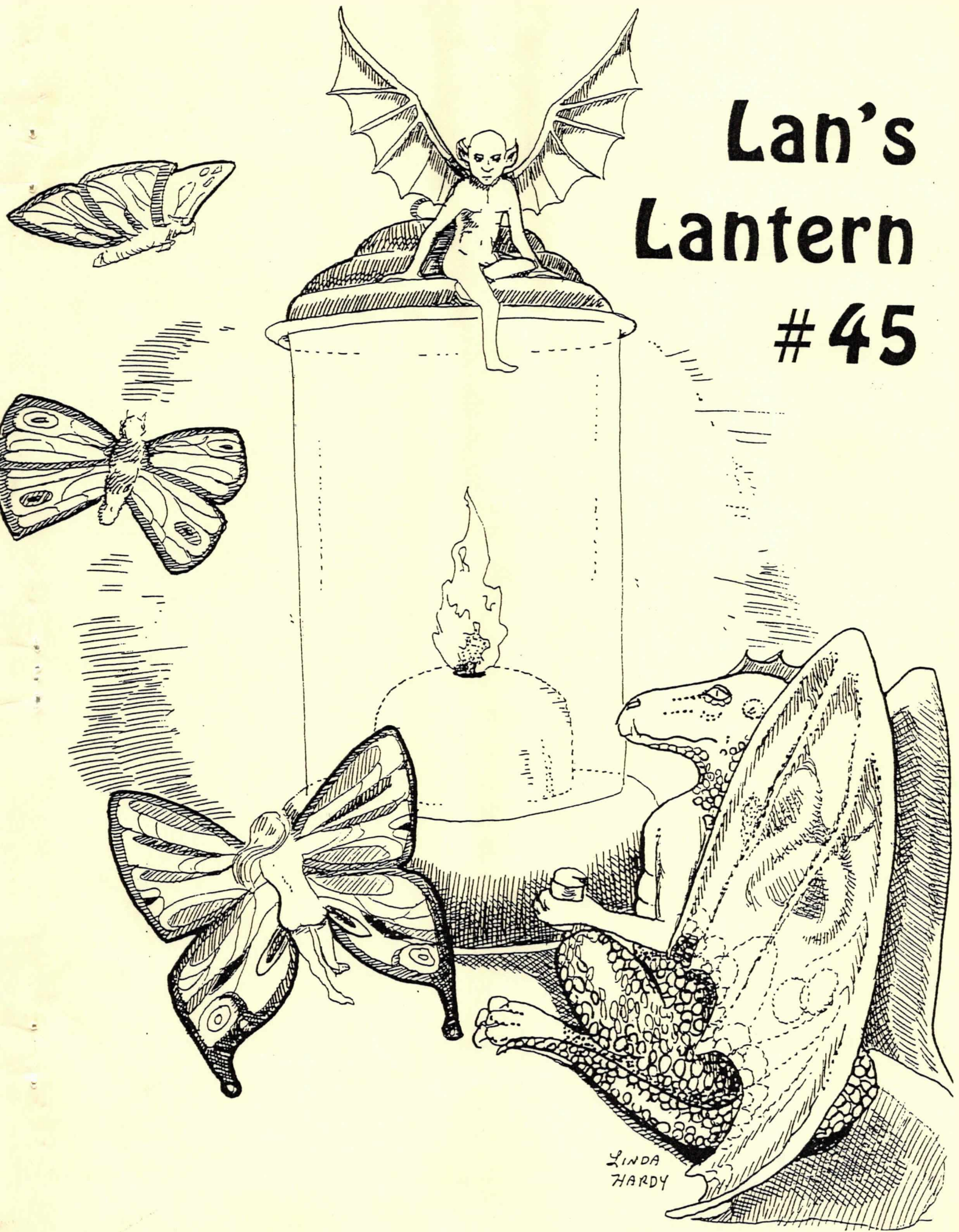


Lan's Lantern

#45



Lan's Lantern #45

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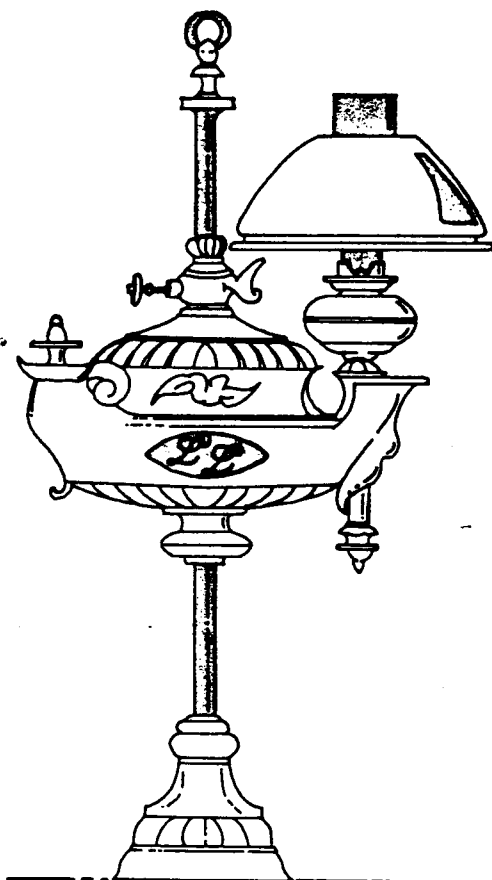


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Dedication

To Kathy, my loving Wife,
 and to my patient readers

Why You Are Receiving This

- ☐ Contribution in this issue
- ☐ Contribution in an upcoming issue
- ☐ Comment or LoC received
- ☐ Trade ☐ You wanted one
- ☐ We're in an APA together
- ☐ Mentioned in the Lettercolumn
- ☐ I thought you might find this interesting
- ☐ This is your last issue unless you do something
- ☒ Please contribute to the Poul Anderson Special, by April 1 1998, and the Gordon R. Dickson Special by September 30, 1998.

Lan's Lantern #45 is published and edited by George "Lan" Laskowski, 2466 Valleyview Drive, Troy, MI 48098-5317 USA. Phone: (248) 641-3055. *Lan's Lantern* is available for the usual, even money (like about \$5), and the whim of the editor. The opinions expressed herein are those of the contributors and may not be those of the editor. Then again they may be.. This is Lantern Publication #31, a division of LanShack Press Unlimited. *Lan's Lantern* #45 is copyright October, 1997, by George J. Laskowski Jr, unless otherwise noted. All contributions become the property of Lanshack Press, but will be returned upon request. All rights return to contributors upon publication.

From the Editor

Lots of Changes

by Lan

There have been a lot of changes in my life in the past couple of years. Most of them you will read about in my "Conreports and Ramblings" section, (page 9) and even there you may note that there has been a significant change. I am no longer running to a dozen conventions a year. My credit cards won't stand for that. In fact, I've been slowly working off the balances of those cards, but that takes time. So Kathy and I have been going to the local conventions, ones where we only stay for the day, or can commute to and from easily. Book buying is limited, as is the purchase of videos. Kathy has become my financial advisor and is making sure that I don't overspend, or get more into debt.

Other changes should be apparent from the zine itself. *Lan's Lantern* is still following the tradition of coming out at least once a year, but this huge genzine is rather late (another tradition). It is still a massive piece of work, but there are fewer pages this time. One reason is that I took about a 115 pages of 12 point type and reduced it to 10 point, bringing the issue under 90 pages. I've been learning how to use MS Word effectively, and I hope that will come across. There is also less artwork. Fewer contributions (*hint, hint*, artists) and much less in the backlog of my art file, along with a desire to compact this issue as much as I could, combined to have a *Lan's Lantern* which is less visual. Cost is a factor as well, since I have not renewed my bulk mailing permit for a couple of years.

On the personal side, my life is better than it has been for a while. A loving wife and two stepchildren have made a big difference. (See my "Ramblings" again for the details.) I have relied less on fandom to keep me busy; this family keeps me busier than I have been in a long while – sometimes exasperatingly so, but not to the point of exhaustion as fandom and other things did before. Having a family has meant more time spent with them, and much less time spent with friends. Even if I had money to go to conventions, Kathy, Dan and Tanya, have priority, and building this relationship as a family takes precedence. Even school has taken a back seat to the family life.

Yes, I still teach mathematics at Cranbrook Kingswood school, and I have taken on some other responsibilities as well. This latter was because the administration thought I wasn't doing enough. Well, okay. I've gotten out of coaching any sort of sports or intramurals for most of my 22 years here at the school (only coached one season – swimming – many years ago), so I was just waiting for something like this to happen. However, coaching would mean that I would only teach four instead of five classes, and the school really needs me in the classroom.

I still have a good relationship with most of my students. Some have become friends over the years, and Kathy and I have even become friends with the parents of my students.

With so much going on, and two children who depend somewhat on me for some of the basics of living, I have changed, and suspect that I will change further. What will happen in the next few years is largely an unknown, but I am looking forward to seeing what will happen.

In This Issue

There is the usual eclectic choices of articles and features that appears in the general issues of *Lan's Lantern*. Mark Leeper's essays I find very funny, and I hope you do too.

There are three fiction selections this time around. Laura Resnick offered an excerpt from her newest book, a travelogue called *A Blonde in Africa*. Flyers are included in the issue. The other two stories are the winner and runner-up for the short story fiction contest at the convention CONTEXT VIII. I am a year behind in getting them into print, but like the previous winners that I have published, these are well worth waiting for. "The Icosahedron" by M. Todd Washington came in first place, while "Barnard's Gate" by Richrd Flood was the runner-up. I think you will find both stories excellent.

I am finally getting into print part two of Elizabeth Ann Osborne's trip to England and Scotland with her family which they took in 1991. She has her own style and way of telling about the trip which is interesting and informative.

There are two separate conreports from others. Eli Goldberg writes about MUSICON, while Dennis Caswell talks about the 1995 Worldcon in his continuing column, "Travels with Dennis".

On the serious side, David Brin, Greg Benford and Greg Bear have an Open Proposal to all fans and fan clubs about hooking young readers into real SF. Read and try it, or atleast make some attempt to follow their suggestions.

Also on the serious side is the interview of Allen Steele about his Mars book, *The Labyrinth of Night*. Dave Creeke managed to talk to Allen at RIVERCON, and came away with this write-up of the conversation.

Again on the serious side (but with some humor), David Shea talks about running informational services at large conventions. Anyone who has tried to do this will welcome his suggestions, and laugh at the situations he describes, but shaking their heads in understanding and disbelief.

Then there is the usual book, record, tape and film reviews, fanzine reviews, the lettercolumn, and my own Conreports and Ramblings.

In Upcoming Issues

I still have to finish up the Bob Tucker Special issue of LL, and I am soliciting articles for the Poul Anderson Special, and the Gordon R. Dickson Special. These authors are or will celebrate their 50th anniversaries as SF writers, and as I try to do, I put out special issues of LL in their honor. So please submit articles, reminiscences, words of praise, etc. to LL about these special people. For Poul Anderson, deadline April 1, 1998. For Gordie Dickson, September 30, 1998.

Okay, now enjoy this issue, and please, send a loc, art. article, or whatever and let me know how you liked it.

An Open Proposal to the SF Community

from *The Killer Bees*

Dear fellow Science Fiction fan or Professional,

Many in the SF community have ideas about solving society's ills, and back up their beliefs with time and money. But in there some venture we might *all* get behind? One that's independent of dogma or ideology? We think there is one place where our community might do a lot of good – the same place where most of us had our feet firmly planted on the road to science fiction. That place is the junior high schools of North America.

Consider the ages from twelve to fifteen, when a person's sense of wonder either blooms or withers. For most of us, science fiction literature cast our minds far beyond the limits of family, city, or oppressive peers. How many kids in today's tense world might be better off if the same portal opened for them as well?

We've all heard about declining literacy. Sherry Gottleib tells that when she first opened the Change of Hobbit bookstore in Los Angeles, it thronged when the local junior high let out. Over time, these customers stayed loyal ... but weren't replaced. In the store's final years, Sherry's average customer was gray-flecked or balding, and the few teens who showed up focused on media or comics. Polls show an aging of the SF readership. Science fiction themes are popular – in films, comix and games – but the genre's literary heart faces demographic collapse.

Worst of all, countless kids forget how to say the most beautiful word in any language – “Wow!”

Our proposal – every SF-oriented club or fan group should consider *adopting a local junior high school* as their main charitable cause –

- * Making contact with librarians and English teachers, to find out their needs and to show them how SF encourages kids.
- * Recruiting guest speakers to visit classes or school assemblies, giving inspirational talks about science, writing or history ... anything to fire enthusiasm and imagination at an age when these are precious, flickering things.
- * Sponsoring a reading club and/or writing contests, to encourage a love of SF and the creativity that helps produce more of it.
- * Persuading bookstores to offer prizes and discounts for teens.

As for the pros, most of us have interesting talents to share. Many SF authors have speaking experience, and for those who don't, what better start than with small groups of kids?

There is self-interest here. Authors who give talks often acquire new fans. Local conventions that sponsor an SF club may soon have new con-con members. If you charity auction sends \$500 to the “Special Wish Fund,” you'll get

a thank-you note; but hand the same amount over to a stunned librarian and the photo will make your local paper! It's a win-win proposition, because each new reader helps SF pros put off the day when we might have to swap our word processors for alarm clocks and actually go to *work* for a living. It also means there will still be fresh SF fans entering the scene when we are old and gray.

Since we first proposed this idea in the *SFWA Forum*, it has led to considerable discussion online, in the GENIE SF Sig and other locales. Now it's time to open up the discussion to fandom in general. In our typical, chaotic way, can we reach some sort of consensus how to proceed? Should we aim at thrashing out a final version of a plan at the Anaheim Worldcon?

- * A recommended reading list for various age levels.
- * how to maintain referral lists of possible speakers in each part of the country.
- * A code of propriety, to maintain our welcome and effectiveness. (1)
- * Ideas about leveraging a grass-roots effort through philanthropic funding.
- * How volunteers might coordinate a continuing effort, while avoiding too much structure.
- * Many publishers already have adopt-a-school programs. (2) How might these be leveraged in conjunction with grass-roots efforts?
- * A name for the program. (e.g. “The Discovery Project”?)

Plans schmans. For the most part what's needed is *action at the local level!* Each of us lives near some school where bright kids now languish – bored, bullied, or unmotivated. Who among us can't recall facing the same crisis once, in our own lives? For many, it was science fiction that helped us turn the corner. Science fiction welcomed us home.

That's where it all finally comes around. No altruism is more effective than the kind that begins at home.

Sincerely,
David Brin, Gregory Benford, Greg Bear

- (1) Before rushing down to school, a note of caution. In today's paranoiac society, a poorly-presented campaign might be all-too easily misunderstood. Lately, small groups of parents have decried SF/fantasy as “Satanism.” Others (with some reason) fear strangers who seek contact with their kids. Mature patience is a better response to such fears than confrontation. The best approach is to seek, and strictly follow, guidance from librarians and teachers about local sensitivities.
- (2) Baen Books publisher Toni Weisskopf has already volunteered to send starter packages of Young Adult SF/F to any school SFWA designates, to support classroom visits. Other publishers should soon follow.

by Mark R. Leeper

You'll like Poe's *Raven* poem more.

Barnard's

Gate

by Richard Flood

Context VIII runner-up in the Short Story contest.

A great clang of metal echoed through Ro's blank dreaming, awakening him to harsh light. An insect face hovering over him, black and gleaming. Mantis face.

Cold air. Iceworld, he remembered, someone's nickname. Ship must have just docked. The jump was over.

The mantis-faced alien shoved a small dark box at him. A translator, too close to his ear. It buzzed: "Arise."

The alien held a syringe in one long hand. Black helmet, Ro realized, that was the mantis face. Dull pain throbbed in his right arm.

The translator buzzed again, tones reedy and halting, coalescing into phrases as the restorative burned away the clouds.

"Arise, M. Ro." The helmet nodded. Above it, things still not in focus. Voices came from behind, soft moaning. Other people coming around.

"Arise," the translator buzzed. "Now. Move to the portal. Now." A gloved alien hand triggered a release on the seat. Ro leaned forward, stood, stumbled. Space legs.

The passed into a cramped airlock, down a corridor where the wind blew cold in his face. Iceworld. The washouts had called it that, back on Earth. The long-faces liked it cold. On Earth, they hived in the mountains and the northern countries.

The voice rasped behind him, again. "Move, now."

They filed into a small open area with a metal-grate floor, an airlock ratcheting shut behind them. A figure came out of the shadows, small and wan, wheeling some sort of cart. Human. He handed a bundle to Ro, nodding, expressionless.

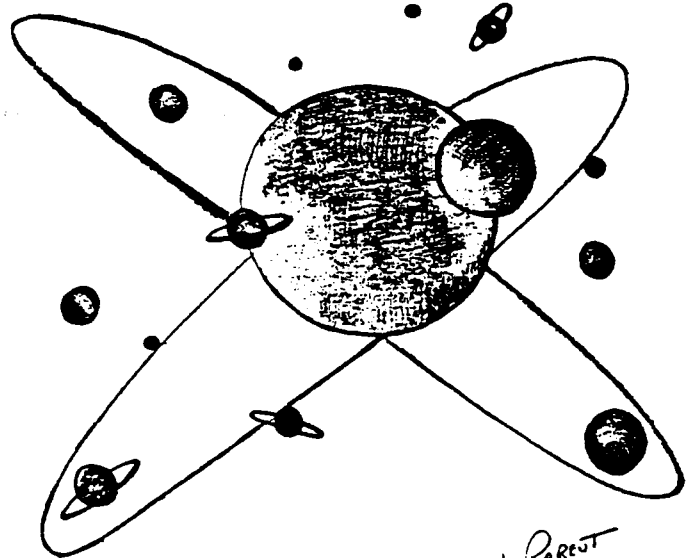
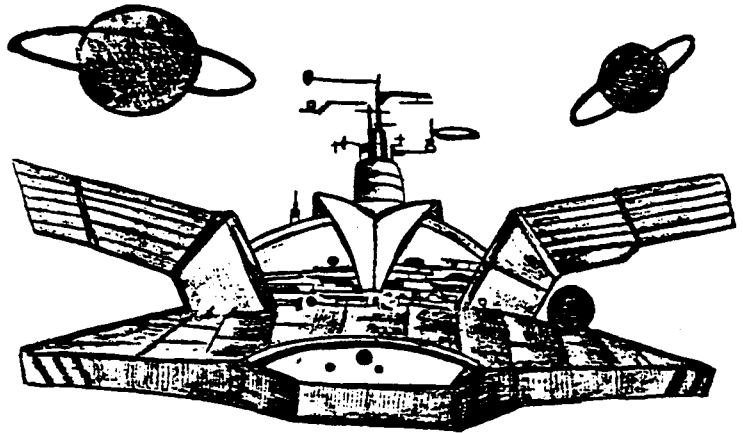
Ro wondered how many worked in the station. Thirty humans had come with him, now light years from home. All had worked for *Dhavani* combines on Earth, but Ro knew none of them. He had been the only one chosen from his region.

They stood in a seeming dock, high black-metal ceiling and angular geometry, *Dhavani* script like cuneiform markings high on chromed walls. Poetry, storage signs - Ro could not tell.

No one spoke, though they stood for a long time. The flight and transport drugs left a strange dislocation. None of them had gone superluminal before. Few Earthlings had. The *Dhavani* chose who joined the brotherhood of space.

Humans were "not for space," some liked to point out. Soft, watery creatures, fit for farms. Biped cattle.

Here, now, Ro was inclined to agree. He feared this was a colossal mistake. He thought of Leah, how she had pleaded with him not to turn down the *Dhavani* "training".



Only a fool turned it down. Only a fool, it seemed now, accepted. Better to struggle on Earth, to starve.

He looked at the things he had been handed. Rules, room assignment. A pale jumpsuit, folded, tucked in a reusable envelope. He closed his eyes tightly, trying to push out the fearful thoughts. His mind reached out toward home. *For you*, he thought. *For both of you*.

He folded his arms against a chill breeze blowing up through the floor. A latch clanked far to the right, and footsteps approached, a slow, swimming gate, limbs not human. The creature was helmetless, tall, dressed in a dark satin fabric. Ro had worked for them for three years, knew their translated voices well, but had never seen one in person.

It stood on a platform a half-meter above them, and motionless in the stark overhead light, could be mistaken for a man. Tall oriental, perhaps Tibetan. But the face was long and ashen, the eyes too narrow. Long, spatulate fingers held out a translator, and the small mouth whispered alien syllables. "I am Shae," said the box. "You will learn from me."

#

They shuffled through a long connecting tunnel with glassine walls, moving at half-speed behind one of the *Dhavani*. The rosy orb of Barnard's star gleamed dully above, too distant to throw much light.

A voice came from Ro's left, speaking softly: "I see you are in the same section."

Ro turned. A dark man with a bushy mustache smiled,

nodded. "I am Vikaram," he said, "Vik."

"Michael."

"You have worked with them," Vik asked, "on Earth?"

"For them. Shae is the first I have seen up close."

"Ah, then." Vik looked up, toward Barnard's star. "At home, in the center at Amritsar, they are not shy. To them we are low-caste, primitives. It is great compassion to allow any of us here."

Ro studied his face for a moment. "I do not expect it to be easy."

Now Vik scrutinized. "You know what hunger is," said Vik. "I can tell. So also do I. This is the kind they like."

They passed into a curved corridor with numbered doors. Some of the others stopped as the procession passed their rooms.

"Do you feel it yet?"

"Feel what?" asked Ro.

"They have given us two medicines," said Vik. "Soon we go to night school."

Their room numbers appeared opposite each other in the corridor. The others moved on. Vik pushed open the door to Ro's room, pointed to a black matte slab at the head of the narrow bunk. "That is your first teacher," he said. He stepped back. "Now you know more than most of them. Good luck. I will look for you in several days."

#

It was not sleep. It was like swimming for underwater, in a warm current, submerged in vast darkness. There was a pale lunar light, somewhere far above.

Sometimes he realized he was dreaming, sometimes not. Dreams like memory, quiet, sunlit times with his wife and son. Flights above the Earth's surface, above trees and large bodies of water. Happy dreams, of his life since the *Dhavani* chose him, the hunger and filth of his childhood forgotten.

Then he watched them labor in translucent, spiral buildings in the icy mountains. Robed, moving slowly with their strange gait. It was their home world. They were like monks, somehow, but they did not pray. They worked on leaden machines in the mountains, carried equipment from place to place within the hive.

He was back on Earth. This time, it was Ro who stayed. Not in his apartment, though, but in a ramshackle trailer. The sun glinted behind rusted cracks in the upper edge of the wall. Leah and Jason wore strange clothing, Chinese clothing. Jason held up Chinese lettering he had made. He had been studying calligraphy for years. They were leaving now, going East to learn these ways. They would be gone for years. He was afraid. He did not want to be alone in this small, decaying place.

#

He awakened from his long sleep into sudden motion, stumbling along as two silent humans helped him to a seeming classroom, rows of cocoon-like seats. When they pushed him in, flecks of color streamed by on a panoramic screen above him. A strange music began, ringing tonal variations.

The others were there, too, sitting in the close rows, segregated by the equipment that wrapped them: uncomfortable webwork seats that stayed tilted back.

Tension descended upon him as he watched and listened, a growing constriction in his gut and limbs. Suddenly, the images froze, the sights and sounds softened. A voice came through the audio circuits: "Is the learning enjoyable?"

Shae's voice, rasping, arrhythmic, contemptuous. The visor retracted. Ro shifted in the hard seat. Shae stood near, in the narrow aisle between the viewing contraptions, a black-and-grey specter. Ro's eyes seemed unable to focus well.

The alien turned to a blonde woman across the aisle, leaning slightly to read the name printed in English and *Dhavani* on her shirt. Ro remembered her from the ship – close-cropped hair and a nice face.

She seemed to cringe in her chair. Feeling, Ro thought, the same discomfort, the disorientation.

Shae whispered *Dhavani* syllables into the translator. "Lynch," it said. "What do you feel right now?"

She squinted up at him, coiled.

"Tired."

"Speak more. What is your meaning?"

She stared at Shae, spoke in staccato. "I am fatigued, burned-out. We do not *sleep* well here."

"Not precise," said the alien. "What fatigue? You are weak in the body? Your mind wanders? You have sorrow or fear? You are frozen in feeling?"

"I don't know."

"Exactly you know," said Shae, translator simulating a shout. He tapped his head, a strangely-human gesture. "The encoding is poor. This will change here."

"*Dhavani* have a billion categories of mind-states, feeling-states, angles of perception. A billion ways to describe the seeing. Consider your lack."

#

Vikaram sat across from him at the small fluorescent table, underlit. He did not smile.

"We become veterans now," he said. "You and I. Some have already been lost."

"How can you tell?" Ro asked.

"Word-of-mouth. Quick word," he said. "Some you no longer see here."

Apart from the staggered meal-times and brief passings in the halls, humans were allowed no opportunity to communicate.

"I do not know if I can finish," said Ro. "Tell me, do you think of Earth?"

Vik smiled.

"In dep?" asked Ro.

Vik nodded. "I return to the foothills of Kash-mir. To my brothers and sisters."

"A most beautiful place," Vik continued. "I think of my children, speak to them in my mind."

"Do you still dream?"

"They have shut off dreaming now. It is the machines, you know."

Ro realized how little he had known, coming here. He had expected instruction in alien mores, linguistics, traditional schooling. Few people knew much back on Earth. Graduates went off-world; washouts vanished into "quiet" parts of the *Dhavani* organization.

"Tomorrow," Vik said, "I will take lifeform-sim. Morning. The tall one says that I am ready. I hope he is right."

"I am sure you will do well."

"I do not know anymore." Vik's hands felt his cheeks. "We are far from home."

#

Outside the slot-window, the pale pink orb of Barnard's star stood before an unfamiliar formation of stars. Ro had sneaked a look at her several times now, but had not been able to find Orion, or Sol, which would be near Orion's belt.

Since the seeming morning, his skin felt too tight, and noises of all kinds were startling him. He wanted to talk with Vik, but had not seen him for two days. Ro had been cleared. He would take his first sim in hours.

Everything was receding. He had not thought of his family much, or Earth, even in dep sessions. He thought of nothing, it seemed, or at least nothing he could bring back into waking memory. He had begun to enjoy the vast

emptiness in dep, in his sleep.

Now, in waking memory, he walked once more along a mountain trail with his wife and son, a trip they had taken before he left. He recalled saying goodbye to them again at the space center.

The scenes were vivid, clear in every detail, even the emotions, each a poignant, full tableau. But somehow, profoundly, not his.

#

"This will lower your neural response," said the pallid human technician, holding up a syringe. "The device is not bearable without it." He asked Ro to disrobe, then told him how to roll into the thing.

The device was a sarcophagus of black polymer, with retractable neural filaments lining its interior, sinus filaments, something down the throat to maintain respiration.

Naked, following the tech's instructions, Ro climbed in. The lid closed. Light needlepricks seemed to touch every inch of his skin.

He plunged through darkness. Not dream-like, not floating, but a clenched dive into cold black silence.

Then a haze of light and sound from every direction all at once, closing on him, settling into him.

He lived and breathed as – something. What was he?

Everything sped up. Rapid breathing, signaling through high-pitched clicks and oscillations, like a datacom stream. He moved quick-ly, on many legs, saw through compound eyes.

Not a fragmented human interpretation of compound sight; it was seamless, a huge visual field. Deep reds and blues colored the landscape, and wave-fronts flickered like scratches in the air. Atop his back, two rows of long hairs poked above his skeletal armor, waving in dense atmosphere. Through these, he sensed the radio sky, the chatter of many small nodes, the roar of the sun above.

He scurried into the ocher light, scanning high for predators, moving rapidly across smooth rock. The nest was in a cave, beneath a rock overhang, and as he entered, his pro-geny trilled their welcome. They were things of beauty, his little ones, sleek and iridescent, eyes and mandibles gleaming blue-black in the semi-light.

But he felt: fear. Constriction. Could not breathe. Something was wrong. The small ones came closer, and looked evil.

A white haze and a high-pitched ringing. Silver latticework above him. No, gray. Gray great. Lighting grate of the station ceiling.

The technician stood over him, moist hand on Ro's chest, mumbling to himself. Ro tried to speak, but could not. He looked in the technician's pale-blue eyes.

"Stay still," the technician said. "It will come back. Takes a few minutes. You weren't a total washout, but they don't like aborts, even late in the session. You're not synched yet."

#

He dreamt again of Earth. Summertime, warm and bright. On a crowded train, going home. In his building, neighbors smiled knowingly at him but did not speak. What was the secret?

He entered his apartment, waiting for Jason's greeting, but it was silent and dark, no motion. He calls for Leah, but there is no answer.



#

One figure sat in the canteen, but it was not Vik. Ro was not sure what time it was – such things had lost their meaning, anyway. It was near the sleep cycle, or perhaps slightly past its beginning.

The figure noticed him, gestured. As he approached, he recognized the short blonde hair, the female contour.

"I was looking for my room-mate," said Ro. "I guess he's not here."

"Sit down," said Janet Lynch. "Vikaram is gone, I think. I have been told that only seven are left."

Ro nodded, but said nothing.

She held up a small container. "Would you like some – fluid?"

Ro smiled. For all their subtlety of expression, the *Dhavani* nomenclature for food was binary: fluid and solid. "No, I think not."

"I came with three others," she said, "from the Orinda complex. California. I am the only one left."

"How are you holding up?"

She pushed her drink back and forth between two fingers. "Better. Mind grows, heart shrinks. How about you?"

"The same." He looked at the smooth pale skin of her face, her neck. She had a faint floral scent. For a moment this seemed strange, out of place, but he realized he too clung to parts of his old life. Old life? It sounded as if he had died, reincarnated.

He looked in her pale blue eyes. He knew almost nothing about her, yet felt deeply intimate. They had both passed through it, through the worst of it. "Do you think they..." he said, and then paused.

"Tinker with desire?" she said, with a wry smile. "Oh, yes. They tinker with everything. And then we head into the stars, alone."

"Some of us do not go alone."

She studied him for a long moment. "Perhaps not."

#

Ro moved swiftly through the high, narrow corridors through the cooling air. He was near the *Dhavani* wing.

Turning a corner, he stopped. Five meters from him, an

armed *Dhavani* guard stood motionless. It wore a black helmet and suit like their interstellar garb.

The helmet turned toward him, eyes hidden behind a horizontal slit. Ro stood, waiting for some other movement, but none came, inexplicably. Anger burned in Ro's face and hands, and though they could not read minds, they seemed expert at sensing human emotional state.

He moved forward, testing. The guard tracked him as he approached, but made no other move.

At Shae's office, the door was open. Shae sat in the low light, rigid and motionless, some sort of cylindrical display on the desk before him. It seemed dimmed and the alien did not exactly appear to be facing it.

"I need to talk to you," said Ro. "Now."

Shae turned slowly in his gridwork chair, spoke in the *Dhavani* whisper. He did not switch on his translator, but it seemed Ro understood. Or at least sensed the indignation and demand in Shae's speech.

Touching the black box, Shae repeated: "Why do you intrude on me? You are not allowed here."

"I want to know about Vikaram Seth, and the others."

Shae let out a low hissing that was not translated. Ro had heard this sound before.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked harshly.

"Your mind," said Shae, "spews trash. Your friends have not been eaten, dissected. We are not monsters."

"Then why do they disappear silently? What is the purpose of this abuse?"

Shae's eyes nictated. "When the Earth-born lapse, there is quarantine. They move to another area, awaiting return to Earth. Further contact is damaging, to both.

"As for abuse, so-called," said Shae, "You come here mad. We must deconstruct you, then rebuild. Dumb animals are not useful in space, on other worlds. You must be expanded."

Ro said nothing. His anger had vanished. Was this, too, something they engineered? He felt emptied now, and full of sorrow, loss.

"You succeed here," said Shae. "Do not fall back. You are not the creature who came here."

#

Before him, small, squat creatures struggled with something, arrayed around something on the ground, bickering with each other. Each form was surrounded by a blue-gray cloud. They moved quickly, chattering at each other in some language he could not understand. Behind them, a checkerboard pattern of rectangles, russet in color.

Something was familiar here. The color of the sky, the angle of light.

One of the creatures looked at him, or through him, it seemed. It had a fleshy face and large mouth. The dim glow of sentience in its eyes almost surprised him. They seemed more like automatons of some sort. The larg-est of them held up his prize, a small, dark packet, and they scurried off down the road. Where they had been, a larger form lay curled on the pavement, in tatters. An adult of the species, a bloated, pale thing.

A whine started to his right. A box-shaped vehicle moved toward him.

Truck, he remembered. Electric. Delivery. Truck. The words appeared, were like sacred utterance, strange in sound.

There were other words. Brick wall. Children. It was all new and strange, and dark. He looked around him, above. The sky was overcast. In the distance, forms scurried in smoky cocoons, in the dim light.

He spoke the word to himself in a *Dhavani* whisper: Earth.

#

As he watched them step from the escalator at the arrival gate, it seemed he was observing them from far away. They seemed small, nervous, soft.

He walked them to an atrium reserved for such meetings, circular couches sunken into the floor, acoustically isolated in the large floor space. They stepped down into one of the areas and sat, gazing at the bright array of stars above. They talked of work, and Jason's school.

Leah had been offered work by the aliens in graphical rendering, something she had long coveted but been unable to find. Jason had begun a technical program available only to those who worked for the combines. All was well.

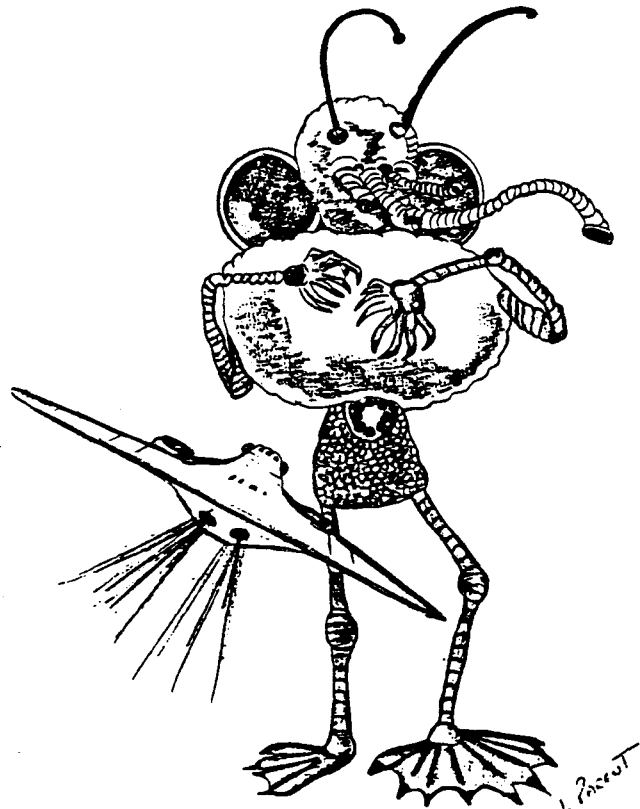
They sat for half an hour, with at least as much silence as speech. Nothing was said about the training, and there were no tears.

He could see their confusion and fear lurking beneath the surface, but did nothing to pull it upward. There was no point. They knew everything, of course, the *Dhavani* handled such things as meticulously as every other aspect of their business. Financially, psychically, they would be cared for. They had lost a husband, a father, no more. There would be another to take his place. Leah would not be alone for long.

After their time, they exchanged hugs, and goodbyes, and then he saw them off.

He watched through the ceiling window as the *Dhavani* shuttle issued from the terminus and arced slowly toward Earth, taking them home.

He turned away, toward the offworld annex. The other graduates waiting for him. Janet was waiting for him. [*]



Conreports and Ramblings 45

by Lan

It has been more than two years since I last wrote up my "adventures." Rather than go through the usual long reports and ramblings, I will summarize the events for much of 1995 and 1996.

1995

In January of 1995, my Uncle Harry died. Harry Klimushyn married my mother's oldest sister Rose. Shortly afterwards Mom's parents died, leaving three kids underage: Helen, Mom and Joe. Eddie, I believe, was in the Navy. So Rose and Harry took them in and raised them as their own. They had two children of their own, Harry Jr., who was known as Sunny died when I was about 7 or 8. He was the younger. Shirley was my godmother, and she died about three years ago. That left Rose and Harry outliving their children, which Harry found difficult to bear, but he did. Fortunately, there were grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

The funeral service was scheduled for Saturday, in the middle of **Confusion**. I was asked to be pall bearer, and even though I really didn't want to do it, to keep peace in the family I did. In a way I'm glad I went; it was nice to see many of the family again. And granddaughter Kim told me that her grandfa-ther Harry said he really wanted me as pall bearer.

I made it back to the convention in time to change and arrive at the panel I had at 4 pm, entitled something like, "Building Bridges in Fandom". Mary Ellen Wessels and I were on it, and Leah Zeldes was also supposed to be there, but I heard that there was a death in her family as well, so she didn't make it. MEW and I had a good time, and she pointed out something that I had not noticed before: currently I seem to be the only fanzine editor who does reviews of filk tapes. As I read through the fanzines I get, I've noticed that she is right. This was frightening, as I never expected to be known for that aspect on reviewing.

As the months sped on, I taught my classes, and finished the school year with the usual rounds of stress and enjoyments. I taught in the summer Horizon's Upward Bound program, and went to several conventions: Millennicon, FilkOntario, Contraption, Marcon, MikeCon, Midwestcon and eventually Worldcon in Glasgow, Scotland. Jennifer Sadler got married to Chris Charlton in May, and I was invited to her wedding.

In August, I traveled around Scotland and the Orkney Islands prior to the Worldcon. I fell in love with the austere beauty of Mainland, Orkney, and would like to return someday. The pictures I have remind me of a place that has captured my heart. The Neolithic sites, the heather-covered hills, the beer and Scotch, the history of the place, are all interesting and attractive.

At Worldcon I once again did not win the Hugo Award, something of a habit nowadays. Still, it is an honor to make the final ballot.

I took up teaching school again in the fall after I returned, and attended Conclave, then Ohio Valley Filk Fest,

where I was the Listener Guest of Honor.

A week later I asked Maia for a divorce, and it was finalized in February. I moved out, and stayed with my friend Kathy Laskowski and her family, taking the basement apartment in her (and her ex-husband's) house. Thanksgiving and Christmas were quiet, but stressful in their own ways, but Kathy and her family made me feel welcome.

1996

January

1996 brought a lot of changes into my life. Exams and the usual end-of the semester school stuff took up a lot of time. I did not require a paper from my classes this year, but made it an option for all them, except for my Algebra IIA class. I did not feel like putting an extra amount of stress into my already over-stressed life. I took Kathy to Confusion, and we received mixed welcomes from people I have known for years. That was to be expected.

February

The divorce between Maia and me was finalized. I concentrated on doing things I wanted to do – like putting together the Hal Clement issue of *Lan's Lantern* and re-establishing goals. I took a hard look at my finances – the huge debt I held on my credit cards, the loans I had taken out – and shuddered. I could not go on running off to conventions and spending money on books and videos as I had before. I was not close to bankruptcy, but it sure felt like it. Kathy looked at my financial situation, and told me what I needed to do to get out of debt.

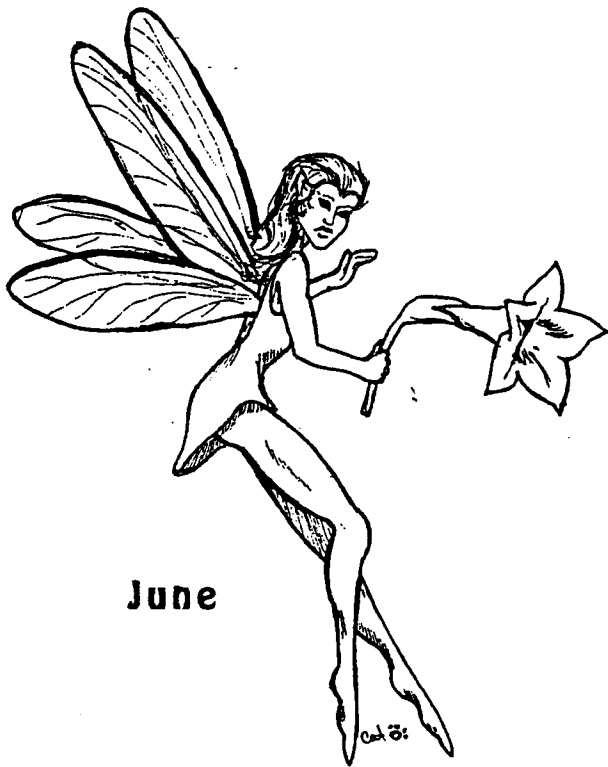
I cut most conventions, and limited spending money on books and videos. I cashed in an old insurance policy, paid off one loan, a credit card, and most of another. The extra money earned from teaching in the Horizons-Upward Bound program during the summer would pay off the rest of that credit card, and make a small dent in another. That would leave me with two credit cards to deal with. And Kathy became my financial manager. It seemed fitting, since I proposed to her and she accepted; we set the wedding date for June.



March-April-May

We went to CONAMAZOO in March, mainly because Jim Landis was the Fan GoH. We both admire and like Jim very much, and wanted to be there for his day in the spotlight. It was at this convention that I started handing out the Hal Clement Special issue of *Lan's Lantern*.

School went through its usual cycle, as did the annual ritual of taxes. Spring came, and Kathy continued to work hard at trying to sell her house. There was an occasional nibble, but well below market value and therefore unacceptable. Dan and Tanya, Kathy's children, continued to do well in school. Dan finished his Junior year at Oakland University (in Rochester, Michigan), and signed up for summer classes. Tanya completed her Junior year at Lahser High School with straight A's. While Kathy and I prepared for our wedding, the kids helped out. We asked Tanya to organize music for the ceremony and afterwards, which she did, admirably. She asked friends to sing and play, and the live entertainment added to the wonderful day.



June

The wedding was the high point of the year. It was held at Kathy's house on June 15 in the afternoon.

On the 14th, as we were cleaning and cooking and Tanya had her friends over for practice, the doorbell rang and we found Kathy's brother and parents at the door. We had expected them Saturday morning. Tom had told Kathy that he might show up Friday, but we had expected him to call first to let us know. Well, we managed to do all right. Kathy and I went to pick up the cake from a local IGA, and then I went to pick up all the flowers. And we finished decorating the house – not much, just some bells and doves; Kathy insisted on bringing my Hugos up from the basement and putting them on the fireplace mantle. Kathy's family stayed with us, since there was plenty of room, and I spent my last night in the basement on the floor in a sleeping bag. Ted (Kathy's father) insisted on sleeping in his "usual spot", even though all I had was a fold-out foam bed; Kathy's ex-husband Henry had taken the single bed to his apartment.

The next morning we all managed to get up and get ready. I had to make a trip to the store to pick up the 9

pounds of potato salad we had ordered. I was dressed by 12:30 PM, as was Kathy, which was good since my parents (almost always the first to arrive) showed up about then. During the next hour we were busy answering the door and showing people around the house. I pulled out the bou-tonnieres for Dan, the fathers and myself, the corsages for Tanya and the mothers, and the bridal bouquet for Kathy. We were a little apprehensive as the 2 PM time approached and the minister was nowhere to be seen. She did show up at 1:50.

At 2, Tanya began playing and singing, "All I Ask of You" from *Phantom of the Opera*, and I started choking then. When she finished, two of her friends played a flute duet as we all processed to the deck. Reverend Penny Hackett-Evans started the service as soon as we were all in place, and everything went fine. Tanya read a poem and sang "The Wedding Song. Dan took care of the rings, and had them ready for our exchange of vows. When I started to say my vows, I broke-up and started crying – tears of happiness, to be sure – but I managed to get through them. Kathy then decided that she wouldn't cry, and got through hers without choking. When the ceremony ended, Tanya and her friends had another song ready, then everyone went in-side, only to be called out again for pictures. Since we were the center of them, we missed some of the music inside. Tanya and her friends performed all through the reception. And she did a lot too. (My father videotaped a lot of it, and Tanya got more "air-play" than we did, which is all right with us.)

Kathy and I started getting stuff ready for dinner, and my sisters, and Tanya's friend Marissa jumped in and pushed us out of the kitchen. Even-tually we had the toast, the dinner and the cutting of the cake. People marveled at how good the cake was; we now plan to use the local IGA bakery when we need a cake – it was *that* tasty and moist. We all had a relaxing time afterwards. Although Kathy and I tried to get out quietly, word of our departure spread quickly, and we were met at the door with cameras and a lot of birdseed (instead of rice).

The hotel we checked into was only ten minutes away. I was fortunate enough to get a reservation there a month and a half earlier – everything in the area was booked for the US Open Golf Tournament. We got the "honeymoon" package, which included complimentary drinks and breakfast, and champagne and truffles in the room. We relaxed in the room, and did what newlyweds usually did – fell asleep from exhaustion. The breakfast was pleasant, though service was a little slow in the buffet line. We checked out before 11:00, but by the time we got home, Kathy's parents and brother had already left.

Tanya and Dan watched us open the cards and gifts. My sister June and her family gave us a Lladro statue of a Bride and Groom, while their son, Kris (my godchild) gave me a photo album for the wedding pictures. Dan and Tanya gave us a Wedding Album with pages for information, places for guests to sign in, etc., and places for pictures. They also had a videocassette case emblazoned with "Our Wedding" on it, in anticipation of the videotape we would eventually get from my parents. Kathy's niece and nephew (Tracy and Tom) gave us a book on art: an alphabetical listing of artists with one representational work – usually *not* one of the more famous pieces. The rest of the family gave us money. We had already planned to use the money for our honeymoon, which we hope to take in August.

The week after was a bit hectic. We had said No House Showings for the weekend, from Friday through Monday, so they started up again on Tuesday, amid torrential rains on both days. On Wednesday, Kathy and I took a day trip (it was cloudy with threats of rain) to Frankenmuth, Michigan. It's the home of Bronner's Christmas Store, and sports a Bavarian village atmosphere. It's a real tourist attraction, and fun to walk around in. There is also a restaurant called Zhenders, which is famous for it's family-style chicken din-

ners. We ate there, but had something other than chicken. There were plenty of chicken dishes left over from the wedding, and we wanted a break from that! We had hope to take a river/paddleboat ride up and down the Cass River which runs through the town, but because of the flooding rains, the water was much too high, and flowing too fast for the paddleboat to operate safely. We ducked into some shops to avoid the bulk of a cloudburst in the late afternoon, and left soon after.

On Thursday and Friday afternoon/evening I had meetings for the HUB program. On Friday evening while watching the Weather Channel, I saw a report of a tornado that ripped through Frankenmuth that afternoon. Eerie feeling. We also got a call from my parents inviting us for dinner at their place on Sunday. We all decided to go.

Sunday morning we had calls for two house showings. One came around 11 AM, and the people really liked the house, and commented on how nice the finished basement was, and how the little touches (like all the wood cabinets and molding and banister) made the house exceptional. As soon as Dan and Tanya got home from attending church with their father, we left for my parents. We had a pleasant time. They had pictures of the wedding for us, and the video. We had a nice ride around the lake in the pontoon boat and an excellent meal and lots of conversation.

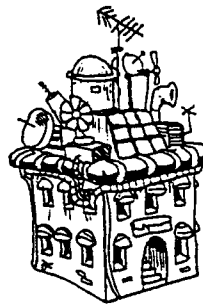
When we got home, there were two messages on our answering machine. The first was from the real estate agency saying that the couple that came by in the morning wanted a second showing that afternoon. The second message was from our agent; he said he had received an offer. When we tried to get in touch with him, Lou wasn't available. But around 9:30 he called and talked to Kathy. "I looked very hard to find you a wedding gift, and I think I found something you'll like." Kathy said, "Really? What is it." Lou replied, "Start packing!"

He wanted Henry to come over and he would present the proposal to us. It was under the asking price, but above the minimum we would go, so the offer was accepted.

On Monday, as I started with the HUB program, Kathy looked at the listings in our Realtor's book, and picked out houses. Every day after work I went to see more houses. We found two quad-level places that looked good, but neither was perfect. Each one had what the other lacked. Dan and Tanya said they wanted a colonial style, not a quad, and insisted on seeing some of those. We found a couple we liked, and by Friday we had narrowed it down to one quad and one colonial. The people who owned the colonial had originally decided to stay in the house when they retired, and so had fixed it up to be virtually maintenance free on the outside (except for grass-cutting). There were lots of nice features - expensive chandeliers, high-quality windows, central air conditioning, a top-notch security system, marble sills on all windows, marble foyer, a lovely master bedroom and bath, a partially finished basement, and more. The Quad was on almost an acre of land, had a garden and was beautifully landscaped. The interior was nice, but the master bathroom was a little small, and the bathroom a tight squeeze. The basement level was unfinished. There was a big price difference between the two, and we had to be careful because of the money we would have - half the amount from the sale of the house.

On Saturday, we all saw the colonial, and the couple was very nice to us. They threw in the freezer in the basement, a bedroom set, the gas grill, and the Nordic Track. We all seemed to have hit it off well, and Kathy spent time talking with the wife; I spent some time talking to the husband. When we left, we decided to make an offer on that house. Lou said they would counter it, since they were asking much more. Kathy said no, they would accept it. He came by on Sunday morning and wrote it up. Meanwhile, Tanya was packing to leave for Spain with her father, and Dan was driving them to the airport at 3 PM. And Kathy and I were

going to my sister June's place to celebrate by nephew's (my godchild's) birthday. We were leaving around 1 PM. At 12:45, Lou called and said that he got together with their agent, he read them the proposal and offer over the phone, and they accepted.



Now realize the time-frame on this. One weekend we get married, the next weekend the house sells (after being on the market for over 2 years), and the third weekend in a row we buy a house for ourselves. Strange things have been at work here. I wondered, what exciting thing would happen the 4th of July weekend? Nothing really! We just relaxed.

JULY

I spent the mornings and afternoons working with the HUB program. I taught 4 classes, had advisor/advisee meetings, took care of the coffee machines (as usual), and participated in the sports activities once a week. I also did dorm duty once a week as was stated in my contract.

When I got home, however, I helped pack and organize things for the move. There was a lot to do to get ready, especially with Tanya out of the country until a week before we were to move. Kathy and I had house-closing on July 22 - that was for both houses, the one she and Henry sold, and the one we bought. The Werths, from whom we bought the Valleyview house, were gracious enough to let us move a few boxes into the basement before closing, so Dan and I moved some stuff in on Sunday (the 21st), and Tanya helped too with some of the lighter boxes.

Closing went well, and on Tuesday the moving truck came to take the big furniture to the new place. I got home from school as soon as I could and helped. The rest of the week was spent moving the "smaller things", which were a ton or more of boxes and stuff that maybe (we thought as we took just one more load over at 10 PM) we should have let the movers take. On Friday, July 26, Kathy and I handed in the keys and garage door openers, and went home to unpack and set the house in order. Of course, since the furniture was moved in on Tuesday, we started sleeping at the new house then. But until we got everything out from the Woodcreek Way house, we did not consider ourselves "moved" until we handed in the keys.

Now, about the house. It is a two-story colonial, with a full, partially finished basement. The first floor has a living room, formal dining room, a kitchen with an eating area, a family room (with a fireplace and a doorwall leading onto a deck into the back yard), a half-bath, laundry room (with a door that opens into the garage), and a library. The foyer has a marble floor. The curving staircase to the second floor has a wrought-iron railing. There are four bedrooms; Dan and Tanya each have their own room, and they share a bathroom. The Werths left a complete bedroom set; Tanya got the bed, Dan the dresser. The master bedroom has a large sleeping area, its own bath and vanity, and a walk-in closet. These three rooms all have Casablanca fans with lights. The fourth bedroom is small. Since Kathy has so many clothes, she has the entire walk-in closet in our room for her stuff. I put my hanging clothes into the spare bedroom closet.

I've fixed up the basement somewhat. I managed to get my video collection in place, with my small TV and VCR working. Reception was remarkably good for such a set in this location. Because of the position of the door to the basement, most of the bookshelves were unable to be carried down intact. So I disassembled most of them, carried down the pieces, and reassembled them. I really could not put them in place. I wanted to finish that end of the basement first, so I need a couple dozen 1 x 2 s and several sheets of paneling. I was not sure when I would be able to purchase

them. And, I still needed to get the rest of my shelves, books and records from my sister's place. My office, however, was set up fairly quickly.

The outside – the property is 90 by 216 feet. That's a lot of grass to cut. I was outside weeding since the first day we moved in. The flower beds which cover three sides of the house and the back deck were well taken care of, and I wanted to maintain that. There was a small section against the back fence for a vegetable garden; Don Werth said he was tired of fighting the rabbits, so he didn't plant one this year. But dill and garlic, and one tomato plant came up. I planned to expand the garden for next year.

Three of the fruit trees were producing – two pear and one apple. The fruit was not ripe, but the squirrels kept getting to them. The two cherry trees and the plum tree had no fruit this year. I've been reading up on growing fruit trees, and the books say that I will need to spray a lot. I don't know if I'll like that.

August

On Saturday, August 3, the Horizons-Upward Bound program ended with an awards ceremony, and parents picking up their kids. On Sunday we had our final meetings and a picnic dinner. Although I was free for the rest of the summer from teaching, I was still extremely busy. I had plenty of things to do to at the new house.

Kathy spent most of her time putting the house into shape. It didn't help that one of the clothing racks in our walk-in closet collapsed from the weight of her clothes. I spent Friday repairing the damage, and putting in extra supports all around so that it *wouldn't* happen again. The kitchen took some time to arrange, but I got used to where everything was put.

Kathy and I carefully measured the library, and ordered a set of 4 bookshelves from the House of Denmark. We had about 1-3/8 inches to spare, which was enough for the phone jack and power outlet. When they arrived Saturday with the units, three went in all right, but the fourth, a 32 inch shelf, did not have enough clearance. It was then that we found out that the store had their measurements wrong. Each unit was 1/2 inch longer than what was written on the signs. We had the delivery men leave the units, talk about what to do for almost three hours. We finally decided to make a change of three of the shelves with three others which would fill in the 13 foot wall with bookshelves. This final arrangement made the library truly a wonderful place for our books.

On Tuesday, the temperature and humidity shot up, so we finally had to turn on the air conditioner. Up to that point, we had relied on the attic fan to keep things cool. Well, the central unit in the base-ment began to leak. I found it in time so that some of the boxes near the unit didn't get too soaked. We called the house insurance company the next day, and eventually they called back with the recommendation of who to call. The company couldn't come out until Friday. So when they did arrive, the temperature and humidity had already dropped back to its below-normal range for this time of year. But the problem was, as I suspected, a clogged drain which backed up the water into the central unit and made it leak out of its other three corners. NOW I know how to fix the problem if it occurs again.

Kathy and I decided that we really needed a honeymoon and a break from unpacking boxes, so we booked a flight to Aruba for a week. We were gone from August 17-24, and we had a great time.

The island is part of the Dutch commonwealth, so that is the official language, though the common language is something called Papiamentu, which is a combination of Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arawak, the language of the original natives who lived on the island. The central part of the island is desert, and all the natural fresh water was used up long ago. There is a desalination plant (one of the largest

in the world) on the island that supplies all the water for its 85,000 inhabitants. There is also an oil refinery. With those industries, and tourism, there is no unemployment, and therefore crime is very low, almost non-existent. Since tourism is so big an industry, most everyone speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese as well.

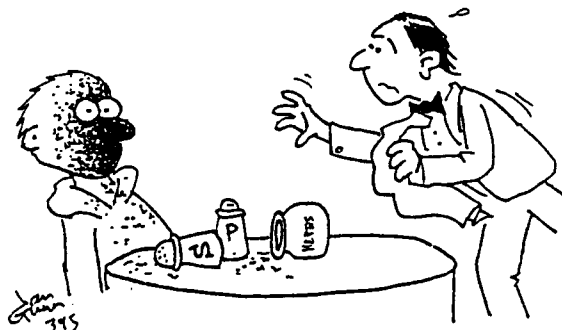
The winds blow constantly from the NNE, so all the native divi-divi trees point SSW. The island is 20 miles by 6 miles, so it is difficult to get lost. Rain comes during September to December, about 11 inches a year. And Aruba is not in the hurricane belt. Because of the wind direction, the North and East coasts are rocky and unsafe for swimming – great for fishing (according to the guides). The best beaches, and where the hotels, time-shares, and the inhabitants live, are on the south and west shores. There are two major towns, Oranjestad, the capital, and San Nicholas, the port where the oil refinery is. Nearby is the desalination plant. There are some interesting sights and rock formations, but certainly there is not a lot to do. I picked up most of this information from the travel brochures, and a guided tour of the island. Our tour was all right, though the guide did not take us to all the spots the brochure mentioned.

We spent most of our time in the hotel area, on the beaches, and in downtown Oranjestad. We took a bus trip to San Nicholas which took us through the entire city (almost every street!). We found a couple nice souvenirs there, and had lunch at "Charlie's Bar" (supposedly a "world famous" spot!). In the capital, aside from lots of window shopping, we went to the Bon Bini festival which happens every Tuesday evening at Fort Aruba. There is a good live band, and some acts with local talent. Some were good, but most of these "acts" were very amateurish. The band, however, was excellent.

There wasn't much to do inexpensively. If you had a lot of money to spend, there were some shows and acts, casinos, and lots of food. The prices for food were very high, unless you wanted to eat at places like Wendy's, MacDonalds, Subway, Pizza Hut, Dunkin' Donuts, etc. With the cost about \$15-20 each for a "reasonable meal", we opted to have one large meal (a buffet if possible) a day, and took breakfast at Dunkin' Donuts. It worked out well.

We returned on a Saturday evening, though by the time we got home (because of a 2 hour delay in the flight) it was after 1 AM. Dan had come to pick us up at the airport, and even met us at the gate.

Kathy had to start school on Monday, so she rested all day Sunday. Tanya too began her new school schedule on that Monday. I didn't have to worry until later in the week, and Dan started his classes the Tuesday after Labor Day. All I had were meetings, so I rested until the big plunge (into meetings) happened on Wednesday.



SEASONED TRAVELLER

September

Seeing my colleagues again was fun. I was asked if anything "interesting" happened over the summer, and went down the list of things from the end of school till then, and

watched as their eyes got wider in amazement. More than one person said that such stressful changes in a person's life should be spread out, not happen all at once. I just smiled and agreed.

School started on schedule, and I got one of the worst schedules for me. I am a morning person, and I arrive early to get things done. Well, the classes I was scheduled for were in periods 1, 3, 5, 7, and 8. Fifth period starts at 12:10 PM, which meant that by noon I was not even half done with my classes. At first I shared the room with another teacher who taught there 4th period, but she found another room that she could use where she teaches another period. I did not get used to this, but I managed to put up with it. My classes were: Algebra IIA (the advanced section like last year), two classes of Algebra IIB (slow paced Algebra II), and two classes of Precalculus.

We all went to my parents' house to celebrate their anniversary and my father's birthday. On Thursday (September 19) Kathy and the kids celebrated my birthday. They got me two videos: *Muppet Treasure Island* and *Aladdin and the King of Thieves*, both of which I had asked for. Kathy gave me two shirts which I needed for school. On Sunday the 22, we celebrated Kathy's birthday. We all went out to eat at a Chinese buffet on that Sunday. When we got back home, Kathy opened her presents, and we waited to cut the cake until after Tanya got home from work and we all finished dinner. From the kids Kathy got a thermos - she had broken hers two weeks before, and I suggested it as a gift to Dan, who quickly agreed to get it from him and Tanya. He was out of ideas of what to get his mother. I gave her a bracelet made of genuine sapphires (as opposed to lab-created gems) in a ten karat gold setting.

I had to write letters to the parents of my advisees. Although I had seen most of the mothers on Mothers' Visiting Day (September 20), I figured that the letter would be better written and sent. For October 2, I had to write midquarter comments on the students who are doing poorly, and those on "the list" put out by the academic deans. I had 19 of the students on those lists. There would have been more, but I moved one student from my Algebra IIA class to a regular Algebra II class; she was failing because she wasn't doing any work. There were 6 others who were either doing poorly, or whose parents I thought would like a comment.

October

Every seven years each independent school in the Central States goes through an evaluation process and is either granted or denied accreditation. For most schools, this is a formality, and they stay accredited as long as they remain true to their mission statements. For most schools it is a time to assess where they've been for the past few years, and where they want to be in the next several. It takes a year to prepare for the final step, a visit from a team of teachers and administrators which takes the self evaluation, and applies it to all aspects of the school, to see if the school is doing what it says it does. Last year we went through the self-evaluation process, and this year the team came to visit on October 6-9. I didn't do anything different than I usually do even if I were not going to be observed, so I remained largely unaffected by this last phase of the evaluation. The end result was that we passed and were granted accreditation.

On October 5, Kathy and I went to a couple of library books sales, and I found a hard-cover, ex-library edition of Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*. The latter I had been looking for since I first read it back in graduate school. I found a copy of it in a local used book store a couple of years ago, but lost it in the divorce. I was very glad to have gotten it. At one of the places were a few westerns by Zane Grey in hardcover. I recalled that some of my friends read westerns, and people

whose taste in reading matter I respected had some Zane Grey on their shelves. So I decided to pick one up and try it. I finished *The Riders of the Purple Sage* in a lot less time than I thought it would take, and thoroughly enjoyed it. I decided to look for more, since I seem to be trying other genres of literature of late.

While on reading, I also finished *A Vision of Eden*, an edited diary of Marianne North, who as an independent single woman in the 1870s and 1880s traveled around the world painting the flora in exotic locales. I saw a collection of her works in Kew Gardens, England, over two years ago, and picked up the two books about her then. Maia kept the other one. Her paintings are exquisite, and many were reproduced in the two books, with very little overlap. While in Singapore, she wrote this:

After a fortnight at Government House, Sir William wrote me letters to the Rajah and Rani of Sarawak, and I went on board the little steamer which goes there every week from Singapore. After a couple of pleasant days with good old Captain Kirk, we steamed up the broad river to Kuching, the capital, for some four hours through low country, with nipa, area, and cocoa-nut palms, as well as mangroves and other swampy plants bordering the water's edge. On the right bank a flight of steps led up to the Rajah's palace. I sent in my letter, and the secretary soon came on board and fetched me on shore, where I was most kindly welcomed by the Rani, a very handsome English lady, and put in a most luxurious room, from which I could escape by a back staircase into the lovely garden whenever I felt in the humor or wanted flowers.

Marianne North
A Vision of Eden, p. 95

After I read this passage, I had to go back to reread it because of the mention of Captain Kirk. Is this the same Captain Kirk whom we all know and *love*? Maybe there is something to this time-travel stuff....



Kathy and I watched two versions of *Wuthering Heights*, the famous 1939 film directed by William Wyler with Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon, and the 1954 Mexican film directed by Luis Buñuel. It is interesting to compare the two; each is faithful to the book, but still only does the first half. The reason for Cathy's death in the Wyler film is illness (probably consumption) instead of dying in childbirth as in the Brontë novel. Buñuel's version is cast in a Mexican mode in a hacienda with a desert landscape, instead of an English manor house on the moors. It works quite well, and Catalina's death is in childbirth, though the story doesn't go much further than that.

Using money that she got from her parents for her birthday, Kathy picked up the BBC version of *Jane Eyre*, nearly four-hour adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's novel on two

cassettes. We watched it over two evenings, and I found it fascinating. I will have to read the novel now.

Tanya has been very busy. In addition to working at Einstein's Bagels, and doing her school work, she also got a part in the fall musical, *West Side Story*. Practices are Monday and Wednesday evenings, and Saturday morning. Her schedule is very tight for what she has to do, but she seems quite content and happy to be putting forth all the effort. I just hope her grades don't slip. She's been accepted at Michigan State University, but she is hoping for an acceptance from University of Michigan, where most of her friends are applying.

We had parents' visiting day – the weekend of homecoming, and I enjoyed myself on that morning talking to parents about my classes. I talked more individually with parents in the afternoon, then went home and worked in the garden.

I had mentioned that the former owners of the house had a small garden in the back of the yard. Small indeed, compared to what I was used to. Of course, I was not thrilled about the hard work involved in breaking up the sod to enlarge the garden, but a month or so ago in the paper I had read about a way of preparing ground for spring gardening without having to remove the sod. It involved covering the area with newspapers and putting compost and mulch on top. If this is done in the fall, the grass is killed, and the ground softened enough that all you need to do is plant. I am skeptical about it, but willing to give it a try. I did cut out some sod to put the cement boundary blocks in place, then spread the papers and covered them with the grass and leave clippings that Dan had saved from his last mowing. I didn't have enough clippings, but I figured with the good weather forecasted – and especially since not all the leaves had fallen – Dan would be cutting grass one more time. Indeed, we had enough good and bad weather that the grass grew, and most of the trees lost their leaves. I will still have to do some raking before the snow finally settles in.

But with the extra grass clippings and mulched leaves, the garden is completely covered. What I will probably do in the spring is turn everything under as soon as the season and temperature allow, and hope for the best. If this works, I'll be happy -- and I'll use the technique in other sections of the back lawn for flower beds. If not, I will presume to have to "weed" out grass from that new garden area.

My father went into the hospital for knee replacement surgery. He came home two weeks after it was over, in time for my mother's birthday. We all showed up to celebrate her 76th birthday on the 27th, and had a fairly good time. My dad got tired quickly, so Kathy and I didn't stay too late. Besides, we needed to get back home to prepare for classes and start writing comments. Dan and Tanya didn't go – they were both busy. Tanya had to work, and Dan had a paper to write.

The end of the quarter was Wednesday, October 30, and grades and comments were due the weekend following. I got a lot done during the course of the week. On Thursday (Oct 31) I went to a workshop with three other colleagues in the math department, and for the entire day (well, 8:30 to 3:30) we learned about cooperative learning and ways of organizing small groups, and how to work out materials which help promote such learning. So I am now preparing to start using some of those things in class -- moreso than I have in the past. It should be interesting.

In the evening Kathy and I planned to hand out candy. When I got home, Kathy informed me that Tanya was planning to have friends over for a small party and hand out candy. Last minute "planning" on her part. It turned out that only one person came over. Tanya and Lonna made some cookies, and took care of handing out the candy, while Kathy and I did some grocery shopping (a special sale on Thursday only). We did not get many people. It was cold and very windy, so I think that parents did not want their

kids wandering around in such temperatures.

November

On Saturday morning, November 2, I helped proctor the SAT exams. There weren't many people, so the work was not too bad. I got home early in the afternoon, and Kathy and I went to House of Denmark to pick up the two shelves we had ordered for our bookcases. On the way back, we stopped at a Barnes & Noble store which has a "Used Book Store" inside it. We spent a couple of hours wandering around inside it. I had just finished reading *She Walks these Hills* by Sharon McCrumb, and looked for some other books by her which might have been there. I found her latest, *The Rosewood Casket* on the shelf with her other mysteries – hardcover at \$23.95. However, in the used book section was the same hardcover for \$6 – in perfect condition. I picked up the "used" book. I since read it, and enjoyed it very much. Both books have some continuing characters who live in the mountains of Tennessee near Virginia. There is a lot of local folklore and color in these books, so I have enjoyed those of hers I've read so far.

Kathy recently finished reading *Emma* by Jane Austen. We watched the BBC 4+ hour version of the book, and found it immensely satisfying. We also saw *Pride and Prejudice*, again the 4+ hour BBC version. We are getting ready to see the BBC production of *Sense and Sensibility*, and we just saw that the Emma Thompson film version of that will be available this week.

We also watched *My Fair Lady*, with Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison. I had never seen the film of that movie, but I had seen *Pygmalion* on stage. It was fun to watch; quite interesting in how the songs went so well with the play, and lavish in production. I was amazed to see the Freddy was played by Jeremy Brett. I wondered if the singing voice was his, or if that had been dubbed like Hepburn's was for those singing parts of Eliza Doolittle.

On Wednesday, November 6, Jim Landis hosted a meeting of the Galactic Cartographer's Society at his new house. I went, was the first to arrive, and we had a pleasant talk about houses and maintenance until others showed up. Jim had a copy of the new Wallace and Gromit film, *A Close Shave*, which we watched. It was very good.

On the weekend of November 8-10, there was the school fundraiser, Giftorama, at the Kingswood campus. Once again I volunteered to participate in the Champagne Opening by pouring the bubbly stuff and wine and soft drinks. Kathy joined me on this venture this year, and we had a good time. When we finished our shift (the first one), we were free to walk around and shop, and partake of the drinks, food and desserts that were set up.

On Saturday (November 9), Tom Sadler came up from Adrian, Michigan, and we spent the morning and afternoon together. He had a copy of his latest fanzine, *The Reluctant Famulus*, for me, but when I paged through it, he saw some of the odd-numbered pages were blank. So he took it back and said that he would mail me a copy to replace it. It was very nice seeing him again. We had a pleasant talk, and the three of us went back to that Barnes & Noble and bought some more books. I am set for reading for quite a while.

The next day, Sunday, a lawn sprinkler service showed up to blow out our water lines for the winter. I watched carefully while they did it, and I might be able to do it myself next year – all I will need is a compressor.

On Friday, November 15, Tanya attended a "Lock-In" party at Lahser High School. This was mainly for the band and orchestra members, but since she is part of the performing arts department (being a Knightsinger), she went to enjoy the activities and be with her friends. I drove her there about 8 PM, and she stayed "locked in" at the school until 2 AM. There was music for dancing, the gym was open for

volleyball and basketball, there were three places where different videos were being shown, the pool was open, and lots of food to eat and drink. I volunteered to help out, and took the late shift, 10:30 PM to 2 AM. I started in the "dance area," and it wasn't too bad. Eventually I moved out around the confined area of the school where I guarded doors and watched the kids have fun. I had a pretty good time myself, until the second round of stations in the "dance" area. The kids running the sound system had cranked up the volume to the point of pain. Fortunately, the chaperones were supplied with earplugs. At 2 Tanya found me and we went home. She said she was somewhat bored. I wasn't. I felt a little sorry for her since she then had to be at school at 8 AM that morning for rehearsal.

The following week went by fairly quickly, except I got a little sick. It wasn't enough to keep me home, but I had a sore throat and on Thursday and Friday I was hoarse in class. It was a little better on Saturday – at least I wasn't coughing, which was fortunate since we went to see Tanya in her small role in *West Side Story*. The show was wonderful. The leading cast was so very good that I became engrossed in the show. One mark of a good production in my mind is whether the song and dance sequence for "America" comes off well. This one did – excellently. (I've seen productions where it didn't, and it badly colored my enjoyment for the rest of the show.) The senior who played Maria was so good that I could barely tell the difference between her voice and the one who sang the part for Natalie Woods in the film. (I'm very familiar with the movie soundtrack – I had all the songs memorized before I saw the movie, since my sister had bought the album after she saw it. This was back in 1961 when the film came out.) Tanya said that other people who saw the professional production which was being done at the Detroit Opera House preferred the Lahser High School production. The choreography, enthusiasm and spontaneity of the high school students was better. Tanya's part, although small, was done with enthusiasm and great enjoyment.

On Sunday I woke up with a headache, and felt generally miserable all day. So I spent the time quietly reading, though Kathy did drag me out to go to the Barnes & Noble Bookstore.

Monday and Tuesday were intense for the students, but not too busy for me. Since I was not giving any tests before the Thanksgiving break, I just conducted classes as usual. On Monday afternoon after school, I met Kathy at Lahser High School for parent-teacher conferences. We talked to most of her teachers, all of whom had good things to say about her. They all understood about her being involved in the musical, so she was sometimes not up with everything in class, but all of them were pleased with how responsible she has been with her work. Our impression (and the impression that Tanya has given us) was that she was behind, and that she didn't have the time to keep up. Well, I am glad the teachers said she has been doing so well. Now that the play was over, Kathy and I hope that she will stay calmer at home and not do so many things last-minute, which is how I think she managed to stay abreast of her studies.

Kathy and I cooked the turkey and dressing at home on Wednesday night. When it cooled down, I carved the turkey and packed it away in a roaster. On Thursday morning, we managed to get the kids up and left 35 minutes later than I wanted. It was snowing, and the roads were a bit slippery, but we still managed to make it to Indiana and Kathy's parents house for Thanksgiving. We brought the main course, with Brussel sprouts. Ted and Lottie provided some dressing as well, and sweet potatoes. We were expecting Kathy's niece Tracy to show up, but instead, she drove in with her brother Tom, and their parents (Tom and Kuei-Lan) showed up as well. We had a good time together, and it was nice to meet the rest of Tom's family. Tom was the only one to make it to our wedding; he drove from his house West of

Chicago to his parents place in Indiana, picked them up, and took them to the Woodcreek Way house for the event.

Tom, Kuei-Lan and Tom went home that evening (they live in Naperville, Illinois, outside Chicago), but Tracy was spending the weekend with her grandparents. We spent the night too, and drove home on Friday afternoon. For the rest of the weekend I did jobs around the house that I had been meaning to do. One thing was that I stripped off the wallpaper in the laundry room, and proceeded to paint it.

December

December 2nd was an in-service day for the faculty, which gave the dorm students another day for traveling, and the rest of the student body a day off. There were two sessions for the faculty to attend. The morning I spent in a lecture about legal implications of civil rights and sexual harassment issues in the classroom. Since I teach a "dry" subject like math, there is little problem with either of those from the subject matter. When I give extra help, however, I do need to be careful with any students alone in the room with me. Usually there is not problem, since I leave the doors open, and the window shade up.

The afternoon session was more of an eye-opener. The speaker talked about how men and women view the world, what's important to them and how they hear things. They are definitely different. These were generalizations, and most people manage to incorporate both in their dealings with people, but some people are so "goal oriented" (a male trait) that they ignore "cooperation" (a female trait).

The week went by slowly after that, which is what usually happens when we have a four-day school week. I managed to get the kids ready for their weekly Thursday test, but my Advanced Algebra II class didn't do well. When I handed the tests back on Friday, I told them they are going to have to start asking more questions of stuff that is unclear.

I also managed to write mid-quarter comments and turn them in on time.

The winter concert at Lahser high school was on Wednesday, December 11. Since Tanya was singing with the Knightsingers, we went to listen to her, and hear and enjoy the other musical groups. They all did exceptionally well, but I have come to expect that. The orchestra did the 4th movement of Dvorak's Symphony #9 ("From the New World"), and took it at a pace that I thought too fast (knowing the runs that were in that piece). When I asked the conductor about it, Mrs. Palmerie said that they picked up the tempo themselves, so she went along with them. They also played a piece called "Tintinnabulations", which was "Jingle Bells" played in various musical styles from classical to modern.

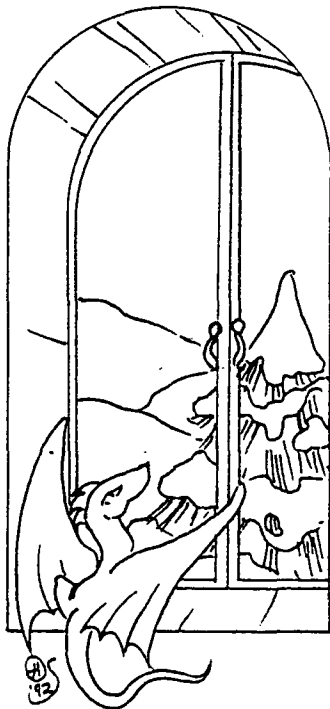
The Knightsingers sounded exceptionally well that evening, and I was proud of Tanya and the group. They sang several Christmas Carols, and made the room feel "Christmas-y".

On Saturday, December 14, Kathy and I went tree-shopping. It was strange doing so since the temperature was up into the 50s. But we found a nice tree (Scotch Pine) and set it up in the foyer of the house. On Sunday I put up lights outside, and lights and garland on the tree. Later, Tanya and Dan decorated the tree. The temperature dropped, and it snowed a little, and so it started to feel more like Christmas.

I must admit that I was more than ready for the two week vacation we had. I gave my usual rounds of tests on Thursday, December 19, and about a dozen of the students, mostly from overseas, informed me that they would not be there on Friday, since their flights were leaving either that evening or Friday morning. And on Friday other students didn't show up either. That was all right, since I was happy

that most of them managed to take their tests before the break. And the school was deserted as soon as the final class period ended.

The weekend was hectic with some last-minute shopping on my part. We invited my parents over for dinner on Sunday, showed them the house, and my father (he had a knee replacement more than two months earlier) managed to climb up and down the stairs to the second floor and the basement. We had some gifts for them, and they had some for us.



For Christmas we traveled to Kathy's parents place in Indiana, and had an enjoyable time. Originally, our niece Tracy was to be the only other person showing up, but when we drove in, Tracy's brother Tom, and their father were also there. Yes, that made it more enjoyable. When we got up the next morning, it was cold and overcast. It started to snow lightly, but soon increased in intensity. We thought about staying another night, but since Tanya had to work on Friday, we decided to drive home. I drove all the way, through lots of snow and sleet, but we made it. Most everyone who was on the road was civil and polite in their driving, so there was no trouble. And we did not encounter too many back-ups or trouble-spots.

Most of the vacation I spent reading. I made it through half the year of *Asimov's Science Fiction*, and finished up the December issues of *Analog* and *F&SF*. I also read several novels, including *Bird Girl* by Velma Wallis, *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller* by James Houston, and *Desert Gold* by Zane Grey. Kathy had gotten me 10 hardcover novels by Zane Grey, all in the same set as the one I had picked up in October. And we found 4 others in the same set, so now I have a total of 15 (plus three paperbacks, with no duplication).

January, 1997

On New Years Day we invited my family to come over to see the house and have dinner; my sisters Judy and Janice showed up with their families. My parents stayed home (the weather was nasty), Gary said he was going to an all-night party and so would not make it, and June and her family had gone to the northern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan to ski at Boyne Mountain. We had a good time, and my sisters were impressed with the house.

I did not work on finishing the basement as I had planned. I did do some more work on this issue of *Lan's Lantern*. And Tom Sadler (editor of *The Reluctant Familiar*) came by for a visit too. All in all it was a good break.

No one wanted to return to work or school on Monday.

I managed to get my kids back into the swing of things, and all my classes had tests on Thursday (January 9). That weekend I also assembled review sheets, and put some final touches on the Precalculus and Algebra IIB exams. I also tried to write the Algebra IIA exam which was slow in coming. While I worked on that, Kathy was upstairs in the li-

brary working on her journal which chronicled the trip to Greece which she took with Tanya in July of 1995.

We took time to celebrate Tanya's birthday on January 11. She asked her friend Marissa to come by for the day, and they watched a movie, had a snack, and before Marissa left, we had cake. Tanya and Marissa also exchanged Christmas gifts, and Marissa had a birthday gift for Tanya. In the evening, Tanya opened the gifts that we got her: gold-plated necklace, bracelet and earrings; slacks, and some personal things. Dan offered to take Tanya to see *Evita* at the theater on a day when she would be done with her exams which were the following week. I thought the Cranbrook schedule for exams was crazy, coming two weeks after the vacation, but Lahser High School had them a week after, as did several of the local public schools.

My exams went fairly well. Unlike most years, I did not have sections for multiple choice, matching, true/false, or fill in the blanks. All the exams were computational in nature, so I could look at the work that the kids did. It took a long time to correct them, and that ran up against the weekend - January- 24-26, which was when Confusion was scheduled. I was on panels, so Kathy and I were going, regardless of how much work was left to do for both of us; Kathy had to finish her grades as well for the semester at Oak Park high school.

Confusion

I was told that I was scheduled for 5 panels at Confusion. Two of them were the Neo Panels, and the others dealt with: "Classics: Old and New", "B5 versus ST", and "Fun Books To Read". When I got to the convention, the two Neo panels were on my schedule, as was the "Classics" panel. But the other two were changed to a single panel, "How to make conventions profitable", which conflicted with the "Fun Books" panel. The first Neo panel on Friday was okay. Two member of the panel promoted their own interest groups, and painted cons as having only weird stuff going on. Ro Nagey was on with me and we two decided that this wouldn't happen again at the repeat panel the next morning. It didn't. Because no one had showed up 10 minutes into the panel time, we decided to cancel it. A few minutes later Kathy and I saw Tom Sadler with his wife Ruth. While Ruth kept a look-out, Tom came and sat with us and talked for a bit until his daughter and her family showed up. We saw Tom on and off through the con.

The Classic Books panel went very well, though Rick Lieder threw out the first question which side-tracked the whole discussion for several minutes. "Why are all the best books written by people out-side the field?" He cited *A Clockwork Orange* and the books of Kurt Vonnegut and J.G. Ballard as examples. Not having read the Anthony Burgess book, I could not say much about it. As for Vonnegut, he has refused to admit that he writes SF, so he is an "outsider" by choice. Nevertheless, I never liked his writing that much anyway, so I don't consider his books among "the best".

When we finally got going, Ro and I took turns leading the discussion, with significant contributions from Barry Gehm and Joel Zakem (those two and I had done some homework in preparing for this panel - in particular I had a list of the Hugo winners to use just in case we needed it). Rick said very little after that. Ro added a twist with audience participation at the end: "Tell us *one* book that you consider a classic - and I know that you as fans will find *some* way of stretching that to 2 or 3 books." There was a large number of people in the room, so it took several minutes to do this. And a couple *did* finagle two titles, and one person used trilogy. It was a very successful panel.

The GoH was Samuel Delany, and we attended his afternoon "Interview". I found out more about the man, much

that I didn't know before since I have not read much of his work, but I found it fascinating, if a little unsettling. After that, we headed for Oakland Mall to pick up a *Star Trek : Voyager* calendar that had come in for me, and by that time we were tired. We went home, and decided not to return until the next morning.

I had a 1 PM panel, but we arrived in time to sit in on Joey Shoji's panel on the connection between literature and music. He moderated several people who cited the work on which the song they had written was based. It was interesting, though it went longer than the hour it was scheduled, and we had to leave in the middle of Mark Bernstein's rendering of "The Green Hills of Earth" so I could make my panel.

That last discussion centered around using contacts in fandom, at cons, and writers' groups to help people trying to get published. Rick Lieder was there again, but no artists were at the panel, so he didn't say much. Author Ron Sarti and I handled this one without too much trouble, and once again I thought was quite successful.

Kathy and I left shortly after that. We had some shopping to do, and we both had stuff to finish up for school -- end of semester grades, comments, scantron bubbling, etc.

The following week was busy with going over exams, showing final grades, and beginning new material. Even though we only had a couple of days a real class (since we started on Tuesday) I still had my usual quiz on Thursday. So the new quarter and semester were off to a running start.

I also handed out the descriptive sheets on the paper which was due on March 14.

Thursday evening was the grade review meeting, and I once again took care of refreshments. Kathy had to stay late for her school's open house on Thursday as well.

The month ended with cold temperatures and snow, and a lot of warmth in our house, which came from the furnace, the fireplace and our love.

February

At the beginning of February, I was called into the Dean of Faculty's office for a meeting. He presented to me a position which he described as "helping out the people on the awards committee". I guess that because I have not been on many committees and the jobs of taking care of the coffee machines, coffee orders, the Kodak copier and supplies, doing the emergency phone-call fan-out, didn't amount to what some other people were doing, so I was tagged for doing this. I accepted, but it was not really what it had been described. It turned out that I was replacing one of the members who was quitting. I was not pleased about that, but since the person I was "replacing" was staying on to help with the transition, I thought it would be all right. Unfortunately, I knew that it *would* be a lot of work, though when I have told other people whom I would have to contact in the process of setting things up for the various student awards, their reaction universally was, "Good, someone who can organize and get things done!"

Okay, I thought. *The other people did well, so what can I do better?*

I would have to wait and see what happens.

I continued to find replacement books for my collection, and both Kathy and I kept expanding our library with classics of literature, or things we would like to have. Recently Kathy picked up a *Cassell's Spanish-English Dictionary*. It goes well with the other *Cassell's Dictionaries* she has in her collection: *Italian-English*, *French-English*, and *German-English*. I gave her my *Cassell's Latin-English Dictionary* to add to her set.

During the month, I did something that took time and energy and I am happy I did. I panelled one wall of the basement and anchored what bookshelves I could into the

ceiling and wall. I then unpacked all the SF books I had with me, leaving most of my Latin texts in boxes and other things for which I don't have room right now. The next step is to start bringing the rest of my collection from my sister's house, and the shelves.

After I had read *Precious Bane* by Mary Webb, I started looking for her stuff in the school library. There was no other novel by her, but a slim volume of poetry, *Fifty-One Poems*, which I checked out, and took my time reading. I was delighted with the collection, and now am looking for a copy to add to my library. I found another of her novels (*Gone to Earth*) in the Barnes & Noble used bookstore near us, and I have it set aside to read soon.

The father of one of my students gave me a book to read. He and I share an interest in the study of Roman Britain, and he wanted me to have a copy of *The Roman Invasion of Britain* written by Leonard Cottrell. I recognized the name from a book I had read before by him, *The Bull of Minos*, about the archaeological digs at the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Crete. I think he also gave me the book in appreciation for helping his daughter do well in math. I had Karen last year, and now this year. More than likely I'll be teaching her again next year in non-AP Calculus. Anyway, the book is very interesting and he and I will have much to talk about when next we meet.

In late February I found out that one of my colleagues, the Latin teacher Steve was taken to the hospital because of chest pains. He had a mild heart attack on the way, and was operated on that afternoon. He is doing well, though weak and tired. I suspect this will mean a complete change in his personal habits now: no more smoking, decaff coffee, and less likely to get upset with his students. It seems that Cranbrook is a place that is not good for one's health. In the last five years or so, four other people have had some sort of heart operation.

Not to think something is wrong with me, but ... I made an appointment for a physical in a couple of weeks. We'll see what comes of it.

MARCH

On the second weekend of March, I started bringing home some of my book collection from my sister's house, and the shelves I had stored there. Well, there was some miscommunication, and she expected me to rent a covered truck and move it all in one trip, instead of what I had planned -- take several weekends and visit with her and her family. Well, when she and her husband have their next free weekend, I'll be getting a truck to move everything then.

Also in March, we managed to borrow a pick-up truck and bought more wood and paneling, and I fixed up another wall of the basement. I also put in place the rest of the shelves I picked up from my sister's house, and have been unpacking more books. I won't feel completely at rest with my library until I get everything from June's place.

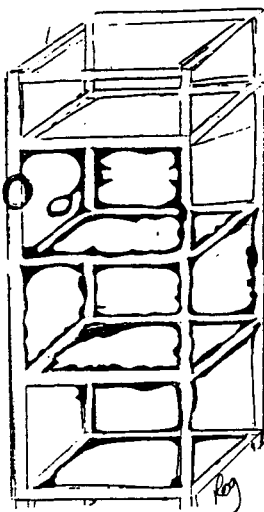
On March 17 Dan celebrated his 21st birthday. We went out to his favorite restaurant (*The Olive Garden*) to eat. He didn't order a drink, but did order one of the more expensive meals. We returned home for desert -- a birthday cake *not* colored green for St. Patrick's Day -- and opening presents. He got shirts and shoes from us, and Tanya gave him a gift certificate to Barnes & Noble Bookstore for \$21. He also got a card from my older sister Judy, and cards (and money) from both sets of grandparents.

I had an appointment for a physical on March 24. In general, I am fine, though (more than) slightly overweight, and out of condition. I need to exercise more and not eat as much. I had to do a colonic-cancer test, which cut into eating some of my favorite foods (red meats, raw fruits and vegetables, etc.), so I was happy to get the samples done before Easter Sunday.

For Easter Kathy and I went to see my parents. We had asked Dan and Tanya to go, but they were going to their father's house for Easter. He bought a new house, after getting re-married in January. And Tanya was also scheduled to work on Easter Sunday, which she did not like at all, especially since she was scheduled to be there at 8AM. She managed to get the time changed to 10, so she could go to church with her father. Dan and Tanya went to church with Kathy and me on Saturday evening. It was the loooooong Easter ceremony, and we decided that after 2.5 hours, we had had enough, and left.

Did people look at the Hale-Bopp comet? I saw it in the morning before I went on vacation (March 14-31), and only got around to looking for it a couple of times since. Even with the naked eye it has been quite spectacular.

On Monday, March 31, instead of the usual faculty "In-Service" day where we have meetings of dubious value, we had off. It gave the boarders time to come in from their vacations without having the crunch of flights on Easter Sunday, and the faculty an extra day of rest. Since both Tanya and Kathy had that day (and that week) off, we all drove to Ann Arbor to visit the University of Michigan campus. Since Tanya has decided to go there, she wanted to see the school. Unfortunately, the weather did not fully cooperate. It was sunny, but cold with a wind-chill in the single digits. We still managed to walk around part of the main campus, and visit inside some of the buildings. We had a good time together.



APRIL

The two (plus) weeks of vacation were wonderful – one reason why I had been able to work in the basement. I have also tried to work on *Lan's Lantern* and made some headway on it, but with school starting up so soon, the end of the quarter coming up, and lots of papers to read when we return, I've had to get school stuff ready in advance.

About the math papers. Friday, March 14, was the day we were supposed to leave for vacation, and the day that my students were supposed to turn in their papers. I had handed out take-home tests for all my classes on Wednesday which were due Thursday at the beginning of their class period, then the rest of the class time was theirs to work on finishing their papers. I knew full well that many of them would be studying for the other tests which were scheduled for that day. Several students thanked me for the extra time I gave them. Then on Thursday night through Friday morning we had an ice storm which caused a lot of damage (though not to our house or property – all we lost was a limb from one tree along the back fence), power outages, and school closings. Yes, school was canceled, and I didn't get the papers from my students that I thought I would. So, when some concerned students called to ask about sending them, I said fine, if you want, but they were due on Tuesday, April 1, when classes resumed. *sigh* It just made more work for me, and I decided not to have the usual test on Thursday that week, but let things go for another next week. Since there were so many things I have to do – grades, comments on everyone (I did what I could with templates for them before classes resumed), Awards ceremony contacts, and classes – I decided not to make extra work for myself. So, I managed to get all my grades and comments done by the required deadline.

Tom Sadler came by for another visit on April 5. We had a nice long talk about fandom, reading, and fanzines.

The grade review meeting was on Thursday, April 10. I got the list of the student who were to be discussed (those with poor grades), and none of my advisees were on it! I was very grateful for that. I also got my advisees' grades, and everyone got all As and Bs, except one student with one grade of D. I will need to talk to her about French; it seems that she is missing a lot of classes and not doing the work she should. And in another class she is barely passing (an art class which is pass/fail), in which she has taken a dislike to the teacher and has purposely skipped. She is in trouble for that, and is near to getting no credit for the course because of the attendance requirement. I hope that she won't purposely fail the class.

Anyway, some juniors whom I had were not doing well, so I had to stick around for the discussions. It wasn't too bad. Instead of an evening meeting, they put it after school. This happened mainly because the Acting President of Cranbrook Educational Community scheduled a "Town Meeting" that evening, and the Administrators wanted faculty to attend if possible. After a long day of school and the grade review meeting, I don't think many people attended. I know I didn't!

Contraption

I attended a local convention – Contraption – this weekend, and it was a disappointment. I was on programming, and only one of the three panels I was on had an audience. But that didn't bother me as much as that there was very little programming of interest – to anyone. Star Trek panels filled up several of the time-slots, but the same people seemed to be on them. Several hours were given over to costume and make-up, preparation for the dance, and very little to panels of real substance.

Kathy and I had with Phil Klass – aka William Tenn – in the consult on Saturday afternoon, and it was one of the high points of the convention. We talked about education and how the students of today don't have the cultural background that we had, even though we are almost 30 years apart in age. He said that he had taught a science fiction course recently at an exclusive Christian college, and he mentioned the Tower of Babel story. He encountered a sea of blank looks. Of the 30 or so people in the class, only one though he might have heard about it. He does not think highly of the way education is going now. I talked about some of the reason such things might be happening, and Kathy added some as well, and these were situations he had not thought of before, or had not heard. Kathy mentioned that her students only want to do work for a grade (not unusual) but don't want to put the effort into doing homework. 90% of her students have after-school jobs, and so they most times don't have the time to do any homework. For my students, they are so busy and involved with so many after school activities that they play the trade-off game – do what is most important and let the other things go until they have time to catch up.

Phil says that he is scared for the future because it seems there is a lack of common ground culture now, that people don't have the same frame of reference any more. Knowing some of the basic things in Western Literature – the Bible, Greek and Roman mythology, a sense of historical perspective, etc. – is what ties generations together and gives them something in common. When this is lost, the "generation gap" increases without bound, and causes a lot of difficult feelings between generations.

I'm not sure what the answer is, and neither does Phil, or Kathy, or Fruma (Phil's wife). But they don't see the future as a very comfortable place.

In the evening after dinner, Kathy and I dropped in on Phil and Fruma Klass' talk on hard science fiction, and that

was another high point of the con. It went on overtime, but they made some very good points about the history of SF, hard SF, and fantasy.

On Sunday, the only panel of mine that had an audience was one I was asked to do, and wasn't particularly enthusiastic about: Alien Abduction. Phil came in at the beginning, and we had a delightful time with the topic. The audience was good, and the panel ran overtime. Thanks to Phil and his wife Fruma, the convention turned out pretty good.

One other high point had nothing to do with the convention. Our friends Jean and Marshall came by to go out to dinner with us, and we had a really good time with them. When the weather breaks and we can count on nice weekends, we hope to invite them over for dinner.

April 15 came and went. We owed money for taxes, but managed to pay it a little early (during the previous week) so that we would not be swamped in the morass of people at the Post Office on that fateful day. The IRS wasted no time in cashing our check!

That particular week was extremely busy for me. This new committee on Awards had me getting lots of material ready for the faculty meeting which was on the evening of Wednesday (16th). So on Tuesday night I was putting together the tests I would be giving on Thursday, and planned to drive to Jim Landis' house for the monthly Galactic Cartographers meeting, stay for an hour, then return home to continue working on my tests. I let Kathy know of my plans, but she came down to my office just before dinner and asked if I could possibly change my plans if something important came up. I said it would depend on what it was.

It turned out that Tanya's friend Marissa had 4 tickets from her parents to see a show that evening at The Palace (one of the arenas in Detroit for special shows). Tanya originally called her father to see if he and his new wife could go, but he wasn't home and she left a message on his voicemail. When Kathy found out, she told Tanya that she would like to go, and could probably talk me into going. She was right. All we had to do was pick up Marissa and the tickets, and head to the Palace ... which we did right after a quick dinner, and a call placed to Jim Landis explaining why Kathy and I were not going to make the meeting. These tickets also included free parking, which we found out was \$6 when we arrived at the Palace.

It wasn't difficult to find our seats -- to the left of the stage in the second level. They were really nice seats. Tanya and Marissa went off by themselves for a while until just before the show started. They've been best friends for several years, and had "personal things" to talk about. So around 8 PM the lights dimmed, a spotlight focused on the stage, and the band began. For the next two hours (with a 15 minute break) we enjoyed Michael Flatley and his troupe as we watched "Lord of the Dance", an extravaganza of Irish and Celtic step-dancing, singing, and musicianship. It was, to say the least, fantastic.

The next day in the *Detroit Free Press*, the theater critic gave the show only two stars (out of 4), claiming that Michael Flatley used the show to flaunt his talents (I didn't think so), and the so-called story-line that united the dancing, songs and solo performers was too thin. I do agree with that. The story, as I pieced it together, is about two groups of woodland dancers, headed by the Lord of the Dance (Flatley) and the Lord of the Dark. The Dark group harasses a woodland sprite and breaks her flute, but she was rescued by the Lord of the Dance. The Dark forces capture him, and he in turn is rescued by the sprite. LotDance returns and has a dance showdown with LotDark, and (of course) wins. In between there is a singer, and two fiddlers (female, one from each group) and solo female dancers (one from each group) who perform. Unless you saw the patterns, it was difficult to see any story.

Kathy asked if I knew anyone in that crowd of a few thousand people, and was unable to spot anyone I might

know -- until we were leaving. As we walked out of the arena, I saw one of my students from my third period class.

We got home around 11 PM. I returned to my basement office and continued to work on my tests, and the Awards material I needed for the Wednesday evening faculty meeting. I got to bed close to 1 AM, and was up at 5 as usual.

The day went by fairly quickly, but I was dragging near the end. I went home for dinner, then returned for the evening meeting. My associate and I talked about the awards (the last item on the agenda) and entertained nominations for the various "book" awards (Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Wellesley, etc Book Awards), and for the other kinds of school awards for the May assembly. I took notes, and when I got home, I typed them all up, and made a copy for each campus (Kingswood and Cranbrook) so those faculty who missed the meeting could read what had been said. It was another late night and early morning.

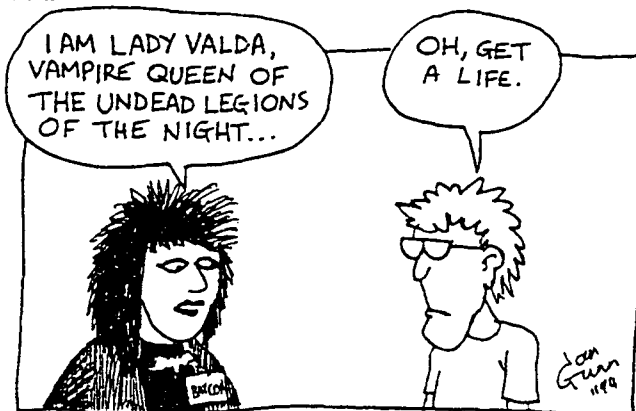
Two weeks later we did the same thing for other awards, though we didn't stay as late. I typed up my notes and made sure each campus had a copy. I began bugging the various departments to let me know who will be receiving awards for the coming assembly so we could notify parents in case they want to come.

Though the weather was fickle, I got outside to turn over the ground that I prepared last fall. Indeed, the grass "disappeared", though the soil underneath it was rocky and sandy. If I continue to mulch and till the soil, it should be very good in a few years. I don't think I will expand the vegetable garden much more than I have. Unfortunately, we had two frosts since I planted tomatoes, and the second frost killed most of the seedlings. The peas, however, were starting to poke their heads above ground; likewise the garlic and a few onions have sent up sprouts. The broccoli survived quite well, but I saw nothing from my bean plants.

The flower gardens were cleaned out, and we started to see what the Wirths left us. There are a number of different varieties of flowers, including tulips and daffodils and some whose names I don't know. This spring should be colorful, if the weather stays nice.

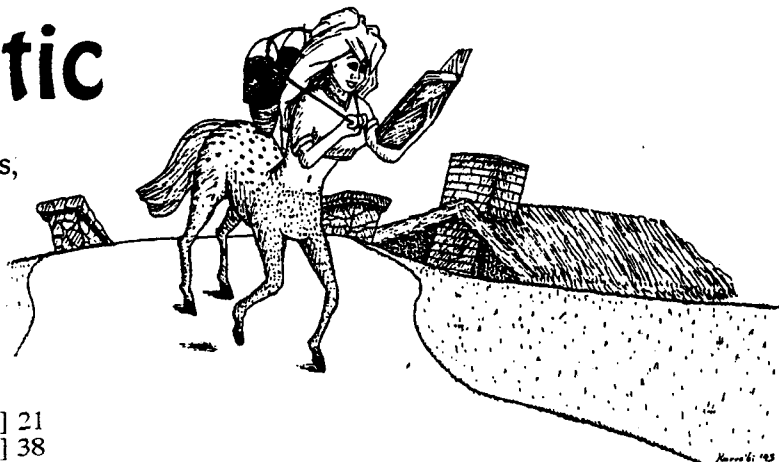
I have been enjoying the newest episodes of *B5*, *ST: Voyager*, *ST: DS9*, and *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*. There is little else I've been watching. I particularly enjoy *Buffy*, mostly because the writers have managed to add enough twists to the standard horror story to keep me interested. In a couple, I was totally blindsided. The most recent I've seen was called "The Puppet Show" and the dummy being used by the ventriloquist was sentient. The logical killer was supposedly the dummy, but it turned out not to be true; the dummy was playing a role similar to *Buffy*, being a slayer of a group of inanimate beings who had to slay for hearts and brains so they could stay sentient. So who was doing the killing? My first thought was the new principal (played by Armin Shimerman, Quark in *DS9*), but I was wrong there too. So, as long as the show keeps some pretty good scripts, I'll keep watching.

Well, that brings to a close my adventures for the time being. I'll pick up at the end of April, the fourth quarter of school, and morework for the Student Awards Assemblies in the next issue.



Pulp and Plastic

Reviews of books, films, tapes, compact discs, and songbooks by Clifton Amsbury, John Filpus, Evelyn C. Leeper, Mark R. Leeper, and Lan.



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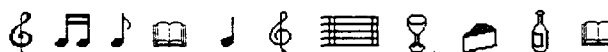
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Film Reviews by Mark R. Leeper

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Trainspotting

Capsule: A vivid look at Edinburgh's community of heroin addicts. The film is a Lost Weekend for the 90s with a little bit of crime film mixed in. This is a decent little indecent film, perhaps neither as hip nor as funny as it was intended to be. It cannot live up to its current hype. Rating: +1.

It has all been done before. This is a superficially non-judgmental look at four friends who are heroin addicts. A fifth friend, Begbie (Robert Carlyle) is clean – at least of heroin – but is just on the near side of psychopathic. However, you have only to step back a half an inch to see that this is really a morality tale about just how bad life can be when heroin becomes your closest friend. Much of this film is strongly reminiscent of *The Lost Weekend*. Recently we saw much the same approach in *Basketball Diaries*. In *Trainspotting* the addicts' lives are seen through the eyes of Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor), marginally the least hooked of the group of addicts. Also in his group are the rather sodden Spud (Ewen Bremner), and Bond film enthusiast trying to be suave, Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller), and the retiring Tommy (Kevin McKidd).

For the first three quarters of the film there really is not much plot. The viewer does get a grand tour of places the viewer does not want to be. This includes a side tour outside and inside "the worst toilet in Scotland," dunking for drugs. This particular treat is a sterling example of the kind of in-your-face (sometimes nearly literally) humor that packs this film. Some really is funny, but much is more a successful attempt to churn the viewer's stomach. It is humor that is more depressing than funny.

As the film opens Mark, an Edinburgh junkie maybe in his early 20s, has determined to get off drugs. From there basically all that really happens is that he gets off, he gets back on, he gets in trouble with the law and he gets off again. At some point Mark decides that he wants to get away from drugs and junkies, only to be pulled back as surely as Al Pacino is in the "Godfather" films. Along the line he gets himself the first serious girlfriend he has had time for in a while. Toward the end of the film a little more happens, but not a lot. Plot is not *Trainspotting's* strong suit. Texture and background is really what it is all about. It takes the viewer inside the life of a junkie and that it does very well – perhaps just a spot too well. These are people you do not want to invite into your home and the film gives good reasons why not. But much of the wacky behavior and even some of the dating jokes have little to do with the main premise of the film unless to show that in some ways the main characters are not a whole lot different than they would be off drugs. The humor is never quite as wild or as hip as intended. These are people who are disaffected from being Scots – as they describe it, the colony of a bunch of wankers – and find escape in hypodermic needles.

American viewers may have a problem making out some (perhaps much) of the dialogue. *Trainspotting* uses Scottish slang and the dialogue is spoken with a heavy Scottish accent. Generally I was able to make out about 80% of what

was said. My average was a little less with the character Spud, but toward the end of the film it became clear that even people in the film are not always sure what Spud is saying. Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* – the title is a hobby that never actually gets mentioned in the film – was a best-seller in Europe and the American publishers had to push up the date of publication here. It seems they had planned an edition to coincide with the release of the film, but so many copies were being brought in from Europe that their publication had to be moved forward to compete. The book was adapted to the screen – leaving a bit too much out some say – by John Hodge. Danny Boyle directed and Andrew Macdonald produced, as they did for the film *Shallow Grave*.

Trainspotting has its creative moments and sometimes it can be funny, but the viewer should be prepared for a downbeat experience and should expect to find himself in some places he would never go of his own accord. As with the film *Crumb*, there is a happy ending in which the viewer escapes the theater and the people with whom he has just spent an hour or so of his life. I expected a film more original than this, but I give it a +1.

Emma

Capsule: It may be that the Jane Austen craze is nearing the end of its course, at least with me. The title character plays with people's emotions and even their lives. In the end her punishment is she is a little contrite for a few scenes before all her dreams come true. Ms. Austen's all-too-visible hand sets everything right in the end, as she always does. A well-acted and well-photographed film, but the story is not Austen's best. Rating: +1.

Warning: Some minor spoilers!

Emma is an exquisite recreation of early 19th century country life. Seeing one scene after another is like looking in on historical rooms recreated in a museum. It is not that every scene is ornate, but each has a feel of authenticity. One almost feels that a guide, taking the viewer around the room and telling the viewer what each of the items is, might have been nearly as interesting as having the actors play out the scene. and at the end of the film one almost feels that might have been a better use of time. I am afraid that it will take some effort to convince me that this is really a better story than even *Independence Day* has, as boorish as that might sound.

As is frequently the case in a Jane Austen story, *Emma* is concerned with the vitally important issue of which of Ms. Austen's generally shallow characters will marry which others. Especially of interest is how will Austen's main heroine get together, after some tribulation of course, with the man who it is so obvious from the beginning is the perfect choice for a husband. At least in *Sense and Sensibility* the main character was in some ways admirable. The self-satisfied Emma Woodhouse (played by the elegant Gwyneth

Paltrow) is merely attractive and rich. I rather hoped through the film that there might be some semblance of a morality tale here and Emma's meddling would lead to her not getting her Mr. Right. Of course, that is not Austen's style and in the end Austen arranges that there is no permanent damage done by Emma.

Mr. Right in this case is Mr Knightly (Jeremy Northam), Emma's sister's brother-in-law. And Knightly really is knightly. He is the voice of conscience and the advocate of restraint ("Better to be without sense than misapply it as you do.") as Emma goes madly running about trying to run the lives of all her friends. Her best friend is Harriet Smith (Toni Collette), afflicted with just average looks. And worse, she is afflicted with a friend like Emma. The persuasive Emma has decided that a local farmer who is interested in Harriet is not good enough to marry Harriet. Emma decides to quash that match and to instead set up a marriage with Reverend Elton, the local rector. Soon two eligible unmarrieds come on the scene. One is the callow Frank Churchill (Ewan McGregor of *Trainspotting*), stepson of Emma's governess and confidant. The other is Jane Fairfax (Polly Walker, who had for more engaging roles in *Enchanted April* and *Restoration*), niece of the region's second ranking busybody. Soon, all the wrong people are attracted to all the wrong people from Emma's point of view.

The novel was adapted to the screen and then directed by Douglas McGrath. The film does have some undeniably witty moments. The acting is all sufficiently convincing. Gwyneth Paltrow looks extraordinarily long-necked and elegant. Jeremy Northam would look very good except for the fashions of the day that seemed to go in for extraordinarily large hats and other exaggerated clothing features. It is something of a surprise to see Greta Scacchi in a smaller role as the ex-governess. Also a familiar face is Juliet Stevenson of *Truly Madly Deeply* in a small role. More than once I found the sets upstaging the action with apple-filled harvest scenes, Christmas party scenes, crocheting rings, and views of odd decorations on yard furniture. In fact, there is little in this film that is not top-notch but the story itself. (I have to admit that I did like the film better than the recent *Clueless*, loosely based on the same novel. But at least there is was easier to like the main character in *Clueless* because the results of her actions would have been less permanent.) The only thing really wrong with *Emma* is Emma herself. With a main character that there was some reason to care about, this could have been a much better film. I give it a +1.

Dragonheart

Capsule: *Dragonheart* is an uneven high fantasy with a few bad ideas but also some very majestic scenes. Its major flaw is to build the dragon too much around Sean Connery's looks and mannerisms and to use topical humor that spoils much of the fantasy atmosphere. *Dragonheart* seems aimed at a younger set, but there are also enough very nice ideas in the film and a sufficiently created world to make this film watchable by adults. Rating: +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Some of my best friends do not understand why I am an admirer of the film *Dragonslayer*. I am not as a rule a reader of fantasy and when I am culling my collection of books, the books that have dragons on the covers seem to be among the first candidates to go. Dragons have been almost over-used in fantasy novels as vampires have been in horror novels. Yet, though I am not a fan of dragon stories, still I found myself totally floored by *Dragonslayer* for some of the plot turns, many of the touches in the script, and especially for Vermithrax Pejorative, the most magnificent dragon ever portrayed on the screen. It is difficult to just put wings on a something that just looks like a dinosaur or a serpent and

expect that it will seem like something that could fly. Yet, it takes just one look at Vermithrax Pejorative to know that she was meant to soar in the air and not walk around on the ground. But as much as I liked *Dragonslayer*, I knew few people had my admiration for that film. At least I thought they did not, until I saw the trailers for *Dragonheart*. They did not show a lot of the dragon, but what I could see reminded me of *Dragon-slayer* and made it look like it could almost be a sequel. Sadly, *Dragonheart* is not the follow-up film I would have wanted, but it does have some moderately sophisticated fantasy ideas, and its dragon is a nice construction, if not as aerodynamic as old Vermithrax Pejorative. In fact, one really doubts that *Dragonheart*'s dragon really would be able to fly.

In this film dragons are an old race that is dying out in large part for having been killed off by humans. That seems particularly short-sighted on the part of the humans since the dragons, we are told, are mystical creatures who for some unexplained reason love humans and want them to prosper and be happy. They seem to be perfectly happy to forgive humans for wiping out their race. *Dragonheart* is the story of the friendship between the last dragon left in the world (voiced by Sean Connery) and the knight and dragonslayer Bowen (played by Dennis Quaid), the man who killed the second-to-last dragon. Draco, as the dragon is nicknamed – we are almost but not quite told his real name – bears no animosity toward Bowen for the death of the last few of his species. Draco just wants to help him stand up for humans. If this seems a little saccharine, well, this is no *Dragon-slayer*. But I am getting ahead of myself.

As the story opens, Bowen is the teacher of Einon (Lee Oakes as a boy, David Thewliss as a man). Einon is the son of a powerful tyrant king, and he is killed in a peasant uprising. Einon's mother, Aislinn (Julie Christie, in entirely too much makeup for 984 AD), takes the dead boy to a local dragon who performs a mystical operation somehow wedding the bodies of the dragon and the boy. The operation is a success, but the boy is almost immediately seduced by the dark side of his own power. Bowen is angered at what the dragon has done to Einon, and goes off in search of dragons to slay. Twelve years later (or just exactly one millennium ago) Einon has become a worse tyrant than his father and the dragonslayer Bowen comes upon the dragon he will come to call Draco. After a rocky start, the two become fast friends.



The initial conceit of having a dragon not just sound like Sean Connery, but also have the mannerisms and even look a bit like him is one of the biggest mistakes in the making of this film. Certainly it will add to the box-office appeal of the film, but it robs the dragon of much of his mystical appeal and his credibility on the screen. Granted, Connery is a better choice on which to base a dragon than, say, Rodney Dangerfield. But fantasy works best when one

can suspend disbelief and put oneself into its world. The casting of Connery as dragon is too much of a reminder that we cannot take all of this literally. Some of the humor really tests our suspension of disbelief. There is a comic dig at President Clinton, there are at least two crotch jokes, there is a joke stolen from *The Wizard of Id* comic strip, but those are the bad touches.

Much of the script by Charles Edward Pogue is intriguing as the dragon becomes a major character in the story. His code forces him to be an ally to some humans, notably the down-trodden, some of whom are responsible for the killing off of his species. And yet, his closest ties are with his worst enemy. He is not a monster, but more an erudite person. Perhaps he is more close in behavior and attitude to Chinese dragons than to the fearsome creatures of European lore. Incidentally, a look at the closing credits indicates that much of the production was done in Eastern Europe, particularly Slovakia, and that is a part of the world where dragon lore is both popular and a local tradition. A traveler in Eastern Europe quickly loses count of the number of artistic renditions seen of St. George and the Dragon, and one rather suspects that the reason is not because people have a fascination with St. George. The plot calls upon a number of high-fantasy traditions and even has a short speech by King Arthur voiced, if I am not mistaken, by an uncredited John Gielgud.

Dennis Quaid is starting to show his age, but does passably well as Bowen even if his accent is a bit uneven. Connery hams it up a little as the dragon, but that is perhaps what is necessary to render him so delightfully into the form of the great beast. Pete Postlethwaite gives a rare, overdone performance as a comic relief man-of-the-cloth who fancies himself a poet. On the other hand, David Thewlis (of *Naked*, *Black Beauty*, and *Restoration*) could have put a little more oomph into his villain. Coincidentally, Postlethwaite and Thewlis both had parts in the recent *James and the Giant Peach*. Director Rob Cohen previously directed *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*, and directed the upcoming *Daylight* which had a trailer at the showing of *Dragonheart*.

Rather than a fantasy that would work well for all ages, this turns out to be a juvenile, but one good enough that adults can enjoy it – which is not quite the same thing. I rate it a +2.

The Phantom

Capsule: Another comic strip character makes it to the big screen as Lee Falk's Phan-tom becomes involved in a chase for three mystic-al skulls. The plot has more holes in it than the face of the Phantom's cave, but does have some of the feel of the old serials. Billy Zane is a curious choice for The Phantom, but he manages to hold his own. This is not a good film – along similar lines I much prefer *The Shadow* – but does have some fun. Still, not enough for actual respect. Rating: a high 0. (Minor spoilers in the review.)

The legend of The Phantom began in the 16th century when off the shores of the Island of Bangalla ("Bengalla" in the film) Singg pirates captured a British merchantman ship and put all to the sword but for a young boy, Kit, who dived over the side just in time to see his father killed. The boy swam to shore and was rescued by pygmies (not so small in the film). The boy swore revenge on the pirate who killed his beloved father, but days later he found the pirate washed up on the shore dead. His goal in life gone, he instead devoted his life to fighting piracy, greed, cruelty, and injustice wherever it occurred. He swore that this would be not just his mission, but that of his sons, and their sons. When he died they would carry on after him. So began a

long line of Phantoms. As there always was a Phantom around fighting evil, even as generations and even centuries passed, the legend grew that The Phantom could not die. He could appear to die, but would return ever and again looking just the same. He was called "The Man Who Cannot Die" and "The Ghost Who Walks". The pygmies kept the secret that The Phantom was mortal and gave each Phantom the secrets of their deadliest hunting poisons. He made his home in the Skull Cave in the deep woods of Bangalla and found other Skull Caves in other parts of the world, including the American Southwest. From these he could fight evil-doers everywhere. But when one Phantom's adventures were ended a Phantom would always return to Bangalla, his true home. The pygmies knew that the day would come when each Phantom would die, usually violently, and The Phantom's son would be summoned to don the costume and assume the role of The Phantom.

I have to admit that even as a child I was not very interested in The Phantom. He was just about the least intriguing-looking super-hero I could think of. A black mask and a skin-tight purple suit was just too little costume. He looked a lot like a professional wrestler. But what really unsold me on The Phantom were his garish purple and black diagonally striped shorts (missing in the film). Because I thought the shorts looked silly, the stories probably never got much of a chance to impress me, though modern critics say that it was one of the better adventure comic strips. The Phantom was the creation of Lee Falk, who previously had created *Mandrake the Magician*. The strip began its long run on February 17, 1936, and sixty years later it was still running. The strip was adapted into a fifteen-chapter Columbia serial in 1943, with Tom Tyler playing the title role. Now, with the character a little over sixty years old, The Phantom is back on the wide screen in a story with a strong serial feel.

The year is 1938 and the world is in turmoil as dictators try to bring about a New World Order. The United States has its own would-be dictator, the ruthless gangster/businessman Xander Drax (played by Treat Williams). Drax's plan is to gain possession of three mystical jeweled skulls which when brought together will bring their owner about the same power that the Lost Ark would. (And this film does borrow heavily and repeatedly from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, albeit lacking the style to make it all work.) As the film opens, we see three ruthless Indiana-Jones-like characters who have tracked the first skull to the Island of Bangalla (ugh-oh!). The skull is in a cave somewhere in the deep woods (UGH-OH!). But it is safe, you see, because one of the mercenary explorers had actually killed The Phantom several years before (Dead meat!!!). Out of the forest, on a white horse and followed by the wolf Devil, come riding The Phantom. And so begins an adventure that will carry The Phantom to New York City and later to a meeting with the last descendants of the Singg pirates, killers of the father of the original Phantom.

Billy Zane is a reasonable actor, best remembered, at least by me, as the sea-going psychopath in the taut thriller *Dead Calm*. And in the purple suit he physically looks the part, even without the striped shorts. Treat Williams plays his villain with a subtle tongue-in-cheek. He does not interpret the role so broadly that he could be in a Batman film, but he is not really playing it straight either. Kristy Swanson, known too well as *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, puts the most character in her maiden-in-distress that I have seen from her in any film, but she has a long way to go. And veteran Patrick McGeehan is known for underplaying his roles and so fits right in. Some of the most interesting faces are in bit parts: a gangster here, a cab driver there.

Perhaps the most intriguing part about Jeffrey Boam's script is its unwillingness to commit to whether The Phantom is supernatural or not. The legend is that The Phantom is supernatural and supposedly the truth is that he is not, but there are bits in the film that imply he is able to do what

no mortal man could. Does he commune with the ghost of his father or is it only a memory? The supernatural certainly mingles with the natural world in this film. Some of his abilities seem to be just on the edge of what is naturally possible, but it could be just the writing. Certainly Boam is willing to contrive some absurd coincidences, particularly having villains fall a little too perfectly into some set traps.

One problem with the script is that while it is sort of explained how The Phantoms find mates to extend their line, it is a little less clear how the Singg pirates find sufficient mates considering where they are. Nor is it really clear why, lacking the dedication of The Phantoms, they continue their line in the same profession. And it is a little hokey having everybody be descendants of the originals, repeating the same battles that have gone on for 400 years.

Many of the scenes are not staged very well. When someone swings on a rope, if you watch the angle that the rope hangs you will see definite continuity errors. One odd departure from the original suit is the addition of surface designs. It is like little black lines were added to accentuate muscle definition. One absurd scene has the wolf Devil apparently talking to the Phantom's white horse and telling the horse where to go to pick up his master. The horse then outruns an airplane. Some horse. There is little on-screen violence, but there is a gruesome scene of implied violence (borrow from the film *The Horrors of the Black Museum*).

In spite of a valiant effort to recreate a feel of the 1930s, *The Phantom* never really works perfectly and often not even well. Then again the same can be said of the old serials. And it is good-natured fun in the style of the old movie serials. If you did not like *The Shadow* which had a good deal more panache, it is a good bet you will not like *The Phantom*. For the sake of that fun I give it a high O.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Capsule: This is a wonderful film for anyone who does not know the Victor Hugo novel and yet a brazenly horrendous adaptation for anyone who does know the story. Disney animators have lavished their greatest technical virtuosity on a script that is painfully inaccurate to its source. With such extremes of good and bad, I have to give the film a mediocre rating, but in fairness there is a lot to admire here as well as much to revile. Rating: low +1.

By any objective standards, point for point, this is the best animated film that has come from Disney Studios. It has the best animation, the most complex story, and even the most interesting characters of any Disney Studios animated film. The reason that this film is getting flak – and I am not saying that it is not fully deserved – is that the violence that the Disney people invariably do to the story is this time being done to a different type of story. It is a story with which many people have both a passing acquaintance and, even more important, a certain respect. This is an adaptation of the often-filmed 1831 novel *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo. But this time the Disney people turn the characters inside-out, totally distorting them, and there is a sizable portion of the audience who know what is going on.

There is a canonical version of the story of Aladdin – the one translated by Sir Richard Burton from the Arabic – but few people actually know the details of the plot. So if the Disney film moves the setting from China to Arabia and bases the story more on *The Thief of Bagdad* than on the original Burton version, few people notice or care. But just about every review I have written of a Disney animated film contains the complaint somewhere that the story is not accurate to the original story on which it is based. This time around the Disney people have chosen a classic that is cyni-

cal, misanthropic, and extremely angry (not unlike the emotions I felt when I first heard that Disney Studios would be doing *Hunchback*). But having resigned myself to seeing a novel I really liked being desecrated on the screen, the film that Disney Studios have made is about as well-made as that studio has ever done. And it is not as if the classic Charles Laughton version was tremendously accurate to the novel either. It distorted the Hugo badly also, though nowhere nearly as badly as the new animated film.

This version is something of a saddlepoint, being on the one hand the worst adaptation of the five well-known English language versions of the novel. (I have not seen the two French versions nor the 1917 version *The Darling of Paris* with Theda Bara – and I'm not sure I want to) – And yet, in my opinion at least, this is the best Disney animated film to date, beating out even *Beauty and the Beast*. This is the darkest-themed of any of the Disney films and has some of the most complex characters, for what that is worth. There is little wrong with this film that could not have been fixed by retitling it *Bell-ringer of Notre Dame*, changing all the character names, and saying this was "suggested by" *Notre Dame de Paris*.

Though never stated in the film, the year is 1482, during the reign of Louis XI. In this version Quasimodo is cutely deformed in much the same way a troll doll is. He lives in seclusion (though not in deafness) because he is forbidden to leave Notre Dame by his harsh guardian, Judge Frollo, and because he is shy, being stigmatized by his deformity. In this version, the people of Paris are unknowingly cruel to him when they first see him close up, but are basically good at heart. The cathedral is run by people who are also good, and the chief evil in Paris is Judge Frollo. Quasimodo's only friends have been three gargoyles who come to life just for him, not unlike the tiger toy in *Calvin and Hobbes*. But risking rejection, Quasimodo makes friends with the rambunctious and buxom gypsy woman Esmeralda and the dashing and noble Phoebus, Captain of the Guards and a man with a strong sense of morality and chivalry. Even in just this much plot the story has been horribly and painfully twisted.

The screenplay – by five people, always a bad sign – invariably finds the most vulnerable places to undermine Hugo's story and to distort nearly everything about it. It is almost impressive how they take such liberties as they do and still leave the story at least recognizable with so much of the screen story just the reverse of the Hugo novel. For example, Esmeralda has one quick moment of shock when she realizes that the ugliness of "Quasi" is not just a mask, and from that point on she has nothing but admiration from him. "You are a surprise from every angle," she sings. It took a great deal of sugar-coating to make the story innocuous enough that it could be a Disney film. And it is still the darkest and most powerful of Disney's animated features, which is perhaps not saying very much.

As bad as the distortion of the novel is, the writers have some powerful scenes. Where Frollo describes the Gypsies as being vermin, like ants crawling under a stone, the scene has the power of some of the anti-Jewish propaganda films of Nazi Germany. There is a terrific scene of the sexually frustrated Frollo seeing images of Esmeralda in a fire that very nicely gets across to even fairly young children the thorny concept that Frollo's hatred of Esmeralda springs from his own desire for her. And the script also borrows from other film versions. There is a scene where Esmeralda prays in the Cathedral for nothing for herself, but for God to help her people. This scene was invented for the 1939 film version, but is the basis for a musical number in this film.

Being fair, Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* is also a technical marvel. The Disney animators are no longer trying to make a computer animated film look like it was entirely hand-drawn. Instead they are mixing in images of such technical perfection they could only have been created

by computer. Gone is the feeling of just six or seven planes of flat images. The images now create a heightened sense of depth that is far too perfect to be done by hand. This film has jaw-dropping scenes that could never be filmed in live-action or animated without a computer. When Quasimodo swings down over the heads of the crowd to rescue Esmeralda and the viewer goes with him arching down, it is one of the most spectacular animated sequences in any feature film. Still, that scene is flawed, perhaps intentionally. It does have the problem that everybody in the crowd seems to have the same height to give the feel of a plane of heads. But it is a terrific image, nevertheless.

There are some other problems with the animation. Once again a different team animates each character. But the styles of animation do not quite match. While Phoebus has a natural roto-scoped look about him, Quasimodo has a flatter look and feel. When the two walk together they do not look right. It almost looks like a human walking with a Toon. Nor is the artwork particularly original. In face Frolo looks far too much like the witch from *Sleeping Beauty* turned into a man. And Esmeralda looks ... well, like Disney animators have lost their innocence and are now drawing heroines with big breasts.

There is a lot of film here for a short 86 minutes, a lot that is terrific and a lot that is terrible. On balance I give *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* a low +1. I wish Disney had stuck to a lesser-known and lesser-loved book.

Phenomenon

Capsule: John Travolta undergoes a brain-boost connected to a strange light he sees in the sky. As his intelligence increases, he and his world each sees the other in different ways. This is a film that draws heavily on Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*. It is a gentle and often compelling film but it becomes muddled just when it should be getting to the point. To some extent it is a vanity piece for John Travolta. Rating: +1.

George Malley (John Travolta) is someone who just gets by in life. He is a good auto mechanic and a decent gardener, but not a whole lot more and he has few friends. He would like to win the favor of a single mother of two children, Lace Pennamin (Kyra Sedgewick), but she is just as determined not to become involved with him. On the night of his 37th birthday he is looking at the sky and sees a bright flash of light that knocks him over. Suddenly the relationships of things become much more clear to him. He is able to play a winning game of chess for the first time. He finds that the Spanish he was trying to learn is suddenly very easy for him, he can two or three books a day - whatever he tries is easy for him. Soon he discovers he has the power to feel the waves that foretell the coming of earthquakes and can even will objects to move. The one thing that he cannot do is win over Lace, the woman he loves. The more he tries to win her over the more stubborn and bewildered she becomes.

George has two constant friends. Nate Pope (Forest Whitaker) is a similarly lonely friend whose lot George tries to improve. The other is a local physician (Robert Duvall) who is like a foster father for George. With some of the strange new abilities and his innocent genius he has, he is able to win over friends. He makes himself a hero, at least temporarily, but soon finds that his new powers also breed a certain suspicion. To make matters worse he decodes a cryptic message signal he hears on short-wave and responds with his own messages in the same code. This only brings him to the attention of the government who takes him into custody to study his strange skills. In spite of his best efforts he finds himself becoming more and more of a freak in

his own town.

John Travolta carries out his role with sufficient charm, though not as much as the script really calls for him to have. But for some minor descents into frustration and neuroses, he remains a simple, pleasant and likable genius. He is getting a little old for boyish, winning roles. Kyra Sedgewick is also likable, but brings even less of an edge to her role than does Travolta. Travolta's unflagging devotion to this woman should presumably be endearing, but apart from a minor physical attractiveness, there is little in her role that makes her seem so worth the effort. Robert Duvall is along playing a physician who is almost like a father to the Travolta character. He seems to be there often as only a sound-ing board and script device. Duvall is too good of an actor not to give a good performance but there is little new for him to do.

What carried *Phenomenon* is the subject of human intelligence and writer Gerald DiPego's idea of what a big increase in IQ brings to a small man in a small town. George's ingenuity and his ideas of small projects and experiments are enjoyable, but toward the end of the film the point of what is going on becomes muddled. George seems to pop in and out of adjustment in ways that are not nearly as interesting as the well-developed Charly Gordon in Daniel Keyes's *Flowers for Algernon*. That novel set the standard to measure stories of intelligence increase by, and this story comes a poor second. (Of course, the film version *Charly* also misses the potential of the story badly and tries too hard to be a 1960s mod film. A faithful adaptation of the novel might be a much bigger service to the viewer than this film had even the potential to be.)

This is a story not without its interesting moments, but it needed less of a fuzzy edge and less of an admiration for good sweet old George Malley. I would give this film a flat +1.

Lone Star

Capsule: The evidence of a decades-old murder of a legendary town sheriff is discovered in a Texas border town and the current sheriff suspects his own father, another legendary sheriff, of the crime. This is a film about strained ethnic relations, strained father-son relations, and a lot more packed into one so-lid and intelligently written script. This will probably be on my top ten of the year. Rating: low +3.

It is not easy to pigeon-hole what John Sayles' new film *Lone Star* is about. At least superficially it is a murder mystery, but there is a lot more to this film. Sayles has written a complex and textured look at life in a border town wracked with ethnic tension from the volatile combination of Whites, Blacks, Mexican immigrants (both legal and illegal) and even some Indians. This is a story of corruption and of strained parent/offspring relationships. There are three father/son pairs and one mother/daughter pair and in each case the parent has caused his offspring to resent him by some behavior or action.

The story takes place in the generally peaceful border town of Frontera, Texas. The plot is set in motion when the remains of a man killed in the early 1970s are found. A sheriff's badge is found among the bones, and so current sheriff Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper) assumes that the body belongs to a former sheriff of Frontera, Charlie Wade (played in flashbacks by Kris Kristofferson). Murdering Wade was almost a public service since he was a corrupt sheriff and vicious bully who had been seen murdering suspects. Sam immediately starts to suspect his own father Buddy (played in flashbacks by Matthew McConaughey). Buddy is something of a local hero for having kicked out Charlie Wade

and becoming sheriff himself. The town remembers Buddy as ending corruption and bringing integrity to the office of sheriff, but this hero-worship does not quite square with Sam's remembrances of his father. Sam remembers his father as being a bad sheriff, only appearing good by contrast to his predecessor. The young sheriff has unfinished business with his dead father and who he remembers with no little hatred. Sam has to dig into his father's reputation and the incidents of more than two decades ago to try to understand this new case. At the same time he is courting Pilar Cruz (Elizabeth Pena), the daughter of Mexican immigrants, whom he loved at the age of 14, but from whom he was separated by his father and Pilar's mother. Cruz is a local history teacher who finds herself embroiled in ethnic tension at her school, a new romance with Sam Deeds, and a touchy relationship with her mother (Miriam Colon). There is also a subplot with the Black community.

Sayles wrote, directed, and even edited the film. He does a reasonable job of weaving together several complex threads of plot into a single story that very much gives a three-dimensional view of life in Frontera. One weakness of the script is that there is an almost completely disjoint plot of an army base in the town and a Black bar that George Wade would shake down for protection money. This forms a whole second line of plot sewn to the main line in only one or two superficial stitches. Some of the same themes appear in each story, but neither story really depends on the other. Together they do give a better view of this small Texas town. In each story the view includes life not just as it is now, but also how it was when it was controlled by sadistic Charlie Wade. In the main story, Sam needs to reconstruct this past to find the facts behind the old killing. In the other, the basis for the current trouble is also in the past of about the same time.

Chris Cooper is probably best remembered for his film debut as the young union organizer from *Matewan*. While the script calls for him to make some of the hardest decisions of his life, he does not convey very deep emotion beyond a sort of sad wisdom. It is much more interesting to watch Elizabeth Pena whose eyes seem to convey more of the sorrow and pain of her life. The role that will get noticed, though it is much smaller, is that of Kris Kristofferson as the malignant corrupt sheriff. Kristofferson is not known for tough-guy roles, but here he can be easily believed as the evil that hangs over the whole town, even after his removal from the scene. Good character performances come from Joe Morton, Ron Canada, and Miriam Colon.

Sayles has managed to turn a not-too-promising ethnic-tension plot into a film that may well rank with *Matewan* as the best enjoyed of his films. The film is intelligent and at the same time clever. I rate it a low +3.

Cronos

(First published in 1994)

Capsule: This is genuinely a cutting-edge art-house monster movie. It is visually striking, has a real "what-happens-next?" plot, and some intriguing human relationships. It has been a long time since a new monster movie has played to art-film audiences, but this one is worth it. Rating: a high +2.

Sometimes I say "don't trust me on this one because it is not my kind of film." On this one I say, don't trust me because it is my kind of film. From an early age I have loved horror film. But I have to say that the horror film rarely likes me. Too often the horror film just feeds off films made earlier. It has sequels that are really remakes and even films in which each ten minutes is a remake of the last ten minutes. The sort of thing you see is "Another teenager is fooling around for nine minutes, then Jason attacks and

kills him." What changes from film to film is the prosthetic make-up, the special effects, and very little else. The feeling I most prize in a horror film is not chills, but curiosity. There are far too few films that make me wonder what the heck is going to happen next. Horror films that do that include *Carnival of Souls*, *Lifeforce*, *The Devil Rides Out*, *To the Devil a Daughter*, *Cronos*, and not nearly enough other horror films. What makes *Cronos* a particular surprise is that it comes from Mexico, a country whose horror films have so often lacked style and originality. Occasionally there will be an atmospheric scene in a Mexican vampire film, but by and large there has not been a whole lot to interest foreign markets. Now, Guillermo Del Toro has made what may have been for me the most enjoyable and creative horror film of the 90s.

In 1536 an alchemist fleeing the Inquisition came to Mexico where he continued his work on immortality until his death in the 1930s. The authorities were shocked by what they found in his rooms, sold off his belongings, and considered the matter closed. In 1996, an antiques dealer, Jesus Gris (Federico Luppi) finds a strange antique clockword mechanism hidden in the base of a statue. It looks like a very large pocket watch, the size of a bar of soap, crossed with a mechanical scorpion. Wind it up and it sprouts legs and stings the hand that is holding it. It is a nasty trick, but that is just the beginning. Roughly speaking, I will say that it does fall into an overly-familiar horror genre, but it presses buttons that genre rarely approaches.

This is a film of stylish images and delightful subtle humor. Little visual images like the monster walking the streets of Mexico in what looks like a tuxedo worn back to front (don't worry, in context it makes perfect sense) spice the film and make it a pure pleasure to watch. Del Toro, who both wrote and directed, has an impressive visual sense without ever letting the special effects or the make-up take over the film. Also to be treasured are the few looks we get inside the *Cronos* Device itself.

Del Toro is a well-known film fan in Latin America having grown up on United States and British horror films, *Outer Limits* and *Twilight Zone*. He wrote the definitive Latin American study of the works of Alfred Hitchcock (which he calls a 540-page love letter to Hitchcock made public). Now he is making his own horror films to compete in Mexico with those made in the United States and if this first film is any indication he is exceeding his goal. Sr. Del Toro, please continue to make original films like this one.

Cronos is one of the most enjoyable horror films I have seen since I was a teen. I would rate it a high +2.

The Island of Dr. Moreau

Capsule: This adaptation from a novel by H. G. Wells – at once a science fiction action adventure and a religious allegory – is one of the strangest and most creative films you will see in the 1990s. Philosophy mixes with horror in ways rarely seen on the screen. Visually the film has the fascination of a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. Though *The Island of Dr. Moreau* will fascinate some, it will repel most others and will be enjoyed fully by only a very small fraction of viewers. Rating: a low +2.

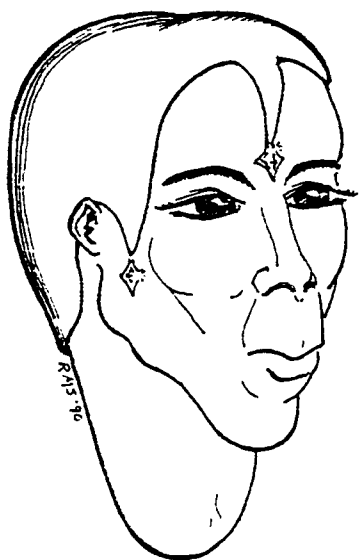
Spoiler warning: I will discuss the premise of the film which may not be obvious to a viewer until well into the film.

H.G. Wells himself was not very happy with Earl C. Kenton's 1933 film *Island of Lost Souls*, based on Wells' novel, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Wells complained that the

film left the religious allegory out of the story. He could not have made the same claim about John Frankenheimer's 1996 film, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. While *Island of Lost Souls* may be a little closer to the word of the novel, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* does more with the themes that Wells considered the core of the novel. If anything, Frankenheimer's film lays on the religious overtones too obviously and too thick-ly. In fact, this is the third adaptation of that particular novel and if Wells were around today, he probably would vote the new version the best. And I suspect that would put him in a very select set. In-deed, this new adaptation intentionally makes itself a hard film to watch. Frankenheimer has managed to out-do Kenton in showing a very strange island outside the usual laws of nature and populated by monsters, monstrosities, and madmen.

Edward Douglas (David Thewlis) is the sole remaining survivor of a plane crash in the Java Sea when he is picked up by Montgomery (Val Kilmer) a veterinarian on a mysterious boat. (Nobody seems to get the main character's name right in any of the versions. It must be hard for a filmmaker to like the name Prendick, I suppose. In this version his name is Douglas.) The boat is taking cargo to an even more mysterious jungle island. Montgomery invites Douglas ashore and then makes him a virtual prisoner, locking Douglas into his room. The island, it seems, is populated by weird and mysterious creatures that seem to be too human to be animals, yet not really in the shapes of humans either. It seems as if evolution has created a collection of intermediate forms between human and animal. In fact, it is not nature, but the hand of man. A brilliant but very eccentric scientist (Marlon Brando as Moreau) is using strange genetic techniques to alter animals into humans. He is God and Pope to the animal-people. A Sayer of Law (Ron Perlman, no stranger to playing people with animal characteristics) carries Moreau's word to his people like a Biblical prophet. The island has come into a sort of order, but a new order outside of nature and with its own synthetic religion. Into this baroque Eden comes a simple act, Montgomery killing a rabbit. This starts a chain of events that leads to a situation incorporating aspects of Adam's Fall and the Apocalypse.

Frankenheimer keeps Marlon Brando on the screen as little as possible. Apparently the actor no longer has the mental ability to memorize his dialogue, and his lines reportedly had to be fed to him by radio directly into his ear. His appearance on the screen is like some incredible androgynous cross between Truman Capote and Jabba the Hut. Whether what we see is his performance or whether he was just being operated by a technician, he gives one of the most bizarre performances of his career. Complaining about the heat and humidity, almost unable to stand, his Moreau is As out of place in the heat of the jungle as he is playing God.



The character of Montgomery, in the novel just the shell of a man, is transformed into a sort of aging hippie, high on drugs and rock music, but still with enough command to keep the island under control. David Thewlis is quickly becoming a familiar face on the screen after his performance as the supreme vulgar-ian and manipulator in *Naked*. Since then we have seen him in *Black Beauty* and *Restoration*, and this year as the villainous king in *Dragonheart*. He is not really given a part that allows him to do much. We never actually see him reacting to what in *Island of Lost Souls* is the big dramatic revelation or reacting very much to anything else.

Though Wells first published his story 100 years ago this year, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is a film that needed the technology of the 1990s to be done reasonably in the story and in the production. While the novel is set in its own time, it seems unlikely that vivisection alone could turn animals into humans, so it is somewhat more acceptable to set the story in the present. Visually there clearly needed to be some computer techniques used to make the animal-people move in ways suggestive of both animals and humans. But the sight of an animal that stands like a man, but leaps like a cat, would no doubt have been an inspiration even to Wells. The one serious flaw in the representation of the animal-people is that in some scenes they look just a little waxy. But even though *Island of Lost Souls* was lauded for its visual imagination, this film seems to have far more creative animal forms. That film could only show intermediate forms that were very close to human already. They might have furry ears, but they clearly had human posture and walked like people. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* shows many more intermediate forms and even some much closer to the animal origins than to humans. Even the opening credits are strange and seem to be jittery, trying to say something they can-not quite express.

Director John Frankenheimer in the 1950s was one of the great TV directors and in the 1960s directed perhaps our country's two best political thrill-ers, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*. He also directed *Seconds*. Since then he has directed notable films but certainly not very memor-able ones. Making a science fiction horror film like *The Island of Dr. Moreau* will probably not do much to win him back the reputation he had in the 1960s since it will please very few people. But it is good that a version of the novel has finally been made that raises the issues that Wells intended. I cannot recommend a film whose appeal I suspect is this narrow, but on my first viewing I was quite impressed. I give it a low +2.

Looking for Richard

Capsule: Looking For Richard is so ambitious that it works better as a partial failure than most films do that are successes. This is a pseudo-documentary about the making of what I take to be a non-existent film adaptation of Shakespeare's Richard III and the discussions of the material as the actors prepare. There is the discussion of Shakespeare and of Richard III, interspersed with seeing how the actors actually do the scenes. Looking for Richard makes an engrossing companion piece to last year's wonderful film production of Richard III with Ian McKellen. The discussion opens up the play Richard III and indeed all of Shakespeare and gives us an unparalleled behind-the-scenes look at the actors' craft. Director and star Al Pacino falls down only in being a bit too self-indulgent and in allowing this to become a vanity piece with too many diversions into arguments and clowning around on and off set. Rating: high +1.

With a remarkable number of Shakespeare plays being made into films recently, *Looking for Richard*, directed, co-

produced, and co-written by Al Pacino, could not have been more timely. There have been many films about the activity of making films, but to my knowledge this is the first film about the making of a Shakespeare film. It gives real insight into the richness and complexity of Shakespeare's writing as well as into the filmmaking process. Pacino's film seamlessly bounces between real commentary and scenes of the fictitious production of an all-star version of *Richard III*. Meanwhile, not just the actors in the supposed film (Al Pacino, Harris Yulin, Penelope Allen, Alec Baldwin, Kevin Spacey, Estelle Parsons, Winona Ryder, and Aiden Quinn), but also guests not in the film – like Kenneth Branagh, Kevin Kline, James Earl Jones, Rosemary Harris, Peter Brook, Derek Jacobi, John Gielgud, and Vanessa Redgrave – talk about the content of Shakespeare and the art of acting Shakespeare. To have all these people in one film is remarkable in itself. To get them all talking about a subject like Shakespeare is wonderful. To then waste so much time watching Pacino clown around as much as he does is agonizing. Indeed, Pacino as a director just does not know when to say no to Pacino the actor. After last year, for me now the definitive Richard will be Ian McKellen. To see Pacino overpowering the role of Richard as he overpowers so many of his roles is almost painful.

There are places that the plotting of the film is inconsistent. For example, apparently the actors are making no more than a film version of the play, but at one point Pacino argues with the adaptation's putative director as to whether they should have an expert discussing the play looking into the camera. Pacino's allusions to his other films amount almost to product placements – at one point he refers to a scene of the play as the "meeting of the Dons," he wears a cap that says "Scent of a Woman," and intentionally or not *Richard III* has rather obvious plot parallels to *Scarface*. The positives of *Looking for Richard* would dwarf the negatives if it were not for the latter taking too much precious time.

Pacino's feature-length discussion of Shakespeare also makes some telling points about the people who play Shakespeare. John Gielgud's viewpoint seems to plain and simple while Vanessa Redgrave goes into a rambunctious and pretentious incoherence about the "pentameter of the soul." These discussions by some of the great actors of our time into why the Bard does what he does with language and how his plays are to be acted will undoubtedly be used in the years to come as part of college courses, yet it is entertaining enough for paying audiences even while it instructs. Even the street interviews are instructive and show a range of people from the well-dressed who have never seen a Shakespeare play to one man obviously less fortunate who waxes on about how if in school we read more Shakespeare we would know how to feel and would have less violence in the streets. The film's playful approach to the classic starts at the very opening credits that at first say *King Richard*, then fill in the additional letters to say *Looking for Richard*. It is Pacino's point of view that today's actors are the inheritors of a grand tradition of acting and drama, the centerpiece of which is the contribution of William Shakespeare.

If Pacino's goal were just to make this one play accessible, which in large part it was, I would say he fell short of last year's production which shows more of the play without ever being inaccessible. For the additional insights into the plays of Shakespeare and the acting required in them I would say *Looking for Richard* is more successful. I rate it a high +1.

The Ghost and the Darkness

Capsule: It has been a good long while since we have had a good African adventure picture. This one, claiming to be an accurate account, is plotted by

William Goldman just a little too closely to Jaws. Still, it is a tense and effective film of a type we don't see much of any more. Beautiful African photography recreating the late 19th century is a definite plus and may even be worth the price of admission all by itself. Rating: high +1.

The story is basically true. At the turn of the century the British were anxious to consolidate their holdings in Africa and connect Kenya and Uganda together strategically with a railway that would allow them to move freight, probably ivory, and perhaps even troops easily. The rail was intended to get permanent lines of communication into Uganda and get it there ahead of the German rail line moving up north from the south. This was to be the Uganda Railway and Britain was racing with Germany and to a lesser extent France to complete it. In 1896, 32,000 workers were brought to Africa from India, principally from Gujarat and the Punjab, just to work on the railroad. In Kenya one river that blocked the way and that the British rail would have to cross was the Tsavo. Colonel John Henry Patterson was selected to build the Tsavo Bridge. His experience told him that it would be a difficult task, but he did not know how difficult.

Patterson's biggest problems turned out to be not from workers but from the animal population. There were frequent attacks of at least two lions who would come at night and drag workers out of their tents. It fell to Patterson to kill the lions, and he had a hard time of it. Between understandable problems with his workers and the efforts to hunt the lions, building the bridge turned into something of a fiasco. However, Patterson was able to collect in his diaries information never available before on just how lions attack and even how they eat humans in the wild. (*The sensitive may want to skip to the next paragraph at this point.*) The screams and crunching of bones frequently could be heard from the camps. The victim would be dragged off by the head, often mercifully breaking the neck in the process. The clothing and skin would be licked off by the lion's rough tongue and the blood sucked out. The trunk and legs, being meaty, were eaten next, and then the arms. The head and feet are not thought by lions to be worth the effort to eat.

Unarmed humans are extremely vulnerable to lions, but are usually safe from such attacks. That is because lions do not want to bother with this unfamiliar prey that walks on two legs and behaves in ways unpredictable to lions. The Tsavo attacks could have been just an incident of elderly lions forced to attack easy prey in spite of the unfamiliarity. Or perhaps it may have been that the railroad workers had hunted out the lions' usual prey. While this film makes the lions out to be extremely large and powerful, doing the killing for pure enjoyment, it is unlikely that they would have chosen human prey as anything but an act of desperation and a last resort. The lion attacks in the region lasted for ten months, though by some accounts there were several lions involved. Twenty eight of the workers were killed and it is estimated that over a hundred other people were also killed. One lion even got so bold as to pull human victims off of trains. The lions were eventually killed in ambush and the Tsavo Bridge was finally completed under Patterson's direction. His later book about his experiences, *The Man Eaters of Tsavo*, was a best-seller. (I have not read the book, incidentally, and know only very little of its content from another reference. It is, however, still in print.) Now a somewhat fictionalized version of Patterson's adventures has been made into a movie.

Early in the film Patterson, played by Val Kilmer, is given five months to complete the bridge. His employer is John Beaumont (Tom Wilkinson), characterized here as the world's worst manager. Patterson is experienced with what appear to be similar tasks in India, but has never been to Africa. He has, however, dreamed of a job that would take

him to that mysterious continent, so he takes the position. He and the audience are treated to the breath-taking East African landscape and animals as he travels to the Tsavo. Almost immediately there is a crisis with a man-eating lion. Patterson, however, makes short work of the lion and makes himself a hero in the eyes of the workers. But there are more lion problems to come. Also to come is Charles Remington, a Great White Hunter in the classic tradition, played by Michael Douglas. Remington will be hired to solve the lion problem. The screenplay for the story is by William Gold- man who certainly knows how to write action from films like *Marathon Man*.

This is Val Kilmer's second role this year with intelligent animals. His performance is slightly more restrained than the one in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. It is an odd piece of casting, but one that works reasonably well. Not so successful is Michael Douglas whose American Southern accent seems to come and go. He seems to take to his acting a little more casually than the role really called for. The producers were clearly going for something of a horror film feel for this historical film as director Stephen Hopkins is known for horror films like *Nightmare on Elm Street 5* and *Predator 2* and action films like *Judgment Night* and *Blown Away*. Vilmos Zsigmond does as much for the film as any of the actors with his beautiful images of Kenya. Though the photography is generally straightforward, it is not really clear why he uses repeated images of brambles. Also slightly clichéd is the use of a distorting lens to show the lions' point of view. There are a few other little clichés that the film could have done without, but to mention them would be spoiler. Jerry Goldsmith's score is decent, though one tends to expect more from his scores.

In general this is a good, old-fashioned African adventure with a fair amount of suspense. I give it a high +1.

The English Patient

Capsule: In the last days of World War II in Italy a badly burned patient is the center of two love stories, one that led up to his plane crash, one that is going on while he is cared for. This is a long and a lushly produced romance with a few surprises along the way. The photography and the period feel are a definite advantage. This is a film that is at once thoughtful and sensual, though it may not pack the emotional impact it wants to with all audiences. Rating: +2.

A biplane flies over the North African desert, the pilot alert, the passenger, a beautiful woman draped sensuously over the side of the cockpit. The plane flies too close to a German position be-low and they fire at the invader overhead. The plane bursts into flames. The pilot tries to pull out the woman in front of him but ends up being badly burned himself as the plane crashes. Some passing Arabs rescue the badly-burned man and take him to a hospital. The man cannot tell the medics what his name is or how he came to be flying over the desert. The story advances in two lines, one of the dis-figured patient (Ralph Fiennes) and his relationship with Hana (Juliette Binoche), a Canadian nurse who more or less adopts the dying man. Hana is a little shell-shocked herself as anybody that she grows to care about dies or is killed soon after. Feeling almost cursed, she forms a close attachment to the scarred patient who is apparently dying anyway. Hana transports the patient to an abandoned farm-house near Leghorn/Livorno and begins tending him full-time. Soon they are joined at the farm-house by Caravaggio (William DaFoe) who takes a strange interest in the scarred man and at times seems to know something of the patient's past. They are joined by two more residents, bomb disposal experts.

The flashback story starts in 1938 before the war and

leads up to the plane crash. The man who will be the patient is Count Laszlo Almasy, a hand-some young man in the employ of the British government. Based in Cairo, Almasy is taking part in a project to map the uncharted regions of the North African desert. He makes friends with Geoffrey and Katherine Clifton (Colin Firth and Kristin Scott Thomas). Together they discover in the desert a cave with paintings of great archaeological significance. This throws Laszlo and Katherine together frequently and though they try to ignore each other, there is a sexual tension between them and they will inevitably be drawn together. The film is based on the novel by Michael Ondaatje, who was born in Sri Lanka and educated in England, but lives in Canada. Anthony Minghella wrote and directed this adaptation.

Ralph Fiennes gives a cool and controlled performance as he always seems to do. As in his other films he cuts a dashing figure but underplays rather than overplaying. Even in scenes that should call for deep emotion, his performances are muted and controlled. He lets the viewer read emotions into his actions and but for the exception of a few scenes, that is true of most of the cast of *The English Patient*. Kristin Scott Thomas is radiant in the desert but uninvolved, more an icon and an image than a fully developed character. She seems more willing to bare her body than her emotions. Though she has more screen time than Binoche, I suspect that she never exhibits a personality that goes much beyond bland. Binoche is sort of the ideal nurse, but we see little of what makes her fixate on this one patient. Still we are able to react with her in ways we cannot with the other three leads.

John Seale photographs the story, using pleasant aerial photography and sprawling views of the desert. There is an effective scene of a sandstorm. Minghella takes the image of the Swimming Man, from the cave found in the desert, and uses it as an image repeatedly as if it has for him specific meaning. In fact he opens the film with the image of the Swimming Man. He must be seeing Almasy as being in some way the Swimming Man. It is a mysterious visual image to make as important as it is in the visuals. Its meaning remains a matter of conjecture for the audience. For the most part Minghella places emotional barriers between the characters and the audience, all but Binoche. For the most part these figures remain as untouchable and unemotional as the swimming figures on the cave wall. Then surprisingly toward the end of the film Minghella does give us one very tense, almost melodramatic, scene. It seems almost a throw-away and out of place.

The English Patient is a truly adult love story, generally well-crafted if a little uninvolved. I rate it a +2.



More Book and Tape Reviews

The Dragon, The Earl, and the Troll

by Gordon R. Dickson
Ace/SFBC, ©1994, \$21.95

Reviewed by Clifton Amsbury

Some years ago a reviewer wrote that "Zelazny never repeats." About the same time I told a librarian, "He *can't* write a bad book." The book I was checking out was *Nine Princes in Amber*.

Now I do not mean to imply that that was a bad book. While not as fresh and exciting as previous Zelazny stories, it was far above our usual standards for a good read. However, as the stories went on, there were two or three I had to struggle to get through with.

Similarly, after four or five, I gave up on the "Diadem" books by Jo Clayton. I assumed it was being extended by publisher's request, but later the author assured me that she had from the first planned on nine books.

This is by way of preface to expressing my disappointment with one of my favorite authors. From *Naked to the Stars* to *Tactics of Mistake* to *The Far Call* to *The Dragon and the George*, all were, each in its own way, great books.

Without checking my shelves, *The Dragon, the Earl, and the Troll* is, I believe, the fifth of the series. *The Dragon and the George* was a breath of fresh air. It's enthusiasm and drive counterbalanced Jim's deficiencies in interesting spirit, and all the other characters were interesting, as was the action and the dialog.

But *The Earl and the Troll* is a different matter. Much of the book is dialog. That is supposed to be good. The dialog is frequently interrupted by a paragraph or two of non-dialog. This is also supposed to be good. However, the interruptions here are cogito-psychological explanations for the dialog-to-come and quite frankly, both that and the di-alog are boring. Despite my curiosity to see if baby Robert were the troll-upstairs, about half-way through I

sadly closed the book.

This would have made a great short story or maybe novelette, but I couldn't manage it as a big novel. [✱]

Tusks are Optional

by Mark Bernstein
Thegamut Publishing, ©1996, \$??.
(PO Box 2742, Ann Arbor, MI 48106)

A Tape Review by John W. Filpus

Mark Bernstein's first tape is a collection of some of his stories and one poem. They were mainly recorded at a concert he gave in November of 1996 at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Ypsilanti. This is a very good, clean recording, and hopefully it will give one of southeast Michigan's best storytellers a broader audience.

Track list:

Side 1:

1. "Big Ty's Ride", Original comic poem; Robert Heinlein meets Robert Service.
2. "Punfinished Symfunny". Original insanity, a "hard boiled" detective story laced with musical puns.
3. "The Dwarf". From *Celestial Navigation*; a moving, serious story.
4. "A Heif Bristory of Fi-Sci". Original insanity; 11 minutes of Spoonerisms. My brain hurts just thinking about it. Recorded at OVFF in 1995.

Side 2:

5. "Letters to Amelia". An original, serious epistolary story.
6. "Tusks Are Optional", a.k.a. "The Elephant Story". A hilarious Mark Evanier reminiscence about writing for live TV.

A very good tape, nicely produced, and a great introduction to Mark's story-telling wizardry.

Book Reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper

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Blue Mars

by Kim Stanley Robinson
(Bantam Spectra, ©1996, \$22.95)

Well, Kim Stanley Robinson has finally finished his Mars trilogy, and while it may be heresy to say this, I'm glad it's over. It is possible that if I had read the whole trilogy at one time, I might have enjoyed the third book more, but the fact is that finishing it was more a chore than a pleasure.

Maybe it's just my reaction to massive, multi-volume

series that take years to finish. Orson Scott Card took so long for his latest Alvin book to come out that I had completely lost interest. The current Turtledove World War series is another one that started out good, but two years later is bogging down, as I try to reconstruct enough of the earlier books to have the current one mean something. And even Robinson, whose work I generally love, cannot overcome this problem.

In the first book (*Red Mars*), Robinson sets the stage, introduces the characters, and gives us a clear picture of what is happening. Though obviously there was room for a sequel, the book did stand on its own. In *Green Mars* he continues the story, with even more emphasis on the technical aspects. But because it was a continuation, *Green Mars* did

not stand on its own, having no real beginning and no real end in itself. (In spite of this, it won a Hugo. I was happy to see Robinson win a Hugo – I just wish it had been for one of his other works.)

Now in *Blue Mars* we have an end. (There is, of course, always room for a sequel set on “blue Mars,” but it is not necessary and I doubt that Robinson will write one.) However, we still have no beginning per se. We also have tons more technical areological and terraforming discussions and explications, and some characterization, mostly to wrap up the stories of the people we have been following throughout. (With all this technical detail, it's almost inevitable there will be slip-ups. For example, “Hindu” is not a language [page 406].)

I wanted to like this book. But I have to say it was too much of a good thing, too stretched out. I'm not even sure why I am saying this. People who read the first two will probably read this one for a sense of closure in any case, and people who didn't probably wouldn't read this anyway. I suppose if you want to read the entire trilogy through, you will appreciate this more, but that's not likely to encompass a large number of readers.



Resurrected Holmes

Edited by Marvin Kaye
(St. Martin's Press, ©1996, \$24.95)

In the introduction to this anthology, it is explained that notes from several unwritten Sherlock Holmes adventures were discovered and that consequently various famous authors were commissioned to write up the stories from these notes. Given that the authors were supposedly asked to imitate Watson's (Doyle's) style as closely as possible, one wonders why such a variety of famous authors were needed and, in any case, each author's style breaks through. That shouldn't surprise the reader – that's obviously the point.

The first story is “The adventure of the Amateur Mendicant Society” by John Gregory Betancourt (supposedly H. G. Wells), and does have a very similar style to Doyle's. The story itself has promise, although the resolution leaves

one moderately unsatisfied as being a bit contrived in regards to Holmes's position.

But “Victor Lynch the Forger” by Terry McGarry (Theodore Dreiser) is more what one expects: a story with Holmes written in a style different than Doyle's. And here is where the first flick-er of doubt begins. While it is possible to do this style shift successfully, it is usually done in humorous pieces (Sherlock Holmes as told by Dr. Seuss – that sort of thing). Done as a serious work, it has interest from a literary standpoint perhaps, but the story no longer has much of the appeal the originals did, which is their style. Recounting the plot of a Holmes story in bland prose would not have captivated generations of readers. Without Doyle's style, something is missing.

“The case of the Notorious Canary Trainer” by Henry Slesar ((W. Somerset Maugham), “The Repulsive Story of the Red Leech” by Morgan Llewelyn (Ernest Hemingway), and “Holmes and the Loss of the British Barque Sophy Anderson” by Peter Cannon (CS Forester) seem more matched with their purported authors because of subject matter than style, at least that I can detect, which I suppose is the stated plan.

With “Sherlock Holmes, Dragon-Slayer” (The Singular Case of the Grice Pattersons in the Island of Uffa) by Darrell Schweitzer (Lord Dunsany) we return to stories whose style is definitely that of their purported authors. These include “The Adventure of the Club Foot” (and his abominable wife) by Roberta Rogow (P.G. Wodehouse), “The Giant Rat of Sumatra” by Paula Volsky (H.P. Lovecraft), and Mrs. Vamberry Takes a Trip (Vam-berry the Wine Merchant)” by Mike Resnick (J. Thorne Smith). The Volsky is one of the better stories, with the style working with the Holmesian atmosphere rather than against it. The Resnick, on the other hand, may be Smith's style, but this only shows that Smith should not have written Sherlock Holmes stories. (By the by, the biographical paragraph about Resnick in the back seems to go out of its way to list such obscure books that fans won't even recognize that this is the same man who has twelve Hugo nominations.)

“The Adventure of the Boulevard Assassin” by Richard A. Lupoff (Jack Kerouac) is certainly in the style of Kerouac. However, it is not a style I like and because of this, this was my least favorite story in the book. “The Madness of Colonel War-burton” by Carole Bugg (Dashiell Hammett) is almost definitely in the style of its purported author, even without the ending, but only serves to show that Holmes is not a hard-boiled detective – nor is Watson.

“The Manor House Case” by Edward D. Hoch (Ellery Queen) is much more in the Ellery Queen style than Sherlock Holmes, with the usual “obvious” clue. (Doyle didn't always “play fair” with the reader, often having Holmes make his deductions based on information not given to the reader until the very end when Holmes explained everything.)

“The Adventure of the Cripple Parade (The Singular Affair of the Aluminium Crutch)” by William L. DeAndrea (Mickey Spillane) and “Too Many Stains (The Adventure of the Second Stain)” by Marvin Kaye (Rex Stout) are two more hard-boiled stories, again reinforcing my earlier statement about how Holmes and this style do not mix.

Although there are a few good stories here, on the whole I cannot recommend this anthology.

War of the Worlds:

Global Dispatches

edited by Kevin J. Anderson
(Bantam Spectra, ©1996, \$22.95)

This certainly seems to be the year for pastiches. First

there was the anthology *Resurrected Holmes* (edited by Marvin Kaye), which is a series of Sherlock Holmes adventures purporting to be written by various famous authors. And now there is *War of the Worlds: Global Dispatches*, a series of accounts of the Martian invasion first described by H. G. Wells, mostly purporting to be written by various famous authors and other personages. (A few are satisfied merely to use the famous people as their main characters.) Interestingly, while there is a story in *Resurrected Holmes* credited to H. G. Wells, there is no story here credited to Conan Doyle. (Then again, there have been earlier Holmes "War of the Worlds" stories, notably Manly Wade Wellman's *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds*.) The only overlapping "authors" between the two volumes are Edgar Rice Burroughs and H. P. Lovecraft, which may seem odd, considering that Holmes and the invasion were contemporaneous, but while the invasion stories are written by or about the participants, the Holmes stories are described as having merely been composed by their authors on the basis of notes to them, so the authors there tend to be from a later period.

The first story in an anthology is normally the strongest, but here I suspect that it is more that Mike Resnick is the biggest draw. "The Roosevelt Dispatches" by Resnick, while amusing enough, is hardly a strong story, centering mostly around a rather obvious (if not predictable) ending. (It also seems to assume the Martians had landed only in Cuba. I don't object to the stories contradicting each other, but they shouldn't blatantly contradict Wells.)

Keven J. Anderson's "Canals in the Sand" has Percival Lowell trying to signal the Martians in response to what he believed were canals on the Martian surface. It is more a "pre-invasion" story, and ends just when things start to get interesting, though readers familiar with the original story should have no difficulty filling in the rest.

The main character in Walter Jon Williams's "Foreign Devils" is the Dowager Empress of Chi-na and Williams manages to give us a glimpse into a very different world than the other, more West-ern-centered stories. Because of this, it is one of the best stories in the anthology, with Williams adding interesting and even somewhat alien characters and outlooks to the familiar invasion story. That this happened to be a very interesting period of Chinese history helped, of course, but Williams seems to have been the only one to think of it.

Daniel Marcus's "Blue Period" centers around Picasso but seemed rather flat. Someone who knew Picasso's life and work better than I might have gotten more out of it. This is the major drawback of this book – for many of the stories, a knowledge of the main character's life and work is necessary. The result is that the market of people who will enjoy or appreciate all or even most of the stories is smaller than one might think, and considerably smaller, I fear, than the number of people who will be attracted by the theme of the anthology.

"The Martian Invasion Journals of Henry James" by Robert Silverberg is perhaps the best-written piece in the book – not surprising when you consider Silverberg's talent. It is also the least original, however, in that Silverberg follows mainly to the story as told in the original, but with Wells and James as participants. (This story should possibly have been placed first to give the readers a good solid background for the other stories.)

Janet Berliner's "True Tale of the Final Battle of Umslopogaas the Zulu" has both Winston Churchill and an H. Rider Haggard character in a way that is not entirely convincing or satisfying. Perhaps it's that having three foci (with Wells's Martians being the third) makes the story just too elaborate.

Howard Waldrop's "Night of the Cooters" was not, apparently, the inspiration for this book, though this 1987 tale of the Texas Rangers versus the Martians certainly predates everything else here and is in fact the only story not written

specifically for this volume. (Several other stories have appeared in magazine form before the book came out, but were nonetheless written for the book.) In any case, Waldrop should get a few extra points for originality, even though that originality is not obvious here. (There have of course been other stories inspired by the Wells novel, but Waldrop is probably the best known.)

Doug Beeson's "Determinism and the Martian War, with Relativistic Corrections" has Albert Einstein thinking about inertial frames of reference while the Martians invade, and "Soldier of the Queen" by Barbara Hambly as Rudyard Kipling meeting the Martians in India.

George Alec Effinger's "Mars: The Home Front" takes a completely different approach than the other stories. Rather than being the story of the Martian invasion of Earth as told by yet another Earthly eye-witness, it is the story of what was happening back on Mars, as told by John Carter. Because Effinger is not describing the same events that everyone else is, this story is a welcome change from the similarity of all the others, and proves that even when given an apparently limiting set of constraints, a good writer can still break out and write something new and fresh.

"A Letter from St. Louis" by Allen Steele, featuring Joseph Pulitzer, is a return to the idea of a fairly standard retelling of the story.

Mark W. Tiedemann's "Resurrection" is primarily a letter purported to be written by Leo Tolstoy. There is more of alternate history feel to this than to most of the others (with the possible exception of the Williams), since the framing story is set in an alternate world from the one we live in.

"Paris Conquers All" by Gregory Benford and David Brin (Jules Verne) is an attempt to tie a Vernian technological solution into the story that did not work for me. "To Mars and Providence" by Don Webb is a reasonably decent attempt to combine the "Elder Gods" of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos with the Martian invasion. But while Daniel Keyes Moran and Jodi Moran try to evoke Mark Twain in "Roughing It During the Martian Invasion," they don't quite succeed; you get a story with a riverboat and some snappy asides, but no real Twain spirit. (Maybe I'm just too familiar with Twain, having read just about everything of his in print, including *Joan of Arc* and *Christian Science*.)

"To See the World End" by M. Shayne Bell is purportedly by Joseph Conrad and is another story that, like Tiedemann's "Resurrection", has a much stronger alternate history feel than the rest of the stories. Most of the stories seem like stories set in the fictional world of Wells, while these two seem as though they are set in our world in the midst of a Martian invasion.

"After a Lean Winter" by David Wolverton is set in the far north and told from the point of view of Jack London. It seems to be a good copy of his style, but it's not a style I'm particularly taken with.

I usually like Connie Willis' work, but her pseudo-academic work, "The Soul Selects He Own Society: Invasion and Repulsion: A Chronological Reinterpretation of Two of Emily Dickinson's Poems: A Wellsian Perspective" wears out its welcome rather quickly. With forty numbered and twelve unnumbered footnotes in its eight pages, it may be more appealing to academics. I found my eyes glazing over after about three pages. Then again, that may be the intent.

An afterward by Benford and Brin again in the voice of Verne concludes with a plea that we go to Mars.

The Higher Space

by Jamil Nasir

(Bantam Spectra, ©1996, \$5.99)

This book is an odd combination of mysticism and mathematics, with some horror touches thrown in. The story

centers around a teenage girl who is trying to escape from her abusive foster father, and avoid her equally threatening birth mother, by stud-ying Thaumatomathematics. Parts of this book seem to be descendants of Dennis Wheatley and Fritz Leiber, with covens and witchcraft. But just when you think you know what's happening, Nasir pulls the rug out from under you with a complete change of direction.

The very fact that this book doesn't fit into a definite category means that it will have difficulty finding its audience. In fact, I'm not sure I can even describe who that audience might be, and certainly not without revealing more of the plot than I want to. I did find that the child-abuse/custody case part proceeded a bit too conveniently for the plot to be completely convincing, which may seem an odd complaint about a book that has so many hard-to-believe concepts. On the other hand, one requirement that I have for a speculative fiction book is that unless something is intentionally and clearly a variation from our world, it should be true to reality as we know it. On the other hand, maybe this is how these cases go – I have no first-hand experience (thank goodness).

In any case, this is certainly an interesting book. While all the individual elements have been used before, this is an original and unique blending of them. It may not be to everyone's taste – unusual blends are often not – but if the thought intrigues you, give this a try.

The Psalms of Herod

by Esther M. Friesner

(White Wolf Borealis, ©1995, \$5.99)

If Esther Friesner can write something like this, why is she wasting her time on *Chicks in Chainmail*?

Well, okay, I'm sure that *Chicks in Chainmail* pays the rent, while a serious novel like *The Psalms of Herod* pays for expresso. It's the way of the world. I could be wrong. I hope I am. But judging by the number of articles mentioning *Chicks in Chainmail* on the Net (forty-one) compared to the number mentioning *The Psalms of Herod* (eleven, six of which are announcements from bookstores), I suspect not.

But back to the book.

I will try to avoid giving away too much of the plot, which will probably make this a bit vague. The time is the future, and there has been some sort of holocaust. The world is much more sparsely populated, and there has been a return to a more pioneer society – and a more religious one. There are identifiable elements from present religions, but not surprisingly there have also been some changes because of the changed situation. Friesner doesn't have an "expository lump" to tell the reader what the society is like, but relies on the reader picking up on the details as they are given as part of the story. The society is not a likable one – not the cozy families of the post-holocaust novels of the 1950s, or even the survivalist discipline of more recent works – but it is consistent. There are echoes of Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Liebowitz* here, as well as George Stewart's *Earth Abides*, but only echoes – Friesner has looked at the paths others have taken in this genre, and struck out on her own.

There are a couple of problems. The main problem is that this turns out to be yet another first book of a bleeding series. And there is no warning of this on the cover or anywhere in the book – except on the last page, where they advertise the next book, *Sword of Mary*, due out in October of 1996.

The other problem is that I am not entirely convinced about the likelihood or even possibility of the basic assumption of the book. With a lesser author this might be more of an objection, but Friesner handles the plot and characters so well that I am willing to suspend my disbelief in this regard.

I am trying to avoid revealing too much, and the result

is probably somewhat incoherent. Come back and re-read this after you've read the book and it will be much clearer.

[Note: This is a trade paperback, but it is the size that one thinks of as "mass market". "Trade" and "mass market" have meanings based on distribution methods, not size. In other words, don't go looking for an oversize book.]

Tennis Shoes Among the Nephites

by Chris Heimerdinger

(Covenant Books, ©1989, \$8.95)

This is a book whose target audience is teenage Mormon boys. I, on the other hand, am a middle-aged Jewish woman. So why am I reviewing this?

Well, perhaps the main reason is to remind people that there is more to science fiction than what they find in their local mall store, or even in their local superstore. Here is a book that, in its eleventh printing, has spawned a whole series, and that I can almost guarantee practically no one reading this has heard of.

Although teenager Jim finds his classmate Garth a bit of a nerd, he is fascinated by Garth's discoveries in a nearby cave. So he and Garth and his younger sister Jennifer go exploring, fall into a whirlpool, and wake up in the Meso-America of the Nephites and the Lamanites. (The Nephites and Lamanites are tribes from two thousand years ago described in the *Book of Mormon*.) So what you have is a group of teenagers who find themselves in another time and have to use their knowledge of history to get by.

Of course, the history is Mormon history, so this is more like finding oneself back in Joseph's Egypt than at Plymouth Rock. And while it must be meaningful and educational to someone who knows at least the basic story, it's a bit baffling to someone who doesn't. (I suppose that one might claim that the novel should teach it so someone who doesn't know it already, but it didn't have that effect on me, partly because with Jim and Garth back there, things are at least slightly changed from the "real" history.)

Am I recommending this? Not really. Unless you live in an area with a large Mormon population, your local bookstore won't have this. While I assume that you can order it directly from Covenant (no, I don't have the address or phone number, but I'm sure directory assistance can help you), it's not clear that it's worthwhile for most people. On the other hand, if you want to look at some of the "edges" of the fantasy field, you might find this interesting.

Celestial Matters

by Richard Garfinkle

(Tor, ©1996, \$23.95)

Most alternate histories are based on some historical event happening differently. For example, it might ask, "What if the south had won at Gettysburg?" A few go back even further, with some change in prehistory, such as "What if dinosaurs survived and developed intelligence?" But Garfinkle goes even further in *Celestial Matters* and changes the basic premises of the universe, by asking, "What if Aristotelian science and Ptolemaic cosmology were an accurate description of the universe?" So, what we have is a universe where the stars and the planets really are fixed in crystal spheres; everything really is made up of earth, air, fire and water; and the gods and goddesses really do exist and interact with mortals. Garfinkle also assumes that Alexander did not die young and went on to conquer Asia until he ran up against China, and the story takes place nine

hundred years later, with Greece and China still fighting with each other. (Well, if Greek medicine actually worked, then Alexander probably would have survived.)

I had two main problems with all this. One is that my knowledge of the details of Aristotelian science and Ptolemaic cosmology is fairly skimpy, since they aren't really taught in great depth these days. So whether the universe Garfinkle constructs is accurate or consistent is not clear to me, nor did I always understand the explanations given. My other problem is that Garfinkle has constructed a universe in which both Aristotelian/Ptolemaic and Chinese science and cosmology are "true," but they also appear (to me, anyway) to be somewhat contradictory. Harry Turtledove did something similar in *The Case of the Toxic Spell Dump*, which assumed that *all* religions were true. Even though that premise is just as contradictory, I found it presented more believably than Garfinkle presents his competing cosmologies. (For that matter, one might ask how other cosmologies such as Mayan or Maorian fit into all this.)

In spite of these quibbles I enjoyed this book. But I am a fan of alternate histories, and the original approach that Garfinkle takes sets it apart from the run-of-the-mill alternate histories that use fairly traditional variations. And in science fiction in general and alternate histories in particular, originality is getting harder and harder to find. (I just hope that Garfinkle's next book is not a sequel to this one, since the ending does seem to imply that there could be sequels.) Also, since I did minor in classics in college (and actually took three years of ancient Greek, of which I remember distressingly little), the classical setting appeals to me on its own. I guess the best question to ask is whether you are interested in the *history* of science. If so, this book will probably appeal to you.

[Publishing note: I see that Tor is releasing this first novel as a hardback rather than as a mass-market paperback or trade paperback. While this will keep it on the shelves longer and give it more of a chance to find its audience than if it were mass-market, I wonder if the hardback price will limit its audience. It is my personal – and admittedly relatively uninformed – opinion that trade paperbacks are the format of the future for quality fiction. Mass-market books have major drawbacks as far as bookstore shelf life goes, but hardbacks cost too much for many readers to spend. This of course has very little to do with whether this particular book is good or not. Let's just say that while I recommend the book, I'm not entirely comfortable with saying you should spend \$24 on it.

One for the Morning Glory

by John Barnes
(Tor, ©1996, \$22.95)

Drawing a pismire from his swash, he stepped over the corpse, leaned far out the window, and peered upward. A lone pigeon was still circling its way skyward, as they will when they look for altitude and have a long way to go. It was barely more than a speck, and no one knew the limitations of a pismire better than Slitgizzard, but nonetheless he tested the lovelock, cocked the chutney, rested one wrist upon the other, held his breath, and squeezed the trigger very gently. The pismire spat fire. ... The pigeon hit the parataxis and bounced onto the tiled roof of the clerihew, where it lay still.

Well, I suppose one could say this takes place on an alternate world. Firstly, magic works, and secondly, the English language seems to have evolved differently. Barnes does violence to the language, yes, but measured, precise violence. If a pismire is a weapon here, it's a weapon every-

where it's mentioned. That's part of what makes this book such a pleasure to read, but there is one drawback. This is *not* the book to give an adolescent. It's not the violence, or the sex, but the vocabulary: it could have a permanent effect of her vocabulary, and not a good one.

The plot is a somewhat standard fantasy one of Prince Amatus and his four companions Goliath, Mortis, Psyche and the Twisted Man. They have to perform the usual sorts of tasks – fighting goblins, defeating the evil neighboring king, and so on – but have the additional problem that, as a result of a childhood accident, Prince Amatus is half invisible. Barnes knows the plot is standard. In fact, even his characters know it, and comment on it.

In spite of all this tongue-in-cheekiness, however, this is not a completely light-hearted fantasy. Good people have bad things happen to them, and good people die. Though Barnes does seem to reign back on the malapropisms during the more serious scenes, this still means the reader may at times be torn between the humorous tone and the serious content.

I am not a regular reader of fantasy, or at least not a reader of what I think of as "regular" fantasy. So when I say that *One for the Morning Glory* is unusual, I could be wrong. But I found it a well-crafted variation on the usual fantasy mores. Whether or not you enjoy it will depend on what you think of the use of language, though, than what you think of the story itself. (Two other books that did different things with language are *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban and *Feersum Endjinn* by Iain Banks. I liked the former, but not the latter.)

Walking the Labyrinth

by Lisa Goldstein
(Tor, ©1996, \$21.95)

Lisa Goldstein is an author who does not follow the more heavily traveled roads of fantasy, but tends to set off in her own direction, sometimes along a lesser-known path, sometimes blazing her own trail. So the title of this work is perhaps as descriptive of her work as a whole as of this work in particular.

Molly Travers is a modern woman with modern concerns until she discovers that her family had a vaudeville act in the 1930s, doing magic. And not just illusion, it seems, but real magic. Molly travels to England to find out more, where she discovers hidden books, secret relationships, and, in the basement of an English country house, a labyrinth that is more than it first appears.

My main complaint with the book is not even anything Goldstein had control over: the typeface. It's a thinner line than the "standard" typeface, hence lighter appearing and, for me at least, harder to read. It did have a light fantasy feel, probably the idea, but

Now, given that is my main objection, you can guess I liked the book.

White House Horrors

Edited by Martin H. Greenberg
(DAW, ©1996, \$5.99)

Four years ago, during the 1992 Presidential campaign, I saw Mike Resnick's *Alternate Presidents* in a window display along with the books by and about the various candidates. So I fully expected to see this in a similar display. Certainly the picture of the "President" on the cover, with a grinning half-face, half-skull, fits in with the image people are starting to have of politicians.

Unlike *Alternate Presidents* (of which this seems to be,

if not the child, then perhaps the niece), many of the Presidents here are future Presidents rather than (real or imaginary) past ones. Perhaps it's that my tastes don't normally run to horror that makes me say that this collection is not as good overall. There, however, some very good stories here. "Healing the Body Politic" by Brian Hodge is a strong lead-off, Gary A. Braunbeck's "And somewhere I Shall Wake" is a memorable idea well-executed, and "The Cabinet of William Henry Harrison" by Barbara Collins and Max Allan Collins also makes an impression. "The Ghost and Mr. Truman" by Bill Crider, while perhaps not as historically accurate (I don't think the Truman re-novations to the White House gutted it quite that much) does have some strong images.

But many of the stories are sabotaged by anachronisms. For example, were doughnuts really purchased in bags 150 years ago, rather than just being wrapped with paper and string? Minor, perhaps, but I am of the opinion that a story set in 1860 should feel like 1860, unless there is some conscious stylistic reason to do otherwise. Some stories were a bit too predictable from the very beginning. And some stories which I think were supposed to be humorous just didn't tickle my funny bone. (One didn't even seem to have anything to do with the White House.)

Do I recommend this book? Well, if you like horror stories in general you may like this more than I did. And there were four good stories that even I liked. Still, when one considers some of the Presidential candidates we've had in my lifetime, one can't help but think that the authors could have come up with more convincing horror stories than these.

[Not surprisingly, assassinated Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy show up either as characters or references fairly often. Even Garfield gets a story. But poor William McKinley seems to be completely ignored. People interested in pursuing the assassination theme should seek out Stephen Sondheim's musical, *Assassins*.]

Alternate Worldcons

Again, Alternate Worldcons

Edited by Mike Resnick
(WC Books, ©1996, \$15.00)

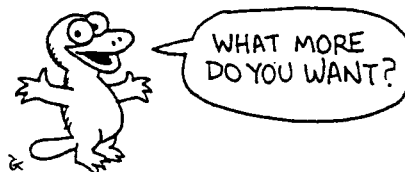
This omnibus book contains both *Alternate Worldcons* (with seventeen stories) and *Again, Alternate Worldcons* (with eleven stories). *Alternate Worldcons* was conceived at ConFrancisco in 1993 and appeared at ConAdian in 1994; *Again, Alternate Worldcons* is new this year. (A third volume is a possibility. Quel surprise.)

As a fan of alternate histories and an attendee of Worldcons (so far, twenty-one of them), this would seem to be right up my alley. But these are not, on the whole, serious alternate histories. They are very "fannish," often dealing with people or events not known to most readers. Strangely enough, Mike Resnick is a character in many of these. There are a few that stand out, though. "ApocalypseCon" by Kristine Kathryn Rusch is a poem rather than a story and could hold its own in a "regular" anthol-ogy. While it's true that its subject matter is a bit specialized, I hope it does make a more visible appearance somewhere. The other notable serious work is "Letters in the Wall" by Barry N. Malzberg and Batya Swift Yasgur. (Malzberg appears frequently in alternate history anthologies, and usually blows away the rest of the stories. For some reason I don't see him in magazines as much, but for the life of me can't figure out why.) The third story of note is "The Man Who Corflued Mohammed" by Mike Glyer, a well-done fannish homage to Alfred Bester's "The Man Who Murdered Mohammed."

But most of the stories require some knowledge of fan-

nish personalities, Worldcon business meeting minutiae, and so on. Of course, the book will probably be found only at conventions or in very specialized stores, so it is targeted at its audience. If you have all the prerequisites, you may find this volume of interest. If so, and you can't find it locally, you can order it from Old Earth Books, PO Box 19951, Baltimore MD 21211-0951, or Blue Moon Books, Ltd., 360 West First Avenue, Eugene OR 97401, <http://www.teleport.com/~hypatia>, hypatia@teleport.com, or BlueMoonBk@aol.com.

THE STREETS ARE CLEAN.
THE SKIES ARE BLUE.
THE FANS ARE FRIENDLY.
YOU WON'T GET MUGGED.
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Blameless in Abaddon

by James Morrow

(Harcourt Brace & Company, ©1996, \$24)

Blameless in Abaddon is the sequel to *Towing Jehovah*. In that book, the corpse of God has been found, and a disgraced tanker captain is hired to haul it to the Arctic.

In *Blameless in Abaddon*, the corpse has somehow ended up as the main attraction in a religious theme park cum miraculous shrine. Justice of the Peace Martin Candle hears there is neural activity in God's brain and decides to bring this most infamous criminal to justice. This is part of the age-old attempt to find an answer to the mystery of suffering, and in the book, it is clear that Morrow has done his homework in researching the theologians who have attempted to answer this question. (At least from a Jewish or Christian perspective – one might argue that finding "Jehovah" means one needn't look at Buddhist or Hindu explanations, but a few Islamic sources might have been nice. On the other hand, it's unlikely the characters involved would have access to or inclination to look for these.) The person defending Jehovah is based on C.S. Lewis, and the story also involves scrabble-playing dinosaurs. (As Morrow quotes from Dostoyevsky, "If everything on Earth were rational, nothing would happen.") We also find out that God is a Platonist.

Morrow has said that he enjoys writing this sort of work in the genre, because "science fiction makes very literal what in other fiction is metaphorical." He also said that it might be nice if people took these things more seriously here (not "it's just a novel"), but on the other hand, he appreciated being able to write a novel such as this without having to go into hiding as Salman Rushdie did.

I would certainly recommend that you read *Towing Jehovah* before reading this, but then I would recommend that you read *Towing Jehovah* in any case. After all, it was nominated for a Hugo, which is a pretty amazing achievement for

a story more cerebral than action-packed. Morrow writes books that are thought-provoking and entertaining, and this is certainly both of those.

(Morrow is now working on a third book, titled *The Eternal Footman*. However, this book does not end on a cliff-hanger.)

Lest Darkness Fall

by L. Sprague deCamp

To Bring the Light

by David Drake

(Baen, ©1996, \$5.99)

Lest Darkness Fall is a classic, and justifiably so. The cover describes it as "the novel that defined a genre," and while there were earlier alternate histories, this was the first to make a major impression on the science fiction field. (Harry Turtledove in his introduction talks about how it changed his life, giving a great example of how alternate histories work: what if he hadn't read it?) It is a book that should be in print and I'm glad to see Baen brought it back. It is interesting that it has been re-issued just as deCamp was given a "Special Achievement" Sidewise Award for Alternate History, and it was cited along with his works *The Wheels of If* and "A Gun for Aristotle" as major seminal works in the genre.

For those who don't know, the plot is very much a "Connecticut Yankee" sort of plot: Martin Padway, walking along in 1939 Rome, is struck by lightning and wakes up in sixth century Rome. He determines to use his superior knowledge to prevent the fall of Rome, or rather the dark ages following it. While Twain intended *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to be a rather bitter description of how bad life – and people – were in the so-called "golden days" of Camelot, deCamp is more an engineer and hence concentrates more on just what a twentieth century man could do with his knowledge.

David Drake's novella "To Bring the Light" is very much in the same vein. (In that regard, the cover blurb that describes it as "a brand-new story that stands that genre on its head" is completely inaccurate.) In it, Flavia Herosilla, an educated woman in the Rome of 248AD is hurled back to 751BC. Not surprisingly, she meets Romulus and Remus, and finds that the area that would be Rome is smelly, dirty, and altogether uncivilized. So she takes matters into her own hands and attempts to improve the situation.

But the novella suffers by comparison to the de Camp. In addition, there are several problems that should have been caught by the editors. I have no problem with the omniscient narrator. However, that is not the voice in which this novel was written, and even if it were, the phrase "the sun was still a finger's breadth below the eastern horizon," would still strike me as awkward. This, combined with punctuation errors, grammatical mistakes, and unfortunate word choices make me again bemoan the current state of editing.

If you haven't read *Lest Darkness Fall*, this is a must-buy. But if you already have that book, then the additional novella is not sufficient reason to buy this edition.

Child of the Eagle

by Esther Friesner

(Baen, ©1996, \$5.99)

Alternate histories are about "what if's," but even so I was skeptical of this one. After all, the premise is that Venus (the goddess, not the planet) comes down and con-

vinces Brutus to save Caesar from the assassination attempt. This could be a pretty silly idea, but Friesner manages to avoid the pitfalls. Venus is not just a silly love goddess, but the more accurate serious deity of Greek mythology. And her intervention is kept to a minimum.

Friesner also manages to come up with a plausible alternate history – perhaps someone more familiar with the period could pick holes in it, but I found it believable. I also found the motivations interesting, though the ending was a bit telegraphed. (Does saying that constitute a spoiler?) But Friesner is never one for the simplistic and manages to cast an unexpectedly mythic interpretation and motivation to it all.

Don't dismiss this one as just another silly-premised alternate history. Unusual the premise may be, but Friesner develops it with seriousness and diligence, and more than a little philosophy. I won't argue that Shakespeare's treatment of Julius Caesar and Brutus isn't greater, but I would recommend this book to those interested in historical fantasy.

Oh, and while it's true that Charlton Heston was in two film versions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, he never played Brutus (or any of the other conspirators), which appears to be how Gary Ruddell depicted him on the cover.

Time Station London

by David Evans

(Ace, ©1996, \$5.99)

This is basically a time travel story with alternate history aspects, rather than an alternate history novel, and is very much patterned on Poul Anderson's "Time Patrol" series. (Here it's the "Temporal Corps.") The story itself has some promise (renegade time travelers are trying to assassinate Churchill and affect the outcome of World War II). But Evans doesn't have the skill that Anderson does (given that Anderson holds the record for most fiction Hugos – seven – this is not surprising), and the story never seems to take off. And perhaps more damaging is that Evans overuses the time travel idea, which makes the story very non-chronological and also means that the reader soon realizes that it is too easy to get around problems using time travel. If nothing is permanent, why care about anyone or anything? And what tension is there in such a story?

There are other problems. One is that Evans seems to be stuck on the letter "S"; his three main female characters are Samantha, Sandy and Sally. (He has a male character named Steven as well.) And he is sloppy with his history. For example, a character gets his Elizabethan English module replaced with one for the 1940s and also gets a smallpox vaccination for the latter period. Wouldn't he have gotten one for the earlier period already? And a character from the early 1950s trained in the 2700s refers to people in the 1940s as "you James Bond types."

Obviously, there will be other stories in this milieu. (For one thing, the back cover says, "Don't miss this thrilling debut of the all-new Time Station series!") But I found it rather flat and uninteresting, and recommend you seek out Anderson's stories instead.

Treks Not Taken

by Steven Boyett

(Sneaker Press/Midnight Graffiti, ©1996, \$12.95)

"Call me irresponsible. Some years ago – the stardate is unimportant now – the irresistible motivation of several outstanding warrants and the certainty of my impecunious nature, caused me to enlist about a Federation starship, for

just as some men hold the briny Sea in their hearts, I have empty Space in my head."

That's just one sample from this book of twenty selections, showing how some famous authors might have written *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, had Hollywood waved the money in front of them.

My only real complaint with this is that Boyett concentrated more on modern authors than on the authors of the so-called Western Canon. I would have liked to see Shakespeare's "Merry Ensigns of Windsor," or Jane Austen's "Mansfield Trek" or Charles Dickens's "Data Copperfield" or even George Eliot's "Romulan." (And I would have thought that "The Brothers Data" by Dostoyevksy was an obvious entry.) But we do have Melville, Joyce, Hemingway, and Conrad. We also have Rice, Clancy, Vonnegut and Dr. Seuss.

I read only the stories for those authors with whom I had some familiarity (which was about three-quarters of them). And for these Boyett captured the style remarkably well, considering the wide range they cover. For anyone who enjoys reading a wide variety of authors and styles, I highly recommend this book. If you can't find it in your local bookstore, it can be ordered from Mark Ziesing (PO Box 76, Shingletown CA 96088, <http://www.ziesing.com>).

And as Boyett himself, "I don't think [these] make any less sense than last year's *Star Trek* season."



Otherwere

Edited by Laura Anne Gilman
and Keith R.A. DeCandido
(Ace, ©1996, \$5.99)

What is clever done once becomes tedious with repetition.

In other words, somewhere between the story about the were-salmon and the were-Republican, my eyes glazed over.

There are fifteen stories in this anthology and a few are actually reasonably good. Had I read them in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* or *Asimov's*, I would have thought them worthy entries there. But here they are diluted by the lesser stories to the point where they all seem mediocre. And it's not even that I tried to read them all in one sitting - I read them over a period of a month, and that's *still* too close together.

"Stories of transformation" go back a long way (and at least one story here pays homage to that). These early stories, however, emphasized the mythic elements, and these were also carried forward into such relatively modern stories as Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde. But most of the stories here don't have that aspect. Either the transformation is done for laughs, or it is a transformation without meaning - a person

changes into an X because that's what the plot calls for, not because X has some meaning.

I am becoming increasingly disenchanted with theme anthologies. In addition to the repetitiveness, the requirement of filling a book with stories on a single topic usually means that the quality level suffers. If anthologists feel they must have a theme to their anthologies, how about something less restrictive, like stories whose fifth word is "grass" or authors born in June?

Quantum Moon

by Denise Vitola
(Ace, ©1996, \$5.99)

At first, this sounds like a really cobbled-together idea - a werewolf detective in a future of a world-wide dictatorship (the United World Government). But strangely enough it works.

Ty Merrick is a detective in a rather run-down future, or at least run-down for the masses of the people. The rich are, of course, still rich. The title might make you think this book uses some high-tech physics concept, but it's really just a reference to a new drug called quantum. Okay, so that makes this just another drug-running story, and telling any more of the story is perhaps unnecessary, but the twist of having the detective be a werewolf, and a female werewolf at that, gives it enough of a twist to make it worth reading. It's not great, but as a first novel it shows promise.

At the City Limits of Fate

by Michael Bishop
(Edgewood Press, ©1996, \$14.00)

Michael Bishop holds the somewhat ambiguous honor of having the most Hugo nominations without a win of any author (ten). But although three of his nominated short fiction pieces are in the time-span covered by this book, none of them are included here. On the other hand, the book has a central theme of religion that, while not completely absent from any of Bishop's work (no pun intended), is better represented by the lesser-known works featured here.

The book starts out aptly enough with "Begin-nings," with two thieves hanging on either side of Yeshua on Golgotha. It ends with the modern-day trial of Judas Iscariot in "I, Iscariot" (a concept echoed strangely in James Morrow's *Blameless in Abaddon*, where it is God on trial instead).

In between, Bishop looks at a snake-handling cult in "Among the Handlers," introduces Saint Augustine to a traveler who tells about the science and technology to come in "For Thus Do I Re-member Carthage," and combines God and the mass media in "God's Hour."

In addition to the theme of religion, Bishop also has a Japanese undercurrent to his work, from a discussion of Japanese Zeros in "000-00-0000" to Yukio Mishima in "At the City Limits of Fate" to "Reading the Silks." Yet although certain themes recur, each story is an individual. Unlike many authors, Bishop seems to produce something fresh each time. Well, okay, two of his Hugo-nominated works are sequels to other works - "The White Otters of Childhood" and *Brittle Innings* - but they are sequels to classics in the field, and Bishop de-finitely give each of them a fresh viewpoint. Bishop can write derivative works that are not derivative, while most authors seem to write "new" works that *are* derivative.

Bishop uses a variety of styles here, a variety of voices, and a variety of techniques, and they all work. Again I am reminded of the two very different styles he maintained throughout *Brittle Innings*. In any case, Bishop is living

proof that in the battle of form versus substance, they can both be winners. I highly recommend this book (and indeed any of Bishop's work). Unless you live near a science fiction specialty shop, you will probably have to have it special-ordered. It's worth it.

(In case you're wondering, Bishop's nominated stories are "Death and Designation Among the Asadi" [1973],

"The White Otters of Childhood" [1973], "Cathadonian Odyssey" [1974], "Rogue Tomato" [1975], "The Samurai and the Willows" [1976], "The Quickening" [1981], "A Gift from the Graylanders" [1985], "Eifelheim" [1986], "Cri de Coeur" [1994], and *Brittle Innings* [1994]. Now wouldn't that make a hell of a collection!)

Book and Music Reviews by Lan

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The Cold One

by Christopher Pike
Tor, ©1995, \$21.00

The Cold One exists; It neither cares, nor feels nor loves. It takes what It wants, and kills if necessary. This mysterious sequence of murders has the Los Angeles police department in a quandry. Reporter Peter Jacobs, graduate student Julie Moore, and ex-street-gang member Jerry Washington are confused and also determined to find out who is doing the murders of these people. Each is connected to the victims through friendship or job, but the complexity of the relationships increase as they each gravitate toward the Cold One. To complicate matters, another murderer is killing people in a different way, but somehow the two are connected. How, and why, are the questions they all need to answer, before they themselves become victims.

Christopher Pike mixes horror and mystery in this complex novel, the first of a trilogy. He adds some mysticism with Govina Sharma, who travels from India to the States following a blind man who has the power to dominate other men's wills. How do these connect with the research of Julie Moore about near-death experiences? Or the mysterious phone calls that Peter Jacobs gets about some of the murder victims? Or Jerry's upper-class girl-friend who is so friendly one minute, then becomes a savage after her near-drowning experience?

For lovers of horror and mystery, this is an excellent novel. There is a sufficient and satisfactory wrap-up at the end of this one, but I am looking forward to reading the next. Pike has me hooked, and I am willing to go along.

Mid-Flinx

by Alan Dean Foster
DelRey, ©1995, \$22.00

Alan Dean Foster takes his most popular characters, Flinx and his mini-drag Pip, and crashlands them on my favorite world of his, Midworld. The merging is logical and fits well within his Commonwealth universe, and opens the way for a new set of adventures for Flinx.

As usual, Flinx and Pip become the center of attention and trouble as they merely try to be tourists on the peaceful world of Samstead. The result of Flinx's refusal to sell Pip to the local powermonger sends the two of them into flight. His attempt to find peace in uncharted space lands him on Midworld, where the pursuers and he must attempt to survive in the lush jungle world where the slightest mis-step means death. The human inhabitants of the planet try to help him, and they leave more of an impression on him that he, or they, ever thought.

This is Foster at his near-best. *Midworld* has always

been my favorite novel of his, though a few since then have come close. This one is excellent, and another that opens up a series I want to pursue. I recommend this to lovers of adventure and exotic locales.

Design for Great-Day

by Alan Dean Foster
and Eric Frank Russell
DelRey, ©1995, \$21.00

Alan Dean Foster takes the Eric Frank Russell novella, "Design for Great-Day" and expands it into a novel with the same flair for humor and understatement that the latter was known for. Earth-man James Lawson lands on the homeworld of an alien warlord and tells him to stop the interstellar war with a rival, or face dire consequences. Of course, a lone man demanding this is laughable, but as The Great Lord Markhamwit finds out, Lawson does not bluff not makes rash statements; he is fully capable of carrying out any threat he makes.

The novel is fun and humorous. It is a great read, and it sent me looking for more of Eric Frank Russell's stuff in my collection.

Climbing Olympus

by Kevin J. Anderson
Warner Aspect, ©1994, \$5.50

This is another in the string of novels about Mars which were published in the first half of the 1990s. A group of "original Martians" – the *adin* – who were humans surgically altered to survive the rigors of the Martian climate, decide to forego their purpose of terraforming Mars for regular humans, and retain the planet for themselves. The *adin* realized that they cannot survive the heavier atmosphere at the lower elevations, and as the air thickens, they are driven to increasingly higher terrain.

The leader of the Mars terraforming project, Dr. Rachel Dycek, is the same person who headed the *adin* alteration, and now she has a choice of de-destroying her "children" to allow humans to survive, or scrapping the project entirely. The agony she feels over the decision is well done by the author, and she is truly a sympathetic character. Less sympathetic is Boris Tiban, the leader of the *adin* whose idea it is to destroy the humans and keep Mars for his people. The sentiments are there, but the methods he chooses are uncivilized and barbaric.

The action is tense throughout, and the reading is fast paced. The basic plot is fleshed out with minor conflicts of the main characters and their underlings. The final showdown between Dr. Dycek and Boris Tiban is knuckle-biting. It's a good story with a satisfying ending.

Dead File

by Sharon Porath
Zebra ©1995, \$5.99

This is a serious, and absorbing novel of technology, a serial killer, and relationships gone both bad and good. Sharon Porath writes a moving story about Kendra McFarlane, an advertising copywriter, whose live-in boyfriend, Walt, turns abusive. He is obsessed with an exposé on some secret crime, and his erratic behavior leaves one route open to Kendra: terminate the relationship. Then she finds she is being stalked. She's sure it's Walt, but when he is found dead in her yard, and the stalking continues, the police – and Kendra – don't know what to think. She is the prime suspect in Walt's death, and can only prove her innocence by finding the real killer.

Sharon Porath writes with incredible visuals and emotions. I felt sick after reading the rape scene (essential to the plot), and the tension mounted as things kept going wrong for Kendra, though I (the reader) knew she was innocent. I read this late at night while traveling through Scotland and Orkney, and it held my interest to the point of finally staying up late one night to finish it. This is an excellent book.

Odyssey: The Authorised Biography of Arthur C. Clarke

by Neil McAleer
Gollancz, ©1992, £5.99

Arthur C. Clarke is one of the best known authors of SF and science in the world. He is considered an national treasure of Sri Lanka, the island south of India in the Indian Ocean which he calls home. This biography chronicles the life of this famous author from his earliest days in England to his several retirements from writing in his home on Sri Lanka. The research was painstakingly done by Neil McAleer, and many of the real-life stories related within these pages deal with people I know who know Arthur. I picked this up from Fred Clarke at the Worldcon in Glasgow, and read in on the plane home. This contains a wealth of trivia and knowledge about the man, and is well worth the price. It is a wonderful companion to *Astounding Days*, Arthur's autobiography of his time writing for John W. Campbell and *Astounding Science Fiction Magazine*.

Frostwing

by Richard A. Knaak
Warner Aspect, ©1995, \$5.99

To Grigori it seems that he has been alive forever, but he is not sure. The gargoyle Frostwing haunts him at night and steals his memories, so he does not know how long he has live, or why he must always fight with Frostwing. Now, in Chicago, Grigori must deal with other hunters, a mysterious man bound to an iron and silver chair, and other intriguing people, which forces him to try to unravel the web that has spanned centuries, which threatens himself and reality.

Richard Knaak is a wonderful writer whose prose is engaging, and whose ideas constantly shift. Just when I thought I had things figured out, he adds a new element of surprise, another twist to the plot, which throws my carefully constructed scenario out the window. He keeps the reader jumping right to the end.



House of Moons

by K. D. Wentworth
DelRey, ©1995, \$5.50

Building off events set forth in *Moonspeaker*, K.D. Wentworth writes another adventure about Haemas Tal, who has established a mind-training school called the House of Moons, which is not to the liking of the long-standing Houses. In particular, Lord Chee objects, but he is more interested in acquiring Haemas Tal herself, along with her riches, since his House has been in decline due to his own mismanagement. However, his weapon to gain control of the House of Moons is an ancient mind-controlling device which violates more taboos than he knows. It rouses the wrath of the Old Ones, to whom Tal is the ambassador, and may destroy the time-lines they try to keep safe.

Haemus Tal's commitment to the Old ones, and her courage in facing inevitable death when battling Lord Chee and his ancient weapon, provide exciting reading and a valuable lesson in Wentworth's world of psi-powers and ancient legends. As K.D. develops this world and its societies, the setting has become as intriguing as Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* and Andre Norton's *Witchworld*. The next novel in the series should be very interesting.

The Chronicles of Scar

by Ron Sarti
AvoNova, ©1996, \$5.50

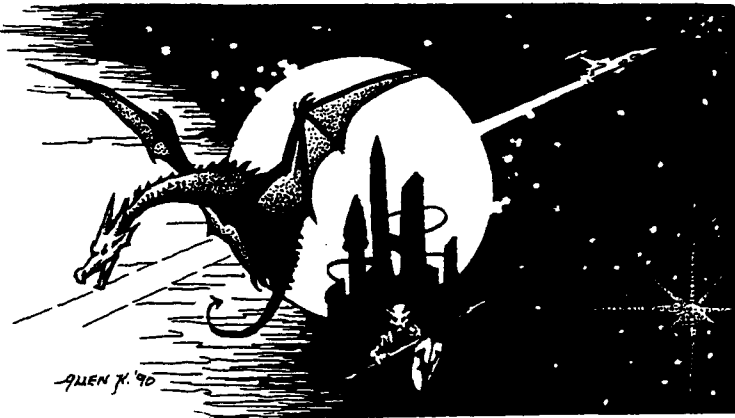
The author, Ron Sarti, gave me a copy of this book at the convention *Confusion* in January of 1996. When I saw

him at the same convention a year later, I was chagrined and embarrassed to admit that I had not yet read his novel. Since then, I have finished it, and wished I had read it earlier to tell him how much I enjoyed *The Chronicles of Scar*.

600 years prior to the opening pages of the novel, the United States was hit with two cataclysmic earthquakes within four months of each other. These unleashed diseases and genetic experiments from sealed laboratories, disrupted communications, and altered the land mass of the US. The setting for *The Chronicles of Scar* is the kingdom of Kenessee, which is on the southern coast of the new shape of what's left on the North American continent. Arn is a street beggar and waif, but is found to be the son of the King, and he is taken in to the Royal Palace to be educated and prepared as the second-in-line to the throne. All of this is related in the first hundred pages or so of the novel, and the life of Prince Arn, how he acquired the name of Prince Scar, and his ascension to the throne, is chronicled in the rest of the book.

This is mostly a fantasy novel, with wars and intrigue, magic and remnants of the old sciences. But Sarti has put a lot of thought into the background so the novel, which stands alone, is open for more books to follow Prince Scar's life, and stories with the same setting. Scar is a likable and interesting character whose comments, both said aloud and to himself, are sarcastic and in many ways so true-to-life. He reminds me of several characters developed by Tanya Huff in her novels.

I would like to find out more of what happens to Prince Scar, particularly the effects of the final battle strategy he uses in an attempt to save Kenessee from outside invaders. *The Chronicles of Scar* is a novel mixed with humor, warmth, bloodshed, and tough choices, and worthy of your perusal.



A Book Dragon

by Donn Kushner

Avon, ©1991 (© 1978), \$3.50

This is a delightful and charming book about the dragon Nonesuch whose task is to guard books, in particular, an ancient tome which became his "treasure". Kushner's premise in this engaging tale is that dragons are ageless, and can grow or shrink in size according to how much the dragon eats. Nonesuch becomes trapped inside his treasure

which was a illuminated volume created by an abbey monk, and is released 600 years later. In the bookshop where he finds himself, Nonesuch protects the owners, and eventually realizes that they need more help than he can give then in his present size. So when dragon-justice is needed, he metes it out with a flair that would have made his grandmother proud.

This is a whimsical tale that should delight the hearts of all book-lovers, and readers of fantasy.

Brother to Dragons, Companion to

Owls

by Jane Lindskold

AvoNova, ©1994, \$4.99

Sarah was placed in an asylum as an autistic child. She grew up there, not realizing how pretty she was, nor how remarkable her skills were. When cutbacks forced her to be released, she met up with a group of street people who befriended her, and, when they find out about her supernatural abilities, help her develop them and make use of them. Sarah's biggest problem, however, is that she cannot speak normally, cannot carry on a conversation. She can only repeat phrases and sentences that she had read to her, and so all the literature she absorbed and retained while in the asylum becomes her vocabulary.

I wasn't sure about reading this novel at the beginning, though it came highly recommended from people who had read it. An adult heroine who carries around a stuffed owl and dragon, called respectively Betwixt and Between, was not my idea of a main character. But since one of the recommendations came from Roger Zelazny, I picked the book up and became immediately absorbed in Sarah's troubles, her companions Betwixt and Between, Abalone, Head Wolf, and Professor Isabella. The novel was a genuine delight and a surprise at how well Jane Lindskold developed and handled the characters. As a Professor of English, Jane used her knowledge of literature to put the correct phrases into Sarah's mouth, which made for some fascinating reading. I immediately added her name to my list of authors to watch, and whose books to read.

Which leads to...

The Pipes of Orpheus

by Jane Lindskold

AvoNova, ©1995, \$4.99

Jane Lindskold takes the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (where Orpheus travels to the underworld to convince Hades to release the soul of his dead wife Eurydice, so she could be with him in the land of the living) and ties it together with the Brothers Grimm fairy tale of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". The Piper is Orpheus with his memory lost out of grief for losing Eurydice, and several children, trapped in the mountain home with the rats (which they eat for food) strive to restore the Piper's memory by traveling to the underworld, and talking Hades into returning Eurydice (or whoever her reincarnation is) to him.

The story is superbly written, and the intertwining of the two stories show how skillful a writer Jane Lindskold is. The stories which she uses as background are in our literary traditions, but who she uses them is unique, and the blend is truly wonderful. I agree with Roger Zelazny's assessment: "One of the brightest new writers to come along in years."

The Baker's Boy

by J. V. Jones
Warner Aspect, ©1995, \$12.99

A Man Betrayed

by J. V. Jones
Warner Aspect, ©1996, \$12.99

Master and Fool

by J. V. Jones
Warner Aspect, ©1996, \$12.99

The first book of this trilogy, whose overall title is *The Book of Words*, was sent to me for review by Betsy Mitchell of the Warner Aspect line. Since I trusted her judgment, I read it when I had some time. The overall impression for *The Baker's Boy* was "WOW!!!" I couldn't wait until the next one came out. I picked it up when I found it, and the same with the third part of the trilogy. I was not disappointed throughout each book of this series. Julie Jones is a superb writer. There may be some problems with a scene here or there, some sense of too many coincidences, but this is a fantasy where coincidence is ordained by the nature of the story.

Aside from the plot, and the desire to know "what happens next", one of the main reasons I enjoyed this trilogy is that the characters were well drawn, consistent and inconsistent at the same time (just like real people), and they were not let off easy. Every one of them suffered. There were deaths, and sorrows, as well as joys and triumphs.

Jack, a baker's apprentice in the castle of the king, finds out that he has magical powers, but they are uncontrolled. The young teen Melliandra, daughter of powerful Lord Maybor, is betrothed to the King's son Kylock, a sadistic and headstrong boy, who is in the control of Baralis, a wizard who wants power. Melli and Jack flee the castle, each for their own reasons, and wander the countryside, each hoping to stay out of reach of the King's guards, Maybor's men, and Baralis' cutthroats.

As the story unfolds, we see a more complex plot, as various factions vie for power, corrupting the church, the Knights of Valdis, and men of honor. Tavalisk, the Archbishop of Rom, has his own agenda of making himself rich, preying off the people of his city, and playing opposing side off each other in an escalating war of death, destruction, and desecration. the Knight Tawl, betrays his honor, and sees no hope for redemption as he pledges himself to another cause. Jack learns more about controlling his power, but feels betrayed by others, until he finally comes to terms with his abilities and destiny. Melliandra brushes with death several times, but her will to succeed, and her own destiny, push her to overcome the most hopeless situations.

The tale is an intricate one, and, amazingly, each book of the trilogy is important. None stand alone, for this is a long novel, and the divisions are merely resting points before the action starts again. The detail and characterizations, the brooding of the people and land, their lightheartedness at times, their willingness to fight for their beliefs, and do what must be done, make this a delightful, serious, and important work in Fantasy.

I really look forward to reading her next novel, *The Barbed Coil*, to be published in the fall of 1997.

Mar's Plus

by Frederik Pohl & Thomas T. Thomas
Baen, ©1994, \$20.00

There seems to be some sort of conspiracy going on with the Mars colony, inhabited by cyborgs, half-cyborgs, and full humans. Demeter Coghlan, granddaughter of a powerful political figure from the country of Texahoma, is chosen to work underground to find out what is going on, meets Roger Torraway (the first "Martian" from Pohl's novel *Man Plus*), and a host of other characters who have their own agendas, and all seemingly at odds with everyone else. In the end, things turn out all right, but it is not a very satisfying read.

This is a novel that I had some trouble following, and appreciating. For one thing, everyone seems to know that Demeter is a spy. She blunders her way through situations in which under normal circumstances, she would be killed or at least disabled. For much of the time I was as confused as Demeter, and how she actually pulled off a successful mission is still a mystery to me. I know Fred has done a lot better in his writing. I hope that this is just a novel on his list of minor works, and no one judges him by this novel alone.

Reel Futures

by Forest J. Ackerman & Jean Stine
Barnes & Noble, ©1994, \$??..??

This is a collection of science fiction stories, the original sources which were made into films. Forest J. Ackerman and Jean Stine, in their introduction, describe some of the changes that were made in transferring the story from the written word to the film, but they mostly leave it to the reader to make the comparisons themselves, by reading the stories and watching the movies – however that could be accomplished (on TV, in the theater, or on video).

Most people are familiar with many of the films like *This Island Earth*, but few fans I know have actually read the novel by Raymond F. Jones, on which the film was based. Most know that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was based on Harry Bates' short story, "Farewell to the Master", but again not many have read the original – so unlike the film version. This book is a gold mine for SF film buffs who *do* want to know the sources for some of these films. It's a good collection with photos and film credits, as well as the literary citations.

Serious Steel

by Leslie Fish & Joe Bethancourt
Random Factors, ©1996, \$??..??
(Random Factors, 3754 W 170th St, Torrance, CA 90504-1204)

Leslie Fish and Joe Bethancourt have been member of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) for many years, and they have entertained at feasts events and tournaments with their guitars and songs. They, of course, are not the only ones with Bard personas, and other tapes have been produced with SCA songs, but this latest collection of songs comprise some of the more recent compositions.

Most of the music and lyrics are original, but in true bardic fashion, they borrow from other sources (Joe from Leslie in "The Ladies of the SCA", for example), traditional tunes, and lyrics from Rudyard Kipling. The songs are humorous, serious, and fun to listen to and even sing along

with. I don't think this is a good introduction to SCA folk-songs, but one needs a knowledge of the group to appreciate the work and clever lyrics. But then again, there are songs here which surpass the in-jokes and specialized knowledge, so it is worth getting even if you have no idea about what the SCA is. Give it a listen - I think you'll enjoy it.

Cetaganda

by Lois McMaster Bujold
Baen, ©1996, \$21.00

At the age of 22, Miles Vorkosigan and his cousin Ivan are sent to Cetaganda to fulfill a diplomatic assignment for dear Barrayar. However, while there, they become embroiled in a Cetagandan plot of unravel the government, a complication which seems to come naturally with any Miles adventure, but something he and Ivan really want no part of. The unwilling participation of the two becomes an important diplomatic matter, particularly since the empress dies of natural causes, and her attendants die from unnatural ones. Eventually Miles figures out what is happening, but not before he learns way too much about Cetaganda, and he saves more than just the Barrayar Empire, and Ivan's butt.

This is a fun novel, light-hearted in many ways, serious in others, for we see more of this enemy of Barrayar. Ivan is his usual bumbling self, and Miles once again shows that brains is better than brawn - in most cases.

Memory

by Lois McMaster Bujold
Baen/SFBC, ©1996, \$21.00

Memory follows *Mirror Dance* in the Miles Vorkosigan saga, and here Miles is plagued by odd memory bursts, which manifest themselves in wild muscle spasms. These endanger his friends because they come at odd and indeterminate times. These irrational episodes are the results of the time he spent in cryogenic stasis. Because he tried to keep them secret and did not report them to Simon Illyan, head of Imperial Security, Miles is removed from the service. This cuts him off immediately from the Dendarii and most of his friends. It was not a good week for Miles, and the forced inactivity made matters worse.

But Simon had his own troubles. There is an assassination attempt, though it is disguised neatly as a breakdown of the computer memory implant which Simon carries in his brain. Simon's forced "retirement" causes a near breakdown of ImpSec and much consternation among the Imperial quarters. And the investigation into Simon's problem seems to point the finger at Miles. However, Miles is concerned more about Simon, the attempted assassination, and possible security leaks than his own safety, and manages to get Emperor Gregor to appoint him an Imperial Auditor, whose word is

law while investigating on behalf of the Emperor. With this new-found power, Miles forges ahead and manages to find the real culprit in Simon's near death, and manages to be accepted into that elite group of Auditors who may be sent anywhere to help the safety of the Emperor, and expedite matters of concern to the Empire.

This new direction for Miles opens up a wider range of possibilities for stories. But will Miles meet with the Dendarii forces again? Will Lois continue to write about those mercenaries? As my friend Lynn Gold pointed out, Miles will have to have at least one more adventure with the mercenary force he created as Miles Naismith; as Taura begins to die, he promised to be there, so we know that is a book in the not too distant future. Other than that, it's all up the Hugo Award winning Bujold to write the books. I for one will continue to read them. And I know a lot of other people who will too.

To the Stars

by George Takei
Pocketbooks, ©1994, \$22.00

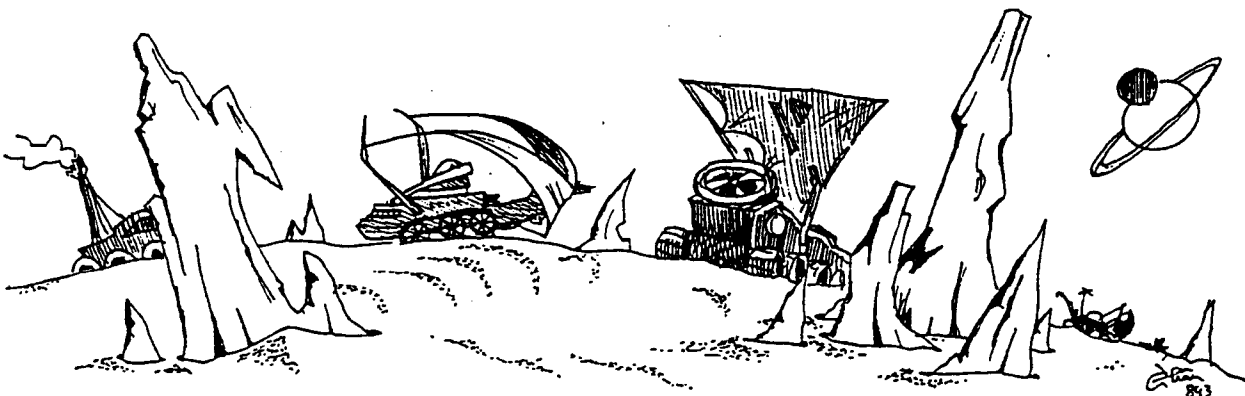
This is subtitled: *The Autobiography of George Takei*, Star Trek's *Mr. Sulu*. And indeed it was written by George Takei, and tells of his life from four years old. He starts with his earliest memory, being shipped by train from his birthplace in Los Angeles to the internment camps for Japanese Americans at the outset of World War II. From there he writes about his education, and his life with his family and on his own, including the acting he did on stage and in Hollywood. Most of the books involves his pre-*Star Trek* days, and it is extremely fascinating. I enjoyed the background he gave for his roles on *The Twilight Zone* and *Mission: Impossible*, and the other parts he played.

This is a treasured book. Although *Star Trek* played an important part in his life, it was not the only thing that George Takei did. The photographs add to the images he creates with words, and his stories about the people who played along side him in *Star Trek* are wonderful. But it is George, and his entire life, which is the focus, and he shows so much more of them than he is than what people see on the screen. For that I was delighted, and nominated the book for the best non-fiction Hugo. Alas, it did not make the ballot, but I tried.

Twilight's Eyes

by Terry Kennedy
Twilight Productions, ©1995, CD:\$14.95;
Tape: \$9.95
(Terry Kennedy, 4141 Roanoke, Apt F, Kansas City
MO 64111)

Terry Kennedy is the "Storyteller" — a persona he uses



when he performs live — and he brings to you a story/song cycle about night activities: acting, love, vampires. It is a fascinating look into nocturnal activities, with the songs interconnected in odd ways. I come away with different impressions each time I listen to this CD, and I marvel at the power Terry has within his lyrics and music.

I have my favorite cuts. "Just Stop Time" has an unusual arrangement — a narration which is also sung. The haunting melody can easily keep going around in my mind with the refrain "If I could just stop time in a moment . . .," but other songs — just as melodious and haunting — offset this one. "Theatre of Night" is powerful, and showcases Terry's voice (actually, all the songs do, but I had heard this one first live at OVFF), and "Guard My Heart" is a love-song — of a different sort, but oh so haunting. His stuff sticks in the mind long after the CD is finished playing.

The songs range in styles from tender ballads to hard-rock and instrumental passages, to straight instrumentals. But the melodies and lyrics blend well with the arrangements and puts this a cut above most commercial rock albums. (That you can understand the lyrics puts almost any song in filking above most rock albums!) I enjoyed this CD, and have played it more frequently than most others I have. I hope that Terry will soon put together another one. This is superb!

Earthbound

by Richard Matheson
Tor, ©1994, \$19.95

Richard Matheson continues to write very readable and very chilling horror. Many of his books and stories have been made into classic films, but I think his love is still the written word. In *Earthbound*, he revitalizes the ghost story.

David and Ellen Cooper rent a seaside cottage in hopes of reviving their shaky marriage. The place is haunted, and the ghost is female. Marianna tempts and nearly seduces David, and Ellen knows *something* is wrong. How will this affect their "reconciliation"? Can they escape from the house, as Marianna's power grows with each day that they stay there.

This is a powerful story which had my heart pounding, my eyes racing over the words, and my fingers turning the pages. This Grand Master of Horror has not lost his touch . . . by far!

Good book. Read it.

The Black Carousel

by Charles L. Grant
Tor, ©1995, \$19.95

As in much of what Charlie Grant writes, the black carousel of the novel is only the springboard for the stories within. When the carnival comes to Oxrun Station, the people flock to it. Some become enchanted by the carousel, others are affected by those who fall under the spell of the carousel.

Casey Bethune becomes enchanted with the carnival, with the Carousel, and Corri, who works there. He ends up trapped? Or has he merely gone insane?

Fran moved into Oxrun Station about the same time that the carnival came. She had a little trouble making friends, but Chip, a ghost, befriended her immediately. Elly and Kitt also know about Chip, and other ghosts and strange happenings. It's hard enough to move into a new place, without the strangeness of Oxrun Station happening as well.

Characters from one episode appear in others, in this

book. The stories intertwine somewhat, and through a mosaic pattern one gets a picture of the town and how the carnival and its black carousel affects its inhabitants.

Orion and the Conqueror

by Ben Bova
Tor, ©1994, \$22.95

Ben Bova continues his saga of Earth's champion, Orion, in this novel. The adventures here take him, on the whim of a superbeing, a Creator who can be identified as Aten, or Apollo, to the time of Philip of Macedon, where he fights at the side of Alexandros, more commonly known as Alexander the Great.

The historical perspective that Bova uses is, as far as I know, accurate. He is using Orion to span several epochs in ancient civilization, as well as the future. Although there is a sameness about the stories — Orion as Earth's champion, searching for his beloved Anya, whose presence he is continually denied by the Creators —, the background and slow development of the character of Orion himself, keep me reading. Bova is a natural storyteller, and he has me hooked on his work.

Anchored to the Wind

by Nancy Louise Freeman
Kaleidophone, ©1995, CD\$14.50; Tape:
\$10.50
(Kaleidophone, 1721 N. Amber Street, Mesa, AZ
85203)

When I heard Nancy Freeman in concert at the World-con in Winnipeg, I knew she had talent. Her clear soprano didn't crack or grate on my ears as so many do. I was a little disappointed in her first tape, *Shouting Theater in a Crowded Fire* (which I reviewed in LL #43), but I knew she was on the upswing in her ability. This CD proves me to be correct. And I can't wait to get her latest: *Logick*.

Nancy's voice has improved, and she blends it well into the variety of styles and songs she writes and sings here. She has written the music and lyrics to all but one ("Dawson's Mitzvah" is a parody of Duane Elms' "Dawson's Christian"), and she manages to make use of her vocal range, and abilities as a guitarist, recorder and percussion instruments. The title track, "Anchored to the Wind" shows how strong her voice has become. Sung with very little accompaniment, Nancy holds the notes strong and clear. Several other songs — "Joiry's Gifts," "Friend I Never Knew" and "Slave Girl Blues" are good examples — emphasize this as well. The topics range from classical mythology ("Ithaka, Ithaka") to the Arthurian legend ("Merlin in His Velvet Room") to modern social topics ("Broken Knife").

The closing song, "Lullaby in Red", is haunting in its images and melody. And Nancy's voice makes a lasting impression here.

This is a wonderful collection of songs, and something to consider as a gift, or for your own collection.

Furious Gulf

by Gregory Benford
Bantam Spectra, ©1994, \$22.95

Times are tough for the Bishop Family and their friends as they rush toward the true center of the galaxy, running away from the mechs whose purpose is to destroy all organic life.

Toby is reaching adulthood, and he is implanted with a microchip of memories from his race and family. As Toby also is in line for the leadership of the Family, he is in touch with Killeen, who as the captain of the ship *Argo*, maintains and encourages the belief that their only escape from the mechs is at the galactic core.

In this hard SF thriller, it is not easy to keep up with what Greg Benford proposes or writes about. The super races, inhuman in so many ways, and barely understandable, tend to boggle the mind almost overwhelmingly. Yet, this is *science* fiction in its purest form, and no matter how trying, it stimulates the sense of wonder no end.

Extremely good, but not for light reading!

Sailing Bright Eternity

by Gregory Benford
Bantam Spectra, ©1995, \$22.95

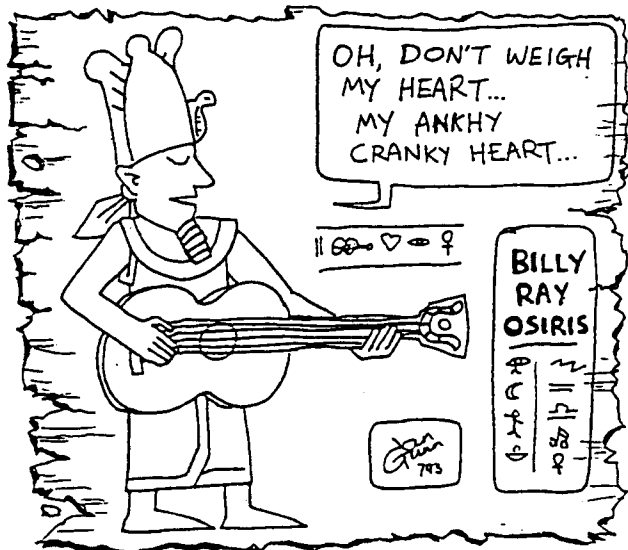
In this final book of the series which started with *In the Ocean of Night*, we find the Bishop Family, Killeen and the long-thought-dead Nigel Walmsley, join forces to help save humanity. They meet the Old Ones, who guard the galaxy from extinction from the "eater of all things" the black hole at the true center, and fight the mechs who are bent on destroying humanity. On the landscape called esty (ST, Space-Time) the trio manages to get lost, find each other and eventually bring to an end the threat to humanity, and open up the next phase of development for humankind.

I found myself getting a little bogged down and overwhelmed with the ideas and shifts in esty, but I kept going as the wonders from Benford's imagination cascaded through my mind. Once again, this is real *science* fiction, and a mind-boggler.

Brightness Reef

by David Brin
Bantam Spectra/SFBC, ©1995, \$??.??

David Brin returns to his Uplift Universe, and starts a new trilogy of adventures on the planet Jijo. It is inhabited illegally by a number of different races which seem to live harmoniously. If the leaders of the Five Galaxies find out about this colony, they would certainly destroy it. But for now, they live together, and they hope for the best.



Two things happen to upset their relatively peaceful word. Another human with amnesia is found, critically injured and near death. And another starship lands, another group of aliens whose shape seems familiar, but they have their own purpose, and it is not to judge the multi-racial colony.

Brin spends a lot of time setting up personalities for the various races and characters within them. I found it all confusing, and would have put the book down before finishing it if it had not been a Hugo nominee. It was very frustrating trying to keep the characters straight, and which one had wheels, and who had his own personal stake in the sticky situation. I found this novel a disappointment. Brin has done better, but now I am leery about picking up the next one in the trilogy.

The Oak, the Rowan, and the Wild

Rose

by Mike Whitaker
V.L.B Recording/Wail Songs, ©1989, Tape:
\$12.00

When I was looking for some British filk to listen to, Bill Roper suggested this tape. The fact that he was selling it had little to do with it. He just commented, "After I heard it, I thought that I had listened to another Moody Blues album." So I took his recommendation and purchased it (from him, of course).

He was right.

The arrangement for the first song, "Before the Dawn," sounded like something the Moody Blues would have done. Several other songs on the tape gave me the same feeling. Many of the songs seem related (like the first few on the first side), something which was confirmed on Mike's CD *Shattered Dreams*, and many seem to deal with fantasy worlds that I can't seem to place.

The vocal quality varies. Pat Brown is very good in "Bright Lady", a strong and solid voice that carries the song very well. Anne Rundle's voice sounds shallow, not supported, and therefore sometimes flat. But she adds much to the songs with her other talents - flute, keyboards, and arranging. Mike's voice is solid, though he has a little trouble sustaining notes. I will add that both improve tremendously by the time they recorded *Shattered Dreams*.

The tape is worth getting, in spite of my reservations about it. British filking is different than what we are mostly used to in the States, and this one definitely shows a range of different approaches and styles.

Shattered Dreams

by Mike Whitaker
NéPalm Music, ©1995, CD:\$14.95

Most of the music and lyrics here are once again written by Mike Whitaker, based on several sources: books, TV, film, and his own imagination. His wife Anne helped out with vocals, arrangements, instrumentation, and organization.

One of the main difference between British filk and North American filk is the variety of instruments used and accepted. Most NA filk uses a guitar, and emphasizes the lyrics and melody. Seldom are there instrumental passages, though that has changed in the past few years. Whitaker is a premiere guitarist, and he uses his skill to great effect in the tracks here. Anne is facile with the flute and keyboards, and her skills are heard throughout the CD as well. Neither voice is trained, but both Anne and Mike convey the lyrics,

melody and meaning with competence, and with much improvement over *The Oak, the Rowan and the Wild Rose*.

The songs range the different styles as you might expect: ballads, humorous, rock, and serious. This CD and the tape reviewed above, *The Oak, the Rowan and the Wild Rose*, contain much of the best of Mike Whitaker and Anne (Rundle) Whitaker. Their work is good, and this is worth at least a listen, if not a purchase.

Spec-Lit #1

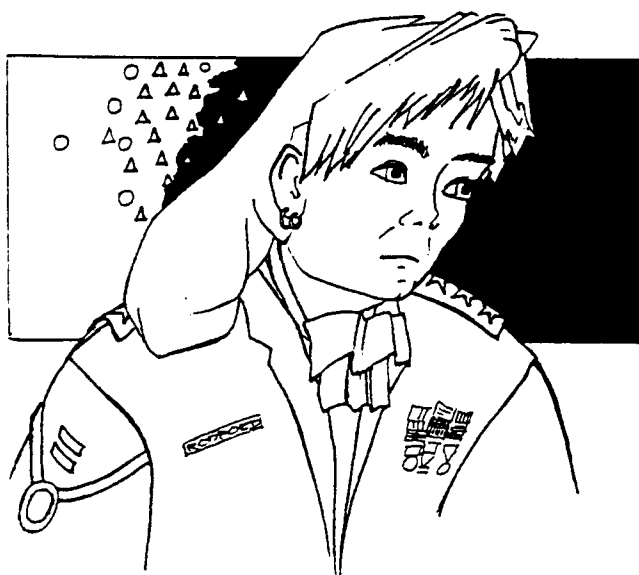
Edited by Phyllis Eisenstein
Columbia College, ©1997, \$6.95

This is a collection of short stories produced by the Speculative Fiction creative writing class taught by Phyllis Eisenstein at Columbia College. As Phyllis says in her introduction, many of the stories that passed her eyes in the years she has been teaching this class have been of high, salable quality, but the students rarely had any inclination to send them off to be published. So, with the support of the College, and two fellow writers (Algis Budrys and Gene Wolfe), she decided to collect the best stories and publish them in what she hopes will be a continuing series of books.

This first collection is an excellent start. The stories deal with possible futures which are mostly frightening ("The Orbs" by Don Franke, "Fugue" by George Alan, "The Liver and Mr. French" by Eric M. Weinstein, "The Gambler" by Jeremy Efroymsen, "To Protect and Profit" by John O'Shaughnessy, "Letters to Luna" by Jenna Rosenthal) but somewhat hopeful ("Right-Horned" by Crighton Hippenhammer). Strange aliens are part of some stories, ("Chief" by Sam Weller, "Spukknapped!" by J.T. Monahan) though even the humans are strange too, not quite human ("Living Alone in the Jungle" by Algis Budrys, "The Changeling" by Gene Wolfe, "The Eatery" by D. Everett, "Night Ride" by Jeff Jacobson). Of course, many times humans are the enemy (several of the above stories, and "Rough Beast" by William McMahon).

My favorite of the bunch is "Fugue" by George Alan. A relationship develops between two highly trained and technically enhanced assassins and they attempt to stay in touch, even though their memories are wiped clean after each assignment.

Phyllis has done a great job in eliciting fine stories from her students. I am looking forward to the next collection, with even better stories.



Wanderlust

by Heather Alexander

Sea Fire Productions, ©1994, \$??.
(PO Box 875, Moss Beach, CA 94038)

This is an extension of the work that talented Heather Alexander has been doing for several years. The songs display Heather's wide range of vocal styles, her expertise on the guitar, percussion instruments, mandolin and fiddle/violin, and her rich voice in the art of storytelling. If you have not heard Heather perform before, this is a "must-have" recording. And then you will want the experience her in person. (An address and phone number for booking her as a performer in your local pub is provided!) Her music is magic, so let her sing for you!

North Coast Cabaret

by Various Artists

North Coast Productions, ©1995, \$??.
(948-145 Rice Ave, Hamilton, Ontario CANADA
L9C 6R3. (905) 574-6212)

All of these songs were recorded at the Star Trek convention, *Toronto Trek VIII* in 1994. Three tracks were re-recorded later that year. But don't think that all the songs deal with Star Trek. They range the regular gamut of what you would find in a late-night filk, though these were done during the three days of the convention. The Filk Guest of Honor was Steve Macdonald, whose performances have thrilled audiences throughout the Midwest, so you know there was a lot of good singing going on.

But consider the other people who are on the tape: Urban Tapestry, Mary Ellen Wessels, Downtown Freddy Brown (Very well-known in the Toronto area), Mark Osier, Heather Borean, Judith Hayman, Stephanie Bedwell-Grime, and the duo of Karen Lindsley and Lloyd Landa. Unfortunately, the songs themselves differed in quality of recording, and in some cases suffered from the "live recording" technique. I wish, for example, that one of the songs re-recorded would have been "Manual Labor" by Linsley and Landa. It was the Winner of the song-writing contest at Filkontario, and this seems to be the only recording of it.

Most of the songs here are not on other tapes or CDs, so it would be a good investment to get this one. There is some excellent material here, and in spite of the drawbacks, the jewels outshine the dross.

Sing Language

by Musical Chairs

Dodeka Records, Ltd., ©1995, \$??.
(848 Dodge Ave, Chicago, IL 60202)

Sing Language is the first tape of the group Musical Chairs, three women who are Linda Melnick, Jean Stevenson, and Lucinda Brown. The group is reminiscent of Technical Difficulties, which makes sense since Linda had been a member of that group. The style is similar, but there are definite differences in this group. The blend is superb, and the selections they sing are appropriate for their voices.

There are some standards which seem to lend themselves well to a trio of voices ("Ancient Sky", "Songbird", and "Velveteen"), but usually one of the ladies takes the lead solo, with the support of the other two, which, I guess, is the point of their group name: Each one takes a turn in the chair as the lead singer.

Even though Jean and Lucinda say "It's all Linda's

fault," it would be your fault to make a mistake and not buy the tape.

Journey's Done

by Steve Macdonald

Dodeka Records, Ltd., ©1995, \$??00

Steve Macdonald has been one of the newest and most welcome additions to the ranks of filking in recent years. His background of singing in bars and coffee-houses gave him an appreciation of filk audiences and tries to thank them by giving them his songs. This second tape, offered through Dodeka Records, is the result.

As with his first tape, *Songspinner*, blends a mixture of serious and less-serious songs, although each one makes a very serious point. All were written by Steve, with three exceptions, for which Steve was the collaborator with his brother John ("The Minstrel" and "Gallamor"), or friend Rick Cartledge ("Premonitions"). Along with his superb tenor voice, Steve draws on the talents of other friends in filking – both for background (or foreground) instrumentation (like Kylea Fulton's flute), and for vocal support.

What about the songs? As one might expect from a professional like Steve, he performs them near flawlessly. He draws his subject matter from *Star Trek* ("To Boldly Go," "Joining"), legend and fantasy ("Gallamor," "Cold Butcher," "Premonitions"), fandom and his personal life ("Acceptance," "The Minstrel," "Plain Valentine,"), encouragement ("Tightrope," "To Touch a Star"). Then there is Steve's great love for space – and his incredible song, "Journey's Done", with its huge chorus.

Needless to say, the tape is well worth its price (whatever it is), and I encourage you to take back some of what Steve offers to you here.

Reclamation

by Sarah Zettel

Warner Aspect/SFBC, ©1996, \$????

This is the first novel by Sarah Zettel, and it is a blockbuster. She has a well-developed universe with lots of alien cultures which have a feeling of reality to them, and technology that makes sense in context of her universe. The two main characters, Eric Born and Arla, are very well developed, but one can't help but notice that the other characters are also well-drawn.

Simply put, the plot involves two main groups of races who are trying to discover the origins of their races. The Vitae think that the pretechnological planet called The Realm is somehow connected with the source of power and the origins of their race, though the Alliance don't think it's possible, whatever interests the Vitae, interests them. Eric and Arla have powers themselves which enable them to both help and thwart the two sides, and, both being from The Realm, possible can benefit their own world. But that would also mean overcoming a lot of superstition and ingrained beliefs. And, it turns out, Eric and Arla will need the help of their people to cast off the two oppressors – but can they convince enough of their people to put aside their old ways in time?

It is a complex story with lots of twists. It is an ambitious book for a new author, and Sarah pulls it off very well! So impressed was I with the work that it was one of my nominees for the 1997 Hugos. I highly recommend it!

Dreamfall

by Joan D. Vinge

Warner Aspect/SFBC, ©1996, \$????

Joan D. Vinge returns to the universe of her hero Cat, the half Human-half-Hydran, who lost his telepathic abilities when he killed someone. Such an act kills a Hydran because of the mind backlash, but Cat survived because he was half-Human. In this third novel of Cat's adventures, he has full citizen rights in the Human Federation, but his assignment is on Refuge, the home planet of his Hydran half. He is assisting a scientific research group who is studying the dreamfall, the cast-off ideas and dreams of the Cloud Whales which accumulate as matter and data in reefs which can be harvested. Cat feels good about his work until he gets drawn into the Hydran underground which is trying to show how bigoted, treacherous, and corrupt the Humans on Refuge are. Will Cat give up his hard-won citizenship to help his Hydran half? Will he ever regain his telepathic powers? The dreamfall seems to rekindle his lost abilities, but to stay there puts him and his friends at risk.

Joan has written another fascinating chapter in Cat's life, and expands on human/nonhuman relationships which is prevalent in so many of her books. This was one of my nominations for the 1997 Hugo Awards. Don't miss it!

License to Busk

by Graham Leathers

Dodeka Records, Ltd., ©1995, \$????

Graham Leathers has produced another wonderful tape of his music. The production values are high, and the music is terrific. His songs are mostly funny, filled with little inside jokes, and some are serious. In the middle of "A Pallet on Your Floor" Gray yells, "Take it, Gray," and he begins a banjo solo, he replies, "Thanks, Gray." One title is deceptive: "Beautiful Legs" is about insects.

Gray is a talented musician, and the songs he writes display his skills with guitar, banjo, mandolin, bodhran, maracas, kitchen utensils, and most of all his voice. The songs are creative, and draw on a variety of topics, from "Canadian Hockey," to Isaac Asimov's character Azazel ("Demon in My Pocket"), railroads ("The Railfan's Lament"), and his native Canada. And there is the occasional satirical song: "The Poor Politician" about Canadian politics, and "Hang Up an Drive" about car-phones.

Superbly done, this is a must-have tape!

Quest for the Green Hills of Earth

by Ned Brooks

Purple Mouth Press, ©1995, \$5.00
(713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA 23605)

In this magazine-type book, Ned Brooks reproduces "Quest of the Starstone" written by C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner, and uses it as a jumping-off point to explore different versions of "The Green Hills of Earth," made most famous by Robert A. Heinlein. In the story, which finds a way to bring Jirel of Joiry and Northwest Smith together into a single adventure, Smith sings some verses of the song. Brooks includes the music of George Heap and Joseph Kaye, both of whom wrote a melody for the verses, for two reasons: that they not be lost, and as a springboard to find more versions of the song. Brooks also prints verses for the Heinlein poem, and other versions of the poem by fans through the years.

For anyone who likes this poem, this is an invaluable collection of the various incarnations and interpretations of it. The bonus of the story, which places the song in context, is extremely welcome, since I do not have a copy of "Quest of the Starstone" in the books of Moore or Kuttner. There is an added bonus of artwork by Alan Hunter which augments the text.

Thanks Ned, for a wonderful book.

Ned requests that if anyone knows addresses for Cindy Heap, Elliot Shorter and Jason 'Chuck' Rein, let him know so he can send them copies.

An Anthropomorphic Bibliography

by Fred Patten

Yarf!, ©1995, \$5.00

(Yarf!, PO Box 1299, Cupertino, CA 95015-1299)

The idea of man changing into an animal, or animals into men has been a fascination of a segment of fandom. Fred Patten has done a study of the stories which incorporate such "animalized animals", and presents them here. The listing is alphabetical by author, and a summary of each story is included. The text is lavishly illustrated with furry creatures. If your interest lies in the direction of such animal stories, send him your address with the money. I found this interesting, and he includes one of my favorite examples (one I have not been able to locate for my library): *Jonathan*, by Russell O'Neil. It's one of the funniest novels I've ever read.

The Westerfilk Collection ~ 2nd Edition

by David Bratman, Jordin Kare, Teri Lee

Wail Songs, ©1996 (1980), \$???

(Wail Songs, PO Box 29888, Oakland, CA 94604)

It is nice to have this *Westerfilk Collection* songbook back in print. It contains some of the best filsongs produced at the time, many of which have not been heard except on long-out-of-print tapes, or worse, on tapes recorded live by amateurs under poor conditions. Now that the music is provided in these pages, – particularly for those whose music is original, and not based on traditional or (then) current music – any competent filker can work out individual arrangements and give these songs new life. The songs are arranged in two ways – in two sections divided as serious and funny, then alphabetical for each section.

The books also has some reminiscences from the people involved in the production of the first edition. These add a lot of historical perspective, and are most welcome. New art fills up the pages, though in some places there is white space where an illustration or two would have balanced the page. The type is large enough to read from a music stand, and being spiral-bound, the book lies flat, both important factors for filkers.

If there are mistakes in the text or music, I am not sure. What music I did try out on the piano, or reading through the lyrics of songs I knew, everything seemed to be fine.

I hope that more filker producers will think about providing a songbook for the tapes/CDs. Some people have the ability to hear the melody and can manufacture chords to go with it. Most can't, or think they can and fake it well enough but somehow they never sound much like the original. The joy of filking is to sing, but making it as easy as possible (by providing chords, music and lyrics) helps.

Slightly OVFF Track ~ OVFF 1995

Wail Songs, ©1997, \$???

(Wail Songs, PO Box 29888, Oakland, CA 94604)

This latest offering from Wail Songs presents some of the best filksongs recorded live and in concert at Ohio Valley Filk Fest in 1995. As usual for such tapes, the producer goes for variety rather than sticking to a theme, and some of the off-key vocals, the slightly hollow sounds, are forgiven because this was done live, and the engineer can only do so much the clean up the recording.

The playlist includes several parodies ("Acts of Parody" and "Making Love Weighing Nothing at All" sung by Kathy Mar, "Gone Filkin'" sung by Tom Jeffers, "I Play Magic Now" sung by Scott Snyder, and "Queen of the Wee Folk" sung by Katherine MacDonald), other humorous songs ("News of the Iceberg" sung by Jordin Kare, "Terminally Ill" sung by Scott Snyder, "Stop Singing Ose or I'll Kill You" sung by Paul Kwinn, "Another Reason Why J. Michael Straczynski Hates Filk Music" sung by Alan Theisen, and "Happening Frog" sung by Heather Alexander), and serious songs ("The Minstrel" and "Moving Along" by Steve Macdonald, "Sound of Thunder" and "The Chemical Worker's Song" sung by Catherine and Paul MacDonald, "Life's Flame" sung by Heather Alexander, "Giant" sung by Dave Clement, and "Railfan's Lament" sung by Graham Leathers).

The packaging is nice, even if the j-card is a little short in the sleeve. One caution is that the playlist seen through the back of the casing has two songs swithed in the order that they are on the tape and listed inside. "Life's Flame" comes before "Giant". For those who know the songs this is not a major problem.

The tape is worth the money. It is an excellent representation of many of the songs that were presented at the 1995 OVFF. To truly do justice, I know that a couple more tapes would have to be produced. I was at the con, I know. This doesn't scratch the surface, but it will give an idea of the quality of music in filking.

OOH, I'M JUST A CATTLE MUTILATIN'
TRANVESTITE WEREWOLF COWBOY
AN' I'M HEADIN' FOR THE TOWN WHERE
I WAS BORN...
I HOPE THAT OL' FULL MOO-DOON
WON'T SINK IN THE WEST TOO SOON
OR ELSE I'LL NEVER GET
THERE BEFORE DAWN...



MOVIE THEMES NOT YET AVAILABLE
ON COMPACT DISK

A Blonde in Africa

[illegible]

By late afternoon, though, I was feeling well enough to come down and sit in the cab of the truck. The countryside was spectacularly beautiful here – steep hills, fabulous vistas, old tea plantations. Unfortunately, the area wasn't so good for finding a bush camp: no flat spots. Happily,

We headed south, killing kilometres in some long, uneventful days of driving across Tanzania toward the Malawi

around sunset, we finally found a good spot outside of a town called Tukuyu. It was a large patch of flat ground, surrounded by bush, set back from the road, down a narrow track which was sheltered by thick trees on either side.

We pulled in, settled the truck in a good spot, and started setting up camp. I had recovered enough to build a fire, though I felt kind of shaky – queasy now. About twenty young men, as well as a few women and children, appeared out of nowhere to watch us. I was used to this by now, since I had been the nightly show in almost every bush camp I'd set up from Morocco all the way down to this spot in southern Tanzania. However, since the rest of the group was still new to this sort of thing, some of them were uncomfortable with the audience. I accompanied two of the Girls (our nickname for the four pretty, young ingenues traveling with us) into the bushes for a whizz, assuring them that there was nothing to worry about. Then I doubled over and started vomiting.

Just another happy day in the life of an overlander.

Feeling a little better, I ate some dinner. I even ate some dessert (banana custard). Ignoring the Girls' assertion that it might not be safe to wander into the bushes alone with so many men still around, I went back out into the dark and threw up all my dessert. To this day, I cannot face custard or bananas. I stayed there for a while, feeling like hell. It never occurred to me to be afraid, though I know now that I probably wasn't alone out there.

After I seemed to have exhausted all of my bodily function for the day, I crawled into the back of the truck and sat around feeling sorry for myself. As usual, everyone was chatting around the fire, or reading, writing, or playing cards in the truck, or milling around somewhere nearby.

Imelda (so dubbed because of the extraordinary number of shoes she had brought with her) was the first to stretch and announce that she was going to bed. Normally, people put up their tents close to the truck, often in a semi-circle around the well-lit side where we built the fire and did all the work. Tonight, however, feeling tired, cranky, and ill, and having found a nice isolated bush camp, most of the people had pitched their tents far away from the truck, deep in the dark. (I hadn't put one up, intending to sleep in the roofseat.) So Imelda disappeared into the dark. Then she returned a minute later in a panic, claiming the tents had been slashed open!

Well, if it had been *anyone* else, we'd have all dashed out to investigate. However, since Imelda saw lions behind every tree, we ignored her. I think I said, "Oh Really?" and went back to my book. Deb (the driver), however, suggested that it would probably be sensible to investigate. So Lionel (an overlander) went out into the dark to take a look. Guess what happened? He came back a moment later to say yes, it was true! Several tents had been slashed open with machetes!

Thieves, obviously, looking for the quickest way into the tents. We never put anything in the tents before going to bed, just in case of something like this, so the thieves had only made off with some tent bags, tent mallets, and a roll mat or two. This meager haul had apparently angered them – a couple of the tents were slashed to bits.

I immediately thought of the Girls. If lions prowling around us by night in Serengeti had frightened them, what would *this* do to them? But lo and behold, they started really coming into their own on this night! They were calm and matter-of-fact. Young Jo announced she was on security duty that night (making sure everything was locked up and put away) and then laughed, realizing that that might not be an announcement designed to make us all feel Really Safe.

Then we heard a lot of men (probably our watchers from earlier in the evening) in the bushes – crashing around, whooping, hollering, laughing, shouting. It really pissed me off. I was too sick for this shit. Deb called us around the campfire to set up a rotation for all-night guard duty. We

were volunteering for shifts when one woman suddenly howled. She had been hit by a rock. Suddenly rocks – *big* rocks – started flying through the air, coming fast, propelled by slingshots! Deb pointed out that this would make guard duty dangerous and guards ineffectual. She suggested that perhaps we should leave.

Leave! What a concept! We started scurrying around, determined to get out of there before we wound up collecting on all that insurance we'd been advised to buy.

Things got very chaotic after that. We normally had a very set, organized routine for packing up camp, but it was thrown to the wind tonight. It was dark, we were under attack, and everything went to hell, including our nerves and tempers.

While putting something away on the far side of the truck, David (an overlander) and I stumbled across Dick, an Englishman in his fifties. I never knew what inspired him to come to Africa, though I had the vague impression it had something to do with keeping himself out of a higher tax bracket. Don't ask; I didn't. Anyway, Dick was either hard of hearing or hopelessly distracted. Not only did he not know we were leaving, he didn't even know we were under attack. He'd been sitting in the dark having a shave and a wash while a riot ensued on the other side of the truck.

It always paid to be simple, direct, and clear when speaking to Dick. David said, "Dick, we're under attack. Pack up your tent *now*, or we'll leave without you."

Dick said "oh," and asked us to watch his shaving gear so he could go pack up. We left it to fend for itself and went back to packing up. As rocks continued flying in, and those hooligans kept whooping and hollering in the bush, the situation in camp was sheer pandemonium. People were getting hurt by rocks as they tried to take down their tents. Someone's headlamp was shattered by a flying rock. Someone else got it on the arm, someone else on the leg. People began to fear getting hit in the eye or some other irreplaceable part. Upon taking down the tents, people realized that their tent bags were missing, which made packing them rather problematic. With normal duties abandoned, we were trying to do everything at once – break down the fire, put away the table and stools, pack up the water, food and firewood.

The chorus of "Ow! Ouch! Dammit!" got louder and more frequent, and it became apparent that the most distant tents couldn't be taken down until the bandits were beaten back a little. So I sacrificed some of my precious firewood to the fight, giving long, heavy sticks to four of our biggest guys, who raced out into the night to confront our attackers. I distinctly remember watching them scurry away. I distinctly remember feeling glad that I was a girl and didn't have to go out there in the dark with them.

Well, you know... adrenaline's a funny thing.

The next thing I remember is stalking through the dark out there, a stick in my hand, screaming and shouting as I beat the bushes. I swear I have no idea how I got there. It certainly wasn't what I *intended* to do, but there I was. Joseph (the co-driver) said something like, "Go back, you crazy woman!" The he and Richard (the campmaster) disappeared into the bushes. I stared at my stick and wondered with sheer horror what I was doing there. Then a rock flew past me, just inches from my head. Bursting with fury, I started hitting the bushes with my stick, running around in a blind rage, screaming things. Crazy insane things! *Bizarre* things. Things like: "Come here you fucking lily-livered sissy-asses!" And even more improbably: "Where are you hiding, you cowardly uncircumcised bastards?" (Although they undoubtedly *were* circumcised.)

I swear to you I have no idea where this purple prose came from. None of my novels reads that badly. Really.

Anyway, I stopped shouting for a moment and stood there panting in confusion. Then I heard footsteps crunching into the earth behind me. Terrified, I whirled around and snarled (rather convincingly, I thought), "Who's there?"

Well, it was just Craig, a Canadian from the truck, come to help the others. He told me to go back to the truck.

"Where is it?" I cried. "I don't have my glasses on!"

He pointed it out and then disappeared into the bushes. I stared at the stick in my hand and realized that if I bumped into someone with a machete in *his* hand, I was dead meat. Perhaps I should go back to the truck, I thought, rather than shouting arcane insults into the bush and waiting to get killed.

So I did. Camp was in even more disarray than it had been when I'd had my adrenaline blackout. The rock-hurling had escalated to the point where Deb (speaking as if she'd been tranquilized; she goes into a state of preternatural calm in a crisis) told everyone to stop worrying about packing correctly.

"Just throw everything in the truck and let's get the hell out of here," she intoned. "We'll worry about it later."

We started dumping whole tents, roll mats, sleeping bags, pots, pans, blankets, mallets, and tools into the truck willy-nilly. I had the wits to lock away my saws, chains, axes, and machetes. Mostly so no stranger could get a hold of them, but also so no one on our truck could go nuts and try to kill one of those hooligans out there; a white man who kills a black man in Tanzania, whatever the circumstances, is in big trouble. I was throwing hot kettles of boiling water, chunks of firewood, work gloves, loaves of bread, and everything you can imagine into the truck, making a mess of stuff.

Then we heard a loud, roaring, primeval scream from the bushes. I thought they were torturing Joseph out there. Well, you know... adrenaline's a *really* funny thing.

The next thing I remember is someone holding me and telling me to get a grip on myself. I had apparently gone tearing around in circles, crying, "Where's a stick? I need a stick! Give me a stick!" God only knows what I thought I could do out there. Luckily, however, Joseph's scream just turned out to be a scare tactic while he was chasing some men. He and the others came back to the truck just as we finished throwing everything inside.

We formed a plan of action for our escape. The truck was vulnerable to attack due to its open sides and easy access, so we would ride with all lights off, and we'd arm ourselves with shovels, rolling pins, and firewood in case anyone tried to climb on board. Joseph, Richard, John, and Craig would go ahead of the truck as we drove down the narrow track through the trees. This was to protect the windshield. If someone hit the windshield with a rock, it could hurt Deb, who was driving. Besides, replacing the windshield wouldn't exactly be a piece of cake out there.

Everything was set, and everyone knew what they were supposed to do—except Dick, who kept sticking his head out of the back of the truck and saying, "Now what's going on?"

We took our places. I grabbed the rolling pin and crouched in the dark. Up in the cab, Deb turned the key to start the engine.

And nothing happened.

The starter motor wouldn't engage. I couldn't believe it. *I absolutely could not believe it!* It was like some awful, sensationalistic, wildly improbable action movie. The god-damned engine wouldn't start!

We piled quickly back out of the truck and milled around in the moonlight, confused and scared. From their hiding places in the dark, our attackers saw us, and a wild war whoop, a cheer of victory, arose all around us.

They got to the engine, I thought wildly, somehow they got to the engine! I experienced the single greatest moment of fear I had known during the entire time I'd been in Africa. I was going to be murdered here in the bush, outside of some little village in Tanzania. We'd never escape them; they knew this place in the dark a lot better than we did. No one else even knew where we were. There probably wouldn't even be any remains. My poor mom. She'd get a

letter... "Dear Mrs. Resnick ... sorry about the non-refundable deposit...."

Then a lot of things happened at once. Lionel came back and passed around word that we hadn't been sabotaged. This was merely an astonishing coincidence; the starter motor had chosen that particular moment to stop working (*what* did I tell you about how unreliable the truck was?). So we'd have to push the truck.

I looked up at the moonlit sky and wondered, *Why me?* It was past my bedtime. I had alternated all day between diarrhea and vomiting. People had ruined my evening, thrown rocks at me, and scared me into fits. And now I would have to *push* that bloody twelve-ton truck to make it start. As if things weren't bad enough, we also seemed to have parked in a gully that I was *sure* hadn't been there before. So we would have to *rock* the goddamned truck back and forth to get it going. I'd done it before, and it was a dangerous enterprise even at the best of times — a phrase which did not encompass being under attack in the dark with a lot of people who'd never had to push an overland truck before.

However, everyone was glad to now have a focus for all that adrenaline. We pushed the truck forward, jumped out of the way as it rocked back on us, then jumped in again to push it forward. We finally got it going, and the engine kicked in. We all piled back in and took our positions. As we drove through the dark corridor of trees, our guys routed the bandits and chased them off. Four overlanders against anywhere from twelve to twenty of them — and they ran away. Well, what kind of men would throw rocks at women in the dark anyhow, I figured? Bullies and cowards, whatever the country. In fact, our guys got so excited chasing them away that the *kept* chasing them; we wound up having to stop and wait for them to come back. When they did, we proceeded on down the road, wondering where we'd find another place to sleep tonight.

Squashed together with our kettles, tents, weapons, pots, and pans, we found a strange place just about a half hour further down the road. It would have looked reasonably normal in Europe, but it looked incredibly weird in the middle of rural Tanzania. It was a modern housing compound: European homes with satellite dishes, tennis courts, and a swimming pool, all lit up, surrounded by high fences, with guards at the gate. It was a complex built to house EEC workers and administrators who were here to build roads in Tanzania as part of some European aid project.

We camped the rest of the night on their floodlit tennis courts. The Belgian in charge said that this happened all the time here, that many people ask for shelter in the compound after bad experiences. He said that the rate of theft and vandalism was terrible in this part of Tanzania—hatred of foreigners, of whites, or rich people. Considering how extraordinarily wealthy this compound, or even our scrubby truck, was in comparison to the hundreds of tiny villages I'd been to, the hatred didn't really surprise me. But ordinary thieving in Africa seldom assumed such a violent and sinister turn.

I went to bed on the roof then. It rained. I didn't wake up till just before dawn. I was soaked and cold and felt terrible. I had to build my fire with kerosene, which smoked incessantly and turned my stomach. All the breakfast toast was charred and soggy, and everyone's eyes were streaming from the smoke.

Ah, well, just another day in the life of an overlander. Anyhow, I was far too glad to be alive to quibble about details. Indeed, everyone was cheerful that morning as we set off for Malawai. The memory of that night added gusto to a ditty I learned over a few drinks one evening:

*I want to be an overlander,
I want to live a life of danger!
Overlander: life of danger!
Life of danger: overlander!*

Such good cheer was not always the case, though. Deb was once in a stoning in Zaire which had bad consequences. They had crashed through part of a bridge, as we once did, and were stuck outside a village all night. They *couldn't* leave when the rocks started flying. No one was seriously injured, but it was a terrifying experience, and the group never recovered psychologically. People couldn't sleep at

night and wouldn't go into the bushes alone for firewood or a whizz or anything else, and one of two of the crew quit the business when they reached Nairobi.

We were a happy group, though. We had won, after all.

The next day, just as we entered Malawai. I discovered that someone had stolen over \$200 from me. [*]



Hair-Sizing

by Mark R. Leeper

I am occasionally surprised at what I have to explain to my wife Evelyn.

Well, to start out I should explain something about my appearance, since it probably would become clear from this article anyway and I might as well get it out of the way. As you might be able to tell by looking at my Web page I what is generally called "rugged good looks." I have a beard, but parts of it are prematurely gray, giving me a rather distinguished look. On top, my hair has given up the battle to hold back all the good things that are going on underneath and has made way for my head to push its way up and through. Now, I rarely actually see the effects of this movement since first of all, in most things I do in the day I do not see the top of my head. Occasionally I look in a mirror, of course. And while I am impressed by what I see, I am not getting the whole picture. You see, there is still some thatching up there and when I look on straight in the mirror it looks like I still have all the hair I ever did. One actually has to look down on my head from above to recognize that, in fact, there are parts of my scalp exposed to the sunshine. And, not surprisingly, looking down on my head from above is something that I rarely do. It requires either two mirrors or an out-of-body experience.

Anyway, it has occurred to Evelyn to wonder why it is that there is gray hair in my beard, but none on the top of my head. I mean, there still is hair up there and none of it is gray. Now, after she has been in this business environment for all these years, she still does not understand what is going on and how things work. Obviously conditions on the top of my head do not support the expenditures of protein that are required to keep an entire head of hair. Conditions were a lot better in the Boom of the 60s and 70s, but since that time they have changed and a certain amount of right-sizing has become necessary. My scalp can no longer maintain the staff of hairs it once did and although I had on my head some of the best hairs available anywhere, in order for my head to stay competitive I have had to lay off a certain number of hairs and make do with a smaller staff. Because

of quality initiatives and because, as I have said, I have some of the best hairs in the business, a smaller staff has been able to make do where a much larger one has before.

Now if I am going to be laying off hairs from the top of my head, which ones should I choose? I could say that the older and grayer hairs have seniority, but such a policy on my head would be shooting myself in the foot, so to speak. Of course, the idea is to lay off the older gray hairs that are approaching pension age and hold on to the younger and more vibrant hairs that have newer and fresher ideas. They obviously are making more of a contribution. I have told my gray hairs that I have really valued their contribution but that, conditions being as they were, their services were no longer required in their present position. I gave them what was a decidedly generous sixty days to find some-place else on my body where I needed hair and to where I would be willing to go to the expense of transplanting them, but those gray hairs that could not find employment elsewhere on my body were terminated. Actually, I have to admit some surprise that more gray hairs did not take me up on my magnanimous gesture, but then I suppose they felt that they were more or less rooted in their present position. Well, I guess it serves them right for being so narrow. The future belongs to the versatile.

And how well has all this right-sizing of my head worked out? Well, under normal conditions the hairs that I had left were doing quite nicely, thank you. Of course, last year on my trip to Southwest, the top of my head sunburned rather badly. Luckily, my scalp recognized what was the proper thing to do in the situation. Obviously another right-sizing became necessary and now I am getting by with even less hair on the top of my head. This means this summer more head has to be protected by fewer hairs, but as I say, these are the best hairs available anywhere and it is time for them to start proving it. If they fall out, let them be trod into the carpet; they let me down. and I am well on my way from having a shiny, vibrant head of hair, to a shiny, vibrant head without hair. [*]

MUSICON 5

Or Was That *BLIZZARDCON*?

by Eli Goldberg

At a semi-recent con, Graham Leathers described the Winnipeg tradition of "Prairie Blizzard Parties."

As Graham described, "The Canadian Prairies are fraught with peril, not the least of which being the Prairie Blizzard. Every now and again a real wollopaloozer of a snowstorm will come out of nowhere, descend on a major city, and cover every square foot with several meters of snow, shutting it down for hours, if not days.

"Fortunately, such a snowstorm usually gives some advance notice before it has a chance to descend upon a helpless population and confine them to their houses. After stocking up on firewood, potato chips, packing their instruments, pets and anything else they don't want to leave alone for more than a day, everyone and their uncle invades someone's house for a "blizzard party" until the City Department of Works and Operations gets moving and clears the snow off the streets and gets the city working again. Then, with some reluctance, the partied-out prairie dwellers shovel out their cars, and head home. It is from here on that people put their heads down and endure the deep freeze of another prairie winter."

Oddly enough, if you relocate such a party from Winnipeg to Tennessee, you'd have had **Musicon 5**. About 75 filkers braved the first batch of snow to attend. Those who made it were treated to a four (and in a few cases, five or even six) day weekend of friendship and song, with full filking Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night at a party aptly named "Sled Dog" party. Most of the East Coasters left Tuesday via US Air, and Crystal Paul being the last to leave on Wednesday since she flew on Southwest, a smaller airline.

Unfortunately, at least a dozen filkers whose homes were already engulfed by the blizzard missed the con, including Margaret Middleton, Michael Longcor, and a number of **Musicon's** most active performers, leaving a very small performer core at the convention. (A number of other semi-reg

ulars such as Maureen O'Brien, Renee Alper, Gary McGath and Lynn Gold just couldn't make it for various unfortunate reasons having nothing to do with weather.)

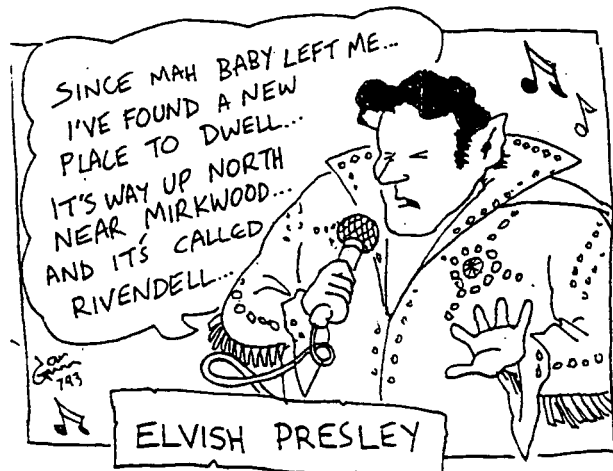
While still enjoyable, the circumstances resulting from the unusual weather meant that much of the convention ended up as performers' circles of Tom Smith, Murray Porath, and the Suttons, filling in the concert slots for the missing performers. (And we all know that Bill and Brenda Sutton were the most important performers at **Musicon** because of their wide range of material, experience from performing bar gigs, and most importantly, because they let me bum a ride to **Musicon**, without which you wouldn't be reading this con review, and they'd have had to actually pay for all of their Hawks tickets.)

Murray Porath – about whom I've heard many flattering comments, but had never had the pleasure of seeing in person until this **Musicon** – was present with his girlfriend, Kathy. They performed some of the wickedest Jewish filksongs that I've ever heard (ever hear "God Lives on Torah," or "Ale Filled Yahoos" [to "Eliyahu"]?), plus several traditional Israeli songs, sung beautifully in Hebrew. Solomon Davidoff was subsequently seen collecting Jewish filksongs for a book of Jewish filksongs – printed right to left, and I believe tentatively titled "Gefilte Filk."

The convention was also notable for the fact the one out of every ten members just happened to be a lawyer. Not only did it result in countless lawyer jokes (including Mike Browne singing Mike Rubin's "Nobody's Lawyer," a parody of "Nobody's Moggy Now" about lawyer roadkill, to Murray Porath's face), it also helped considerably with the various hotel incidents that occurred during the weekend. (The hotel was \$40/night, and let's just say that we got what we paid for.)

For example, Jinny (Andy Eigel's S.O.) – like many con members – was trying out the various leather attire for sale from Ram's Head Armory in the dealer's room. With nowhere to change clothing in a dealer's room, a number of filkers were seen strolling through the lobby in barbarian leather en route from the consuite bathroom. Nobody really minded – except for the restaurant manager. When Jinny passed by the lobby (along with lots of other folks, including Lee Billings, our con chair), the restaurant manager asked her, "Getting ready to work downtown?" (It's a local reference to where the Nashville whores work.) Jinny responded, "No, I work in a restaurant in Dayton." (If I recall, Jinny's presently a chef by profession, and plans on opening a restaurant in several years.) The restaurant manager replied, "That's all right, dear, I'm sure they could find a street corner for you somewhere." Jinny was respectably restrained, and just gave her a cold stare and walked away.

In another instance, a group of filkers including Solomon Davidoff (who diligently follows Jewish dietary laws) went to the Saturday hotel lunch buffet. Solomon exercised good judgment and asked the cook whether various



food dishes contained any meat products or byproducts. The cook promised us that they didn't. Solomon believed him. Not only was there ham cloaked in his mass of spinach, but the squash was littered with bacon. Solomon, unfortunately, realized the latter fact after he had already consumed it. The hotel promised a written apology to Solomon.

Suffice it to say that **Musicon 6** will be at a different (although still undetermined) hotel next year, and received a significant price break as a result of the problems.

In addition to an unusual number of hotel problems, **Musicon** was also notable for having first concerts for Scott "Cosmo" Snyder, Terry Kennedy, and the duo of Andy Eigel and Dave Tucker. Scott was a real treat; if you haven't heard him, he's an energetic guitarist and mandolin player of the highest caliber, as well as an excellent songwriter. He just began filking a bit under a year ago. Terry is a professional musician in the midwest who owns a 24-track digital recording studio, and just started filking last year at OVFF; if you haven't heard him, his vocal and guitar technique very much parallels that of Pete Grubbs. Andy Eigel and Dave Tucker are two young Midwestern filkers in their early twenties who are quickly becoming outstanding musicians; Andy has already mastered much of Steve Macdonald's guitar technique without a single lesson. Keep an eye on them over the coming years. With all the competition to performer at OVFF, it was great to have a chance to finally hear all of them sing at length.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Becky McGraw during a lobby jam. Becky is a very talented vocalist who also began filking several months ago. I certainly hope she sticks around. It's my personal opinion that she could easily rival Julia Ecklar as a performer if she chooses to develop her skills.

Bill Rintz, who recently had a stroke in September and could not attend OVFF, returned to fandom at **Musicon**. While he only took his fiddle out for 10 minutes – much of his muscle memory disappeared during the stroke – it was truly a pleasure to have his warm and friendly presence back in fandom. In effect, Bill is now in a position where he has to reteach himself much of what he had already learned about playing the fiddle, which is a very frustrating, tedious, if not even downright depressing, situation to be in for such a talented man as Bill. I don't think there's anyone who doubts that he'll be as good – and better – that he was before his stroke in the coming months and years.

This was also the first con that I had brought the 29-string harp that I had recently hacked together from a kit in my living room with lots of sandpaper, a drill, and a \$99 saw from Home Depot, as well as a full weekend's worth of improvisational woodworking that must have driven the folks in the neighboring apartments insane. Despite the fact that I couldn't really play it worth a damn at the con, it was the only harp at the convention and a lot of filkers seemed to enjoy it. (For a \$325 kit, it's actually a damned playable harp with a bright, clear tone; plug, plug....) Several filkers liked the harp well enough that they even asked for the address of Musicmaker's Kits to build themselves a harp, too. (Should you be one of them, that address is Musicmaker's Kits, Inc., PO Box 2117, Stillwater, MN 55082-2117.)

Most jaw-popping of the folks who twiddled with the harp was Russell, a member of the band *Timelines*. While a group of us (Andy Eigel, Jinny, Becky, and a few other people) were hanging around in the lobby mutilating filksongs, this young man (whom I had never seen before) simply walked past us in the lobby, sat in a chair, and asked me to play something. I naively ignored him, assuming he was with the high school wrestlers who were sharing the hotel. (Speaking of stereotypes, the wrestlers in question turned out to be very friendly people, read SF, spent a lot of time hanging out with several of the filkers. One of them even knew the son of my officemate at CNN, who also wrestles. Small world. Two of them asked for **Musicon** flyers and

said they'd be back next year.)

Anyway, Russell then proceeded to ask for permission to play with my harp, and much to my shock he was not only one of the best harpists I had ever heard in my life, but it turns out that he lives about 5 minutes from me in Atlanta. Oops. So much for stereotypes....

Most surprising, though, of the folks who played with my harp was a precocious 11-year old child (I think his name was Davis), who plays clarinet in school and had apparently never touched a harp before. He was plucking out melodies within 15 minutes. I couldn't believe that this same kid who had just plunked his first harp string Friday night had actually walked up to me at the Sunday night jam/filk and told me, "You're trying to play in the key of D, aren't you? You're actually in a different key; I think it's F. I think you want to flatten the two sharped notes on the two blue strings towards the top of the harp, and flip the sharping lever on this other note down here" *Gulp* You know ... he was 100% right, too.

I'll leave the other details for the other con reviews, as there is much, much more to say. Having just moved to Atlanta six months ago, I certainly found **Musicon** to be a much-anticipated and appreciated oasis of filk in the veritable Southern filk desert. Speaking of which, if you live in Atlanta and want to have monthly filksings, give me a ring at (404) 231-3183. If there's enough interest, I'll get off my duff and start 'em.

February, 1996*



Across the Wide Water

A Trip Report on Merry Old England and Parts of Scotland

by Elizabeth Ann Osborne

Part II: The Trip Around the Island

[In August of 1991, Elizabeth Osborne and her family traveled to England and Scotland. She wrote up her travels, and submitted them to me for publication. I published the first part in Lan's Lantern #43, and now, here is the conclusion of her trip report. --Lan]

Chapter 10: Sunday From London to Canterbury

Sunday was the day that we started our car trip around the Island of Great Britain, and we had no idea of what to expect. The first struggle was just to get out of London. The system we had set up was for Dad to drive and to have another person in the front seat with the map. The people in the back seat were to yell, when needed, "You're on the wrong side of the road!" Happily, that didn't take place very often.

We had a nice little car, very new, with no air conditioning but with both a cassette and CD player. As mentioned before, we just barely got all the luggage in the trunk, but we still had a couple of small bags in the back seat.

We drove through London, past the Tower of London and over Tower Bridge into Lambeth, where Dad missed a turn and we immediately got lost. This was accompanied by much hooting from the back seat and much loud discussion between Linda and me on why men wouldn't stop to ask directions. It took an hour to get back to the center of London and try again, over the Tower Bridge a second time, and this time we made it.

The first place that we stopped was the Thames Barrier, a huge attempt to prevent flooding in London. The southern part of England was sinking and with rising sea levels, London was getting more and more water in its streets. The Thames Barrier is a sort of movable dam and can close in case of high water levels (leaving all the towns to the East of London with even more water). A good display about the Barrier was in the Visitors' Center and we watched a program about the dam. We ate lunch there also and took some pictures. This was a great technological marvel; a pity it was as ugly as sin. It looked like five giant snails lined up for a race.

The next stop was planned to be a quick stop in Greenwich for a look at the Cutty Sark and the Observatory. It was Sunday, however, and there was a huge flea market in the area. The crowds were huge and we couldn't find a parking space anywhere, so we moved onto the Motorway

(English highway) and on to our next stop.

Getting onto the Motorway was a chore; we kept finding ourselves headed the wrong way. Finally we got it right and headed for the town of Seven Oaks. There we planned to see Knole House, considered to be one of the best homes in England. After an hour and a half we reached the town of Seven Oaks. We parked the car at the community pool and followed the signs down a deep valley and up a very steep hill. We began crossing roads which had cars on them coming from the main entrance, which was on the outside of town! By the time we reached the top, our legs were aching and we had to stop to catch our breath. Knole House is the home of the Sackville family and two branches of it are still living there. Most of the house, however, is run by the National Trust. They take care of the "state apartments" and leave the family to live in the old servants hall.

Most everything in the house was from the Stuart period, despite the fact that the house had been built in the 1500s and looked like a smaller version of Hampton Court. It was nice, but seemed a little damp and bare. One room, however, the King's Bedroom, was furnished with silver cloth and tables. I was like nothing we had seen elsewhere. We still couldn't take pictures or walk on the floor with high-heeled shoes (ladies with them on had to wear slippers while going through the house).

The house and the grounds were given to the Earls of Dorset (the Sackville family) who later became the Dukes of Dorset. The last of these Dukes died in a hunting accident in Ireland in 1857. The house was given to his sister, whose husband took the Sackville name and became Lord Sackville; the family still lives there.

Knole House is in the middle of a huge deer park and there are great herds of brown and white deer running around begging for handouts. Most of the other people there were English and they loved to picnic. The deer know this and gather in groups whenever someone lays down a cloth. There are signs that forbid feeding the deer, but these are happily ignored.

Dad went and got the car and drove around to the main entrance while we took pictures of deer and looked in the gift shop.

The next stop was the country home of Winston Churchill. This was Churchillwell, his home from the 1920s until his death. It was very nice and modern and a GOOD size. I wouldn't have any problem living there. The house was filled with Churchill items, including some of his paintings. Dad was surprised that the Germans hadn't tried to bomb it during the war (it was right on a line from London

to the coast). When we pointed out that it was rather small, he remarked, "That's what spies are for." We were told that the Churchills had a problem keeping the house in the later years of Winston's life, so some unknown persons paid the taxes each year until his death.

It was very pleasant, and there were a great number of people in attendance, mostly English. There was a fair sort of food place where many people were getting hot tea because the temperature was rapidly cooling down. Dad bought *The Complete Speeches of Winston Churchill* on audio tape. I bought two mini-books called *Spot the Fireplace* and *Spot the Furniture*, both of which were guides to figuring out the ages of antiques. I guess we looked English because we were stopped by someone who wanted to talk to us about banning hunting on National Trust lands. Once we opened our mouths, we had no trouble getting rid of them. We also accumulated lots of material from them on our car.

Soon we were on our way to Canterbury, about an hour away by the Motorway. We got to our B&B just as it was getting dark. The place was called Esham Lodge and was covered in flowers. Once we were outside of London the private gardens that we passed were just wonderful. I expected great flow-ers at the Palace gardens, the parks, etc., but was really surprised at all the flowers that people grew around their homes. In Florida the flowers are gone by the beginning of March. Even in Ohio, the flow-ers are all gone by mid-July. Here, in the middle of August, the flowers were in full bloom!

Another thing I noticed on our way there was there seemed to be hundreds of little sapling trees along the road and each one had what looked like a metal cage around it. There seemed to be thousands of these south and east of London, all the way to Canterbury. I finally asked one of the guides at Churchwell what they were. He told me that a few years ago there was a big storm that blew down a lot of the trees. These were replanted, and the cages are to prevent animals from eating the saplings.

Esham Lodge was a bit more hotel-like than the place in London. Linda and I got our own room for the night which was nice. Everyone was hungry but there weren't many places open on Sunday. We were directed to a steak house which we went to in the rain. It was nice and we had a fair meal. Linda was surprised by the poor quality of waitressing (she worked as a waitress) — it was not very good anywhere in England.

The steak house was right next to the local Roman Catholic church (which had a sign which read "Authentic Relics of St. Thomas the Martyr"), and I wondered if they envied the huge cathedral down the road. Most likely they wouldn't care for the expenses.

We dashed toward the B&B after dinner and got Dad to settle down for the night. He was developing a bad cold and we wanted him to rest. Linda and I watched the program "Travels in Britain", which contrasted the original Canterbury Pilgrims with a group of homeless who were demonstrating by having a modern pilgrimage of their own. It was just a bit of luck that this particular program was broadcast that night. Afterwards we watched an American-made TV movie, *The Man Who Lived at the Ritz*, and we dropped off to sleep.

Chapter 11: Monday Canterbury, Dover, and Cross Country to Salisbury

The next morning we woke up very early and ate a different version of the eggs and bacon that we had each day in London. As Dad checked out, we packed the car with our luggage and drove around the town looking for a drugstore and laundry. We found a chemist and Dad bought some

badly need-ed cold medicine. We then found a tiny hole-in-the-wall laundramat with only two washers and one dryer. They also took in laundry to clean, but it would have taken all day to get it done. We spent all morning washing clothes, which was really needed since we had worn every article at least once. Dad and I had been washing stuff in London with shampoo (which worked very well), but we all needed to do laundry. In truth, we all begrudged the time, but it had to be done.

After we repacked and loaded the car, we drove to a parking lot outside the medieval walls of Canterbury. These are still standing and make an impressive barrier. We walked under the road instead of across it. I thought that was really neat—certainly one way to cut down on traffic accidents. Once inside the old city of Canterbury, we joined the already crowded streets going toward the Cathedral. I stopped off at a bank to cash some travelers checks and nearly lost my family in the crush. The place was busy, especially when you have everybody walking along really narrow medieval streets. If you put everyone in medieval dress, you would have a good idea of what it might have been like 700 years ago (though you would have had to add some open trash). The Cathedral was huge, but we really couldn't see much of it because of the buildings around it. Once we passed through the arch into the courtyard, it loomed over us.

We entered and for a small donation of £1.50 we got an audio tape tour of the Cathedral. Just as we were about to start, a Deacon came out and led a few hundred tourists in the Lord's Prayer and a prayer for world peace (the third major church in which this happened to us!). The Church smelled full of incense; it was busy with tourists, pilgrims, local worshippers and clergy. Many in the crowd were French and Italian, and I wondered if they were here more as pilgrims than tourists.

One of the first stops on the tape was the Martyrdom, the spot where Thomas Becket was killed by the four knights of Henry II. I was a little surprised by the location; from my reading of the accounts of the assassination, I was under the impression that the killing took place near the high altar. In fact, the site was at the foot of a side staircase.

The Chapel of the Swordpoint (the name for the area itself) had wonderful stained glass. All the stained glass at Canterbury Cathedral is great, lots of it original. One window had a picture of George VI and his Queen (the present Queen Mother), and the present Queen and her sister as children. Right next to that is a window with a picture of Edward V and his family, including the poor Princes who were murdered in the Tower. This window was very important to me. I have a biography of Edward V and his family, and that window was one of the plates in the book. All of the glass was very nice, including the modern ones. The medieval glass was removed during WW II, fortunately, since the city was heavily damaged by bombing raids and all the glass was blown out when a concussion bomb landed nearby.

The next part of the tour led down into the crypt. This was the oldest part of the church and held the Treasury, where the collection of church silver and vestments were kept, and the Chapel of Our Lady of Underwood. This was the original location of the crypt of Becket, and where Henry II did his public penance. The incense was so thick that it was nearly rolled about in clouds. I imagined an incense-burning machine somewhere down here chugging away, but I never found where it was coming from.

Walking around the crypt in the dim light I found about a dozen chapels, some used for services, some dusty with disuse. Down here were the burial places of several Archbishops, including the last Roman Catholic Archbishop. He had died of natural causes before he had to butt heads with Henry VIII. That allowed Henry to appoint Cranmer to that position. Looking at that little, half hidden away tomb, I thought about life's vanities. Becoming Archbishop of Can-

terbury was most likely this man's dream. He must have thought that he'd reached the top of a greasy pole, only to have it all come crashing down around him just before he died.

I left the crypt after praying at the Underwood Chapel, and headed toward the back of the church. Behind the main altar was the shrine to Thomas Becket, until Henry VIII had it destroyed. Now a lighted candle resides in the spot where the shrine had been, as well as the tombs of Henry IV and Edward the Black Prince. Nearby in an enclosed glass case were Edward's gloves, surcoat, sword and helmet. Some SCA people I know would really like to see that. At the very back of the church was a chapel to "modern saints and martyrs", including Martin Luther King. After saying a prayer there, I went to the next chapel, St. Anselm.

The first thing I noticed was the modern stained glass window. I also noticed some medieval frescoes on the wall. These were the only frescoes I saw on the trip. Quite a number of people believed that medieval people lived in houses and castles with bare stone walls (just check out any period film). In fact, most walls were plastered over and painted. These walls have not survived in most places, but they survived here (although damaged). I was very impressed. I could not explore the chapel as much as I had wanted because it was being used for some sort of consultation session, but I did see the tomb of St. Anselm (1033-1109) in the middle of the room.

I finally reached the end of the tour. I had gotten separated from the rest of the family, but they were waiting for me by the door. I took a quick trip to the bookshop but only bought some postcards (which got lost) and a few items for my friends in the SCA. While leaving the square I tried to go into another gift shop, but Linda threw herself in front of the doorway, shouting "No, no!" Dangerous action, Sis, I thought.

Despite my feelings on the subject, we ate at a famous Scottish restaurant in Canterbury, McDonald's. We then returned to the car and drove eleven miles to Dover.

We had no trouble on the drive and were there in less than a half hour. We saw the famous White Cliffs and nearly ended up on the ferry to France. There was an excavation of a hotel for Roman civil servants on business for the Empire in Dover which I would have liked to see, but we had to move on.

Dover Castle, with its history from the Norman conquest to WW II, was sitting on top of the cliffs. The castle looked like something that would be nice to own. When we left Dover, we passed by the construction entrance to the Channel Tunnel and nearly got run over by two huge dump trucks.

Thus started a day of marathon driving along the south coast of England from Dover to Salisbury. We did it by driving nearly non-stop and by cutting off items we had wanted to see with bloody abandon. We were in for a rude shock as we covered South England at the height of the vacation season. Everyone who could afford it had a little cottage on the Channel. Indeed, the weather and site were very nice - sunny and bright. Kent fairly glittered and the area reminded me of the coast of the Great Lakes in summer. The traffic, however, was very heavy. The cars and trucks were almost bump-er-to-bumper from Dover to Brighton, and all this on a two lane road that went through every village and took every curve it could. We rarely got above 30 mph, and the distance we had to travel to Salisbury suddenly looked very long indeed. It seemed like those tiny two lane roads were laid out by a drunken cow. And everyone used them - garbage trucks, farm equipment, and people who insisted on traveling at 35 mph. You never miss something until you lose it, and we missed our US interstate highway system.

The rolling hills of Kent reminded me of western Pennsylvania. Some of the best gardens I have ever seen were in front of the homes we drove past. The English were famous

for their flowers and this showed me why. And cultivated flowers were not the only ones we saw. Beautiful wildflowers were here too: Queen Anne's lace, daisies, larkspur, Scottish thistle, goldenrod and poppies were all growing at the side of the road.

There were many strange-looking buildings that we saw, rounded structures with roofs that looked like upside down ice cream cones. The really strange thing was that the top of the roofs were white and looked tiled, and like someone had broken the tip off. We couldn't decide if they were barns, windmills, or silos. Later I found out they were called "oate houses" and were used for drying hops.

We skipped Hastings and drove to the town of Battle. This was where the Battle of Hastings took place. The site was run by a group called "English Heritage", a non-profit rival to the National Trust. We walked around the battlefield and the ruins of the Abbey that was built on the site where King Harold was supposed to have been killed. The battle site was obscured by roads, trees, hedges, fences and buildings. It was a little hard to visualize the battle that was fought 900 years ago and changed the history of England.

Here, as in other places we encountered in England, was the ruins of an Abbey destroyed by Henry VIII during the destruction of the monasteries. The extent of the damage reminded me of the destruction of the Cultural Revolution in China. I was raised a Protestant with a positive view of this action; seeing it in person I wasn't so sure. After about 40 minutes we left and continued our journey toward Salisbury.

We crossed both Portsmouth and Brighton off our list and headed inland for Winchester. We got there about seven in the evening. This was the capital of Saxon England, and many of the Saxon Kings were buried in the Cathedral. Unhappily it was too late to get into the Cathedral. Besides, we couldn't get near it because of a pedestrian mall. We did stop for gas and talked to the manager of the station. He had just come back from a three month drive across the US and was happy to help us. Then it was on to Salisbury, where we arrived at 8.

We were relieved to be in Salisbury and at the Red Lion Inn. (We had seen so many Red Lion, King's Head, and White Hart pubs that we joked about buying a franchise; we kept count as a way of passing time in the car.) This Red Lion Inn dated back to the 1300s when it was a pilgrims inn. It became a coach inn, and was still operating today. The inside was mainly Victorian, but a cut-away in the dining room showed the first waul and dabble interior. There were some interesting pieces of furniture, but I wasn't sure if they were original or reproductions. The wooden beams were real, as were the metal hinges on the doors. We arrived too late to eat in the dining room, but we were fed in the salon.

We got a huge room with four twin beds right under the roof. Despite having driven across the country, I was not really that sleepy, so I spent some time staring into the darkness.

Chapter 12: Tuesday Salisbury Cathedral, Stonehenge, Bath, and on to Oxford

The next morning we ate breakfast in the dining room before packing the car and leaving a very nice spot. Dad drove to Salisbury Cathedral, our next stop on the list. This cathedral is big, having the highest spire in England (if not all of Europe). It was covered with construction scaffolding which had signs that read: "Watch Out for Falling Masonry". We told Dad that he could get a free stone.

Salisbury Cathedral had been through a lot in its 700 year history. It came close to ruin twice during that time, and it was still undergoing repairs. The biggest concern was

the spire which was being replaced. Although the stained glass was Victorian Medieval and looked terrible, the inside was really nice. It had a great many embroidery and needle-work pieces around the Cathedral, and these are rightly famous.

To fund the rebuilding of the spire, the church has two interesting fund-raising campaigns. One was to pay to write your name on a piece of roofing lead. The other was to pay to draw or write on a small piece of glass that would be placed in the new spire when it was finished. Our family did write on the roofing lead, and I wrote both my name and SCA name on a piece of glass. I also wanted to add, "The Dream Lives!", but the engraving tool was heavy enough that I had a difficult time just carving my name.

I picked up an interesting story about the Cathedral. After it was nearly destroyed during the English Civil War, a committee was formed to hire some people to repair it. They hired a young architect (19 years old) named Christopher Wren. His plans were so expensive to carry out that he was fired, and the plans put on the shelf. After he died (he lived to be 92), the rebuilding committee took the plans off the shelf and used them for the second time that the Cathedral was fixed – during the 1800s. I doubt that they paid the family for them.

After prayers, I was looking at a model showing the original building of the Cathedral during the 1300s. At one point I noticed something about the construction. They used loose gravel to fill in the site, since it was wetlands. Now "wetland" is a word heard often in Florida. It means "swamp-land"! SWAMPLAND! Ahhh! No wonder the place was falling down. A vision of the Monty Python skit (from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*) about the castle that was built on swampland filled my head as I turned around (almost expecting to see chunks of stone falling down), and looked for an exit.

My dad came up and I hissed, "Dad, this place is built on swampland! No wonder it's falling down."

He replied, "I know. I was talking to someone and he said that everything is built on three feet of wet gravel. As long as the gravel stays wet, the whole building stays up." Well, I didn't run out of the building, but I didn't linger there either.

I ended up in a very pretty and pleasant cloister (an interior courtyard), one of the largest in Europe. Dad and the rest of the family soon joined me, and we walked around there. Salisbury houses one of only four original copies of the Magna Charta, the beginnings of all British and American law. It was displayed in an eight-sided room that stood apart from the rest of the Cathedral. It had huge clear windows which let the sun in, and had a really cute stonework showing the story of Noah's Ark. On display with the Magna Charta were some books from the 1400s showing examples of lettering and bookbinding.

At the other end of the cloister from the main church was a brass-rubbing center. Dad had never heard of this hobby and was very interested in the display. I didn't have the heart to tell him that it's fairly common in the US. A trip to the gift shop followed, where I bought a copy of the Magna Charta and Dad bought a piece of stone taken from the repair site. We walked out of the Cathedral just as the first busload of tourists for the day arrived.

One quick note. As we were leaving town we passed Salisbury's gaming store: Floppy Tongue.

Our next stop a half hour away was Stonehenge. This place was packed with British tourists, busses, people selling ice cream, etc. We parked across the street and walked through a tunnel that went under the main road and up on the other side. The stones were roped off in the middle of a sheep pasture (What does England do with all those sheep? On second thought, don't answer that.), so we could not go up to the stones. I expected to be awed by Stonehenge but wasn't. Maybe I've seen too many pictures of it, heard how

great it was, seen too many huge buildings in the past week, etc. We spent about 40 minutes there, avoided the gift shop, and left for Bath.

Bath was not on my list of places to visit, but Dad wanted to see it. Bob also suggested it, although we were not sure what we would be seeing there. The route was another one through country roads and, even though we had our seat belts fastened, we were tossed about the back seat. I ended up getting car sick and was in a foul mood by the time we got there.

The city was surprisingly crowded to the point of almost making it difficult to walk in the streets. I thought this was strange, especially since most of the people were British, and it was a weekday. Later I found out about shopping tours, where Londoners take the train to Bath for shopping. Bath used to be famous as a resort area, but not now. The last hospital/spa closed in the 1970s for some unknown reason. And the city is famous for its architecture.

We walked down streets filled with loud traffic noises and road construction, onto a pedestrian street which ended up in front of the Roman Bath Museum. These were the ruins of the original spa built during the Roman occupation of Britain. Most of these ruins were only uncovered in the past century, even though the hot springs were known throughout the history of the Island. Except for Stonehenge and the London Wall, these ruins were probably the oldest ones I saw in England or Scotland. The tour guides took large groups through a complex and very impressive system of rooms and baths. They had so many people coming through that their narrative was spoken too fast and there was little time to ask questions. One room had to be emptied before the next group could come in.

There were signs everywhere that told people not to drink or touch the water in the main pool. When I asked about it, I was told that the warm water from the spring, plus the warm sunlight (the roof of the main pool was gone) caused a huge growth of algae and micro-organisms in the water which made it unsafe to drink unless treated. They mentioned that the water contained a certain amoebas which could infect the brain and be fatal. I nearly laughed when I heard this because the same thing takes place in Florida during the summer.

After that tour, we started walking and looking at the shops. The city's heyday was in the 1700s and most of the gift shops reflected that. The Roman Museum gift shop, however, had more varied goods, and I bought a Roman cookbook there.

By then it was after two o'clock and we were getting hungry. We couldn't find a place serving food until we happened upon a modern mini-mall called The Footlights. Linda and I noticed a Crabtree and Evelyn store (a company which specialized in scented soaps and other bath products), and we dove in. Before the guys could drag us out we discovered a restaurant on the second floor that served lunch and tea. We sat out on their second floor patio above the rooftops of Bath and ate a really nice meal. This was the only place in Britain that we saw use tea bags. Each table had a little metal and glass teapot with a plunger inside. When your tea was ready you pushed the plunger down and it crushed the teabag for you. We thought that was really neat.

It was after four o'clock by the time we finished lunch, so we decided to get back into the car and continue on our way toward Oxford where we were to stay for the night. We had planned to go to Stratford-on-Avon this day, but Dad figured that we would arrive too late to see anything (things in England close at 5). So we drove to Oxford and had no trouble on the road until we came to what we Americans would call a bypass around the city. For some reason we got turned around and circled the rather small city for an hour. Once inside we drove around for another hour trying to find our B&B, before finally calling. It turned out not to be in

Oxford at all, but in a nearby town named Kington. It was a strange place, in that every brick building was made out of the same colored brick, giving it the look of a large housing project or apartment blocks. We stayed at the Bowood Lodge which, despite its name, looked a great deal like an American roadside motel. I didn't mind that. The food was good and the beds soft. The only thing missing was a pool (not that we saw one anywhere in Britain). The service was the best we had received so far during our trip. While I talked to the waitress about mutton stew (remember, I was wondering about all those sheep we had seen), Dad and the rest of the family took their glasses of English hard cider back to the room (with our host's permission). Dad nearly tripped on the sidewalk and dropped his. We all played Skipo for an hour (I had a feeling that I was the only one strictly sober) and we got ready for bed. Before we turned in, however, the innkeeper and his wife showed up at our door. It wasn't that we were too loud, but some-one had blown a fuse in the motel and the fuse box was in our room. Within a minute they were in and out with the trouble fixed.

Chapter 13: Wednesday Oxford, Blenheim Palace, and Nottingham

After a deep sleep we arose, ready to go again. A big breakfast followed and we were soon in the car driving around Oxford. We headed for the train station where we parked the car and boarded a tour bus. In most places we had avoided the guided tours, but we really had no idea of what to see, and even Bob was having trouble locating his college. Bob had been living in Oxford for nearly six weeks but only knew the town by walking or biking about. Most of the streets were unfamiliar to him. It was a wonderful sunny day and we had a great view of this mid-sized town. It was surprisingly full of people, noise and traffic, so much that I wondered how the students could study. And this was summer break, too.

Oxford University is made up of about 30 different colleges, each with its own history and admission standards. It is completely different from the American style university with its large individual buildings, dorms, halls classrooms, etc. Each college is one huge building with its own dorm, offices, classrooms, chapel, and a huge grassy quadrangle in the middle. After we toured, Bob found his college, so we picked up the car and drove there.

Bob had spent six weeks at Summerville, one of Oxford's women's colleges. During the summer they open their doors for a summer session for students from overseas. While there, we sat in the quadrangle waiting for Bob to finish checking out his old room. I was amazed to find how quiet it was in there. It was as if the noise of the outside traffic just disappeared.

As a parting activity, the family walked to a nearby store to buy Oxford stuff. Bob wanted a school tie (good luck finding one from Summer-ville!), and Linda bought a rugby shirt for her boy-friend. While they did this, I went to check out the bookstore next door. Oxford had a lot of book-stores, but for some strange reason I couldn't find anything I wanted to buy. My family was amazed. After this we got back into the car and left Oxford, heading north.

We had no real plans of where to go, but I reminded Dad that he had thought about seeing Blenheim Palace. I was tempted to point us in the direction of Stratford-on-Avon (there were enough signs on the road), but didn't push it.

Blenheim Palace was the home of the Dukes of Marlborough, and the family still owned it. The first Duke of Marlborough acquired it by defeating the French army in 1704. Winston Churchill was born there (his uncle was the

Duke) and they had his suite of rooms open to the public with some items about his life. Sir Winston is also buried on the grounds, but it was quite a walk to get there so we didn't go. The family had taken to selling farm goods and conducting tours of the place to raise money. It was very crowded with people, including many English people who had a nice time just sitting under the trees on the huge lawn. The tours were run by the same type of elderly retirees that you find at American historical sites. They walked around talking about "our Duchess, our Duke" with obvious pride. There were some very impressive rooms, but it was still a livable place. The gallery, a long narrow room found in many stately homes, used to display picture collections. It was recently painted a very modern peach and white, and was turned into a library. Included here were some family portraits of Princess Diana, the Dukes Robes of Parliament and other family momentos.

After seeing the family chapel and the fountains in back of the house, we ran through four gift shops. I stopped only to buy soda and gingerbread to eat. We hadn't stopped for lunch and I was starving.

It was later afternoon so we raced down the motorway toward Stone-on-Trent to see the pottery factories there. Linda was getting married next year and she wanted to look at place settings. We tried to reach the Royal Dalton factory, but were too late. We headed immediately for Wedgewood. Their museum was closed, but we got to go through the gift shop, where I had Dad buy items for the grandmothers. Linda looked at patterns and I bought a china box. As we were leaving, I saw the US flag flying in a row with other flags. I had to take a second look because I thought I was in the US for a few minutes.

We hit rush hour traffic, and as we inched along Dad and I talked about the US highway system. Dad mentioned that driving in England was like driving in the US during the 1950s before the highways were put in. He said "It was the best thing the Democrats ever did." That's saying a great deal from my Dad.

The traffic finally eased and we raced down the open road toward Nottingham. We made pretty good time but still arrived around 7 PM, after most eating places were closed. We were starving. As we traveled through the James Harriot-looking land-scape, we finally came to a recently opened B&B called The Arms. I said, "Turn in here," to my Dad and we stopped for an early supper. The place was wonderful, one of the best places we ate at during the whole two weeks. It was a well-decorated farmhouse, very pretty, and if we hadn't had reservations elsewhere, we might have stayed there. If I ever go back to England again, I would certainly want to stay there at least one night.

We drove a half hour to Nottingham, which was nearly empty. Kevin Costner's film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* was opening in England that week, and we thought it would be cool to see the film (again) in Nottingham, but we got to the theater twenty minutes too late. That was all right, since we were also looking for our B&B and we didn't find it while driving through the city.

Since we would be driving a lot the next day, and we would have to get started early, we decided not to do any backtracking. So when we stopped at Nottingham Castle (too late to get in, of course), we peered through the gates, and I took a picture. We passed plenty of places to stay, displays of Robin Hood stuff, through to the other side of town. The B&B was in a little village of not more than two dozen houses, on the outskirts of Nottingham. Upton Fields was a recently renovated 17th century farmhouse with pretty stained glass windows and a paved porch which overlooked the fields and the village in the background. It was after dark when we arrived about 9. The couple who ran the place were waiting up for us, and they turned in as soon as they put us in our rooms.

There was little to do, and I was too upset to sleep. I

was tired from riding in the car all day, and disappointed that we had not seen more. We had skipped Stratford-on-Avon, and now most of Nottingham, two of the places I had really wanted to see. I stayed up to write in my journal until I wound down enough to sleep.

Chapter 14: Thursday York, and on to Scotland

The next morning we awoke and had one of the best breakfasts in England. We ate in the dining room and looked over the pictures the hostess had of her daughters' weddings. I played with the family's two cats before they were shooed out, and we talked with the hostess about the traffic north.

We got on our way, but took twenty minutes to visit the Sherwood Forest visitor's center. The problem was that it didn't open until ten, and it was only eight-thirty. Dad tried to cheer me up by saying that it looked like a tourist trap, and not to feel so bad. We drove to York, arriving about noon. By the time we got there I was suffering from a mild case of car sickness. I was not in a good mood and made Dad stop at a chemist's for some motion sickness pills. I took two tablets immediately and felt better in a few minutes. I hadn't stopped to think about the side effects.

It was lunch time for us, and we looked for a place to stop as we drove toward the city's center. We passed several B&Bs, but nothing was open for lunch.

The city of York is very old. It was founded by the Romans as an administrative center for this area, the most northern part of their empire. The walls they built are still standing around the city center. During the Middle Ages York was the administrative center for the Church in the North of Britain. It nearly became the capital of England, but for the fact that the English Kings had to keep an eye on their French lands. It was one of the largest cities of England during this period, about the same size as it is today. When Henry VIII got rid of the Catholic Church, York went into a decline that it never overcame until the 19th century. The result was that York had a more medieval flavor than most English cities because the people didn't have the money to do much "modern" building. I was really looking forward to this spot, but was once again to be disappointed.

By the time we got to the city's center, it was obvious that everyone in England (it seemed) was there in York. The roads were so full of cars that they looked like parking lots. The roads were narrow to begin with, and it didn't help that the locals parked on both sides of the street. We looked in a few parking lots, but didn't see any open spots at all. Then we drove around the city's walls, but got into a twenty minute traffic jam. There were people everywhere, some in cars, some walking, and more arriving at the train station across the street.

The car hadn't moved for some time when I noticed a store that specialized in dragon and fantasy figures. I had been looking for such items since Windsor but had been unable to find anything. I jumped out of the car and rushed in. They had exactly what I wanted. I bought some for a friend and rushed out. I couldn't believe it. The car stood still for twenty minutes, then the minute I got out it moved. I waited for a while until the car returned.

I hopped back in and Dad said they had driven around the town only to find no parking places anywhere. As a result, we stood Linda on the back seat with the upper half of her body through the sunroof, and we drove around York while she took videos. We saw the Cathedral wrapped in plastic and scaffolding, and some of the surrounding areas. We didn't do too much else there. While Linda was a big hit with the crowds, I was sure that the police would not be so amused by it.

As we were leaving the city, we tried again to find a place that was serving lunch. We stopped at one B&B to

ask for help, and were told that we couldn't get lunch in the city, that "the trade didn't support it." Considering the crowds we had passed through, we found it hard to believe. The owner nodded and told us that most of the trade was one-day trips from London, and that those people didn't eat in town. London was about three hours away by train, the most popular and smartest way to travel. The owner recommended that we go eat lunch at The Grange. We got the same story from the next place we went to, so we looked for The Grange. ("Grange" is an old-fashioned word for "farm".)

The Grange was about ten miles out in the country. It was nearly empty when we got there, and we had to wait about a half hour before they opened. We sat in a lobby filled with "country style" knick-knacks and pictures of the York Cathedral fire which happened a few years ago. The owners also allowed us to look over the menu and order early. We then sat down to partake of another of the best meals we had on our English trip. One dish I remember well was an appetizer with mushrooms and garlic, called "Poor Man's Snails". We had a great meal at a great place. I thought it very odd that the best restaurants in England were in the country and not in London.

While we were there, only one other group came in, English tourists who talked about opening their own B&B. Unknown to me, during the meal side-effects of the motion-sickness pills that I had taken before had begun to take effect. I seemed fine as long as I was sitting down, but I knew I was in trouble when I stood up. We were walking out of the restaurant when I accidentally knocked a purse belonging to the other party onto the floor. I reached down to pick it up and nearly fell flat on my face. My family guessed then that I was in trouble, since they got me outside and into the back seat of the car quickly. I slept most of the way north, but I did remember waking up to see Newcastle.

I awoke as we came close to the border of Scotland. Dad was looking for Hadrian's wall, while Linda and I talked about how we would know that we were in Scotland. Would there be a border crossing, since it is a separate country? or would we just stop in a town and find out that we were in Scotland? The countryside was wonderful, very green, bright and sunny. We followed the road, climbing up into the hills which were covered with pine trees.

Suddenly we were on a flat piece of ground on top of the hills. The road widened and along the side was an eight foot length of reddish stone that looked as if it belonged at Stonehenge. Simply carved on it was *England and Scotland* on either end. Of course, we stopped, as did everyone else who came that way. We looked at the view, watched the people, got a drink, and took lots of pictures. It had been rather warm when we set out from Nottingham, about 70°F, but here it was really different. We jumped out of the car, and immediately jumped back in for our jackets. It felt like 40°F, if anything. It was cloudy and there was a stiff cold wind. Our pictures showed us huddled up together and saying "Dad, please Hurry!" A roadside stand was doing a good business of selling coffee and hot chocolate. A truck driver stopped and got a cup. "Been hot in Nottingham," he said, "and now this!"

From where we stood we had a great view of England on our right, Scotland on our left. Linda and I looked down on England, which was full of sunshine, then on Scotland, which was covered with clouds and rain. Linda commented, "We now know how to know when we're in Scotland. The weather turns nasty!"

I read a stone that said the spot had been set aside as a meeting place for Lords from the borders to have peaceful meetings. I mentioned that it probably wasn't used very much. After we prevented Dad from falling off the cliff while taking pictures, a van from the north came by and unloaded three adults and six children, all blondes, including the dad carrying a video camera. The real surprise was that they did-

n't speak any English. Linda poked me and asked what language they were speaking, and I guessed Gaelic. Later, after I had thought about it, they were probably speaking Norwegian.

We got back into the car and drove down the hills into Scotland. There was not much to see until we got to Jedburgh, where we stopped to look at the castle there. A sign mentioned that Mary, Queen of Scots was held there as a prisoner before being sent over the border to England. I found out that the Scottish people had Mary, Queen of Scots, on the brain, just like people in the US have George Washington on the brain. Any spot where she even stopped for a night has a sign out front to commemorate it. We drove for another hour or so until we came to Edinburgh.

To my thinking, Edinburgh was a too small a town for it to be the capital of Scotland. The old Scottish Parliament building was there, as well as their National Theater and Gallery. Holyrood Palace, the place where the Queen stays while in Scotland (the Official Scottish Palace) was there as well. And the Scottish Crown Jewels were housed in Edinburgh too. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I don't remember much about the drive into Edinburgh. The pills I had taken were still affecting me. We ended up in front of the place we would be staying for the weekend. It was another B&B, though not as nice as some of the ones we had stayed in. With the Edinburgh Festival going on, we were lucky to find accommodations at all. The place was a Victorian house with three stories. We were on the top floor and had to walk 45 narrow steps to get there. When we got to our room with our suitcases, we dropped onto the beds and slept for an hour before Dad got up and started talking about dinner. The last thing I wanted to do was get back in a car. Sis, who was of the same mind, and I went back to sleep while the guys went out for food.

About 45 minutes later they came back with Chinese Take-Away (like American "take-out"). Dad reported that the Chinese ladies in the take-away had laughed at their "strong American accents." We ate and Dad gave me some flyer he had picked up about what was going on in town.

Every year during the month of August, Edinburgh hosted a Fine Arts Festival which invited Europe's and the world's most creative and best opera, theater and other fine arts. Along with this was the Fringe Festival, a collection of off-beat and just-plain odd acts. It was not strange to have every theater, storefront, church hall and even street corners filled with plays, acts and even bagpipers. The streets were filled with people and walking could be difficult, especially trying to get around the dance troops from Africa, the rock band from Poland, the acrobats from Russia, and so on. Along with all this was a book fair and an arts and crafts fair taking place in the park.

Unhappily I was too tired to do more than see straight, so I went down to the lobby of the B&B (which had been the living room) to watch some TV and see the people coming in and out. While I was there I noticed that the sun didn't set until 10 PM. This surprised me until I remembered that Scotland was on the same latitude as Newfoundland in Canada; in Florida, the sun sets by 8, even in the summer. Bob came in and informed me that, after reading the guest book, about 50% of the people there were Americans. 25% Japanese, and the rest "from all over". As soon as I felt strong enough, I climbed the 45 stairs to our room and went to bed. I had no trouble sleeping like a log the rest of the night.

Chapter 15: Friday Edinburgh, and the Festival

The next morning I felt fine. We got up early and nearly walked in on the owner and his family eating their breakfast. We waited a bit and then went in to eat much the same

breakfast that we had in London. After the hearty meal we hit the pavement to do some sightseeing, but we had no idea of what to do. We walked a few blocks to the Tourist Information Center and hung around there for about an hour. I think we stayed there so long because it was so cold out. Finally, we decided to take a tour bus around and see if we could find anything to do. We caught the first bus of the day, and despite the cold sat in the upper exposed story (you can always tell the Americans...). We were the only people on the bus at that time, and the guide came up and sat with us.

While we rode around the historical part of the city, she pointed out special items and told us about the City. We had a good view of most of the sites, except for the Robert Burns Monument which was covered with scaffolding and plastic. The old Medieval city of Edinburgh was not very large, only about a square mile. The area was too dangerous to live outside the walls of the city, so everybody was crammed inside. Despite its small size, as many as 5,000 people lived within its walls. Buildings during this period were often as high as five stories, with the rich people living on the top floors, closer to the light and air, while the poor lived on the street level. Narrow alleyways were once the city's main streets, and the Royal Mile – the mile-long road from the gate of Edinburgh Castle to the city's gate – was the city's main street.

When the bus stopped at Edinburgh Castle we got off to take the tour. Because we had the National Trust passes, again we didn't have to buy tickets. While we waited to enter, we watched their "Changing of the Guards," and looked over the area where the Edinburgh Tattoo was going to take place. Since we were planning to go to the performance that night, we were concerned that the place was too exposed to the wind, and that we would freeze there. It was really cold; even the Scots Guards were wearing plaid pants instead of kilts.

To explain: Edinburgh was on the highest point in Edinburgh. Built on the plug of a prehistoric volcano, it looks down on the countryside all around it. Inhabited since prehistoric times, the castle was the main military spot and royal palace until the time of King James VI of Scotland (who became James I of England). It remained a military outpost, even a prison camp for POWs, up to the beginnings of the 20th century. A moat used to run around the castle, but that was drained and now it was a parkland.

Once we got into the Castle, we were led around by an elderly guard, much the same way we were herded around the Tower of London. We went higher and higher until we were some 800 feet above the city. During our tour we saw the Scottish Crown Jewels (the oldest set in Europe), the old palace, lots of weapons, the Traitor's Gate (unlike the one in London, people who were believed to be traitors to the crown were tossed out this gate to fall to their deaths on the rocks some 800 feet below). We saw the Scottish War Memorial, a huge chapel built to honor those Scotsmen who died in the First World War, and St. Margaret's Chapel.

St. Margaret's Chapel had a very interesting history. It's one of the oldest buildings that is still standing on the rock. It was built around 1200 AD. Margaret of Scotland was a member of the old Northumberland royal family. They lived in peace with the Saxon Kings in London, but the family was forced into exile when the Normans came. Her brother took the family to Scotland where she planned to join a convent and become a nun (so the story goes). King Malcolm of Scotland, however, fell in love with her and pressed her to marry him. She did, and became Queen. She became very powerful and influenced Scotland and Scottish policy for many years. For one thing, she introduced such new ideas as candles, dinner plates, and soap to the Scottish Court. Queen Margaret pushed for Church reform and built Holyrood Abbey (which was now Holyrood Palace)

After her husband, her eldest son, and then she died,



Queen Margaret's second son David ascended the throne. King David of Scotland was one of the best rulers that Scotland ever had, and he had built the little chapel that bears his mother's name, and in which any member of the Scottish military can be married.

A side note: In many ways Scotland is still a separate country from England. They print their own money, have their own flag, their own Crown Jewels, their own Parliament building, and Elizabeth II of England is called Elizabeth I of Scotland. Unlike London, or much of England, the Scots fly their flag often. In England, and especially in London, I almost never saw the Union Jack, but Edinburgh was full of the Blue and White Cross of St. George. I never saw the yellow and red flag that comes out at every highland games around the world and is used as Scotland's flag all over the US, and I could get no one to explain to me why.

After we passed through the castle, we ended up in the gift shop. This was full of little bottles of whiskey, some woolen items, tapes of American songs played by bagpipers and fiddlers. I didn't think I wanted tapes of "When the Saints Go Marching In" by bagpipe.

After the tour, we went shopping along the Royal Mile. Many of the shops sold wool products and types of whiskey, and I doubted that they were open all year round. We popped in and out of a few stores. I found Edinburgh's gaming/comic book store called WarHammer, but I didn't go in. The guide on the bus recommended a specialty store with hand-knitted items. There I bought a hat and gloves, and my family also bought stuff to keep warm with during the Tattoo. I later sent the hat and gloves to friends in Ohio, since there was not much call for wool gloves and hat in Florida.

All of the stores were filled with Scottish knickknacks. One of the things I bought was a pottery "Nessie", as I have always wanted one. In one store, however, I saw something that no self-respecting Scotsman would wear, but which I loved. It was a foot-long dirk, a type of dagger or short sword. It had a beautiful yellow stone in the hilt, the size of a small chicken egg. The scabbard was "silver" and black with two little knives on the front. How do you say "tacky" in Gaelic? But I wanted it so bad. I would have been the envy of everyone at the next SCA event. I didn't even bother to ask the price. I knew that it was way beyond what I could afford.

(Once home, I asked the question of the head of Trimmies Scottish Household, "How do you say 'tacky' in Gaelic?" He told me that there was no such word or concept; any culture that developed plaid didn't need to worry about being "tacky".)

A note about dress. There were lots of locals in the streets, but it was really cold. The only men in kilts I saw

were two teens playing bagpipes, the doorman at the Edinburgh Hotel, and one guy who was playing bowls. I was also surprised, looking through the stores, that the outfits being sold were not the traditional outfits so beloved by the Scottish Country Dancing people. The outfit was made up of the kilt, a solid color sports jacket with a tie in the same color, and a regular white shirt. Very different from what I thought it would be.

We ate lunch at the Pizza Hut, then got back on the bus. Once again we sat on top with the guide, and saw the rest of the city. She pointed out the New Town, built outside the walls in the 1700s, John Knox's house, Georgian House, and other places. We also saw Robert Louis Stevenson's house, but it was not open to the public.

After the tour we walked back to our B&B where we rested for about an hour, then got dressed for the Tattoo. Since we had not brought cold-weather clothes with us, we dressed in layers. I had two t-shirts on under a long sleeved shirt and jacket, two pairs of pants, plus my gloves, hat, and a scarf. Everyone else dressed much the same way.

First we ate dinner, then took a taxi to the castle. The tattoo was to take place in front of the castle where temporary bleachers had been set up. We found our seats and snuggled down. And as we sat in the open night air on the highest point of the city, it began to rain. Oh well, to tell the truth, it wasn't a hard rain, but more of a gentle mist. It went on all through the performance, slowly wetting the ground below us, but we all stayed warm under our clothing.

As the sun set, the MC worked the crowd and we were in a good mood when the show started. The Edinburgh Military Tattoo is basically a very big band concert, with about ten different marching bands from around the world, each performing first by themselves, and then in the famous massive pipe and drum. This year's program had bands from Britain, Asia, and the US. Among the selections was included "A Salute to Scottish Forces in the Gulf" and "A Selection of Scottish Folk Tunes."

There were other things on the program too. A motorcycle club came out and did tricks. My favorite was a lion dance performed by the Singapore Police Band. Two lion dancers came out and did their dance, followed by a little lion cub. It was cute until a dragon appeared from the castle and "threatened" the dancers until they "danced" it away. (There is an old Scottish legend that a dragon lived under Edinburgh Castle and caused a negative influence on anyone who lived there.)

Finally, the show ended with the Massed Pipes and Drums, the Lone Piper, and finally "God Save the Queen". Then we all stumbled back to our hotel to tumble into bed. Dad had videotaped the whole program, and seemed pleased to have seen it. He later mentioned that while spending summers in Canada as a teenager, he was taken to see similar events.

Chapter 16: Saturday Around to Glasgow

The next morning we packed the car and left Edinburgh early. I had mentioned that I wanted to do more shopping at the Past Times store in the city, but Dad was worried about traffic. Since it was Saturday and there seemed to be a lot of traffic in the city, I didn't push it. I had bought a tape of what I thought would be bagpipe music, but turned out to be a not-so-nice tape about Scottish Queens, and an interview with the person who planned the Tattoo each year.

The Firth of Forth is the narrow stretch of sea just north of Edinburgh. The land on the north side of the firth is sometimes called the Kingdom of Forth because of the twenty or so castles there. The countryside was very pretty despite the rather cloudy day. There was almost no traffic, so we had little trouble going over the country roads. We

paused to take one last look at Edinburgh from over the firth, then headed north.

We kids had been nagging Dad to go to St. Andrews Golf Club. We knew that he would enjoy it, but he kept saying that it was too far out of the way. We pointed out to him that it would only take about an hour and a half to get there, and it was a very pleasant ride. So he gave in.

St. Andrews was a little village on the east side of Scotland. The coastline looked like the southern coast of Lake Erie in late fall, but it was a nice little place. All the shops sold golf equipment and accessories, and the golf course looked just like it did on TV. There was a very large and fancy hotel on the side of the course, but other than that there was hardly the development I would have expected from such a world famous site. I expected that the place would be filled with timeshares and resort houses.

We went through the Museum of British Golf. Linda and I watched golfers teeing off while Dad and Bob went through the pro shop. The weather turned rainy, and we got a small lunch in the club grill. In town we found a large store which sold all the "Scottish stuff" you could possibly want: t-shirts, kilts, wall plaques, jewelry, sheep skins, music, etc. I picked up a Scotland t-shirt there.

Instead of heading straight for Glasgow, we turned northwest so to travel through some of the foothills of the Highlands. The land got more and more hilly, dotted with little villages and patches of forests. After a couple of hours we headed south toward Glasgow.

Glasgow means "green glowing place" in Gaelic, but it is an industrial city. As we approached the city, the sun came out--the first time we had seen it while in Scotland--and the air was clear and crisp. "Football weather," my Dad called it, and it did remind me of the fall weather in Ohio. It reminded me so much of my time in Cleveland that when I walked into the Holiday Inn, I thought I was at an old **Earthcon**, the old local SF convention in Cleveland.

We had rooms at the Airport Holiday Inn, which we assumed was near the airport, but when we got there, we found a hotel, but not a Holiday Inn. That was fortunate, since the power to that hotel was out. We found our hotel while driving into town, next to a new Hilton. While we dragged everything into the lobby and checked in, Dad returned the rental car. We collapsed in the room; even though it was only 3 PM, no one had any desire to sightsee.

This Holiday Inn was owned by a British company, but it looked the same as any Holiday Inn in the US. It was a relief after all those B&Bs. Linda tried to get *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* on the movie channel, but only got snow. When she called down to the front desk to complain, they informed her that the computer that controlled the program was down. I repacked my luggage while Linda was wrestling with the TV. When I finished, I put on my swimsuit and headed for the pool.

When I got to the pool and health club, I found my way blocked by construction materials. They were closed for repairs. I took the lift back to the room, and when the doors opened on a different floor, I saw the whole place had been gutted. A huge redecorating project was underway, no doubt because of the new Hilton next door. Since there was nothing else to do, I returned to the room and changed for dinner.

Dad and I went to the restaurant while Bob and Linda ordered room service and watched TV. During dinner, Dad and I talked about the trip. I was really pleased with it, even though we had missed some of the places I had really wanted to see. Dad enjoyed it too, but he was disappointed with one aspect: he had hoped to visit a really different place. He felt that in the end England wasn't the exotic place he thought it would be. "It's a bit like Canada. The people dress the same, they eat the same, they drive the same cars. They just sound a little strange," he said. My Dad was nearly raised in English-speaking Canada, and so all this was familiar to him. This also told me something about my

father that I didn't know before. I suggested that to get the alien culture he seemed to be looking for, he needed to go to a country where they speak a different language--like France.

Chapter 17: Sunday The Trip Home and Final Musings

We were woken up by a wake-up call from the hotel. Everyone we had talked to recommended that we arrive at the airport at least two hours before the flight was to leave. We were only ten minutes away from the airport, but we needed those two hours.

The first stop we made at the airport was to drop our bags off. We had to identify each one and its contents. This took some time for each group of people. While we did this we talked to a group of lawyers and their wives from Chicago who had been golfing in Scotland. One of the women was from Canton, Ohio, near my home town, and we talked about that for a while. After our bags were taken off to be X-rayed, we went through a series of checkpoints designed to check our identities. It was a long process, but I was glad to go through it as opposed to ending up somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Finally we reached the waiting area for international flights, but before we could sit down they called for us to board our plane. After a final security check we walked on board.

The flight took off at noon as scheduled. The trip was not as interesting as the flight in, and seemed much longer. We saw the movie *Legal Eagles*, read, played cards, ate, and I wrote in my journal. Seven hours later we were in Chicago's O'Hare Airport. It was 11 AM. We walked around for about an hour before my flight was ready to leave. We all said good-bye and I used up the last of my film taking pictures of the family. My plane took off for Raleigh, North Carolina, where I changed planes, and landed in Orlando around 6 PM. My car was right where I had left it, and I drove the two hours home. The strange thing was that I had experienced some 16 hours of daylight, and it wasn't until 7 PM that the sun began to set. The only negative thing that happened was that I was stopped for speeding on the way home, but I managed to talk my way out of the ticket.

The trip was great. I really enjoyed going. I had had five chances to go to Europe, but this was the first time that everything worked out. It was nice to finally see some of the sights that I had discovered in my history and SCA research.

I did find out the story behind Linda's worry about the food in England. One of their neighbors heard about their trip to England, and invited her and Dad over for authentic English food: steak and kidney pie. It was not a success, and Linda was worried that she might not like anything to eat in England. The food was, in fact, quite good, especially when they stuck to basics like meat and potatoes. The problems came when they tried to get fancy. On the other hand, we had no trouble getting pizza, hamburgers, French fries, coffee, or even cold soft drinks. I learned to like warm Coke with a bit of lemon. Every restaurant had special vegetarian dishes, but they also used lots more real butter, eggs, cream, and whole milk than we do.

Clothing was much the same, but less casual. Bob said he could easily pick out the Americans in Oxford by who was wearing shorts, something the English rarely do. Linda and I didn't have the time to clothes shop, but we did like what we called the "English Dress", a type of print dress which was very common.

I was worried about traveling in August, since that was a very busy month for European travel. Although things were quite crowded at times, we enjoyed the travel. We felt especially fortunate to experience the Arts Festival in Scotland. In all, I enjoyed the trip very much, and I hope to return again some day to see some of the things that I missed.

[*]

On Running Informational Services for a Large Convention

by David M. Shea



As one who has officially run informational serviced for a Worldcon, several large regionals, and other conventions, and served as consultant on the subject to others, I hope this article may proved helpful to someone.

The most important single suggestion I could make would be to advise you to define clearly the parameters of the job. In other words, know clearly *for what* you are responsible, and *to whom* you are responsible. Remember Shea's Sixth Law, which sayeth, "Get it in writing"; the First Corollary, which sayeth "Put it in writing"; and the Second Corollary, which sayeth, "Keep a copy". A simple way to do this is by filing everything in chronological order in an ordinary loose-leaf binder. Access to a photocopier is a distinct asset. Presumably one could manage most of the same functions by computer, if one were so inclined, and supposing one had a computer.

(As to the use of computers, use your own judgment -- but note that a fifteen-cent Bic does not "crash" at random intervals. The odd and frequently inaccurate term "user-friendly" notwithstanding, my experience suggests a computer is likely to be more trouble than it's worth, unless operated by genuine experts and/or confined to strictly quantifiable problems, i.e., registration; and that the conventions which attempts to computerize its entire operation is an accident studying to become a disaster. But then I've been accused of being a Stone Age mind on the subject.)

Another key point to keep in mind is that you cannot do it all yourself. The keys to effective management are delegation and planning. By the time the actual con rolls around, your system should be so well arranged, and your people so efficiently trained, that the operation will run itself. This frees you up to do what a manager is supposed to do: set policy, and troubleshoot *major* problems. In due course I'll give you an object lesson, the infamous tale of the Great Parking Garage Hooraw.

How large and how formal an organization you will need depends on the magnitude of the job. For Worldcon, I had a four-tier system. As department head, I set policy. Major operational decisions were made by myself or my two assistants. Actual running of the information desk was delegated to a shift supervisor who was responsible for the staff workers. This method served well at Worldcon, but would probably be top-heavy for a smaller con. For a regional, 1500+ person convention, you should probably have at least one assistant. At a small con, you might just wing it.

In my view, the director of informational services is the one person other than the Chair who needs the most general overview of the convention. It requires a person with experience in many areas of convention work. The job also requires authority, i.e., full committee member status (as Worldcon, full department head status). If the chair won't

give you sufficient authority to do the job, you're better off to refuse it. You shouldn't have to find yourself arguing with gophers and doorwardens over your right to make a decision.

Before you set up your system (here we are "defining parameters") you should probably consider these factors:

** Is Information going to be answering phone calls from outside the convention, i.e., mundanes, or merely answering questions within the con? Clearly the latter is a less formidable task. At Worldcon, the local TV station came in, shot some brief footage of the wildest costumes, and mentioned the con on the evening news; whereat we were besieged by dozens of calls from, literally, hysterical children demanding to know if "E.T." was there. This also illustrates why the mundane media should be avoided: the very best you will get is, "See the harmless freaks." A clear policy should be established as to who is responsible for dealing with the media. Accept this responsibility only at gun point.

** Get a *specific* commitment from the Chair as to when the information desk is to be open. At a regional or local con, presumably Information should keep at least Registration hours -- roughly noon to midnight on Friday, 10:00 AM to late evening on Saturday, etc.

** Even doing merely in-house services on any reasonable scale will probably require a minimum crew of two people at a time, so you should have a *clear* understanding as to staffing help; or you should be prepared to recruit your own entire staff. The latter is more work, but may be preferable. Since Information is a knowledge-intensive job, merely inserting randomly selected gophers is likely to present problems. It does no good to assign people to work the information desk if they know so little, they refer every simple inquiry to you. Look for smart, self-reliant people with some convention experience.

** Is Information going to be responsible for ancillary information services (free handout racks, party listings, message boards)? If so, make sure you have a clear commitment as to who is providing the physical props (tables, easels) and where they will be located. In general, I would recommend at least one large 4 foot by 6 foot cork or fiber board for personal messages; one for party notices; if you have room and supplies, one more for program changes and general announcements. At a smaller con, something smaller would suffice. The Information staff should understand clearly it is their responsibility to keep these areas in some kind of order.

Once you have the broad picture set up, and some idea of how you're going to handle staffing, you can begin to think about specific problems:

** The amount of attention devoted to parking, food,

and local tourist attractions outside the con (if any) will have to depend on circumstances. If the convention is at a large suburban hotel with lots of free parking, you shouldn't have much problem. If the facility is downtown where parking is scarce and/or charged for -- the usual situation in most cities -- you should have a prepared guide to parking facilities. The city may already have one; consider checking with the local convention and tourism office (assuming there is one). Every convention should have a restaurant guide of some sort, preferably with a *map*, and with special reference to cheap places -- fen are notoriously tight-fisted in this regard. The popular fannish cuisine in the area where I live is Chinese; it may be different in your area.

Detailed information on the layout of the hotel/facility should also be available. I don't wish to keep harping on the word *map*, but it really is desirable. In general, people looking for food, program items, and their friends, will be your largest class of customers. I strongly recommend against the practice, seen at a few conventions, of assigning "fannish" names to program space; this is a surefire ticket to endless confusion.

** Stock lots of extra pocket programs -- a few hundred at least.

** Cultivate the person responsible for hotel liaison, and make sure this person will be carrying a beeper. You *will* need access to this person: trust me on this one.

** Information will almost certainly get drafted as the impromptu lost-and-found. At Worldcon, things turned in included any number of lost badges, eyeglasses, prescription medications, and several wallets with credit cards and substantial amounts of cash! Blessings on those states which put photographs on drivers' licenses.

** You will also be pressed into service as the complaint department. Anticipating the scope of this, especially at a large convention, I would have a complaint form prepared in advance, with legitimate assurances that serious problems will be taken seriously by the committee.

** It would probably be desirable if a policy were established as to whether memberships for *next* year's convention are going to be sold *this* year. Some cons do this, some don't. Worldcon always does, so you should know where the other city's table is.

** At least one person will confidently expect you to cash a personal check, and will be indignant when you decline. A policy should be prepared in advance. The usual policy is: checks are accepted for amounts due to the convention (door memberships, art show sales) with adequate ID -- the treasurer of the convention gets to define "adequate". Probably you should have a prepared policy as to whether the convention accepts credit cards. Hotels will usually cash traveler's checks, at least for registered guests. You might want to check on this in advance; experience suggests that guessing about what the hotel will or will not do is a chancy business.

** It should be clearly understood that you can't play "Have you seen John?" for 2500 or 5000 people. That is, information is *not* a personal message service; though you should provide a place for it. If you are taking phone calls, our policy at Worldcon was to agree to post messages with no guarantee that they would be received.

** You should *not* allow the information desk area to be used as a luggage drop. This is a problem which will probably crop up on the last day of the convention. Hotels usually provide a check room for guests, free or for a nominal fee. It would be a good idea to check about this with the hotel in advance.

** There should be a policy on whether mundanes will be admitted to convention areas, specifically, dealers' room and art show. Again, some conventions do this, some don't. (Hotel employees do not count as "mundanes" for this purpose; your people should understand that hotel staff have access.)

** Some fen are religiously observant. Many hotels keep a listing of nearby houses of worship. Check with your hotel; if they keep such a listing, your problem is solved.

** I know you don't want to think about this, but: Make a note of the location of the nearest hospital. Just in case. (This is called "contingency planning"; this is the reason why we have, for instance, Trident submarines.)

Finally, be prepared for anything: not just your ordinary garden variety stupidity, but big-time, championship-caliber stupidity.

Case in point (and an object lesson in You Can't Work Miracles), the Great Parking Garage Hooraw.

At our Worldcon, the garage across the street from one of the key hotels was a municipal, public garage. Since the Thursday and Friday of the convention were regular business days, it was as usual heavily patronized by downtown office workers. Fans arriving during the work day often found the garage full. The hotel (*not* the convention) referred some people to another, privately owned garage a block or two away.

On Monday, fans went back to get their cars -- and found the private garage closed and padlocked. (It was Labor Day weekend, remember? It was a *holiday*.)

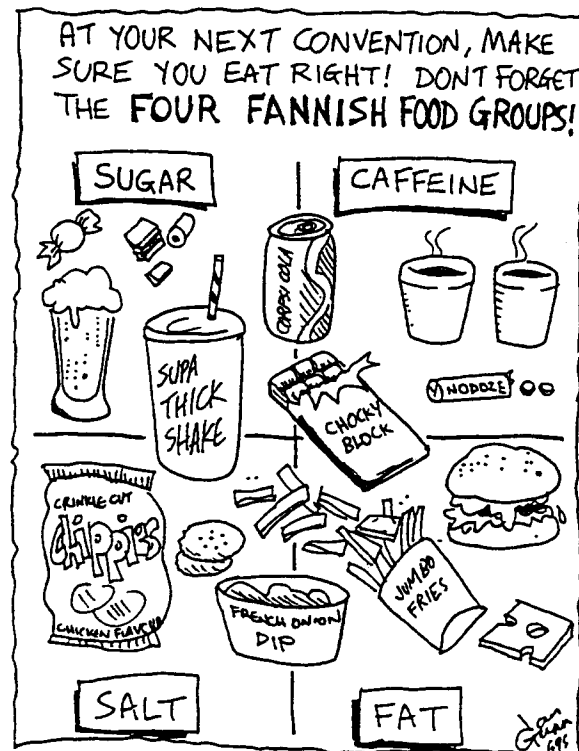
Three guesses as to where they came screaming for help.

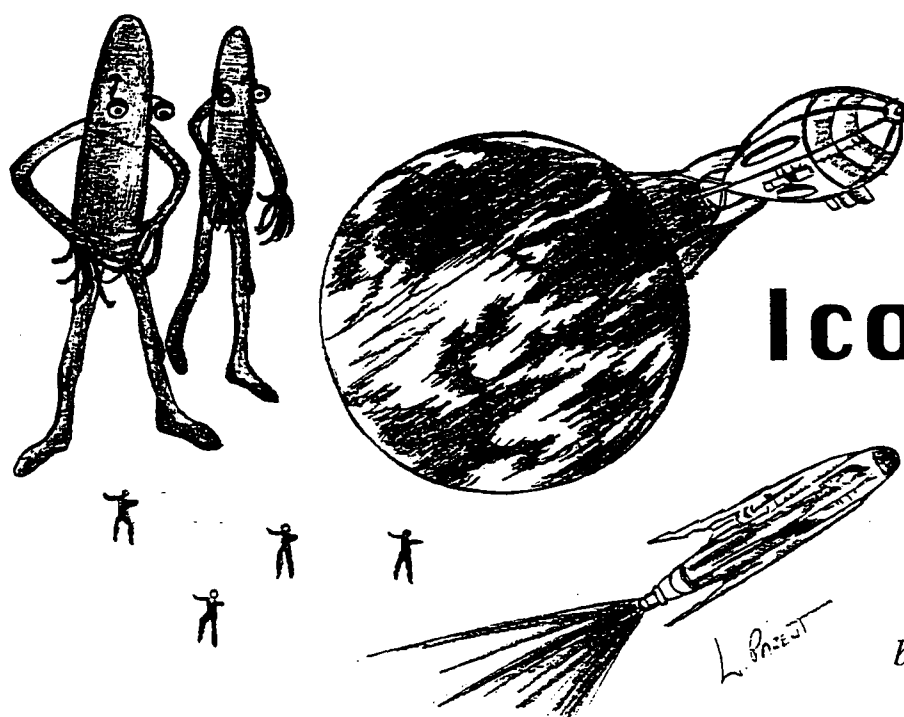
I spent most of Monday (yeah, sure, I really needed this on Monday of Worldcon when I was *already* in terminal burnout) on the phone to anyone who would listen, trying to find out who owned the garage and who had the keys. I'll spare you the gruesome details. We never did find out. Presumably some fen had to stay over an extra night and retrieve their cars on Tuesday.

Certainly they had reason to be upset. But why were they so nasty to me? It wasn't *my* fault. I was trying to *help*. (I don't honestly see where I or the convention could be blamed for not anticipating this.)

As I said before, planning and delegation will take care of most problems. The most important *final* suggestion I can offer would be this: Have faith in your system and your people. If you have prepared them properly, they won't let you down; and you won't end up totally wiped out. Do your best, and let the chips fall, etc. With luck, you might even have time to enjoy the con.

Good luck. [X]





The Icosahedron

by M. Todd Washington

Todd's story won the Short Story contest at Context VIII in 1995. He was up against stiff competition; the runner-up story is on page 5.

--Lan

My room is chilly and empty, except for the bed and the holographic terminal at its foot. The stench of disinfectant is so strong that I can taste it in the air when I inhale. The entire room and its contents are all white, save only the small green and red, holographic interface, floating within an arm's reach from my bed.

The Medical Facility of the Martian Orbiting Research Station is silent for the first time in two days. Doctors and reporters have been scrambling among the rooms, trying to see the three scientists rushed here after the incident on the Icosahedron. As of this morning, only I remain. Dr. Aydin was rushed planetside last night, and Dr. Obermeyer was released this morning.

I reach my index finger into the holographic interface and begin recording a transmission. "Professor Sebastiano, the doctors told me to contact you as soon as I could. Well, now that the examinations are over, I am able to talk. What is going on?"

I issue the command transmitting the message back to Earth via three interplanetary relay stations. It will take a little over thirty minutes before the message can reach my advisor at Cambridge, she can respond, and I can receive the reply.

It is hard to believe that I am here. For that matter, it is

amazing that I even became involved in this project. All I did was mention an interesting speculation to Dr. Sebastiano, who helped me to publish it in *The Journal of Theoretical Anthropology*. Two months later, she sent me here.

* * *

She had asked me a week in advance to set up an appointment to meet with her, because she was far too busy with meetings and grant renewals to spend much time with students. But honestly, we didn't mind. She was the kind of professor who could shout at you and destroy your last ounce of confidence without provocation, and she did it frequently. The work environment was stressful, but it made all of her students closer. We all had one terrible thing in common, the Dragon-lady.

When the appointment time finally arrived, I was extremely nervous. I gathered as much self-confidence as I could, expecting for her to abolish it in an instant, and I entered her office.

Her desk was a mess. Nearly a score of holographic documents were scattered in front of, beside, and above her eyes. Her dark, brown hair was tousled and she had dark circles below her eyes. Apparently, she had been up the entire night revising a grant application, and she had wired it to the Foundation, only minutes before the deadline.

She took her glasses off and rubbed her fingers through her hair. "Ian, last week I received an announcement from the Martian Orbiting Research Station concerning a publicly televised conference about the Icosahedron."

"Yes, I have heard a little about it." I tried to sound as polite and calm as I could.

"Well, they were impressed by our paper about the Icosahedron. They have invited me to give a talk, and then accompany the other presenters as they actually open the alien artifact to see what's inside."

"Well, that is fantastic."

"Let me be blunt." She constantly used this phrase before she began her usual tirades, and I instinctively prepared myself. "Your idea was unique, and it caused a little controversy when we published it. However, I am too busy to prepare for a world-televised conference, because I have to renew another grant soon. Besides, I have more important things to do than go to Mars. But, you are going to go and give the talk instead. That way, our lab will not look bad for turning down such a lucrative offer."

I was stunned, but not truly surprised. Her callousness toward other faculty members and scientists was well known to her students. But more than that, I was apprehensive about making such a presentation.

"are you sure that I am ready to give the talk? Our paper was the only thing that I have published."

"You will do it, Ian."

"But the conference is in six weeks. I am going to have to leave later this week in order to get there in time."

"It looks like you're going to be busy. Have one of the post-docs in the lab assist you via the holonet during your flight. I'll be too busy to help you." She looked down at one of the images in front of her and began working.

To claim that the next weeks would be stressful was a drastic understatement. During the long voyage on the transport ship, I worked on organizing the speech and preparing the holograms. Two days before our arrival on Mars, I completed the talk. Finally, I had time to rest, and I slept for forty consecutive hours.

* * *

I look at the clock and see that thirty-one minutes have passed. The holographic terminal flickers to life, and a small image of Dr. Sebastiano appears, sitting against the opposite wall.

"Ian, I just finished speaking with Dr. Obermeyer about the incident while exploring the Icosahedron, and I am relieved to see that you are going to be all right. When do you expect to be back working in the lab?"

How typical! All she can think about is work.

"I am not sure when I will be able to come home. Hopefully it will be soon, so what did you think about the conference?"

Again, I transmit the message across half a billion kilometers of space. I am certain that in a half an hour, I will be hearing her criticize every aspect of my performance at the meeting.

* * *

When I arrived at the meeting on M.O.R.S., the press was swarming around the well-known scientists. This was going to be a huge production. I had not seen so many holographers and reporters at a scientific meeting for three or four years.

It always upset me to see that science finally had achieved the status of popular culture. We were celebrities, like athletes and entertainers at the turn of the century. After all, this was the reason we were presenting our talks on Mars and opening the Icosahedron directly afterward. It was dramatic, and it exposed the billions of science fans, watching the conference from Earth, to the advertisements of the event's sponsors.

I was quite nervous about being in such distinguished company. Dr. Rohan Aydin was here, and he was leading

the expedition. He was a physicist of great fame, and in many people's opinion, and arrogant, ambitious man. He had won the Wright Award in 2087 for his performance at the Eighty-third Annual Experimental Physics Conference at Toronto, and ever since, he has been the self-appointed ruler of the American scientific community.

The other presenter was Dr. Rebecca Obermeyer, and astrophysicist from U.C.L.A. Unlike Aydin, she was known for her sense of humor and charm as well as her sharp intellect. Obermeyer was not as influential outside her field, but she was certainly more liked.

I had trouble waking from my lengthy sleep, and I arrived at the meeting as Dr. Aydin was making his closing remarks. I was familiar with his opinions about the Icosahedron from reading his papers. He believed that this artifact was built for the purpose of making first contact, and the writing on its twenty surfaces was a greeting.

The moderator stepped to the podium and called the meeting to order. "The next talk will be presented by Dr. Rebecca Obermeyer of the Astrophysics Department at U.C.L.A. She will discuss the origin of the Icosahedron."

"Thank you. My presentation essentially will be in two parts. First, I shall attempt to define the direction from which the Icosahedron approached our solar system. From this data, we can begin to speculate about the interstellar origin of the Icosahedron. Now, as we know, the Icosahedron was found six months ago drifting toward the sun. It was found by miners of the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Fortunately these miners accurately measured the position and velocity of this object. Using these figures and the Gravi-sim 7.1 program, I modeled the trajectory of the Icosahedron as it entered the solar system.

"In the first simulation, I used a radius of one light-year, centered on the sun. I neglected all other masses except for the four giant planets. Since the Icosahedron was approaching the sun at twenty-three degrees above the orbital plane of the planets, this is not a bad assumption. Now, from this simulation, I extrapolated its velocity and position out to one light-year from the sun. At that point, I ran a separate computation, using the masses of every known star within a radius of twenty light-years, and I found that its velocity remained unaltered. I do not think that the range can be expanded much further than twenty light-years, because of the significant possibility of undiscovered stars at greater distances.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to identify a star which could be the origin of the Icosahedron. However, the evidence suggests that the star in question is in the constellation of Sagittarius. Also, the Icosahedron's velocity through interstellar space was $4.7 \pm .2$ kilometers per second."

Dr. Aydin waved his arm for her to pause as he finished sipping from his glass of water. "That velocity is of the same magnitude as the motion of the stars relative to each other. Doesn't our inexact knowledge of the locations of these stars in the remote past make your calculated trajectory wrong?"

"Not at all. We ran many simulations with a range of values for the stellar positions and momentums, and the conclusion is not greatly altered. If there are no other questions," – she looked at Aydin, and he shook his head; she did not even bother looking at me – "I will move on to the second part of my presentation.

"Now that I have told you the approximate direction from which the Icosahedron came, I will argue that we also know the type of star that is the home to the builders of this object. The Icosahedron does not reflect much radiation in the visible spectrum. However, Dr. Silvana Sebastiano noted in her paper, which Ian Cornwall will discuss next, that Icosahedron has markings on its surface which reflect visible light of longer wavelengths – reds, oranges, and yellows – and near infrared radiation. This seems to suggest that the creators of the Icosahedron could see light in the range of 600 to 950 nanometers. This is the range of wavelengths

that is thought to be visible by life evolving around a class K star, since such a star emits light maximally at these wavelengths. Because class K stars are small and faint, the star in question has probably not been detected at this time."

Aydin slid so far forward in his seat that he almost fell off it. "Wait a minute. Your assumption that 600 to 950 nanometers is the visible range of the aliens who built this artifact is not necessarily true. Suppose that this object is designed to reach another civilization and announce the presence of the intelligence that built it. Would not these markings be in the visible range of the civilization that the Icosahedron was intended to reach? Perhaps the builders wanted it to be found by a society living around a class K star."

Dr. Obermeyer grinned. "Rohan, your point is valid, and there is little I can say to address it. However, I suggest that astronomers begin looking for a class K star in the constellation of Sagittarius. If we knew the distance of the star, it would be far easier for them to locate it. Once one is found, we can send a radio transmission of greetings, and perhaps we will finally make first contact with an alien society. Thank you for your attention."

The moderator returned to the podium after the usual, courteous applause died down. "Thank you, Professor. The next part of our program will be titled, 'The Icosahedron as a Monument and Analogous Cases from Human History,' presented by *Mister Ian Cornwall*."

I could have sworn that she emphasized the word "mister," reminding everyone that I was only a graduate student, and not a real scientist.

I fought my fear and walked to the podium. The lights dimmed, and the holographic display showed a representation of what the Icosahedron would look like to someone who could see near infrared radiation. It was roughly spherical and mostly black. Each of the twenty faces of the structure had identical markings. The prominent symbol, three large circles contained within a triangle, filled the center of each face. It was surrounded by many rows and columns of smaller symbols.

I took a deep breath and thought to myself, *Speak slowly and clearly*. "Thank you. As Dr. Obermeyer, uh, pointed out in the previous discussion, the Icosahedron has, um, markings on its surface. Every attempt to translate these symbols on the alien object has failed. They have been compared with every linguistic motif that is known, and they do not match anything that we understand. For this reason, we have concluded that the meaning of the markings on the Icosahedron has a specific context, and this context is the culture of its alien builders."

"So the question obviously becomes this: What can we speculate about these markings, given that the meaning has an unknown cultural context?"

I could see some of the scientists in the audience starting to look bored. I had assumed that this would happen. After all, I was talking about semantics and cultural anthropology, and they wanted to hear about infrared absorption spectra and relativistic velocities.

"I think that these inscriptions are alien hieroglyphics. The primary symbol is probably the name of an alien civilization or of a great alien leader, and the clusters of circles surrounding it probably refers to dates on the alien calendar. As Dr. Aydin has suggested in his numerous publications, a subset of these small circles are probably numerals. Unfortunately, we do not possess the metaphorical Rosetta Stone required to understand the rest."

"Look at our own history. Humans have built countless monuments: the pyramids, the Sphinx, the Gardens of Babylon, the Eiffel Tower, and Mt. Rushmore, for example. The list could continue on for a very long time. None of the monuments were meant to say something to future civilizations. Instead, they were meant to honor something: a leader, a state, a god. I think that the Icosahedron is the same sort of thing."

I could see Dr. Aydin's bored expression coming to life. He was shaking his head from side to side.

I continued. "If you allow me to be quite speculative, I think that the Icosahedron is a monument to an alien leader who has been dead for millions of years. In fact, if burial customs of this species are anything similar to those of humans, the body may actually be in the Icosahedron. That is, it may be a tomb."

Dr. Aydin finally asked his pressing question. "Mister Cornwall, your entire hypothesis is that this is some sort of monument from millennia ago is absurd. It is based on the fact that the primary symbol is the symbol of a person, a leader. Is it possible that the symbol could mean anything?"

"That is correct. However, look at the hologram. Surely you can see how prominently the primary symbol is used. It is on all twenty faces, and it is as large as five thousand square meters. If the symbols were a message or a greeting, only displaying them once would be sufficient. These symbols were placed on this artifact with tremendous respect, almost worship. For this reason, I am inclined to think that my hypothesis is likely to be true."

Dr. Aydin made no obvious facial expression and was silent. I sat down after my talk, and it felt as if a massive weight was removed from my shoulders. I breathed easily, and I was sure of my abilities for the first time since beginning graduate school.

* * *

Dr. Sebastiano's image is returning to the terminal space at the foot of the bed. I propped myself against the headboard and awaited her response. "Your talk was not bad. The 'Rosetta Stone' that you referred to has been found. One of Dr. Aydin's post-docs managed to discover the meaning of the series of numbers. Now we know what the Icosahedron is, and we owe it all to your expedition. It provided the missing piece of the puzzle."

She's not going to tell me. I have to wait another thirty minutes! "How did it provide any useful information? What is the Icosahedron?"

I cannot imagine what had been discovered.

* * *

The day following the conference, Dr. Obermeyer, Dr. Aydin, and I boarded the shuttle. Three reporters came with us to chronicle the opening of the Icosahedron for the audience on Earth. When we were situated on the shuttle, the autopilot flew us to the Icosahedron which was also in orbit, fifteen minutes from the station.

I was filled with excitement when the Icosahedron appeared in the shuttle's window. The object looked entirely black and spherical. It was only visible against the orange-red crescent of the Martian surface. Despite the fact that I had been studying it for months, the size of the artifact amazed me. Its diameter was nearly one kilometer. As we neared it, the visible portion of the writing on the twenty faces became evident.

Dr. Aydin said, "We are going to approach the Icosahedron near one of the vertices. The structure is not entirely closed there, and we will be able to enter."

At the vertices, where five of the triangular faces met, the sides did not fit smoothly against one another. That created an opening in the coat of the object. These openings exposed a fifty-meter-long passage that led to a solid metal wall. The shuttle was less than a quarter of the diameter of the entrance, and it easily fit into it. As the shuttle slowly entered, the starry sky and the bright orange Martian globe were swallowed by complete darkness.

The spotlights in the front of the shuttle illuminated the passage. It was smooth and circular, and it did not narrow, widen, or turn. After reaching the end of the passage, the

shuttle sat motionlessly before the barrier.

In front of us, three more shuttles were waiting for their engineering teams to finish. A dozen men in space suits guided a large drill out of the hole they cut through one meter of metal, leaving a two-meter-wide entrance for our team.

While the engineers were finishing their work, the three of us dressed for the space walk. I had never worn a space suit before, and I was quite surprised by its comfort. When we had completed the preparations to leave the shuttle, we slowly climbed out the pressure lock. Using the suit's gas jets, we maneuvered ourselves through the gravity-free environment toward the hole. We entered the heart of the Icosahedron one at a time, with Dr. Aydin leading the way.

Suddenly, Dr. Aydin said over the radio link, "Do not look toward the shuttle. I am going to activate the bright beam."

The blackness surrounding us was suddenly illuminated, and the white light blazing through the small hole was being reflected off the interior of the central chamber, nearly blinding me. My visor automatically compensated, and I scanned the interior of the chamber.

Filling the void in a regular arrangement was an uncountable number of large cylinders. By examining the one nearest me, I figured that there were of uniform size, about ten meters long, and about three meters in diameter. They were closely packed, but a human could slowly squeeze in between and around each of them. The cylinders bore the primary symbol quite prominently, but minor the symbols were not present.

The chamber was enormous, and it was approximately spherical. I could not see very far into the room because the cylinders were so tightly packed, but judging from the size of the artifact, I estimated its diameter to be nine hundred meters.

"I suppose that you still think that these are coffins," a voice said to me over the radio link.

It was not even worth responding.

"We are here to find out what these storage devices contain. Let's open one," Dr. Obermeyer suggested.

She had already entered the maze and was out of sight. Dr. Aydin and I entered at the same spot, and we crawled around five or six cylinders until we found her. By the time we had arrived, Dr. Obermeyer had cut three-fourths of the way around the end of the device with a laser scalpel. She quickly finished, and we positioned ourselves around the circular top, preparing to remove it.

"Here we go into a new chapter in human understanding," Dr. Aydin said.

We all pulled on the lid and the metallic circle at the end of the cylinder easily came off. As soon as it was removed, a high-pitched scream sounded through the radio. It was a horrible, alarming shriek.

"What the hell is that noise?" I asked frantically.

"It's the Geiger counter! Get the hell out of here!" Aydin shouted.

We left the lid floating and climbed over and around the other cylinders. The scream persisted as we were bombarded with beta particles. It was so frightening that we did not even bother to think whether we were headed in the correct direction. By the time we reached the perimeter of the maze, the Geiger counter began to quiet. Evidently the tight packing of the cylinders isolated the radiation to a limited region.

When we finally reached the shuttle, it departed at maximum velocity to the M.O.R.S.'s medical facilities. Judging by the intensity of the Geiger counter scream, we had been bombarded by near-lethal doses of beta particles as we had fled. Unless the spacesuits had sufficient shielding, none of us would probably live much longer.

We were immediately taken to the facility, and here I have been resting since. The doctors told me I will be fine, but they want to run some further tests to determine the levels of radiation to which I was exposed.

* * *

Dr. Sebastiano appears again. "Ian, it seems that some of the numbers surrounding the primary symbol correspond to the number of protons and neutrons of many of the radioisotopes resulting from nuclear fission. The markings are an inventory of the amount and type of each isotope. Evidently, the Icosahedron is a radioactive waste receptacle of an alien civilization."

"Wow! From measuring the amount of radioactive decay of the long half-life isotopes, has it been calculated how long the Icosahedron has been adrift in space?"

Thirty-one minutes pass.

"Yes, it has been adrift for 3.5 million years. Earlier today, I spoke with Dr. Obermeyer from her transport ship. She said that based on her velocity estimates the Icosahedron has traversed fifty-five light years. She has directed astronomers to search the constellation of Sagittarius for a class K star at that distance. The scientific community plans to name it Aydin's Star, when it is finally identified. This has really turned out to be quite a surprise."

"Well, it really should not have been that surprising.

The aliens must have assumed that any space-faring civilization would have had to deal with the problem of such waste products themselves, and thus would have immediately recognized the pattern of numbers."

I guess that we have not sufficiently addressed that problem ourselves.

Thirty-one minutes pass.

"Anyway, you were right about the primary symbol being displayed as a sign of respect. It was a warning." [*]



Fanzines Received

Reviewed

by Lan

Over the past two and a half years I have received a lot of zines. Some got misplaced in my move to two residences, so I am missing a few issues. Some may have just gotten lost. However, here is a listing of those I have now, with hopes of continuing to get them and respond in some way. As for reviewing the issues, like before I may make a comment or two on a particular zine, or just give the address.



Ansible, #74-78 (Sept 1993-Jan 1994). David Langford, editor. 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, ENGLAND. Available "by accosting the editor, by making him rich, or for stamped addressed envelopes (1 per copy)." E-mail: ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk. The multiple Hugo-Award-winning fanzine whose editorial wit and turns of phrases have continued to amuse readers around the world.

Asterism, volume 1, #3. PO Box 6210, Evanston, IL 60204, USA. Quarterly; \$6/year. Jeff Berkwitz, the editor, has written and compiled a number of reviews about SF, Fantasy and Space music. Some are music scores from film, but many are from artists unknown to me.

Ben's Beat #35 & 38. Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666-2626. The 35th issue of *Ben's Beat* (his FAPA zine) has a tribute to Bob Bloch. In #38, Ben focuses on his trip through Middle Europe (Hungary, Austria Czech Republic, etc). He offered it to me for publication, but I passed on it, knowing that it would take some time before I could get this issue into print. It has appeared in Tom Sadler's excellent zine, *The Reluctant Famulus*.

Bardic Runes IX. Michael McKenny, editor, Gvihilh-hih Glyphics, 424 Cambridge St. S., Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5 CANADA. \$4/issue, 3 for \$10 (Canadian or US funds). A collection of original fantasy short stories, some very good, some just okay. Mike and his wife, Cathy Woodgold, are looking for submissions (3,500 words or less); payment, 1/2 cent/word.

Casablanca #0. Alan and DeDee White, 3060 S. Decatur Blvd, Las Vegas, NV 89102 USA. For the usual. A "catch-up" zine for those who knew Alan White several years ago in the days of *Delianeator*, and other zines out of San Jacinto California. He is married and has moved to Las Vegas.

Centaurs Gatherum Newsletter, #29. Bob Stein, editor,

7500 Pennington Road, Norfolk, VA 23505-3641, USA. Bob Smith takes over the reins of this zine full of art and stories about centaurs. Lovely to look at!

Challenger #1 & 2. Guy H. Lillian III, editor, PO box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-3092. Guy has been away from fanzine publishing for several years, but he is back with a wonderful collection of articles and art compiled in these pages. His focus is the fannish male and his interests, which "will include material on the fannish *female*, of course." Some very interesting and evocative reading.

Chris Drumm Books, #86-107. Chris' Drumm, PO Box 445, Polk City, Iowa 50226-0445. Chris' book catalogues come regularly, and are a welcome sight in my mailbox. I peruse them and mark the books I would like to order, but never seem to have enough money to do so. I will send in an order realsoonnow. He has an excellent selection.

Channel Z #2. Joel Zakem, 2127 Eastern Parkway, Apt #2, Louisville, KY 40204 USA. This is Joel's ALPSzine, in exchange for LL. He talks about himself, music and interesting things he has done.

Connotations Vol 4 #2, Vol 6 #2, Vol 7, #2. Matthew Frederick & Margaret Grady, PO Box 62613, Phoenix AZ 85082-2613 USA. Quarterly, \$5/year. The issues contain news, reviews and some fiction. They cover everything from SF to gaming to media, and do a good job with it. Worth at least a look, but probably one of the better bargains for SF information and interests.

Convention Log #64, #65 (and others I probably misplaced). R Laurraine Tutihasi, 2567 Plaza Del Amo, Unit 209, Torrance, CA 90503-7329 USA. This is Laurraine's personalzine which summarizes events, conventions, and travels which she has experienced. Very interesting, and an insight into the life of an active fan.

Cube #56-61. Hope Keifer, editor, SF³, PO Box 1624, Madison WI 53701-1624 USA. A clubzine for SF³. It contains better than average conreports, and reviews, since many members write regularly for fanzines. Very good.

DASFAX 1996 & 1997 issues. Sourdough Jackson, editor, 31 Rangeview Dr., Lakewood, CO 80215. The clubzine for the Denver Area Science Fiction Association. Good reviews and comments about the SF scene both local and in general. One of the book reviewers (Fred Cleaver) also writes for the *Denver Post*.

De Profundis #274-#304. Tim Merrigna, editor, The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, 11513 Burbank Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91601 USA. A clubzine with lots of good stuff.

Derogatory Reference #80, 83, 85, 86. Arthur D. Hlavaty, 206 Valentine St., Yonkers, NY 10704-1814 USA. Roughly quarterly; he usual or \$1/issue. A personalzine with lots of opinions and an active letter column.

Dreamhaven Books and Comics. Greg Ketter, 1309 4th St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414 USA. Greg runs his store in Minneapolis, hucksters at conventions, and runs a mail order business as well. The listings are good and complete.

Dunkaton Press #1-3. Ruth Berman, 2809 Drew Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55416 USA. Ruth writes about Oz, and not everything is published. In these zines, she had placed some things she has written, or has reprinted articles by others who share her interest in L. Frank Baum and his Oz creation, and have sent them to other interested parties. Very nice, interesting and entertaining.

Empties #14, 15, 17. Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX UNITED KINGDOM. Available for "the usual" or £5 (or the local equivalent). This is a combination of a personalzine and genzine, but mostly filled with personal items of the authors. I suppose Faan Realism as opposed to Fiction. Good reading and the articles generate an active letter column.

Erg #129-137. Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, YO12 5RQ UNITED KINGDOM. Available for the usual; but Terry really wants feedback, i.e., letters of comment. This must be Terry's 37th year of publishing his fanzine. Lots of interesting stuff about SF, fandom, Terry's life, and a regular column by Ken Slater. Highly recommended.

Eyeballs in the Sky #9. Tony Berry, 55 Seymour Rd., Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, b69 4EP UNITED KINGDOM. "Available for all the usual, reasons, drinks and large wads of cash." It has a lot of articles with, in this issue, a single theme: Banks! I should read these in more detail to see if I can untangle my convoluted expenses and debts. Then again, since these are written by fans, maybe not!

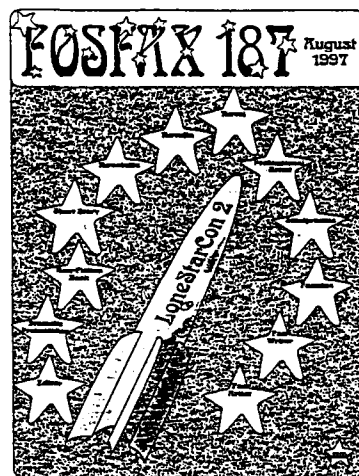
Fanalysis #16. Ray Shaffer, PO Box 1014, Kapaau, Hawaii USA. A personalzine wherein Ray talks about several different topics, most of which revolve around *Star Trek* and other media. Good thoughts for discussion.

File:770 #106-114. Mike Glyer, PO Box 1056, Sierra Madre, CA 91025. USA. An excellent Hugo Award-winning fanzine written with lots of wit and humor. Excellent, and highly recommended.

Filking from C to C. vol 1, #4. c/o Peggi Warner-Lalonde, 52 Lofthouse Drive, Whitby, Ontario L1R 1W5 CANADA. C\$4.00/US\$3.00. A zine with articles about filking, and some filksongs w/music. This issue timed for release at the 1997 CONFUSION in Michigan, where Joey Shoji was the Filk GoH. Many of the articles are about Joey. Very well done and informative.

Firebird Music Winter 1996 - Summer 1997. PO Box 30268, Portland, OR 97294-3268 USA. A catalogue of tapes, CDs, art prints, music books SF/F books and posters. Particularly good for the filk and fantasy fan.

Flip Flap #34. Lynn Hickman, 413 Ottokee St., Wauseon, OH 43567-1133. One of Lynn's last apazines for FLAP. Fandom lost an active member when he died last year.



FOSFAX #173-187. Timothy Lane, editor. c/o FOSFA, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281 USA. A fanzine many times nominated for the Hugo Award. Has interesting reviews of books and films, and an active lettercolumn. If you like interacting with fans via print, this is the zine for you. Recommended.

Galacto-Celtic Newsflash #11. Franz Miklis, A-5151 Nussdorf 64, Austria, Europe. A very interesting fanzine from Austria, which gives a European slant to what I think as "normal" fandom. I welcome the different point of view, as you might. Recommended. This also has art, poetry, stories, reviews, personal comments, and the usual genzine stuff.

Gasbag #193-202. FUMGASS, c/o Peter Christian, 1337 Ardmoor, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 USA. \$20/year. Published 5 times a year by the Friends of the University of Michigan Gilbert And Sullivan Society (FUMGASS), this journal chronicles the activities of the G&S plays at the U-M, and information about G&S from around the world. Lots of pictures and interesting commentary for the aficionado.

Gegenschein #73 - 79. Eric Lindsay, 43 Chapman Pde, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776 AUSTRALIA. Available for The Usual. A chronicle of Eric's travels, reviews of books, and items of interest to him. #77 is of particular interest and sensitivity, as Eric talks about the death of his mother.

- Girabbit 7.** David Bratman, 1161 Huntingdon Dr., San Jose, CA 95129 USA (also PO Box 662, Los Altos, CA 94023). Irregularly produced, this zine was put out in memoriam of Seth Goldberg. A wonderful tribute to a fan who gave a lot to the community, but stayed in the background far too often.
- Gradient #11-15.** Bob Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA. A mostly personalzine with articles by some others. Many times talk about teaching, science fiction, and Chinese literature, a recent hobby-becoming-an-obsession with Bob. I find his comments refreshing, and in many instances stimulating. Highly recommended.
- Habakkok Chapter 3, Verse 4 (1994).** Bill Donaho, 626 58th Street, Oakland CA 94609 USA. The usual or \$2. Some very interesting articles by very active fanzine fans. Enlightening is Bill's autobiographical "Growing Up in Texas". It also has a massive lettercolumn.
- Have Bag, Will Travel, TAFF Bulletin #1-4.** Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX UNITED KINGDOM. Four of the six installments of Martin's 1996 TAFF travelogue. The complete trip report with illustrations and additional commentary is available from him for £5 or the equivalent currency from your country.
- Ibid #90 & 96.** Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666-2626. The 96th issue of Ben's apazine for *The Esoteric Order of Dagon* (1996). #90 is an issue dedicated to August Derleth with photos and commentary, along with a description of the troubles and successes his son Michael has had in staging his opera *Harvey Milk*. #96 has some good talk about books, his trip to Charleston, South Carolina (tied in with Lovecraft and the theatre), and the mailing comments.
- Idea #9,** Geri Sullivan, Toad Hall, 3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55408-4315 USA. Some excellent artwork by Steve Stiles (sketches for "The Other Toad Hall" of *The Wind in the Willows*), photographs of Corflu, and dog stories.
- It Goes on the Shelf #14 - 18.** Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA 23605 USA. Descriptions of books of interest to Ned, with some reviewed and described. He also engages in "discussions" about books and editions.
- The Knarley Knews #49-63.** Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton, WI 53204-2017 USA. The usual. I highly readable and interesting personalzine, though Henry would like more contributions from others. His trip reports are fun and interesting to read; his "spumings" invariably elicit comments from his regular readers.
- Barry R. Levin Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature.** 720 Santa Monica Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 USA. A list of science fictional books, manuscripts and special items for sale. Of special interest to SF collectors with money.
- Lofgeornost #36-48.** Fred Lerner, 5 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001 USA. These are copies of Fred's FAPAazines, which include interesting travelogues and commentary on a wide range of topics, though mostly SF in nature.
- Maverick.** Jenny Glover, somewhere in Edinburgh. This is dated February of 1995, and thus before the Worldcon.
- She moved into the Edinburgh area and I have not been able to locate her address. Anyway, a very nice and interesting zine with an international flavor.
- Memphen #208-234.** Tim and Barbara Gatewood, 3125 South Mendenhall #353, Memphis TN 38115-2808 USA. A monthly clubzine of the Memphis SF Association. Well done with news, some reviews, and some interesting local information. Tim is behind the Darryl Award, named in honor of local, long-time fan Darryl Richards. The award is for the best story (of any length) which uses Memphis in its background (or foreground).
- Mentor, The #88-90.** Ron Clarke, PO Box K940, Haymarket, NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA. Still one of my favorite zines from Australia. Ron includes a mixture of art, articles, stories, poetry and SF history. Highly recommended.
- Metcalf Zines:** Norm Metcalf, PO Box 1368, Boulder CO 80306-1368. A collection of Norm's apazines which he sends in trade of LL. "The Devil's Work" from FAPA, "Resin" from SAPS, "Sulph" from PEAPS, and "Tyndallite" from SFPA. His knowledge of the pulps and history of SF is amazing, and I find reading these very enlightening.
- Mimosa #16-20.** Nicki and Richard Lynch, PO Box 1350, Germantown, MD 20875 USA. A multi-Hugos winner for best fanzine, and deservedly so. This is one of the prime sources for fan history. Always good and interesting reading.
- MSFS/MSFire, vol 1 #1&2, vol 2 #3 & 4, #5 & 6, vol 3 #3, #4.** Lloyd G. Daub, Editor, PO Box 1637, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1637 USA. The clubzine of the Milwaukee Science Fiction Services, with lots of news, stories, reviews, book and media information. etc.
- Munich Round-up. #165.** Waldemar Kummig, Engadiner Str. 24, D81475 MÜNCHEN GERMANY. American agent: Andrew Porter, PO Box 022730, Brooklyn NY 112020056 USA. \$4/issue. A German fanzine with a lot of pictures and reports about the Glasgow Worldcon.
- Muse 134.** July & August 1995, Spring/Summer 1996, March 1997; published irregularly. Steven desJardins, 1711 Massachusetts Ave. NW #134, Washington DC 20036 USA. A personalzine.
- NASFA Shuttle, The, October 1994 - July 1996.** Mike Kennedy, Editor, 7907 Charlotte Drive SW, Huntsville, AL 35802-2841 USA. The clubzine of the North Alabama SF Association. #10/year, monthly. A good clubzine with lots of conreports, reviews, club news, and an active lettercolumn.
- Notes from Oblivion, #29,** December 1996. Jay Harber, 626 Paddock Lane, Libertyville, IL 60048 USA. A personalzine, and this issue deals with Star Trek and his opinions of the whole phenomenon.
- Nova Express vol 4, #2, #3.** Lawrence Person, editor, PO Box 27231, Austin TX 78755-2231. Good articles about SF, written by well-known authors.
- Opuntia #19, 19.1, 23, 28, 28.1A.** Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary Alberta, CANADA T2P 2E7. Published irregularly. Mostly personal but has some interesting interchanges in the letter column.

Packrat #10. Lynn Hickman, 413 Ottokee St., Wauseon, OH 43567-1133 USA. One of Lynn's last apazines for PEAPS, dated October 94, but not pubbed until January 1995. Lynn started this apa, I believe (the Pulp Era Amateur Press Society), and has been collecting pulp magazines forever. Fandom lost an active member when he died last year.

Passionate Fulcrum, vol. #2. Mike Whalen, PO Box 55422, Metairie LA 70055-5422 USA. A personalzine wherein Mike gets passionate about his interests. Loves to get locs.

Pelz-Zines, Bruce and Elayne Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St., Granada Hills, CA 91344-3951 USA. Two travelogue zines wherein Bruce describes his and Elayne's trips to Hawaii to see the eclipse in 1991, and to Egypt in 1995, because Mike Resnick visited Africa and they wanted to too.

Periodical Lungfish, vol 1, #12. DASFA, PO Box 18618, Denver, CO 80218 USA. A fanzine sporadically produced by the Denver Area SF Association. It contains articles, stories, poetry and comics. A fine production.

Phassionate Fulcrum. #3. Mike Whalen, PO Box 55422, Metairie, LA 70055-5422 USA. \$2 or the usual. A personalzine by Mike, whose main topic is his life and the events leading to his divorce in 1995. Well-written.

PhiloSFy. #4-6. Alexander R. Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Dr., San Antonio, TX 78239-4022 USA. The usual, or \$1/issue. A splendid little zine in which the editor discussed ethics and philosophical standings on war, governance, and death, a nice letter column and book reviews, and occasionally fanzine reviews. A good mix and interesting.

Phosgene. #1. FOSFAX, c/o FOSFA, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281 USA. Timothy Lane and his FOSFAX crew delivered this "April Fools" issue in April of 1995. Some very funny bits in their own style.

Pry. #3. Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA), Joyce Katz, Laurie Yates, John Hardin and Aileen Forman. This 1994 issue invited help, ideas auction items, etc., for the 1995 CORFLU Vegas.

QUIPU. #5, 6, 7. Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, NY 10034 USA. E-mail: vr@cr.acm.org. The usual. A wonderful personalzine which leaves food for thought and a desire to write a response. I finally got around to doing so for issue #7 (after suppressing the desire for #5 & 6, due to my life-changes), where Vicki talks about getting a tattoo. Highly recommended.

Random Factors. John & Mary Creasey, 3754 W. 170th St., Torrance, CA 90504-1204 USA. This is the 1993 catalogue for the Creaseys, and it contains listings of filk music tapes, CDs, and songbooks. I am sure they are still in existence, and carry much more than these 26 pages indicate.

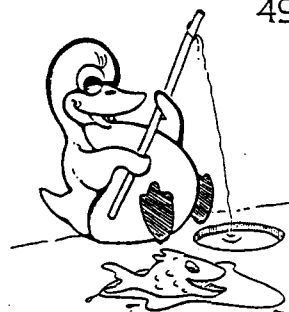
The Reasonable Freethinker. #4. Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39236. A personalzine with comments and musings by the editor, and an active lettercolumn. This issue is from 1995.

The Reluctant Famulus. #39-49. Tom Sadler, 422 W. Maple Ave., Adrian, MI 49221-1627 USA. Quarterly, the usual, \$2/issue, or neat things and compliments. A

delightful zine with many comments and musings by the editor, regular columns by Bob Sabella, Terry Jeeves and Sheryl Birkhead, and a plethora of book reviews, art, some fanzine reviews, and lots of letters. Hugeworthy and highly recommended. Tom is running for TAFF, and I support his nomination! Vote for someone on the ballot, which has been included in this issue.

The Reluctant Famulus

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Summer, 1997

Rune #85. Garth Edmond Danielson, PO Box 8297, Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 5548 USA. The irregularly published fanzine of the Minnesota Science Fiction Society. Some wonderful things here, but probably the most moving is the tribute to Lee Pelton, *Rune* editor 1978-90. His friends remember him, his life, interests and accomplishments, and most of all, his friendship. Recommended.

Sacred Trust #1. Murray Moore, 377 Manly Street, Midland, Ontario L4R 3E2 CANADA. The usual. An introductory zine to the editor, and Murray also makes significant comments in his fanzine review column.

Science Fiction 5-Yearly. #10 (November 96). Lee Hoffman (3290 Sunrise Trail, Port Charlotte, FL 33952-6066), Any Hooper (4228 Francis Ave., S., Seattle, WA 98103) and Jeff Schalles & Geri Sullivan (3444 Blaisdell Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55408-4315) editors. The usual. Still produced by mimeo, this zine brings a wealth of history to its pages, not the least of which are the contributors (like Lee herself, Ted White, Robert Bloch, and others). Highly recommended.

ScientiFiction. Spring 1995-Autumn 1997. Mark Schulzinger, 4 Nevada Circle, Gallup NM 87301-5469 USA. Quarterly, \$6.00/year. This is the newsletter of First Fandom. Well done and interesting, and well worth reading. I need to renew!

SFSFS Shuttle #119. Joe Siclari & Edie Stern, South Florida Science Fiction Society, PO Box 70143, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307-0143 USA. The newsletter and fanzine of SFSFS. This May/June 1995 issue was the tenth anniversary of the zine. It includes reminiscences from its membership, and other articles, reviews, and club news. Very well done and recommended (especially for the Florida fans).

Sigma. #108 (January 1995) - #138 (July 1997). PARSEC, PO Box 3681, Pittsburgh, PA 15230-3681 USA. The monthly clubzine of P.A.R.S.E.C. (the Pittsburgh Area

- Realtime Scientifiction Enthusiasts Club). It contains information about the club, news about their annual convention CONFLUENCE, and lots of book reviews.
- Silvercon Memories, The Adventures of TruFans in Glitter City.* Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA. A lengthy conreport of SILVERCON III. Has some interesting bits.
- Situation Normal.* Feb 1995-Sept 1995. Joyce Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA. The monthly newsletter of SNAFFU (the Southern Nevada Area Fantasy & Fiction Union). The many contributors makes for interesting reading.
- Skug* #11. Gary S. Mattingly, 7501 Honey Ct., Dublin, CA 94568 USA. This 1995 semi-perzine also contains articles by Wm. Breiding, Bruce Townley, and Richard Coad. Very good writing and interesting topics (like beer, the 1995 San Francisco International Film Festival, and the making of a short porno film).
- Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin.* vol 6, #1. Tom Feller, editor, Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39236-3626 USA. As the title indicates, this zine contains information about the Southern Fandom Confederation. It also has conreports, a fanzine review column, and other interesting information.
- Space Cadet.* #1, #6. R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Ave, Apt #110, Vancouver, BC V6J 1J1 CANADA. A personalzine with other contributors (like Terry Jeeves). Very interesting, though I should write a loc, something more than just this review recommending it.
- Spektra after the flood: NEBULAFANZINET.* 1995, 1996. David Griffin (Tamburingränd 3, 175 48 JÄRFÄLLA, Sweden), Lars-Arne Karlsson, (Ekås Gällared, 310 60 ULLARED, Sweden), Henry Linder (Teaterallén 24, 903 64 UMEÅ, Sweden), editors. This zine covers the nominations of the Swedish Nebula, their annual award for the best SF published. There are reviews for the nominees in all categories.
- Splash Splash.* Spring 1996-?. Joy V. Smith, 3403 Providence Road, Lakeland, FL 33809-1380 USA. A pleasant zine with some interesting articles on SF, reviews, fanzines, and reprints from other fanzines. Much deals with collecting and publishing; two issues have an interview with Janet Fox, editor of *The Scavenger's Newsletter*.
- Squib* #1. Victor Gonzalez, 905 NE 45th St, #106, Seattle WA 98105 USA. A zine which seems to be strictly a promotion for Victor's candidacy for TAFF. Nothing wrong with that. Some very good writing.
- Stun Gunn.* #16. Ian Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130 AUSTRALIA. This August 1994 issue is subtitled "The F-Word", for "fan fundraising". A hilarious approach to something necessary for the continuation of the various fan-funds in existence.
- The Texas SF Inquirer.* #52, 53. Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Drive, San Antonio TX 78239-4022 USA. These 1994 zines are the publications of the Fandom of Central Texas. Lots of reviews, and articles about SF and conventions.
- Thingummybob.* #11. Chuck Connor, Silden House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF ENGLAND. The usual craziness from
- Chuck Connor, and the included articles all seem to center on sex in one way or another.
- Trapdoor.* #16. Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen CA 95442 USA. \$4/issue or the usual. Still one of the finest, most interesting fanzines produced. Great writing, and HIGHLY recommended.
- The Trufan's Advisor.* Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA. A lively and fairly complete introduction to fanzines and fanzine production. Arnie includes a list of fannish words and terms commonly used. Extremely helpful for the neo-fanzine fan.
- Twink* #3 (Sept 1996). E.B. Frohvet, 4725 Dorsey Hall Drive #A-700, Ellicott City MD 21042 USA. A very good fanzine which should be supported with art and articles. This one has an excellent analysis of Constantine Bothari, a character in Lois McMaster Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan series.. Also included are book and fanzine reviews. The editors welcome locs and contributions.
- Uncle Hugo's SF Bookstore, Uncle Edgar's Mystery Bookstore.* #26-37. 2864 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55407. A listing of recent releases of SF and Mystery books. Wonderful catalogues, with reviews and essays about books. If you mail order books, get these. e-mail: unclehugo@aol.com
- WeberWoman's Wrevenge.* #50 (Oct 96). Jean Weber, PO Box 744, Ryde, NSW 2112 AUSTRALIA. The personalzine of Jean Weber, with columns by Lyn McConchie and others. Very readable, very interesting zine, with reviews and an active lettercolumn as well.
- White Trash.* Vol 1, #4; Vol 2, #1&2. Thomas Anthony Longo, PO Box 8890, New Orleans, LA 70122-3037 USA. \$2.50/issue, the usual, trade. A fanzine of opinions, arguments and altercations.
- Wild Heirs.* #3-9.5. Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107 USA. A fun fanzine from the group of fans who live in Las Vegas. Zany, crazy and even interesting.
- Wondering and Wandering.* #5. Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina CA 91722 USA. Don's general-circulation fanzine with personal comments, fanzine reviews, conreports, and lettercolumn.
- YARF.* #0. PO Box 1299, Cupertino, CA 95015-1299 USA. This 1993 issue "zero" of *The Journal of Applied Anthropomorphics* is for the lovers of "furry fandom. Many have been published since then, and I think the price is up to \$10/issue now.
- Zero G Lavatory.* #3-5. Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, BC V0R 1S0 CANADA. A mostly personalzine by Scott, with a very active lettercolumn. Good interactions with his readers.
- Zina* #1. Barnaby Rapoport, PO Box 565, Storrs, CT 06268 USA. A personalzine with lots of opinions - on fandom, movies and the like. Well, done, and easy reading.

Steele on Mars

Allen Steele interviewed by Dave Creek

The flood of SF novels set on Mars continues. In this interview, Allen Steele (himself the author of the Mars novel *The Labyrinth of Night*) tells us why books set on the Red Planet continue to be popular. The interview was conducted at **Rivercon XIX** in Louisville in July 1994.

Steele says you can trace this literary phenomenon back to H.G. Wells: "Half the time when I talk to another science fiction writer or SF fan, or whatever, they cite *The War of the Worlds* as being their first book, the one that turned them on. So as far as the science fiction side of it goes, I think Mr. Wells was responsible for a great deal of it. The second reason is that ever since the dawn of the space age, Mars had been the objective. One of the first things the Russians did was to send a probe to Mars. Our first planetary objective beyond the Moon was to send a craft to Mars. And even after we found out that we didn't have any canals and that there weren't going to be any tharks and Dejah Thoris wasn't there, if anything our curiosity increased.

"It wasn't like Venus, that when we found out that it was a hellhole on Venus' surface, public interest and a lot of science fiction interest lapsed. If anything, we wanted to find out why Mars looked this way, and why this was a planet that seemed dead and yet when we looked at it closer, still seemed to be somewhat active.

"I think it's basically mythological. It used to be that when you thought of a fantastic place far, far away you conjured up heaven, or Nirvana, or Atlantis, or whatever. Well, now we know that there may not be a heaven, or that Atlantis is very much mythological or that Nirvana is a band that no longer exists, but Mars is very visible and we can imagine this as being The Other World."

Steele also points out that Mars continues its grasp on our imagination because of its accessibility. He says a lot of people, especially SF fans, are surprised and disappointed that humanity hasn't already made the journey to the Red Planet. He realizes, though, that it will take a lot of hard work to realize some of SF's visions.

"I think terraforming is a lot harder than a lot of people think it's going to be. We're going to have colonies established on Mars for a hundred years or so before anybody can make a real, honest-to-God, realistic effort doing it. In my own future history that I've been slowly concocting, I have the first effort at terraforming fail disastrously—they screw it up. But I think it's going to be the first place that we're going to have self-sustaining colonies. Even a lunar colony can depend somewhat on Earth for supplies. On Mars they can't do that; it's too far away. Mars will be the next Antarctica. It will be the next place that people will have to live off the land. Terraforming, though, it's going to take a while."

His own SF novel, *The Labyrinth of Night*, "came about because I think every science fiction writer is owed a Mars story." The book postulated that the mysterious "face" on Mars really is an alien artifact. Does Steele believe that himself? "I think there's a 99.9% chance that the face is coincidence, that it's a land form that was sculpted so that when the light hits it just right it looks like a face. But even that tenth of a percent of a chance that it could be an alien construct is enough to fascinate people—it fascinated me, in

spite of the doubts that I had.

"Now, of course, some people have made a career out of writing Mars stories. I wanted to write just a good, solid adventure story set on Mars, but with realistic technology, and put in a lot of politics of the time. It was surprising to me that at the same time it was published, four other novels appeared that year.

"And the beauty of it was—look at those novels—each of them was different. The only thing they had in common was that they used Mars as a backdrop. You can't compare my novel to the best known one, *Red Mars*, by Kim Stanley Robinson, any more than Robinson's book can be compared to *Mining the Oort* by Frederik Pohl, or Pohl's book can be compared to Bova's book. And there's still more—later this year, Kevin Anderson is going to be publishing *Climbing Olympus*, yet another Mars book. [It appeared in September of 1994.] Of course, there's the rest of Stan's trilogy."

Steele also pointed the way toward a possible return of the Martian adventure story in the style of Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter stories. He says if you postulate that Jupiter turned into another sun at the birth of the solar system, you could have a Mars warm enough to generate life. You could do all the adventure novels you wanted on a parallel-universe Mars.

"Going back to mythology, I think Mars is the new Wild West, it's the new great frontier...I think that a lot of us are holding out hope that we might find a skeleton or something like that—or that we may have found that some sort of primitive life rose from those ancient seas before it was killed off. Even the fact that we don't know exactly what extinguished life on Mars, what caused those seas to dry up, what caused it to lose most of its atmosphere, that's a great mystery that is going to haunt us for a long time.

"In a way, Mars is the great haunted house of the solar system, and any kid wants to check out the haunted house, I think Mars has that kind of macabre fascination.

"If there were one symbol for Mars, besides the ancient Greek one that's commonly used, it would be a question mark. It is one of the big, if not the biggest, mysteries of the solar system. And until we resolve all those questions, Mars will be a point of fascination for science fiction writers, for space buffs, for kids, for everybody." [✱]



Travels with Dennis

Intersection – Worldcon 1995

by Dennis Caswell

This year, the World Science Fiction Convention was held at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center (SECC) in Glasgow, Scotland. About 5,000 people attended the convention, and I feel that fun was had by most all.

I was traveling with a friend of mine who had never traveled abroad before (to my knowledge). I had been to the U.K. before, but he had not. I warned him about the prices there, so he was not greatly surprised at the cost of things. The pound was worth about US\$1.60, and one spent pounds there like one uses dollars within the States.

As usual, I worked registration on Wednesday and Thursday, and work the Masquerade and Hugo Ceremonies. There were no parties to speak of on Wednesday evening, so we spent the time recovering from jet-lag.

Wednesday I was assigned to the registration table, and Thursday was largely spent working program participant registration. I did get to register Samuel "Chip" Delany, and Diane Duane, since I was handling the letters D-F. The rules said that all people were to show identification, so I made Samuel Delany show his, even though he was the Professional Author Guest of Honor. No problems there. However, when Toastmaster Diane Duane came to register, I knew her well enough that I asked her for ten pieces of photo-identification. ☺

Opening ceremonies was interesting, with the chairman remarking that this was the first time that Worldcon have gone from one commonwealth country to another. Then two witches came on stage, later revealed to be Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. As a surprised guest, Mike Jitlov was there, and later during the convention I managed to talk with him for a short while.

I attended a number of panel items on Friday, including "Negative Matter Supported Wormholes," and a most interesting one about "The Spaceship and the Bilges." The latter panel featured Diane Duane, Geoffrey Landis, Elizabeth Moon and Dr. Robert L. Forward. The panel was about the physical excretion of alien beings, and how this may be done on a futuristic spacecraft.

At the closing ceremony at **Conadian** last year, Anne McCaffrey indicated that this would be her last appearance at a Worldcon. She stated this wrong; it was her last appearance at a *North American* Worldcon. She was at **Intersection**, accompanied by Todd Johnson. I first saw her at a Kaffeeklatsch, and she was seated in a wheelchair. This made me concerned for her health, for reasons that I will state later. She was not doing many book signings, but I managed to get two books autographed at that session. Anne knows who I am, so I would not be able to get more than her limit signed, even if I were to try.

Talking to Todd Johnson, I learned that Anne McCaffrey using the wheelchair only to take it easy. On Sunday morning, I saw Anne walking into the SECC unaided, and upon asking how she felt, she indicated that she was feeling quite well, and was taking it very easy on herself. In addition, I showed her the pictures that I had of my white

snowmobile, which IU had named Ruth. This brought on the not-unexpected reaction from her.

There was some bad news at the convention. We were told that John Brunner had suffered a stroke, and would not be attending any functions for which he had been scheduled. I was working the site-selection table on Friday evening when we received news that he had passed away. This was a severe shock to me, considering that I had registered him as a program participant the previous day. I knew that he had been at the con. And now he was gone. Just like Fritz Leiber at **Magicon**.

Saturday morning was spent at the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) business meeting, where several items were discussed. One item of note was defeated on a 26-26 tie vote, which was initiated when I requested a division of the house. WSFS is for SMOFs only.

The Masquerade was scheduled to start at 7:30. At 7:15, an announcement was made that the Masquerade would be starting in fifteen minutes. *Fat chance*, I thought. *Since when has a Worldcon Masquerade started on time? This one would be no different.* And it was no different; it was 30 seconds late.

As I remarked to friends of mine later, the knowledgeable fan would have missed the first three entries in this Masquerade.

Sunday was spent getting various autographs, at the Hugo Award rehearsal, and at the Hugo Award ceremony itself. I was one of the Award ushers, and brought on stage the awards for Best Fan Artist (Teddy Harvia), and Best Novel (*Mirror Dance* by Lois McMaster Bujold). Other awards went to *Interzone* (Best Semiprozine), Jim Burns (Best Professional Artist), "A Martian Child" by David Gerrold (Best Novelette) and Mike Resnick for "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" (Best Novella).

Also on Sunday, the site-selection results were announced. Baltimore won on the first ballot, and the Worldcon, **Bucconeer** will be held from August 5-9, 1998. In addition, the 1997 **Eurocon** was decided at the convention, and **Octocon** won the vote. I do not know the current rates, but they were selling memberships for £15 at the convention. **Octocon** is held in or near Dublin each year, and Anne McCaffrey generally attends. When I was there in 1991, her program items were in alternate programming. I have mentioned this in other publications, but it should be noted that Anne McCaffrey is generally unknown in Ireland.

In general, **Intersection** was a very competently run convention, with good co-operation from the convention center and the various hotels. I know of two cases where the hotel went beyond the norm to accommodate us. It is pricey, but well worth it. When the room parties become hall parties, and the halls become crowded, then the parties have become a success.

Intersection, like **Confiction**, shows us that science fiction fandom is world wide. I can hardly wait for **L.A.Con III**. [*]

Post Scriptings

Letters of Comment on *Lan's Lantern* #42 & #43

Martin Morse Wooster, PO Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907 USA

Ben P. Indick's travelogue about his Spanish vacation was quite delightful. I agree wholeheartedly with his buying music he heard while on his travels, as this is also one of my long-standing habits. This year, for example, I was in Ithaca, New York, on business and stopped by the local farmer's market, which happened to have a glass harmonica player who not only played all the instruments on compositions that called for two or more glass harmonicas, but even made the instrument himself, including creating the individual goblets by hand. **Con-Francisco** was a particularly good place to pick up tapes, as San Francisco may well be the world capital for street musicians, and is certainly the only city where electronic autoharp players and second-string tenors sell their tapes on the street. (I bought both tapes, of course.)

Lynn McMillan should be more accurate in her descriptions of Harry Harrison novels. *The Hammer and the Cross* is a collaboration between Harrison and English academic Tom Shippey, who writes under the pseudonym "John Holm". I gather Shippey wrote most of it. *The Turing Option*, billed as a collaboration between Harrison and Marvin Minsky, should really be thought of as a Harry Harrison novel with Marvin Minsky's ideas in it.

The decline in the quality of SF short fiction and the rise in the quality (and number) of SF novels mentioned by Harry Warner Jr. could be explained by economics. Writers can make more money writing novels than short fiction. I recall Joe Haldeman saying in a *Locus* interview that he made a dollar a word for the novels he did. This means that Haldeman earns about ten times as much for his novels as for his shorts, and Haldeman is by no means SF's top income earner. In the '50s, by contrast, SF writers received about twice as much for doing novels as they did for short fiction, so they would have had less incentive for doing longer work. There were, in addition, many more markets for short fiction in those days. I certainly agree with Warner, though, that the best SF stories of the '50s might survive longer than the best SF of today.

Buck Coulson should know that I do enjoy doing enthusiastic reviews; I also prefer to spend my time reading enjoyable books rather than bad ones. But I would hate it if, as a critic, I was required to be nice all the time. In my view, those writers who only gave positive reviews (Theodore Sturgeon, Orson Scott Card) will never be known for their criticism. The best critics are those who are neither permanently in bliss nor permanently morose, but somewhere in between.

David Thayer, 701 Regency Dr, Hurst, TX 76054 USA

Faulty cinematic research amuses me. Paleophiles

know the characters in *Jurassic Park* would have found nothing to extract by syringe in the insects trapped in amber. And Ian Gunn's car in his *Back to the Future* cartoon looks more like a Ford Mustang than a DeLoren.

Hey, a car is a car. If it runs, that's good enough for me. If it also happens to travel through time, well, that's a bonus!

#43: Placing B. Ware's cartoon on your back cover was appropriate. His laser-free art deserves no post-script. Even the local carrion-eating funny animals avoid his humor.

Your poor treatment as fan GoH seems typical of late. To too many newer fans, that honor is a valueless remnant of an unknown past era. The question Generation X asks is what have you done for me lately. If the answer is nothing, you are nothing.

I disagree with Dennis K. Fischer's conclusion that sex will be zero at zero-G. Humans are uniquely inventive and adaptable. But forget an easy return for those who live long in space. Astronauts who spend long stretches in zero-G lost bone mass (no pun intended).

Murray Moore, 377 Manly Street, Midland, Ontario L4R 3E2 Canada 11 July 94

I read your review of the first nine issues of the comic book *Mantra* because you identified George Barr as the writer. I had no knowledge that Barr was involved in comic books. I assumed that this George Barr, likelier than not, was the George Barr who is one of the guests of honour at **Conadian**. I completed your review without being any wiser as to the comic book George Barr's being the artist George Barr.

Were you thinking of **Conadian**, too, Lan? I saw a copy of *Mantra* on the comic spinner at the Transit Shop at the mall, and examined it for clues that would answer my question about writer George Barr. The writer of *Mantra* is Mike Barr, a comic book writer who has spent his career primarily writing for DC Comics comic books.

Yes, you may be right in this, that I was thinking of the then upcoming Worldcon. Mea culpa for my mistake.

I will be surprised if Anthony Ravenscroft's memory of a version of "Repent, Harlequin!" said the Ticktockman" with a prologue and an epilogue proves to be accurate. I know it well, having read it, and having heard Ellison read it. (*Harlan! Harlan Ellison reads Harlan Ellison*, Alternate World Recordings Inc., AWR 6922, 1976. Record sleeve art by Leo and Dianne Dillon. "Shatterday" occupies Side 2.)

Milton F. Stevens, 5384 Rainwood St., #90, Simi Valley, CA 93063 USA February 1995

During my initial scan of *Lan's Lantern* #42, I noticed Roy Lavender's comment on your fanzine as a menace to the ecology. While I doubt you are going to singlehandedly destroy the Amazon rain forests, I have noticed another problem. Every time I think about how much work it takes to produce *Lan's Lantern*, I experience an overwhelming desire to lie down and take a nap. This reaction really gets in the way of writing locs.

Well, I am glad you recovered enough to write this one.

I don't have any information on an appearance in a men's magazine of "Repent, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman" which Anthony Ravenscroft mentions, but there was a comics version of the story published in *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* comics at about that time. *Unknown Worlds* did quite respectable comics versions of quite a few known science fiction stories. I particularly recall their version of Niven's "Not Long Before the End." In several issues of *Unknown Worlds*, Bob Shaw's *slow glass* was used as a framing device for the stories.

I remember the series in Unknown Worlds. They did excellent versions of Van Vogt's "Enchanted Village" and Moorcock's "Behold the Man".

I also have a phantom tale which I have never been able to locate. I thought it was from *F&SF* in the early fifties, but I have never found it there. The story was about a boy, who is the victim of bullies and finds a magic ring which forms an impenetrable barrier around him. Years pass and he finally realizes that the barrier has entirely separated him from the rest of the human race. Of course, he can't remove the ring by this time, and the barrier doesn't disperse even when he finally cuts his ring finger off.

Mark Bernstein's summary of the 1993 short fiction nominees reminded me of how dismal I thought the short fiction output of 1993 really was. The fiction did inspire my sense of wonder, but in this case I was wondering why I was still reading this crap. If the best science fiction exhibits an imaginative leap, most of this stuff barely managed an imaginative slither.

Over the 40+ years I've been reading science fiction, there have been several periods when I started feeling the current SF output was getting to be bland and utterly routine. This may be one of those periods, but it does seem like the short fiction writers in 1993 were getting their ideas from nothing more exotic than the daily newspapers. I was almost shocked to notice I was enjoying the SF in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* far more than I was enjoying the material in the prozines.

Good luck finding that story. I don't know if my readers can help; I don't remember such a story. I do hope that the short-fiction writers since 1993 have produced some better tales.

Robert "Buck" Coulson, 2677W - 500N., Hartford City, IN 47348 USA 17 May 94

I know a few things about Spanish history, but Indick's comment about Franco getting Jews out of Yugoslavia and Greece on Spanish passports was new to me. Fascinating. Hitler couldn't have appreciated having a man he'd help put into power turning on him like that. As for the Washington Irving dates, Irving died in 1859 and presumably the plaque was installed in

1959.

I always tend to think of Murray Leinster as a prolific author - I have 4 hardcovers, 1 trade paperback, and 29 paperbacks by him - until I realize how long he was writing. He was indeed successful. I recall mediocre stories by him, but never a really bad one.

Readers of Robert Bloch might be surprised by his autobiography, but fans who remember the Bloch and Tucker duo cracking jokes at many a convention, or those who have read *Eighth Stage of Fandom*, will find the autobiography exactly what they expected. I hadn't noticed the Schwartz/Norton collaboration until McMillan reviewed it, but I'll have to pick it up in paperback at least.

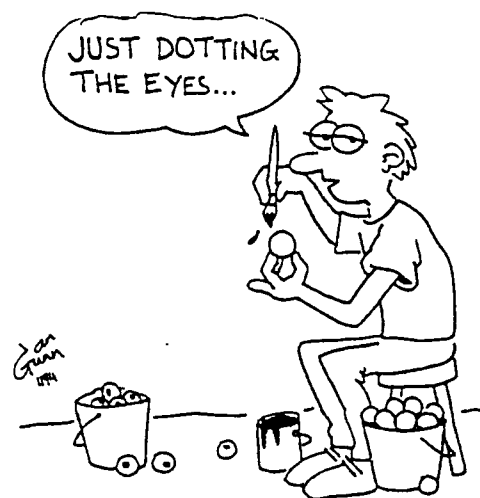
Err ... since you also review *What's A Hoosier*, Lan, you should have noticed that there is previously recorded material on *Longcor Undead*; you mention two of them. Not much previously, of course, but previous is previous..

Sorry about that. I missed the publication dates on the two tapes.

Congratulations to Roy Lavender; anyone who can parody a limerick deserves an accolade.

I don't think I ever considered getting adulation for my writing, though like Milt Stevens I wrote (detective stories) as a teenager. I wanted to (a) prove I could write well enough to sell, and (b) make money. Eventually I did, and had fun doing it. (For all I bitch about the reviews I do, I still have fun, and still make money, though there's been less fun and less money the past several years.)

I'll disagree mildly with Harry Warner. Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* is generally regarded as the best Civil War novel, but Ambrose Bierce wrote some highly regarded short fiction about the Civil War, and he was in it. (In an Indiana regiment; just another Hoosier.) "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and "A Horseman in the Sky" are fit to be mentioned in the same breath with Crane. "Chickamauga" is less well-known, but it's both an accurate account of the aftermath of a battle and a horrifying account of a little child seeing it. There are several other war stories in Bierce's *In the Midst of Life*. (And in *The Collected Writings of Ambrose Bierce*, Citadel 1946, which is what I have.) Of course, I'm a Bierce fan, and was even before I learned that he grew up about 10 miles from where I grew up. Kindred spirits On the other hand, I fully agree with Harry about parents being important in creating readers. My parents had books they had purchased and library cards, and I usually got at least one book every birthday and



Christmas. My parents had to go with me to the library when I was little, but the Warsaw librarians were pretty lenient about letting me borrow whatever I wanted to once I got a bit older. (I even borrowed a librarian's car once, when I'd locked my keys in mine. I was a teenager then, and that's being very liberal.)

Fred Jakobic, 1025 N. Third Street, Marquette, MI 49855 USA

Ben Indick's article was not all Greek and I enjoyed the Turkey. Besides, I don't understand or read either language. But, no translation necessary. In reading "Eunuchs in Space" by Dennis K. Fischer, I came to the conclusion that there is a lot of space between sex, in space. Still, in reading the article, sex would be a whole new ball game, and something would have to be longer ... for success, depending on just what success is. Osborne's trip to England was a pleasant read. It, or your article, reminded me that I would not care to try steak or kidney pie. That is not my thing.

R Lorraine Tutihasi, 2567 Plaza Del Amo, #209, Torrance, CA 90503-7329 USA

Re #42: Algernon D'Amassa was of the opinion that Walt Disney World did not deserve four days. The last time I was there I devoted a whole week to it. Back then, EPCOT and the MGM Tour had not yet been built. I think it is a matter of personal preference.

I guess I'm not normal, according to Harry Warner. I read science fiction long before I saw my first television set in 1956. Of course, I didn't know what I was reading was science fiction.

I sympathize with Sheryl Birkhead's hotel problems. Sometimes you have to let the company know how you expect them to apologize. You can name a monetary amount, for instance. Many companies will pay any reasonable amount. I once had problems with both United and American Airlines. They both messed up my special meal request. United sent me a cheque for \$10. American asked me what I wanted them to do about it. Of course, I should have asked for \$10; but I was too upset at the time. The next time I had problems with an airline, I specified exactly how much I thought they should reimburse me; and I got the cheque in the mail.

Helen E. Davis, 74 Waterford Dr., Centerville, OH 45458 USA. June & December, 1994

Thank You for printing "Silver." It was very nice and Diana Harlan Stein's artwork on the first page is very nice. Did she do it to order for my story? I thank her and Tullio Proni. I've given the companion stories to Tom Sadler for submission to *The Reluctant Familiar*. I think he's interested. Do you know of any other fanzines which would publish fiction? Every time I publish something in the *Lantern*, I receive strange zines in the mail. I think they want contributions from me, but see - they all have an anti-fiction stance, and I'm not proficient at anything else.

The art piece by Diana Harlan Stein was one I had in my files, and I thought fit perfectly with your story, which is why I used it. Offhand, the only other fanzine which prints fiction occasionally is Memphen, whose editor Tim Gatewood can be reached at: 3125 South Mendenhall, Suite 353, Memphis, TN 38115-2808.

I sympathize with Anthony Ravenscroft's predicament. I know of some phantom tales myself. I wonder

if he is still looking for it? If so, I'm going to make a *really stupid* suggestion - has he looked for the *Playboy* issues at the public library? Or through University inter-library loan? In 1978 or 79, in Shreveport, LA, I was working on a term paper on Ray Bradbury. There weren't enough references to be found in the school library, so I went to outside sources. Among other things, I learned that *Playboy* did print SF, also interviews with prominent SF authors. I also learned that the downtown library took the magazine and kept back issues in the archives.

Terry Jeeve's story about coming to America reminds me of my Honeymoon trip the Bahamas. Someone, I think it was Steve's brother, filled our suitcases with rice the day of our wedding. We spent the night there in Tulsa and took an early flight the next morning. Too early for us to clean out the suitcases. In my befuddled state, I didn't realize that the Bahamas was another country until we got off the plane and found ourselves facing customs. So when they asked if we had any fruits or vegetables, I declared, "Rice." People are nice in the Bahamas; the custom official seemed amused by my story.

David Palter, 55 Yarmouth Rd, Bsmt., Toronto, Ontario M6G 1X1 CANADA. July 1994

My favorite part of #42 is Ben Indick's travel report from Iberia, which is interestingly informative about some little known aspects of history. Ben is quite a well-educated traveler.

I did enjoy "Silver," Helen Davis' award-winning story. Although it relies heavily on fantasy clichés, it contains a spark of genuine feeling. This story reminds me of the type of fiction that Marion Zimmer Bradley chooses for her "Sword and Sorceress" anthology series.

The essay "Rock Music as Science Fiction" by Pete Grubbs is commendable for its scholarship (this has got to have been some kind of academic paper before it was submitted to LL - right? [[*Right!*]]). However, it did not interest me much. The idea that SF has become a major influence in popular music (and for that matter, throughout our present culture) is quite obvious to me, and does not need to be meticulously proven, at length. Furthermore, the lyrics of John Palumbo which are cited fail to impress me - although it is easily possible that they work well with the music of *From the Greenhouse* (which I haven't heard). I consider the song "Hammerheads" by Shriekback to be a superb piece of SFnal music, but I also think that without the impassioned music, the lyrics would be pretty flat (although superior to those quoted in this essay).

Interesting that Robert Coulson finds *Analog* to be the most readable of the SF prozines. I agree, and it has become the only one that I still read every month.

Lawrence Watt-Evans, 5 Solitaire Court, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 USA. October 1994

I do have some comments on #42 - specifically, Pete Grubbs' "Rock Music as Science Fiction."

I'm not familiar with Crack the Sky or *From the Greenhouse*, but Grubbs' statement on page 22 that "*From the Greenhouse* is the only [album] of my acquaintance which obviously adopts the form of SF sub-genre identified by Amis and Aldiss" is a sorry display of ignorance. Has this man never heard *Blows Against the Empire*?

Apparently not.

In fact, his list of SF-related music manages to miss all the output of the Jefferson Airplane and Jefferson

Starship, despite the giveaway of the second band's name.

I'm not going to write an entire follow-up article – though I easily could – but I cannot resist pointing out that on *Crown of Creation*, released by RCA in 1968, the title cut lifts its lyrics directly from John Wyndham's novel *The Chrysalids* (aka *Re-Birth*). To be exact, they're the speech the mutant leader from New Zealand gives near the end of the book, when Canadians protest at how coldly she talks about their families.

On *Bark*, the Airplane continued with "War Movie," which reminds me of nothing so much as A.E. Van Vogt's work.

Just two really blatant examples.

Moving on to the Starship, the original Starship, the thirteen-member thrown-together-for-one-album band headed by Paul Kantner and Grace Slick, produced the concept album *Blows against the Empire*, the story of a counter-culture conspiracy that escapes oppression for the sake of their children by stealing the first starship, a la Heinlein's *Methuselah's Children*. How does this fail to fit Amis' or Aldiss' definitions?

Paul Kantner has been an obsessive science fiction fan his entire life, and it's reflected in virtually all his music; how'd Grubbs miss that?

An then there's the band Hawkwind and *Time of the Hawklords* – they had Michael Moorcock helping them out.

Grubbs mentions Rush, but not "Red Barchetta," their classic short SF story in the form of a single song, using SF techniques of implication, rather than explanation.

And what about going back to Sheb Wooley's "Purple People Eater"?

I mean, if he'd titled his article "A Look At From the Greenhouse" I'd have no problem, but the title implies that he's looking at *all* of rock music, which he just ain't.

This is all just off the top of my head; I haven't even bother to look at my albums, where I know I'd find plenty more stuff to cite.

How does Grubbs handle *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*? He says it's a song by David Bowie with SF influence. No, it isn't – there's no such song. That's the title of an *album*, which tells the story of a kid who becomes a rock star at the instigation of an alien who wants him to spread the word that there's hope, that the ecological catastrophe that's going to destroy humanity within five years need not happen.

Admittedly, it's not exactly *clear* that that's what the album's about, but Bowie explained it that way in several interviews back in '68.

Bowie's another performer whose work is saturated with SF tropes.

There are dozens.

Why on Earth pick an obscure band like Crack the Sky and claim you're writing a general article about SF in rock?

Billy Thorpe, *Children of the Sun*.

Dozens, I tell you.

Hmph.

And there are several albums of The Moody Blues and Yes which use SF concepts. Yes, dozens.

Tom Sadler, 422 West Maple Ave., Adrian MI 49227-1627 USA. May 1994

I'm puzzled about something in *Lan's Lantern* #42. It's no major matter but it did make me curious. I wonder if the judges at *Context* changed their minds about the winner of the Limerick Contest. My memory tells me that at *Context* the winning entry in the Limerick

Contest was a different one. My poem you printed was the winner in the appropriate category, but I thought my limerick was too. A quick check of the two certificates I received informed me that I had placed first in the Poetry and in the Limerick categories. I don't mean to make an issue over something that is, after all, only five lines long, but it seems I get so little credit for things I've done that I feel the need to correct any perceived oversights.

Oops! I guess I did make a mistake. I guess I made a major error here. Even though it has been a while, if you send me the poem, I will reprint it with the appropriate adulation. Forgive me, Tom. I certainly did not mean to slight you nor your accomplishments.



Gary M. Bernstein, 4640 282nd St., Toledo, OH 43611 USA. July 1994

in re: Dick Lynch's letter about A.E. Van Vogt and *Alien*. His facts correspond with the information I received (some of it from Van Vogt) but his speculation ("Back then I guess that was good money") is way off. The film people admitted no guilt nor liability but purchased the film rights to the short story in question for the \$50,000 figure Dick Lynch mentioned. This purchasing the film rights to the story solved a lot of legal delay, hassle and expense. Many financially sophisticated mavens and Hollywood experts advised Van to demand the all important screen credit.

Conventional wisdom deems that a writer's share of a movie that he has not been paid for in advance should be at least 10%, not counting penalty fees and compensation for stress, suffering, professional embarrassment, and all kinds of other things that only lawyers know how to spell. But if I remember rightly, Van Vogt's share of the gross, not even counting toys, t-shirts, and literally hundreds of millions of dollars in sequels, should have been over ten million dollars cash in hand. Plus, the loser of such a lawsuit often has to pay the winner's legal fees which come to an equally staggering figure. However, the time taken by such litigation, especially if the defendant thinks they don't have a case and decided to drag their feet as much as possible to delay paying up, can extend over an amazing number of years.

Van Vogt, who was about 72 years of age at that time, said something to the effect that by his math, accepting \$50,000 now was better than making his

grandchildren very, very rich.

Maybe, but it's a shame there was no official credit given to him as author of the block-buster movie. It would have made the film sales of his other classic science fiction tales much easier.

The credit for *Alien* is quite a saga in itself. Screenwriters O'Bannon and Schuster were horrified to learn there were plans to drop their names from the script and be replaced by a couple of the producers. An appeal to the Screen Writer's Guild soon fixed that. Apparently some elements, such as the important eccentricities of the science officer, were added after the credited writers had left.

Some scenes were actually filmed but cut before release of what the alien was doing with the victims it dragged into the ducts, namely using the dead human bodies as places to lay their "eggs" or young; had these scenes been included, the film would have resembled Van Vogt's story even more. Whether this was the reason these scenes were dropped or if it was done for some entirely different reason is a matter of idle speculation.

There is another chapter in the peculiar history of the evolution of this story. Another film, called something like *It: The Terror From Beyond Space*, appeared in the early sixties. This low-budget film, which I have never managed to see, is said to have a plot very much like Van Vogt's story and very much like *Alien*. The screenplay was by Jerome Bixby, a writer who occasionally wrote some of the most distinguished and original science fiction short stories of the age, although most of it, except "It's a Good Life", has been undeservedly forgotten. His Hollywood screen writing career, working on films with tiny budgets and unsympathetic producers, was somewhat undistinguished. The one high budget film based on his screen story, *The Fantastic Voyage*, was completely rewritten, allegedly ruining the charm of his having set it in the nineteenth century, a la the film version of *The Time Machine*.

Bixby, like the latter O'Bannon and Schuster, was a well-read science fiction fan.

However, there is some question as to how much one SF story can resemble another. An idea can be borrowed, as ideas are not copyrightable. Literary arrangement and treatment are a different story and the property of the author. Van Vogt's stories have influenced many writers in between.

Many times in the years since *Alien* came out, I have seen Van Vogt referred to as "the real author of *Alien*" or "the unacknowledged author of *Alien*" or sometimes just "the author of *Alien*". I believe such references are on tricky ground legally, or perhaps not, since it is critics and fans making the reference rather than A.E. Van Vogt or his representatives. I guess, and I have no formal knowledge of the law, that the phrase "unofficial author of *Alien*" is a little more accurate, since no one ever paid Van Vogt for *Alien*, but only after the movies' release bought movie rights to the Van Vogt story that the purchaser claimed was not the basis for the famous film.

I'm sorry Van Vogt didn't get paid more, but I'm glad the movie public got to see what was, if not the product of his story-telling genius, something that by an amazing coincidence bore a remarkable resemblance to his work. The screen writers deserve some credit at least, for if they were heavily influenced, and least they were influenced by the best.

Thanks for some clarification and additional information on this. Since I have seen It: The Terror From Beyond Space, I can see that indeed it does resemble one of Van Vogt's episodes from his work, The Voyage of the Space Beagle, which was

also first published as a short story.

Allan Beatty, PO Box 1906, Ames, IA 50010-1906
USA November, 1994

When Terry Jeeves' open-reel tape recorder and 8mm film projector give up the ghost, he should be able to find used ones easily enough. I see them in second-hand shops all the time. Of course, there's no guarantee they're in working order.

The issue brought back many memories from when I was very active in fanzine fandom in the 1970s. It's good to see some familiar folks from back then are still active, such as Ben Indick, Terry Jeeves, and Sheryl Birkhead. If I weren't so busy with other activities, I could easily enjoy plunging into fandom again. It's a good thing you had no fanzine reviews in this issue - I'd have never gotten to sleep last night.

Good to hear from you, Allan. Check out the fanzine review column in this issue. Lots there!

Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6 CANADA. December 1994

Ben Indick's trip to Spain sounds great. Spain is often ignored when it comes to explaining the European heritage of the Old World. A shame Ben wasn't able to make contact with Spanish fans, like Hector Ramos of Barcelona, whose small newsletter *Pertinax* is travelling the world, letting fandom know of Spanfannish news. Many people are taking the time and money to travel ... I'd like to go back to Holland and Belgium, and perhaps see Scandinavia, too.

I understand what Buck Coulson means about used (or even new) anthologies being difficult to sell. My first exposure to science fiction came through the anthologies and I still enjoy them. My mother wanted short stories to read and finish during short breaks in her busy schedule, and I read them for the same reason. They are especially good with riding the subway to and from work.

Jay Kay Klein, PO Box 397, Bridgeport, NY 13030
USA. December, 1994

The copy of #42 was much appreciated. I was taken aback by the size of it, and haven't been able to read it cover to cover, but I have read selected parts of it - and skimmed the remainder. And I will say that the \$5 subscription price per issue is something that I find for me to manage. I can see where such a huge number of pages, and the postage required would dictate the price. Let me make a suggestion.

I think most fans these days have a computer - I expect to have at least a Pentium with a 1 GB disc, etc. sometime next year. You could easily fit the entire #42 onto a 1.44 meg 3.5 inch floppy. Publishing this way would certainly be cheaper and permit a lower per copy cost.

You need not pay the price if you write a loc or send some sort of contribution. Your suggestion, however, of putting Lan's Lantern out on disc, is a good one, something which has been suggested several times by my readers. I could probably save the entire issue in a single file in ASCII format, copy it onto a disc those who want it that way, and mail then that. The main problem is it would have no artwork, just blanks where the art should be.

Mick Hamblen, 6002 Lakeview Drive #D, Indianapolis,

IN 46224 USA. July, 1994

Harry Warner's and your comments about the high price of video and what little you get on them is so true. American-sold Japanese animation like the *Nadia* series has approximately 30 minutes of video at \$15 each. This can be expensive after buying the first eight.

You should also consider the following when buying so-called "collection" videos. According to a local newspaper article, the shelf-life of a videocassette is approximately ten years. You should store them standing on end, and fast-forward and rewind them at least once a year.

For true collectors of video, like Elizabeth Ann Osborne, ought to consider getting themselves a laserdisc player, as LDs have a higher quality and don't deteriorate like videocassettes do. As a Japanese animation collector, the only way I could get animation from Japan was on Laserdisc, or know someone who would make a copy from LDs. Thank goodness these days there are a lot of new companies bringing out Anime right here in the USA. Even chains like Blockbuster are carrying it. One of the best of the new videos to come out is *My Neighbor Totoro*, a very gentle fantasy from Fox Home Video.

My favorite typo from #42 was "*Steel Beech*" by John Varley. I thought, what is he doing writing about a metal tree? Oh, *Steel Beach*! :)

Yes, I have heard about the "shelf life" of video cassettes, but so far I have not seen much deterioration of mine. They seem to be holding up all right. Sorry about the typo, but at least it held some amusement for you!

Pamela Sargent, Box 486, Johnson City, NY 13790
USA February 1995.

I've been dipping into issue #42, and was especially interested in Ben P. Indick's "Iberia," probably because I was in Spain last May myself to promote my historical novel *Ruler of the Sky*. My Spanish publisher brought me over, the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Information Service got into the act, and I ended up with a two-week-all-expenses-paid trip around Spain (mostly the North), making me feel as though I'd won some sort of contest. George Zebrowski and I spent six days in Barcelona, seeing many of the sights Mr. Indick mentions, and traveled to other cities by both plane and train (Spanish trains, among the worst in western Europe, are still years ahead of anything in the U.S., and I found them delightful; the trip from Madrid to Zaragoza revealed a landscape much like the American Southwest). Of course, I had to work while there, giving interviews, lectures at various universities and the like, but it still felt like a holiday. My journal of the adventure runs to some 40,000 words.

So I did enjoy "Iberia," but Mr. Indick is wrong about the food. I thought it was good to excellent — then again, we had Spanish associates guiding us to the good places and someone else picking up the tab, which may make a difference. He is absolutely right about the Prado, where we spent most of a day and could happily have spent a month.

Sheryl Birkhead, 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20882 USA

"Eunuchs in Space" by David Fischer was very interesting. I think the mental image of Newton's laws in action only serves to point out how ridiculous it might be. But if the sex drive dwindled, at least there would-

n't be such massive frustration. As is done in many species now, frozen embryos might serve a function of replenishing numbers, but that doesn't explain gestation — where/how/who/what.

Having been to Great Britain twice, I *really* enjoyed Elizabeth Osborne's travel doin's and only wish you had space to run it all in one shot. In the Islands (GB, not Virgin) we found out several things — not matter how much attention you pay to driving, you tend to come out of a "roundabout" (traffic circle) on "our" side, i.e., the *wrong* side for Merry Olde ... does a lot for the heart rate. Twice we noticed signs which said merely "Road Ends", only to come around a bend in the road (slowly, thank heavens) to have ... the road END. Americans tend to think we have a monopoly on idiotic driving — but until you've driven in Rome (at least we're used to the sides of the road there) or London — you ain't seen nuthin'. When I went to Ireland I flew a chartered flight with a group which goes every few years since their members are of Irish ancestry (I just happened to see an ad in the paper), so you fly in, they turn you loose, and collect everybody in three weeks to fly out. I had a student pass and took trains and buses. One of the cabs I did take was way out to a country B&B I'd contacted ahead of time. The cab driver was what Americans think of with the term Irish, and we chatted quite amicably. As we left the town of Limerick he commented that I'd be doin' both myself and the populace a favor by *not* drivin'! He had seen the white knuckles, although I hadn't said a word. Oh yeah, before accepting the fare, he had told me the price — but thing and roads were a lot more complicated than he'd planned. I honestly felt he deserved more than the agreed-upon fare. It was obvious he felt so too, but a deal was a deal. We "discussed" it and he was willing to stick with the original deal ... if I'd throw in a kiss. Nope, won't tell you what happened

"Tana Leaves" by Mark Leeper — really nice reading. With just the title and no mummified illo, I wondered where Tana went, but it soon became obvious. Aha, if you can't keep all those leaves in that box, then there must be a secret cult which grows Tana and pops the leave (appropriately dried, I presume) into the box as needed. This might also pave the way to another movie — *The Tan(ing)a Salon*.

Joy V. Smith, 3403 Providence Road, Lakeland, FL 33809-1380 USA

I enjoyed Samanda Jeude's autobiographical piece. I was glad for the chance to get to know her better. The sex in space article was excellent. I've always been curious, and Hollywood takes such liberties with the truth, you can't trust anything they put out.

I enjoyed the travel reports too, especially England. One of my favorite articles was "Tana Leaves." I shared the image of a short, hopping mummy with the family; they loved it.

I also liked Samanda Jeude's review of *Stranger in a Strange Land*. I've never read it (so many books, so little time). I'm glad I didn't waste my time. It really irks me to see women portrayed as bimbos, inept, sex toys, etc.

I greatly enjoyed your ramblings, including your punting on the river. All I know about punting I learned in a Lord Peter Wimsey novel (*Gaudy Night*, I believe), and from what I read, you done good!

I also liked Susan Schwartz' (the Memsahib) China report — fascinating.

In #44, I found an excellent, interesting look at Hal Clement. *Needle* is one of my favorite stories, and I'd like to read the sequel to *Mission of Gravity*. I loved

Barnaby Rapaport's loc - witty and well-written.

Walt Willis, 9 Alexandra Rd., Donaghadee, N. Ireland
BT21 OQD

I found *Lan's Lantern* deeply impressive, not just for its sheer volume, but for its variety of material and its inherent worth. I am left wondering what I can possibly say in a letter of comment which would be worth the \$2.59 it cost to send it to me, and I can quite understand if you don't send me any more.

Dennis Casweiss's report on the Irish SF Convention was very interesting to me, especially where he mentions feeling more safe in Northern Ireland than in most American cities. One should bear in mind that this was well before the current cease-fire, and had nothing to do with the highly visible army presence. The fact is that Northern Ireland has always been the most law-abiding area in the Western World, as far as ordinary crime is concerned.

I enjoyed your travelogues and conreports. It was interesting to see the comments about the time involved in "saddling up" a horse.

I'm afraid I tended to skim through all the reviews, knowing how unlikely it was that I would ever see any of the books being discussed. A notable exception was the review of the Robert Bloch *Unauthorized Autobiography*. I can't help wondering if I'm mentioned anywhere in it. I know it's unlikely, but I was in correspondence with him over the years and he and his wife visited us in 1965.

On the letter section, I was very impressed by the letter from Ken Carter, a new name to me. His comments on Greg Bear and the sense of wonder seem to me original and quite profound.

I'll continue to send copies of Lan's Lantern as I can. // Yes, you are mentioned in a couple of places in the Bloch book. I believe Maia sent you the references in a letter before we split.

Lloyd Penney, 412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6 CANADA

The new look of the fanzine is great. I've had some fun in the past, trying to get some double-column work done with Word v5.1a on a Macintosh Powerbook, so I know how difficult it is to do this, unless you've got a good publishing programme.

Thanks. I manage to do well with Word 5.0. But there is still a lot for me to learn about this program.

Ben Indick must have enjoyed his trip to Greece and Turkey. In the few places I have traveled, like Mexico and Holland, I've wondered how the folks there feel about the tourists who swarm about their homes in the warm months. I know now, and it's just the same as how Californians feel ... Welcome! Now, go home

Great article by Dennis Fischer on the actual mechanics of anything (including sex) in zero-G. It's one thing to make remarks and snicker, but it's quite another to look into it and recognize the degree of feasibility. Reality rules, ultimately.

I usually don't comment on short fiction in fanzines because usually it's a little tedious. However, in the case of "Rosabelle, Believe" by Janeen S. DeBoard, this story is the best I've read in some time. It must have hit me like it did because I've been entertained by the writing of Richard Matheson, and this story reminds me of some of Matheson's bittersweet novels whose plots transcend time or death. I am reminded of *Bid*

Time Return and *What Dreams May Come*, two of the few novels that stick in my mind. There's got to be a market for this wonderful story.

Mark Leeper reviews *Doomsday Gun*, about Gerald Bull and the megacannon-gun he concocted. Many Canadians know the story of Bull, his skill and knowledge in ballistics, and his hopes to impress governments with his super gun. His dream to benefit from a purchase of his gun came to naught in the West, and that's why he went to the Middle East. Bull's pathetic story has been made into documentaries shown on the CBC and CTV networks, and I'd recommend those over some HBO drama, which, as I would suspect, has not been shown here. HBO knows it would be picked apart here.

Ad Astra 14 did not work out for you the way we wanted. I can look back on it and see communication breakdowns, goof-offs, and sloppy work from many people, some of whom just didn't give a damn. (It had shirts, though, hm?) I think that fact was one of the reasons I've left active participation with the AA concomm.

Yes, great shirts at Ad Astra 14. I too would like to see Janeen S. DeBoard's story see a paying market. It is excellent, which is why it won the short story contest, and I was glad to publish it in LL.



Roy Lavender, 2507 East 17th Street, Long Beach, CA 90804

The meteor miners of space
Never lose their pre-eminent place.
Their suite, I suppose,
Can be joined by a hose
To a girl's to increase the race.

As usual, fandom anticipated NASA by decades. Specifically, "Eunuchs in Space, by Dennis K. Fischer.

Somewhere in the same time frame, Walt Willis' *Slant* published "Project TIFF," which outlined most of the difficulties Fischer considers. There were several LoCs to *Slant* by prominent writers of the time on the same general subject.

Of interest to historians, ballistic flights in aircraft were going on, including some unofficial experiments. Considering that at the time, such flights gave only some forty seconds of experiment time, followed by smashing to the floor in a four "G" pullout, it was no surprise that the name of Project Quicke became attached.

Also of possible interest, North American Aviation (pre-Rockwell) was well aware of the debilitation from

long term bed rest, extended that to zero-G and in the very early 1960s proposed a wheel type space station to go into orbit in one shot. Unfortunately, the President needed something spectacular to counter the news from Russia and we went to the Moon instead. At least it gave the development of big engines a boost and Rocketdyne was ready to produce the Saturns.

As [art of the interest in a wheel-type station, NAA built a rotating facility, consisting of the fuselage of a small airliner on a long arm. It came because of NASA concerns that being in a rotating station would make the astronauts nauseous. I guess NASA types were not aware of a world where men make their living running a Merry-Go-Round. That facility never dropped below one-G and usually the subjects were under about one and a half-G. However, it was possible to enter and leave through the center bearing and it had comfortable couches, so various experiments were performed during the late shift which were not written up.

Me? I designed the big hydrostatic bearing.

There was another study of the effects of crowded conditions on space station crews, including co-ed crews. The first phase included study of the many Navy reports on submarine crews, which weren't co-ed, then the crews of long range patrol planes, which were. (The Navy was not always fully informed.)

NAA built a multi-story cylindrical 'station', suspended on isolators in a high bay hangar. It was wrapped in thick fiberglass blankets to keep out Downey, California, traffic sounds. There were small bunk rooms with heavy curtains. There were microphones throughout the 'station' and television coverage of the 'control room' and a few other areas.

NAA was somewhat sensitive to the possible bad publicity that might result if the co-ed 'crew', mostly students from the local state college, were discovered in unauthorized experiments. The students were well aware of the areas covered by the cameras and avoided them. However, the microphones were very sensitive. When the audio gave notice of activity that was not likely to be detailed in a report, the third shift supervisor injected a few drops of a butyl compound into the air duct and a few seconds later ... well, you get the idea.

The above limerick appeared in *Lost Limerick & Bar Room Ballads*, a fannish publication that appeared at the Cinvention in 1949. Somehow, a copy made its way through Radium City, Canada, to the Maritime Alps in France and into the hands of Gershon Legman, the expatriate author of *Love and Death*. It was published again in his second volume of limericks. He traced the 1949 fannish publication to its source, using the mail. Remarkable, considering the lack of publishing information in the original. He did it in order to give credit.

On the subject of early fanzines, it is somewhat strange that none have ever been found done in cuneiform. The technology was there. Clay for the tablets was available; roller seals, in the form of rings, were fairly common. All that was missing was the early fan to make a seal the size of a mimeo drum, then roll out multiple copies of his LoC.

On second thought, it's probably just as well. Consider the postage on a *Lantern* of 166 pages, going from Ur to Lagash!

Poul Anderson, 3 Las Palomas, Orinda CA 94563
USA April 1995

Dennis Fischer's "Eunuchs in Space" prompts me to express some disagreement and to ask for more information about other matters. It's not that I have any emotional resistance to his thesis. In fact, I've used the idea that human reproduction may be impossible even

under Lunar gravity, in a couple of novels. At present, we simply don't know.

However, a number of Mr. Fischer's statements astonished me, and I thought I kept reasonably current with the space news. Some are definitely wrong, such as the female menstrual cycle being affected by the moon or the male testosterone cycle hitting a low point in daylight. As for substituting centrifugal (not centripetal!) force for gravity, this is entirely possible provided that the radius is big enough for the gradient and the Coriolis forces to be small.

Other claims made by the article are, at least, very dubious. Nowhere else have I seen it reported that time spent in a free-falling spacecraft leads to impotence, messed-up menstruation, or breakdown of the immune system. To the best of my knowledge, rumors of sexual experimentation in space, Russian or American, are, so far, only rumors. Why should brown M&Ms be banned on missions that don't have chimpanzees along? I could go on at length, but you get the general idea. May we have some documentation of all these assertions?

Humans certainly do encounter some serious problems, not yet fully understood, in space. No doubt hitherto unsuspected new ones will arise as missions get longer and more complex. But let's not invent any, except for the purposes of fiction.

Now it's up to Dennis to reply. And I hope to have that published sooner than your response to him was!

Nancy L. Freeman, 1712 N. Amber Street, Mesa, AZ 85203 USA

The travelogues and reviews were very interesting, but there was so much reading that I fell into my old habit of reading the end first, then the beginning, then the middle parts (I used to read fiction like that all the time - no point in plodding through a 200-page book only to find a lame ending!) Vicarious con-going is better than none. I was also glad that you printed the articles by Samanda Juede, as the TAFF ballots don't really provide much room to "get to know" the nominees. Can't say I agree with Maureen O'Brien's assessment of Stephen Lawhead, but now I understand a little better where he was coming from in his Arthurian books. Did you really used to construct this massive tome on a typewriter?

I rarely read the endings of books to see if I want to read or finish them. I usually give the author about 1/4 of his text to convince me that I should continue reading. If I am not hooked by then, I put it away. Occasionally, if I am undecided, I'll peek at the ending.

I was happy to put out the extra information about Samanda in Lan's Lantern. I am sorry she didn't win, but she did give the other people a run for the honor. I hope she will try again.

Yes, I did used to put this all together on a typewriter. It was tedious, and the text did have many more typographical errors, but I had better control over illustration placement. There are trade-offs in everything.

Gregory Benford, University of California, Dept of Physics and Astronomy, Irvine, CA 92717-4575 USA

I wonder if your readers have some suggestions for this idea?

It strikes me that often a writer's essential flavor can be summed up by one of his book titles. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* or maybe *Hard Times*. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*. Hemingway, *In Our Time*.

In SF, I picked *The Stars My Destination* for Alfred Bester, *Star Maker* for Olaf Stapledon, *Childhood's End* for Arthur Clarke. Ursula LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest*. Poul Anderson, *Time and Stars*. Tom Disch, *Camp Concentration*.

Then I thought of that ceaseless advocate of the space program, Robert Heinlein. Surely his mood and attitude is captured by *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. Space as gritty, huge, hard, real.

Similarly, James Gunn's definitive treatment of the radio search for intelligent life, *The Listeners* — not a bad title choice for his essential theme, since Gunn is one of our best social critics.

In this spirit, I welcome title nominations from others. Or disagreements.

For Jack Williamson, The Humanoids. Learn and adapt. For Andre Norton, I am sure people would choose one of the Witch World books, but I think either Time Traders, or Ordeal in Otherwhen, both with themes of the individual coming to terms with self, but the latter with a female protagonist. Also, the latter includes alien contact and cooperation among species, something immensely important in Norton's work.

Buck Coulson, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348 USA

Enjoyed the contraception in space article. But I notice that fictional accounts of space-travel usually get around the difficulties by providing either artificial gravity or a propulsion system which provides a "pull" toward the rear of the ship. The latter might get the participants into some awkward positions, but humans are quite adaptable. So it just means no sex at the present state of technology.

The idea of Roger Elwood as a Christian writer bothers me because he never struck me as a genuine Christian. He was noted for not honoring the part of the contract that says that editors receive enough free copies of an anthology to enable them to pass along at least one free copy to contributors; there were pointed remarks made about the condition of his basement, with all those undistributed anthologies being stored there. He was also a proven liar; I know he lied to both myself and Piers Anthony about our "co-authored" *Laser* book. I was pretty sure he was lying to me at the time he did it, and the reissue with Piers; comments pretty well proves it. I'm sure he can write about Christian virtues, but I doubt very much if he ever practiced them.

Mark Leeper's comments on tana (or Tana) leaves assume that all those leaves were stored in that little box, and that tana leaves were a product of Egypt. The Egyptians were traders; what makes Mark think they didn't (secretly) import the leaves from central Africa or the Caucasus? As for the little box, I used to smoke ground Jimson weed leaves for asthma; they were dried and made into imitation cigarettes. From the time I was six or seven years old until the remedy was outlawed when I was probably in my late thirties, I probably consumed a ton or two of them, but each package came in a nice little box. (Tin or cardboard rather than onyx, but then we live in a degenerate age.) The mummy might have gone through hundreds of those little boxes. (The boxes were identical? Well, so were mine, right down to the printing which would have startled the

Egyptian traders.)

Since I got introduced to science fiction by Heinlein's short stories, defects in his novels don't perturb me. I thought — and still think — that he was going downhill by the time he wrote *Stranger in a Strange Land*; it was so obviously a pitch for the Now Generation, or whatever "generation" was in vogue when the book came out. (Human generations used to be considered as an approximately 30-year period, but in our rush to the future we've shortened that to 5 or 10 years.) And his novels were going downhill before *Stranger*; *Farnham's Freehold* (1961) is probably his worst book, because he changed direction in the middle of it, and the two halves don't mesh. *Stranger* was, technically, an improvement, whatever one thinks of the sexuality. I even quit reading Heinlein for a time; I'm not sure I ever did read *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. Whatever the mundane world thinks, *Stranger* was no classic to me; "The Green Hills of Earth" is my idea of a Heinlein classic, with a truly heroic lead character.

Enjoyed Susan Schwartz's trip report more than most because there are more people in it.

Charles Broerman, 2815 School St., Alexandria VA 22303 USA (June, 1995)

You have a tremendous amount of energy, or maybe just a very strong will, but either way it puts me to shame. I've been talking about buying some top soil and putting in a few new flower beds in the garden for weeks now, but have yet to get beyond the talking stage. Fortunately, most plants will keep going given half a chance, otherwise half my garden would be dead, since my care after planting amounts to an occasional feeding, water on especially hot days, and a weeding now and then. Incidentally, the bed I planted over the place where I buried our sheep dog last fall is doing well. I thought of a parody of one of those PBS gardening shows, where the host is burying dogs all over his garden, explaining the advantages of different breeds, etc. Well, yeah, I guess that's a little sick

Yes, just a little sick, though it does sound funny. I hope that you indeed did get around to putting in the new flower beds. In the back yard of the new house that Kathy and I live in, I expanded the vegetable garden, and we are enjoying the vegetables this summer.

I enjoyed all the travelogues in LL. When I was a teenager we lived overseas, on Guam and then in the Philippines, and one summer we circumnavigated the globe, stopping at cities in Asia and Europe, then spending time with relatives in the States, and finally a few weeks in Hawaii before returning to the Philippines. As an adult anything like that is out of the question, so other than an occasional weekend at the beach I have to do my traveling vicariously through other people. I think I enjoyed Susan Schwartz's account best, probably because the circumstances of her trip meant she interacted more with the locals and the other visitors, rather than a basic "I went there and saw this." The story of the struggle and eventual triumph over the Spanish translator was very engaging. Everyone's come across that type at one time or another, and it's great to read of someone coming out more or less on top over them.

Another thing I like about LL is you take science fiction seriously. Some fanzines seem to make it a point of honor to have as little to do with the genre as possible.

I got into fandom because of science fiction. I like

the genre, and make it a point of putting it in my fanzine. Why else? I too don't care for a lot of those zine which make it a point to exclude SF.

Also enjoyed the movie reviews and your filk recording reviews. After reading Mark Leeper's review of *Red Rock West* we went to the video store and found a copy. Apparently this movie is as poorly distributed in video as it was during theatrical release. The clerk said that this store, part of one of the smaller chains, is the only one that carries it locally. And they have only one copy. We were lucky to ask about it just as the previous customer had dropped it off, since it's a popular movie and doesn't stay in the store long. It's hard to understand why such an excellent film is so hard to get ahold of. Maybe the Dahl brothers pissed somebody off.

A film that's very similar to *Red Rock West* is *After Dark My Sweet*, based on the book by Jim Thompson. It came out in 1990 but we only got around to seeing it yesterday. This is a fantastic movie, maybe even better than *Red Rock West*. I would highly recommend it to anyone who likes that kind of story, the small-time types try to pull off a crime that goes bad, with lots of twists and turns and a final surprise at the end.

That sounds neat, I'll have to look for it. As soon as I read Mark's review of Red Rock West, I picked up a copy. Yes, a lot of twists and complication so you really don't know what's happening until the end.

Just briefly, Lan, a few other things that stand out for me from LL 43: Dennis Fischer's sex-in-space article was very interesting. Apparently that stand-by of SF, gravity simulated by rotation, won't work, since people become violently ill as soon as they leave rotation. That was used in the ship in *2001* of course, and also now in *Babylon 5*. Mark Leeper's Tana leaves meditation was great. I also enjoyed learning about Samanda b Jeude. If I was eligible I would give my TAFF vote to her. Unfortunately as a neo it will be '97 before I can participate.

Well, you can participate now, since I am finally getting around to publishing this in 1997. Vote in the TAFF race this year. I Support Tam Sadler.

Ruth M. Shields, 1410 McDowell Rd., Jackson, MS 39204 USA June 1995

My favorite piece [from *Lan's Lantern* #43] was Susan Schwartz's "China Syndrome." I laughed so much that my husband Rickey came to find out what I was reading that was so funny, and then I had to read him bits of it. She did a wonderful job of combining the serious and silly aspects of her trip, and by the end of the essay I felt like I had just had a long conversation with a new friend. Great Writing!

The use of photos as part of the various reports was a good idea; although some of them reproduced better than others, they still brought the reader closer to the writers and gave us glimpses of the places they wrote about.

Oh, and I was very impressed by the cover. Very appropriate for your zine!

Milton F. Stevens, 5384 Rainwood St., #90, Simi Valley, CA 93063 USA. June, 1995

Yes, the new size type in *Lan's Lantern* #43 is an improvement. Type size is one area where bigger is u-

usually better. I use the Arial 12 pt. in this letter and my other fanac, because I can read it without my glasses. I've only needed glasses since I was 46 (I'm now 52), and I'm not yet in the habit of wearing glasses. Since I'm barely coordinated enough to tie my shoelaces in the morning, I'm never going to try contact lenses.

Dennis Fischer's article casts grave doubts on the tourist potential of outer space. I'd never thought about trying some of the positions in the Kama Sutra comfortably in zero gravity, because I never thought the positions in the Kama Sutra were supposed to be comfortable. I thought a major part of it was to engage in sexual experience beyond the point that most people would engage in sexual experience. Sort of like climbing Mount Everest because it's there.

On the other hand, one of my colleagues at work thinks climbing mountains in Colorado is a great way to spend a vacation and another loves two week hunting expeditions on the Alaskan tundra. Unless there is a whole bunch I don't know, I doubt there is much opportunity for dalliance in either locale. However, these guys represent a very small minority of the vacation going public, and most people aren't going to swarm to a place where they can't engage in regular sex.

While space might not be good for vacations, it might be a great place to send teenage children. You send them there for schooling when they reach puberty and don't let them come back until they graduate from college. This would naturally create a large job market for zero gravity teachers. How does that sound as a job opportunity?

Hmm, if I could take my wife along, and we could somehow make sex work in zero-G, sure, I'd go! The pay had better be real good!

Mark Leeper makes some interesting points about mummies and their related lore. Even if mummies were only 55 inches tall, they could have probably killed their victims with bad breath. After a couple thousand years, morning breath could be pretty ferocious, and you never see mummies using mouthwash. As to how a mummy always catches the girl, movie women used to be not only the weaker sex but also the less coordinated one. The average damsel in distress came equipped with a great set of lungs (disclaimer) for screaming and absolutely no mobility. They could have easily been menaced by a severe case of dandruff.

Until I read Maureen O'Brien's article on Christian Publishing SF/F, I had no idea that Roger Elwood was around the field in any capacity. His name is so thoroughly associated with schlock as the result of his new material anthologies that he would be well advised to use another name when doing anything associated with SF.

Of all the SF I have ever read, only an infinitesimal portion of it could qualify as being Christian. Off the top of my head, the C.S. Lewis Space Trilogy, *Canticle for Leibowitz*, and a Randall Garrett series on priests who had to deal with theological problems with aliens, are about the only examples that come to mind. The lack of Christian SF doesn't surprise me, because Christianity wouldn't be relevant to the vast majority of SF. In order to write Christian SF, you really have to set out with the specific intention to write Christian SF.

Most sectarian fiction, whether it be socialist, Christian, or whatever, is second order stuff. Writers limit themselves when they choose a philosophical box and put themselves in it. If they just let their various opinions wander wherever they go, they're more likely to produce an interesting product.

My mind wandered, and I started thinking about

Coleridge's comment that Satan was the hero of *Paradise Lost*. John Milton started out to write Christian literature, but his own anti-monarchical sentiment pushed him out of the philosophical box. Milton had rebelled against the King of England, and he had a hard time not sympathizing with a rebellion against the King of Heaven.

Roy Tackett, 917 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107 USA April 1995

In his review of *The Shadow* Mark Leeper states that The Shadow on the radio was a little different from The Shadow of the pulp magazine. A little? There was hardly any connection between them. Lamont Cranston was never The Shadow in the pulp although The Shadow was frequently Lamont Cranston. Cranston was a world traveler frequently off in odd corners of the world and The Shadow assumed his identity in New York. The Shadow of the magazine did not have the ability to cloud men's mind so they could not see him. He was very quick and depended on darkness to make himself unseen. He had a ring of henchmen who did his bidding and reported to him about assorted crimes and criminals. Margot Lane did not exist. She was on the radio for the benefit of those who needed a woman character to follow.

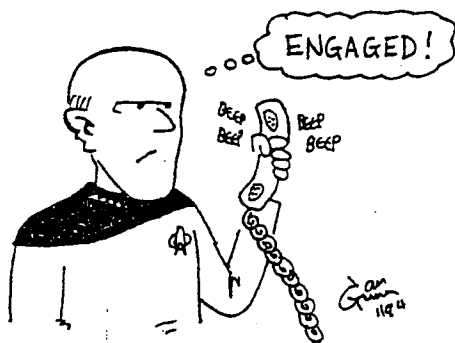
In a novel titled *The Shadow Unmasked* it was revealed that The Shadow was actually a supposedly crippled World War I flyer who led a reclusive life because of his injuries. Obviously he had recovered.

The movie introduces a completely different character and while it is fun to watch, this is in no way The Shadow that I know.

I've been around a lot longer than Samanda b Juede and find that I totally disagree with her opening comments in "Remembering Tomorrow." Let me say that Fandom is not a religion but Science Fiction is. "All fans hug/kiss their friends the moment they see them ..." What fandom do you belong to, Samanda? "Their Saints, Angels and Gods are the SF Pros. No, Samanda, they are just writers. And as for those who led us to SF, well, Ed Hamilton, Captain S.P. Meek, Dr. David H. Keller and others too numerous to mention.

Science fiction and fandom have been around a lot longer than Asimov, Heinlein and Norton.

Thanks for the information about *The Shadow*.
My only knowledge of the character comes from the 1940 Columbia serial.



Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722 USA
March 1995

This issue of LL [#43] does display your neoishness in respect to the new DTP electronic technology, but it's a distinct - almost amazing - improvement over the previous issues (even though they, in turn, were consid-

erably better than the average traditional fannish KTP (Kitchen Table Publishing) products of what some people persist in calling "The Good Old Days).

Frankly, I doubt that you'd need to go to "an actual desk-top publishing program" - as you grow more accustomed to, and proficient with, Word, I think you'll find it's quite capable of doing everything that's really needed for formatting and producing an attractive fanzine. (The more formal (and horribly expensive, and not-at-all-easy-to-learn) DTP Programs might do the same things a little faster and a little bit easier, perhaps, but so little moreso that they really don't seem to be called for (or worth it, in either money or learning-time) unless one has a full-time publications-designing business; for fanzines there is, IMHO, really no need for kerning, or for saving 2 or 3 minutes in doing a Heading, and it's of questionable virtue to use Advertising Art/Display techniques on basically text-material.)

While browsing through LL #43, however, I did come up with A New Theory (which might not be original, and could even, for all I know, already be accepted throughout fandom as an Axiom). This issue shows both why LL has won a Hugo (and been nominated several other times) and why certain Traditionalistic Fanzines Fans have such a strong antipathy towards it.

The more traditional fanzines generally have (or had) a very small circulation - rarely more than a hundred or so copies - and (not always with deliberation on the part of the Editor) accreted to themselves a readership and contributorship that was, generally, strikingly homogeneous and specific in areas of interest, preferences in style and approach and outlook, and in what might be called "literary talent". If things don't chance that way, a determined editor can shape them so through a careful selection of columnists, acceptance of contributions, and lettercolumn editing. That's the kind of zine that many "traditional fanzine fans" teathed on, and that they still like best. Some of them (perhaps more than a few, even) go so far as to feel that any other kind "isn't a Real Fanzine", or at the very least, is a wretched fanzine.

Lan's Lantern doesn't Conform to (that) type at all. It contains a vast range of material, much of it on topics that are peripheral (if not alien) to "traditional science-fiction fandom" - mostly sub-fandoms of fringe-fandoms that have somehow attached themselves to "SF Conventions" within the past ten to twenty years. There appears to be a school that holds very strongly to the idea that "fanzine" fandom (and perhaps "Science Fiction Fandom") must remain small and retain a (rather narrow) focus if it is to survive as such. There is, I think, a considerable amount of sense in this, and encouraging that process seems reasonable, but attempting to Enforce it (as a few Faanish & Sercon fans appear to be attempting to do) seems to me to be both pointless and futile.

As far as I can perceive, LL is the primary fanzine of what might be called Eclectic Fandom ... the fanzine version of "the 1990s WorldCon", as it were (and it's been pretty much that since at least the early '80s, as I recall). Though I rather prefer smaller, narrower-focus fanzines in which every topic dealt with is one I find fascinating (just as I prefer small cons where I know most of the people and can expect that we'll have a great deal in common), the broad-sweep approach has the great virtue of presenting new fields in which to become interested. Regrettably (but probably inescapably), much of this material in LL misses the mark slightly, with me. Ordinary fannish writing (which is pretty good writing by mundane amateur standards) is fine when I'm already highly interested in the topic it deals with, but anything that's going to interest me in, and make me En-

thusiasm about, a new field has to be very good writing indeed, and, quite frankly, there's not a whole lot of that in LL (or, for that matter, in other fanzines of any kind). Maybe I'm just getting old and jaded and overly nostalgic, or maybe there's something to the idea that most of these newer sub-fandoms, because they are less based on the written word, do not encourage their adherents to excel in such verbal skills.

LL strikes me as being an enormous hodge-podge, containing some material I enjoy a great deal, much I mildly enjoy, and some I rather regret having bother to read. It would be dreadful, I think, if all fanzines were like this, or even if many had such an omnivorous editorial stance, but one or two (maybe even two or three) seem to be A Good Thing.

Thank you. You identified exactly what LL is, an eclectic fanzine with a hodge-podge of articles that appeal to the editor, and published in hopes that they might appeal to the readership.

Martin Morse Wooster, PO Box 8093, Silver Spring,
MD 20907 USA April 1995

Many thanks for *Lan's Lantern* #43. I remember the Barry Levin article that David Creek writes about quite well. Its premise was something along the lines of "Writers! Turn your trash into the stuff that collectors would really want!", lamenting the fact that a computer disc is far less interesting to the ardent collector or the future scholar than a manuscript marked up by hand and cranked out on a manual typewriter. But collectors should realize that technology has made much of their passion obsolete: I wonder if anyone actually thought that five printouts of various stages of a Lois McMaster Bujold novel were really worth several thousand dollars. Collectors who are that obsessive should spend their money on limited editions and help support small presses. And writers should realize that while technological advances will make their manuscripts much less valuable, it's unlikely that a single copy of a novel will be lost in a fire or a train station, or that a novelist, like Balzac, will have most of their profits from fiction eaten up by making corrections at the printer.

Lan Laskowski's trip report from England was quite enjoyable, and was enhanced by the photographs. But I am not surprised that he had trouble with rowing a punt on the Cam. At least he did not try the two techniques that *The Official I Hate Tourists Guidebook*, a spoof I picked up on my last trip to England, recommended that Britons teach unwanted tourists: Tell the tourist to stand on the edge of the punt, lean over, and stick the pole out as far as possible, or insert a rubber core in the middle of the pole so that the unsuspecting tourist will spring into the river. Dave Langford, when I showed him a copy of the book, approved of both methods.


I was lucky I didn't land in the river when the pole caught on the bridge. Several days of hiking around London and the countryside made me fit enough to hang onto the pole and pull the punt back against the current and release the jammed pole. I was much more careful after that!

And Lan – if your master's degree is in Latin, how did you end up as a math teacher?

My bachelor's degree was in both Math and Latin, with an English minor. I applied to seven graduate schools in both math and Latin, and was accepted in all of them. Only one offered me a Teaching

Assistantship with tuition remission and a stipend, which is the one I took. So I graduated from Ohio State University with a Master's Degree in Latin. Finding a teaching job in Latin was not easy, and was almost always coupled with a math class. When I finally got the job at Cranbrook, I was hired for math classes, though the first two years I was at the school I also taught one Latin class.

Mark Leeper's film reviews are very well written and have long been a high point of the *Lantern*. But he misses one major problem of *A Clear and Present Danger* — it really isn't Tom Clancy's novel. The Clancy novel mostly takes place in Latin America and is focused on military efforts there. The film mostly takes place in Washington and is a paranoid thriller about political power. Granted, the film is a very good paranoid political thriller, thanks to fine performances by Donald Moffitt and Harris Yulin, but the center of the film is far removed from what Clancy's goals and intentions were.



I Also Heard From: Harry Andrucshak, Sheryl Birkhead, Michael Bishop, Kim & Charlie Brown, Joseph W. Casey, Buck Coulson, Helen E. Davis, Tomislav Detelj, Bill Donaho, Linda J. Dunn, Tim and Eileen Eldred, Donald Franson, Kelly Freas, Jill Fredrickson, Nancy L. Freeman, Joseph Green, David Grubbs, Hal Hall, Teddy Harvia, John Hertz, Lynn A. Hickman, Roy, Hill, Nancy Holland, Diana Huey, Ben Indick, Samanda Juede, Michelle Kennedy, R'ykandar Korra'ti, Richard Kostelanetz, Allen Koszowski, Michael P. Kube-McDowell, Michael McKenny, David Langford, Aaron B. Larson, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Jane Lindskold, Mary Manchester, Mary Lou Lockhart, Gary Lovisi, Richard Lynch, Diane Miller, Mike Moir, Terry O'Brien, Lore Ann Parent, Joe Patrouch, Bruce & Elayne Pelz, John M. Portley, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Tom Sadler, Shawn Standfast, Steve M. Stirling, Sally Syrjala, Sylvus Tarn, Joan Temple, John Thiel, Ariane von Orlow, Julie Washington, Henry Welch, Taras Wolansky, Gwen Zak



The adventures
of Dr. Susan Calvin*

No, I'm not Harlan Ellison
in drag!

PssT. I
think he
likes you!



* Isaac
Asimov's
I, Robot

In "Liar"

Whaat! You think
I am dumb enough
to fall for that
junior high school
prank?

Hair
Bun
→
Not a
mouse
ear.

Yes

Wasn't
it P.T.
Barnum
who said
"one was
born
every
minute?"

Okay.
Where is he?

You-you beast! The
Director of Robots Inc.
didn't love me like
you said! Do you
have any idea how
much I spent on
make-up and the
perfume, obsession?

shellacked
hair
→

Don't worry
my dear!
You were
an excellent
field study for
my valuable
research!

what
research?

Now I can follow
my chosen profession
-- writing romance novels.

simmer



Where's that
blowtorch of
mine?

Frame-Gray's

Finis

WELCOME TO THE 1998 TAFF RACE!

What is TAFF? The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than \$2 or £1. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

Who may vote? Voting in the 1998 race is open to anyone who was active in fandom prior to September 1996, and who contributes at least \$2 or £1 to the Fund. Larger contributions will be gratefully accepted. Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot. You may change your vote any time prior to the deadline.

THE DEADLINE: Votes in this race must reach the administrators by Midnight *December 13th, 1997*.

Voting details: TAFF uses a preferential ballot system which guarantees automatic runoffs until a majority is obtained. You rank the candidates in the exact order of your preference for them. If the leading first-place candidate does not get a majority, the first-place votes for the lowest-ranking candidate are dropped, and the second-place votes on those ballots are counted as first-place votes. This process repeats itself until one candidate has a majority. Your votes for second and third place are important, but you may give your candidate only one ranking on your ballot. In order to win, a candidate must receive at least 20% of the first-place votes on both sides of the Atlantic, separately. Any candidate failing to receive this minimum percentage on either side will be dropped, and the second-place votes on their ballots counted as first-place votes in the next ballot count. Thus candidates and their supporters will need to canvas fans on both sides of the pond. You may send your ballot to either administrator, but it will be tabulated with the other votes from the side of the Atlantic on which you reside. Votes from fans not resident in *either* Europe or North American will not count towards either 20% minimum, but are important to the outcome of the race.

Hold Over Funds: This choice, like 'No Award' in Hugo balloting, gives you the chance to vote for no TAFF trip this year, if the candidates do not appeal. Hold Over Funds may be voted for in any position, and is exempt from the 20% requirement; thus, if it receives a majority of the votes on the final ballot, no TAFF trip will be held this year regardless of how many votes Hold Over Funds received on the first ballot.

No Preference: For voters who prefer not to choose between candidates, but don't want the trip held over.

Donations: TAFF gratefully accepts your freely-given money and material for auction; such generosity has sustained the Fund for over 40 years. TAFF is fandom's oldest travel fund, and one of its worthiest causes -- give early and often! Please contact your nearest administrator for details.

Candidates: Each candidate has posted a bond, promising -- barring Acts of God -- to travel to *Intuition*, a British convention to be held in Manchester, England on April 10 thru 13, 1998, if elected; and has provided signed nominations and a platform (overleaf).

Please read both sides of this ballot before voting. Send entire sheet as your vote.

**NAME &
ADDRESS:**

PHONE:

Signature & Date: _____

Enclosed is _____ as a contribution to TAFF. Please make all checks payable to Martin Tudor (UK) or Dan Steffan (US), not to TAFF, and in the currency of the administrator's country.

If you think your name may not be known to the administrators, then in order to qualify your vote please give, in the space below, the name and address of an active fan (not a fan group, a candidate or their nominator) to whom you are known:

1998 TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND BALLOT

The Candidates:

VICTOR GONZALEZ

Highly placed secret masters declined to confirm that, if elected, first-time pond-hopper Victor Gonzalez would soak in the cold bathrooms, greasy curries and dangerous old women of the United Kingdom, bask in the deliciously Seattle-like weather, and grovel at the feet of D. West. After 44 issues of *Apparatchik* and hundreds of newspaper stories about chipper/shredder mishaps, Victor longs to see the land of Peter Sutcliffe, Stuart Sutcliffe and Greg Pickersgill, and promises to write a trip report in the form of a muck-raking investigative story.

(Nominators: Arnie Katz, Steve Green, Ted White, Christina Lake, Robert Lichtman.)

ULRIKA O'BRIEN

Everywhere I've gone in fandom, people drew me there. Each time, I relearned that when print friends meet, friendship deepens and we give each other better charity of understanding when we meet again in print. In my oddball walkabout of print and online fandom I've met a host of folks, challenging and intriguing, hailing from the UK and Europe. I'd like to meet them, the better to be friends. I'd like to swap scurrilous yarns over a pint, find out about this "real ale" business, prove I don't bite, test my invulnerability to the opacity of British dialects. Oh, and write a scandalous trip report.

(Nominators: Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Dave Langford, Geri Sullivan, Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen, Andy Hooper.)

VICKI ROSENZWEIG

Tea, cider, and lots of good conversation. What's the catch? Right — well, I think I'd be a good TAFF administrator. I've been OE of A Women's APA for several years, and when I took my dream vacation to Hong Kong, I published a trip report within three months. I've been sending my zine, *Quipu*, all over the world, and British fans have sent me lots of great letters and zines in return. Now it's time to visit, attend a British convention (Intersection doesn't quite count), and have the sort of conversation that only happens at two in the morning.

(Nominators: Lucy Huntzinger, John Dallman, Luke McGuff, Alison Scott, Vijay Bowen.)

TOM SADLER

Most people wouldn't suspect it to look at me, but I am a devout fanzine fan who believes fanzines are the true core of Fandom. I even publish my own fanzine, *The Reluctant Famulus*, which some people seem to like. I have never been outside the United States before (Unless a brief trip into Canada counts.), so I figure it's time I broadened my horizons. Additionally, I have made the acquaintance of several British fen who I'd really like to meet in person. If I win the TAFF voting, I promise I won't embarrass either country too much.

(Nominators: Buck Coulson, Terry Jeeves, George Laskowski, Derek Pickles, Mike Glicksohn.)

PLEASE READ AND FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF THIS SHEET! Send in the entire sheet as your vote. Do not detach this portion of the ballot.

I vote for. (rank 1, 2, 3, etc.):

_____ VICTOR GONZALEZ	_____ ULRIKA O'BRIEN	_____ VICKI ROSENZWEIG
_____ TOM SADLER	_____ HOLD OVER FUNDS	_____ NO PREFERENCE

Send ballot & donation to:

Dan Steffan
3804 South 9th Street
Arlington, Virginia 22204
U.S.A.

Martin Tudor
24 Ravensbourne Grove (off Charles Lane)
Willenhall WV13 1HX
England

Reproduction of this form is encouraged. It is the official voting vehicle and must be reproduced verbatim. Anyone doing so should substitute their name here: _____

George J. Laskowski

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Alexander Books is pleased to announce the release of *A Blonde in Africa* written by Laura Resnick, the adventures of an overlander traveling from northern Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope. It is the third book in Resnick's Library of African Adventure.

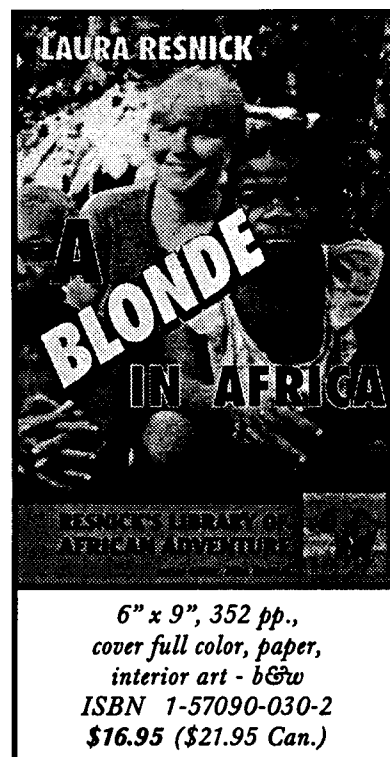
For both the actual and the armchair traveler, *A Blonde in Africa* is a delightful read detailing Laura's eight and a half months spent living out of a truck, cooking outdoors, and camping at night. Read about the excitement of rafting down the Zambezi River, one of the best and most famous whitewater rivers or of exploring the Congo Caves. Read about the dangers of driving across the border between Morocco and Mauritania (it is land mined) or of being attacked at night by a village gone berserk. Read about the wonder of playing with mountain gorillas or of seeing hundreds of wild animals in their natural environment. Read about the frustrations of being arrested in a Third World country or of bribing police and border guards to do their jobs. Read about the cultural differences in buying food and souvenirs, renting a boat, or keeping money in a hotel safe. Read about the uniquely African custom where a village exorcises evil by plunging knives into their stomachs.

Laura Resnick has always been a traveler. She went to Sweden when she was 16. At Georgetown University she majored in French and minored in Italian. By 25 she had lived in England, Sicily, and an Israeli *kibbutz* and visited close to a dozen other countries.

Laura is a successful romance writer under the name Laura Leone, winning the award Best New Series writer. She also received the Campbell Award for her science fiction writing. She is currently writing a fantasy trilogy.

Whether you love to travel or long to travel, *A Blonde in Africa* will be a joy to your library. Using high-quality paper, ink and binding, we have produced a sturdy book, ideally resistant to wear. Our state-of-the-art facilities and mass production enable us to keep the retail price down to \$16.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling (in the US only, foreign shipping rates based on country.)

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Please rush me _____ copies of *A Blonde in Africa* by Laura Resnick @ \$16.95 each (slightly higher outside the United States). Shipping & Handling: \$3.00 for 1 book - \$1.50 for ea. add'l. book. 6% sales tax in N.C. only.