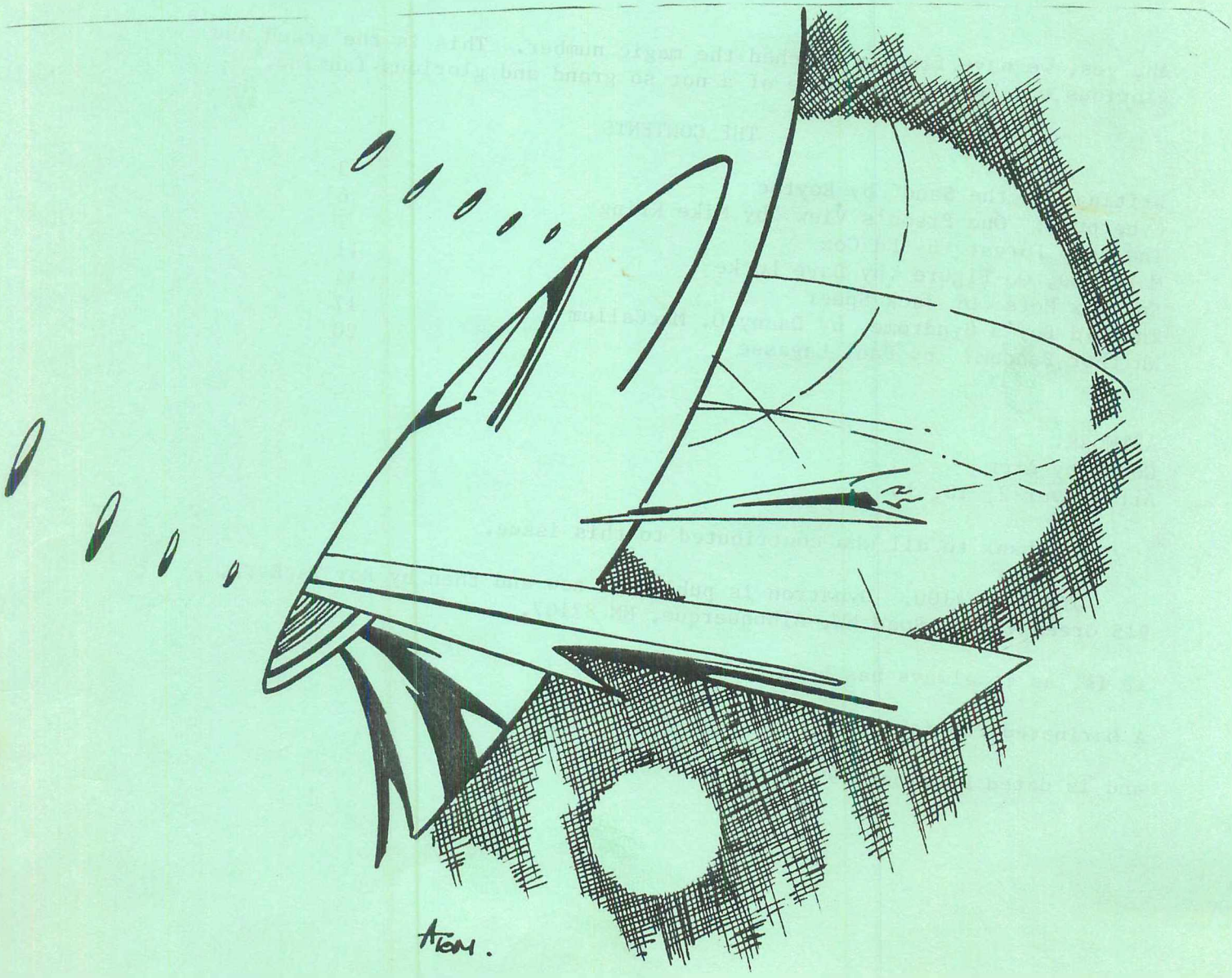
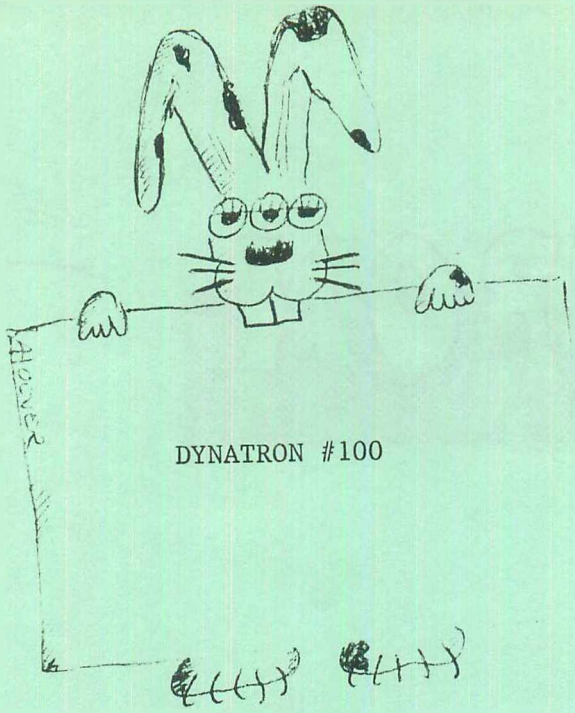
DYNATRON

#100





DYNATRON #100

Ah, yes, we have finally reached the magic number. This is the grand and glorious one hundredthe issue of a not so grand and glorious fanzine.

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ARTWORK:
Cover by Atom
Art Hoover 2, 10, 16

My thanx to all who contributed to this issue.

DYNATRON #100. Dynatron is published now and then by Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107.

It is, as it always has been,

A Marinated Publication

and is dated December 1991

WRITINGS IN THE SAND

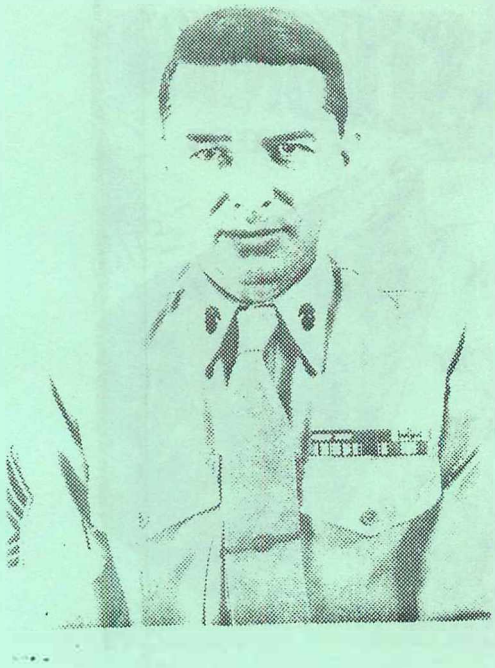
100 issues of DYNATRON. I am tempted to add: "That's not too many." Perhaps it is, though. Both from the point of view of the fans who have read this zine over the years and, mayhap, from the point of view of the editor/publisher. It has been a long time.

You could say that in a way it is Buck Coulson's fault.

My roots in the science fiction/fantasy field go back to the 1930s. I was a reader of fantasy from the time I learned to read and read whatever children's fantasy books were available. There were not too many. I picked up my first prozine in 1933 (which is also the time I started smoking--is there a connection?) and was instantly hooked. What wonderful stories. I can't recall which prozine it was but I went looking for more.

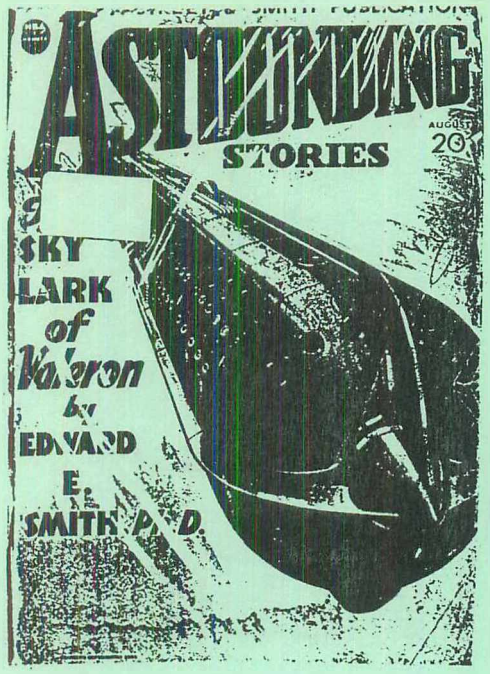
Certainly the stories had an effect on me and influenced the direction of my life. They set me firmly on the "science" road which I still follow. You give an eight-year old "adventure on the planet Mars" and the immediate question is "What is the planet Mars?" which led to an interest in astronomy and space which led to physics (how are we going to get there?) which led to a general interest in most of the other sciences. Ah, but there were so many interesting side paths. The worlds of the past and fantasy. Mythology and mythological creatures which led to fantasy and fantasy creatures and there isn't any end to it all, is there?

Anyway, somewhere around the end of the 1930s I got to wondering about these "amateur science fiction magazines" I had been reading reviews of in the back pages of the prozines so I ordered two or three of them.



Roytac when he first began to publish Dynatron.

The passage of 30+ years has improved neither the zine nor the editor.



I had found fanzines and something called fandom. There was Harry Warner's SPACEWAYS, Bob Tucker's LE ZOMBIE, Julius Unger's FANTASY FICTION FIELD ILLUSTRATED NEWS WEEKLY (each issue came with a photograph of the latest magazine cover or something else connected to the field), and, of course, Forry Ackerman's VoM. This was heady stuff for a young fan living in rural Colorado. There were actually people out there writing about and discussing science fiction. And other "fans" and this thing called "fandom." Goshwowboyoboy!

So I began contributing a few letters of comment and hanging about on the fringes of fandom. This was normal because in rural Colorado one was always on the fringes. It didn't make any difference what it was, one was on the fringes.

World War II came along and I enlisted but kept up sporadic contact with fandom. I would manage to come up with a fanzine now and then and maybe send along a letter just to let fandom know I was still alive.

I met my first real live fan in 1945. That was Ackerman who looked me up after I returned from the Pacific and was stationed in San Francisco. He invited me to come to Los Angeles to attend the Fanquet which was being put on by the LASFS to honor one of their members who had crashed the pro ranks.

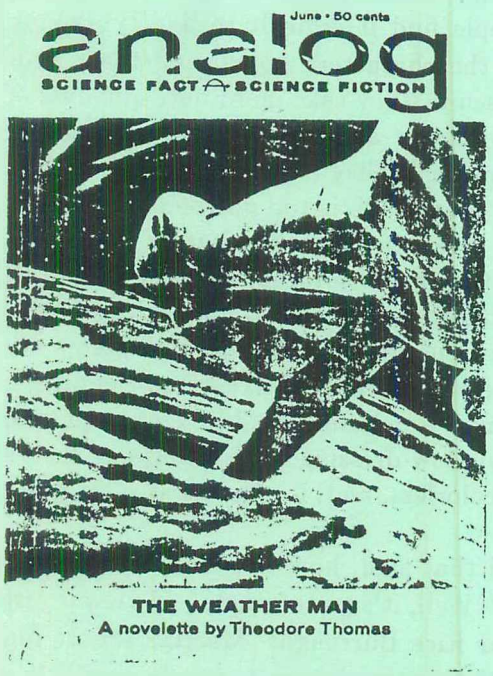
After WWII I stayed out on the fringes of fandom. Kept in touch but that was about all. In 1949 I was back in San Francisco and plunged, so to speak, into a bit more fannish activity. I joined the Golden Gate Futurians which was essentially a fannish group, and the Elves', Gnomes' and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Society which was, despite the name, a fairly serious literary group. While the GGFS members were given to publishing individual fanzines, the Little Men, as a group, published RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST, one of the more prominent and respected fanzines of the day. Needless to say, I preferred the Little Men.

But things change. (A profound thought, that.) In 1951 I was married and transferred out of San Francisco. With the new status and the new assignment fandom faded out of the picture. Not sti, just fandom. I really didn't give much thought to it for several years. As a result I seem to have missed the entire "Sixth Fandom" era of fabulous fannish fans and fabulous fannish fanzines. Which may be just as well.

In 1960 I was stationed at the Marine Air Station in Beaufort, South Carolina, a place noted more for alligators and rattlesnakes than for excitement and stimulating intellectual activity. (Well, the reptiles could get a bit exciting at times.) I was in my office one day waiting for the rain to stop and idly turning the pages of a prozine when I came across a reference to Buck Coulson's

YANDRO. "A fanzine," I muttered to myself. "They are still being published." So I sent off a sub to YANDRO and it was interesting. Buck ran a fanzine review column and I sent off for a few more that looked interesting. And they were. So I wrote a few letters of comment and the publishing bug began buzzing around my tent and bit. (Actually it was a mosquito but I think it carried publishing germs.) I had access to stencils and mimeograph paper. All I needed was a mimeograph and I mail ordered one from Sears. I got names and addresses from fanzine review and letter columns and in September 1960 mailed out DYNATRON #1 (for three cents per copy, too.) It wasn't very good but it did bring in enough response to keep me interested.

I was transferred overseas in 1961 and publishing got a bit complicated. I would cut stencils, mail them back to Chrystal who ran them off, assembled and mailed out the zine. That worked pretty well. I tried to keep DYNATRON a monthly and managed to do so for a while. In earlier years the zine had a good following including a fairly large international mailing list. That international circulation got me on one of Fed Gov's lists during the Nixon presidency. Not too surprising as I was working for FedGov but it was a bit irritating having my mail opened and my telephone tapped. Couldn't do much about the mail but we had a lot of fun with the phone tap.



Expenses, particularly postage, were on the increase and DYNATRON had slipped from monthly to bi-monthly to quarterly to irregular and finally became a sporadic contribution to assorted apa mailings.

When I ran #94 through FAPA in May, 1990, Brian Earl Brown noted that I was getting close to the magic 100 mark. Yes, I replied, and at the rate I am publishing I might get there by the end of the century.

In April of this year Corflu was held in El Paso which, I figured, was about as close to Albuquerque as it was ever going to get and if I was going to attend a fanzine convention I needed a fanzine so I produced something I called DYNATRON #95. There was a lot of talk at Corflu that there might be vast herds (tens even) of potential fanzine fans at conventions if only there was a way to attract their attention. Worth a try, I thought, so I produced a fairly decent DYNATRON #96 and set out copies at a couple of conventions. Of the 75 copies I put out at cons--well, they were all picked up by someone but produced zero response. So much for the idea that there are herds of potential fanzine fans hanging around conventions.

But that was DYNATRON #96 and, hmmm, I wonder...if I worked at it I might be able to reach #100 by the end of 1991. How hard do I have to work at it? What else do I have to do? Why the hell not?

I produced #97 and #98 for SAPS, dumped #99 into the November FAPA mailing and, egad, here we are with #100. Astounding!

100 issues of the same title isn't any record, to be sure. There are other fanzines which outnumber that. But not too many. I think 100 issues is worth a mark on the checklist. And it took me only a bit over 31 years.

And now what? Is this the final issue of DYNATRON? It is tempting to think about retiring the title now. But I wouldn't bet on it. Publishing this zine now and again has a certain lure. And if I go back to an annual schedule I can publish DYNATRON #200 in 2092 or thereabouts.

Why the hell not?

CYBERPUNK: ONE PERSON'S VIEW

by Mike Kring

First off, let me just say that even though the reviewers might declare cyberpunk dead, don't believe it: it's still around, it's just not called that anymore. Now, I like cyberpunk, so let's get that prejudice out of way; but just because I like the stuff doesn't mean I'm ignorant of some of the reasons why people don't.

One reason people dislike cyberpunk is that the science is, well ..., to be truthful, stupid; i.e., "dumber than dirt". The entire sub-genre has been crippled by the idea that people will have holes drilled into their skulls, and electrodes (or whatever) attached directly into their brains, with the wires leading from their brains to openings under a skin flap, or a jack in the middle of their forehead, and that they will brandish this "wound" the way punk rockers display their glued, spikey hair — like a badge. It's a genuinely stupid idea on several counts: it ignores the incredibly high risk of infection (close to 100%) such a "fashion" would entail (talk to a neurosurgeon sometime); self-multilation may be okay in some parts of the world, but among the Western Countries (which is where most of the participants in these stories/novels reside) that isn't the case; it would be an extremely expensive operation for a long time to come (just as tummy tucks and the like are today: the surgical techniques aren't new, but the cost is still quite high), therefore rare, which implies the time lines of these stories/novels are off kilter; and lastly, but most importantly, advances in the field of electronics make it unnecessary. Surgery to implant extremely sophisticated electronics can and will be done to the brain, no question about it, but software can be downloaded just as easily via radio as it can "jacking in". In fact, there are experiments being done, right now, that involve placing receivers in the brains of laboratory animals and stimulating them via radio signals. That's just one step from having the cyberpunk "cowboys" get their software via radio without having to worry about cables and the like. Admittedly, it makes for great drama to be physically tied to a cyberdeck and have to yank out your patch-cord or your brain will fry, but, frankly, I don't buy it. (A cyberdeck, if such a thing existed, would probably be implanted within the brain itself. Everything about it would more than likely reside in software, not hardware. The research in electronics is toward faster and smaller chips, and if you had millions of gigabytes of RAM in your head and everything was superconducting, then most changes in cyberdecks would be geared towards the programs. That would mean each cyberdeck change would be easily pirated and would spread like wildfire through the hacker underground. I personally think the cyberpunks have been much too conservative in their approach to the electronics of 50 to 100 years from now. I feel the future will be stranger than *anyone* can imagine with regards to computers.) If you can't stand science being savagely mishandled for the sake of a story, cypberpunk's not for you.

That's all really a side issue, though. I think the main reason people find it difficult to like cyberpunk is that most of the characters populating the postulated future are scum: they take inordinate amounts of drugs; worship violence; and are obsessed with cheap, kinky sex. To pretend they're merely trying to survive in a "world gone mad" is too patronizing: they're just plain sick. Even the so-called heroes lie, cheat, and kill because they know nothing else; and they're all doomed to die young, with no one to mourn their passing. Now, some of the prophets of cyberpunk, most notably William Gibson, have tried to tidy up the future, a bit, and portray a wonderful world *inside* computers, but it's all just window-dressing. The cyberpunk future is usually gray, colorless, and, for the most part, quite depressing.

And with all that said, how can I like cyberpunk; why do I read it? Well, it's quite simple — I view it just like I view Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian series: fun nonsense. Sure the writing is mostly razzle-dazzle, but I like to read that now and again. And, yes, the plots of most cyberpunk novels aren't even strong enough to support a longish short story, but that's okay, I'm along for the ride. I admit I do get bored with the sex-at-the-drop-of-a-hat attitude some of the authors take, and I'm getting really tired of the needless violence they all seem to feel is necessary, but I think the thing that bothers me the most is the incompetence of the bad guys. The bad guys are, for the most part, super super-rich people who can't seem to hire anyone who can catch the protagonists. If the computer networks are as pervasive in the future as portrayed by the authors, then the "good-guys" would never get away, much less even know they're being chased.

But, hey, sometimes you can't justify it — you just like it.

And happy 100th issue, Roy.

MK

BY

ED COX

THE PULP FOREST

IV

Way back in 1943 when I first discovered science fiction, the magazines for the most part featured letter columns. There were two basic types. One was where the readers expressed much opinion concerning the stories in the prior issue. Prime examples of this school were PLANET STORIES, THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING STORIES. The other major type of letter- column was one in which the reader expressed opinions about the stories but also expressed great desire to see old classics re-printed in that magazine. Prime examples here are FANTASTIC NOVELS and FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES. This yearning for the old and gold also found itself expressed sometimes in letters in ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION and AMAZING STORIES, and to a lesser degree, in the columns of WEIRD TALES and, again, PLANET STORIES. In fact, one time or another, any prozine letter-column would contain a letter by some reader nostalgically recalling great old stories from that, or some other, magazine.

This was enough to drive me mad. Having devoured great gobs of western, mystery, air war and hero-series pulps, the new genre filled me with an insatiable desire for more, more, MORE Science Fiction. I scoured every newsstand in town (all two...) and haunted them on the days of the month I quickly found to be when the next issue of such-and-such magazine was next due.

But what burned in me even more, it seemed then, than wanting the next issue(s) to arrive, was a desire to somehow obtain all the Great Stuff I'd missed by just then coming onto the scene.

One magazine in particular that whetted my appetite was FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES. That letter column was full of missives requesting the "Great Old Munsey" classics. As I started reading the magazine in 1943, I had missed the Munsey reprint issues. Book reprints were the mode of that era. But the readers kept recalling the classics from the early era and clamoring for the reprints to come back, littering their letters with all manner of exotic and fantastic titles that had me slavering in frustration at having missed them. Plus no apparent hope of seeing any of the stories soon, or ever.

The first issue of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES I'd found was the June 1944 issue featuring The Greatest Adventure by John Taine. It started sort of slow (to my PLANET STORIES and CAPTAIN FUTURE geared mind at the time...) but once into it, it became a great adventure. It was my introduction to John Taine. And as I read further issues of FFM, and the letter columns, I was to use it as a yardstick to determine that I wanted those fantastic

sounding titles, somehow. Such as The Earth Tube by Gawain Edwards, The Green Ray and The Purple Sapphire by John Taine, The Red Hand by Arthur Machen, Etidorpha by John Uri Lloyd, The Night Land by William Hope Hodgeson, Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander by Frank R. Stockton, Land Under England by Joseph O'neill, Yezad, A Romance of the Unknown by George Babcock and The Slayer of Souls by Robert W. Chambers.

These are but a fraction of a long list I compiled from the pages of FFM in 1947. I knew these had to be fascinating, fantastic and thrilling stories to read. For one thing, I had read the above-mentioned John Taine, so the others must be great, also. I recognized Stockton; had to be the guy in the English book who wrote "The Lady or the Tiger". And I had actually read the book by Robert W. Chambers a couple of years ago. It had belonged to my uncle. The same one who had a copy of DOC SAVAGE MAGAZINE for September 1941, "The Mindless Monsters", which was my introduction to that series. The book could no longer be found but I remembered it. And the other titles, zillions of them, many by Burroughs, Lovecraft and others I recognized, simply excited my sense of wonder.

As the years went by, FFM did issue some of those titles. I also saw them often listed in the long ads I started receiving from THE WEREWOLF BOOKSHOP (of later notoriety). But my budget didn't allow for a lot of book-buying then. But I'm jumping ahead of the story. I, too, started writing letters to FFM and hollering for reprints. Mainly of books by authors I knew, as well as the Chambers. By now I had started collecting books but of the Chambers titles I did obtain (The King in Yellow, In Search of the Unknown, etc.), The Slayer of Souls eluded me, never being listed by any of the booksellers from whom I received lists. Years later, as it happened, FFM did reprint the story (in the May 1951 issue).

For a time, I did collect first editions of the older, "classic" fantasy titles. In addition to Frank R. Stockton's Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander, I obtained an equally intriguing title, The Great Stone of Sardis. Which finally brings us to the object of this installment of THE PULP FOREST. Though Stockton's The Great Stone of Sardis was not reprinted, nor even mentioned, in FFM, it was therein which generated my interest in collecting old fantasy tomes of which this was one by one of the writers often mentioned. Therefore it sort of falls under the general umbrella of topics covered by THE PULP FOREST.

So, a while ago (in 1990), I read the book.

The Great Stone of Sardis by Frank R. Stockton, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1898. This is dubbed, "A Novel", illustrated by Peter Newell. This is a tome prior to dust jackets, with the embossed, embellished imprint around the title

on the front board and spine. Profusely illustrated though not as profusely as a Big Little Book... It is a novel that can be included under the umbrella of science-fiction. In-deed it is listed in Bleiler's first Checklist of Fantastic Literature along with fourteen other titles. It is the story of a young genius type inventor who has a whole complex of shops and buildings working on various projects developing various ideas he has had. His name is Roland Clewe and he has a crew of devoted workers and associates. All this is funded, until he starts making real money with one or more of his inventions, by a widow named Margaret Rawleigh. She lives nearby and the whole shebang is located in Sardis. New Jersey. What a letdown. I had once envisioned some ancient and lost city full of exotic beings and such. But here in 1990 that vision was long gone and the trauma wasn't much.

In fact, once into the story, it was rather interesting. It gave me a lot of insight as to how the technology of the time generated the "futuristic" concepts found in the story. Plus it was written at about the time the race to the North Pole was still not won and was apparently a theme not unusual in fiction of the era.

In the course of the story, Roland perfects a submarine which is designed to travel under the icecap to the North Pole. Now *that's prophetic science-fiction!* Because indeed they did make it in a concurrent story while Roland worked on his Great Shell, The Artesian Ray and other such things back at Sardis. Also during this time he confessed his love to the young widow who had been funding the endeavor all this time.

The trip under ice to the North Pole was quite interesting. During it, they ran across a whale, that almost mythical sea creature that was thought to be extinct due to excessive whaling back in earlier decades... Also, the arch-villain of the story, a Pole (!) named Rovinski, has been trying to steal Clewe's secrets and indeed stows away on the sub. Meanwhile, back at Sardis, Clewe uses his Artesian Ray to peer down into the depths of earth much as a telescopic x-ray. This is where he discovers the Great Stone of Sardis. It's thousands of feet below the complex, so he drills down to it with his great Shell. This latter is a sort of automatic boring machine. It indeed does get down to the stone but has problems. So Clewe descends in a sort of basket lowered by a winch using a super-tough cable which will not break. Better not as Margaret is duly upset by the venture.

Needless to say, all ends well. The sub (named the Dipsey) returns with all crew safe (except for Rovinski), Clewe and his widow get married, pieces of the stone, like super-diamonds had been brought to the surface and used to finance everything, etc., etc.

The book was actually enjoyable to read, once I down-shifted from such as Parker, McBain and company. It was an interesting view back into an earlier era considering what was then commonplace was the basis on which new and startling inventions would be new and startling.

However, it is another title, similar to the many which excited my imagination back in those days, which I have finally read. There are a lot more of them on my shelves. And back about ten years or so ago, a lot of those titles appeared in paperback, one of the benefits of the Tolkein books appearing in this country. Ballantine, for example, published a number of classics in its Adult Fantasy series. But that's all another story and possibly not to be encompassed by THE PULP FOREST (as this segment barely squeezes into). Needless to say, it was at least different and a change of pace from what I usually read. But it is going to be the predecessor of a lot more such fare, from both book and magazine segments of my collection. And undoubtedly, you'll all probably have to suffer though more reviews of this sort of stuff.

****

thought they were devils, and that they returned to hell.

In the Author's Postscript, the publishers leaned on Brown to divulge all, because they considered it *"unfair to your readers not to tell them."*

Brown's response was as apt as his storytelling abilities:

> *"Many things are unfair, including and particularly that request of my publishers!*
>
> *I had wanted to avoid being definitive here, for the truth can be a frightening thing, and in this case it is a frightening thing if you believe it. But here it is:*
>
> *Luke is right; the universe and all therein exists only in his imagination. He invented it, and the Martians.*
>
> *But then again, I invented Luke. So where does that leave him or the Martians?*
>
> *Or any of the rest of you?"*

All right, let's get down to the nitty gritty. Is there anyone remembering the book who didn't just feel a mild surge of nostalgia? I've read it several times, and remember it with fondness just a mere five years after a last reading.

And is there anyone who didn't read the book who wonders if it had any point to make? Did any good come from these beings who appeared and disappeared without apparent means or reason? Was there some purpose to their bedevilling us in running our secrets up the flagpole and throwing them at bulletin boards? Did their smirky and slimy little accompanying comments serve to do anything more than whip us into an adrenalin rage? Was there any sign that something positive or negative would grow from their having been here?

Well, the memory is tricky. The book can play differently at different times. We all know it's a recognized classic. Not all of us like it. Not all of us who actually love Brown's writing bring MARTIANS, GO HOME to mind when remembering him fondly.

Someone who read it a long time ago, to pick one example, is fellow fan Al Curry. He was the most recent one I spoke to about the book (because they'd made a movie from it, and I'd just finally managed to find it to watch, and he was the closest one to mention that to because he works where I do and the next coffee-break conversation would seem a likely place to drop that topic; but I surge ahead of myself).

I told him that in the mid 80s I'd read that a movie was being made of this story. And that I'd read it in an APANagezine by Jymn Magon, who has so many gold records nailed to a load-bearing den wall that his house sags. That it was being made wasn't a reason to cheer, but I was interested. A year ago I read that the movie made about $30,000 at the box office and placed near dead last for the 1990 movie year. No theater out here carried it. No video store could get it. I saw two minutes of it in a trailer on the front of a rental movie by the same producing company (a movie so bad I couldn't watch it).

I told Curry I'd seen it, finally, on cable.

He said he'd read the book, and all he remembered was that it was extremely irritating, and what was it about again?

It was about a bunch of extremely irritating Martians.

Oh, well, maybe that was why he found it so damn irritating.

No doubt. Definitely there were aspects like that.

MARTIANS, GO FIGURE

article, by Dave Locke

.....

It was March 26th, 1964 when the earth was invaded by one billion little green Martians. That was roughly one Martian to every three of us humans. They were unharmable, obnoxious, and with no purpose except to expose all earthly secrets both public and private. They drove us nuts. We had no privacy at all. We didn't know how they got here or why, finally, they went away.

I first learned about the coming invasion in 1956, back in the Golden Age of SF when I was twelve years old. I was also ill at the time, had previously read all the school library's selection of juvenile skiffy, and there were no unread Hardy Boys, Rick Brant, or Tom Swift, Jr. in my own small collection. My mother drove to the nearby village to pick up our mail, stopped at the variety store, and brought home letters, bills, junk mail, and the well-packaged Bantam edition of Fredric Brown's MARTIANS, GO HOME.

These disrespectful aliens were so interesting that much of the time I lost awareness of being sick. I'd never heard of Martians like this. But then, no one else had, either.

> *"Yes, we should have been prepared.*
>
> *But for the form in which they came? Yes and no. Science fiction had presented them in a thousand forms--tall blue shadows, microscopic reptiles, gigantic insects, fireballs, ambulatory flowers, what have you--but science fiction had very carefully avoided the cliche, and the cliche turned out to be the truth. They really were little green men.*
>
> *But with a difference, and what a difference. Nobody could have been prepared for that."*

The Martians were green and about two and a half feet tall. Mouthy little wiseacres: *"Look, Mack, straighten up and fly right. Is this Earth or isn't it?"* They wore loose blouses, tight-fitting pants, and shoes. All green. They were like dwarves in reverse, with short torsos and long limbs. Large, bald heads, big mouths both figuratively and literally, and hairless. Lots of little differences.

They didn't teleport, they kwimmed. *"You need apparatus to teleport. Kwimming's mental. Reason you can't do it is you're not smart enough."*

You couldn't touch the things: *"both hands went right through it and closed on one another"* when trying to grab at a green neck.

How were they here, really? *"We just learned the technique of long-distance kwimming. Just short-range before. To do it interplanetary, you got to savvy hokima."*

Why were they here? *"That's none of your business, either, but it'll be a pleasure to give you a hint. Why do people go to zoos here on your lousy planet?"*

Brown began his Postlogue with: *"to this day, nobody knows why they came or why they left."* He ended it with: *"Nobody, but nobody, misses them or wants them back."*

A number of people considered themselves solely responsible for the departure of the Martians, and not everyone considered them to actually be Martians. Some

So how did it play on the screen?

Maltin reviewed it in his MOVIE AND VIDEO GUIDE 1992:

> *MARTIANS GO HOME (1990) C-89m. *½*
> *D: David Odell. Randy Quaid, Margaret Colin, Anita Morris, Barry Sobel, Vic Dunlop, John Philbin, Gerrit Graham, Ronny Cox, Harry Basil. TV songwriter Quaid accidentally summons a billion green wisecracking Martians to Earth; chaos (limited by the film's low budget) ensues. Fredric Brown's classic sci-fi humor novel misfires on the screen, partly because the pesky Martians are all played by mediocre standup comics. [PG-13]"*

And partly because the anticipated but of course necessary script-diddling was not consigned to, let's say, a William Goldman. And partly because an original story was translated to a derivative screenplay (e.g.: skiffy author protagonist becomes tv songwriter so he can summon Martians via a CLOSE ENCOUNTERS bare-bones little ditty, and reverse the ditty to send them away, as opposed to not knowing how they got here or why, finally, they went away). And partly because ... and because ... and ad barf nauseum.

It wouldn't do to cast kind words upon such an anemic rendition of this very alive story. Perhaps it could be rendered unto the screen a dozen times without truly capturing its essence, or enough of its essence to get excited about it.

Still ... all disappointments and problems aside, and definitely all comparisons aside ... the movie does have its moments. Certainly, on its own terms, it turned out far better than I expected going in. Sure, it didn't look promising going in, and cable tv ran it in the early afternoon and late at night, wherever it wouldn't interfere with someone who wasn't deliberately tuning in for it.

So, if you stand on your head, you can find something to like about this, while envisioning Fred Brown spinning in his grave. Takes a real attitude adjustment. Takes knowing that there isn't the faintest chance in hell that this movie will look like MARTIANS, GO HOME any more than Geraldo Rivera looks like a real reporter. Takes recognizing that just about everyone involved had decent skills and apparently the desire to present an amusing story within the confines of a pocket-change production.

Forget the comparisons, recognize the budget, see the effort (unfortunately), and watch people work to make the most of what at least has the appearance of being fun. The movie does indeed have its moments. Though ultimately it fails it's a cheap noble effort that generates some intentional amusements and laughs, and it retains a flavor which is not at all contrary to the inherent story of MARTIANS, GO HOME.

Did it have a point to make? Was there purpose to this story?

Of course there was. MARTIANS, GO HOME examines the honesty and openness with which we deal with each other. Were there conclusions? Not ultimately. Were we better off for the unsettling experience of encountering one billion little green wiseass whistle-blowers? The presumption is there that we were, but no proof. If Brown had drawn a conclusion the story would not have been the classic that it is. Brown showed or displayed pictures; he didn't nail them to the wall.

It was March 26th, 1964 when the earth was invaded by one billion little green Martians.

And I'll never forget it.

10-29-91

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By JACK SPEER

EN DEUX MOTS

We get more and more of familiar phrases and stock sayings. They were observed in the Reader Speaks, when Wonder Stories letterhacks compiled Phiphty Phavorite Phrases of the editor etc.

Advertisers constantly play on familiar expressions, and also add to them, e g "the pause that refreshes" and "the whole thing". When a church paper published children's similes for God, one was "God is like Coca-Cola, because he's the real thing." It put me in mind of Huxley's "Love's as good as soma".

Titles of episodes in DuckTales, Darkwing Duck, and the like pun on sayings: "All's Fahrenheit in Love and War", "Toys Czar Us", "Up Up & Awry" (that goes further back than My Beautiful Balloon; and the dialog contained the familiarly combined words "a bird" and "a plane"). Red Dwarf took its titles Balance of Power, Waiting for God, and Thanks for the Memory from previous word-stringers.

I've already discussed canonical Star Trek titles. Among the noncanonicals, these for the animateds derive from sayings or quotations: One of Our Planets is Missing, the Eye of the Beholder, Once upon a Planet, and How Sharper than a Serpents Tooth. From the first three seasons of the next generation, we have Hide and Q, the Big Goodbye, When the Bough Breaks, the Arsenal of Freedom, We'll Always Have Paris, Elementary Dear Data, Unnatural Selection, the Measure of a Man, Who Watches the Watchers, Deja Q, Sins of the Fathers, Captain's Holiday, Menage a Troi, the Best of Both Worlds, and probably others.

Feghoots would be impossible without stock expressions. And think of the changes we rang on the horse of another color: the hearse of another caller, the Horace of another choler, usw.

Bumper stickers, motto cards, etc, do wonders with them.

"Missouri loves company" is probably a promotional bumper sticker. The Johnson Smith & Company catalog offered a button saying "If you can read this you're too darned close", sixty years later converted to the bumper sticker "If you can read this you're following too close". They feed on each other like that. "Ban the Bomb" became "Ban the Bum". The diamond-shaped in-window signs quickly evolved themselves to death, from "Baby on Board" to "Mother-in-Law in Trunk".

Old catalog of a thousand potshot postcards yields these to a sampling: "Support your local god", "I hope you're feeling", "I disagree with what you say but I respect your right to be punished for saying it", "Home is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there", "Your past is safe with me - I'll never try to change it", "If you really loved me, you'd let me kick you more often", "Reports of my being alive and well have been grossly exaggerated", and "Quick! Get this man to a woman!"

Motto cards typically ape a familiar saying in the first line, and put the bon-mot in the snapper: ."Whatever goes up will morenlikely go up some more after the first of the year", "Thou shalt not lie, cheat or steal - unnecessarily" "Money isn't everything - for one thing it isn't my thing", and "You can't fool all of the people all of the time but it never hurts to try".

Many book titles are quotations with no change. On my shelves of American books i found these: A Nation Conceived and Dedicated, This Hallowed Ground, a World I Never Made, Leave Her to Heaven, My Country Tis of Thee, Rally Round the Flag Boys, Barefoot Boy with Cheek, the Powers that Be, in Dubious Battle, the Ramparts We Watch, from Here to Eternity, the Paper Chase, Both Your Houses, the Tales of Hoffman (about the trial of the Chicago Seven), and the Palace Guard.

Others change words: All the Presidents Men (from All the Kings Men, about the Kingfish, from Humpty Dumpty), Up from Liberalism (after Up from Slavery), and If Life is a Bowl of Cherries What am I Doing in the Pits (based on a 1920s song).

And some book titles originate famous expressions, like the Call of the Wild and You Cant Go Home Again. (Now somebody tell me those copied earlier sources.) Occasionally a title relates to its subject, like a book about the Roosevelts called a Rendezvous with Destiny, Citizen Hearst, and Churchill's Their Finest Hour.

Songs, a frequent source, are also copiers: All in the Game, All or Nothing, All that Glitters, Anything Goes, Ask Me No Questions, and As Time Goes By.

Broadcast economists seem to have a weakness for word play. Paul Kangas yesterday said the Disney company might be wishing upon a star, but added reassuringly that it's a Cinderella stock. Louis Rukeyser delivers puns better, and Stephen Auge used to delicately insert quibbles.

Sometimes takeoffs, like Lewis Carroll's, become more famous than their models. "Work is the curse of the drinking class" is a revision of "Drink is the curse of the working class."

Some sayings must drop out of the collective memory, but we probably carry a bigger load of them around in our heads than any previous generation. It's getting to where you can hardly talk without phrases that remind you or someone else of a saying. At least one author, De Camp, has projected the habit of quoting into the future. I think it was the Viagens series in which there was an Arab interplanetary culture that frequently referred to imaginary folklore, 'As the dervish said to the sheep in the fable', e g.

Dictionaries of famous quotations used to be badly arranged. They'd be categorized under such abstract words as Ability, Absence, and Accident (Little Blue Book No. 815). One would have to be thinking in the same categories as the compiler to find an imperfectly remembered quotation in such books. Where would you look for "Would that mine adversary had written a book"? In the PocketBook of Quotations, it's under Writing.

Nowadays quotes in such books are most commonly arranged by author, and then indexed several ways. The Shorter Bartlett published by Permabooks (mine is falling apart, without hard use) indexes usually by one word which is in the quotation, e g Time, with run-on italic entries giving a second word, e g Stitch in, and the citation. It should have Footprints or Sands, but hasn't. I believe the true successor to Bartlett does a better job of indexing, but it has yet to turn up for me on the library's buck-a-bag day.

The ideal dictionary of quotations would be computer-accessed: You input a few words from your half remembered quotation, and the machine retrieves any string in its universe that has the search-words in it. That's a common method for legal research now. The computer also searches for derivative forms of the word, which is good: otherwise you might not retrieve, for example, This Hallowed Ground's original, which was "cannot hallow--this ground."

Probably nearly any famous passage can be identified by a couple of words: "boldly go", "adversary" + "book", ktp. Likely opinions will concur on which two words best distinguish it. Joe Haldeman knew that you know what comes after "Ask not". Cliches like "hoary hair" are not distinctive. But do you have any trouble with stranger + land, fear + evil, or number + beast? Of course not. They're all from the Bible.

JACK SPEER

THE OLD BOY'S SYNDROME. . .a criticism

by Danny O'Neill MacCallum

A while back, Stanley Schmidt wrote an editorial in Analog that said, basically, that the many complaints he's had about sf stories not being what they used to be, were just complaints from older readers who were so stuck in a golden-age rut, that they didn't and couldn't like stories that weren't what they used to read.

He went on to say that modern sf is just better written and that it was the readers who should be criticized and not the writers.

Yeah?

Well, bull-caca. Translation -- I take umbrage with that. I think there's a valid complaint there that Schmidt, because he is editor at Analog, cannot possibly address in any manner other than to defend his choice of story selection.

I am 38 years old and did not grow up on the pulps or the great grand sf stories like the Skylark books or Heinlein's earlier stuff. Nor did I read until much later authors like C. L. Moore, Edmond Hamilton, John W. Campbell, and easily a dozen others. But I have read them, and found them infinitely more exiting than most modern stories or authors. I've been subjected to each decade's form of New Wave sf and have found them all decidedly lacking.

Lacking what you ask? Well, mostly lacking just what most of the complainers were complaining about to Schmidt.

There's no story anymore!

Oh, don't get me wrong. There's plenty of exposition in today's stories. And character development. And intensely detailed background of this science or that technology or this tecno-military buzz word ridden campaign. But there's just no, or very few, stories on a grand scale anymore. Mankind doesn't explore the stars and conquer worlds and galaxies anymore. Instead, he explores his drug-abused, social-ills induced, despised, paranoiac and wretched soul, and conquers some dimly and dismally perceived fault with his gestalt. Oh, and somewhere in all this the word *laser* or *nano* shows up and that classifies the story as great modern sf! Or if the writer isn't one of the few physicists approved for writing technical fiction (tf, I say, instead of sf) and can't or won't include violence in their story then, if the above permutation in angst is to occur and be sf, they just put it on another planet and throw in some truly alien custom, like wiping only your left foot upon entering someone's habitat, or some such.

Part of the problem with modern sf is that the rules as presented by editors just like Schmidt for writing acceptable sf have become too rigid as regards the science in science fiction. I contend that, if they didn't already exist today in print, items like matter transmitters, FTL and telepathic/empathic organisms wouldn't make it into print because they would be too much like

fantastic fiction and not close enough to real science as we know it today. No. For today's sf you have to have every situation supported by massive calculations and all science has to adhere to present scientific beliefs. Hence the growing number of physicists writing tf and hence the dwindling number of non-scientists writing sf stories. We've exchanged vision for credentials.

And just so you don't think I'm entirely rigid in my dislike of modern sf, *yes*, I do think the old stories needed improvement in things like characterization, motivation and dialogue.

The problem, as I see it, is like most overcorrections to recognized problems, we've counter steered so hard over we've lost control in the other direction.

On the one hand we had stories that were all action and space opera without any pause for some character's self-examination or acknowledgment that the events in progress had actually affected him more than, say a stroll to his front porch for the morning paper, while on the other hand we have stories that are some tortured character's solution to a set of personal problems on par with bad B.O. and herpes. When all's said and done it's boring -- there's no **STORY!**

Where's the **awe**. Where's the nifty discovery of biological, stellar and cosmological oddities? (And no, I don't mean a 220 page lecture on an alien pair/race/tribe/entity/ 's sexual practices misunderstood as an attempt at communication/aggression/cultivation spun off as a sub-plot to the explorer/scientist/soldier/ 's amour problems with his or her partner explorer/scientist/soldier.)

That is what most sufferers of the old boy's syndrome (OBS) are complaining about. They don't want the same old stories they used to read. If they did, they'd simply blow the dust off some old copies of *Astounding* and save $5.95 (new) or $2.00 (used) off the cover price of paperbacks. What they want, and what I want when I sound off with my own version of the OBS is the old *sense of wonder* and excitement we used to get with the older stories, instead of *wondering*, insensate, where the excitement went.

It's not the readers, Mr. Schmidt, it *is* the stuff that being published. It's boring. Or at the best, mildly informative, kind of like reading a longish *Science News* or *National Geographic* article.

And Stanley Schmidt's defense of modern sf and his concomitant attack against we members of the Old Boy's Club is not surprising. As an editor of one of the few sf magazines left, *he could take no other stand, even if he privately agreed with it*. He approves, disapproves and selects the types of stories that get published these days. He steers the boat of readership up the sf river. He can't possibly set a new course and at the same time say he approves of the old course; whether the old course has merits or not. So his thoughts about any *problem* with readership must be discounted as an incredible conflict of interest. You can no more believe he's giving us an honest assessment of a recognized problem than you could a politician's assertion that he won't raise taxes/introduce user fees if elected.

Notice that I didn't say he is misleading us. I merely said he cannot be *believed* as speaking the truth. It's his *job* to be

positive about his job and confident about his choices.

IT DOESN'T MEAN HE'S RIGHT.

All of this doesn't change the premise that there exits, I believe, a valid complaint by a large number of sf readers, that something's lacking in modern sf. Writers and editors are constantly complaining that the readership is diminishing, couching their complaints as though it were somehow the readers' faults. Maybe, just maybe, the readers are *bored* with the current philosophy of sf stories that give them psychological slice-of-life vignettes about people they'd really rather *not* know all *that* well, and instead search out stories of grand trials, treks and tribulations in other genres. Like, ummm, *fantasy* fiction, for instance. Yes, I realize that genre has its own manifold of story problems. But it's not difficult to find examples of stories within that genre that have *story* as their basic component and not *introspective theology*.

And the real problem with the current state of sf stories being published is *if the older readers find the stuff unappealing, how can the really younger readers find it appealing?* There is the crux of the matter. If you turn off the younger readers of today, where will your future readership come from. And couldn't you make a case (I've tried) that the perceived declining readership of today is probably just that response showing up. Fewer people are reading sf today because they just don't like what they read yesterday.

After all, why do most of us read sf today? *because* -- we liked what we read yesterday. The problem is, a lot of us are saying that what we *really* like is what was written this morning, not this evening!

Be seeing you . . .

Dan

Whither fandom?

By Paul Lagasse

I used to love reading *Starlog*. In fact, it was my introduction to the world of fandom. Until I found that magazine I had no idea so many other people were "into" science fiction. The people who wrote letters, the people who wrote the articles, and the people who were being written about all became my friends.

Early on, *Starlog* had a sister publication called *Future*. This magazine overlapped some of the topics covered in *Starlog* but also covered the people and groups dedicated to making a better world through science – as it were making SF come true. This was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when both fandom and realization movements were strongly "grass roots" in orientation. *Future* dealt with Professor Gerard O'Neill's space colonies, Jacques Cousteau's discoveries, and the L-5 Society. *Future* also tried to put science fiction into a cultural and societal context, acting as a forum for the opinions of science fiction authors and featuring articles on the history of sci-fi literature and film.

Ten years later, *Starlog* is older and a lot less wise. After about two years, *Future* disappeared. The publisher said its mandate would be absorbed into *Starlog*, which would be both fanzine and forum. Forum lost. So did grass roots. (By the way, whatever became of the L-5 Society?) Fandom has become a lucrative business, with travelling circuses like Creation cons spieling out merchandise and big conventions rating hotels, political and media recognition and international cooperation. No more handmade resin phasers or hand-tooled sonic screwdrivers. Top-of-the-line, high quality mass-produced collectibles and literature are available for "serious" and non-serious fans at fairly high prices.

And the grass roots people finally abandoned utopia for the stock exchange. No more talk of raising goats in orbital ecosystems. Now the people who want to go into space wear ties and rent high-rise office space. And NASA? Well, they turned out to be money-burning monolithic bureaucrats with scant concern for human life.

Now *Starlog* looks more like any number of preteen rags with pictures of New Kids on the Block on the cover. Its articles have depth the way wading pools do. No more fourms. With programs like *Beauty and the Beast* and *Alien Nation* consigned to near-oblivion, it has become pretty much a *Star Trek* fan rag, covering that whole empire in minute detail for lack of anything else to write about.

Starlog, I fear, serves as both indicator and warning for fandom. We have seen fandom so grow in influence that television stations literally can not show *Star Trek* episodes in random order. Influential, yes – but also marketable, profitable, and exploitable. Fandom can be trivialized, and is.

Like the L-5 Society, fandom was born of an informal gathering of people with common interests and less agenda than enthusiasm. Science fiction, or any literature, is both child and vanguard of society. Fans honor that heritage by the discussion and study of fiction's roles in life at large. Fans find the meaning, and we ought not to forget that meaning is the basis of philosophy. The unexamined fiction is not worth fanning, you might say.

Paul Lagasse, a longtime resident of Santa Fe, is currently interning at various aviation history archives in Connecticut. He maintains contact with fandom in Albuquerque.

HIGHLANDER 2 (R½★) Coronado, Four Hills, Hollywood Cinema, San Mateo. One of the most incomprehensible and confused movies ever made, a berserk melange involving medieval Scotland, the year 2024, the planets Earth and Zeist, sword fights and laser rays. This movie, almost awesome in its badness, will be remembered by science fiction fans as one of the immortal low points of the genre.

Hmm. Reads like a Green Slime candidate.

On the astronomical front the latest is that astronomers may have discovered ice caps on Mercury. This past August the chaps at JPL bounced radar off the innermost planet and used the VLA to receive the refelcted image. The waves came back with a strong indication that there is ice, of some sort, at Mercury's poles, the temperatures of which they estimate is -235° F. Or, on the other hand, it could be reflected sodium's signature.

Marvelous.

On the other hand three years ago an expedition went out to the Sargasso Sea to prove that eels from America and from Europe mated and laid eggs there. Don't these people read the literature? That's been known for years and years.

And here's another one. Linda Vigilant of Penn State University, making a study of mitachondrial DNA has concluded that there was a common femal ancestor of mankind in Africa around 250,000 years ago. OKay. Except the same study was done back in 1987. The results have been challenged but I haven't seen (and don't expect to see) anything new on that.

John Arthur Long wrote "Eve of Regression" in 1988 which used that as a theme. It wasn't too bad until the end when it got all bogged down with the Christian religion. You might want to pick it up in a used paperback store.

It is all speculation, of course. There really isn't enough evidence for anyone to make any decent guesses.

And, he said, this has been Dynatron #100. None genuine without this signature and all that rot.

Roytac