

OPUNTIA

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Saint Urho's Day 2015

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When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

TRANSIT FANNING IN CALGARY: PART 9. INCIDENTS

by Dale Speirs

Smartphone cameras are handy things. When taking candid shots in public, I don't hold it at arm's length as many do, but instead keep it close to my face and move my fingers as if I were texting. No one pays attention to a texter, but if you are obviously taking a photo, it might lead to trouble.



Bus front seats fold up to make room and usually there is no problem squeezing strollers in. I never saw more than two strollers at once, one on each side of the aisle. But January 29, each stop brought another stroller on board until there

were four of them. I always sit in the second or third row, and was able to sneak off a smartphone photo of the traffic jam inside the bus (the fourth stroller is partly blocked from view by the arm of the young mum in purple).





These are regular City police, not Calgary Transit peace officers (special constables). I presume this man wasn't being taken down the hard way just because he didn't pay his fare. Seen at the Dalhousie LRT station on January 30. Since the train in the photo was the one I wanted, I didn't stick around to rubberneck.



At right is a Calgary Transit cruiser.

The sign below usually means a car driver tried unsuccessfully to beat a train across a level crossing somewhere down the line.



RADIO FICTION: PART 2. RADIO WITH PICTURES

by Dale Speirs

I've never owned a television set in my adult life. I was too poor for cable when I first started out on my own, and later when I could afford it, I instead went with a standalone DVD player. No commercials, play the show when I want, pause it for a bathroom break or to get something from the fridge, and replay dialogue that I missed. I could pay cash for the fanciest large screen set today but never will. It is cheaper to buy or rent DVDs of interest instead of paying for cable. There have been several movies and television shows set in contemporary radio stations which I have enjoyed greatly.

Baby, If You've Ever Wondered ...

WKRP IN CINCINNATI was a comedy that ran for four seasons from 1978. It didn't do well during first run because the network kept shuffling its time slot and viewers couldn't find it. In syndication, however, it became a popular show, sometimes outranking first-run shows. The creator of WKRP was Hugh Wilson, who based the characters and events on personal experience from his radio days in Atlanta, Georgia. One of his chief writers, Bill Dial, had also been in radio and adapted many of his experiences to the show. WKRP therefore had an unusual degree of authenticity. The boxed DVD set wasn't issued until 2014 because the original show used actual Top 40 hit music clips in the DJ scenes. The DVD producers discovered they couldn't get rights for some of the music and had to substitute generic rock. Sorting out all the rights took a long time.

The saga of WKRP AM opens with it being a bottom-rated station playing the kind of music that even Lawrence Welk would have thought dull. The funniest of these selections was the Hallelujah Tabernacle Choir (a take-off on the Mormon choir) singing "You're Having My Baby" as if it were a church hymn. The staff are incompetent or goldbrickers, often both. The station manager is middle-aged Arthur Carlson, for whom the word "wimp" was invented. He is a fanatic fisherman, indecisive, and living in fear of his mother, a dowager who owns the station. Mrs. Carlson, for whom the word "battleaxe" was invented, only makes occasional appearances at the station, when she enjoys terrorizing the staff.

The long story arc that stretches over the series is that of Andy Travis, hired as Program Director to convert WKRP into a Top 40 station. Over four seasons, WKRP gradually improves to 14th in the rankings, then 10th, and in the final

episode, to 6th, at which point Mrs. Carlson decides to convert it to all-news. This mirrored the actual trend in real life as music stations migrated to FM for the better quality sound, and left AM radio to all-news or talk shows. Unfortunately the show producers chickened out and zero-reset it back to rock.

The receptionist is Jennifer Marlowe, a blonde bombshell who is the highest-paid person at the station. She dates wealthy older men, preferably in their 80s with heart problems, and as a result of their generous gifts lives far beyond her means. She does not type, take dictation, or fetch coffee, and was basically hired as an ornament for the front lobby, although she does answer the telephone. A trainee news reporter with the awkward name Bailey Quarters is the shy ingenue, who becomes more assertive as the series progresses. She is a quiet beauty in her own right, and plays Mary Ann to Jennifer’s Ginger.

The Sales Manager is Herb Tarlek, who makes used-car salesmen look good. He is lazy and only sells enough commercial time to get by on the commissions. A married man with children, he constantly hits on Jennifer, who will have nothing to do with him. Herb wears suits of loud checks and ill-placed leather patches, at least one suit of which was tailored from an actual horse blanket. He shocks the staff one day when he walks in wearing an ordinary business suit.

Les Nessman is the incompetent newsman, obsessed over hog futures, and constantly mispronouncing names such as “President Ree-gun” or the golfer as “Chy Chy Rod-er-goo-ez”. There are two main DJs. Dr. Johnny Fever, on the morning show, is a drug-addled hippie left over from the Sixties and not always sure what year or city he’s in. Venus Flytrap, who was hired as the token black on the station, plays mellow music on the night shift. Since the station is usually deserted then, he likes to bring in his girlfriends and wine and dine them in the broadcast booth.

WKRP IN CINCINNATI has one of the funniest episodes in television history, “Turkeys Away”. This was based on a true story from Hugh Wilson’s radio days, when an Atlanta station promotion went terribly wrong. In the television episode, Arthur Carlson sets up a Thanksgiving promotion but instead of just giving away frozen turkeys, he flies over a shopping mall parking lot and drops live birds from a helicopter. Les Nessman is there on the sidewalk and covers the disaster in the style of the Hindenburg fire (“Oh the humanity!”) as turkeys plummet to the ground, smashing through car windshields and sending panicked shoppers running. The final line of the show, as a chastened Carlson

returns to the studio, is a classic: “*As God is my witness, I thought turkeys could fly*”.

Radio stations have used contests from the beginning to try and keep listeners. “The Contest Nobody Could Win” starts off with Johnny Fever misreading the copy he was given and announcing a new contest with a grand prize of \$5,000. Trouble was, the actual amount was \$50.00. Since he announced it repeatedly on the air before Carlson noticed, the station is stuck for the bigger amount. (Carlson seldom listened to his own station, on the grounds that it would only upset him.) After a huddled meeting, the on-air staff come up with a guess-the-music tape containing six split-second fragments of obscure songs. To win the \$5,000, a listener must correctly identify all the songs and the performers. Unfortunately, there is a winner.

The characters grow and progress as the series goes on. Carlson and his wife Carmen face a crisis when she becomes pregnant in her late 40s, a more serious event back then. We meet family members, learn the back stories of their lives, the lobby is redecorated, Jennifer is actually seen typing once, and the station slowly improves under Travis’s guidance. Some episodes tend to preachy and not enough humour, but by and large the laughs are steady.

Just Give Me That Rock And Roll Music.

AIRHEADS (1994) is a good comedy about a trio of rock musicians who are constantly struggling but can’t get ahead. They decide the main problem is that they can’t get any air time on radio stations. If they could only get their demo played, then fans would flock to them and make them Top 40. One wonders though, why they weren’t self-producing cassettes, CDs, or vinyl to sell at their gigs, a standard procedure for bands then and now. Their leader Chazz (real name Chester) has tried every record label and can’t get past the security guards. So they pick on radio station KPPX, which plays rock music.

Radio stations have the same security procedures as Hollywood studios and for the same reasons, but the trio manage to sneak in and make their way to the broadcast booth, waving realistic-looking toy submachine guns. Instead of the DJ welcoming them with open arms, they get into an argument with him on air, unaware that he left the microphone open in the hopes that listeners would call the police. When they tell him their band is named The Lone Rangers, the DJ points out that the plural makes no sense, and everyone starts arguing about grammar.

Nonetheless, they get agreement to play their demo tape, albeit at gunpoint. The musicians are not the brightest sparks and recorded their demo on reel-to-reel tape, which became obsolete about the time they were born. A technician manages to find an old tape deck in a storage room but when the demo is played, the unit fails and eats up the tape. The music doesn't get past the third chord (same as the first two chords).

The police arrive, a crowd arrives after hearing the drama live on air, and eventually a media circus develops around the station. As the hostage-taking proceeds, a manager inadvertently reveals that the station is converting to easy-listening music the following Monday. This was news not only to the trio but also the station staff, and the DJ learns he will be replaced with two weeks salary in lieu of notice.

A felony is a felony, and eventually the trio must give themselves up. The good news is that their sensational debut has caught the interest of a A&R agent. He gets them a good lawyer who bargains down their jail sentence to a few years, and in the meantime their recordings are boosted into the Top 40. They'll have the cachet of having done hard time when they get out.

The comedy goes well, although the movie has been made obsolete by the advent of mp3s, Websites, Facebook pages, and YouTube videos. To us Boomers, 1994 was yesterday, but it is actually two decades, and seeing the technology of the radio station reminds us how far we have come in such a short time.

The Real Deal.

NEWS RADIO went on air in 1995 and ran for five seasons. It started off as a conventional sitcom, but later often shifted into bizarre scenarios. It is about WNYX, an all-news station in New York City. The primary lead character was Dave Nelson, hired in the first episode as the News Director of the station. He starts out weak-willed and indecisive, but over the course of the series becomes a strong-minded man who occasionally drifts over the line into insanity. He grew up in Wisconsin and is a Boy Scout figure. In one of the episodes, the staff discover to their horror that he is a Canadian by birth. (The actor who played him, Dave Foley, is Canadian.)

Photo at right: I saw this at Heritage Park auto museum in Calgary.



In the second episode, Dave begins a clandestine affair with his senior news reporter and producer Lisa Miller. Eventually they are found out but carry on anyway before a final breakup, after which they remain friends of a sort, sometimes with benefits, sometimes not speaking to each other. Lisa is a savant who can calculate square roots in her head, but obsesses about radio news and government politics. She is a policy wonk who sometimes just won't let go of an obsession.

The owner of the station is multi-billionaire Jimmy James, whose conglomerate owns everything from WNYX to a hockey team. He spends an inordinate amount of time hanging around the station micromanaging, but in the final season it is revealed that WNYX is the secret communications centre of his business empire. He is eccentric, constantly searching for a wife, taking up fads, and making silly bets with other billionaires. The radio station loses money throughout the series, so he sends in consultants to improve its efficiency (ie, lay off staff) and ultimately sells it in the final season.

Among the supporting staff are Beth (no last name ever given, despite efforts by Dave to find out), a brainless young secretary who habitually wears micro-miniskirts and revealing clothing and does very little work. Matthew Brock is the junior reporter who is a complete incompetent. Dave spends the entire series trying to get rid of him, without success. Bill McNeal and Catherine Duke are the drive-time radio announcers, bickering with each other incessantly. She disappears from the series in the middle of the fourth season when the actress who played her, Khandi Alexander, got a job with the CSI television series. Joe Garrelli is the station's electrician, always inventing weird gadgets out of duct tape and spare parts.

Bill is a wild and crazy guy at odds with Dave, but it is a fair fight as they continually one-up each other through the series. One of the running gags through the series are the musical intros that Bill created for his editorials, "The Real Deal With Bill McNeal", sung by an enthusiastic vocal group. His editorials were sloppily written, with Lisa and Dave continually having to reprimand him.

In one memorable episode, "French Diplomacy", Bill's editorial about foreign diplomats escaping parking tickets because of their immunity triggered a chain of consequences. The first time around, Bill drifts into excessive rhetoric when he suggests that foreign diplomats violating parking laws should be dragged from their cars and beaten. Someone thought he was serious, and does indeed

drag out and beat a diplomat. Bill goes on the air to apologize, saying the problem is Joe Vigilante, who should be dealt with. It turns out that there really was a guy named Joe Vigilante, who is dealt with by an angry citizen. Third time around, Bill tells people they should listen to their hearts instead of being ruled by anger. That sounds harmless enough until a mental patient cuts out a beating heart and tries to listen to it. You can't win for trying.

In "Presence", a convention of radio station owners is in town. Jimmy James plays poker every year at the convention with the other media magnates. Instead of cash bets, they gamble with mixing boards, coffee machines, and, unfortunately for Bill, personal contracts of their on-air staff. Jimmy loses Bill to an Atlanta station owner, but gets Lisa to substitute for him in the game. She manages to win Bill back but not before also betting Dave's contract as well. Dave is upset to learn that she bet him while only holding a pair of sixes.

The series began drifting into the bizarre not only within regular episodes but also special parody episodes. In those special episodes, the basic stage sets were redressed to fit the parody. An SF parody set on a spaceship used the station layout with starfields displayed in the windows instead of the New York City skyline. Dave's office is not unlike a certain Star Trek captain's bridge, and everyone walked around in white jumpsuits. The movie TITANIC was parodied by turning Dave's office into the bridge, the men's washroom became the boiler room, and the broadcast booth was the not-wanted-on-voyage storage room where the lovers made out. Everyone dressed in period costume.

Phil Hartman, the actor who played Bill, was murdered by his drug-addled wife, who committed suicide a few hours later. The fifth season went on without him, it being explained on the show that Bill died of a heart attack while watching television. Jon Lovitz substituted as the new announcer Max Louis, but he wasn't as funny. In the fifth season, a rival within Jimmy James's empire appears, Johnny Johnson, who is implacable and unperturbed by anything while he works his evil plans. Lisa marries Johnny but as the preacher pronounces them man and wife, Johnny is arrested on felony charges. Lisa finds herself a jailhouse widow but likes it because she can keep working at her career without a husband in the way and still have conjugal visits with Johnny.

The series never recovered and was written to a final conclusion that year with Jimmy James retiring and the station going to new owners. All in all, this was a good series, although the final season drifted and became just plain silly. A lot of good laughs though, and well recommended.

REAL AND ALTERNATIVE HISTORY: POTATOES AND PIGS
by Dale Speirs

I begin with a review of THE POTATO: HOW THE HUMBLE SPUD RESCUED THE WESTERN WORLD by Larry Zuckerman (1998). This book avoids being a dry botanical account of *Solanum tuberosum* and instead looks at the social impact of the potato on Europe. The Spanish discovered it in the 1530s, unaware that it was the real treasure of the Andes, not gold. The potato is a cold climate plant adaptable to poor soils, and a standard food of the Andes natives.

Cheap and easy to grow, it took a long time to catch on as a mass diet in Europe because it was associated with slaves or peasants. The delay wasn't, as some historians write, because it was thought poisonous since it was a member of the nightshade family. This happened with the potato's close relative the tomato, but the main problem with the slow European acceptance of the potato was class consciousness. A shame, because potatoes and milk (which supplies calcium and vitamins A and D) make a complete nutritional diet at low cost.

Potatoes were introduced into Ireland circa early 1600s, but not by Sir Francis Drake or Sir Walter Raleigh as legend has it. The potato was well established by 1780. It was favoured because it was less work to grow it than oats or wheat. No need for expensive ploughs, which cost a year's wage, never mind the expense of horses or oxen.

The first major disease problem was curl virus in the 1770s, when potatoes were well established across Europe. Zuckerman writes: "*One wonders what might have happened had curl arrived thirty or forty years earlier, when the potato was much less important. With fewer people to mourn it, perhaps no one would have cared to save it.*" (page 59).

Potatoes at first ameliorated other crop failures such as oats or wheat, which did not do well in the wet, cool weather that favoured potatoes. The potato in Ireland had greater productivity, and thus allowed smallholdings to proliferate, along with a rackrent system of land tenure that held back Irish society for a century. The association of ragged Irish peasants with potatoes, their main and often only diet, gave the crop a bad name among the better folk. In North America, no such prejudice ever developed, for out at the frontiers of Canada and the USA, any reliable food source was greatly appreciated.

The Irish famine of 1845 to 1850 will forever be a textbook example of the dangers of monocultural agriculture. *Phytophthora infestans*, the blight fungus, was considered divine retribution against degenerated Papist peasants. The cause of the disease was not demonstrated until 1861, so anyone could and did speculate freely in the absence of facts. The potato famine was worse than it would have been for crops grown from seed, such as oats or wheat. Since potato crops are vegetatively propagated, there is little or no genetic variation. When an entire country relies on two or three cultivars, as Ireland did back then, the only question is why the famine didn't strike sooner.

Mashed Alternatives.

To take up the author's speculation about what would have happened if the potato had not caught on in Europe, one must first consider what happened because it did. Potatoes allowed a greater population increase than would have otherwise been the case, and reduced the frequency of famine. Irish peasants stayed in the Emerald Isle, scrabbling for a living on ever-smaller allotments. The main impact of the potato was sociological, not agricultural, for it allowed inefficient subdivision of farmland and a near-feudal economy.

Had the potato never become popular, the frequent famines that existed before its time would have continued. Besides checking the population, it would have encouraged greater emigration to the Americas. Without the potato to speed up the spread of smallholdings, European farms would have been larger, and peasants could never hope to have land, even under the rackrent system. In the New World, there was land in abundance, governments actively encouraging settlers, and a lack of hide-bound social controls. Peasants would therefore have a greater incentive to migrate, instead of stagnating on their tiny plots of land in the Old Country.

The peasants who migrated would be less enamored of the old way of life, and while not necessarily openly rebellious against the British, French, or Spanish overlords, certainly more disrespectful of them. A greater proportion of Irish in the Canadas would have made the colonies more difficult to control. Even in our timeline, it took the British Army two years to put down the rebellions in Ontario (then called Upper Canada) and Quebec (Lower Canada) in 1837, which also required direct rule from Britain and a few hangings for treason to encourage the others. With more immigrants in the two Canadas, it would have been difficult to control them.

Alright then, the British Army fails to entirely control the Canadas. Instead of successfully suppressing the rebels, the British government must negotiate peace. The Confederation of our timeline began in 1864 and was mostly completed by 1871, with the British North America Act proclaimed on July 1, 1867, uniting the two Canadas and some of the Maritime provinces as the Dominion of Canada. In the non-potato timeline, the rebels' victories (there were actually two groups of them, one in what is now Ontario, the other in Quebec) leads to Confederation thirty years early.

Canada united thirty years earlier means that its expansion westward will be faster, as it races to beat the Americans to the breadbasket of the prairies. The Hudson's Bay Company owned the prairies and the Arctic (the natives' view of whose land it was didn't count) until it sold Rupert's Land to Canada in 1869. That process came sooner without the potato, and by the 1850s the Canadian government has started to explore the prairies.

Although there were fur traders wandering about prior to the 1850s, the first systematic expedition in our timeline was Capt. John Palliser's in 1859. Instead, settlement is already underway by then, and the Metis are steamrolled before they knew what hit them. Louis Riel is a young boy then, not the fiery orator who won one rebellion (1870) and lost one (1885) in our timeline, so he never appears in the history textbooks.

No potato means greater reliance on wheat and oats, and the prairies are colonized that much faster to feed eastern Canada and export grain to Europe.

Hubris And Mr. Griffin's Pig.

A stronger, more secure Canada means that the government will not tolerate the British wimping out on them, giving away the Oregon drainage system and half the British Columbia coastline to the Americans. The Pig War of 1859, instead of being the almost-forgotten skirmish of our timeline, turns into a full-fledged action between the Americans and Canadians.

In our timeline, there was a dispute between the USA and Britain (the Canadian Confederation didn't exist yet) about the boundary line in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, now the British Columbia/Washington State area. The Oregon Treaty, as with so many other treaties, garbled up the boundary line because those signing it didn't know the geography of the area (the same thing happened in the Minnesota/Manitoba/Ontario area but that is another story for another day).

At the heart of the dispute was San Juan Island, which ended up being occupied by both British and American troops. The original treaty specified that the boundary line was the main channel of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The problem was that the Strait has two navigable channels, one on each side of San Juan Island. Each country claimed the channel on the far side of the island from them, which would give them the island.

The incident that triggered the military actions happened on the morning of 15 June 1859, when an American settler, Lyman Cutler, shot a Hudson's Bay Company pig that had been rooting around in his potato patch. Cutler was threatened with a \$100 fine and trial in Victoria (Vancouver Island) for destroying British property. Military troops, some hotheaded, some just stumbling into a situation where they had no idea what was going on, were landed from both countries on the island. The whole thing eventually went off to international arbitration by Kaiser Wilhelm I, who awarded the island to the USA. Nobody wanted to go to war over a dead pig [1].



One Potato, No Potato, War.

In a non-potato timeline, Mr. Cutler didn't have a potato patch, but he still had his other vegetables, and still shot the pig. Hotter heads in Canada prevailed this time, heady from a too-rapid expansion out west.

Although Canada has had a good army historically, it has always been weak in naval strength outside the two World Wars. This time, an aggressive response by Canada results in a stronger response by the Americans, who have a much larger navy. San Juan Island is captured by full military force for the USA, and the Canadians are routed. Canada can hold onto the northern British Columbia coastline (because of shorter supply lines) that was taken by the Americans in our timeline, but fails miserably trying to keep the Oregon drainage system. It is only good fortune that Canada didn't end up losing Vancouver Island and the Fraser River delta as a result of the Pig War.

Repercussions Elsewhere.

While an alternative Pig War may not have changed much physically, it certainly altered the diplomatic climate between a premature Canada and the USA. In our timeline, the British overlords avoided many clashes between the two countries because they had their minds on the global picture and didn't want to get into fights over useless acres of snow. With a premature Canadian Confederation because the potato never caught on as a crop in Ireland, the British washed their hands of the whole matter and left the Canucks to extricate themselves from their mess.

Canada and the USA had many skirmishes over boundary disputes. The USA unofficially supported Fenian raiders into Canada, and when the American War Between The States broke out, Canada was only too happy to provide some support to the CSA. (Which was strange, because Canadians opposed slaveholding.) With the USA fully committed against the CSA, Canada takes advantage and re-occupies San Juan Island.

The Union states now have a two-front war on their hands. On the other hand, Canada now has to scramble to build up a navy, since the Union can legally raid Canadian shipping in the North Atlantic. With actions strung out all over the continent, Canada is forced deep into debt scrambling to build a trans-continental railroad twenty years before our time. Having done so, it then discovers how vulnerable a single-track line across endless boreal forest and

bald-headed prairie can be to Fenian and/or Union raiders. This ties up immense numbers of soldiers. The vast uninhabited distances make it impractical to rely on reserve militias to protect the line. They have to be everywhere all the time, whereas raiders only have to slip in, blow the bridge or line, and run back across the border.

In no time at all, Canada is in financial trouble, and decides to settle for peace. The Union, anxious to concentrate fully on the CSA, lets Canada off with a treaty that puts everything back the way it was. San Juan Island is returned to the USA. The American war is finished in 1867, having taken longer than expected because the Union had to divert resources to the northern border.

Canada's debt load means that its grain must be almost all exported to pay the interest. The wealthy elite still get their wheaten bread, but the average Canadian cannot afford it very often now. Rioting over the price of bread troubles the Canadian government, and some provinces threaten to leave Confederation.

In desperation, the government tries plans such as resettlement of the lower classes into the Arctic, but it is the Ministry of Agriculture who save the day. Some of their researchers have been experimenting with obscure crops such as the potato. They breed up new cultivars that are immune to the curl problem. At first the settlers refuse to accept it, but hungry people can't be choosers, and soon it is accepted. Its ease of culture ensures that it becomes widely used as a food plant, and it was made for cool climates. The potato becomes the dominant food crop within a decade, and all is well. At least until a certain fungus appears.

References.

1] Fowler, A.G. (1992) The other Gulf War. THE BEAVER 72(6):24-31

THE LOST DANGEROUS VISIONS

by Dale Speirs

Harlan Ellison made his way through the science fiction community as an enfant terrible in the 1950s, then became a parody of himself as a grouchy old man. His forte was short stories and screenwriting, and he has produced many memorable works that will be reprinted far into the future. He also did a bit of editing to keep the wolf from the door, which brings us to his two most famous anthologies and one of the most famous unpublished books in the world.

DANGEROUS VISIONS and AGAIN DANGEROUS VISIONS are two doorstep anthologies that certainly play an important part in literary SF. A third volume, THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, was repeatedly promised and just as repeatedly postponed until it became a joke among writers as the years and decades went by without it being published. Christopher Priest published a brilliant and hilarious analysis of Ellison's trail of broken promises, available as a free text file online as THE LAST DEADLOSS VISIONS.

In Thoughts From The Visions Of The Night.

DANGEROUS VISIONS (1967) was part of the New Wave movement. It contains 32 original stories, and in glancing down the table of contents, the majority of the authors are still recognizable as being among the best in SF. The book is riddled with forewords and afterwords; Ellison could have done well writing advertising copy. Not all the authors live up to his fulsome praise, and the actual information content in his editorial remarks is low. I'm not going to review all of the stories but will pick a few samples.

Some of the stories may have been dangerous at the time of publication. Many stories are not at all dangerous, then or now, and seem to be standard SF ideas rewritten in trendy styles of the literary set. Others were not publishable elsewhere more because they didn't fit the theme of SF digests, not because they were particularly revolutionary. A few authors confuse detailed descriptions of gore and splattered organs with genuine innovation. Ellison himself tries this out with "The Prowler In The City At The Edge Of The World", about Jack the Ripper in the future, still killing and disemboweling women. Graphic descriptions of violence or sex were nothing new then in the litcrit university crowd, although to the average SF fan they may have been.

The first story "Evensong" by Lester del Rey is something that could have been published in a 1950s pulp magazine. God nurtured humans, who evolved beyond him and now hunt him through the galaxy, all the way back to Earth. Not a believable premise and a weak story to lead off with.

Philip Jose Farmer's long story "Riders Of The Purple Wage" reminded me that when I first read this book I couldn't get past more than a couple of pages of this story. I still can't. Farmer was a big frog in the small SF pond back in those days because he dared write about sex when, despite their lurid covers, the pulp magazines were as prudish as an elderly maiden aunt. This story is a poor man's version of James Joyce, with pages of gibberish that are supposed to be literary but are instead a boring rewrite of avant-garde fiction from the 1920s.

One story with staying power is Fritz Leiber's "Gonna Roll The Bones", about Joe, a gambler. He has an unhappy home life with a domineering wife and mother, and prefers to stay out at night. One night he finds himself at the crap table against an opponent who appears to be Death. The stakes steadily increase. Finally Joe bets his life and his soul on what appears to be a sure thing and then loses. But there is a twist ending and Joe cheats both death and Death, realizing afterwards that the women had been using magic on him and failed, much to their surprise.

"Eutopia" by Poul Anderson is about Iason Philippou, a Greek man who travels through parallel universes doing research on them. The European countries are still feudal and have colonized North America as a patchwork of different colonies. Philippou did something terrible in the Danish colony and flees to a Hungarian colony gain sanctuary. He lies to the Hungarian warlord about what he did to anger the Danish overlord, claiming to have inadvertently seduced the Danish lord's daughter thinking she was a commoner. However the Hungarian lord learns the truth and expels Philippou on the penalty of death. Philippou manages to get back to his timeline, where Alexander the Great didn't die and took time to consolidate his empire, which in our timeline fell apart on his death. Because of that, Greek science flowered and later invented the devices which allowed travel between universes. Philippou's real offense against the Danes is not found out until the last sentence, when we are reminded that the ancients considered man-boy sex to be the purest form of love. This story could definitely be considered as dangerous at the time of first publication. It reads as a conventional multi-universe story until the last sentence suddenly twists the reader's interpretation of it 180 degrees, yet conforming to the preceding text without seeming to be a forced ending.

David R. Bunch has two short stories in DV. He is a writer who is mostly forgotten because he only wrote short stories in a variety of magazines, and as far as I know, no collections are in print. Most of his stories were set in Moderan, a planet of human cyborgs whose behaviour was bizarre yet logical from their point of view. They lived individually in fortresses and fought incessantly against each other with missiles and remote weapons, with no empathy to fleshies who wouldn't turn themselves into cyborgs. I suspect that one reason Bunch isn't remembered is because his stories really were dangerous visions, and they annoyed SF fans who wanted rockets in space and engineers solving problems by spot-welding another busbar in place.

Skipping some stories that were not SF or particularly dangerous even then, the next one I note is Damon Knight's "Shall The Dust Praise Thee?". It is a nice concept. The Day of Judgement has arrived. The sky splits open to reveal Jehovah on his throne, surrounded by his angels. Earth, however, is a burnt cinder. Humans have exterminated themselves through some war more terrible than atomic, and there are no dead to raise from their graves.

Many of the stories have surprise twist endings, such as Poul Anderson's story mentioned above. The problem with this type of story is that you can only read it once with any genuine interest. There are a number of stories that rely too much on this method. Many others are readable but are not that notable. There were only a few stories that I couldn't get through to the end, but on the whole this anthology is a good one. For your reading list.

The Vision Is Yet For An Appointed Time.

In glancing down the Table of Contents of AGAIN DANGEROUS VISIONS (1972), I recognized about half the names. Many of those names, recognizable today as Grand Old Men or matriarchs of SF, were then unknown writers just starting out. Others have vanished completely. This volume is thicker than the first, and Ellison's verbal diarrhea is just as bad. As with the previous volume, many of the stories, however readable they may be, have trouble living up to the title of the anthology. Some are ordinary SF despite Ellison's puffery, and some are just imitations of avant-garde.

"The Word For World Is Forest" by Ursula Le Guin is an ecological puzzle type of story that was popular in ANALOG magazine. The story contains some sex sequences between humans and aliens which John W. Campbell Jr or subsequent editors of ANALOG might have bounced, but other than that it is

not particularly dangerous. Humans are trying to settle a planet inhabited by sentients called creechies, who initially seem passive about the invasion because they misinterpret the humans' behaviour. The planet has numerous tropical islands covered in forest. Earth having wiped out its trees, an unlikely premise, wood is now more valuable than gold. Humans begin clear-cutting and shipping the lumber back to Earth, creating ecological damage which eventually causes the creechies to rise up, fight a guerilla war, and emerge victorious. Le Guin briefly touches on the ecology of the planet but most of the story is wish fulfilment about how if we all just try to get along there will be peace in our time.

Andrew Offutt's story "For Value Received" is not SF, and certainly not dangerous, but it is an interesting gimmick story that is still relevant to Americans. A man becomes the proud father of a baby girl, delivered in a hospital. When it comes time to take the baby home, he disputes a \$40 item on the bill (Americans have to pay for medical care in the same way they pay a car repair bill). The hospital administration has a policy that patients will not be released until the invoice is taken care of, so the baby stays in the hospital and her parents visit daily. The dispute drags on for years, and the baby grows up in the hospital into a fine young woman who earns her medical degree. Meanwhile the interest on the unpaid bill mounts up to \$364,311.41. When she turns 21, she is free to leave since she is an adult and cannot be constrained for her father's actions. I know little about Obamacare other than it is not free universal health care such as Canada and Europe have, but I suspect the Offutt scenario is just as plausible today.

A similar scenario not too unrealistic for our times is Ed Bryant's "The 10:00 Report Is Brought To You By ...". Television news is desperate for film to keep its audiences shocked and watching, so they hire bike gangs and criminals to rape and pillage, filmed live by cameras. With drone cameras today, easily purchased in stores at your local shopping mall, the only thing stopping the news teams is the fear that they might be found out and indicted. They would if they could.

The story "In The Barn" by Piers Anthony is one I remembered well from my first reading of it decades ago. But before that, I have to tell you this story. My father was born on a south Saskatchewan homestead where his parents operated a dairy farm near the village of Shaunavon. They lost it during the drought years of the Great Depression, and started over again on a new dairy farm in what is now suburbia of northwest Calgary. Two of my father's brothers took

over the farm and milked cows until the 1980s. By that time, the suburbs had grown up against the farm and they sold out. My father went off to Guelph Veterinary College as the war ended and earned his DVM in 1951, spending the rest of his life as a livestock veterinarian in the Eckville-Red Deer area about 130 km north of Calgary. I was born and raised there. Dad kept a couple of hundred of Charolais beef cattle on rangeland. Ranching is the least intensive form of farming. There was no way he could be milking cows twice a day while working as a veterinarian.

And so to this story. It is about an explorer from Earth Prime, so-called because it is the originating point of countless parallel universe Earths. His current task is to examine Counter-Earth #772, specifically to find out how the planet can have a strong agricultural economy despite the absence of any large mammals other than humans. He infiltrates a dairy farm as a newly-hired farmhand, and is sent to milk the cows. The cows turn out to be a subspecies of humans bred to give milk, with gigantic breasts. The males not required for breeding would be beef stock, much as surplus male Holstein calves are converted to steers and fattened for the slaughterhouse in our world. Humans are the only large mammals on the planet, but they have been bred for specific purposes. An interesting concept. My uncles were hard-shell Baptists so I never showed them this story, and I definitely didn't have the courage to mention it to my father, even though he had lapsed from the church by then.

Unlike DV, ADV does have a few more dangerous stories, although many of them tend to be short-shorts of three or four pages. While many of the authors have vanished into the dustbin of history, there are a fair number of stories that justify reprinting.

There Shall Be No More Any Vain Vision.

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS has been promised for decades, and if it is ever published could be better titled as AT LAST, DANGEROUS VISIONS. In ADV, Ellison wrote in a foreword that LDV would appear in about six months, which would place its publication date sometime in 1972, or to be generous, in early 1973. Ellison kept promising and promising it over the years. He had been buying stories for LDV but was forever behind in writing the forewords for each one. He kept buying though, and the book got out of control. Had it been published, it would have been a multi-volume work as it would have been physically impossible to print it as a single giant volume at a reasonable price.

Christopher Priest was motivated to collate and analyze Ellison's promises. THE LAST DEADLOSS VISIONS was compiled in 1984 but not published until 1987. It went through several versions; the one I have is dated 1994. There is a published version called THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER. Priest's documentation of LDV is quite humourous, assuming you aren't one of the authors who dealt with Ellison.

Priest analyzes each of Ellison's claims, and how the man was specific enough each time to convince people the book was imminent. Ellison would state positively and firmly that the manuscript would be delivered next week, or that it had already been delivered, or that a new publisher had signed a contract for it. The laughter stops when Priest points out that the writers who sold the stories never saw them published unless they bought them back. Some have died without seeing their stories in print. It isn't just the money that authors like; they want to see their stories in print, something to point to with pride. Buying a story and then sitting on it is a cruel thing to do.

Priest suggests three outcomes. The Steady State Theory is that the book will continue in limbo, with occasional announcements that publication is nigh, that new stories have been bought, but no real action. This seems to be actuality. The White Dwarf Theory is that only a small selection of the stories will be published in an affordable volume, a sort of Best of LDV selection. Ellison, however, has said all or none. The third alternative is The Big Bang Theory, when the book is abandoned, all rights returned, and Ellison closes a very long chapter in his biography. I suspect the Big Bang idea will come to pass when Ellison dies. He is now an 81-year-old man in poor health who recently had a stroke. He and the LDV are not long for this world.

The SF newsmagazine LOCUS had a number of news items about LDV, of which I have scanned a couple on the next two pages. (In those days, LOCUS was a typewritten zine, hence the primitive look.) Note the amazing specificity of Ellison's press releases. He did not bumble around on the stage but strode confidently to the microphone and stated the details so clearly that no one in the audience could doubt what he said. When such exact information is provided, one takes the man at face value.

FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS Sold To Berkley



HARLAN ELLISON

Publishing rights to THE FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS edited by Harlan Ellison, the most anticipated anthology of the last decade, have been sold to Berkley Books for \$50,000. The editor is Victoria Schochet. This is the third time rights have changed hands since the initial announcement of the book in 1972. They expect to publish it, in three volumes, in the spring of 1980.

DANGEROUS VISIONS, published by Doubleday in 1967, was one of the most successful anthologies of all time. It has sold constantly since its initial publication and has been almost continually in print for twelve years. The current paperback edition is available from Signet. It contains 32 stories and is 238,000 words long. AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, published in 1972 by Doubleday, was even longer and contained 46 stories by 42 writers. It was not quite as phenomenally successful as Volume 1, but is still a top selling book.

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS was originally just an offshoot from AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS. In his 1971 introduction to Volume 2, Harlan Ellison had the following to say about the book, "THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS will be published, God willing, approximately six months after this book. It was never really intended as a third volume. What happened was that when (AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS) hit half a million words, and seemed not to be within containment, Ashmead and I decided rather than make AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS a boxed set of two books that would cost a small fortune, we'd split the already-pur-

chased wordage down the middle and bring out a final volume six months after this one."

The best laid plans... In 1972 Doubleday sold AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS to the Science Fiction Book Club despite Ellison's objections that the contract called for his permission to do this. Harlan broke with Doubleday and refused to turn in the final book. Instead, he went to Harper & Row and sold an anthology to them called DANGEROUS VISIONS AND IMPOSSIBLE VISIONS for \$10,000 which was really THE FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS in clever plastic disguise. Eventually he was able to buy back all of Doubleday's rights and the polite fiction of the two books disappeared. Harper & Row sold paperback rights to Signet, announced the book, and waited for the final manuscript which somehow never was finished. Harlan was determined to include all authors who had not appeared in the first two volumes and kept buying stories well after the deadline. He was also to write introductions to the volume and to the individual stories. Years passed. Most of these have still not been turned in to Berkley. (None were ever sent to Harper & Row), but Berkley's editor, Victoria Schochet, who was also the editor who handled THE FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS at Harper & Row, is confident that they will all be on hand in the next few months.

THE FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS contains 113 stories by 102 authors. It contains 700,000 words of fiction. Each story is illustrated by Tim Kirk and there is a triptych cover by Don Ivan Punchatz. Berkley will publish the book in three volumes issued simultaneously. There will be a limited box set concurrent with the regular issue. Eight years of waiting may have finally come to an end.

FINAL DANGEROUS VISIONS Contents

Harlan Ellison's LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, to be published by Putnam next year, will contain the following stories in its three volumes:

LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS: BOOK ONE
James Gunn, "Among The Beautiful Bright Children" (9100 words); Bob Shaw, "Dark Night In Toyland" (4000); Bruce Sterling, "Living Inside" (2250); Delbert Casada, "The Bing Bang Blues" (2000); Mack Reynolds, "Ponce De Leon's Pants" (1800); A. Bertram Chandler, "The True Believers" (7000); Anne McCaffrey, "The Bones Do Lie" (7000); Grant Carrington, "In A Spaceship, Maybe" (3800); Lisa Tuttle, "Child Of Mind" (6800); Patricia C. Hodgell, "Dark Threshold" (1500); Ward Moore, "Falling From Grace" (4000); Daniel Walther, "The 100 Million Horses Of Planet Dada" (English version-4200, French version-4200); Richard E. Peck, "None So Deaf" (2000); G.C. Edmondson, "A Time For Praying" (7700); James Sutherland, "The Amazonas Link" (6000); Richard Wilson, "At The Sign Of The Boar's Head Nebula" (47000); Howard Fast, "All Creatures Great and Small" (1200); Joseph Pumilia, "A Night At Madame Mephisto's" (1200); Leslie A. Fiedler, "What Used To Be Called Dead" (2800); Manly Wade Wellman, "Not All A Dream" (5400); Felix C. Gotschalk, "A Day In The Life Of A-420" (2600); Doris Piserchia, "The Residents Of Kingston" (5000); Jerry Pournelle, "Free Entrance" (11000); John Morressy, "Run-down" (1200); Arthur Byron Cover, "Various Kinds Of Conceits" (2000); Robert Thom, "Son Of 'Wild In The Streets'" (15800); Wilson Tucker, "Dick And Jane Go To Mars" (7500); Raul Judson, "On The Way To The Woman Of Your Dreams" (3800); Gerard Conway, "Black-stop" (5500); Craig Strete, "Ten Times Your Fingers And Double Your Toes" (3500); Chan Davis, "The Names Of Yanils" (9000); Robert Lilly, "Return To Elf Hill" (900); Jack M. Dann, "The Carbon Dreamer" (9500); Michael Bishop, "Dog's Lives" (6000); 34 authors--35

stories--total wordage: 214,250.

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS: BOOK TWO
Ian Watson, "Universe On The Run" (4200 words); Gordon Eklund, "The Children Of Bull Weed" (17000); Anthony Boucher, "Precis Of The Rappacini Report" (Afterword by Richard Mathegon) (850); Susan C. Lette "Granma, What's The Sky Made Of?" (1500); David Wise, "A Rousing Explanation Of The Events Surrounding My Sister's Death" (1800); P. J. Plauger, "The Dawn Patrol" (10000); Clifford A. Simak, "I Had No Head And My Eyes Were Floating Way Up In The Air" (6600); Langdon Jones, "To Have And To Hold" (20000); Jonathan Fast, "The Malibu Fault" (1750); Leonard Isaacs, "I Think, Therefore I Am" (1000); Philippe Curval, "The Taut Arc Of Desire" (English version--7200, French version--7200); John Christopher, "A Journey South" (21500); Ron Goulart, "The Return Of Agent Black" (3800); Avram Davidson, "The Stone Which The Builders Rejected" (2000); Charles L. Harness, "Signals" (13125); D.M. Rowles, "Thumbing It On The Beam, And Other Magic Melting Moments" (2000); Raylyn Moore, "End" (9250); John Jakes, "Uncle Tom's Time Machine" (3000); Franklin Fisher, "Adversaries" (4700); Hank Davis, "Copping Out" (1000); Edmond Hamilton & Leigh Brackett, "Stark And The Star Kings" (10000); Mildred Downey Broxon, "The Danaan Children Laugh" (5300); Joseph Green, "Play Sweetly, In Harmony" (6300); Robert Sheckley, "Primordial Follies" (4000); Wm. E. Cochrane, "Cargo Run" (18800); Nelson S. Bond, "Pipeline To Paradise" (5000); Orson Scott Card, "Geriatric Ward" (7000); Robert Wissner, "A Night At The Opera" (3000); Charles Platt, "The Red Dream" (9800); Algis Budrys, "Living Alone In The Jungle" (1352); Edgar Pangborn, "The Life And The Clay" (6500); 32 authors--40 stories--total wordage: 216,527.

THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS: BOOK THREE
Daniel Keyes, "Mama's Girl" (4000);

Cordwainer Smith, "Himself In Anachron" (2500); Pamela Zoline, "Dreamwork, A Novel" (16000); The Firesign Theatre, "The Giant Rat Of Sumatra, Or By The Light Of The Silvery" (5000); Steve Herbst, "Leveled Best" (1300); Russell Bates, "Search Cycle: Beginning And Ending"--"1. The Last Quest" (2250), "2. Fifth And Last Horseman" (5000); Vonda N. McIntyre, "Xyy" (1600); Frank Herbert, "The Accidental Ferossilk" (3500); Graham Charnock, "The Burning Zone" (6000); Doris Pitkin Buck, "Cacophony In Pink And Ochre" (5500); Frank Bryning, "The Accidents Of Blood" (5500); Michael Moorcock, "The Murderer's Song" (7500); Wallace West, "On The Other Side Of Space, In The Lobby Of The Potlatch Inn" (6500); William Kotzwinkle, "Two From Kotzwinkle's Bestiary" (5000); Octavia Estelle Butler, "Childfinder" (3250); Tom Reamy "Potiphee, Petey And Me" (17000); Laurence Yep, "The Sea-Dragon" (17000); Alfred Bester, "Emerging Nation" (2000); Robert Thurston, "The Ugly Duckling Gets The Treatment And Becomes Cinderella Except Her Foot's Too Big For The Prince's Slipper And Is Webbed Besides" (3500); Steven Utley, "Goodbye" (2000); Graham Hall, "Golgotha" (3200); Edward Bryant, "War Stories" (10000); John Varley, "The Bellman" (11500); Joe Haldeman, "Fantasy For Six Electrodes And One Adrenaline Drip (A Play in the Form of a Feelie Script)" (10000); Harry Harrison, "A Dog And His Boy" (4000); Janet Nay, "Las Animas" (6800); Geo. Alec Effinger, "False Premises: 1. The Capitals Are Wrong" (4000), "2. Stage Fright" (2500), "3. Rocky Colavito Batted .268 In 1955" (5500), "4. Fishing With Hemingway" (3000); Fred Saberhagen, "The Senior Prom" (4800); A.E. Van Vogt, "Skin" (7000); Stan Dryer, "Halfway There" (3000); Gordon R. Dickson, "Love Song" (6000); Michael R. Coney, "Suzy Is Something Special" (8000); Jack Williamson, "Previews Of Hell" (3000); 36 authors--38 stories--total wordage: 214,200.

BOOK REVIEW

by Dale Speirs

HITLER’S URANIUM CLUB by Jeremy Bernstein (2001). In the dying days of World War Two, a group of German physicists was scooped up by Allied troops and eventually brought to England. The ten scientists, led by Werner Heisenberg, were interned without charge or trial for six months in a country house outside Cambridge, called Farm Hall. The house was thoroughly wired with microphones, and secret teams of monitors translated the more significant conversations of the Germans. Transcripts were circulated to British and American atomic authorities for their information, for the professors had been part of Germany’s nuclear bomb effort. These translations are now published, with sidebar commentary, to show what the Germans were really saying and thinking at the time, as opposed to their sanitized histories and autobiographies they published over the next few decades.

Heisenberg was the doyen of the group, the one to whom the others instinctively looked to for leadership. In the early days of their seclusion, the Germans were alternately strutting their importance as leaders in nuclear research, and busily creating a myth that they had not worked on atomic bombs but reactors, in an effort to stall the Nazi war effort. Their pride as leaders in nuclear research was shattered when they got the news of Hiroshima, and realized that they, who hadn’t even managed a working production reactor, could be of no use to the Allies who were obviously far beyond them.

As the group waited out their captivity before being returned to Germany, they fretted about lack of letters to families back home, and kept themselves busy trying to figure out how the Allies made the bomb. To the contrary of what they later said, most were actively involved in bomb research for the German Army, but hindsight showed them they had been incompetent. There were too many theorists, like Heisenberg, and not enough practical laboratory technicians. To be fair to them, they had to struggle by with a few million Reichsmarks and a few hundred people at best, while the Manhattan Project was a billion-dollar operation with tens of thousands of staff, and, as well, not forced to constantly re-build and re-locate due to bombing.

A fascinating read, and a direct look into the minds of those who could have warped history into a Germany-with-the-Bomb timeline.

WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21 every year. 2015 will be the 21nd year of the WWP.

At 21h00 local time on June 21, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe. At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour.

Raise a glass, publish a one-shot, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2015

Calgary's annual readercon When Words Collide returns on the weekend of August 14 to 16, 2015, at a new and bigger location, the Delta Calgary South Hotel on Southland Drive SE, just east of Macleod Trail. There have been SF conventions at this hotel in previous years, so the building is a good venue. More details at their Website: www.whenwordscollide.org

This is a literary convention designed to cross genres, with author Guests of Honour from fantasy, science, fiction, mystery, romance, and young adults. The convention has become very popular with literary agents, editors, and publishers, who take rooms for pitch sessions and private negotiations.

The panels are mostly literary but there is a strong science track. For mystery writers and readers, the Calgary Police Service usually send an officer out to explain the real-life procedures of detective work, not at all like the CSI shows. The dealer bourse is almost entirely small-press publishers and a couple of book dealers. No one selling crystals or light sabres.