

ScientiFiction

Spring, 1997



The First Fandom Report



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Two Rays, one Beam and one Bradbury, hobnobbing at Archon 20, 1996.
Photo courtesy of Mary Lu Lockhart.

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CLEMENT WINS HALL OF FAME

Hal Clement, nee Harry Stubbs, won the 1997 First Fandom Hall of Fame award. It will be presented to him at the 1997 First Fandom Reunion at Name That Con 10, Earth City, Missouri, in April.

Hal is best known for his science fiction mystery "Needle," but other of his works, such as "Iceworld," and "Mission of Gravity" are also well known and read. He was one of the mainstays of *Astounding Science Fiction*, and the scientific groundwork he did for his novels resulted in articles for that magazine.

Hal is a fan's fan, a pro's pro, and an all-around nice guy. He can often be found at cons where he enjoys everything with a pleasure that seems unchanged over the decades.

FIRST FANDOM REUNION NEARS

MAKE RESERVATIONS NOW!

There isn't much time left to make arrangements to attend the 1997 First Fandom Reunion. This year the reunion will be held at Name That Con 10 in Earth City, Missouri, on April 4-6.

The con will be held at the

Harley Hotel
3400 Rider Trail South
Earth City, MO 63045-1199
314-291-6800

Rooms are \$67 a night for up to four people.

Membership is free for all First Fandom members and a guest, and many other amenities are offered by the Name That Con crowd. For additional information they can be contacted at:

Name That Con
c/o SCSFFS
P.O. Box 575
St. Charles, MO 63302
namethatcon@juno.com

Earth City is very close to St. Louis, and transportation will be provided from and to the St. Louis airport by the convention.

This year both Hall of Fame awards will be presented at the reunion.

ZAKEM RUNS FOR DUFF

FANS RUN FOR COVER

In an unexpected move, recent First Fandom member Joel Zakem announced his plan to run

for DUFF. The decision stunned many who already believed Zakem to be standing on his head and in no need of additional physical repositioning.

In all seriousness, Joel has been a longtime associate of Louisville fandom, and is prominent in Rivercon affairs. He is a member of the Cincinnati Fantasy Group, and has been since his teens. It was at that group where he fell in with Beam and Schulzinger, a pair of fannish upstarts who corrupted him beyond repair.

If our members can find it in their hearts to forgive B&S for their past misdeeds, they are urged to fill out and submit the DUFF ballot which appears in this issue.

APPLICATIONS

The following have applied for associate membership:

Elliott Broderick
Jim Broderick
William A. Clemente
Yuri A. Mironets

NEW MEMBERS

The following have been made Associate Members:

Robert Beerbohm
Box 507
Freemont, NE68026
beerbohm@teknetwork.com

Arthur H. Rapp
282 Grovania Drive
Bloomsburg, PA 17815

Joel Zakem
2127 Eastern Parkway, Apt #2
Louisville, KY 40204

Welcome Dinosaurs!

NECROLOGY

Charles De Vet
Lynn Hickman
Joni Stopa
Roy Wood

DUES

Dues in First Fandom remain \$5.00 per year until the June mailing when they will increase to

\$6.00. The number on your mailing label will tell you to the end of which year your dues are paid. Please keep your dues current if you possibly can.

FIRST FANDOM PATCHES

STILL AVAILABLE!

We still have a limited number of the second issue of First Fandom patches available. These are approximately 4½ inches high and are completely embroidered in beautiful colors. The price is \$5 each, postpaid. They are available for purchase by all Founding or Associate members (sorry, Patrons, we're working on a pin for you).

Send your order to the editor with a check or money order made out the First Fandom.

EPHEMERA

We keep a fairly good stock of First Fandom ephemera on hand. This includes back issues of *SciFiction*, old membership cards (both Founding and Associate levels), and rosters. If you are interested please send the editor an SASE and he'll send you a copy of the current list.

If anyone needs a replacement membership or patron identification card please let the secretary-treasurer know. He's a lazy lunk, but if prodded hard enough he'll set matters to rights.

DEADLINES

The deadlines for First Fandom events and StF are as follows:

First Fandom:

April 4-6, 1997 -- First Fandom Reunion and presentation of Hall of Fame awards, Name-That-Con X: Inconferno, Earth City (St. Louis), Missouri.

May 31, 1997 -- last date for nominations for 1998 Hall of Fame award.

SciFiction:

April 19, 1997 -- Closing date for Summer, 1997 ish.

July 19, 1997 -- Closing date for Autumn, 1997 ish.

October 18, 1997 -- Closing date for Winter, 1997 ish.

ROBERT D. SWISHER: AN OBITUARY

by

Sam Moskowitz

(Copyright 1996 by Sam Moskowitz)

With the death of Robert D. Swisher of Kirkwood, Missouri at age 85, the science fiction field has lost its pioneer bibliographer of fanzines as well as one of the most enthusiastic fans of the thirties and forties. Swisher was also John W. Campbell's closest friend and correspondent.

Up until 1956 Swisher probably had the largest fan magazine collection in the world. He not only collected fanzines from every country, but even the circulars and special announcements they mailed out. Using this collection as a base he distributed, in eight installments, his *SF Check-List*, the first (October, 1938) bibliography of all the fanzines ever published. He kept revising this up to the 1942 issue, after which it was taken over and updated by Robert Pavlat and William Evans, also in installments, and finally collected by Harold Palmer Piser as *The Fanzine Index* in 1965. It has not been updated since the Pavlat and Evans edition. Swisher's distribution of his index was done through FAPA of which he was a member, and the publication

of the index was done to fulfill his membership requirements. It probably would be literally impossible to bring this index up to date now.

In the December, 1934 issue of *Astounding Stories*, under the pen name of Karl van Campen, John W. Campbell, Jr. had a short story entitled "The Irrelevant" which set out to disprove the law of conservation of energy. Swisher mathematically discovered the error in "van Campen's" theory, and wrote to F. Orlin Tremayne, then the editor of the magazine. At the time Swisher lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Tremayne replied, suggesting that Swisher discuss the matter with the author who lived at 15 Linnaean St. in Cambridge. Swisher found no van Campen at that address, but he did find John W. Campbell, Jr. and his wife Donna (Stebbins), and they became fast friends. When Campbell moved from Cambridge to New Jersey the two men began a correspondence, usually a letter a week, for 23 years. Though they discussed technical matters predominantly, in every letter Campbell would sum up the week's activities of both his personal and professional life. Swisher saved these letters and after Campbell's death sent them back to his wife Peggy. I helped Peg Campbell sell her husband's book and magazine collection following his death (as well as writing his obituary for the *New York Times* at his typewriter in his

office). In appreciation she said I could extract any information I wished from the letters. However, on her lawyer's advice, she had the letters put away for 20 years. The 20 years are up and with special permission I have put together a life of Campbell from 1936 to 1953, 100,000 words in length, and now under submission for publication.

Swisher did his undergraduate work at the University of Michigan in pharmacy and continued there to get a Ph.D. in pharmaceutical chemistry. Then he went to work for a division of Monsanto Chemical Co. In product and process research, ending up with emphasis on biodegradable detergents and their raw materials. This resulted in his omnibus work "Surfactant Biodegradation" which was published in 1971, with an expanded edition appearing in 1976.

Up until his death, after his retirement in 1975, Swisher lectured and acted as a private consultant on biodegradable detergents.

Swisher was married to Frances Nevada who kept his enormous collection of both fiction and fanzines in apple-pie order, and even collaborated with him on time travel. She died in 1967.

Swisher attended the First National Science Fiction Convention in Newark, N.J. in 1938 with John Campbell, and with his wife the First World Science Fiction Convention in

New York. At the latter convention his wife fruitlessly interceded with the convention committee to allow The Futurians to enter. The Futurians has published an anti-convention booklet and brought with them six pro-communist booklets after having spent a year trying to destroy the convention. When they refused to promise not to disrupt the convention they were not allowed entry. When they tried to forcibly get in, the police had to be called.

Campbell had gained his reputation as a writer by writing super science epics in the tradition of Doc Smith. When the vogue passed, Campbell was stuck with three lengthy stories in that tradition. In an effort to arouse interest, Swisher wrote an article for the July, 1936 issue of *The Science Fiction Fan* entitled "Super Science Fiction," urging the fans to write editors asking for more stories of the Smith-Campbell type. All the magazines had reader departments; a few letters might encourage a groundswell of approval for the super science stories and permit Campbell to reintroduce his specialty.

The Science Fiction Critic was friendly to John Campbell's stories, and he had personally contributed to its pages. Now Swisher sent them a piece entitled "Science Fiction Analysis 1926-1937." This was in the form of a two-page chart rating all the

magazines year by year from zero to four with the latter being the highest. Swisher found 1927 the best year and 1933 the worst, with the average quality of all the magazines ranking below two.

Professionally he wrote and sold "What Are Positrons?" (*Astounding Stories*, August, 1937), published before Campbell became editor. Swisher defined them as "positively charged twins of electrons, that they combine with electrons in a complete annihilation and destruction of matter and liberation of a corresponding amount of energy as gamma rays." For this article he attached his "Ph.D." to his byline.

The Science Fiction Critic published several lengthy articles by a Patterson, New Jersey fan named Peter Duncan of what can be most generously described as destructive criticism of science. Fiction. The Swishers were appalled at the intensity of the articles and the two of them wrote a piece entitled "Apologia," which appeared in the *Critic* for March, 1938. The article responded to Duncan's points on the commercialism of science fiction, the mental status of its readers and its science and literary quality. Duncan had written that he was leaving science fiction because of its weaknesses. The Swishers bid him farewell with the statement: "after all we are the ones that are at fault for trying to take our pleasures when and if we can."

Swisher and his wife were members of The Stranger Club, the leading fan organization in the Greater Boston area. Many of their meetings were held in Swisher's home at 15 Ledyard Road, Winchester, Massachusetts. When Boston held the 47th Worldcon in 1989 they labeled The Stranger Club as Fan GoH and brought back as many of the old members as possible; among them was Swisher, who occupied a place of prominence on the platform.

During the period when The Stranger Club was holding meetings at Swisher's home, a baby girl was born to them on July 3, 1940. She was named Frances Nevada Swisher II.

During the middle and late fifties Swisher, unable to find time in which to enjoy his collection which included the professional magazines as well as many fantasy books, and facing a corporate relocation to the St. Louis area, began a process of selling it off. In June, 1956 I visited Swisher and proceeded to fill gaps in my fan magazine collection, making it one of the most complete in the world to that date.

While editing *New Fandom*, I published a piece by Peter Duncan masquerading under the pen name of Loki. This incensed Swisher who wrote me on December 11, 1938: "Sam, will you please tell me what earthly purpose you expect to serve by publishing such an example of

poor taste as the Loki article in the second issue? It is a perfect combination of unintelligent writing and unintelligent editing and is the sort of thing which if continued, will bust you completely." This article had excoriated Bob Tucker's letter writing and author David R. Daniel's fiction.

One bit of fan bibliography that Swisher never had published was a listing by *author* of all the articles in fan magazines. Possibly this still exists somewhere, but it probably would only be carried through into the forties.

Swisher was a mature, affable and deep-dyed fan during the period he was active, a type of which the field never had too many.

A LETTER FROM VLADIVOSTOK

Dear Mr. Schulzinger!

I hope you won't be too greatly surprised having received a letter from an unknown man from Russia. But let me introduce myself. My name is Yuri Mironets, I work as a professor at the English Language Department of Far Eastern University in Vladivostok, Russia. I teach mostly various aspects of English -- reading, translation and analyzing of the texts, grammar, etc. But three years ago I proposed to

give the students of the English Language department a course of lectures in American Science Fiction and Fantasy. As you probably know, American science fiction, with a few exceptions, was practically prohibited in the former Soviet Union, but now the situation changed.

As I have been a devoted sf fan since my childhood (I'm 52 now), I decided to get the students acquainted with the best works of American SF writers. My proposition was approved by the Faculty's Council, and so my lectures began.

Now I have about 20 students in my class in American SF, and 10 students writing their students' research papers on American SF writers and their works. For example, one of the students is writing his research paper on Robert Heinlein's "juvenile" novels, another -- on Ursula Le Guin's novels "The Left Hand of Darkness" and "The Dispossessed." Last year one of my graduate students defended her graduation paper (in Russian they are called "diploma works") on E.E. "Doc" Smith's series "The Skylark of Space."

Unfortunately, the changes in our country didn't influence in any favorable way the situation in Vladivostok book shops -- they are still empty not only of American SF books in the original, but of any

books in English. Still, I managed to collect a small library of American sf books and had to do with what I had.

Regretfully, our University library is not of much help -- after the collapse of the Soviet Union the financing of the Universities stopped almost completely and the University library is now in a pitiful state and can't afford buying even the most necessary manuals and textbooks, to say nothing of sf books.

If my request isn't too bold, perhaps you can donate us some sf books with which you or other members of First Fandom club can part? This year I plan to enlarge my course of lectures in SF and everything will be of great help.

I wish you and all the members of First Fandom club Good Health, Good Luck, and Clear Ether!

Yours sincerely -- Yuri.

P.S. I found your address in the Fandom Directory, kindly sent to me by Harry A. Hopkins, the publisher.

Yuri A. Mironets
Oktyabrskaya St. 2, Apt. 15
Vladivostok, 690000
Russia

BOOK REVIEW

"The Lost World" by Michael Crichton

reviewed by

Mark Schulzinger

I admit it, I was wrong. Science fiction of the 20's and 30's is still being published. Unfortunately it is now being published as mainstream fiction and is being accepted as such by hordes of readers.

Michael Crichton, who has written some very interesting novels, among them "Rising Sun," has finally managed to reach his nadir by shamelessly copying Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic tale. Admittedly he's changed the name "Challenger" to Levine in order to keep up with the times, and he's tacked on a pretty lame pseudo-scientific explanation for all the goings-on, but it's still the same old same old.

Well, not quite. As a concession to the movie studio, whose celluloid version is probably being filmed right now, he added a couple of pubescent kids, a spear carrier, and a mess of Bad Guys who Get It In The End. Only an idiot could miss the set-ups, the give-aways, the telegraphed plot twists, and the Inevitable Conclusion.

What's most distressing

about this whole mess is that science has finally managed to outstrip the author's ability to comprehend it. This is bad since Crichton is a physician by training. I don't think I'd want someone who didn't know the difference between a reflex and an instinct mucking around with my body, nor would I want someone who didn't know how a...whoops, almost gave away an important point which all of you who read Niven and Pournelle ought to know by heart now. And speaking of Larry and Jerry, this is only the second time in as many novels that Crichton has stolen ideas from them.

Crichton's literary currency has become so debased with this latest work that I'm sure it's only a matter of time before he starts his own series of Captain Planet novels. Go back and re-read the original.

REVENGE OF THE SCIFAN

The Crazy Years

Well, I guess Bob Heinlein was a bum prophet; he just didn't have the foresight to envision all the amazing human failings that would go into his conception of the Crazy Years. But it's obvious that we're smack dab in the middle of 'em, and maybe it's time to take a small peek at what we wot of this interesting period in history.

I. The Death of Fiction

No, I don't mean of science fiction, but of all fiction. Tom Wolfe recently made the statement that genetic exploration will reveal that the human organism isn't a *tabula rasa*, but a latent image awaiting development. This genetic Calvinism only reiterates what physicians have been chanting for years.

Since the idea of fiction concerns the attempts of the protagonist to overcome his own flaws, and to find happiness or unhappiness as the result of his ability or inability to do so, this approach to behavior means the death of fiction of all types. Why isn't it obvious that flaws are genetically determined at conception, that none of us is able to either detect or escape his weird even by the most heroic of measures?

Now all plots will consist of agonizing descriptions of the protagonist's inability to deal with his innate flaws, the discovery of the genetic factors underlying those flaws, and the prescription of ever more bizarre behavior-controlling medications or surgery to control them. No one is ever happy, no one is ever sad, everyone is just well-maintained.

The good side is that Doc Savage will be coming back!

2. The Final Development of Political Science

There are too many examples of this for me to do more than just skim the surface. Logging is being banned because of an owl which doesn't inhabit the areas to be worked, and never did. The removal of hiring quotas based on race and gender is seen as discrimination because only through quotas and discrimination can true equality be achieved. The attempt of several states to legalize drug use and "stop the madness" of the failed war on drugs is pronounced contrary to Federal policy; maybe even seditious. Billions of dollars in spending are recommended to remove particulate matter from the air in order to reduce the number of asthmatic hospital admissions by about 0.4%. Women are blamed for "catching" breast cancer despite the Sr^m levels in the atmosphere. *Guttersprache* is declared a valid language.

3. The Death of Common Sense

Here, too, examples proliferate like rabbits on a spring day. Wheelchair ramps on streetcorners are built at a furious pace despite the fact that there are less than half a million wheelchair bound folks who are able to get around on their own. Millions are thrown into the streets because Federal housing guidelines make it impossible to create affordable

housing for them. Small businessmen are put out of business because a non-employee levels a discrimination charge against them.

4. The Death of Science

Hey, what about that alien spaceship following comet Hale-Bopp (never mind that it doesn't exist)? Didja hear about the alien "artifact" discovered in Roswell, New Mexico? Turns out it was scrap from some artist's atelier, but that didn't keep it from being put in the Flying Saucer Museum anyway. Flaxseed and cottage cheese will keep you from getting cancer. God is only a bit over 5,700 years old. A measure of the cost of those items US citizens routinely buy to stay alive, stay warm, or get to work is not a valid indicator of whether or not there is inflation.

Well maybe that last should have been under the heading "The Death of Economics," but I'll give the field the benefit of the doubt.

Ain't it a kick to live in such enlightened times?

The other day Sally and I were wandering through the local mall in search of nothing in particular but diversion. In WaldenBooks I found a magazine that subtitled itself "the magazine for sci-fi fans who have a life." We both agreed that this was obviously a contradiction in terms.

I want to thank all of you out there for your acceptance of the dues increase. A few of you were so enthusiastic about it that they have prepaid their dues under the new rate. They will receive credit, the new dues rate will not go into effect until the June mailing.

It is also gratifying to have such a busy pair of chairmen at work. To date Bill Beard, con liaison chairman, has been exchanging information with the Name That Con folks at a furious rate. Don Dailey has been expanding his membership and patronship packets to include all sorts of goodies, and he will be working on a pin for Sustaining Patrons Real Soon Now.

In all seriousness, it's good to have some highly motivated folks around who will suggest changes on their own, and who will prompt me to get off my hairy behind and do something different. It's far too easy just to give in to inertia and do what has always been done before. Unfortunately, that way lies extinction.

In case anyone gave a rat's behind, my first anniversary colonoscopy came out fine. And I have the baby photos to prove it! The procedure was extremely interesting, given the existence of fiber optics, mini-telecams, and whatnot. I was able to watch my own innards live and in color with only a slight wince when the tube went racing around a curve. Later,

when I examined the photos, I was able to marvel at the skill my surgeon manifested when he closed the anastomosis. Ray goes through this every year and they usually knock him out. They gave me 6 mg of Versed and 50 mg of Demerol and all it did was deaden any pain. Sally said that heavy alcohol intake will reduce the response to any painkillers, but were that the case Ray would need a gallon of the stuff. Me, I'm a light drinker I am.

But only during the daytime.

I got an unexpected and interesting letter from Vladivostok, Russia, late in November, and it is reprinted in this. It was from an instructor at a local university who teaches a course in English science fiction. He explained all the difficulties he was having getting books with no money and asked us to send volumes to him.

Now, for reasons completely unconnected with politics, I do not trust a Russian who asks me to give him something; the Russians have become quite adept at sticking out their hands for something when they either don't need it or intend to put it to a different use than that which they state. I replied to this gentleman that he appeared to qualify for membership in First Fandom and that I would personally underwrite his membership if he, in turn would send me a letter every month telling

me what was going on. In addition I would make his plea public in the pages of this magazine.

I felt my reply was reasonable. Besides, it would get me some postally used Russian envelopes (I would have said "covers," but only a few of you would understand that term). I sent out my reply, air mail, on December 2. I received a reply on January 2. It seems that Dr. Mironets met Verna Trestrail on a trip to the U.S., and she helped him considerably. It also appears that he qualifies for Associate Membership status in First Fandom. Alas, the Russian postal system isn't much better than that of the old Soviet Union, so I don't think I'll get much in the way of interesting covers, still I will get something. I urge anyone who wishes to make a contribution to Yuri's educational cause to send him material.

I also sent money to Riga, Latvia. The name of the city alone will get a guffaw from Ray who had an old friend from there. I did so with trepidation because the Latvians aren't all that better than the Russians when it comes to doing business with us filthy rich Americans. Still, the amount wasn't that large and the return, hopefully a Latvian stamp catalog, will be interesting.

I just received word that Ron Small has moved. Into a Post Office Box. I suppose the bears

took over his old place. His new address is: P.O. Box 382, Shapleigh, ME 04076. Thanks for the information, Ron, you just saved us about a buck in forwarding fees.

Some of you know that I am a great fan of Sam Raimi's "Hercules..." series, others could care less. "Xena, Warrior Princess" was a spinoff of this program, and was quite good until the fans started taking it seriously. All of a sudden Xena was Relevant. She had Pain, she had Insight, she had Possibilities. In short she became a royal pain in the podex. Now I can't stand to watch the show, to watch Lucy Loveless writhe in psychic agony. Can a fanzine be far behind or am I, as usual, a bum prophet and has this horror already occurred. On the other hand, Hercules is still great fun.

Others of you know that I have left SFWA, which is another royal pain. I am currently writing monthly column for "Stamp Wholesaler," a magazine for stamp dealers which has been around for many years and which is now owned by Krause Publications. It's fun; I don't have to be politically correct and I don't have to worry about whether or not my editor will "resonate" to my writing.

I was surprised when Ray told me that Joel Zakem was a DUFF candidate. I have known Joel for a very long time but, since physical and temporal distance have

separated us these many years, I had a tendency to still think of him as the teen-ager who discovered the Cincinnati Fantasy Group close to 30 years ago. Of course Joel is not a teen-ager any more. He is an attorney who works for the Commonwealth of Kentucky in Louisville, and who is active in many aspects of fandom. I last saw him at the First Fandom reunion at Rivercon and was impressed with what I espied. Joel is every inch the proper actfan, complete with attached bottle of beer (of course Beam and I preferred the harder stuff -- and still do).

I would warrant that Joel is an excellent candidate for DUFF and I urge that all members cast a vote for him. To make it easy to do this, a copy of the current DUFF ballot is included with this issue. Please note that **it is not bound in!** It is not an official part of the issue and may be removed and used without violating the integrity of the issue. Use it. Please.

Also please note my new e-mail address:

mschulzi@cnetco.com

I got sick and tired of my old provider's lack of ability to keep a link up, to keep my account intact, and to maintain their site in a manner befitting an organization that tried to charge me \$35 a month for access. My new site charges me a whole \$22 a month, and seems to

be maintaining its site effectively.

For those of you who subscribe to Juno, please note that my Juno address no longer exists. This service, which is trying to make it on outside ads, has found it necessary to discontinue its 800 number access lines. Naturally no local access lines are available in Gallup. I can't complain, though; Juno gave me access for nothing, and its decision to take it away made no real changes in my life.

DINOSAUR DROPPINGS

Dear Mark,

I am most happy for the mag and all the various things that come here. One of these years, but not this one, I'll attend a reunion in the U.S. See you then!

All cheer,
Sam Lundwall

Dear Mark --

The Worldcon was a wonderful experience. I'm glad I was able to be there. Marjii Ellers was very kind to me and to my guests.

I'm grateful for the Hall of Fame award.

All the best --

Frank Kelly

Dear Mark,

Thanks for the Winter issue -- congratulate John Coker (who photographed me in Orlando) on his Time Machine! But how badly "The Gang of Four" will have aged in only one year.

All good wishes,
Arthur C. Clarke

Dear Mark:

Just received the Winter issue: thanks.

Re the proposed dues hike: all in all modest when compared to virtually any other recent price increases, and also it appears to be necessary; I'd say thumbs up.

Very sorry to learn of all the adverse medical reports from various members; best wishes to all hands on this scene.

The black bears join me in extending best wishes to everyone for a pleasant and happy season.

Sincerely,
Ron Small

{I would say this man bears watching
-- Mark}

Dear Mark,

Hugo's Hugo again. Since both Forry Ackerman and Ben Jason wrote misunderstanding what I said, I must not have been clear: I was regretting Gernsback not being voted an award and a trophy by the committee or the fans. It was a gracious gesture of Ben to give him the rocket that Forry now has in his collection, but not the same thing as his being formally recognized.

As for Baen Books and 1945, it is the extreme case that highlights a more general problem, the more so in that Jim Baen is, as you point out very profit-oriented in choosing what he prints. Word is that Algis Budrys has decided to take *Tomorrow* online beginning with the January issue. If so experienced an editor, with a good base of subscribers, cannot make a print magazine work, then the problem is undeniable.

I note from the cover photograph taken in October of 1997 that Ray Bradbury has gotten over his foolish fears about time travel expressed in his "A Sound of Thunder," where his hero crushed a butterfly with his boot and returned to a sign reading "Tyme Safari, Inc." Or is the future more flexible than the past? Must be.

Sincerely,
Catherine Mintz

Dear Mark:

While I'm glad you pinned down a site for our Hall of Fame presentations I am worried that I never heard of any of the guests and wonder what kind of an attraction they are for us or the convention, though they certainly are cooperative. They to get names of dinosaurs who will attend and publish them. This may be a bigger attraction that the guests you list.

All best,
Sam Moskowitz

{Sam, I dare say that as we get older there will be fewer and fewer names we recognize. I think one of the problems involved the proximity in time of this con to Archon. We will try and do better as we progress with this new project. -- Mark}

Dear Mark:

It is with great sadness that I am writing to you of the death of my father, Bobby. He loved Science Fiction to the very last and was reading and waiting with anticipation the latest writings of his favorite authors from the 90's, Lois McMaster Bujold and C.J. Cherryh.

His book, "Surfactant Biodegradation." and the later editions thereof are acclaimed by critics. He was given by Monsanto the research assignment to investigate the interaction of

detergents and the environment and worked in that area for many years. This lead to about a dozen US and foreign patents, the publication of a couple dozen research papers in various scientific journals and his book. In 1976 he received the annual award of the Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association for excellence in environmental chemistry.

Among his other interests he counted bicycling, 35mm photography, listening to fine or occasionally outrageous or preposterous music and travel.

Respectfully yours,
Kathryn M. Swisher

Dear Mr. Beam,

This letter is to inform you, if you have not already been so informed, of the death of one of the members of First Fandom. Early on Sunday morning, January 5, 1997, Charles V. De Vet passed away at his home in Edina, MN, with his family by his side. He had been suffering from cancer for several months.

Charles was very active in Minnesota, promoting newer writers and giving encouragement to anyone who wished to enter the field of Sci-fi writing. We had the distinct pleasure of having Mr. De Vet attend meetings at the homes of our members, and listening to him talk

of the golden days of Science Fiction.

I will leave it to others better qualified than I to give you the details of Mr. De Vet's writing career, which spanned almost five decades. Suffice it to say his stories were original, witty, thought provoking and, above all, entertaining.

When Charles met with a group of would-be writers he always gave them one invaluable piece of advice: "There are two kinds of people, those who want to write and those who do." My own modest success in the field of Sci-fi/Fantasy writing has been due to that advice.

He will be well remembered and missed by all who knew him.

Sincerely, yours,
A.M. Decker

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As usual Mark is bitching at me about the deadline. But that is his job as editor and he probably handles it better than I did.

Of course I didn't have anybody to bitch at. I am, as usual,

trying to figure out what this message will contain. I guess the big thing is taking the Hall of Fame award Ceremony away from the Worldcon and giving it to a Regional Convention. I still have mixed feelings about this. It was becoming more and more difficult to deal with the Worldcon committees, our agenda seemed small beside theirs. We will have to wait and see how our present course works out. Name That Con in St. Louis has been chosen this year for the ceremony. It will be held April 18 - 20, 1997 at The Harley Hotel in Earth City Missouri. The Convention Committee is offering First Fandom members free membership, free transportation to and from the Airport, Bus Station or Train station, a First Fandom VIP Suite, admission to the regular VIP Hospitality Suite and Special Guest reserved seating at the major functions of the Convention. I plan to attend and hope to see many of you there.

In October I drove to Napoleon Ohio to attend the Funeral of Lynn Hickman. It was my chance to say goodbye to an old friend. I had known Lynn since 1951, some 45 years. I remember the visits when Lynn was passing through Indianapolis during his years as a farm implement salesman. He always had something fresh to say and new jokes to tell. Lynn, like myself, was a Buck Jones Fan. I will miss him.

We went to Cincinnati for the Cincinnati Fantasy Group's annual New Years Eve party at Roger Sims's. It is my one time a year to put on a Tuxedo. It was a night of good conversation ushering in the New Year with friends.

Concerning the coming raise in dues. I agree completely with Mark on the necessity of this move. Dues have not changed since 1982. The raise probably should have been greater but we will have to wait and see. Remember you can pay your dues ahead at the current rate of \$5.00 per year until the dues notices come out in June.

Besides Name That Con I have Midwestcon and Inconjunction on my schedule. We have several other non SF trips planned. Mary Ann and I are looking for a warmer place to live when she retires in a couple of years. Also we would like it to be a place where an asthmatic can breathe easier. Any suggestions will be appreciated.

Until next time-----

IN CLOSING...

So, here I am with over a column to fill. It seems like old times. Or at least a recurring theme.

Given all the bad reviews, I had some trepidation about going to see "Mars Attacks." I needn't have

felt that way. It is one of the better spoofs ever done of bad sf movies, and the fact that it was based on a set of bubble gum cards doesn't alter its thrust.

I was pleased to see a lot of scenes from old movies, including "The Day The Earth Stood Still," lovingly recreated by Tim Burton's crew, and I lost count of all the visual sequences from other films that he re-made just for this one.

Most of the actors in the film were folks Burton worked with in the past. Sylvia Sidney was the bureaucrat in "Betelgeuse," and of course Jack Nicholson was a magnificent Joker in "Batman." I suspect some of the fun in the film was watching familiar actors act so very well in a movie that was supposed to be so bad.

Many of the special effect were Burtonesque and reminiscent of "The Nightmare Before Christmas," but they only added to the hilarity of the spoof.

Great fun; I recommend it highly.

Until next time, then...

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