

DYNATRON

Eddie Anderson wrote that he had heard of DYNATRON for years but understood that it was extremely difficult to get on the mailing list. I replied that it was fairly easy to get on the mailing list; what was difficult was getting me to publish an issue. The time comes, though, as it does to all dedicated fanzine types, when one begins to notice an itch. And I have so noticed and the only way to get rid of it is to pub my ish.

This is the 70th ish of DYNATRON. It is published, as usual, by Roy Tackett at 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107, USA. DYNATRON is, for the edification of whatever governmental entities who might be sneaking a peek, a fanzine; an amateur publication devoted to science fiction, fantasy and things that stem therefrom plus whatever else happens to be bugging Roytac at the moment. (I should mention that anything herein not signed by someone else can be attributed to either Roytac or HORT (take your choice).) The schedule of publication is rather irregular. DYNATRON is available for 50¢ (inflation gets to everything eventually) or as a trade for your fanzine.

And to wrap all this up: A Marinated Publication X dated May, 1979.

Dick Geis reports that the USPS will be boosting charges for "oversized" envelopes and banning "undersized" envelopes as of 15 July. "Undersized" is defined as measuring less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height or 5 inches in length. "Oversized" is more than $6\frac{1}{8}$ inches high, $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches long or $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Which means, ol' faneditors, that if, after 15 July, you mail your zine flat in the standard 9 x 12 envelope (either first class or third class) each copy will cost you an additional 7¢ surcharge.

Fannish ingenuity will find a way, though, I'm sure. You can always do what I've been doing for years: fold it over, staple it shut and mail it out. Provided it is thin enough.

But publishers of fat printed fanzines don't worry about postage costs anyway, do they?

I had given some thought to having DYNATRON printed. Figured that if I went offset I could use some fannish "art" to help break up the lines of print thereby making it a bit easier for the now generation of fen (are they still the now generation or has that passed into history?). I made some inquiries as to costs. Dynatron, you will note, is still being cranked out on the old Tower mimeo. As for the "art"--I've never been all that enthusiastic about fan art anyway. It ranks maybe a notch above fan poetry. Fan poetry is the absolute bottom.

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And this is the bot-

BUT IS IT LITERATURE?

by

DAINIS BISENIEKS

What with one thing and another, I can't deliver up-to-date book reviews. There is much else in the world, and so much that wasn't written yesterday. Max Beerbohm told of a man who wouldn't read a book less than ten years old. In that time a work would cease being fashionable. A nice idea. I have followed it, inconsistently. At other times I have troubled to order from Britain first editions hot off the press and not due to appear here for a while.

Ah well, let's try for reflections on moderately recent books. I actually got through a pair of one-author collections a while ago. Now most of the SF I have troubled to keep consists of novels. G. K. Chesterton said of a popular author that people could only read his books nine times because they could forget them nine times. (Eight would suffice.) I am content to keep some novels of that kind. But the real test is: can one read it twice running, having just learned "how it comes out"? Among mysteries, those of Dorothy Sayers pass the test. In SF, various works of Ursula Le Guin, Frank Herbert...I could go on about fantasy, but I won't.

But short stories, now? I hate to say, offhand, that SF stories in any way average out worse. But emphasis on the idea is a weakness of SF. How carefully, in story after story, is the key revelation saved for the end! And how often, then, is the tale fun to read when you have guessed it? Or after you know it? I was looking at Hal Clement's collection SMALL CHANGES the other day, and you know how many of his stories turn on ideas. I had read them all, years ago. I glanced at some opening pages and tried to remember. Aha, got it! I flipped to the end to check. Did I want to read what lay between? I regret to say not.

They were the stuff of science fiction--but they were water under the bridge. Or, to change the metaphor slightly, you can't bathe twice in the same river. It has been said (by whom?) that what we read (at least in our formative years) is not particular stories by particular authors, but the stuff of science fiction, adding up to a whole in our minds. And that's an experience we can rarely recapture in rereading. If anything is lastingly interesting, it is character.

Or try this. Once more I must name Ursula Le Guin and a rather short story, "Direction of the Road". It is, by gum, a prose poem; I can find no better term, though I do not want to claim for poetry the best effects of prose. But there: it works because its words are the right words joined in the right way. As with poetry, you have to read it again to see just how right they are. It could not be remotely the same thing in different words, or in translation, whereas the ordinary SF story loses nothing in translation. Lester del Rey (ANALOG, Apr 1978) has a point--for the average reader, style, beyond a certain level of competence that should be found (my emphasis) style doesn't really matter. Never mind Lester's straw man who reads sentences instead of story. Not guilty! But of course we have to get to

a story through its sentences and the words in them. Can't have the bread without the flour, and what if that has lumps? Haven't you wished that Anne McCaffrey's books had the same verve in dialog, action and exposition as Larry Niven's? I've found it such a goddamn chore to read the Dragon rider books: If I were to read them twice, it would be for a better view of what was lost in the fog.

But to the story collections: one of them was THE BEST OF DAMON KNIGHT (SFBC), wherein is one prose poem I can cherish as I do those of John Collier-- "The Handler". The ebullient big entertainer is celebrating another success with his hangers-on; but then he asks his handler to take a bow, the little guy inside who runs him--and the jollity dies down, to revive only when the handler retreats back inside. Meaning? Oh come now--a poem should not mean but be. Damon has a fine ear for speech and its nuances: it's nice to see how he varies the pace of his prose. Clear to see in a short piece like this. There are other, longer ones, but dammit, they are mostly downers. Yes, yes, I will admit that fiction should look at failure, the evil uses of man's works, and so on. One should contemplate them unflinchingly, as they say. Well, I do flinch. There are times I do not want to have my nose rubbed in anything. The mix in this book is not right for me; and I look in vain for catharsis, for which cleansing is said to be a fair translation.

Damon calls "Down There" his "unknown masterpiece"--about the computer-assisted hack writer of romances who gets his jollies out of slumming and unsavory sexual contacts. We have also "Semper Fi" (a.k.a. "Satisfaction")--the temptations of the mentigraph; synthetic experience without responsibility. "The Analogues" (an oldie)--induced hallucinations of a "personal guardian angel". "Time Enough"--the failure of time-machine therapy to overcome past failures. Here too is the famous "Not With a Bang"--the last man and last woman scheming how to use each other. "Masks" is an unpleasant version of "No Woman Born"--the brain in a mechanical body loathing all living things. Quite enough downers for one book.

Damon tells us that he wrote "The Enemy" and "Mary" when he was having eye trouble and feared he might be going blind. In the first, a young girl asteroid prospector meets an alien creature (or robot) and they must help each other toward mutually inimical goals. The description is intensely realized. In the other, a girl in a caste- and custom-bound postwar society longs for more than transitory love--and her lover comes at last to escape with her: out of society, to the land which may at last be fit for life again.

If one were to ask me for a sampling of the best of modern SF, I might well include these two, with other and of course different stories. The ending of Methuselah's Children has long summed up for me one of the things I liked first about SF and still like: determination in its characters and a cautious optimism.

Most of the other stories are jokes of one kind or another, and quite good ones, except for the infamous "To Serve Man", which I first read long years ago and refuse ever to read again. And why must so authors spoil their reputations with short-shorts like "Eripnav" (a Feghoot which prefigures the locally notorious undoing of Elfula)?

Isaac Asimov did it with a bit about giant aunts. For a while I was terribly disappointed in him. But The Bicentennial Man has in good measure restored my faith. I read the title story for the first time. Was it worthy of its Hugo? I will say yes. The robot who chooses mortality and is at last adjudged to be a man is one of his best-realized characters. I also liked "Waterclap"--the clash of interests between space exploration and subsea exploration resolved.

But surely everyone has noticed how much argument and discourse there are in Isaac's stories. "Reason, reason is my middle name!" No, of course they are not always directed at the reasoning part of man. Not in "Waterclap", where Demerest must be talked out of a jealous act of sabotage. "Feminine Intuition" is indeed about reasoning, and a very good story, too. "That Thou Art Mindful of Him" is about perverse robotic logic--but then the assignment called for carrying an idea to its extreme.

That was Isaac the professional at work. It is interesting how many of these stories were in some way commissioned or asked for. I have been cautioned not to think of "self-commissioned" work as being by and large superior. But here, I'm afraid, we have a number of short "gimmick" or "idea" pieces of no distinction. Once the ending is known, there is no reason ever to read them again. The development is interesting only while the ending is unknown. How utterly damning it would be to say this of a poem or a musical work! And I think the analogy holds. Characterization and style will save a story from this doom: Isaac's best stories have enough of the former. But he does not write fiction in words to make one sit up and take notice. Nonfiction, yes, but there the style is for immediate, one-time effect, and it is terribly un-economical.

Another professional is L. Sprague de Camp, who has announced that he writes nothing "on spec". When he does write, he delivers the goods and never, never surprises. I will say I eagerly picked up two recent novels, THE HOSTAGE OF ZIR and THE GREAT FETISH. I knew they'd be the same old baloney. But the former at least was good baloney, while the latter was stale. I don't think I will analyze. If you've read one novel of his, you know the formula. What I like least (as in Heinlein's novels, too) is the blowhards and incompetent bumbler opposed to the hero, all made of straw. I am not amused. I am not ready in every mood to explore the viewpoint of a fool, but when it is done well I know I am in the presence of literature.

DAINIS BISENIEKS

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A LETTER FROM

ART RAPP

DYNATRON 69 arrived on 9 Feb. Since the Albuquerque postmark seems to be Jan 23, I can only conclude that the postman who walked from there to here with it had a pebble in his shoe.

You are so right that the day of the subzine is over when postage runs 40¢ a copy. Twilight is closing in on most any other form of communication by mail as well. Did you notice how small the influx of Christmas cards was this winter compared to prior holiday seasons?

I started to say that perhaps fandom would have to switch to ham radio, but of course that leaves no written record, which would end an era in itself. Hmmm, how about a fannish RTTY net? Some advanced hams are experimenting with slow-scan TV...of course, it all involves a good deal of equipment and technology, and if there is one thing most fans lack, it is cash and mechanical ability. Guess we need to develop workable ESP.

Well, at least you got your mimeo dusted off and into action; mine still reposes as a carton of parts in the attic, where it went when we moved up here 1½ years ago. Have to get it out and reassemble it One of these Days.

Your point about the existence of easily accessible mineral resources (up to recent times) as evidence against lost prehistoric technological civilizations is well taken. Note that it doesn't necessarily contradict the von Daniken cult's contention that spacemen have visited Earth in prehistoric times, tho.

Come to think of it, wouldn't it be interesting if, when we get around to trying to exploit the vast resources of coal and oil and stuff supposedly waiting in Antarctica, we find someone has beaten us to it? (The Piri Reis map is supposed to be evidence that Antarctica was being viewed from space before it developed its ice cap, as you know.

Maybe Mars didn't look the way it does now before the strip mining operators got busy there...

Did you ever notice, in the old Assyrian and Babylonian bas-reliefs, all the kings and noblemen seem to be wearing wristwatches? Well, maybe they aren't wristwatches; maybe they're pillboxes, or compasses, or Dick Tracy wrist radios, or maybe the Babylonian equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Funny thing is that none of the writers who discuss those civilizations even mention the things.

Velikovsky (pause to take deep breath): The best pro-&-con discussion of his theories and related matters was several years ago in an academic quarterly called PENSEE, which devoted about eight full issues to the subject. (I ran across it in the Baltimore County Public Library; any university ought to have a file on it in their library). It was published somewhere in the northwest (U. of Oregon, perhaps?).

The most serious objection to Velikovski's scenario boils down to conservation of angular momentum in the Solar System which seems to require that bouncing Venus off Mars or Earth would change enough energy of motion into heat to vaporize most of the planet (which Velikovsky recognized; it's one reason why he predicted, in contradiction to what astronomers claimed when he wrote his books, that Venus would be found to have a high surface temperature).

Ghu knows I'm no expert in celestial mechanics, and can only get the general drift of some of the mathematical arguments involved, but it looks to me as if most of the objections neglect the fact that a planet isn't just sitting in its orbit (or rather, zipping along in it), it is spinning on its axis as well. This makes a planet not the simple body of Newtonian physics, but a gyroscope. If you've ever played with a gyroscope you know that it doesn't rebound when you apply force to it; it either resists as if it were a massive body, or it yields in a direction not governed by simple vector mechanics at all. I'm not sure but I suspect that mathematicians have not yet developed a general solution to the problem of collisions between gyroscopically rotating masses.

Which doesn't prove that Velikovsky was right, but points out considerable irrelevance in objectors who fail to recognize the complexity of the forces involved.

It's been a long time since I've read WORLDS IN COLLISION. (I read the original article in Harper's that started the controversy, though, and got hold of the book as soon as it became available. It seemed the fannish thing to do). As I recall, one of his points was that after the encounter with Venus, Earth's year changed from 360 to 365.25 days. Elsewhere he attributes the Earth's petroleum deposits to hydrocarbons which rained down on Earth during this period. A few minutes ago, while musing upon this subject, it occurred to me that adding mass to the surface of a rotating planet would be like a spinning skater stretching out his arms: it would conserve angular momentum by decreasing the speed of rotation. Now it should be possible to calculate how much mass would have to be added at Earth's surface to produce the amount of slowing -- OOPS! Assuming the orbital period remained the same, the rotation of the Earth would have to be speeded up, not slowed, wouldn't it? Damn, there goes a lovely theory! (I was going to suggest that the necessary mass should be of the same order of magnitude as the weight of petroleum known to exist on Earth, assuming that a figure for the latter could be dug up somewhere.)

Politics (pfui, dirty word): The state legislature and the county commissioners all started off the legislative season by raising their own salaries. This we need? I am inspired to devise a plan to make politicians work for the people, to wit:

The highest elected official in any jurisdiction is allowed to make only as much as the average per capita income of the people who voted him in. (In other words, in a state, the governor would get the average per capita income of that state (multiplied by the number of people in his family.) This would be TOTAL family income;

if he's already making more than the average from outside sources, he wouldn't even be eligible for office.

("Yeah" says the incumbents, "but you gotta pay good salaries to get good men." "Nertz," say I, "big salaries don't attract good men, they just attract greedy men." What we want is someone who will run the state for the benefit of those who are not already sitting pretty.)

The legislature could receive salaries equal to the governor's, but not more. Under this system, it seems logical that the governor and legislature would take care that no lesser official made more than they did. ~~[[~~In New Mexico the mayor of Albuquerque has a higher salary than the governor of the state. RT>>

Now, if the state's per capita income improved during the politician's term of office, upon completion of his term he would get a "bonus" equivalent to the increase, plus 10% to compensate for the fact that he had to serve at his original salary while the rest of the citizens were doing better. On the other hand, if per capita income decreased during his term of office, he would have to forfeit a percentage of his original salary equal to the decrease.

Just to make cute tricks more difficult, any candidate for office would have to agree in advance to make his Federal income tax returns public while he is in office. (Almost 50% of the--unpaid--school board members in Pennsylvania are threatening to resign because a new disclosure law will force them to reveal the sources (not the amounts) of any income in excess of \$500 per year.)

What does all this do? It puts (comparatively) poorer people in office, where, if they decide to legislate a vast project that will require a tax increase, they'll feel the hurt in their own pockets, just like the ordinary taxpayer does. And if tax increases hurt them personally in the family budget, I'm sure they would think of all sorts of ways to achieve economy in government operations.

O.K., what am I forgetting? I can see some flaws in the idea, such as that it will make a lot of genuinely worthy men ineligible for office, but wouldn't it, on the whole, give us a more responsive government that would tend to eliminate unnecessary operations rather than building empires?

(Of the three county commissioners who just raised their own salaries, one owns a wholesale meat business (he got chided last year when the newspapers found out his business held the contract to supply the county jail); one owns the regional Texaco distributorship; and the third is a bank director. Their political salaries are all "second incomes" to supplement already upper-level primary incomes. Having them decide what is best for the average taxpayer is not my idea of how democracy should function. They all three have announced they will run for re-election this year.

Meanwhile in Harrisburg, the floor leader of the state house complained in today's paper that he gets a lot of static when sessions of the legislature are scheduled for Thursdays or Fridays because so many of the legislators have businesses back home to tend to.

Arrrrgh, whatever made humanity saddle itself with politicians in the first place?

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ROYTAC: Certainly the evidence against a high level technological civilization in pre-historic times does not rule out the contentions of the vonDanikenites. Even when faced with the direct evidence, as he was on a PBS program a few months ago, neither vonD nor his followers will admit he is wrong.

The Piri Reis map is interesting but hardly conclusive. I don't think the details claimed are all that clear. I wouldn't completely rule it out...it would have to be copied from some pretty old charts, though. If I were to speculate I'd have to go with somebody from the Bronze Age: that was a daring bunch of sailors who seemingly travelled a lot farther than they are generally given credit for.

Speaking of Bronze Age there are some recent digs in Thailand (about which I have, unfortunately, few details) which indicate that bronze was being used there perhaps a millenium before it came into use in the Middle East...

...(See how we flow from one to another) Based on his excavations of Qafzeh cave near Nazareth, Bernard Vandermeersch speculates that the Cro-Magnon's probably originated somewhere in the Middle East. He would like to look, he says, in the south of Asia or southern Russia. Shall I give him a clue? My own thoughts on the matter are that Cro-Magnon originated in that vast complex of mountains between the Caucasas and Mesopotamia. The area very roughly defined as Kurdistan.

I don't really know about the theories of Velikovsky. They are, of course, pretty wild. But considering everything about the solar system we've learned since we started sending probes off to the outer (and inner) reaches I would have to say that his theories are no further out than the accepted ones currently being taught as scientific dogma. Astronomers are working overtime trying to fit all the new facts into accepted theory and are having a difficult time in doing it.

Heh...I remember reading, years ago, a long explanation of Saturn's rings and why it was the only planet to have them. Now we know that Uranus has rings and Jupiter has rings and I'll lay 8 to 5 that Neptune turns out to have rings.

Speaking of which...I'm sure all you readers are aware that Neptune is now the 9th planet. Pluto crossed Neptune's orbit on 21 January 1979 to become planet #8. It will recross Neptune's orbit in March 1999.

Humanity saddled itself with politicians because it is, basically, dumb. I don't know if your poor people politicians would be an improvement. Seems they would be more susceptible to graft. Trouble is we are too easy on our politicians. They have grown to think of themselves as something apart from the common herd, so to speak. And the idiot voters keep returning them to office no matter what they do. The law I would like to see passed is one that would limit all office holders to a single term of two years. It might help them pay attention to the business of government. As it is now the only thing they pay attention to is getting themselves re-elected. Fat chance of getting anything like that passed, though. Unless, of course, the people give them a less desirable alternative.

XXXXXX

RT

SIR

A one act play in five scenes

by

CHRYSTAL TACKETT

I

"Sir. There's rioting in sector C."

"How bad does it appear to be?"

"Not bad yet but the weather is hot. You know hot weather seems to pump up rioters."

"We just had air conditioners installed in all the homes in the trouble sectors. That's those supported by state funds where no one works."

"I know, sir, but the idea they'd flock to their air conditioners to get out of the heat is not a valid theory."

"Hmmm. We also installed all kinds of tension reliever equipment in each block. Didn't that help?"

"No, sir. It's more fun to get together and be destructive by throwing or breaking things which are not designated to be thrown or broken."

"What is the reason for this riot?"

"Nothing in particular, sir. At least our informants cannot seem to find any. Just a sort of "holiday" for the rioters."

"Well, watch the situation a while longer. Use your own discretion. If you think they are becoming too destructive to property and life then you know what to do."

"Yes, sir. I'll contact the water supply controller for that area and have him add the necessary amount of tranquilizer to calm them down and keep them at home and passive."

"Just make sure they don't get too much. We do want them to be able to get out on the streets and to the stores. They have to keep using their monthly allotments or else our privately-owned stores which harvest those state allotments will go broke and we can't have that. Of course we don't want to suffer too much in the way of damage so don't take too long to calm them down - just long enough to make it all look natural."

"Yes, sir!"

II

"Sir!"

"Yes, Grainwater, what is it?"

"The farmers, sir. They are starting to grumble again about the prices they get for their crops."

"Well, always seems someone is out of kilter with passiveness. If they get too annoying you'll have to resort to the old epidemic pill method we used to use on the masses. We certainly can't control them through their water or food supplies since most farmers have their own."

"Sir, what kind of epidemic scare shall we start this time and how long shall they have to take the pills?"

"It depends on how serious they are. If it is a mild uprising then a weak tranquilizer until the harvest season is over and they've

sold their crops to our privately-owned cooperatives (at our price, of course) should be sufficient."

"Yes, sir. We can start low-keyed and increase the strength and the period of time for the pills if needed. But, sir, you didn't say what the epidemic scare should be this time."

"That's not for me to say. Go to the medical research division. Tell them how much of an epidemic you need. They will give you one that is correct for the psychological mood of these farmers at this time."

"Sir, what if there are no psychological weaknesses at this time?"

"Then the communications media department will start one. They will gradually feed the dissidents the necessary emotional thoughts until they are ready for the epidemic belief."

"Never thought of that. Well, I'm new here. Guess I have a lot to learn."

"Agreed. Just make sure you learn only what you need to do your job."

"Yes, sir!"

III

"Sir! The generals are grumbling again."

"What is it they say now?"

"They must have war. They need to try out their new equipment and they also must get rid of some of their older personnel so they can promote the younger ones. Also they need activity to promote themselves in rank. Besides their friends in the military supply business need more business supplying the military or else they are going broke."

"Is that all?"

"Well, some say they would like to get away from home with an excuse to really live it up. The troops are getting restless. A war would quieten them down."

"They've forgotten we do not have wars any more, eh? Quieten the generals down. Put them to rest along with their troops."

"Which method shall I use this time, sir? The food or the drink?"

"Use them both. Use the old eat, drink and be merry method. What the hell, I can feel for their feeling of frustration over inactivity. Give them a good time for a while. Doctor their food and their daily ration of drink and they'll supply the merriment. If they die let them die merry instead of by cold steel or hot fire."

"Yes, sir. Sometimes I think I joined the wrong department of control. I'd like some of that eat, drink and be merry bit myself."

"You watch yourself. You start grumbling and you may not like what you get."

"Yes, sir!"

IV

"Sir!"

"Grumbling? What is it? You sound excited."

"I am, sir. It's the nation of Abced. It is acting up."

"What? Abced? What is the trouble. Does not its control have it under control?"

"It is Abced's control that is the problem, sir. The head of control is not controlling. He says he is sick of control, control, control. He wants to go back to the old days of struggle when people weren't controlled and did as they pleased."

"Well, we knew one of our controllers might flip someday."

"What shall I do, sir? Shall I send him one of your special gifts? How about the one with the mind expander in it?"

"No. Send nothing. I'm as bored as he is with all this control. Let it move along at its own pace. Let it spread as it will. Let control slowly dissolve."

"Sir?! You cannot do that! You are head of UNOWHO. The controller of all the controllers of the world. If you don't control it will all fall apart. We shall be back to demands for democracy, to riots, wars, high bills, and on and on. Sir, you are the supreme controller. You must stop the controller of Abced."

"You are right, I am the head of UNOWHO. I am the head controller of all controllers. I control as I wish and I can control by not controlling and that is what I chose to do."

"Sir, I shall have to report you if you pursue this madness."

"Fine. To who will you report me?"

"... Yes, sir."

V

"Sir?"

"Yes, oh Keeper of the Universe?"

"Sir, the supreme controller of planet Earth is refusing to control his controllers."

"He wants to return to the old ways, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, it would appear that way."

"Does the next in line for supreme controller of UNOWHO know of this decision?"

"No, sir."

"Then there is no problem."

"Sir?"

"Go to the computer room and have the supreme controller's number punched up for erasure. Then the next in line takes over."

"I was just in the computer room, sir. They are very busy. It seems the operators are having trouble. The XYZ universe with which they were playing games has gone wild, crashing about madly and all that. The operators keep keying in the program stop code but the computer keeps rejecting it. If they don't stop the program soon we'll lose that whole universe."

"Those operators might as well be Earthlings for their lack of knowledge of computers and the indiscretion of the games they play. That will be the third universe they've lost lately. They'll lose the one with Earth in it soon at this rate. Just standby until they have finished messing everything up and I'll send in a new crew of angels to be trained in that section and take over. I'm tempted to erase some computer operators from Earth and get me a new crew that way but they are no better trained. Oh Keeper of the Universe, don't you ever become a computer operator."

"Yes, sir."

XXXXX

CRYSTAL TACKETT

WRITINGS IN THE SAND

Writing in the May 1979 issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, Ray Nelson expresses a certain distaste for the term "fan" as applied to the sub-culture to which we belong and suggests that we term ourselves "Futurians" because we are future-oriented and that is what we are looking towards and trying to shape. I agree with him. The term "Futurian", as Ray points out, has been with us a long time and has been used by aficionados of science fiction for longer than has the term "fan". "Fan"...can mean anything. I'm a fan: baseball, football, rock, or even Lawrence Welk. "Futurian", on the other hand, is pretty well self-explanatory.

Futurian it will be in Dynatron from now on.
(Come to think of it I was, years ago, a member of the Golden Gate Futurian Society....)

The state of the Futurians in Albuquerque continues in a downward direction. The Albuquerque Science Fiction Society showed signs of a renaissance after Bubonicon 10. There was an influx of new people and a few months of excellent programming but the attempts at programming fell away and so did the new faces. ASFS has returned to its former state of a once-a-month gab session among the hardcore members.

Alpha Centura (sic), the Albuquerque Star Trek club is also in decline. Not too many months ago AC's monthly meetings attracted more than 250 attendees. Attendance has been declining, some of the divisions are having to merge for lack of membership and the programming is no longer of much interest. The latest meeting attracted less than 50.

Universes and Unicorns, a group which centered around a local fantasy book store, went the way of the real unicorns some months ago.

The Force, a group of high-school aged people apparently ran into an immovable object. It has not been heard from in some months.

Mike Kring and Owen Laurion secured an official university sponsor and attempted to start an SF club at the University of New Mexico. Mike and Owen were the only attendees at the meetings that were held.

The reasons for the decline in the Futurian oriented clubs in Albuquerque are not readily apparent, except in the case of ASFS. The Albuquerque SF Society has nothing whatsoever to attract and hold new members. In the other cases one can only speculate. Perhaps the STAR WARS fad is fading in which case there may be a revival of interest when THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is released. STAR TREK is still being shown on the tube each weekend but it may be that the adherents of that show are growing a bit weary of it. There has been not much else in recent months to keep up interest. BATTLESTAR GALACTICA was a turkey from the very beginning. Stf movies such as BUCK ROGERS and INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS have been deserved flops. As for written stf, the magazines become increasingly hard to find here and most of the recent books aren't worth bothering with. There is nothing, such as DUNE, to arouse and hold interest.

So Futurism in Albuquerque is in a downturn.

And how is it in your area?

Speaking of stf....just to prove that I still read it although it becomes increasingly difficult....

Someone, it must have been a literature major, recommended Marta Randall's Journey to me. Did someone mention turkeys?

I struggled through the introductory chapter. It was... I'm reaching for a word...not semi-stream-of-consciousness...that isn't quite right. Confusing is more correct. I got the impression that the sun of a planet called NewHome had entered pre-nova stage; the climate was unstable, the economic and social systems were generally going to hell. The government, unable to do anything and losing control, started a pogrom: "Scapegoats were needed, instant symbols of The Enemy, symbols which could be broken and killed - unlike the long dryness, unlike the dying sun. Symbols which could be looted, could be sacked. Old women. Children. Snow."

Snow?

Round up all der snowmen, Fritz, und march dem to der concentration camp. Ve melt dem down for der coal in dere eyes, nose, und buttons.

The story is not set on NewHome but on Aerie which is located four light years away. Aerie is owned completely on Jason Kennerin. He and his family are the sole settlers among the natives (described as Marsupial sentients (whaaat?)). It is mentioned that Kennerin had purchased the planet. There is no mention of who sold it to him. I gather that Kennerin became about conditions on NewHome, pulled off a raid to rescue about 100 detainees in one of the camps and brought them to Aerie to settle as refugees. I don't know if he rescued any snow or not.

The second chapter is short, only 6½ pages, and is remarked on only because Randall managed to change viewpoint four times in those 6½ pages. Remarkable. Remarkably bad writing.

In chapter 3 a shuttle comes in from space. The Kennerins and the refugees, fearing a reprisal from NewHome, arm themselves with hammers and awls and sickles and lengths of pipe and hide in the woods.

Would you believe a settler on a wild and primitive world who was able to pull off a raid on an armed camp has no weapons? Would you believe that? I wouldn't.

I read a few more chapters of character development and love and problems and then gave up.

I have read a lot of criticism of space opera but, by Klono's ferrous fingernails, I prefer that to soap opera which is what Journey is.

I understand the original title of this was Solitary People and that it was changed to Journey by the publishers. They should have kept the title and changed the book.

On the other hand there is Hotel Transylvania by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and I will mark it as a tribute to her writing ability that I read this through from cover to cover and enjoyed it. It isn't the sort of story that ordinarily appeals to me. Hotel Transylvania is what we would call a "woman's book" which is to say it is filled with romance and melodrama and great gobs of description of the fashions of the day, etc. It is "a novel of forbidden love" and that in itself is usually enough to turn me off. The setting is France...no, Paris (the two are not the same) in the autumn of 1743. Madelain de Montalia

falls in love with le Comte de Saint Germain who also loves her but there are some difficulties: he is a vampire and she is marked for sacrifice by a coven of Satan worshippers.

There is action and peril and melodrama a-plenty before they all...hmmm...are, shall we say, undead happily ever after.

Paris in the time of Louis XV is not a particularly fascinating setting. The nobility was decadent, far from being noble, and rapidly sliding towards its deserved end in the Revolution.

Le Comte de Saint Germain is not your run-of-the-mill vampire. Yarbrow demolishes a lot of the superstitions that surround the undead. For example, Saint Germain is not the least bothered by the religious trappings of Christianity. In fact he uses them himself against the cult of Satanists. He confesses, however, that sunlight would bother him and he would not be able to cross running water if it were not for the fact that the soles and heels of his shoes are well filled with his native earth. Far from being a figure of terror such as Dracula, Saint Germain is portrayed sympathetically as the symbol of a man among the bestial nobility.

(Hmmm. There've been two or three books of late portraying vampires as the good guys. Maybe it is time to re-read I Am Legend.)

In any event Yarbrow did a fine job on this one. Recommended.

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Grosset & Dunlap's "Today Press" line came out with a book called Strange Happenings by Paul Bannister. Bannister starts off by giving thanks to all those good folks at the NATIONAL ENQUIRER which should be enough to steer most Futurians away from this book. (The things I read for the sake of Dymatron's readers....)

Strange Happenings is the usual mish-mash of "psychic" experiences going over a lot of the old familiar ground: ghosts, Geller, Dixon, Danniken, the usual crap, but the last chapter, "The Psychic Arms Buildup" is of interest. Bannister reports briefly on governmental experiments in psionics both here and in the USSR. There's really not a whole lot new here, most of these reports came out years ago but it is interesting to note that the Soviets are still verymuch into psionic experimentation. You will recall the case of the LA TIMES reporter (his name escapes me which is probably just as well) who was kicked out of the USSR a couple of years ago and his public (at least) amazement that the Soviets should have gotten all upset simply because he was digging into information on psionic research. "It isn't even a science," he said. Maybe not but it is classified military information. A lot of such experimentation is going on--the Soviets seem to believe they are onto something. You can bet those so-called microwaves being beamed at the US embassy in Moscow are part of it.

Chuckle. Somewhere John W. Campbell is laughing his ghostly head off.

Bill-Dale Marcinko (got two heads like Joe-Jim?) sent along a copy of AFTA #3. Bill-Dale, ol' buddy, I'm not about to try to read any zine that requires the use of a magnifying glass.

Local Futurian Vic Milan last year sold a short story, The Casque of LaMont T. Yado to ASIMOV's. I didn't read it. (A title like that...) However, University of Albuquerque drama student Carrie Bryan apparently did and liked it because she turned it into a one-act play which, along with something called The One's Within by Amy Lucas, was put on by the UofA in February. Chrystal and I, along with other Albuquerque Futurians attended. The One's Within was the old chestnut about the government keeping the populace in the dark while the war rages on. I'm still not sure what Casque was about. Both were very avant-garde, experimental, and bad.

But what else can one expect from university drama departments?

For some time there have been reports from northern New Mexico, Colorado, and other western states of strange and mysterious "cattle mutilations." A number of dead cows have been found "with tongues, eyes, sex organs, and other parts surgically removed." Yes. "Surgically removed." That's what they say on the teevee. There are reports of mysterious lights in the sky. There are reports of wild and evil dogings by wild and evil religious cults. A deputy sheriff who investigated one of the mysterious mutilations found a mysterious white powder around the mysteriously mutilated carcass. It is, I tell you, mysterious. The UFOnuts have rushed to the scene. Mysterious visitors from Venus or Saturn or another galaxy even, they say. Demons, say the Catholics and call for the priests to haul out their medieval paraphernalia (not to be confused with doper's paraphernalia) to exorcise them.

The "news media" (that's them there electronic fellers) have been in a state of high excitement. What does it all mean?

Now comes Dr James Prine, a veterinarian with one of the mammalian biology groups at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory to cool off all the hot speculation. Dr Prine was called in to investigate some of the mysterious mutilations. What mystery, he asks. Coyotes, vultures and other scavengers are the obvious culprits. When cattle die on the range from natural causes, as they do now and then, the scavengers move in and feed on the fleshy tender parts such as eyes, tongues, sex organs and the like. Nothing mysterious about it. And what about that mysterious white powder the deputy discovered? Buzzard shit.

So there goes another mysterious mystery of the west down the prairie dog hole (where it will probably contact the plague). But the UFOnuts won't accept that and neither will them there electronic fellers. It was always a good story on the late news. Wild-eyed anchorman (cue card told him to look wild-eyed) excitedly reading about another mysterious cattle mutilation while film of a stockcar race rolls in the background (the director screwed it up again). (The reason they become anchormen, you know, is because they move their lips when they read anyway...)

Ah, well, there was a lot of fun to be had with it while it lasted.

And, of course, there is always the holy tortilla.....

Chrystal and I drove to Los Angeles in March to do the chores. Chrystal's mother, who is 85, still lives in Los Angeles so we make the journey about once a year to see her and to do a few things she can no longer do for herself such as shampooing rugs and the like.

We were shopping at a Ralph's Market. I stood at the meat counter alongside a young man who, like me, was looking at the various cuts of meat and sadly shaking his head.

"You know," he said, "all a man does anymore is work to make enough money to buy the groceries and pay the rent. After that there's nothing left."

I had to agree with him. I am strictly a pay-as-you-go type. We have no credit cards except for a gasoline card I carry for emergencies. (Something I've done since we were robbed in Colorado Springs some years ago and left with only the gasoline card to get home on.) So I suppose I notice prices more than do those who live on plastic financing. I can remember the Great Depression of the 1930s. The working man is worse off now than he was then. True he did not have as much money then as he does now but what he had went much further. Consider that in those days one breadwinner in the family was enough. Now there has to be two. A recent report indicated that in 85% of American families both husband and wife work. And in most of those cases the wife has a job not because she wants it but because she has to help pay the bills.

We are, however, much more placid than we were 45 years or so ago. The people of the 1930s were a militant bunch. The people of the 1980s will get upset only over the loss of their favorite television program. Mildly upset.

It is going to be interesting to watch what happens during the next decade. Keep your powder dry.

But I digress. As usual. We checked the convention lists to see if there was anything doing in the LArea during March. There was something called "SF Weekend" listed for 23-24 March at the Buena Park Hotel in, of all places, Buena Park which is deep in the wilderness of mysterious Orange County. SF Weekend was being sponsored by FPCI and we knew the Crawfords to be square dealers so we decided to take it in at the end of the trip.

Let me tell you about the Buena Park Hotel. Supposed to be a class place. I had phoned ahead for reservations but when we arrived we were told they had no record of any reservations for Tackett. Presumably they had played the old overbooking game and once they were filled the reaction to anyone else was "tough shit". I was not amused. When we got home and I received my March telephone bill I made a copy, circled the two calls I had made to the hotel in red, sent it along to the hotel with a letter of complaint. I did not get any answer to that either.

So Chrys and I went across the street to a motel for a room. We made a specific point of not spending a cent in the Buena Park Hotel while attending the convention activities.

SF Weekend turned out pretty good as such things go. Most of the attendees were younger types from the Orange County area. Few of the LA futurians care to wander that far into Orange County. Perhaps the Orange County people practice strange religious rites or somesuch worshipping Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm (I have heard of something called the California Angels.....)

There were a few familiar faces: Forry, the Tribbles, George Clayton Johnson squatting on the hallway floor, as usual, either telling stories and praying to some mysterious god. Milt Stevens passed through on his way to a Petard meeting which was being held even deeper in the depths of bottomless Orange County.

There was an assortment of panels, films, a costume show. I particularly enjoyed the panel on "Space Patrol", a stfish teleseries of the early 1950s. The panel consisted of Nina Bara who played "Tonga" the villainess of the series (who was absolutely delighted that she could still fit into her original costume after all these years), Norman Jolley who wrote about 95% of the scripts, and Irene Gizzi who is head of the Space Patrol Fan Club. What I found most fascinating was that the show was on live six days a week. There was a fifteen minute show Monday through Friday and a half-hour segment on Saturday. Jolley would write the script each morning, the cast would arrive, grab copies, run through it once and go on the set to do the show.

Had they had any disasters while maintaining that sort of pace? Only once, said Nina Bara. They had a substitute in playing the captain who completely froze on camera. What did they do? Left him there while the rest of the cast fled the scene. Jolley recalled that he had once killed everybody off by crashing the ship into a planet. Had to figure out a way to revive them all for the next day's show.

I have no memories of Space Patrol even though it was on the air for five years but television did not cover the entire country in those days and I was probably busy with other things anyway. I must admit a certain respect for those involved, though. Visual science fiction is generally difficult to do and a group that could do it live six days a week for five years deserves a bit of recognition.

Otherwise it was sort of a strange con. There didn't seem to be any parties: most of the people went home after the final movie of the evening.

There was the usual panel on "Whither SF?" This one featured Stephen Goldin and Bjo. As usual no decision was reached as to where SF was going. (Up in price the same as everything else.)

Did I mention Bubonicon #11? Probably not. August 24 and 25 at the Ramada Inn East in Albuquerque (where else?). Guest of Honor is Orson Scott Card. Prices are \$6.50 for membership or \$8.50 for membership and the luncheon if you join before 1 August. Write to Mike Kring, Apt 213, 6413 Academy NE, Albuquerque, N.Mex., 87109. If you are not going to Brighton you may as well come to Albuquerque. Among other things you could learn first hand why we call it Bubonicon.

I am, I guess, out of step, as usual. I always have my priorities mixed up. I cannot understand a bunch of retread protestors from the Viet Nam war era massing in D.C. in an effort to close nuclear power plants while our own government is actively working to put its citizens back in the cold and dark.

(Actually, I can understand their primary motivation. They are trying to relive the exciting days of the 1960s when there was always action. Most of the movement of the 1960s was simply a game played by bored affluent kids who had nothing else to do.)

In Albuquerque the waste of water by the city government (and its citizens) is rapidly depleting the Rio Grande aquifer. The city fathers insist there is no shortage of water officially while they unofficially urge a variety of conservation measures on the public. Those of us who still have our own wells and have been able to observe the drastic drop in the water table in the past year know what is happening. City government does not want to make any alarming statements, however, as it might be bad for business, especially construction which is booming with the influx of new people to the area.

In Albuquerque the good citizens are protesting that some of the kids have to pass a porno book store on the way to school. High school kids, that is. I wonder what a porno book store could possibly teach a student of high school age that he or she hadn't learned years ago in grade school?

Let me recommend to you, if you have not already read the stories, Ross Rocklynne's "Darkness" series. The stories, "Into the Darkness", "Daughter of Darkness", "Abyss of Darkness", and "Rebel of the Darkness", were originally published back in the 1940s, the first three in ASTONISHING STORIES and the last one in IMAGINATION. They were gathered together in 1973 and published as half of an Ace double under the title "The Sun Destroyers".

That title makes them sound like ordinary space opera which they are not. These are the stories of vast energy life-forms and, particularly, the search for the purpose of life by four of them. Rocklynne's concepts in these stories are on a vast scale encompassing millions of years and entire universes. The four main characters are well enough drawn as to become real to the reader.

And it appears that in "Into the Darkness" Rocklynne postulated a quasar years before the astronomers actually discovered those strange bodies at the edge of the universe.

Highly recommended. You'll probably have to look in the used paperback stores for it.

The second half of the Ace double in Edmond Hamilton's "A Yank at Valhalla" from STARTLING STORIES, 1941. A pretty good adventure story in itself.

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