

PROSPECTUS 16

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PROSPECTUS is the irregularly published newsletter of the Fantasy and Science Fiction Society of Columbia University. It is available to dues-paying members of the Society (dues are \$1.00 for the academic year). Edited by Eli Cohen. The Society meets every Thursday at 8:30 in the Postcrypt (basement of St. Paul's Chapel). For information about the Society and its activities, contact:
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Many thanks to Helen Bellows of the Math. Stat. Department, for running off and partially collating the last issue of PROSPECTUS.

PHILCON

It started on the wrong foot, with Nancy Lambert and me crammed into a rush hour subway going to Pelham Parkway. We were on our way to meet Rich and Joanie Serrano, who were going to drive us to the convention. Did I mention that it was raining? It was raining. We were late. The subway, as is its wont, went through the usual heart-stopping slowdowns between stations -- almost grinding to a halt, then lurching forward a few feet, picking up speed (just to get your hopes up), and then repeating the process.

Of course we eventually made it to the Serrano's, and after sundry delays and a pizza, left for the fabled city of Philadelphia. Rich Serrano, who besides being a lawyer is a first degree black belt in jiu-jitsu, entertained us on the way with descriptions of how to kill, mangle, maim (see also HARM) a man with a rolled-up magazine or a book of matches. I could not possibly, in this limited space, chronicle the whole incredible trip -- the journey across the Turnpike-of-Evil-Smells, the narrow escapes from wrong turns.... We had nothing to guide us but a few cryptic notes reputed to have been handed down from the semi-mythical Elliot Shorter himself. But He-Who-Watches-Over-Travelling-Fen smiled upon us, and we made all the right turns (for the wrong reasons, of course), arriving at the Sheraton before midnight.

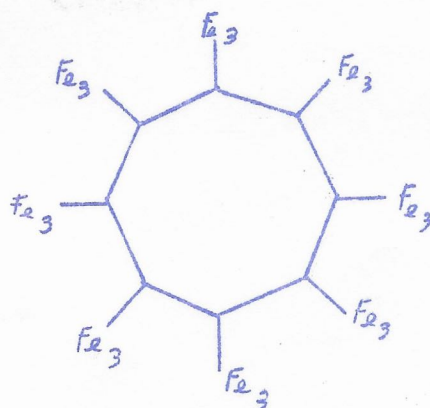
I located Mark Owings (whose room I was sharing), bumped into half-a-dozen friends on the way, and, after stowing my suitcase, spent the next four hours rapping with various people. It was a little after 4 a.m. when Mark and I got back to the room, and about 5:30 when we stopped talking.

We were up the next day at the crack of 1... well, maybe 1:30. Anyway, we had lunch at the hotel's Minute Chef (aside from high prices, poor service, and bad food, I guess it was OK), and got to the program in time for Ben Bova. Bova gave an entertaining talk on assessing the effects of technology, briefly mentioning some of the things his company is working on -- like "the lasers the Air Force tells us we're not allowed to call death rays."

At 4:30 p.m. Jon Singer was presented with the Lyman Blakely Award by Lester del Rey, who said that he had been asked to do the presentation, had no idea what the award was for, and that perhaps the winner could explain. And Jon proceeded to give a

very funny, totally ad-libbed, twenty minute speech on the history of the award (which I am trying to get him to write up for AKOS). It seems that sometime around August, a note appeared in LOCUS (a bi-weekly newszine, 10 for \$2.00, available from Charlie Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, N.Y. 10457 (\$\$\$Plug\$\$\$)) to the effect that "Jon Singer has won the Lyman Blaklee Award." Jon, of course, immediately began to ask everyone in sight, "What's the Lyman Blaklee Award?" No one knew. Ted Pauls, in WOKL, mentioned that Jon had won "the Lyman Blakely Award." Jon began to get agitated. "What the hell is the Lyman Blakely Award and HOW DO YOU SPELL IT?!!" He asked Ted Pauls. Ted said that Charlie Brown had told him, and he (Ted) had no idea what it was. Jon asked Charlie, and Charlie said it was a news item Gary Labowitz may have sent him, and he (Charlie) had no idea what it was. Gary (who lives in Pennsylvania) said he wasn't sure, but it might have been mentioned in a batch of stuff he got from Los Angeles... Jon began to smell a rat.

Let me digress for a moment. There is an ancient and venerable custom among fans known as "hoaxing." It is perhaps best explained by giving an example. A little while after Fred Lerner got out of the U.S. Army, he received a letter, on official Canadian government stationery, to wit, "Although it is unusual, your request for admission to Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Armed Forces has been accepted. Please report on such-and-such a date, etc. Note: Unfortunately, U.S. Army basic training cannot be



Ferrous Wheel

accepted as exempting you from Canadian basic training." All very official sounding, with the proper seals and letter heads. This is an example of a hoax. The victim, in this case Fred, knew he was being hoaxed, but the important question was by whom. Eventually, after many months, the hoaxers broke down and Fred discovered that his good friends Brian and Sherna Burley had been behind the whole thing. Let me give another example: Two years after the Canadian Army episode, Brian and Sherna decided that, since Fred had been in the Canadian Army for 10, these many years, it was about time he received his pay. So they organized a plot whereby fans all over the country began mailing Fred Canadian pennies. The

process by which they convinced Fred that Frank Prieto (who was perhaps the only fan not involved) was behind it all is too complicated to explain here. But you get the idea.

So, there was Jon Singer, the winner of an obviously phony award that no one had ever heard of. As he put it, "I made a list of suspects, and then proceeded to eliminate every single one." References appeared in strange fanzines, and weird letters about the award arrived in the mail for the next two months. And finally, on November 14, 1970, at PHILCON, Lester del Rey presented Jon with a lovely red velvet covered folder with a small gold propellor beanie in the lower right-hand corner. (Note: The propellor beanie is a traditional symbol of science fiction fandom.) It was really not too surprising that upon opening the award, Jon found a picture of a grinning Brian and Sherna Burley (together with Ted Pauls), the signatures of everyone who had

contributed to the hoax, and an inscription: "To Jon Singer, For Service Above and Beyond the Call of Nature."

After the presentation, I joined a group of Pittsburgh fans trading repartee with Robert Silverberg, and then left for dinner at my cousin's in Cherry Hill. I got back around midnight, just in time for the annual Trial conducted by the True Faith of the Sacred Cat. (The two elements of the True Faith's Catma are: 1) The Lord Mota resides on Mars in the body of the Sacred Green Cat. 2) If you'll believe that, you'll believe anything.")

Sherna Burley was being tried for hanging Fred Lerner in effigy. Fred, disguised as a mild-mannered librarian working for a great metropolitan university, is in reality the Janandra -- the Corporeal Manifestation of the Lord Mota and Representation of His Infinite Wisdom (Umtarawa! Smigee, smigee). The foul deed, a most vile and serious heresy, was committed just before the trial in front of the jury (which consisted of all the spectators). His Utter DisGrace Thomas Dis-cardinal Bulmer presented the Persecution's case. Rich Serrano presented the defense. One of the defense's points was that the effigy (constructed from an old sock) was in fact better-looking than the Janandra himself, and therefore far from being a heresy, was in fact a compliment. This argument had a strong effect upon the jury. (The Janandra, I should perhaps point out, was not present at the convention.) But the keystone of the defense was a piece of evidence, to wit, a bottle of wine. It was submitted that a) this evidence must be examined quite carefully, and in great detail, to make sure it was authentic, and b) in the interest of creating a precedent useful to judge, jury, and all participants in future trials, the accused should be acquitted on the basis of said evidence. To quote Sherna, the alcoholic bribe was "certainly in keeping with the spirit of the law." The time-tested cornerstone of True Faith justice ("The question is not whether the accused is guilty or innocent, but whether he is of more use to us guilty or innocent!") was brought in conflict with years of precedent: No one has ever been acquitted at a Trial. The sentence of death by inebriation has always been imposed. (Justice in the True Faith proceeds by leaps and bounds; i.e., in kangaroo courts.) Legal and theological (or more accurately, spiritual) arguments were presented, and it looked like debate would continue until the evidence turned to vinegar. A compromise was reached: A mistrial was declared, and the evidence was examined by everybody; or perhaps it was the other way around -- my memory of events is rather fuzzy after this point. Though I do recall that it was excellent evidence!

Staggering, er, ah, leaving the trial, I bumped into Ginger Buchanan, who was busy snaffling glasses for the party the Pittsburgh fans were giving. Ginger, among other things, is Dictator of WPSFA (the Western Pennsylvania Science Fiction Association). I joined in, and eventually found myself with a bucketful of glasses, waiting with Ginger for an Up elevator. We were on the third floor, and elevator after elevator arrived on its way down, but nothing was stopping on the way up. The situation was desperate. The glasses were urgently needed by the hoards of thirsty fen at the party. We knew what had to be done. The Elevator God

A,A,A,A...

Furry A Series

was demanding a sacrifice. Since I was carrying the glasses, there was only one choice: Her voice almost breaking, Ginger volunteered to "go down to the first floor and grab an elevator to bring up to 3." (It's strange how people always retreat to euphemisms at times like these.) With a brave smile, she said goodbye, and descended the steps leading to the depths. We both knew it had to be. And sure enough, not two minutes after she left, an Up elevator stopped on three. I brought the glasses and explained about poor Ginger's fate. Everyone was sad, but even Suzanne Tompkins (who shares a basement with Ginger -- but that's another story) said, "Well, we did need the glasses..." We were all pleasantly surprised, though, when Ginger reappeared a little later. She looked a trifle dishevelled, perhaps, and refused to talk about her escape from the Elevator God, but we were just glad to have her back.

What with this and that, I didn't get back to Mark Owing's room until 7:00 a.m. I knocked apologetically at the door, and discovered a) there were five of us sharing the room that night, and b) everyone else had gotten in only about half an hour before.

Sunday, Larry Niven gave a talk on Ringworld, Dyson spheres, and similar methods of harnessing a sun's energy. Even to my untrained ear, some of his physics sounded a little off. The fact that Hal Clement (sitting in the audience) occasionally shook his head and appeared to moan made me sure some of his physics was a little off. But he did throw out some fascinating alternatives to the ringworld he describes in Ringworld.

The convention ground to a halt. A group of about 15 of us went to the Open Hearth (an excellent smorgasbord style restaurant in Pennsylvania) for dinner. On the way there (I was with the Serranos, Jake Waldeman, and Jon Singer), a car behind us hit us, fortunately at a very low velocity. The only damage was a crushed trunk lock that made it impossible to open the trunk. When we finally got back to New York, the back seat had to be taken apart and all our luggage removed from that side. Jon did a heroic job of luggage removal. (I hope the picture Joanie took of him wriggling over the back seat into the trunk comes out...)

The next convention seems to be Mondo-Con, January 22-24th, at the New York Statler-Hilton. It'll probably be the middle of finals. Sigh. But what the hell,

FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE!

THE ADVENTURES OF GRAYSON GREENSWARD

It was Grayson Greensward who, in the year 2731, saved the colony on Laqueus from destruction by giant mothosaurs. The colonists had settled the planet in hopes of establishing a global textile industry, and for the first few decades their efforts were generally successful. The development of a large population and the rise of technology unfortunately caused such a tremendous ecological imbalance that gigantic mutated insects began appearing. The worst of these were the mothosaurs, who savagely attacked all the cloths and fabrics produced at the mills. The entire colony was in imminent danger of financial collapse.

In response to the colonists' heartrending plea (and their generous reward offer), Grayson sped to the scene. "Walls."

he said. "The mothosaurs break them down," replied the Laqueans. "Chemical repellents," suggested Greensward. "They're immune." "Force fields?" "They have no effect on the monsters!" "Gotta be something...." Greensward muttered. "Have you tried tatting?" His conversant blushed: "I'm not married." Another Laquean murmured, "Tatting? Is that anything like kippling?" "You trops!" yelled Grayson. "Tatting is lacework!"

Sure enough, it was found that a certain type of lace would successfully repel the beasts. "We need," Greensward decided, "someone who can make a shield of lace to protect the settlement. Such a person must be skillful enough to make such a thing, yet also quick and limber, so as to avoid the mothosaurs at the same time." "But we have no such craftsman on the entire planet," cried the colonists, "and we need one immediately!" "Don't worry," Grayson replied, "I'll get you one."

True to his word, he showed up the very next day with the lacemaker, who nimbly and dextrously set up a barrier against the huge insects. "Amazing, Mr. Greensward! How did you get that man here so fast?"

Grayson looked up from counting his money and said, "Oh, I just told everyone that it was a tatter of lithe and deft."

Yarik P. Thrip

(with thanks to David Emerson)

Janet Megson (co-editor of AKOS) has just gotten back from the hospital after an operation connected with her motorcycle accident last August. Best wishes for a speedy recovery.

There are rumors afloat that Robert A. Heinlein will be interviewed by WKCR sometime in January. More news when I get it.

We Thought You Might Want to Know Who's Boss, or, What Do You Mean, There's Four Inches Left on the Last Page? Department.

Grand Marshal: Eli Cohen
Petit Marshal: Maggie Flinn
Acting Seneschal: Nancy Lambert

This issue is brought to you by the ten ink-stained fingers of your acting seneschal, Nancy Lambert, presiding at the SCM Electra 120 typewriter.

IMPORTANT!! NEWS FLASH!! THE POSTSCRIPT WILL BE CLOSED THURSDAYS UNTIL AFTER CHRISTMAS!! Meetings will be held in my room, 408 McBain. Dial 7310 on the phone downstairs to get in.