to think about it before, but Tucker had more to do with them than either he or I knew.

When Jake Saunders and I finished The Texas-Israeli War: 1999 in '73, the first thing I did was to go back and reread The Long Loud Silence. To make sure I hadn't unconsciously stolen something. Well, not that I know of, except that we had the tank squadron stop at a roadside park for chow. Sure enough, if you read your Tucker, you'll find the bullion crew from Ft. Knox pulls in at a roadside park for the night. The radio broadcasts in The Long Loud Silence are not quite as surreal as ours, but that's the difference between urbane Davenport, Iowa and buckle-on-the-Bible-belt south Texas. There's no cannibalism in our book, but plenty of farm people running around with shotguns and .22s.

The most pervasive influence is that it's business as usual, during apocalypse. Everybody doesn't just break down and become filled with survivor's guilt. They get on with what they have to do, and some, like Russell Gary, do good jobs.

In "Mary Maragret Road-Grader" I had your basic after-things-fell-apart-gathering-of-the-tribes story, with liberal doses of

diesel worship and nostalgia. As an editor once said, I "started with Stone Age barbarians and went downhill from there." Unconsciously, I did the same things Tucker did: things are more primitive at the end than at the beginning, but they're more peaceful, too.

The Long Loud Silence follows a descending and arithmetic curve along the lines of the Ultimate Arms Limitation Talks. The book opens with War World III, more powerful than that you can't get. Russell Gary goes to the local all-night gun store and outfits himself with enough personal armament to have satisfied Pancho Villa. Partway through the book, he carries a shotgun. In the last chapter, he's down to a .22 rifle because it kills as easily as a cannon, if you do it right. The offensive action in the book is hitting someone in the head with the handle of a knife. After that, there's nothing left but teeth and fists.

Even so, the last chapter (of the original edition) of The Long Loud Silence is a peaceful one, full of snow and promise, and it's about the only quiet chapter in the whole book.

In "All About Strange Monsters of the Recent Past," I had the last man left after all the 1950s monster movies come true. He was a soldier who makes his own separate peace with the monsters, choosing to die when and by whose jaws he wants, rather than fighting just one more inane holding action for what's left of authority. This was mostly because I'd just gotten out of the Army, and realized that if anyone would have been sent to fight monsters, it would have been me. But there's more of Russell Gary in the story than I realized at the time.

Secundo: As in all good books, there are scenes you will remember for the rest of your life in The Long Loud Silence. And it will amaze you how many of those scenes you remember wrong. That's the sign of an even better book, because you keep remembering them through the years, filling in details like you want. When I reread the novel in 1973, I looked with great expectations toward some of my favorite scenes. I'll tell you about them and what I found.

First, the woman on the floor, turning blue, pointing a barbed finger at Gary when he returns with groceries on his disastrous trip across the River in New Orleans. (The finger was barbed, at one point. The woman, however, was red-purple. The city was either Shreveport or Little Rock).

The farm family listening to the radio, wondering aloud about life on the other side of the River, a scene filled with nostalgia and quiet heartbreak. (Gary is the only one we see listening to the radio. There is heartbreak, but it's all his, and it sure isn't quiet.)

The frightening description of the cannibalized body of the farm boy. (There is none.)

The idyll with Jay Oliver and the woman on the Gulf Coast and its tragic breakup. (It's not that idyllic. The groundwork for the

dissolution is laid long before. It's not tragic. I didn't remember his return trip there, either.)

The terrible fight, in the snow, in the last chapter, with the guy who waits outside his cave for him. (It's not terrible. It's not even there, it happened years before. The description takes less than a paragraph, and it is remembrance.)

I did remember, almost word for word, the old woman getting shot off the bridge, Gary killing the robber sneaking up on the farmhouse and dumping his body in the creek while the radio played, and the last line of the book.

Some things you can't forget.

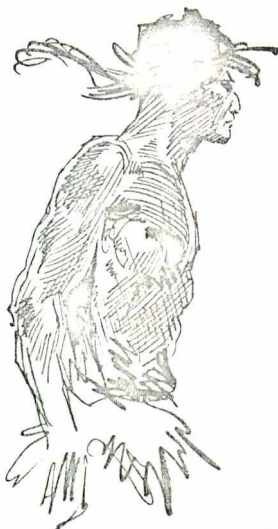
Tertio, and quod erat demonstrandum: I reread the novel last week. It is celebrating its 27th birthday, and I hope something I write sometime can hold up that well. It takes you back to a time and place when there was every possibility that the then 48 states would cease to be, along with the rest of civilization, overnight. The Long Loud Silence, more than any other book, brings the fears and justifications of that deadening decade into focus. But Tucker's book is no socio-political barrage of words. It's a novel about real people, and what they do, and you and I would do, if we had to. Not pretty, not pleasant things. But with that reversion to savagery, we'd still keep some of the dreams we had when we thought we could hack it in this post-modern civilization we have. That's the thing The Long Loud Silence still has to say.

#

I met Wilson Tucker for the first time in 1976 at MidAmericon. We started talking. I told him the first thing I'd done after finishing the first draft of my novel was to reread The Long Loud Silence to make sure I hadn't copped anything from him.

He looked around. "The first thing I did when I finished that book was to go back and reread George Stewart's The Earth Abides, to make sure I hadn't copped anything from him," he said.

It was time for a drink.



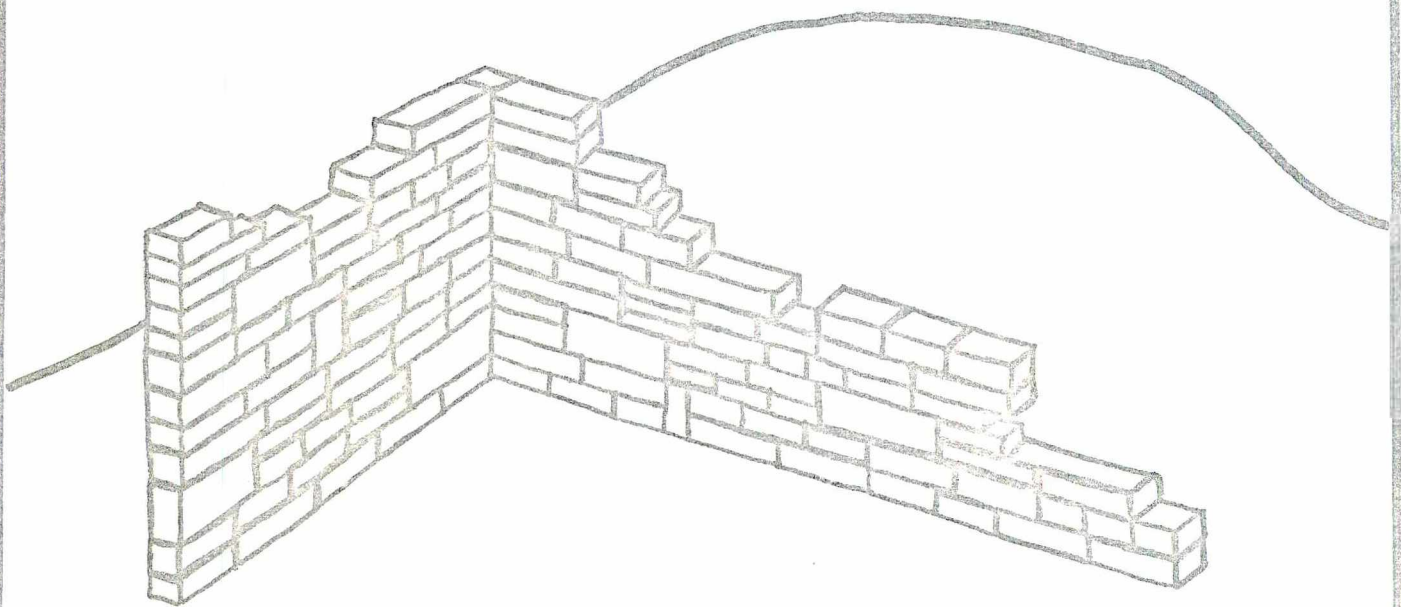
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NEW DISCOVERY
ON TUMULUS T



PREHISTORIC SHRINE IN NORTH AMERICA

REPORTED BY PHYLLIS EISENSTEIN

Dr. Oliver Chadwick reports the discovery, during excavation of Tumulus T, of an ancient religious shrine. The site was first uncovered during roadbuilding across the so-called Radioactive Desert of North America, now no longer dangerous; earth-moving equipment exposed the northeast portion of the mound, bringing a number of metallic artifacts to light, and construction was then suspended for the remainder of the season by the regional autocrat while Dr. Chadwick and his party made its investigations. Excavation was hampered by the numerous wild animals of the region, especially the dogs, rats and mutant humanoids, but an elite corps of guards dispatched by the autocrat prevented any loss of life among the excavators. Through their efforts, the archeological party was also kept plentifully supplied with fresh meat.

There are no remains above ground at all at Tumulus T, but the mound is 43 feet high and has a considerable reputation locally as a sacred site; natives from as far away as the western coast of the continent have been known to make pilgrimage to it, sometimes more than once per lifetime. Those who walk upon the mound are reputed to acquire certain arcane powers, especially the ability to consume alcoholic beverages in unlimited quantities without deleterious effect. They are also credited with enhanced senses of humor and uncannily mesmeric effects on members of the opposite sex. The god of the mound is known in the contemporary dialect as Tucker, and every time a native invokes that name, he must raise his right hand above his head and make a ritual, scooping gesture with it. There also appears to be an incantation associated with the gesture, but its meaning was not known even to the users.

Among the most significant finds were a large number of uniform-sized cylindrical metal containers, each with a thumbnail-sized aperture at one end. Fragments of metal that fit these apertures were also found, either separately or inside the containers themselves. Attached to almost every fragment was a metal ring, suggesting that the fragments were worn as finger ornaments, or perhaps as pendants on neck chains. They may have been good luck charms, sometimes deposited in the containers as votive offerings.

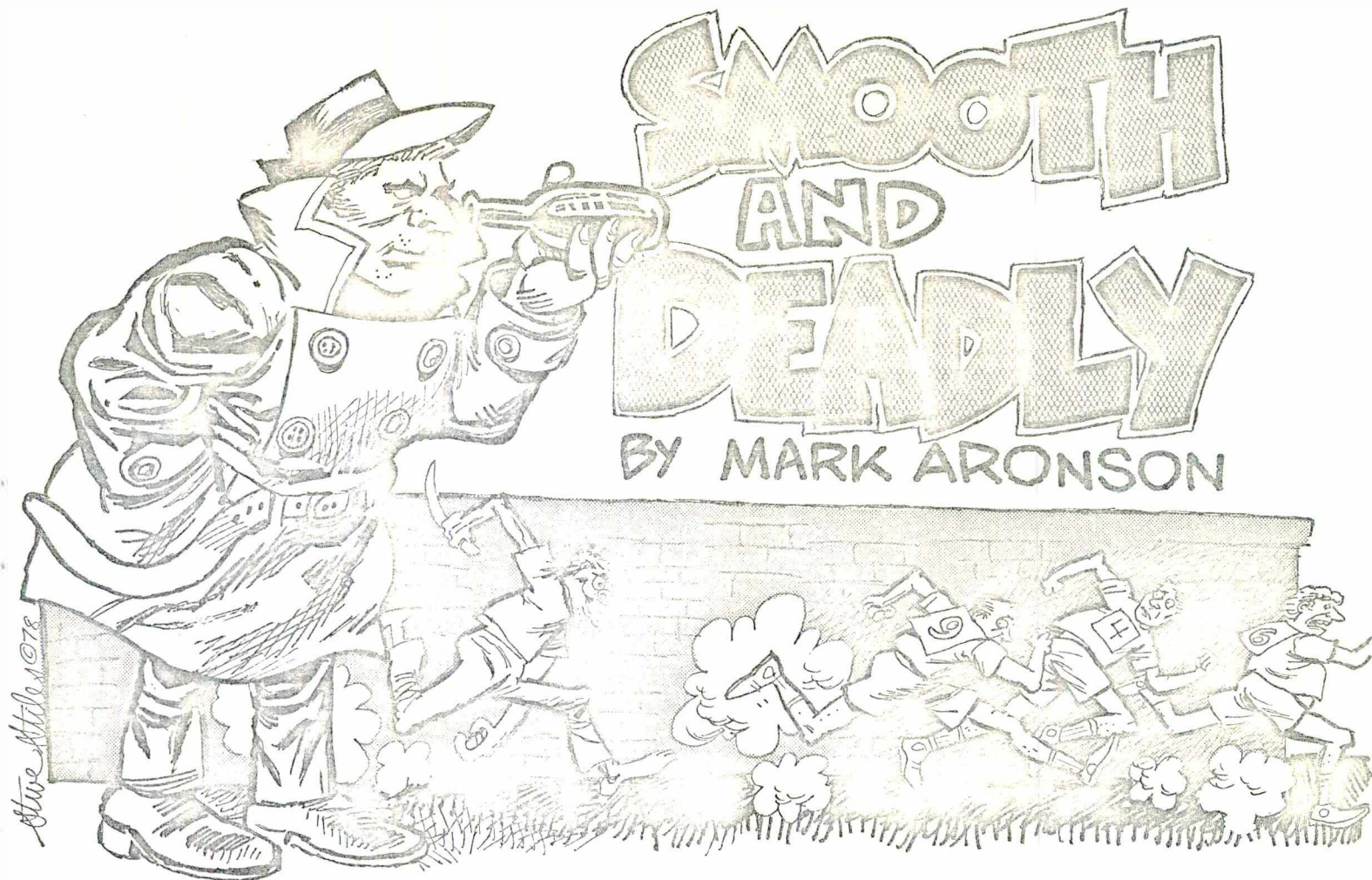
Color residues on the containers themselves hint at elaborate decoration, possibly prayer inscriptions; this line of reasoning is supported by the discovery of so many of the containers in large aggregations, as if they had been piled on altars. Single containers were also sometimes found, usually at one end of a large chamber, a likely location for a major altar -- apparently they were used by the high priests as well as the common worshippers. Along with these single containers were often found metal phallic symbols that may have been priestly wands. Dr. Chadwick hypothesizes that the containers, which never held more than one votive offering each, may have also been foreskin receptacles, the foreskin being sacrificed by its owner on the altar of Tucker. Such organic material, of course, would not have endured to the present day. The current population's strong association of the god Tucker with sex lends this hypothesis some credence.

Also among the more numerous remains were glass bottles of every size and shape, and fragments of transparent plastic which appear to have constituted vessels of some sort. The contrast between opacity of the cylinders and transparency of these items may indicate some sort of public display of the latter's contents. Possibly they contained relics of the early acolytes of the god Tucker. Alternatively, they held materials used during a communion-like ritual, possibly euphoria-inducing plants such as are known to grow wild all over the region. Some of the glass bottles bear inscriptions in relief on their surfaces, but so far none of these have been decoded.

The only other obviously religious artifact unearthed was a rotating drum turned by a handcrank, apparently a prayer wheel. It was surrounded by unidentifiable carbonized remains (from the destruction by fire of the shrine) which yielded a radiocarbon date of 1980 plus or minus 150 years. Thus the building dates from the end of the Atomic Era and is one of the oldest religious monuments of the continent.

The building itself is of some artistic as well as archeological interest. The foundation are a sort of concrete similar to that used by many ancient civilizations, including the Olmec, the Roman, and the Californian. But the walls, from the crumbled evidence, were constructed of hundreds of different kinds of bricks, all cleverly fitted together. This engineering achievement must rank with that of the Andean civilization, where carefully dressed stones of many sizes were fitted together to form monumental structures. Dr. Chadwick hypothesizes that the bricks were all handmade by individual worshippers and brought to the site as offerings to the god Tucker, after which they were incorporated into the shrine.

A reconstruction of the Tucker Temple is now underway at the University of Tierra del Fuego and will be opened to the public sometime next year.



I usually let Maggie open the mail in the morning; morning and I don't get along too well. But business hasn't been too good lately, so I've been getting in early (can't sleep anyway) to look for a couple of checks that ought to be coming my way. This early in the morning, the sun shines through the big street window and paints my sign on the opposite wall: "Hack Maul, Discreet Investigations." It takes cash to keep those letters on the window, and lately I've been coming up short.

So there I was, riffling through the morning mail, slouched in the chair behind the old wooden desk that was all my partner left me when he bought the farm on the Baxter case. Bills. No checks. Just like it's been all month.

I took a couple of belts from a bottle I keep in the bottom drawer. It sizzled on the way down and then gave me a couple of belts; good stuff. My cigaret kept dropping out of my mouth, so I pushed a carpet tack through my lower lip and stuck the butt back on it. You've got to be tough to survive in this business.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the doorknob turning slowly. Suddenly I remembered I'd left the outer office door unlocked. Maggie wasn't due for another half an hour; anyone could just wander in. Could mean trouble.

Quieter than an alley cat sneaking through the kitchen door at the Ritz I pulled my .38 Police Special from its shoulder holster, leveled it at the door and unfolded myself from the beat up old leather swivel chair.

The door opened a crack and kept opening. My finger tightened on the trigger. It was a guy. He had one hand on the doorknob, the other on the edge of the door. Unarmed. I relaxed, but kept Old Faithful handy. You can't be too careful in this racket.

Then with a shock like the sound of bouncing garbage cans on the morning after a long night I recognized him! Every strand of salt-and-pepper hair was plastered in place, except for the maverick forelock. How many times has that high-cheekboned mug stared out at me from front pages and TV screens? Sure I recognized him. Who wouldn't?

But there was still one question: What was Bob Tucker doing in a down-at-the-heels dick's office?

I was feeling a little warm, so I spit out what was left of my cig because it was making the tack too hot. The butt landed at Tucker's feet; the tack sailed across the room and crucified a cockroach crawling up the wall. I lit another coffin nail with a match that I scratched to life on my eyeball. Tough.

"Sit down," I told Tucker. He sat. There was no sign of the famous smile or the flashing eyes. He was in trouble. Big trouble.

"I'm in trouble," he said. "Big trouble."

"So's everyone who hits that chair," I said. "What's yours?"

You could see the words weren't going to come easy. He looked around and put his index finger alongside his nose, then let his hand fall back to his lap and looked up.

"It's my Smooth," he said. "It's gone."

Well, you could have knocked me over with an alderman's conscience. I was in shock. That gesture -- the single raised hand swooping down like a pigeon's bomb run, the sigh, that word, drawn out and sweet as a hustler's hustle: "Smoooooth." Gone! How could Tucker be Tucker without it?

"Are you sure it's gone?" I asked. "Absolutely sure?"

He nodded. "Can hardly even get the word out anymore. My hand won't move -- and the only drink I can think about is buttermilk. It's sad, I tell you, plain sad."

I scooped a pad of yellow paper up from the desk and chewed a new point onto the stub of a pencil lying next to it.

"All right," I said, "begin at the beginning. Don't leave anything out. You never know what's important."

"It was a woman," he began.

I should have known -- you can't trust dames. They'll always cross you.

"Yes, it was a woman. She took advantage of my trusting nature and inexperience -- for, as you know, I am never less than extremely gallant to members of the fairer sex. Anyway, dear old Dad was gone for the evening and she and I were . . . having some innocent fun. But nothing that Dad would disapprove of, no sir. And just when I was . . . most vulnerable, she hopped right off . . . the furniture and pointed this -- well, I don't know exactly what it was, looked something like a big plastic jewel covered with blinking lights -- this jewel, or whatever it was, straight at me. I tingled all over and knew it was gone, gone forever. No more Smooth. Never again. I must have passed out, because the next thing I knew, she was gone. And you've got to help me find her!"

I was getting all this down while Tucker looked around nervously for a glass of buttermilk. I heard the outer office door swing open. It had to be Maggie. I looked at my watch; she was early.

Maggie breezed through the inner door. She tossed me a quick smile and said, "So that's where the mail went. I . . ." But the next words, whatever they would have been, stuck in her throat like chicken bones. She saw Tucker and did a take that would have done Mary Astor proud.

And Tucker saw her. "It's you," he whispered. We both stared at the strangely blinking pendant nestled on her well-filled sweater. It only took me a second to make the connection.

With a snarl, she leaped back against the door and pulled a small revolver from her purse. It was just like her: curved, hard, smooth and deadly. Her eyes flashed in the same mad rhythm as the plastic jewel that held Tucker's previous Smooth. I knew she was set to go off like a champagne cork at a Polish Wedding.

"It's the one thing I've always wanted," she rasped through her clenched teeth. "And it was yours, always yours. But now it's mine, and I'm finishing off the job the way I should have the other night. I should have known you'd never let it go without a fight. But now you'll never get it back. Never. Never!"

She centered Tucker's tie in the sights of her gun but mine spoke first. I got her in the gut. It spun her around while she got off a shot that thwacked into my desk with the force of a jackhammer on rotten concrete. One more hole; and the movers would have a half-ounce more to carry when I rented my next office.

Maggie slumped to the floor and never worried about anything again.

Tucker steeled himself and knelt at the heap of clothes and meat. He looked at me. I nodded. He slipped the jewel from around her white neck, which would soon get whiter. The room shimmered and Tucker stiffened and murmured something -- sounded like "Rosebud."

He didn't have to say anything; I knew. We both knew. Tucker had his Smooth back.

I smiled and heaved away the butt that never left my mouth. There was still enough in my bottom drawer bottle for a test, so I pulled it out.

"Smooth."

"Smooth."

There was a tear in Tucker's eye. "There's no way," he said, with a catch in his voice like a snag in a doubleknit suit, "there's no way I can ever repay you. You're a true and good friend, and I, and I . . ."

"Forget it," I said. "You'll get a bill -- one day plus expenses. But maybe, in your next book . . ."

"Yes," he said, "yes, the dedication. But I can't use your name -- no one must ever know about this. Can I depend on you?"

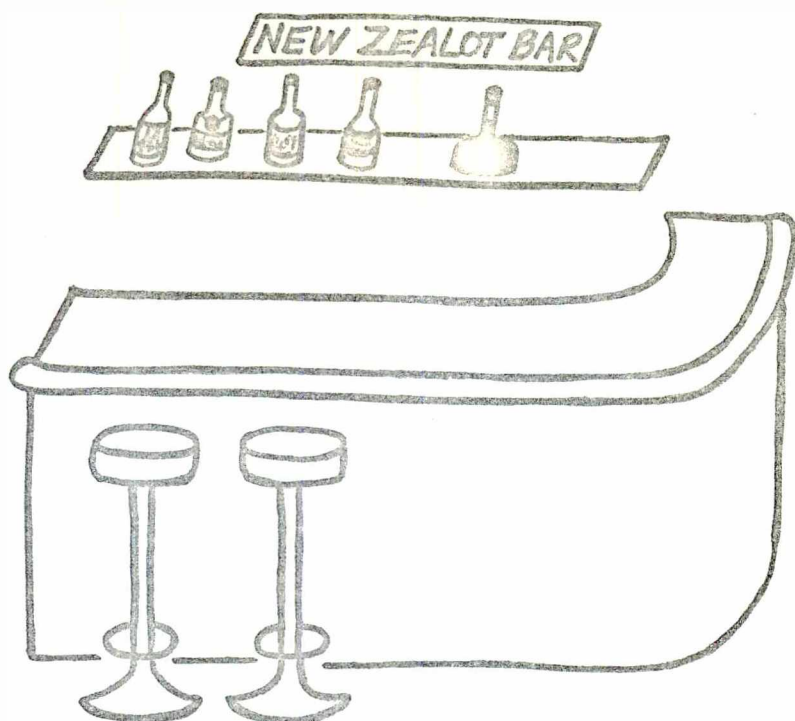
I nodded, and it was enough for Tucker. If anyone's got a better rep in this racket, I haven't met him yet. Tucker shut both doors when he left.

I was alone with what was left of Maggie. I'd have to tell the cops it was self-defense, that she couldn't take the parade of classy dames who always found their way to the chair that Tucker was just in, that she went crazy with jealousy. They'd buy it.

Maggie's flesh was still warm; her hand still clutched the smoking revolver. Soon her fingers would close so tight on the grip that the cops would have a hell of a time getting it away from her.

Her eyes bulged like toadstools in the park after three days of rain, but her face was still pretty. What a waste. I needed another weed; I struck the match on her nose. Scorched her lashes.

It's a tough business.



MS. FOUND IN A BOTTLE

by Michael Glicksohn

It's long been understood that there are certain things that everyone talks about but no-one can actually do much about. Chief among these are such national disasters as the weather, taxes, the postal system and Bob Tucker. Of course, periodically we all give in and at least try to put up a small fight against these plagues that an ill-natured world has visited upon us: we carry umbrellas or fly to Florida to either avoid or seek out the rain, depending on personal preference; we tell little white lies to avoid paying taxes, perhaps even claiming to be authors after selling a few stories to Ted White; we soak off uncanceled stamps for reuse and sometimes bicycle clear across country to deliver a letter faster than the US Postal Service; and every now and then we vainly try to get rid of Tucker by gathering money and sending him off to some exotic foreign land.

It never works, of course. The exotic foreign land, with its parochial desire to remain exotic, invariably sends him back to us, reputation enhanced, stature swollen, more omni-present than ever. And so we talk about him for a few more years until, lemming-like, we once again rush off in fine fannish fashion.

One must be honest, though, and admit to one positive side-effect of these periodic projects. Tucker being Tucker, his trips invariably generate all sorts of new additions to the immense canon

of fannish lore which has built up around Bob during his forty or more years in fandom. The trip to Australia for the 1975 World-con produced several of the longest and most detailed con reports of the last few years and the name of Tucker was prominent throughout them all. And the tales told at just about every convention since Aussiecon have become so well known that fans that have never been closer to Australia than watching the Quantas koala wandering through the Sydney Opera House on a six inch black-and-white television screen in Dubuque, Iowa can talk about The Seven Inches of Snow In Sydney, The Canadian Apachee and The Time The Window Didn't Pull Tucker To His Death just as if they'd made the trip themselves.

There is one incident of Tuckermobilia from that trip, however, which has barely been mentioned in print (a mere single paragraph in a long-out-of-print limited-edition Canadian report) and just hinted at in conventional conversation. Although it is a small, unimportant, almost forgotten, not especially amusing and totally irrelevant (not unlike this reporter) incident, the editor of this publication has requested that I put it down on paper for you. Despite slight puppyish feelings, I shall endeavor to comply, if only to indicate how you too could have your life enriched by sharing an anecdote with Tucker and to warn you to take the appropriate precautions. When you happen to be travelling with Tucker in England next summer, take copious notes on everything he says and does; then when you're called upon years later to reconstruct a happening you won't have to suffer my fate. You'll never find yourself scrabbling around for words and memories for the pages of some obscure fanzine when you could be sipping twenty year old Scotch in the Green Room of "The Tonight Show."

As I peer through the thick mists that time and alcohol have spread between me and Auckland, New Zealand in August of 1975 I can just barely make out three fans, newly arrived in that cool damp city, sitting in a quiet, rather dark bar. Two of them are Tucker and Sheryl Birkhead. The third is me. Tucker and I spent a reasonable time in bars, often while other members of the tour were off looking at art galleries and large rocks and pretty buildings. Chacun a son gout, as the culture mongers are wont to say. We had decided to investigate our first New Zealand bar together. (We'd have been there a lot earlier but the plane insisted in staying in the air while getting from one country to the next.)

It didn't take us long to discover that the fresh-faced youngster behind the bar was (a)in his first week on the job, (b)a Canadian just arrived from Vancouver and (c)an impostor. When he discovered I was a countryman he admitted, sotto voce, that he'd lied about having previous experience as a bartender to get a job. Somehow I think we'd have figured that out for ourselves in short order. And somehow I don't think his lack of qualifications or his attempt to keep this lack between the two of us really made any difference.

He literally knew nothing. He not only didn't know how to make anything, he didn't even know where anything was that might be used to make anything. When Sheryl ordered a Brandy Alexander,

it took Tucker and I and one of the other bartenders a good ten minutes to help him make it. But this didn't seem to bother his co-worker who spent most of the time wandering up and down, muttering to himself, trying to remember what people had ordered and saying "Shit!" in a surprisingly loud voice.

Nor did he know what to do when I ordered a shot of Chivas Regal Royal Salute even though the bottle was in plain sight on top of a display of superior brands. The modern generation simply has no degree of quality upbringing anymore. By this time the third of the Three Stooges behind the bar, a slightly shaggy young fellow, had somehow found out that we were tourists and would be on our way to Waitomo the next day for a tour of the underground caves. Fixing Tucker with a piercing gaze he advised that "You'll really dig that. It's an outtasight trip after a couple of joints" and wandered off to affront some elderly ladies. It's pretty hard to capture the whole atmosphere after so long, but by now we felt we had inadvertently stumbled into some sort of surrealistic comedy. It was becoming difficult to restrain our laughter.

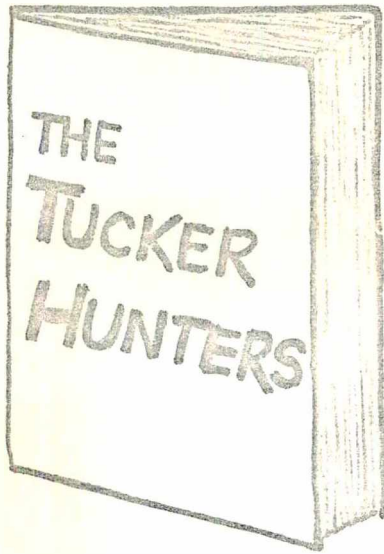
It's a habit of mine while in bars, during lulls in my part of the conversation, to inspect the shelves I'm sitting in front of. One never knows what goodies one might find or what new tastes one might uncover. The Auckland bar was pretty standard in its fare but there was one exception. I drew Bob's attention to it; it was a bottle of the most beautiful and uniquely purple liqueur I'd ever seen. I didn't have the faintest idea what it might be. Neither did Bob. But our curiosity was definitely piqued.

Predictably, the neo behind the bar was no help, but he did attract the attention of Bartender #2 (the "shit" disturber) and asked what the purple drink was. "Don't know," came the answer, "no-one's ever ordered it since I've worked here." BOOOONNNNGGGG! Four eyes lit up like a pinball machine that's just been broken wide open for every free game in the book! Bob turned to me and I turned to Bob; the reaction somewhat akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull. I ordered us three shots of the stuff and prepared for some wonderous new experience.

I wish I could report it was memorable. I wish I could report that it was the best of times or the worst of times. But it wasn't. It wasn't much of anything, in fact. None of us was really sure what it was like, but all three of us had different tentative descriptions. And I can't even remember what they were.

Sheryl left, leaving her glass mostly untouched. I finished it, of course, for not to have done so would have been to affront the hospitality of our host country. So Bob and I sat there, our tastes unimpressed and our tongues stained purple. It was then that the Hippy Bartender #3 drifted by and noticed us. "Hey," he said admiringly, "you guys are into that stuff. That's what all the meth drinkers go for." And off he went to spread joy to others.

That's all there was to it, at the time. But you know something? I've never sold another story since that day. And it seems to me Tucker's output has been down of late. I guess that proves it. There's just no place for purple pros anymore.



Your favorite book is now a
hot-shit teleplay...

The Tucker Hunters

by gale burnick

SETTING:

Camera pans through a futuristic office building, somewhat sterile in appearance, of GSFS: the Galactic Science Fiction Society. The camera reaches a door that says "Research Division." Cut to inside the office where a conservative-looking man in typical leotard-type future garb is seated behind a desk. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

Welcome to the world of the 26th century. Thanks to science fiction, peace has been achieved on Earth and throughout the greater human worlds under the guidance of the DOFs, the Descendents of Fandom. Now these world leaders of Gisfis, the Galactic Science Fiction Society, are looking for . . . their ROOTS.

SCENE 1:

Woman, also in leotard-type garb, but modest in appearance, enters the man's office. She raises her arm up fairly straight then sweeps it down in front of her chest, then up in front of her other shoulder as she speaks in greeting.

"Smooth."

"Smooth," the man replies with a similar gesture as he looks up from his work. "Wanda, the lab has finished testing the new range on the time capsule. They say it's ready to go back 600 years."

Wanda nods. "Is that how far I'm going? Has research finished with it's report?"

The man returns her nod saying, "How I envy you! You're going to a convention to contact the selected key figure."

"Meteoric! Is it Heinlein, Ursula LeGuin, Kilgore Trout?"

"No," he says. "We've determined that the link between professional science fiction and fandom was a man named Tucker. As a writer he was known as Wilson Tucker, but as a fan he was Bob. In fact, our researchers have hinted he might know something about the origin of our greeting, Smooth." FADE OUT

COMMERCIAL:

A little boy chewing gum smiles and says, "Tanstaaf! is great gum." Then he proceeds to blow a big bubble as a second little boy enters stage right and says, "It's the only gum his mother lets him chew." The second boy now takes his hand and flattens the bubble into the first boy's face. CUT

SETTING:

Something resembling a Contac capsule spins in space and time. Cut to a figure of a young woman entering a hotel lobby and checking in. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

There was a long, loud silence as the capsule hurtled back in time to 1979, to a particular weekend, a particular hotel, and to . . . a SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION.

SCENE 2:

The camera follows Wanda as she first goes to her hotel room, then ventures down to the convention registration desk. As she stands on the "New Members" line with other waiting fans, more fans keep passing by. The passing parade includes people in Star Trek, Star Wars and Rocky Horror costumes as well as those in normal fannish attire. As Wanda reaches the desk, fade to the Meet the Authors Party where Wanda watches the introductions. She seems awed as writers like Gordon Dickson are introduced, but somewhat shook when Gardner Dozois, Ed Bryant and Spider Robinson follow one another to the stage. Wanda is obviously relieved when Bob Tucker is presented and meets the approval of her conservative eye. Cut to scenes of Wanda unobtrusively following Bob from party to party in different hotel rooms. Before too long the bottle of Beam's Choice appears. Wanda watches the bottle go 'round and the hands go up with great curiosity and innocence. When the Smooth takes place, she faints. CUT

COMMERCIAL:

During a masquerade, a costumed woman steps out of the line-up and holds up a small box as she speaks, "Designed by a woman gynecologist, Scifi is the last word in tampons." CUT

SETTING:

Fans gather around Wanda where she fainted, roomkey in her hand. After a few words, several carry her to her own room where she soon regained consciousness. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

Wanda's roomkey was in her hand, so some of the fans carried her there and soon she came . . . to.

SCENE 3:

In Wanda's room several fans hover near her bed as she awakens.

"How are you feeling?" asks the first fan. "Can I call a doctor?"

Wanda reacts with a pained look at the idea of a doctor, "No, oh no."

"When did you eat last?" a second fan asks. "I think you should have a bite of something."

Wanda seems to read something into this statement. She is unsure how to answer and finally says, "No, please, I don't consume raw foods."

Fan #1 offers, "I could just run down to the all-night place, it's open until 2 AM, and grab you something. Do you want a hot-dog or hamburger?"

Now Wanda is clearly disturbed. She looks at the people in the room aghast, and her disgust becomes apparent. Vehemently she cries out, "You're barbarians! This can't be the foundation of so much good! You consume mass quantities of alcohol, you have no sexual mores and, and you eat your animals, even your own pets!" FADE OUT

COMMERCIAL:

A plump matron carrying a cream pie enters a dining room. As she says, "Here at Tucker Inn we serve only the very best," she trips and the pie lands in the face of a near-by customer.

SETTING:

Discussion continues animatedly in Wanda's room. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

The fans suspect something is amiss and questioning Wanda proves that they have truly had . . . a CLOSE ENCOUNTER.

SETTING:

The camera follows Wanda as she attends convention after convention, her manner obviously changing, easing up, as time goes by. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

Wanda relaxes more and more as the fans persuade her to attend more and more conventions, and she tells them of her five month mission to explore this strange world and seek out the origins of its civilization.

COMMERCIAL:

A young woman holds up a bottle that resembles a mixed bar drink and says, "Sexually active? Then use Spayed Gerbil douche, available at the best convention hotels. And you can get even more protection with Gafia temporary sterility pills."

SCENE 4:

A small room party at yet another con with Wanda and some fans.

"You know," Wanda says, "I no longer feel like a stranger in a strange land. But soon I must return to my world, and the news I bring will destroy it. How could they keep control, keep peace, when it becomes known that the DOFs as Descendents of Fandom are DUDs, Descendents of Utter Degradation?"

"But do you want to go back?" asks the first fan. "We thought you had begun to like it here, with us."

"Oh, how I've come to love it here; it's like a dream," Wanda murmured.

The second fan turns to Wanda, "Don't dream it, be it."

"Yes," agrees the first fan, "Why do you have to go back? From what you say, wouldn't it be better if you didn't return to tell them about fandom?"

Wanda pauses pensively, then, "That, that idea seems too good to be true. I'd want to think about it. No, wait, I want to ask Uncle Bob. I'll do what he says."

SCENE 5:

The camera follows the group containing Wanda as it finds Bob at another party. He is sitting on the floor with a few friends and he is obviously quite happy with his bottle of Beam's. The new arrivals surround him and are obviously explaining the situation with many gestures. Bob is nodding in and out and a fan keeps him propped up.

The second fan concludes, "So, Bob, what do you think, should she stay?"

Bob opens his eyes at that moment and automatically raises the bottle in his hand. He drinks and passes the bottle along toward Wanda, urging her to take it, "Here, here."

The gathering takes this as a sign of approval and responds with cheers and hugs. FADE OUT

COMMERCIAL:

A dignified man removes his wire-rimmed glasses and says, "Caf-feine keeping you awake at night? Then try Cor-flu non-caf-feinated beverage."

SETTING:

The empty time capsule returns to the 26th century. Both the Research people and the DOFs scratch their heads over its implications. Meanwhile --

VOICEOVER:

So Wanda, with a group of her new friends around her, returns the empty capsule to its 26th century home where researchers and DOFs alike try to interpret the meaning of its return without Wanda. In our future they debate whether or not to send further temporal visitors, but we don't worry, we have Wilson "Bob" Tucker . . . TIME MASTER



JUST AS I SUSPECTED!
THIS FANZINE IS
POLLUTED