

ScientiFiction

Spring, 1998



The First Fandom Report



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Cover showing tombstone of Abraham Merritt is courtesy of Sean Donnelly.

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THREE WIN HALL OF FAME AWARD

Jack Agnew, John V. Baltadonis, and Milt Rothman were elected to receive the 1998 First Fandom Hall of Fame award. The vote was made in a rare, unopposed, election suggested by Founding Member Bob Madle and published in the Summer, 1997 issue.

In that letter Bob pointed out that the three recipients were founding members of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society in 1935.

The recipients will receive their awards at the First Fandom Reunion at Dragon Con in Atlanta over Labor Day weekend.

BILLIE LINDSAY MADLE

Billie Lindsay Madle, wife of long-time fan Robert A. Madle, died December 4th, 1997, of cardiac arrest. She had been suffering from congestive heart failure for about a year.

Billie was born on August 31, 1919, and met Bob in 1943 when he was stationed at the Signal Office in Camp Sutton, North Carolina. She was a civilian employee of the same office. They

were married in November, 1943, and recently celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary.

Although not an sf fan, she accompanied Bob to just about all conventions, and was his regular assistant as a book dealer. She could usually be seen behind his table with her warm smile and charming demeanor. She was also his business assistant.

Bob and Billie have four children: Robert, Jr., Richard F., Jane E., and Mary Lomke. They have three grandchildren. Billie is also survived by two sisters: Mary E. Montgomery and Patsy Bailey.

BUCK ILL

R. Creighton Buck, long-time fan and Founding Member of First Fandom is currently confined to a nursing home.

According to his wife, Ellen, Creighton is suffering from dementia as the result of multiple infarcts. He has been in the nursing home since May of this year.

Although he no longer either reads or writes, his wife might enjoy hearing from all his friends. Her address can be found in your copy of the Roster.

CLARKE RECEIVES HONOR

AWARDED HONORARY KNIGHTHOOD

First Fandom Founding Member Arthur C. Clarke was awarded an honorary knighthood by Queen Elizabeth II. His name appeared on the New Year's Honors List.

Most readers will recall that Arthur's accomplishments are numerous, and that his most signal one was the concept of the geosynchronous satellite by which communications are now sent around the globe at speeds almost as fast as those of the ordinary postal services.

While Arthur will not be invested as a knight, and while he is not to be called "sir" (that honor seems to have been reserved for some singer who dresses like a stolen car), I am certain that all First Fen will think of him as "Sir" Arthur from now on.

DEADLINES

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

First Fandom:

May 31, 1998 -- last date for nominations for 1999 Hall of Fame award. Last date for nominations for 1999 first Sam Moskowitz award.

Labor Day weekend, 1998 -- First Fandom Reunion, Dragon Con, Atlanta.

SciEntiFiction:

April 18, 1998 -- Closing date for Summer, 1998 ish.

July 18, 1998 -- Closing date for Autumn, 1998 ish.

October 17, 1998 -- Closing date for Winter, 1998 ish.

DUES

Dues in First Fandom are now \$6.00 per year. 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.

REVENGE OF THE SCI- FAN

THE ANIMALS AMONG US:

Lately I've been observing a disturbing phenomenon, one which

is leading me to believe that humanity is being infiltrated by a species which is indistinguishable from itself, which can interbreed with it, but which is not human but animal.

Although the definition of what makes human beings human has been debated and theorized for some time, the consensus appears to be that humans are self-aware while animals are not. This self-awareness leads us to such activities as religion (cf. Vercours's "You Shall Know Them"), and speech (although this latter has been recently challenged by Noam Chomsky and his followers).

To a psychologist, the desideratum of humanness is the ability to introspect, to show self-awareness by being aware of internal emotional states, even if it is sometimes very difficult to verbalize such states. For example, if someone is asked why he hit someone else and he says, "hey, man, he like you know bugged me," this can be translated into "his behavior annoyed me." This constitutes introspection, and thus self-awareness.

More recently, however, when asked why they performed certain actions, some people are saying, "I don't know." This is a statement that cannot be translated into terms which even suggest introspection. As a matter of fact, it can't even be translated into terms

understandable as those which are made by people with dissociative reactions ("I don't remember") or by those with immature object relationships ("It was as if I was an observer, not a participant").

Some examples of this phenomenon include: a 30 year old woman who shoots and kills her two young daughters and then calls the emergency service to say that she has just done this but does not know why; a child who stabs a friend and, when asked why he did it says, "I don't know."

It might be argued that these individuals were aware of their internal states, were capable of introspection, but were unable to articulate it. I disagree strongly; the statement "he bugged me" is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from "I don't know." The former statement conveys information, the latter does not. What's more, the former statement implies self-awareness while the latter implies a lack of same.

And therein lies my concern. It appears that there is some segment of the human population which is not human at all, but which is animal masquerading as human! They are able to mimic us perfectly except in the crucial aspect of self-awareness. They appear to think, but we have yet to be able to differentiate between consummatory behavior and thought. They seem to be able to do everything humans

do, but they do not possess the crucial faculty of self-awareness.

We always wondered what form an alien invasion would take: Roswell-type critters, pod people, giant slugs. But did we ever in our wildest dreams think that they would be no more than cunning animals? Maybe it's high time we starting to do so.

Life gets more interesting all the time.

I was working on my e-mail when my clothes washer emitted a loud "pop" and began melting its way to China or whatever is on the Tellurian antipodes of Gallup. Waal, golly gee, it's 1998 ain't it (even the date sounds like science fiction!), and we don't gotta waste our times with quill pens and post riders in order to answer our mail no more. And jest after ah got rid of ahr washin' rocks the durn nu-clear washer went critical.

In honesty, 1998 isn't too much different from 1950. I still get a whale of a lot of mail, although now it comes as electronic impulses which are less permanent than paper versions, and I get a whale of a lot of junk mail, which is also and thankfully less permanent. It takes less time to answer each piece of mail, but volume has increased to the point where total time is about the same.

Clothes washers still wash

and spin, but both functions have become part of one drum. The new machines are smaller than the older ones, but they handle loads just as large. Motor technology has changed to make cheaper motors that will last as long as the older ones, but they still burn out after some 25 years or so, and they still make an interesting stench when they do so.

I could go on and on, and bore the daylights out of all of you with comparisons of how things have changed since John Campbell made that observation about 1950, but heck and durn — you already know.

There is one area of change, though, which both astounds and annoys me. I, like others of our group, was raised on the concept of the large spacecraft, I mean the REALLY BIG one! We read and wrote about mile-long ships, and were delighted by the size of the launch vehicles that lifted the Mercury and Gemini craft from the Earth's surface. Yeah, we knew that the capsules were about as big as beach balls, but we knew that launch technology would mean there would be some Really Big ones along any decade.

So what did NASA do this past year? It sent a roller skate to Mars. Admittedly, it was quite a roller skate, with all sorts teensy widgets on board, but it sure was tiny. I wonder if this is the future of the Age of The Conquest of Space:

nanomachines investigating the physical properties of dust motes while humanity just sits and watches it on the boob? In my heart of hearts I still prefer BIG!

DINOSAUR DROPPINGS

Mark...

I realize that as the Grand High Phoobah of First Fandom's old printing press you do on occasion experiment with aspects of the grande publication.

However, as a newly minted member, I would prefer my name is spelled correctly so others will realize I too am from the exalted regions of 1940s fandom.

After all, would T Rex allow you such a horrid misspelling of his/her/its name? Would not a stegosaurus challenge your failure to proofread for spelling errors? Is there some poor prehistoric creature wandering in limbo because you stole one of his/her/its "s" and tacked it randomly into the middle of mine?

After almost 8 months of exchanging missiles, spears, and occasionally valueless money and stamps, I find the person most trusted to sell me Scott US 2041 must ruin the family name by

reckless disregard of my grandfather's name and the way an Irish court bailiff in western Massachusetts thought it should be spelled.

An instant and succinct apology, plus a session of kowtowing and forelock tugging make the only way you can repent. By 9:00 PM EDT I expect to hear a slow rhythmic knocking emanating from the southwest United States.

(In fun)

Everett "Ev" Slosman

{Ev: always delight to hear from another satisfied customer — Mark}

Dear Mark:

As you may or may not remember, I was wondering about Abraham Merritt's middle name. According to a brief autobiography edited by Walter Wentz and reprinted in Sam Moskowitz's *Reflections in a Moon Pool*, it was indeed Grace, his mother's maiden name, but he dropped it at an early age --because of damages incurred by fighting companions who kidded about it."

So it looks like he got what he would have wanted on his gravestone.

Merritt came from an interesting family, boasting, among

two or three other people of particular distinction, James Fenimore Cooper and a several times great grand uncle. His family was relatively wealthy, and he attended the University of Pennsylvania, expensive then as it is now.

The total collapse of the family fortune eventually drove him west, like so many other young men of the time, and after an adventurous series of events, many of which may be true — if embellished — Merritt became a reporter on *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the newspaper which I open my front door to every morning.

Merritt went on to better, and better-paying things, but the foundations of his interest in science, witchcraft and the like were set in these early years which SaM has documented with information that might otherwise be impossible to locate.

On a completely different topic, the date by which I should pay my dues was clipped off my label: am I still in good standing?

Sincerely,
Catherine Mintz, Sustaining Patron

{Thanks for the wealth of information, Catherine. It looks like Mr. Merritt had the unfortunate happenstance of having been a boy named Sue. For some reason the label printing part of my database program isn't behaving

itself properly, and I must reformat things. I'll notify you when you need to renew. — Mark}

Dear Mark:

To answer your question in the Autumn ish (P. 10): Yes, the current crop of fen out there are coming along fine. They are real in ways we never thought of. And delightfully not mundane.

On the other things, I suggest to Jack Robins that whatever else he does with his records, he send a copy to the Science Fiction Oral History Association (c/o Nancy Tucker, 695 Judd Road, Saline, MI 48176). I sent mine in both tape and written form.

I can't remember. Did Aubry Mac Dermott ever get a Hall of Fame award for founding the first fan club in April, 1928? Now it will have to be posthumous. He is survived by his wife, Bea Mac Dermott.

Clifton Amsbury

Dear Mark:

This letter is to nominate Forrest J. Ackerman for the first Sam Moskowitz Archival Award.

Forry is the most logical choice of all people to receive this honor. Several years ago SaM noted

that the three most impressive collections of science fiction-related material in the world were held by Gerry de la Ree, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Sam Moskowitz.

During the past nearly seventy years, Forry has managed to salvage many thousands of unique important items from major genre films, such as original props, armatures, dioramas, costumes, souvenir books, movie posters and lobby cards, and has recovered many historically important ephemeral items discarded by staff members of the early science fiction magazines, such as cover paintings, correspondence, contracts and manuscripts.

Each week for decades, this material has been on display to the general public during "open Houses," and has been catalogued, photographed and documented by universities, institutions and historic societies. The collection has been a primary source for countless articles, magazines, photo essays, books, college courses, video tapes, Internet web sites and other related projects.

Forry's preservation efforts have brought positive international attention to science fiction and the sense of wonder in general, and have influenced many people's lives for several generations. Above all, it is this willingness to share his passion for collecting those items that makes Forrest J. Ackerman the natural candidate for receiving the very first

Sam Moskowitz Archival Award.

John J. Coker, III

Dear Mark:

The latest issue of *SciFiction* was fun reading except that the subject matter (another member, another death) is always so sad. I knew Sam Moskowitz very well; I don't recall ever having met or corresponded with Connie Ruppert. Still, except for an obit notice in *Locus* or *Science Fiction Chronicle*, who in the world of fandom would honor the memory of some of these oldsters (SaM, yes, but not as likely as Connie).

Too bad that First Fandom will not be officially recognized at the 1998 Worldcon in Baltimore; that would have been my first FF meeting in years. Armed with a copy of the latest membership roster, I'll have to keep an eye out for individual members. Ahoy, Forry!

Sincerely,
Lester Mayer

Marko --

Trying to learn about E-mail and such is really frustrating to a computer illiterate like myself emerging from the word processor stage. Was ready to give up and go back to the post office, but Nancy

made me make the attempt again.

Another SciEntiFiction with creative cover layout got here and is appreciated. Note in yesterday's paper about ACClarke getting an honorary knighthood. Seems we're forbidden to address him as Sir Arthur. Maybe we should all chip in and buy him a big round table.

Talked to George Young last night and he really made me feel younger by telling me that the youngest Misfit on their team just retired and they're now bowling afternoons in a retirees league. And here I've just started an entry level job as a "customer service rep" for a big lab where all I do is deliver reports and supplies, pick up blood, urine and other specimens, process the paperwork and try to keep the clients happy.

Got Dragon Con info the other day and will try to go. Don't really care for the hotel rates so will see if there is a nearby Motel 6 or some such.

I now have irrefutable proof that there is a colony of Martians or other Bug Eyed Monsters alive and thriving in the great state of Missouri. If I'm doing this correctly and the scanner is working, there should be a partial map accompanying this. And if you will look at Missouri Highway 19 about five miles south of Owensville, there is the hamlet of BEM! Nuf sed. Discovered this recently as my

Saturday route takes me from Phelps Hospital in Rolla to Herman Hospital in Herman. They keep out of sight and/or disguised, but failed to bribe our Secretary of State to keep the name off the map.

I refuse to belittle Beam's alleged encyclopedic knowledge but will brag anyway about the many many items I've earned by answering questions and winning "Joke of the day" competitions on local radio stations. In fact the one I told you about the real reason Santa uses reindeer (an original by the way) was voted the dumbest joke of 1997 by KOQL, or KOOL radio 106.1!

See you whenever,
Hal Shapiro

{Folks, this missive came to me by e-mail and Hal, as usual, got his return address wrong. Hal, I think it's just spiffy that you are now transporting disgusting bodily waste for a living. Most of us do that in the course of our lives, but we hardly ever get paid for it. -- Mark}

Dear First Fandom:

I am writing to you about my father, Lynn Hickman. Back in 1988 Curt Phillips did a "Testimonial/Roast" scrapbook on dad. Several members of First Fandom were asked to contribute. This scrapbook started with 12 letters.

I am asking anyone in First Fandom who would like to contribute a letter to do so. It would be greatly appreciated as I am planning to keep adding to this scrapbook for many years to come. So please write and send letters to Mark Hickman, 413 Ottokee Street, Wauseon, Ohio 43567.

Sincerely,
Mark Hickman

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey, guess what -- there isn't a President's Message this issue! It seems that Ray spent too much time standing on his head and picked up a case of the Type A Sidney flu. Frankly he sounded horrible over the phone, and it took several trips to the doctor before he was able to start to mend.

Right now he sounds pretty good, and reports that he feels much better, but he still isn't quite up to writing for StF.

When I told him I was going to get the issue out on time for a change, he said: "fine, now I don't have to write that damn message." Honestly, folks, you'd think he didn't enjoy doing this.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I'm glad, really glad, to be able to get an ish out on time again. There have been so many things plaguing us over the past half year, and they always seem to hit just before it's time to put the mag to bed. To be able to start the new year with an issue that isn't late due to illness, trips, or acts of malevolent spirits is something that makes me think the rest of the year will go pretty well, too.

As a matter of fact, I am so optimistic that I'm starting to make plans to be at the First Fandom Reunion in Atlanta. Getting there will be a lot more difficult than the last time I went to Archon; New Mexico isn't exactly close to anything but chaos. It even takes me six hours to get to Phoenix. Still, I think I'll be able to make the trip, and I'm even looking forward to it.

Meanwhile I want all of you out there to stay well, and keep them cards and letters coming in!

FIRST FANDOM
Dinosaurs of Science
Fiction

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