

MATRIX 61

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OCTOBER -
NOVEMBER
1985

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BSFA

CHAIRMAN RESIGNS

At the last BSFA committee meeting, held on August 10th, Alan Dorey formally announced his intention to stand down as BSFA Chairman after over 6 years in the job. The notice to come into effect immediately.

In stating his reasons for this Alan included his increasing family responsibilities, his wife Rochelle is expecting a second baby in November, an increasing workload at the office and he also felt that this was a good time to step aside to let some of the 'new blood' bring a fresh look to the Association.

On a personal level we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Alan for all his efforts during the six and a half years that he has held this demanding position.

The announcement has left a large gap in the administrative structure of the organisation and one that is not going to be easy to fill. So now we are on the look out for possible candidates to fill this role. Do you think you have the kind of make-up that it takes to be the front man for the BSFA? If so then perhaps we've got a job for you. Salary zero, perks minimal, power as much as you can generate! Brickbats and abuse abundantly available. How do you apply? In the first instance make list of what you think the chairman should do, write it down and send it, together with why you feel you could do the job to Alan Dorey 22 Summerfield Dr, Middleton, Greater Manchester.

Those concerned that the BSFA anthology might not now see the light of day can rest assured, Alan intends to continue to edit this jointly with Bernard Smith. Over fifty submissions from the membership have been received and provided that they can all be read and considered in time we expect to be able to distribute the finished anthology with the next mailing.

John Harvey

APOLOGY

John Harvey

Few of you can of failed to notice the brevity of this issue. To all of you out there in BSFAland we extend our apologies and assurances that it won't happen again (will it Dave!)

In fact there was very nearly no Matrix at all in this mailing! On our return from our antipodian jaunt Eve and I had expected to find a virtually complete issue, ready and waiting for the press to roll. Not so, Dave Hodson had not been able to deliver the goods. Why not? Well to be fair to him he had recently started a new job at Forbidden Planet which demanded lots of overtime, his typewriter did decide to snuff it and, as with Alan Dorey, Dave does have increasing family commitments (yes another second child due in November).

We decided this wasn't good enough and, having gone to the trouble of obtaining the Bob Shaw item (see page 5), felt that at least this minimal issue should go out. Dave was pressed into contributing pages 3 and 4, the rest was put together by Eve and I in the 2 weeks since our return.

We hope you enjoy what there is of it and just ask that you watch this space for the return of the media reviews, fanzine reviews, club news, competition, convention reviews and maybe Inky Fingers?

DEADLINE FOR MATRIX 62 - 8th NOVEMBER 1985

All contributions to Dave Hodson, 104 Bebben, Gloucester Rd, Tottenham, London N17 6LN.

THERE'S A CONSPIRACY IN 1987

Yes, Britain has won the bid for the 1987 Worldcon. If the Worldcon in Brighton is anything to go by Conspiracy, that's the official name it's been given, promises to be the SF event of the decade. Where's it being held? Who're the Guests of Honour? See the convention listing for more news and does anybody fancy the Netherlands in 1990?

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1985 HUGO AWARDS

Below is the complete breakdown of Hugo voting with nominees listed in order of result, the first listed being the winner. 443 valid ballots received and 22 invalid.

BEST NOVEL 395 ballots

Neuromancer, William Gibson
Emergence, David R Palmer; The Peace War, Vernor Vinge
Job: A Comedy of Justice, Robert A Heinlein; The Integral Trees, Larry Niven

BEST NOVELLA 355 ballots

'Green Ester', John Varley
'Cyclops', David Brin; 'Valentina', Delaney & Stiegler
'Summer Solstice', Charles Harness; 'Elemental', Geoffrey Landis

BEST NOVELLETTE 349 ballots

'Bloodchild', Octavia Butler
'The Man Who Painted the Dragon Grinle', Lucius Shepard
'Return to the Fold', Timothy Zahn; 'Blue Moon', Connie Willis; 'Silicon Muse', Hilbert Scheuch; 'The Weigher', Vinicoff & Martin; No Award; 'The Lucky Strike', K S Robinson

BEST SHORT STORY 345 ballots

'Crystal Spheres', David Brin
'The Aliens Who Knew, I Mean Everything', G A Effinger
'Symphony for a Lost Traveller', Lee Kilgough; 'Salvador', Lucius Shepard; 'Ridge Running', K S Robinson; 'Rory', Steven Gould

BEST NON-FICTION BOOK 313 ballots

'Vonder's Child: My Life in Science Fiction', J Williamson
The Faces of Science Fiction, Patti Perrell; Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed, Marlan Ellison; In The Heart of the Head, George Turner; The Dune Encyclopedia, Willis E McNelly

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION 413 ballots

2010
Ghostbusters; Star Trek III: The Search for Spock; Dune The Last Starfighter

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR 358 ballots

Terry Carr
Stanley Schmidt; Shawna McCarthy; Edward Ferman; George Scithers

BEST PROFESSIONAL AWARD

330 ballots

Michael Whelan
Vincent di Fate; Val Lakey Lindahn; Barclay Shaw; Thomas Kidd

BEST SEMI-PROZINE

325 ballots

Locos edited by Charles M Brown
Science Fiction Chronicle; SF Review; No Award; Whispers; Fantasy Review

BEST FANZINE

284 ballots

File 770 edited by Mike Glyer
Rataplan; Ansible; No Award; Mythologies; Holier Than Thou

BEST FAN WRITER

284 ballots

Jaye Langford
Leigh Edmonds; Richard E Geis; Mike Glyer; No Award; Arthur Hlavaty

BEST FAN ARTIST

287 ballots

Alexis Williland
Brad Foster; Joan Hanke-Woods; Bill Rotsler; Stu Shiffman; No Award; Steven Fox

JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD

291 ballots

Lucius Shepard
Melissa Scott; Geoffrey A Landis; No Award; Elissa Malcona; Bradley Benton; Ian McDonald

CONVENTIONS

MEXICO 2 7-9 February 1986

Now moved to the Royal Aages Hotel, Birmingham - site of Novacons past. Second Progress Report with hotel booking form now out. Attending Membership £9 - write to 24a Beech Rd, London W11 2BA

ALBACON III 28-31 March 1986. 37th British Annual Science Fiction Convention Central Hotel, Glasgow - Goh

Joe Haldeman, Goh John Jarrold Attending Membership £9 before 1/3/86, £12 thereafter - write to Albacoin III, c/o Vince Docherty, 20 Hillington 6dns, Glasgow G52 1PR

CONSPIRACY '87 27 August - 2 September 1987. 45th World Science Fiction Convention Metropole Hotel & Conference Centre, Brighton, UK Professional Gohs Boris Lessing, Alfred Bester; Fohs John & Ken Slater; Special Fan Guest

Jaye Langford write to 28 Buckett Road, London W4 1BN, UK for more information

BSFA POSTS

At the Committee Meeting held at the last mailing session, not only did Alan Borey resign (see front page), but also the following posts on the committee were filled (subject to ratification at the AGM):

- Business Manager
- Paul Ward
- Company Secretary & Treasurer
- Phil Knight
- Cashier
- Eve Harvey

Many apologies for the brevity of this notice but no doubt Dave Hodson will be giving more information in future issues. Have no fear, lack of public announcement will not stop them commencing their duties. Now all we need is a Chairman!

(Information on this page compiled by Eve Harvey - under the stern editorship of John Harvey. Please do not adjust your sets, normal programmes will resume soonest.)

NOVACON

Fifteen GUESTS OF HONOUR

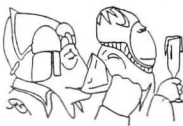
1st - 3rd November 1985 Dave Langford
De Vere Hotel James White
Coventry

REGISTER NOW!! SEND JUST £7.00 (CHEQUE OR PO MADE PAYABLE TO NOVACON 15) TO:- GRAHAM POOLE, 86 BISHWOOD PARK ROAD, WILDE GREEN, SUTTON COLDFIELD, WEST MIDLANDS, B72 1AG...OR IF YOU'RE STILL IN DOUBT JUST WRITE TO GRAHAM AND HE WILL SEND YOU FULL DETAILS.

PROGRESS REPORT TWO AND BOOKING FORMS ARE OUT NOW!

NOVACON IS AN ANNUAL SF CONVENTION FEATURING TALKS BY FAMOUS AUTHORS, FILMS, DISCOS, COMPETITIONS, PARTIES, QUIZZES, REAL LIFE AND LATE LATE RARE NOVACON IS BRITAIN'S LOWEST RUNNING 'REGIONAL' CON & THE FIRST 'REGIONAL' CON TO 'GO NATIONAL' AS WELL AS BEING ONE OF THE LARGEST CONS IN EUROPE AND AS SUCH ITS ATTRACTS NOT ONLY SF FANS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE, BUT ALSO A LARGE NUMBER OF WELL KNOWN AUTHORS. NOVACON REMAINS BRITAIN'S CHEAPEST FULLY PROGRAMMED SF CON AND HAS KEPT THE SAME £15 BOOK RATE SINCE 1981 (RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN ROOM WITH FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST). NOVACON THIS YEAR CELEBRATES ITS FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY AND WE INTEND TO CELEBRATE IN STYLE...IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT WE MEAN BY THAT YOU'D BEST REGISTER NOW SO THAT YOU WILL BE ONE OF THE LUCKY PEOPLE WHO CAN-

COME TO THE PARTY!



NEWS

* NEW BRITISH BOOKS. Paperbacks.

October: Arrow/Hamlyn: Richard Heredith - Run, Come See Jerusalem £1.75; Moyra Caldecott - The Tower and the Emerald £2.25; Peter Beare - Silent Slaughter (Trauma 2020 vol.3) £1.95; Tanith Lee - Death's Master (reprint) £2.50.
Century: Katherine Kurtz - Camber of Culdri, Saint Camber, each £2.95 (new editions).
Corgi: Lyndon Hardy - Master of the Five Magics £2.50.
Fontana: Michael Moorcock - The Laughter of Garthage £3.95, Byzantium Endures (re-issue) £3.95.
Futura: Bari Wood - Lightsources £2.50; Paul O'Williams - The Ends of the Circle (Falbar 2) £1.95; Jane Gaskell - The City (Atlan 4) £1.95; Patricia McKillip - Riddlemaster of Hed, Heir of Sea and Fire, Harpist in the Wind (new editions) each £2.25.
Granada: Colin Wilson - Lifesource (New edition and re-titling of 'Mind Parasites' to tie in with film) £1.95; Rick Raphael - Code Threes (new ed.) £1.95; Brian Aldiss - Barefoot in the Head (rep) £1.95; Jack Vance - Rhialto the Marvellous £1.95; John Grant - The Truth about the Flaming Ghoules £2.95; J. G. Ballard - Hello America (rep) £2.50; E. E. Doc Smith & Stephen Goldin - Revolt of the Galaxy £1.95; Phillip K. Dick - Lies, Inc £1.95; Michael Moorcock - The Ice Schooner (re-issue, revised first Granada ed.) £1.95; A. E. Van Vogt - Slan, Book of Pith (re-issues) £1.95; Sterling Lanier - Hero's Journey, Unforsaken Hero (re-issues) ea.£2.50; Brian Lumley - Psychomach £2.50, Psychomech, Psychosphere ea.£1.95 (re-issues).
Methuen: Barrington Bailey - The Rod of Light (Jasperodius 2) £2.50.
New English Library: Stephen King - Cycle of the Werewolf £4.95; Leigh Brackett - The Reavers of Skait (Vol.3) £1.95; Robert Heinlein - Revolt in 2100 (rep) £1.95; Alan Dean Foster - The End of the Matter (rep) £1.95.
Pan: Hilary Bailey - All the Days of my Life (non SF) £2.95; Julian May - The Pliocene Companion £2.50; Douglas Hill - The Last Legionary £2.95.
Penguin: James P. Hogan - The Code of the Life Makers £2.95; Keith Roberts - Molly Zero £2.50.
Sphere: Morgan Llwyellyn - Bard £2.95; Marion Zimmer Bradley - Night's Daughter £1.95, Mist of Avalon (rep) £3.50; David Langford - The Leaky Establishment (non SF) £2.25.
Star: Brian Herbert - The Garbage Chronicles £2.25, Sidney's Comet (re-issue) £1.95.

November: Arrow/Hamlyn: David Drake - Cross the Stars (Hammers Slammers 2) £1.95.
Century: M. A. R. Barker - The Man of Gold £2.95; Paul Anderson - The Corridors of Time (new edition) £2.95.
Granada: Ramsey Campbell - The Parasite; Ellis Weiner - National Lampoon's 'Doon'; Bob Shaw - Fire Pattern; Jack Vance - The Planet of Adventure (omnibus edition); Brian Aldiss - Starwars (rep).
New English Library: Robert Heinlein - Job: A Comedy of Justice; George Proctor - V: The Chicago Connection.
Methuen: Clifford Simak - All Flesh is Grass, Time and Again (reps) ea. £1.95; Roger Zelazny - Lord of Light (new edition) £1.95.
Dacorum: Christopher Priest - The Glamour £3.50.
Star: Dean R. Koonts - Voices of the Night £2.25.
Target: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - The Adventures of Professor Challenger £1.60; Terrance Dicks - Dr. Who: The Krotons £1.50.
Unicorn: Barbara Hambly - The Ladies of Mandrighyn £2.50; Karel Capek - War with the Neuts £2.95; Cherry Wilder - A Princess of the Chaseln £2.95.

December: Granada: Piers Anthony - Bio of a Space Tyrant 3; Politician; Sterling Lanier - Menace under Marswood; Michael Shae - A Quest for Sibyllis (a sequel to Jack Vance's 'Dying Earth'); Isek Dinesen - Seven Gothic Tales; Brian Aldiss - Space, Time and Nathaniel (rep).

January: Granada: Rob Holdstock - Mythago Wood. New English Library: Lawrence Sanders - The Passion of Molly T.

Hardbacks.

George Allen & Unwin: October: Lisa Golstein - The Dream Years £8.95. November: Ian Dennis - Bagdad: The Prince of Stars in the Cavern of Time Vol. 1 £8.95.
Allison & Busby: Moyra Caldecott - Son of the Sun (Nov) £8.95.
Jonathan Cape: Kurt Vonnegut Jnr - Galapagos (Oct) £8.95.
Chatto: Angela Carter - Black Venus (Oct - Coll) £8.95.
Collins: Alan Garner - The Golden Brothers & Other Tales of Gold (Oct) £5.95.
Firecrest: October 'Star Trek' novels - Janet Kagan - Uhura's Song; John M. Ford - The Final Reflections; Howard Weinstein - The Covenant of the Crown; Greg Bear - Corona; Robert E. Vardean - Mutiny on the Enterprise. All available at £6.95.
Gollancz: October: Ian Watson - Slow Birds (coll) £8.95; Terry Carr (editor) - Best SF of the Year 14 £9.95 hardback/£4.95 trade paperback.
January: Frederick Pohl - Pohlstars (coll) £8.95.
Hodder: Jean Auel - The Mammoth Hunters (Nov) £9.95.
Macdonald: (Library Editions) October: Robert Adams - Death of a Legend (Horseclans 8); November: Jane Gaskell - The City; Robert Adams - Witch Goddess (Horseclans 9); 'S. P. Sontow' (Sontow Sucharikutul) - Vaspire Junction. December: Robert Adams - Bill the Ace (Horseclans 10). All ea. £8.95.
New English Library: October: Colin Wilson - The Personality Surgeon £8.95. November: Robert A. Heinlein - The Cat Who Walks Through Walls: A Comedy of Manners £9.95.
Severn House: October: Ben Bova - Orion £8.95.
November: Patrick Tilley - Astrak Wars II: The First Family £8.95; Clifford Simak - The Cosmic Engineers. Oriflame: A new publisher specialising in "the field of authentic, quality fantasy fiction in the tradition of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and William Morris." First release (Summer 1985) - The Sceptre Mortal by Derek Savde (a classic of Sword and Sorcery with detail in the plotting (which) matches anything in detective fiction. There are passages of horror recalling H. P. Lovecraft and stray echoes of the ghost stories of William Hope Hodgson and M. R. James - or so the press release says.). Trade paperback £2.95. Two maps and a board game are planned releases that tie-in with the book.

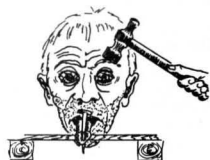
* Yes, just what we've all really wanted - a Brian Aldiss Appreciation Society. £8 per annum to Pauline Valentine, 25 Margate Road, Long Eaton, Derbyshire will get you a special badge and a quarterly newsletter and all the other usual blumph...

* Norman Spinrad's The Iron Dream has (again) been placed on the index of "youth-threatening writings" (to quote a certain hugo award winning fan writer) in Germany. Which means that it can't be advertised, displayed or sold over the counter (a black market in Spinrad novels - the mind boggles...) in case it corrupts young, blue-eyed, blond minds???

* Frederick Pohl's THE YEARS OF THE CITY has won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best SF novel of 1984. Second was Lucius Shepard's GREEN EYES and William Gibson's NEUROMANCER was third.

* Lin Carter, author of the THONGOR sword & sorcery series and several CONAN novels and stories amongst other things, is in hospital in the US with an 'inoperable case of advanced mouth cancer' and his condition is described as serious.

- * Another mysterious happening - Arthur C. Clarke is to put up a £1,000 a year to fund a Clarke Award for best SF novel by a British author.
- * A quick bit of BSFA news. Paul Gamble (Gamma to his pals, drinking partners and Titan customers) approached your correspondent and said: "Dave, what's this about you in Ansible?" It read... "BSFA COUP! A rumoured takeover plot was greeted with eager yawns from everybody except the committee (whose dim lustreless eyes glowed for the first time in years, at the glorious thought of being thrown out). Rumoured arch-conspirator Dave Hodson is practicing a baleful stare after the manner of old and tired Chairman Dorey, but so far tends to overdo it..." If you're going to write about me Dave you could at least send me a copy...
- * Russell Hoban has adapted his RIDDLE WALKER (or is that the other way round) for the stage and the world premiere will be at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester on February 20th 1986. (more details from the Box Office, Royal Exchange Theatre, St. Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7DH)
- * SF/Fantasy artist Rodney Matthews is to exhibit and sell some of his work at The Langton Gallery in London. The exhibition begins on November 15th
- * Robert Silverberg is to be the book reviewer for L. RON HUBBARDS TO THE STARS MAGAZINE.
- * Ray Bradbury is to visit England next April to promote his new novel DEATH IS A LONELY BUSINESS.



Nail em down...

Dorothy Davies Because I didn't write a libelous letter in reply to Bernard Faringdon, Oxon. Smith's missive - pointing out his other deliberate mistake, misreading an Orbiter ad, and getting me involved in subsequent bitter recriminations from him, because I didn't accuse him of quoting me out of context - in short, because I didn't write the kind of letter MATRIX is printing these days - I am mentioned as being less than convincing. It continues to confirm my current feelings about the BSFA - that everyone is there to rubbish everybody else.

I don't intend to write any more letters like that. So whether this one gets further than WAFH remains to be seen.

In the meantime, thanks to Sharon Hall for very kind words, but I have handed Orbiter over, look, stock and info sheets, to Sue Thomason. I did inform your illustrious Chairman; he hasn't seen fit to inform the membership. So I am. All future Orbiter communications, please, to Sue Thomason, address as in FOCUS. It's time I spent more time working on commissioned books than on BSFA work, which doesn't give me any satisfaction any more. It used to, it used to.

*** Sorry I upset you so much but when I get letters that are two or three pages long and are obviously the product of a lot of thought and work, then I get a tiny scrap of paper with six lines and a none too relevant quote from an issue of Starlog... Well, I forget who said "One reaps what one sows."

Ton A. Jones
39 Rippleshire
Bracknell
Berks, RG12 3QA.

I was very pleased to see John Harvey's letter clarifying the situation. The letter laid it on the line, effectively he and Eve have subsidised every member of the BSFA since they started running the litho machine. How many of us realised this but didn't like to think about it? I wasn't surprised how long the magazines took to produce and thus how much time John and Eve had to put in when I think of how many hours at the duplicator Keith Freeman had to do when all the magazines bar VECTOR were duplicated. Whilst not being surprised it doesn't mean I'm not horrified - this seems a sacrifice beyond any duty to the BSFA. I can't remember when we last made anyone a life member of the BSFA (the last I was involved with as Chairman was John Brunner) but it seems to me that John's dedication merits this type of recognition.

What John's letter spells out is that on current subscription rates the BSFA cannot afford to have all its magazines lithoed unless John does them for free. How long can we expect John to provide a "free lunch" - parts of his letter certainly sound as though he's become tired of the task and who can blame him? Does the committee have a contingency plan for the day John decides he's had enough? Are they assuming someone else will step in to take up the task? If a replacement could not be found the options are limited:-

a) Assuming £8 membership fee is enough to cover lithoing VECTOR the other magazines could revert to duplication - providing someone is willing to do this or we can afford a professional.

b) An increase in membership fees. Notwithstanding the London meetings view that £10 - £12 is not unreasonable (and I agree), apparently large increases have led to lost members. The fact that there hasn't been an increase for several years usually cuts no ice - people are not logical that way. Perhaps a decrease in members is acceptable although it goes against the committee's aims for the last couple of years.

c) reduce the frequency of the magazines and use professional printers. I don't know what we'd have to reduce but I do know members would be lost; the mailing is what most members get from the BSFA.

d) Scrap one or more magazines and use professional printers for the rest. FOCUS would probably be first choice (to go) as it appears infrequently and it is specialist but it wouldn't save enough. You then have to decide whether to cut MATRIX or PI or perhaps you'd have to cut both.

We are living on borrowed time, we are reliant on one person - unless there are other volunteers. Even if John continues until he drops we have only postponed the inevitable. Isn't it time to pay for lunch and make ourselves honest? I would favour a combination of increased membership fee (say £10) with some sines reverting to duplication but the committee could sound out members views. Whilst John is willing to continue and we don't have to pay for a professional these monies should go into a special publications fund for future needs.

Moving to Alan Dorey's reply. I appreciate the reasonable tone particularly as the tone of my letter was deliberately not reasonable in order to provoke a response. Knowing that no one ever benefits from other people's mistakes I will still try and dissuade Alan from trying to improve the production quality of VECTOR in order to improve sales. The committee I served on tried and it did not work. I remember being told at "Dark They Were and Golden Eyed" that there is a limited market for a magazine like VECTOR, is a literary sine with no strong editorial personality, unlike SF Review or Locus. At that time VECTOR carried some excellent artwork and was well laid out, which on the whole is still the case. I was told we could only improve one-off sales by going to colour covers (and perhaps interiors), from a visual point of view we'd be competing with comic fan-zines but we'd still have the literary contents. We judged colour would not pay.

At this year's World Science Fiction Convention - Aussiecon II in Melbourne, Australia - there was a very special guest. The Australians had heard so much about him that they started up a special fund to raise money for his trip out there and I was proud to do my bit for my favourite author as UK Agent for the fund. Bob Shaw, a good writer but more importantly an excellent, long-standing fan and general Good Guy, has for 10 years now been entertaining us at British Eastercon with his talks. The Aussies wanted to hear him, so they asked him to give an 'after-dinner speech' following the Banquet. Unfortunately a slight breakdown in communication meant that Bob arrived in Australia thinking he'd be doing a 5 minute spot, whilst everyone else was expecting an hour-long talk. As always, though, Bob delivered the goods and I'm delighted to present below a transcript of his speech. Due to the misunderstanding, however, Bob only had short notes from which to work, so the following has been transcribed from a tape recording. Thus any mistakes, misspellings etc are totally my fault. Due to tight time-constraints (10 days from my return from Australia and the deadline for this issue of Matrix), Bob hasn't had the chance to fully check the transcript. So if there are any howlers, shout at me, not him.

Eve Harvey

My Life & Space/Times

BOB SHAW at AUSSIECON TWO

This convention started off for me in a tremendous way with the opening talk by Race Matthews. The things he described in his talk - learning about science fiction, producing his fanzine and discovering how difficult it was to get science fiction to read during WW2 - I went through myself except I was in Northern Ireland. It was really a time-binding experience for me to come here and find a Cabinet Minister had done exactly the same things as I'd done. My god, I wish we had politicians that produced fanzines! Though I don't know what Margaret Thatcher's would have been like - a sort of heavily censored version of the Financial Times. And I hate to think what sort of convention she'd have run.

I discovered science fiction at a very early age. At about 10 or 11 I was reading the boys papers of the day - Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, Adventure, Champion, Skipper. They weren't comics in the sense used today, they weren't picture books, but boys'/children's papers with a lot of type and only one little illustration each page. They were a tremendous introduction to literacy. I very soon realised that in every issue there was always a science fiction serial. I didn't know what science fiction was in those days, but I suddenly realised that these special stories, which had nothing to do with the wild west, football teams etc, but had people who went out to other planets were what I wanted to read.

Even after 40 years I can remember some of those stories better than novels I read last week. The Wizard, in particular, featured one serial called 'Full Speed Ahead to the Worlds of Fear'. There's more plot in that title than today you sometimes get in an entire trilogy! The earth was being menaced by a giant comet (somebody else has written a story about that quite recently - it does happen a lot in science fiction) and the main character decided he must get away from the Earth before the giant comet struck - which is good thinking. He had just discovered a peculiar metal which was impervious to gravity but not having read H G Wells he didn't call it Cavortite. He built himself a spherical space ship which was operated by pulling up little panels and gravity would draw you off in the direction of the panel. He neglected the fact that the take-off speed would have been something like one inch per century - that was just a detail.

Having escaped before the comet struck, he travelled all round the galaxy for 4 years having tremendous adventures on every planet he visited. After 4 years everyone on the ship was homesick and decided to return to see how things were on Earth after the destruction. Sure enough the comet had struck the Earth, but it had split it down the centre - down the Atlantic and the Pacific - and the two halves were about 3 miles apart. I think about 5 people had been injured.

Actually, all of these series lasted 4 years because that was the limit the writer could take. Another one that really sticks in my mind was 'The Purple Planet Needs Air'. That series featured a purple planet, as the title suggests, which needed air, as the title suggests. It was also in our solar system but it was never disclosed which planet it was because most of the planets in the solar system were not purple. The inhabitants, realising they were running out of air, did a very sneaky thing - they built themselves huge vacuum cleaners, pointed them at us and switched them on. I'm almost certain there's a flaw in the science of this story, but they started stealing our air, drawing it away across space. This fact was discovered by a test pilot flying a very high-altitude aircraft - he found he was having trouble getting back down again. So they loaded up with baked beans or something and went off to this purple planet, having great adventures there for 4 years until the writer died.

These stories satisfied me for a while. I grew up at the age of about 12 or 13 when I discovered my first copy of Astounding Science Fiction, which these days is known as Analog. That was a genuine turning point in my life. The first issue I got had an A E Van Vogt story - The Storm - part of a series called The Mixed Men. It is impossible today in a world where science fiction is so plentiful and commonplace - there's just more than you could ever read - to adequately describe the reaction of someone like me, living in Belfast which will never be the fun capital of the galaxy.

This thing dropped into my hands with an A E Van Vogt story dealing with the adventures of a space ship commanded by a woman called Grand Captain Gloria Laurr. She was out hunting down a race of robots that had escaped from the Earth 3,600 years earlier and settled in one of the Lesser Magellanic Clouds. I still remember the opening sentence of that story - 'my first adult sf story - it went something like, "The warship from Imperial Earth came around the Sun so quickly that the observer had no time to commit suicide." That was it, I was gone then. It was worse than LSD. I've never had LSD, but I understand it wears off after 2 or 3 days, this didn't. 40 years later it's still got me.

I freely admit that my work as a science fiction writer has been influenced by A E Van Vogt because he was the one who realised that the science was important, but the imagination was more important. He had a feeling for the future that other people didn't seem to have. He used to throw away lines; in one story he had a production line for space ships (I've forgotten the name of the story) and explained that it took 400 years for the first spaceship to come off the production line, but after that there was 1 every 2 minutes. That was superscience and he knew. In

the Weapon Shops of Isher he had a scene in which a reporter investigating this organisation tried to go into one of their shops. The reporter tried to turn the handle on the door but it was connected to a computer which identified him and locked the door, not letting him in. Today that is nothing, you could do it, but in those days it was a vision of the future many other science fiction writers could not have achieved. I still remember the first computers coming out. They all had names ending in IAC and they were almost as big as this room. But Van Vogt knew instinctively that that wasn't the way it was going to be.

I've discovered that nothing dates so quickly in science fiction as a story in which the author is particularly proud of its accuracy at the time of publication. A month later - out. I think my favourite example of this comes from Saturday morning cinema. I used to go and watch the Flash Gordon series, the old chapter movies. In 'Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe' (again I've forgotten all the details) but Flash is whizzing along in his little spaceship going about 500 miles an hour with smoke going straight up from the back end, and bits of gunpowder falling straight down. They get hit by a raygun from Ming the Merciless, whom some people say I resemble, and the ship is crippled. Having been forced to land, they are organising their escape when Flash Gordon said, "Everybody check your anti-gravity belts", and they all looked down at their little silvery belts which, if we ever do have anti-gravity belts, could quite possibly be the way they'll look. The artist or prop designer was using his imagination. Then he said, "Check your ray gun", and they all looked at their little guns, which, could possibly have resembled ray guns if we ever get them. Again the prop designer had used his imagination. The three of them were just about to jump off, Flash, a big burly chap - I've forgotten his name but he had a very well-developed breast plate who we nicknamed Big Chief Iron Fitties - and Dale, when Flash said to Dale, "Don't forget the portable radio." She disappeared, returning struggling with a big box. Until then the prop designer had been using his imagination and doing very well. But the movie had been made in the 30s and this bloke knew that the radio was a thing the size of a writing desk. No matter how much he tried he couldn't visualise it being shrunk to much more than half a writing desk. So she had to jump out with this.

I've wandered off the subject of the talk - I had no intention of talking about Flash Gordon. What I meant to talk about was the effect that this mind-blowing discovery of science fiction had upon me personally. In some ways it was good, in some ways it was bad. One of the bad ways was that it destroyed my education. During the time I was supposed to be working up to university entrance I was doing nothing of the sort. I was sitting at the back of the class either reading Astounding or publishing my own carbon-copy fanzine which had a circulation of 3. The carbon paper in W2 was pretty bad. When it came time for me to sit matriculation examinations I ducked out. I knew I was going to have the worse flop ever.

Somehow I managed to get a job as an apprentice structural engineering draughtsman where I was supposed to design buildings in which people could sit without the roof falling in and killing them. A big responsibility for someone whose total education had come from Planet Stories, Thrilling Wonder Quarterly and things like that. Even then, faced with the responsibility of earning a living, I didn't sober up. During the war we got British Reprint Astoundings. One came out every second month and for me it was like a form of drip torture. The issue which appeared at the beginning of December I wouldn't read immediately, I'd keep it till Christmas morning and read it on Christmas Day - that was my Christmas present. I had my little collection hidden in an old gas fire in the office and when nobody was about, which was quite often because it was a small firm, I used to sit and read the stories. I knew them all off by heart, but I would read them over again.

One of my duties as an apprentice structural engineer was

to make tea 4 times a day on a little gas ring connected by one of those flexible pipes to the mains. For a diversion, I managed to obtain a very fine gas welding nozzle which I fitted into the pipe. When I switched the gas on I could get a little flame about 1/2" long, but when I turned the nozzle suddenly the flame would shoot out about 3 feet. I called it the Betatron Ray and hunted down every bluebottle, daddy-longlegs and butterfly that ever came into my office. I'd go about shouting, "Die, you Venusian swine." This was one of those old-fashioned offices with huge shelves of paper (invoices and things) hanging up on the wall which were all brown around the edges as a result of near misses. And the smell of a burning bluebottle in a small office is terrible.

Between these episodes I tried to improve myself with astronomy. Astronomy is one of my real loves and I think it is an interesting fact that very many science fiction fans start off with an underlying interest in it. I had a big problem, however, in that I couldn't afford a telescope, and telescopes are somewhat dearer for astronomers. I tried to build one using an old pair of spectacles, but the only tube I could get was a piece of lead pipe. I remember watching the transit of one of the moons of Jupiter one night when I fell asleep. The lead pipe fell out of my hands, through the window and landed on the dog's kennel at about 3 in the morning. The poor old dog thought it had been nuked and it had some kind of fit, running round the district. The windows lit up in every house and I had to hide out.

Even though so short of money, I kept trying to get a telescope. I remember once I'd saved up 7/6d and I noticed an eyepiece of a telescope on a market trader's stall. It had obviously come off a big telescope about 6ft long, but being the first thing in the astronomical equipment range I could afford, I decided I was going to have it whatever the cost. The old lady running the stall said 7/6d. I was so delighted. Although I knew this was only a piece off a much larger telescope, she must have had a pang of conscience because as I was going out of the door a sort of strangled noise came out of her throat and I realised she was trying to speak. I turned round and she said, "Do you realise there's a bit missing?" I've never seen such a beetle as on her face, avarice and truth all mirrored on the human countenance in that one second.

I kept working as a structural engineer but feeling that I hadn't achieved my real potential in life. I moved out to Canada for 3 years. We decided to settle in Calgary, Alberta and during the first week there I went along to the local meeting of the Literary Club. Different people read their piece and everybody commented on it. One little woman got up - she had a really strong resemblance to Bugs Bunny, but she was a science fiction writer and read a very, very long story full of women with green-tipped breasts. I don't know why they had to be green. She went into tremendous detail about this space ship which had gone to Venus where all the women with green-tipped breasts were. As it was coming back into the Earth's atmosphere the ship slowed down to 500mph, speeded up to 1,000mph then slowed down and landed.

She put great emphasis on this, so when I had to do my criticism I asked what all this slowing down to 500mph, speeding up and then landing was all about. "Well," she replied, "this is aerodynamics. Reading works on space propulsion etc you're informed that when you're slowing down you also have to pass through the sound barrier." She'd read somewhere else that to go through the sound barrier you had to speed up to 1000mph. So though she had her ship slowing down, she knew it had to go through the sound barrier which meant accelerating up to 1,000mph, and then she let her ship slow again and land. "I'm almost sure there's a flaw in the science somewhere", I replied to which she jumped up really upset. Now this woman had incredibly bad luck because her big squish line for me was, "Listen buster, you've obviously never read The Challenge of Space by Arthur C Clarke." Out of the 14 million people in Canada at that time she had to pick on me. "Not only have I read The Challenge of Space by Arthur C Clarke," I retorted, "but last month in London I

discussed some of the problems with Arthur himself." I never heard of her again, but with her kind of luck she wasn't going to make it anyway.

After struggling on for years in the engineering business, I realised I wasn't going to make it. I wanted to be a writer so, back in Belfast again, I managed to wangle my way into a public relations job in the aircraft firm where I worked. The interview was a bit difficult because the bloke running the PR department was a tough, ex-Fleet Street editor who wanted somebody good and he wasn't too happy about taking someone from the drawing office. He wanted to know what writing experience I had. At that time I'd published about 200 articles in fanzines but I thought that wouldn't sound so good, so I said, "I've published 200 articles in science-related journals". He was deeply impressed and I got the job on the spot. For months afterwards he kept saying to me, "Bob, how about showing me some of these science-related journals?" to which I'd reply, "Yes, I'll bring some in tomorrow." Imagine showing up with a big pile of Myphen. Luckily he eventually forgot about them.

I decided to try and settle down as a public relations man. It was a bit closer to writing science fiction, but there were all kinds of dissatisfactions with it. One day a party of Commonwealth journalists arrived - this was about 1972 when all the madness in Ireland was at its height - but the policy of aircraft firm I worked for, policy was that it didn't matter - we could deliver on time, nothing's bothering us. So, having shown the journalists round the factory, I had to take them on a little flight in one of our aircraft around the Mountains of Mourne at the bottom of County Down, to show them how beautiful Northern Ireland is and how nothing ever happens there. We flew down Belfast Loch a little as I told them, "This is going to be the experience of your life. You're going to see the Mountains of Mourne for the first time - the most beautiful mountains ever." Actually, they aren't even mountains, it's a rotten, boring little hill. All these songs about how beautiful Ireland is have been written by people who've never been anywhere else. It's really quite a dismal place and the Mountains of Mourne are the worse - the actual pits.

As we were flying down towards them the aircraft suddenly performed an unprogrammed 180° turn. So I went up the pilot to ask what was happening. He pointed to the earphones, indicating that I should put them on. "We've just had word from the control tower, there's a bomb on the aircraft", he said. "What am I going to tell these people?", I said, and he helpfully replied, "You are the bullshit artist. That's what you get paid for, you tell them something." So I returned and announced, "Folks, we're going back because there's been a strike in the canteen and if we don't get back soon your tea will be cold." And it worked - those people had the story of their lifetime right in their hand, and they left that factory not knowing. Not a word appeared, so I fulfilled my function, I concealed the truth from the world's press. There wasn't a bomb in the aircraft anyway, but that wasn't the point.

It was this dishonesty of public relations that got to me in the end. The aircraft I'm talking about was a two-engine one and the whole point of having 2 engines is that if one of them stops you can keep the other one going and still fly along. But this airplane had a defect, when one of the engines stopped the plane fell down. In my public relations handouts, though, I wasn't allowed to say that. When people asked what the performance of this aircraft was on one engine, the most I was allowed to say was that it had a negative rate of climb. It was even worse when I got fed up with Belfast and went over to England. I was working as Publicity Officer for Vickers shipbuilding group in the north of England who are a big firm building such things as nuclear submarines, the lot. They had the same attitude - you weren't allowed to say things. They never spoke about the surface of the sea, it was called the air-sea interface. Particular submarines had faults sometimes - they sank, but you weren't allowed to say that either. The most you were allowed to say was

that sometimes the ship would undergo a depth excursion. It sounded great.

It was similar in my spell in newspapers when the Belfast Telegraph tried to make me a sports reporter. I managed to get through the first few days OK, but when it came to Friday the Sports Editor came up to me. I hadn't realised I'd have to report sports - I knew nothing about it. He handed me a little slip which was a fixture for a hockey match and told me to report that - 300 words. "Wait a minute," I said, "I've never seen a hockey match." "It's all right," was his reply, "the rules are just the same as in football," and escaped before I could explain I'd never seen a football match either.

I had to go around the next day, a wet, cold Saturday in Belfast, to a little patch of cinders on which two very disgruntled teams of hockey players were knocking this thing around the pitch with about 10 spectators standing around with umbrellas. This was my start on a career I hoped would end in a Pulitzer Prize. I knew it was going to be a disaster. I had no idea what was happening when I suddenly heard somebody under one of the umbrellas saying, "Lesley Garvey isn't using the left side of the field enough." I thought that sounded good so I got out my notebook and wrote it down. I moved closer to the umbrella and during the course of the match he made about 5 statements like that which I noted down. Then I and got the names of the people who scored goals and retired to the local pub. After 4 hot whiskies I phoned my story in to the newspaper. Going in on Monday morning I was expecting to be sacked but the Sports Editor came up and congratulated me on this brilliant piece and my insight into hockey. Over the next 4 years I built up a reputation as a hockey reporter, and I never learnt the rules of the game. My reputation was founded on the fact that all over the country people would read my story and say, "That's just what I said at the match. This man really knows his stuff."

After 4 years I quit the paper, but they kept me on because I was so good and on Saturdays I was reporting for 5 newspapers - my own paper plus the Sunday Times, one of the most prestigious papers in the world, the Observer and two papers in Dublin. Getting paid 5 times for the one story and I still didn't know the rules for the game of hockey. I was getting embarrassed having to go up to people and asking who was playing whom, (they had gave me the names on the bit of paper but not which colours the teams wore). One day I decided I must know it by this time and I wouldn't ask anybody anything. So I watched the match and did a glowing report - one team had beaten the other 4-0. I was walking away from the telephone when I noticed a man from the losing team commiserate with one of the men from the team that had won. That was funny, I thought, so went back to check up and found out I'd got the story backwards. After that story I gave up. That was the end of my sports reporting career.

It was time now to become a full-time science fiction writer - there was nothing else left. One of the big things about science fiction writing is that you need to know far more than with any other kind of fiction and so this has involved me in being a scientific researcher as well as a writer. I've explained a lot of my work in talks in England at different conventions but people have complained about the way I keep picking on poor old Einstein because of all the mistakes he made. But it's not Einstein's fault that his brain and mine aren't in the same class. I read somewhere that it wasn't a tremendous IQ which made Einstein a great scientist, it was his simple, child-like approach to problems. And for all I know my mind is more simple and child-like than Einstein's. So I was able to see through a lot of the flaws in his work. Take this silly business about trying to disprove simultaneous events using 2 people, a bike, a moving railway train and the two people flashing lights at each other as they passed. Well, everybody knows this is stupid. You can't do that. The ticket collector would throw you off.

The other thing he built his name on was this thing about

the twins paradox. You take two identical twins; one goes off on a space flight way out into the galaxy and back, and when he comes back he's younger than the one who stayed on earth. That's where Einstein made his mistake. He was misinterpreting the evidence. As Sherlock Holmes said to Dr Watson, "When you have eliminated every other theory, the one which remains, however unlikely, is the best." That Conan Doyle could think up on the spur of the moment. The real truth of the twins paradox is that one goes off swanning around the galaxy having a lovely time enjoying himself, in the meantime his brother is at home doing all the washing, paying all the bills, moving the grass. When his brother gets back he's exhausted - no wonder he looks older than the one who was away off on a holiday.

After enumerable brilliant observations like that I began to gain a reputation as a science fiction writer and researcher, and I began getting the perks - Quest of Honour trips and so forth. I've had some funny QG trips, Poland, for example, 'the land of the 40 watt bulb'. If this was Poland there'd be only one bulb hanging up for the whole room.

One of the funniest things I got in this GOF line was GOF at a Star Trek Convention. I'd never been a Star Trek fan, I'd sort of watched it but I've never cared for it all that much, but during my talks I'd built up a little team called The Night Shift. If you've watched Star Trek you'll have realised that it travels for a long time so there must be more than one crew - they've got to have shifts. But when anything happens there's only the same crew on the deck. They sit there and every weak get thrown out of their seats as they run into a vast immovable force field. They've forgotten about seat belts. These people are having all the fun, and there's another crew to which nothing ever happens. They miss all the action. I'd built this up into a talk called The Night Shift which some Star Trek fans heard so they invited me along to a Star Trek convention in Birmingham - not Birmingham which is in Alabama, but Birmingham which is in England. Great I thought - free booze for the weekend.

Unknown to me, though, they had acquired two of the stars of Star Trek to be there. One of them was Scottie, whom I had run down quite a lot in my talks. He calls himself an engineer but when he's supposed to be fixing the main drive all he does is open a trap door outside the canteen, jump down and move a lot of little lego blocks around. I knew he wasn't an engineer. When he appeared on the walkway at that convention everyone went nuts, he got about 10 minutes applause. He then explained that being on Star Trek and learning science and technology had taught him so much that when he was on a trip to one of the big space ship manufacturers - McDonnell I think it was, in the States - and they were showing him around their design areas, some of the engineers came up and said, "Look, we've been stuck on this problem for 2 or 3 years." He looked at it and said, "Have you tried doing this?" at which they hit their foreheads with their hands and exclaimed, "Why didn't we think of doing that!" He'd fixed it for them because he'd been on Star Trek. The other character was Checkov. He came up to me and said, "I understand you're making a lot of money through making jokes about me." I didn't like to tell him that I'd never included him in any of the routines because he was too unimportant. So that night when I had to do the Night Shift routine, I included him especially.

This is the sort of thing you get involved in when you take up science fiction writing for a living, so take my advice - don't do it. In conclusion I'd like to say that though all I've talked about tonight is professional science fiction writing, my presence here wasn't achieved through any of my professional work but because I've been a science fiction fan since I was a kid and I've written a lot in fanzines for more than 30 years. The money which brought me here was provided by ordinary fans and there's no way in which I can thank them enough for the pleasure.

a look at newszines

Eve Harvey

News is something we all find of great interest, and since the usual fanzine column is not available this issue, we thought a listing of some of the all too few newszines available, both here and abroad, might be of use.

ANSIBLE - UK

Provides scurrilous rumours, disinformation and anything else Dave can get his hands on about the professional sf scene, comics, films, fandom, conventions. You name it, he'll print it, and with his own contacts in the publishing world you can often get the real 'inside story'.

Publication: Originally monthly, but somewhat more erratic when Dave's novel deadlines come close.
Cost: 5 issues for £2. Cheques/money orders to 'Ansible', Girobank a/c 24-475-4403
Address: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks
Trade: Will trade for news, articles etc

SHARDS OF BARREL - Europe

Must be for anyone who wants to know what's going on over on the continent. News of books, conventions, fandom - anything of interest. Personally I find much, if not of vital importance, of great interest - especially the Eastern European scene.

Publication: I think quarterly - he doesn't actually say
Cost: £3.50 cash or post giro (NL) 14113560. Payments by cheque are \$2 extra.
Address: Eoslof Goudriaan, Noordwal 2, 2513 EA Den Haag, The Netherlands
Trade: Cosplay, useful news or other printable contributions.

LOCUS - USA

Winner of the Hugo award for semi-prozine, this is the leading newszine of the sf world in the USA. More emphasis on the professional than the more personal and fanish news.

Publication: Monthly
Cost: Sample copy \$2.25, a small \$23 for 12 issues, \$43 for 24; airmail \$35 and \$66 respectively. All subscriptions payable in US funds.
Address: Locus Publications, PO BOX 13305, Oakland, CA 94661, USA
Trade: I don't think they do

There are now two major newszines in Australia, but they don't overlap too much since one covers mainly fanish/convention news whereas the other is more biased towards serious matters.

THYME - Australia

A newszine I enjoy, even though I don't know the people being mentioned - it's interesting to read of goings on in fanzines the other side of the world which sound just like our own.

Publication: Bi-monthly
Cost: \$5 for 10 issues. All overseas copies sent airmail
Address: UE Agent, Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 2NR
Editors: Roger Veddall & Peter Burns
Trade: News etc, though prefer subscriptions for overseas because of mailing costs

THE NOTIONAL - Australia

Articles, book reviews etc by Australia's leading SF Reviewers and critics, news of the publishing and fanish world. Rapidly becoming the focal point of Australian SF and fandom. More in-depth articles than Thyme.

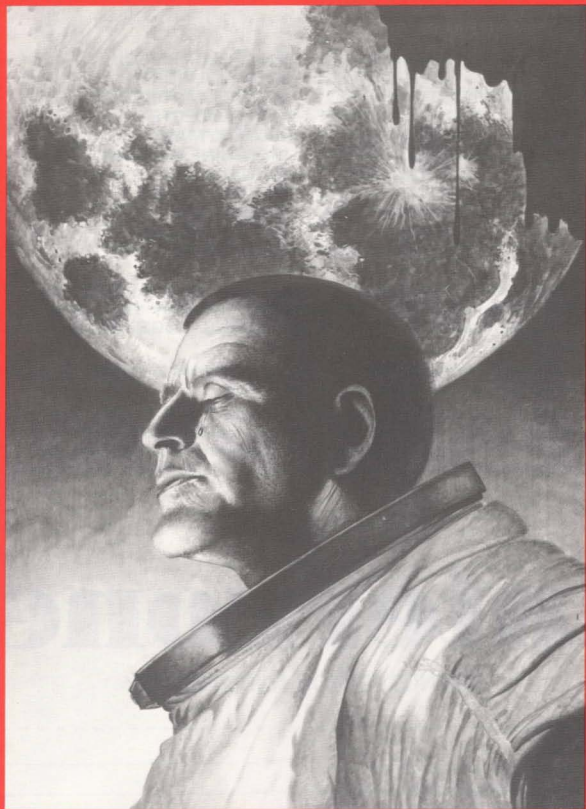
Publication: Monthly
Cost: £7.50 surface, £11.50 airmail for 12 issues
Address: UK Agent, Eve & John Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3QH
Editors: Leigh Edmonds (Hugo nominee) & Valma Brown
Trade: Reviews, news, review copies and one-to-one trade for fanzines.

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